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EDITORIAL

020 3890 3890

eds@evo.co.uk

www.evo.co.uk

evo, Dennis Publishing,
Bedford Technology Park (Building 109),
Thurleigh, Bedford, MK44 2YA,
United Kingdom

EDITOR

Stuart Gallagher

MANAGING EDITOR

Ian Eveleigh

DEPUTY EDITOR

Adam Towler

GROUP WEB EDITOR

Steve Walker

ART EDITOR

Rich Browne

ROAD TEST EDITOR

James Disdale

SUBEDITOR

Jonathan Baker

STAFF WRITERS

Antony Ingram

Will Beaumont

STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Aston Parrott

CONTENT EDITOR

Jordan Katsianis

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

John Barker

Richard Meaden

Steve Sutcliffe

David Vivian

COLUMNISTS

Richard Porter

Ted Kravitz

OFFICE MANAGER

Jane Townsend-Emms

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Steve Fowler

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

John Black, Henry Catchpole,

Matt Joy, Nick Trott

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS

Otis Clay, Lee Marshall, Dean Smith

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Ed speak

'RACE ON SUNDAY, SELL ON MONDAY'

can trace its routes back to a time when race cars were little more than road cars with numbers

stuck to their doors, but the adage remains true today.

We may scoff at F1's relevance to road cars but by the end of next year Mercedes will present Project One, an F1 car with enclosed wheels and a roof. Around the same time Aston Martin will deliver the Valkyrie, a road car designed by Adrian Newey with not an insignificant amount of input from his colleagues in Milton Keynes.

Today's damper technology owes so much to the World Rally Championship, and ultra-high-performance tyres wouldn't be the remarkable things they are without years of development on track.

Endurance racing has a lot to be thanked for when it comes to motorsport-inspired road cars. Of the four track-focused specials we take to Anglesey this month, three are from manufacturers that build thoroughbred racers so closely linked to their road-car counterparts that it doesn't take much imagination to see the latter plunging through the Foxhole in the dead of night trying to pass a Manta with a fox's tail fixed to its aerial. Although Ford obviously built its GT race car first before figuring out how to turn it into a road car.

Why, then, do some manufacturers spend an eye-watering sum on motorsport with no supporting road-car programme? WRC is the biggest culprit and has been since the demise of homologation requirements. Between 2003 and 2012 Citroën won eight World Rally titles yet not a single car inspired by these achievements materialised. VW is nearly as guilty. It won four titles between 2013 and '16 but gave us the damp squib Polo R WRC road car.

Today? Toyota has teased us with its Yaris GRMN, Ford continues to deliver when it comes to the Fiesta ST, and Hyundai is heading in the right direction with its i30 N, but seriously guys and gals, isn't it time you came out of the forest and celebrated the success you achieve in it?

Stuart Gallagher, Editor @stuartg917

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Julian Lloyd-Evans

GROUP ADVERTISING DIRECTOR

Steve Machin

ADVERTISING MANAGER

Pierre Clements

SENIOR SALES EXECUTIVE

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DIRECT MARKETING MANAGER

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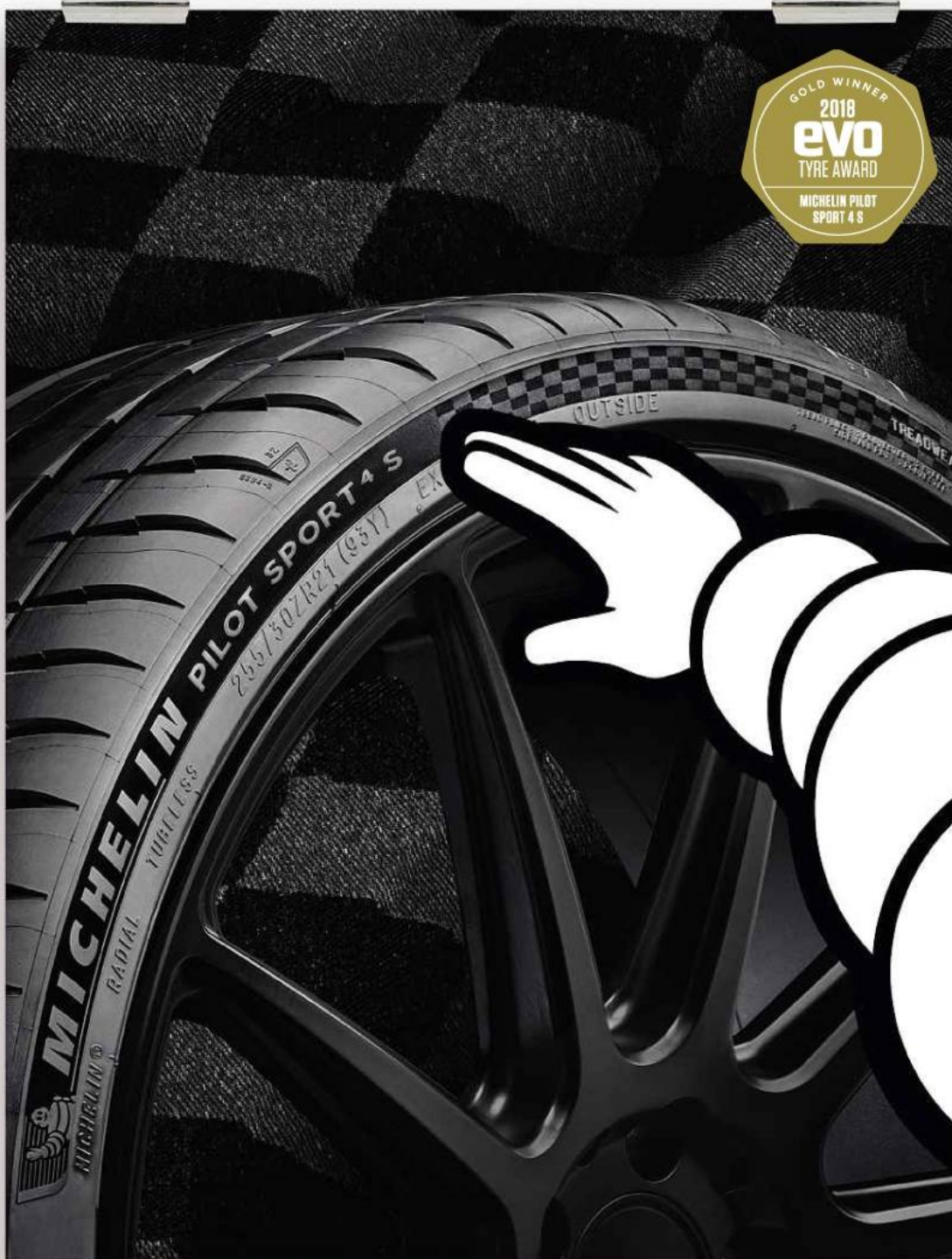
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Felix Dennis



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Track attack

Lamborghini takes the Aventador's naturally aspirated V12 to 759bhp for its potent SVJ



AS THE AUTOMOTIVE WORLD RACES headlong on an electric path, Lamborghini is remaining loyal to the internal combustion engine that has served it so well these past 55 years. It's acutely aware that one day it will succumb to the pressures of producing hybrid and EV powertrains, but until battery-powered motors are able to deliver the emotive engagement of a howling V10 or demonic V12 there will always be a multi-

cylinder, petrol-fuelled engine attached to the aluminium or carbon tubs of Sant'Agata-built sports and super sports cars.

Which is great news, because nothing spikes the hair on an *evo* writer's neck like a Lamborghini engine at full chat, as James Disdale explains on page 42 after exposure to the Huracán Performante Spyder. And now there's another Bolognese beast to enjoy: the Aventador SVJ. All 759bhp of it.

1 CONCEPT

Revealed at the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance during the recent Monterey Car Week, the SVJ is the latest special-edition to join the Aventador line-up. Following the original SV of 2015, it takes much of what Lamborghini has learnt in terms of aerodynamics from the Huracán Performante and rolls it into its flagship model.

There's more power from the V12 engine, too, and while acceleration and performance is on a par with the SV and S models, where the SVJ really ups the ante is when it comes to track performance. Specifically, one track in Germany, where it has posted a lap time of 6min 44.97sec.

Marking the model's launch is a special-edition SVJ 63, a limited run of 63 examples celebrating Lamborghini's founding year (1963) and featuring a bespoke livery. As for the name, the SV part is the abbreviation for Super Veloce and the J is short for Jota, the name Lamborghini gave to its most track- and driver-focused cars in the past, most notably the achingly desirable Miura Jota.

2 DRIVETRAIN

With 6.5 litres and 12 cylinders producing 759bhp and 531lb ft of torque – 19bhp and 22lb ft increases over the Aventador SV, and achieved at higher engine speeds – the SVJ pushes the naturally aspirated 60-degree V12 to its limits.

Sitting beneath a new removable carbonfibre engine cover are new titanium intake valves and a redesigned and longer intake tract for the cylinder heads. Together they provide a higher flow coefficient.

The big change, however, is a lighter, shorter exhaust system. Exiting above the bumper between the rear lights (as per a McLaren 720S) the new system reduces back pressure and also promises to improve upon the V12's already glorious soundtrack.

Those hoping for a new gearbox will be disappointed to hear it's the same seven-speed automated single-clutch offering here. The four-wheel-drive system does have a revised torque split, though, with an additional three per cent sent to the rear axle (now 37 per cent front, 63 rear).

3 AERODYNAMICS

Aerodinamica Lamborghini Attiva, or ALA to you and me, is the active aero philosophy introduced last year with the Huracán Performante and which has allowed the company to go chasing lap times with serious intent. It's the aero that's been improved upon the most in creating the SVJ, with the main focus to achieve a significant downforce improvement over the SV. Which it most certainly has, with a 40 per cent increase across both axles, while at the same time reducing overall drag by one per cent. A small margin, but a gain none the less.

There's a new, wider front bumper with aero blades attached to either side and significant changes made to the intakes. There is also a 'floating' front splitter (increasing the car's length by over 1.5cm) that's linked to a pair of air vents incorporated into the top of the bumper. Combined, these should make the SVJ's front end feel incredibly stable and direct.

There's also a new fixed carbonfibre rear wing, larger side intakes to improve cooling and fins to reduce drag. Under-the-car-aero has been improved, too, to work with the front splitter and more aggressive rear diffuser, which combine to produce 30 per cent of the car's total downforce.

'WHERE THE SVJ REALLY UPS THE ANTE IS WHEN IT COMES TO TRACK PERFORMANCE'



4 CHASSIS

At either end of the SVJ's carbon tub sit aluminium subframes and connected to these is the same suspension fitted to all Aventadors, albeit considerably retuned.

Every suspension component has been reworked to provide both higher mechanical and aero grip. The anti-roll bars are 50 per cent stiffer over an SV's, damper stiffness has increased by 15 per cent and Lamborghini's magnetorheological suspension has been recalibrated to improve body and wheel control on track.

Improvements to the Aventador's rear-wheel steering have been made to further exploit the aero gains and improve high-speed stability, while the dynamic steering has been tuned for greater precision and to match the new aero balance and higher grip levels. So too have the ABS and ESC. The standard tyre is a Pirelli P Zero.



**'THIS SVJ LOOKS
SET TO RAISE
OUR PULSE
FURTHER STILL'**



EVO VERDICT

evo has always had a soft spot for the Aventador, no matter what the state of tune. Yes, the ergonomics make us cry, but the Aventador always brings a smile to our faces the very moment the key lands in our hand. That the drama continues inside only adds to the anticipation, and when the starter motor whirs and the beast awakens, a torrent of adrenaline flows through you, the tension rising in anticipation for what is to follow. It's matched by few other cars. Yes, there are quicker, more sophisticated, more tech-savvy supercars, but an Aventador remains an icon and this more focused, more aggressive and more toned SVJ looks set to raise our pulse further still.

HOW THE LAMBORGHINI AVENTADOR SVJ COMPARES

	AVENTADOR SVJ	FERRARI 812 SUPERFAST	McLAREN 720S
Engine	V12, 6498cc	V12, 6496cc	V8, 3994cc, twin-turbo
Power	759bhp @ 8500rpm	789bhp @ 8500rpm	710bhp @ 7250rpm
Torque	531lb ft @ 6750rpm	529lb ft @ 7000rpm	568lb ft @ 5500rpm
Weight	1525kg (dry)	1630kg	1283kg (dry)
Power-to-weight	506bhp/ton (dry)	492bhp/ton	562bhp/ton (dry)
0-62mph	2.8sec	2.9sec	2.9sec
Top speed	217mph+	211mph	212mph
Basic price	£356,000 (est)	£262,963	£218,020
On sale	Now	Now	Now



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Bugatti takes an unexpected turn

Chiron-based €5m hypercar puts cornering prowess before top speed

'THE DIVO IS MADE FOR BENDS' IS HOW Bugatti president Stephan Winkelmann describes its latest hypercar, which was unveiled at Pebble Beach. Based on the Chiron but with significant changes to its aerodynamics and chassis settings, the Divo – named after the French WWI fighter pilot turned mechanic and racer Albert Divo – trades top speed for cornering prowess: it's lapped Nardò 8sec quicker than the Chiron. Only 40 will be made, at €5m (c£4.5m) apiece. All have found homes.

SPECIFICATION

Power	1479bhp @ 6700rpm
Torque	1180lb ft @ 2000-6000rpm
Weight	1960kg (767bhp/ton)
0-62mph	2.4sec
Top speed	236mph (limited)
Basic price	€5million
On sale	Sold out

1 AERODYNAMICS

Intakes at the front of the car create air curtains to smooth the airflow along its sides. Front and rear spoilers and a diffuser contribute to a 90kg increase in downforce over the Chiron, making 456kg in total possible. Additionally, each brake has its own cooling intake, while a NACA duct on the roof feeds air to the engine.

2 ENGINE

Here you'll find the same 8-litre quad-turbo W16 as in the Chiron, still producing 1479bhp and 1180lb ft of torque. In line with the Divo's new focus, however, the 'Top Speed' mode has been removed, so the Divo stops accelerating at 236mph, whereas the Chiron can go on to a second limiter at 261mph.

3 CHASSIS

Despite weighing in at nearly two tons the Divo is still 35kg lighter than the Chiron, with new wheels, a carbonfibre intercooler, a reduction in insulation, a lighter sound system and the omission of storage compartments all contributing to the loss. Front camber is increased and steering and suspension tweaked for better response.

4 DESIGN

The styling is a departure from the Chiron's but maintains Bugatti's most recognisable aspects. The grille, central fin and 'signature line' on the flanks remain, but the aero and cooling elements, LED headlights and 3D rear lights are all new, as is the Titanium Liquid Silver and Divo Racing Blue paintwork.

Right: revised aero increases downforce by 90kg.
Below: 3D rear lights are new



by ANTONY INGRAM

Audi's race relation

764bhp electric road-car concept takes inspiration from Le Mans-winning racers

AUDI SAYS ITS PB 18 E-TRON CONCEPT – also revealed, as its name hints, at Pebble Beach – is 'destined to push boundaries'. While we're unlikely to see its kind on the road any time soon, it's indicative of the brand's desire to leverage its huge experience in endurance racing and increasing involvement in electrified powertrains to develop its future product line. Low, wide and flat, PB 18 features several technical details first seen on Audi's Le Mans-winning racers, and notably eschews autonomous functions – an internal working title of 'Level Zero' was used to differentiate it from the Society of Automotive Engineers' well-publicised autonomous driving 'levels'.

SPECIFICATION

Power	671bhp (764bhp peak)
Torque	612lb ft
Weight	1550kg (501bhp/ton)
0-62mph	2.0sec
Top speed	n/a
Basic price	n/a
On sale	n/a

1 DRIVETRAIN

PB 18 pairs a single electric motor up front with a brace of motors at the rear. A boost function can briefly lift maximum output from 671bhp to 764bhp. Strong regenerative braking means most deceleration is via the motors, while the set-up also allows for torque vectoring.

2 RANGE AND CHARGING

The driver can choose to limit the e-tron's performance to the benefit of range, with an anxiety-minimising 311 miles said to be possible. Even then, a full charge of the 95kWh solid-state battery pack takes just 15 minutes with an 800V charger. Wireless induction charging is also a possibility using a charging pad attached to the floor.

3 DESIGN

While the styling is a development of that of recent Audi concepts, the cab-forward architecture is inspired by Audi's now defunct LMP1 programme. The car's structure is a mix of aluminium, carbon and other composites, while the laser headlight technology was first developed for Le Mans.

4 CHASSIS

The LMP1 influence continues here, with independent suspension at all four corners comprising upper and lower control arms with pushrods (at the front) or pullrods (rear) acting on adaptive magnetic-ride dampers. Steering and pedal inputs are by-wire, and the driver's seat can be positioned centrally, just like in a racing car.



**'THE PB 18 NOTABLY ESCHEWS
AUTONOMOUS FUNCTIONS'**



Infiniti and beyond

Prototype 10 inspired by early Californian speedsters

Above and below:
Prototype 10
indicative of Infiniti's
move to lighter and
leaner vehicles

INFINITI CONFUSED AND DELIGHTED in equal measure at last year's Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance with its Prototype 9 – a sleek, hand-built and cigar-shaped roadster inspired by 1930s racing cars. This year's offering is more conventional, with a speedster body, but continues a push towards electrified vehicles. Infiniti design director Karim Habib suggests the firm is keen to look at 'lighter, leaner' vehicles and modular technology.

1 INSPIRATION

Overseen by Infiniti's Japanese design centre, penned in the United Kingdom and produced in physical form in San Diego, USA, the Prototype 10 takes its visual cues from 'early Californian speedsters' – and offers an enticing indication of the design themes we may see on future production Infinitis.

2 PERFORMANCE

Infiniti has chosen not to describe the details of the Prototype 10's electric drivetrain. We expect it's powered by nothing more exotic than a development of the Nissan Leaf's set-up, just like Prototype 9. That would mean a single electric motor with around 148bhp and 236lb ft of torque.

3 DESIGN

Less contrived than the 1930s Grand Prix-inspired Prototype 9, Prototype 10 is also less recognisable as an Infiniti, lacking the firm's signature grille. The monoposto layout is asymmetric, with a fin behind the driver's seat and sharp geometric detailing, referencing the 'shock of sudden [electric] acceleration'.



4 PURPOSE

With no production plans, Prototype 10 is instead designed to raise awareness of Infiniti's intentions to move towards electrified propulsion – all new Infinitis will feature either full electric, range-extended hybrid or parallel hybrid technology from 2021 – with a focus on strong acceleration performance.

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by JORDAN KATSIANIS



Top: head-up display among tech. **Above:** folding hard-top has been swapped for lighter fabric roof

New BMW Z4 breaks cover

Third-generation roadster gets compact body and soft-top roof

IT SEEMS LIKE WE'VE WAITED AN AGE for a new Z4, but finally BMW has rolled out its all-new roadster – so far only in flagship M40i M Performance form.

This is the third-generation Z4 and by now you'll no doubt know that it has been twinned in development with the incoming Toyota Supra. Spreading the cost of developing a niche model has meant that the previous Z4's pseudo-GT vibe has been replaced with a more aggressive, back-to-basics approach, which we're hoping will have a positive effect on the driving dynamics.

The new Z4 goes on sale next year. Here's everything you need to know.

SPECIFICATION

Power	335bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque	368lb ft @ 1520rpm
Weight	TBC
0-62mph	4.6sec
Top speed	155mph (limited)
Basic price	TBC
On sale	Spring 2019

1 ENGINE & GEARBOX

Only the M40i M Performance variant has been revealed so far, featuring BMW's 3-litre TwinPower turbocharged straight-six with 335bhp. Thus equipped, a 0-62mph time of 4.6sec is claimed, with top speed limited to 155mph. An eight-speed automatic gearbox will send power to the rear wheels. Four-cylinder engines and manual 'boxes are expected, too.

2 CHASSIS

Despite Toyota's influence in the new Z4, BMW's core chassis elements have very much been adhered to. As a result the car has a 50:50 weight distribution and a wide stance and should weigh less than the outgoing model thanks to a fabric roof and more compact dimensions. This M40i M Performance model will also get larger performance brakes, adaptive dampers and an M Sport differential.

3 DESIGN

Where once there was a pert, short tail and long, extending bonnet, there is now an awkward combination of a short wheelbase and long overhangs. The styling takes inspiration from the Z4 Concept revealed at Pebble Beach last year, but when grafted onto a less extreme set of proportions, it's obvious there have been compromises.

4 INTERIOR

As with the chassis, the interior consists of a combination of new-generation BMW components, sharing most of its switchgear and tech with larger models such as the new X5 and 8-series. There's a major upgrade in tech, too, with the latest iDrive and a head-up display. A driver focus is still apparent, albeit toned down compared to the previous model's steeply angled dash.

by JORDAN KATSIANIS & ANTONY INGRAM

Return of the Silver Arrow

Retrofuturistic styling meets electric power in latest Mercedes concept

MERCEDES-BENZ ARRIVED AT PEBBLE Beach with this retro-inspired concept. Called the EQ Silver Arrow, it combines styling cues from the marque's illustrious racing past with the kind of electric drivetrain that will play an important role in the company's future.

The car's styling is directly influenced by Mercedes racers of the 1930s, '40s and '50s – from the aluminium bodywork-aping Alubeam Silver paintwork, through to the single-seat layout.

Within the compact cockpit is a similar mix of new and old, with traditional materials rubbing shoulders with futuristic elements. So there's saddle-brown leather covering the seat and steering wheel, and aluminium highlights and a walnut floor, but these are offset by a very modern head-up display projected onto the slim wraparound weatherscreen.

Under the carbonfibre skin is an electric drivetrain producing 739bhp.

It's fed by an 80kWh battery enabling a range of over 248 miles according to simulations based on the new WLTP testing procedure.

The first model in Mercedes' production all-electric EQ range will be revealed later this year, and although we have already seen concepts of what to expect in the near future, this one is a look further down the road at where Mercedes might take its distant future, whilst still drawing on its past.



600LT gets MSO treatment

Carbonfibre aplenty for Sports Series flagship

McLaren Special Operations' show car for Pebble Beach was all about carbonfibre. The Stealth Grey-painted 600LT MSO features a McLaren F1-style carbon roof scoop and air intake plenum, a carbon styling pack (lower front bumper and splitter, rear bumper, diffuser, rear wing and door mirrors) and Senna-sourced carbon bucket seats. There are no changes to the 592bhp V8.



Vroom with a view

Bugatti Chiron Sky View gains glass roof panels

The Divo (see page 21) may have attracted more attention at Pebble Beach, but it was also joined by the Chiron Sky View – essentially a Chiron with glass roof panels either side of its central spine. The glass apparently enhances the Chiron's roof stiffness, and Bugatti details no weight increase. We're rather taken by it; viewed from above the result resembles the glassy cockpit of a B-29 bomber...



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The world's most popular performance car reaches another milestone

FORD REACHED A MILESTONE in August when it produced its 10millionth Mustang. Building that many examples of *any* car is a feat in its own right, but for a performance car it really is something to be celebrated.

Production began back in 1964, and from a shrunken, simplified platform shared with the mid-sized Falcon, Ford created the very idea of the 'pony car', a class of accessible

performance cars that transcended trend and time. Over the years the Mustang became immortalised in films such as *Bullitt* and *Gone in 60 Seconds*, making the model an accessible blue-collar hero for generations of fans in North America.

It has outsold its American rival, the Chevrolet Camaro, almost twofold, and consider also that the ubiquitous Mazda MX-5 'only' crossed the 1million threshold

after 17 years in production. Impressively, the enormous consumption of the Mustang has been almost entirely from North America, as exports were minimal until the arrival of the current sixth-generation model in 2015.

The Mustang has hit a chord with multiple generations of fans, bringing performance cars to the masses in much the same way as hot hatches did for European buyers. Long live the pony car.



Big sellers: the best of the rest

Chevrolet Camaro: 5.4million units

So often considered second to the Mustang, the Camaro is in a clear second place in terms of highest-selling performance cars.

Volkswagen Golf GTI: 2.2million units

Consummate hot hatch, origin of the species, the one against which all others are compared. Whatever you call the GTI, its 2.2million sales since the first iteration in 1976 make it the most successful hot hatch ever.

Porsche 911: over 1million units

Porsche built its milllonth 911 last year, the model having evolved at a rapid rate since water-cooled engines appeared in 1997. First introduced in 1964, the 911 may now be over 50 years old, but it's one of the few cars that still amazes us with every new generation.

Mazda MX-5: over 1million units

Mazda holds the record for the highest-selling two-seater open-top sports car with

its MX-5. The original was an instant hit with buyers, and 30 years later the model continues to be a beacon of simple thrills.

Mazda RX-7: 811,000 units

This might be a surprise, but between its launch in 1978 and its retirement in 2002, the RX-7 sold at a rate not far behind that achieved by its smaller sibling. It is, perhaps unsurprisingly, the highest-selling rotary-engined car ever.

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NICK TROTT

EDITOR (2009-2016)

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

It was 1998. The first issue. I'd just started my career as a motoring journo and it became my dream to work on *evo*.

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

I think it was a SEAT of some kind – a Driven written as a freelancer before I was editor. Nothing glamorous, but I was so excited when Peter Tomalin asked me to write that review.

What was your first car launch for *evo*?

That SEAT. The best launches were when the manufacturer just threw us the keys and said 'come back tonight'. *evo* did just that with the GT3 RS 4.0 in France (issue 142). I knew where rally legend François Delecour lived, so I asked Chris Harris to seek him out. Porsche was not expecting that or the resulting video (or tyre bill).

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

Either the 'analogue supercars' test in 2013 or eCoty 2015. For the former (*evo* 186) I worked for months behind the scenes to get the cars together – F1, F40,

F50, Carrera GT, Zonda, Murciélago SV and Noble M600 – but it was worth it. We had a £1million excess on the F1, which probably would've shut the mag if we'd crashed it. I was so moved by that test that I had a tear in my eye when driving the F1. eCoty 2015 (*evo* 216) was magnificent. I'd been negotiating with the then-new North Coast 500 initiative in Scotland to do the test on the route, but little did we realise just how beautiful it would be. I heard that Prince Charles, who supported the initiative, was given a copy of that eCoty test. I know what he thought of it, too, but I'm not allowed to say!

And your most memorable *evo* drive?

KTM X-Bow to the Arctic Circle Raceway with photographer Gus Gregory (*evo* 142). Any road trip with Gus is an adventure. I remember him spotting a photo opportunity, but it meant walking into a rocky river of meltwater. I dropped him off thinking he'd never do it, but sure enough five minutes later he emerged holding his jeans and camera above his head. He'd fallen in, of course... but had bagged the shot. Gus's photography helped shape the mag – he's an unsung *evo* hero.

Your worst *evo* moment was...?

My first eCoty was pretty bad (2010, *evo* 152). I had to ask two supercar makers to collect their cars – or what was left of

Below: X-Bow to the Arctic Circle was a highlight for Trott (trouserless Gus Gregory not pictured)

them. And Chris Harris nearly inserted a GT2 RS into a Merc SLS, while Ollie Marriage spun a 458 right in front of me. There was also the time we blew up Harry Metcalfe's TVR Griffith. That was particularly awkward.

Tell us about the most disappointing car you drove while at *evo*

Alfa Romeo 4C. Heartbreaking.

Your favourite *evo* story by a colleague?

Dickie Meaden's record-breaking Skoda Octavia drive at Bonneville (227mph in a 2-litre forced-induction production car; *evo* 162). His story was so beautifully written that you could taste the salt. Sam Riley's video of it was sensational, too.

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

It seems almost churlish to say, as I had the chance to drive pretty much everything. Even a Porsche 917 (in-joke). Um, I missed out on the LaFerrari, but I can't grumble!

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

Can I give you a best, a 'most *evo*' and a favourite? Best is the Porsche Cayman GT4. I honestly don't think there's a better road car. Most *evo* is the Porsche 997 GT3 RS 3.8, but the McLaren 675LT runs it close. Favourite is probably the Lexus LFA. The car and the story behind it are just so intriguing.





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Rearview Prints has just added this new piece to its growing range of automotive-themed posters. It features a trio of classic Porsches – namely a 356 Speedster, a 917 and a 911 Carrera RS – and is available mounted or unmounted in sizes from A4 to A2.



CLEANING

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Wheels keep getting bigger, more ornate and more of a pain in the derrière to keep clean. To the rescue comes Bilt Hamber's Auto-Wheel cleaner. Using a chemical reaction to cut through grease and brake dust, the new formula is said to be better than ever.



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Racing simulators don't end at PlayStation-connected steering wheels and pedals. At Dura RPS in Brackley, Northamptonshire, you can experience over 100 tracks from a single-seater cockpit with a 4m-wide curved screen. Various packages are available for one to five people.



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Vava Dash Cam
£99 amazon.co.uk

The Vava Dash Cam uses a Sony image sensor to capture 1080p, 60-frames-per-second HD footage. The wide-angle lens covers up to five car lanes, while an accompanying mobile app means you'll never need to remove the SD card. Plenty to keeping – and your insurers – happy.



CLOTHING

Dirty Velvet 'Turbo Sloth' T-shirt
£28.95 dirtyvelvet.co.uk

Dirty Velvet's 'Turbo Sloth' tee is actually as wonderful as it sounds. The image of a 1950s Formula 1 car in mid-air driven by a helmeted sloth is brilliant in itself, but beneath is a quality, 100 per cent cotton tee produced from sustainable sources.



RIDE-ON CAR

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WATCHES



Dart Wahoo

dartwatches.com c£300 (est)

This chronograph from newcomer Dart is keenly priced and stands out from the crowd thanks to the 'bullhead' format of its 42mm case and the subdials' distinctive wave texturing.



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creuxautomatiq.com c£1790

Although its watches are Swiss-made, Creux Automatiq actually hails from Australia. Its influences include modern architecture and vehicle design, as can be seen in this latest, limited-edition 45mm piece.



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evo track season continues apace

Changing conditions bring fresh challenges to evo's third track event of 2018

IT'S BEEN A LONG, DRY SUMMER, BUT A BRIEF downpour as the pitlane opened for our third track evening of 2018, held at the Bedford Autodrome towards the end of August, threw a brilliant curveball at attendees.

Slippery tarmac was the name of the game for the early part of the evening, but drivers didn't shy away from the extra challenge out on-track. It was short-lived, though, as the

warm temperatures soon saw the surface dry out and normal grip levels restored.

As always, a variety of tasty metal (and carbonfibre) could be seen tackling the South West Circuit. Our Fast Fleet Caterham Seven 310R was complemented by some near-competition-spec siblings, while an Ariel Nomad shod with track-focused rubber raised many a smile from onlookers.

And, of course, evo's track evening partner for 2018, BMW, was once again present with a selection of desirable models: an M2, an M4 Competition Pack and an M140i were available to be driven on the circuit by attendees, while on show in the pitlane were the new M5 Competition, 18 Roadster and – making only its second UK public outing after the Goodwood Festival of Speed – M850i Coupe.

Top left: evo's Fast Fleet Seven gets to grips with the South West Circuit (again).

Top right: Ariel Nomad in action. **Top centre and below:** BMWs aplenty



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Driven

Morgan Plus 8 50th Anniversary Edition

Limited-edition model honours half a century of V8-powered Morgan motoring. Just make sure you wear a helmet...





AFTER WEEKS, NO, MAKE THAT months, of a blazing heatwave that's turned every single blade of grass in England to bleached yellow, the road to Malvern today is uncomfortably cold, annoyingly blustery and experiencing the kind of relentless precipitation that reduces visibility on a motorway down to 100 yards. I am driving a Lexus LS 500h limousine. Well, I say driving, but it's very much in the modern, uninterested sense, where the quality of the

hi-fi is the most notable aspect – an absurd yin to today's forthcoming test drive yang.

The Morgan Plus 8 50th Anniversary Edition does have a sound system, but the Alpine head unit looks like it dates from 1991 and I can't conceive of any possible situation, bar parked, where you'd be able to hear it, for the car it's in has no windscreen, side windows or roof.

As the name denotes, this car marks 50 years since Morgan first squeezed a V8 engine – then the Rover, née Buick, 3.5-litre – under

the louvred bonnet of a slightly extended Morgan 4/4. Some 6000 Plus 8s later and the lineage in its current form is reaching the end of the road, the BMW N62 naturally aspirated 4.8-litre V8 that today powers both the Plus 8 and the Aero GT no longer being in production. Just 50 of these anniversary models have been constructed across two versions: the blue 'speedster' you see here and a British Racing Green 'convertible' with all the weather protection that the speedster lacks. There's

Driven

a host of special edition details, including towing eyes, white calipers and a ceramic heat treating on the fat rear exhaust pipes, as well as the graphics, such as the '8' on the grille and the yellow pinstripe around it. An automatic gearbox is available, but thankfully for us, this speedster is a six-speed manual.

You either fall for the Anniversary the first time you see it or you don't, and I must confess I absolutely love it. It is parked outside the front door of the factory when I arrive, surrounded by quaint-looking little 4/4s dripping with chrome that inevitably represent for many the cliché of Morgan motoring. By comparison, the impossibly low-slung speedster looks like a cross between a historic racer and a vintage dragster, a whiff of the dieselpunk aesthetic in how it integrates contemporary grunt, semi-slick tyres and LED headlamps.

Plus 8s have evolved considerably over the

years since the original with its four-speed Moss 'box, cam-and-peg steering and live rear axle. In 2012 the model received the same sophisticated bonded and riveted aluminium chassis previously the preserve of the new-era Aero models, with further improvements to structural rigidity and the suspension arriving in 2016.

All of which feels very far from the mind as you twist the dainty chrome door handle to gain entry and the thin door clangs shut behind you like that on a fairground ride. The leather-clad seat has deep side bolsters but doesn't offer great lateral support and sits the driver up high; a lower bucket would be preferable.

Still, thankfully the rain has stopped, although the air still has a chill and the roads are damp. I leave the tonneau zipped over the passenger side, and hunch forwards to maximise the limited protection from the slipstream that the small aeroscreens offer. A



'Without goggles your eyes narrow and then involuntarily close out of self-preservation'



Above: BMW V8 (recognise the stripes?) propels the Plus 8 50th from 0 to 62mph in 4.5sec.

Left: tiny aeroscreens offer limited protection

thumb of the starter button wakes the BMW V8, which snorts and huffs quietly through those glorious jutting rear pipes, until, that is, you open the throttle, whereupon the sheer bombast, volume and wonderfully pure delivery of the engine is enough to make you weep at its imminent demise.

It makes for a fast car, too, which is hardly

surprising when you consider that it weighs just 1100kg dry, and has 367bhp and 370lb ft to propel it along. A 0-62mph time of 4.5sec and a top speed of 155mph say much more about the relative sedateness of the manual shift and the rudimentary aerodynamics than the car's purely accelerative qualities.

You'll need at the very least a pair of goggles to drive the 50th speedster at speed. Without them it soon becomes tricky to see, as your eyes narrow to slits and then involuntarily close out of self-preservation. A full-face helmet works best of all, as it enables you to breathe more easily too, meaning you can concentrate more on the overall driving experience. Initially, that's dominated by the engine, with its readily available torque and progressive throttle. The retro-styled but modern alloys are shod with sticky Yokohama Neova rubber, which is, um, considerably less sticky in the wet; there is no traction control (although you do get ABS) and the 50th is the kind of car that will oversteer anywhere and everywhere if you so desire.

The quick, accurate steering and light,

precise gearshift further confound the trad appearance, and it's soon obvious the 50th can be hustled along at a serious pace. Smooth surfaces suit it best: the bumpier the road, the more the car is deflected off line, both at the front and the rear, and major intrusions can occasionally lift you clear of the seat.

But guess what: exposed to the elements at unprintable speed, the V8's cacophony reverberating off the landscape, the 50th is exhilarating – a truly engaging, engrossing experience. There is never a dull second, and hence it's entirely understandable why you may feel inclined to spend £129,000 on one. It's a fabulous sign-off for a very British – albeit German-powered – muscle car.

Adam Towler (@AdamTowler)

Engine V8, 4799cc **Power** 367bhp @ 6300rpm
Torque 370lb ft @ 3600rpm **Weight (dry)** 1100kg
(339bhp/ton) **0-62mph** 4.5sec **Top Speed** 155mph
Basic Price £129,000

+ V8 performance and sound, driver involvement
- Blowy at speed, not cheap, ride busy on poor surfaces

evo rating ★★★★★



Lamborghini Huracán Performante Spyder

New al fresco option amplifies the drama of Lambo's most hardcore V10 model

SOMEHOW THE ITALIANS HAVE mastered the art of successfully hacking the roofs off hardcore, track-honed supercars. Whereas the thought of a convertible Porsche 911 GT3 has you thinking 'Nein danke,' the mere mention of the drop-top Ferrari 458 Speciale Aperta has you yelling 'Sì, molto buona!' at the wind-in-the-hair thrill of it all. So it came as no surprise when Lamborghini revealed it had lifted the lid on its Huracán Performante. I mean, who wouldn't want to get closer to that magnificent V10?

Compared to the palaver that is going topless in an Aventador Roadster (Driven, **evo** 251), lowering the hood on the Huracán is child's play, with nothing more taxing than the prod of a button required to stow the roof. The electrically powered set-up can be opened or closed in less than 20 seconds, even when travelling at speeds of up to 30mph – there

are no 15-minute stops by the side of the road while you grapple with uncooperative panels and a head-scratching storage system. The addition of a folding roof has resulted in a 125kg weight increase over the coupe (although at 1507kg dry it is 35kg lighter than the standard Spyder), with most of the increase in mass coming from the extra chassis strengthening needed to offset the rigidity reduction caused by the roof removal.

The rest of the car is largely unchanged, save for some subtle heft-compensating tweaks to the springs and adaptive dampers (the latter a £5148 option, which is a bit of a cheek on a £238k car). This means you get the same 631bhp 5.2-litre V10 driving all four wheels through a seven-speed twin-clutch transmission, plus the same three driver modes (Strada, Sport and Corsa; there's no Ego mix 'n' match option here). Also present and correct

is the ALA (Aerodinamica Lamborghini Attiva) active aero, which uses moveable flaps in the nose and engine cover to balance drag and downforce. Less subtle but equally effective is the huge rear wing that's made from the same strange marble-effect compressed carbonfibre strands that are used throughout the Performante. Finally, there's the Direct Steering variable-ratio rack that increases alertness as you ramp up the driver settings.

Unless it's raining then it's top down all the way with the Performante Spyder, an approach that makes sense the moment you flick open the jet fighter-style trigger protector and prod the start button beneath. There's a short whir as the starter spins, then over your shoulder the V10 catches and crackles into boisterous life. Even with the windows dropped you never feel this close to the action in the coupe.

For the first few hundred yards Strada mode

**'It feels
explosively
rapid at any
speed and in
any gear'**



Above: with the top down the glorious 5.2-litre V10 feels even closer than in the coupe. **Right:** active aero supplemented by fixed rear wing

is the order of the day, but just so you can check it works. Surprisingly supple ride? Check. Engine note that's pure supercar but muted enough for daily duties? Check. Twin-clutch gearbox that shuffles ratios with the speed and smoothness of a Las Vegas croupier handling a deck of cards? Check. Given its hardcore tendencies this car really is as easy to live with as an Audi R8, unyielding and thinly padded fixed-rake seats aside.

But of course the mode you really want to use, all the time, is Sport. A flick of the steering wheel-mounted control releases the Performante's potential. Instantly the exhaust note changes as valves open, uncorking the sublime 5.2-litre V10. My, this is a fabulous



engine. Low down there's a booming, bassy rumble that resonates through the whole car and into your very core. Push on and the timbre changes to that of an angry metallic howl that's got more than a hint of mid-'90s F1 car as it homes in on the 8500rpm red line, the TFT rev counter dementedly flashing yellow to red.

Lamborghini reckons the Spyder is a couple of tenths slower to 62mph than the coupe, but a 3.1sec time is hardly shabby, and with

naturally aspirated torque everywhere and throttle response so sharp it threatens to cut your right foot to ribbons, the Huracán feels explosively rapid at any speed and in any gear. Speaking of which, that seven-speed 'box flicks between ratios so quickly and cleanly that you barely feel the shifts on the way up, while downchanges are met with a beautifully timed blip of the throttle and a salvo of window-rattling pops and crackles on the overrun.

So intoxicatingly brilliant is the engine that it'd be easy to overlook the Lambo's other dynamic highlights. The extra weight might have blunted the Performante's ultimate performance – you'd have to be at a track and on the very ragged edge to notice – but it has helped keep the body incredibly stiff. Over really gnarled roads in the ultra-firm Corsa mode there's just the merest hint of flex, but the rest of the time it's rock-steady. As a

'It's thrilling and addictive, and losing the roof adds an extra layer of involvement'



result you have the confidence to push the car hard and revel in its exhilarating balance and agility. The steering, oddly slow when ambling, becomes hyperactively quick, while the grip and traction are simply sensational. Equally impressive is the body control. The low-roll handling is a given, less expected is the spooky deftness with which the dampers effortlessly deal with ruts, crests and potholes, allowing you to pick apart a twisting section of road at an astounding rate and with delicate precision, only really nasty cambers causing the steering to buck and writhe in your hands.

It's a reminder that the Huracán has a



playful side, too. Yes, the steering lacks a little feel, but there's genuine adjustability and interaction here, the rear of the car gently moving about under heavy braking (the carbon-ceramics are tireless and blessed with a perfectly progressive pedal), eager to help get the nose pointing in sooner for a straighter exit. Get greedy with the throttle too early and the nose will push wide, but have a lift or be patient and you can have the car exiting a bend with just a whiff of oversteer, the trick four-wheel-drive system cleverly balancing grip and slip.

It's a thrilling and totally addictive

Above: no roof, but the Spyder maintains all the visual attitude of its hard-top sibling. **Far left:** thinly padded seats take the edge off otherwise impressive usability. **Left:** driver modes are accessed by a switch on the steering wheel

experience. And it's made only more so by the car's decapitation, because losing the roof adds an extra layer of involvement. It's not just the noise of that wonderful engine, it's the gentle squealing of the brakes as you slow for a corner, the constant fizz and buzz of the tyres over different surfaces, and the *fissssss* of air being sucked into the V10 every time you squeeze the throttle. Then there are the smells and the panoramic views, too...

No, the Performante Spyder isn't ultimately quite as focused as the coupe, but we're talking gnat's whiskers here and it adds even more drama to an already adrenaline-fuelled package. If the fixed-head car is a widescreen, surround-sound machine, the Spyder delivers the full IMAX experience.

James Disdale

Engine V10, 5204cc **Power** 631bhp @ 8000rpm
Torque 442lb ft @ 6500rpm **Weight (dry)** 1507kg
(425bhp/ton) **0-62mph** 3.1sec **Top speed** 201mph
Basic price c£238,000

+ That engine, the handling; easy to live with, too
- Unyielding seats, not for the shy and retiring

evo rating ★★★★★

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R8 V10 » 592+BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
RS4/RS5 » 488+ BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
RS3/TTTS » 420+ BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
RS3/TTTS (NEW) » 480+ BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
S3 / GOLF R » 375+ BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
3.0TDI (ALL MODELS) » 315+ BHP
3.0 BI-TDI (ALL MODELS) » 380+ BHP
Q7/A8 4.2 TDI » 400+ BHP

BMW
M2 » 435BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
M3/M4 » 540+BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
M5/M6 » 730+BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
X5M/X6M » 730+BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
X5M50D/X6M50D » 450BHP
M135i/M235i » 410+BHP
i8 » 415BHP
120i/220i/320i/420i » 275+BHP
116D/216D/316D » 160BHP
118D/218D/318D » 225BHP
120D/220D/320D/420D » 240BHP
328i/428i » 295BHP
335i/435i » 410+BHP
330D/430D/530D/730D » 360BHP
335D/435D/535D » 395+BHP
550i/650i » 555+BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
640D/740D » 395BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
X530D/X630D » 360BHP
X540D/X640D » 395BHP

MERCEDES-BENZ
A45/CLA45 AMG » 420+BHP
AMG GT/GTS » 560BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
C43/E43/GLC43 AMG » 455BHP
C63/63S 4.0T AMG » 620+BHP
C63 6.3 AMG » 530+BHP
500 4.7 BITURBO (ALL MODELS) » 498+BHP
63 AMG 5.5 BITURBO (ALL MODELS) » 700+BHP
55 AMG KOMPRESSOR » 600+BHP
(+DE-LIMIT & SUSPENSION LOWERING)
S65 » 780BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
SL65 AMG » 690BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
SL65 BLACK » 720BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
SLK 55 AMG » 420BHP
200 CDI (ALL MODELS) » 173BHP
220 CDI (ALL MODELS) » 230BHP
250 CDI (ALL MODELS) » 260BHP
C300 HYBRID » 285BHP
C300E » 350BHP
C400/E400 » 400BHP
350 CDI (ALL MODELS) » 315BHP
420/450 CDI (ALL MODELS) » 358BHP

ALL 2017 RANGE ROVERS AVAILABLE
RR 50SC/SVO/SVR STAGE1 » 600+BHP
RR 50SC/SVO/SVR STAGE2 » 650+BHP
2.0/2.2 DIESEL (ALL MODELS) » 220+BHP
RR 4.4 TDV8 » 395 BHP
RR TDV6 3.0D » 305+ BHP
RR SDV6 3.0D » 350+BHP
DEFENDER 2.2 » 180BHP

PORSCHE
996 TURBO/GT2 » 600+ BHP
997 TURBO 3.6 » 625+ BHP
997 GT2 RS » 670+ BHP
997 TURBO/S 3.8 INC PDK » 611 BHP
997 GT3 RS » 480 BHP
991.2 GT2 RS » CALL
991 TURBO/S (ALL MODELS) » 750+BHP
991 GT3 3.8 (ALL MODELS) » 490+BHP
991 GT3 RS 4.0 (ALL MODELS) » 525+BHP
997 CARRERA S » 376+ BHP
997 CARRERA PDK » 368 BHP
997 CARRERA S PDK » 400+ BHP
997 CARRERA GTS » 435 BHP
991 CARRERA (ALL MODELS) » 500+BHP
991 CARRERA S (ALL MODELS) » 500+BHP
991 CARRERA GTS (ALL MODELS) » 540+BHP
BOXSTER/CAYMAN 718 GTS » 420+BHP
BOXSTER/CAYMAN 718 S » 420+BHP
BOXSTER/CAYMAN 718 » 380+BHP
BOXSTER/CAYMAN 981 GT4 » 430+BHP
BOXSTER/CAYMAN 981 GTS » 375+BHP
BOXSTER/CAYMAN 981 S » 345+BHP
CAYENNE GTS » 450 BHP
CAYENNE TURBO 4.5 » 565+ BHP
CAYENNE TURBO 4.8 (ALL MODELS) » 650+ BHP
CAYENNE TURBO S 4.8 (ALL MODELS) » 650+ BHP
CAYENNE 4.2 DIESEL » 450+ BHP
CAYENNE 3.0 DIESEL » 318+ BHP
MACAN S » 420+BHP
MACAN GTS » 440+BHP

MACAN TURBO (ALL MODELS) » 480+BHP
MACAN S DIESEL » 318+BHP
PANAMERA TURBO » 600+ BHP
PANAMERA DIESEL » 305+ BHP

EXOTIC / MISC
FERRARI CALI T » 660BHP
FERRARI F12 » 780+BHP
FERRARI 599 » 647 BHP
FERRARI 488 » 750+BHP
FERRARI 430 » 525 BHP
MCLAREN MP4-12C » 700 BHP
MCLAREN 650S » 720 BHP
MCLAREN 675SLT » 750BHP
MCLAREN 570/S » 680+BHP
AVENTADOR » 750+BHP
HURACAN LP610 » 650BHP
GALLARDO LP560 » 600+BHP
BENTLEY 4.0 T V8 » 700BHP
BENTLEY GT/F-SPUR » 680BHP
GT SPEED / SUPERSPORT » 690+BHP
BENTAYGA W12 » 700+BHP
MASERATI GHIBLI 3.0S PETROL » 470 BHP
MASERATI GHIBLI 3.0 PETROL » 400 BHP
MASERATI GHIBLI 3.0 DIESEL » 312 BHP
MASERATI GT/OPORT » 438 BHP
MASERATI GT S / MC » 479+ BHP

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Hyundai i30 N Fastback

The i30 N hatchback has quickly become an **evo** favourite. Can the Fastback version do the same?

WHEN IT COMES TO A HISTORY of high performance, Hyundai is barely out of short trousers. Not that this is having any impact on its ambitions. The i30 N hot hatch – itself worthy of mention in the same breath as Peugeot's 308 GTi and, whisper it, VW's Golf GTi – is only the beginning: in the pipeline is a product range as far reaching as a crossover and a bespoke N performance car. Next to arrive from the firm's Nürburgring test centre, however, will be this, the i30 N Fastback.

As its name suggests it's a hot version of Hyundai's recently launched five-door coupe. It's intended as a more mature proposition for buyers who want the pace and poise of the hatch but are put off by its aggressive styling and soundtrack. It doesn't officially make its debut until this October's Paris motor show, but Hyundai's N division (headed by former

BMW M boss Albert Biermann, should you need reminding) is keen to get things right straight out of the box and has therefore provided **evo** with early access to a pre-production example late in the model's development cycle.

Despite wearing a camouflage wrap it's still clear to see the Fastback has a more elegant form than the hatch, the sloping rear roofline and extended tail making it look lower, but less aggressive, in its stance. Yet there are clear hints of N pedigree beneath, not least the ducktail spoiler on the tailgate, added to improve high-speed stability (there are no numbers yet, but expect a higher top speed than the hatch's 155mph).

The 19-inch alloys and the larger brake discs and calipers are taken from the i30 N hatchback, as is plenty of other hardware. This includes the 271bhp turbocharged 2-litre four, the six-speed manual gearbox

and the electronically controlled limited-slip differential. Also carried over is the MacPherson strut front suspension and independent multi-link rear axle, albeit with a number of tweaks aimed at sharpening the Fastback's handling but not at the expense of comfort.

The majority of the changes are focused on the front suspension, where spring rates have currently been reduced by five per cent and the anti-roll bar slimmed by a single millimetre. Biermann's team have also changed the bump-stops in length from 55 to 62mm, the aim being to increase control at the limit. Curiously, the pre-prod car we tried went without the rear strut brace – it'll likely be standard in the UK, but in most other markets it will be an option.

If Hyundai intends for its N Fastback to be a little more restrained compared to the hatch, it's succeeded, with the engine far less



'The plentiful grip provides encouragement to dial down into the car's inherent good balance'

Above: Normal mode provides the best ride on most roads. **Top right and above right:** Fastback promises to be handsome sans camouflage

exuberant here. The gurgling idle is still there, but in this example it's more muted. It's the same on the move, where even the more aggressive N mode's trademark pops and crackles on the overrun are far more muffled. Hyundai says the volume will be pumped up for UK cars, but if the Fastback is supposed to be the more refined choice then I'd say this less ostentatious approach works nicely.

What hasn't changed is how the motor propels the Fastback along compared with the hatchback. The torque motor needs to be worked hard to overcome the car's mass (expect the Fastback to weigh around 50kg more than the hatch, so closer to 1500kg), but it responds well the harder you work it and the



exercise is made more enjoyable by the manual gearbox's short and precise shift action.

Our test route starts in the rain, but it's clear the Fastback retains the hatch's planted feel, with plenty of grip providing encouragement to dial down into the car's inherent good balance. Cycling through the numerous driver modes presents the bespoke personalities of the Fastback's engine, steering and chassis, but it's clear that the hardest N setting is still way too stiff for most roads, causing the car to hop and bounce over the bumps and camber changes. Sport mode offers a more useable operating window, while Normal allows the car to breathe with the surface. With more time, as we've found with our Fast Fleet hatch, finding the Fastback's configuration sweet-spot should unearth the car's true potential.

The changes to the front axle are hard to detect at first. There's still bags of traction thanks to the sophisticated electronic diff, which distributes torque between the front wheels with an unexpected crispness. But time on Millbrook Proving Ground's rollercoaster Hill Route highlights the changes. With a dry surface allowing more load to go through the

chassis there's a more natural response from the steering. There's more front-end bite, too, as the softer set-up resists understeer for longer, with the rear end contributing to the cause on a trailing throttle. It's a very fast, involving machine, but if you're looking for more flair the i30 N hatch and Peugeot 308 GTI are more expressive machines.

It's encouraging that Hyundai is willing to develop a series of cars with differing characteristics. The contrasts between the i30 N hatch and Fastback may seem small, but they are significant enough to deliver different personalities to appeal to different audiences. It's an approach the VW Group would do well to adopt in a bid to inject some individuality into its VW GTI and forthcoming Cupra models.

James Disdale

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc, turbo **Power** 271bhp @ 6000rpm **Torque** 279lb ft @ 1450-4500rpm **Weight** 1480kg (est) (186bhp/ton) **0-62mph** 6.1sec (est) **Top speed** >155mph (est) **Basic price** £29,000 (est)

Sleek, poised and approachable chassis, gutsy engine
 N mode too much for the road, could be more involving

evo rating ★★★★★



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Mercedes-AMG GLC63 S Coupe

A performance SUV that thinks it's a hot hatch offers fresh competition to Porsche and Alfa Romeo

AUDI HAS ITS A5, S5 AND RS5 Sportbacks and BMW its 4-series Gran Coupe, but if you want a Mercedes C-class with five doors that isn't an estate you'll need to head down the SUV route, and if you want an RS5 Sportback rival it will need to be the AMG GLC63 S Coupe as driven here. All £76,860 of it (or £90,925 as tested).

Wearing a '63' badge means, of course, that this coupe-SUV is equipped with the most utilised engine in performance car history this side of the Volkswagen Group's 2-litre TSI unit. This AMG GLC has 503bhp and 516lb ft of torque to call upon and drives through the company's nine-speed Speedshift MCT gearbox and 4Matic+ all-wheel-drive system.

The standard air-suspension has its work cut out controlling a 1945kg machine capable of reaching 62mph in 3.8sec and hitting 174mph. Even more so given this car considers itself more hot hatch than hot SUV. Because, as with Porsche's Macan and Alfa Romeo's Stelvio Quadrifoglio, AMG's GLC63 S doesn't sing from the SUV hymn sheet of unresponsiveness. It genuinely feels as well set-up as any other AMG product.

Yes, the steering's as textured and granular as a rubber glove, but its rate of response and how it directs the GLC's bluff nose into a corner is both unexpected and reassuring for what comes next. Which is a calmness to the body control and a chassis that feels distinctly rear-wheel drive as opposed to flat-footed and four-wheel drive. The GLC doesn't move around



nor flow through corners like a C63, but neither does it bludgeon the course like a front-row forward making a break for the try line. It all means you're not resigned to a journey of pointing and squirting along the straights and grinning and bearing it through the fun bits.

The GLC63 S Coupe may drive more like a hot hatch than an overladen SUV, but it still lacks that tactile adjustability and that sense of the driver being an integral part of the drive. So while it impresses with how neatly it turns in, how well its body is controlled and just how sophisticated its damping is, you can't set it up for a corner, nor adjust it once heading through it as you can in many of AMG's more conventionally shaped performance cars.

If how it drives is perhaps a little surprising, how it goes shouldn't be. That V8, as in so many AMG applications, will rotate its crank at close to 7000rpm with the enthusiasm you'd expect of a naturally aspirated 16-valve four-pot. And when you introduce the underside of the throttle pedal to the carpet there is always



a part of you, no matter what your feelings towards such machines, left in awe as it takes off with the violence and urgency of a C63. It only really begins to let up when you are well into autobahn speeds and the aerodynamic drag and portly kerb weight finally have their say. And when it comes to slowing it all down you'd be wise to cough up the £4285 for the optional carbon-composite brakes.

evo will always favour a four-door coupe or an estate over an SUV, but we also appreciate that some have no choice, in which case the GLC63 S Coupe falls into that shallow pool of performance SUVs we'd suggest considering. **Stuart Gallagher (@stuartg917)**

Engine V8, 3982cc, twin-turbo **Power** 503bhp @ 5500-6250rpm **Torque** 516lb ft @ 1750-4500rpm
Weight 1945kg (263bhp/ton) **0-62mph** 3.8sec
Top speed 174mph (limited) **Basic price** £76,860

+ Unexpected dynamics, unquestionable performance

- Lacks adjustability and engagement

evo rating ★★★★★

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Leon king

Stuart Gallagher's request for our perfect 'one road, one car' combinations (Ed Speak, *evo* 252) got me reminiscing over a drive from some years ago in my 2002 SEAT Leon Cupra [above].

It was late afternoon and I had an appointment at Aberystwyth. Having gone through Shrewsbury, Welshpool and Newtown, I came to the A44 at Llangurig, where there is a mouth-watering combination of fast straights and tight bends. It's a drive that has never left my memory, the Leon having entertained me over every metre travelled. Arriving at Aberystwyth the brake discs were steaming! I'd choose this road and car combination every time.

David Andrews

French fancies

I decided to break the 'one road, one car' rule slightly and choose a real-world car on a nearby road and also something I can't currently afford on a road I have never driven.

The former combination would be a Renault Sport Clio Trophy on the A359 from Bruton to Nunney in Somerset. It's local to me and has the perfect blend of tight, unsighted, dodgily cambered corners, with patchy tarmac followed by brilliantly flowing sections that are abruptly punctuated by suspension-testing dips.

The bikers will hate me for saying this, but you can leave superbikes for dead along here as their riders just can't get their knee down, or corner or brake like you can in the Trophy. It's



good fun embarrassing them at sane speeds.

My fantasy pairing? Probably a bit clichéd, but any 911 GT3 or GT3 RS on the Route Napoleon [above]. Never been, but it looks fantastic. And the GT3 surely doesn't need justifying.

Ian Davies, Somerset

Chariots of hire

Like Richard Porter (column, *evo* 252), I too always get excited about the hire car choice when going on holiday abroad. And like him we also – unfortunately – have an SUV as our own car, so every hire-car transaction is a chance to try something else.

On our recent family holiday (two adults, two teenagers, one little one) I paid extra for a car from a specific group from Sixt at Munich airport. The group contained the Audi A6 3-litre or BMW 530. I was hoping for a 530 diesel due to its smooth six-cylinder engine, and hoping it might convince my wife to consider it as our next car choice.

A 530 was confirmed at the desk, but it turned out to be the four-cylinder petrol version when I arrived at the garage. What a disappointment. And the kids wouldn't stop moaning due to the lack of space on the back bench.

Next time I'll just hire an SUV, and I'll probably end up buying one again, too. Double disappointment!

Alexander Dietrich

Worth the weight

Right, I've had enough. Simon McCaul ('Heavy Metal', Inbox 252) suggests the new Aston Martin



LETTER OF THE MONTH

Sennasational!

I'LL ADMIT I HAD BECOME A LITTLE JADED

with print journalism, thinking: 'Why pay good money and wait weeks for new car reviews when I can watch YouTube the second an embargo is lifted on the next big thing?' Then I read your Senna drive in issue 252.

The Senna. A car that I had little interest in, that I don't like the look of and that I feel is completely irrelevant in this age, where safely overtaking has become socially unacceptable. However, the way Adam Towler and Aston Parrott transported me to the Scottish Highlands and put me right there in the car with them was a brilliant reminder of why I have subscribed to *evo* for so long and what makes it so unique.

Fantastic writing and amazing photography have ensured I will be subscribing for as long as you guys keep going. Keep up the good work!

Dan Marsh

PS I still don't like the look of the Senna, but now I really want a drive in one!

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 from the 1960s and is limited to an edition of just 300 pieces.



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Vantage is overweight. When I approach my own Vantage I never think of it as a bit lardy. I see it as the metallic version of Marilyn Monroe – a timeless beauty with wonderful curves.

Next to today's marasmic models, Marilyn had generous proportions, but last time I checked neither cars nor beauty were sold by the kilo. I didn't go into the Aston dealership and say, 'Excuse me, young man. Can I have 1700 kilos of your best Aston Martin?' There is so much more to this car than its weight. It cannot be reduced to the same level as buying potatoes. So get over it you car-fat shamers and buy an Ariel Atom.

Malcolm Wilson

Fat fighter

Dave Dunlavy (Letter of the Month, Inbox 252) considers the absence of a glovebox and door pockets in a McLaren 600LT [above] a step too far in weight saving. 'How much weight will that save?' he asks. Actually, I'd think about 6 pounds. At least!

One should not only consider the weight of the (probably carbonfibre) box and door pockets, but also the water bottle in the door pocket and the owner's manual in the glovebox (I have not seen the McLaren's, but other cars have manuals of about 1000 pages, including multimedia instructions), as well as wipes, food, etc.

Touching upon food, if car manufacturers really want to reduce the weight of a vehicle on the road, a subscription to the gym for the owner of the car would be a useful step. This would provide an alternative way



to save some more weight, and would be cheaper than switching something else – the windscreen wipers, say – to carbonfibre.

Victor L Knoop

Wheel life

Just reading *evo* 251 and the review of the Golf R Performance Pack. Marketed as a more track-ready version, they say? Slightly bigger brakes – OK. Tiny rear lip spoiler appendage – meh. Wheels... Now this is where I found offence. Diamond-cut and wearing ultra low-profile tyres [above]. Really, VW? Your idea of a trackday weapon runs on alloys that will be destroyed the moment a wheel is dropped off line?

It's not just VW: BMW caused me similar anger with its M4 GTS with its silly intricate wheels aimed at the posers of the high street, not the pilots on track.

It's about time expensive, difficult-to-repair wheels were consigned to history, as having them on our current roads is nearly as foolish as having them on a trackday hack.

Sarj Sothisrihari, Essex

Testing times

I totally agree with Richard Meaden about the dying art of road testing (column, *evo* 251). Nothing excites me more than reading stories of journos taking cars through some beautiful scenery, but here in Indonesia we literally have only a few print car magazines left. Many of them have migrated to the internet, Instagram or YouTube.

It seems what's lacking for today's generation is imagination. They are spoiled: they want



videos full of personalities to talk to them, then they head to the comments section to start a fight club rather than a discussion.

And while there is nothing wrong with the new-age magazines that Dickie mentioned, what's the essence of them? 000 magazine costs \$62.50 per issue. It feels like a collector's item for the wealthy few rather than a magazine for the masses. I just don't like the idea of print media becoming so exclusive. Thankfully I can still subscribe to **evo**.

Ifan Ramadhana,
Jakarta, Indonesia

Vantastic!

Due to starting my own business, I recently had to swap my beloved Viper Green Scirocco TSI for a Volkswagen Caddy Maxi [above] – and, boy, am I having so much more fun driving! Roads that simply were not a challenge to the Scirocco unless you were doing borderline reckless speeds are now a font of interaction.

That bump on the tight right-hander that you didn't even notice in the Scirocco? It's now an opportunity to feel the Caddy's rear skip a foot to the left as the suspension relays the fact it was not designed for on-the-limit composure. I'm also enjoying having to plan overtakes to dispatch dawdlers on A-roads. No more dropping down a cog, planting the throttle and passing them with ease – a 1.6 diesel in a long-wheelbase van does not a rocketship make! Now I have to think my way past them: drop back several hundred metres before the upcoming corner and plant the throttle, carry the momentum through the bend,



and then as long as the following long straight is clear I have a closing speed that means I can pass safely.

I have found myself utilising Rob Wilson's driving tips far more in the van than I did in the Scirocco and having so much more enjoyment. So let's all get out of our fast and super-grippy hot hatches and supersaloons and buy light vans! Maybe...

Andy Cleary

Anagram corner

Looking at **evo**'s online content I stumbled upon an article regarding the new Ares Panther concept [above], which reimagines the De Tomaso Pantera of the 1970s, '80s and '90s. This brought me to reminisce on two fronts. Of course, memories of that original, hot-rod-like take on Italian exotica were conjured from the memory banks, but strangely so were early '90s converted lorries.

This may seem a strange link to an American-engined supercar, but my misspent youth saw me at many a festival site. On one occasion, I saw an old Leyland truck-cum-living-space sporting a modified badge on the front. It spelled out the phrase 'DENY ALL', the manufacturer's choice of individual metal letters making an easy anagram-producing media for this king of shenanigans.

Even though I know today's solution would be to use some super-lightweight titanium/carbon/alloy, I would still advise against the Panther's maker using removable individual letters for its products, given what ARES could easily be rearranged to...

Mark McIver

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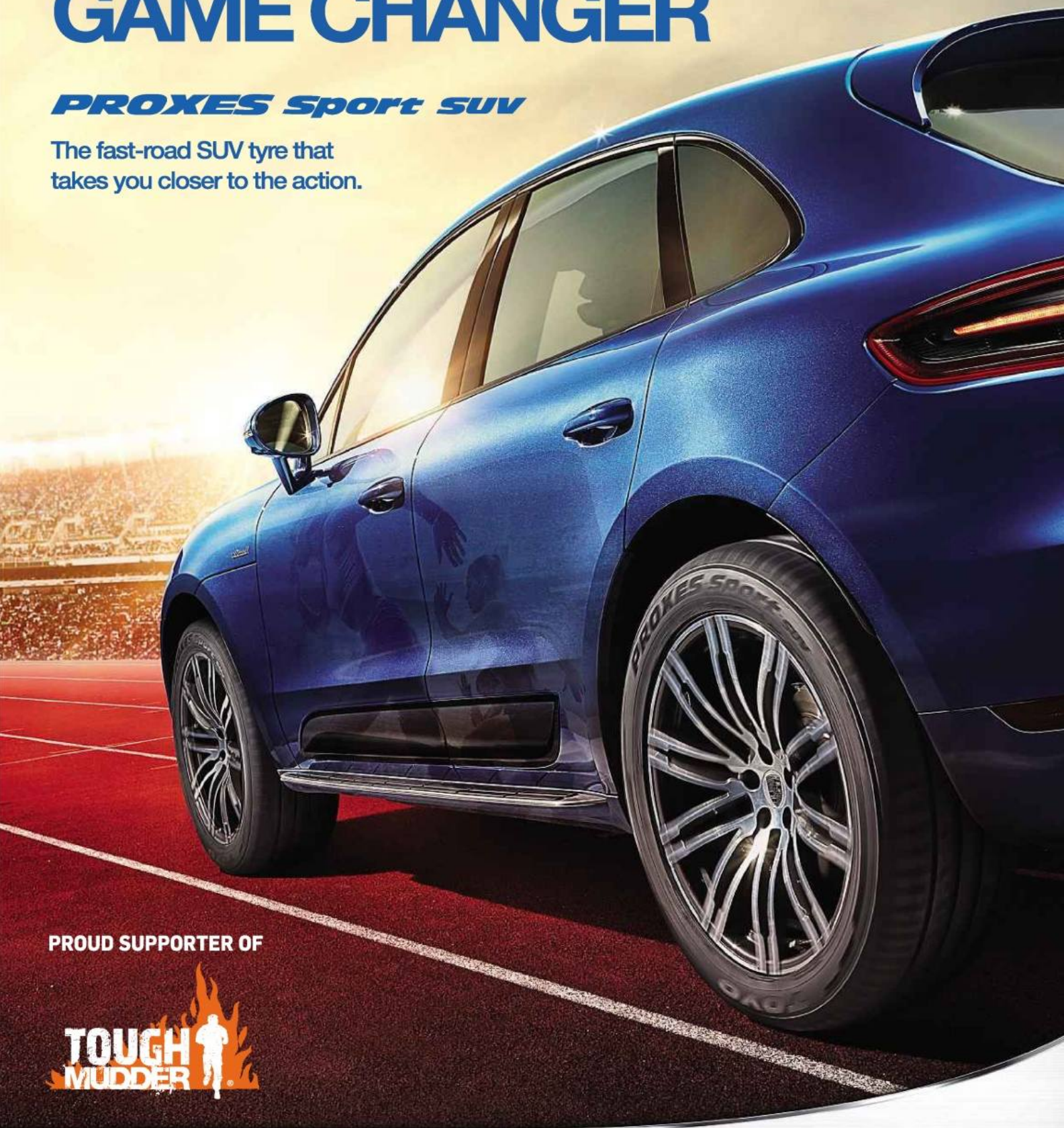
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RICHARD MEADEN

The erosion of our ability to enjoy the open road isn't new – it's been going on since the '70s

THIS YEAR MARKS THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY of the Gumball 3000. I've never cared for it much. In fact it's always been my idea of hell. As an advert for fast cars and the people who drive them (often badly and, tragically, sometimes with reckless abandon) it has always done the wider car community a disservice.

It's in stark contrast to the event which (loosely) inspired it. Formally known as The Cannonball Baker Sea-To-Shining-Sea Memorial Trophy Dash, but abbreviated by all to simply the Cannonball, it was conceived by American motoring journalist Brock Yates as an underground 'up yours' to the increasingly draconian (for the time, at least) traffic laws and speed limits. Particularly those that governed the country's sprawling freeway system.

I suspect most of us – at least those of us outside of America – first became aware of the maverick event as a result of the *Cannonball Run* movie, which though accurate in its coast-to-coast New York to LA format painted a brasher picture of the 'race' than the superbly low-key reality of Yates's pedal-to-the-metal protest.

For a much better idea of what it was all about I can thoroughly recommend the late Yates's book, *Cannonball! World's Greatest Outlaw Road Race*, which documents its origins and describes the five runnings (plus the first reconnaissance run) held between 1971 and 1979. It's a helluva read. Aside from the compelling notion of crossing America as quickly as possible, it's the prescience of his observations and the relevance almost half a century later that really resonates.

Some of this is definitely due to '71 being the year of my birth. It's also because, like Yates, I happen to be a motoring journalist with a love of fast cars and the freedom a car and an open stretch of road represents. However, what seems most remarkable to me is that he perceived the threat posed by many of the road traffic laws and 'advances' in technology that are turning drivers into skill-less, vacant-minded automatons, and long-distance journeys into an ordeal by arbitrary speed limits, Smart motorways and almost constant surveillance by the authorities.

Admittedly his solution, or at least his protest, was extreme, but it was also symbolic. Looking back from 2018, where moral outrage is the norm, it seems incredible that his efforts were

taken in the correct spirit, at least by the public and wider media. I suspect this is because he didn't make a song and dance about it, with the only published acknowledgement of his first coast-to-coast run being a column he wrote upon completing the trip.

Of course, he and the event itself gained some celebrity, or rather notoriety, but in the few years Yates ran the Cannonball it managed to retain its integrity. Largely because he restricted the entry to a small circle of trusted friends, colleagues and like-minded individuals, but also because it wasn't heralded by a mass-media hoopla or punctuated by endless parties and photo opportunities. There simply wasn't time for all that crap.

The first official running (also in 1971) is the stuff of legend; Yates partnering with the then recently retired racing hero Dan

Gurney in a dark blue Ferrari Daytona. They won, in a record-breaking time of 35 hours and 54 minutes, with Gurney impishly stating 'at no point did we exceed 175mph'. Subsequent Cannonballs saw the record lowered, but its lasting legacy was to inspire younger generations to continue in the spirit of Yates and, indeed, Cannonball Baker, the first great coast-to-coast pioneer. I only wish I had the spuds to try it myself.

I'll leave you with some lines from Yates (who sadly died in 2016) and his

own summary of his famous *Car and Driver* magazine column, written after his first reconnaissance run in early '71: 'Oh, God, the anarchistic barbarity of it all! Out there on Uncle Sam's own 31,000 miles of superhighways driving at speeds sometimes beyond the legal limits, in actual conscious violation of our traffic laws. That's the way it's going to be, car freaks, in the first demonstration that some people are aware enough to handle their own destinies behind the wheel of an automobile...

'If the movements of automobiles can be monitored and controlled (as with goodies like VASCAR and ORBIS) we are a long way down the road to 1984. Therefore this mindless government urge to make us safe from ourselves can, in the long haul, lead to an electronic nightmare whereby you couldn't buy five gallons of gas or run a half-mile over the speed limit without ringing a gong in the Big Mutha computer in Washington.'

Forty-seven years later our personal freedom as drivers has been almost entirely eroded. I'm sure Yates would take no pleasure in saying he told us so.

'It's the prescience of his observations and the relevance almost half a century later that really resonates'

@DickieMeaden

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RICHARD PORTER

An unlikely head-turner holds great promise for a British sports car institution

I'VE NEVER DRIVEN A CAR THAT ATTRACTED so much attention from my neighbours. Relentlessly they came, wanting to paw at its bonded aluminium skin, asking if they could sit in its brilliant interior, posing endless questions about its high-tech drivetrain. I've parked Ferraris and Porsches outside my house and no one's paid much attention, but everyone on my street went absolutely nuts for the new London taxi.

I'm interested in the new London taxi, too. For one thing, it's technically intriguing because it runs primarily on electricity. Not entirely, of course, because there's a three-cylinder, 1.5-litre petrol engine under the bonnet, but this acts only as a generator, topping up the batteries and adding another 300 miles to the electro-only range of 80 miles. On my day of padding round London the dash display suggested a real-world range closer to 50 miles, especially once I'd slogged up a few north London hills. They say the average London cabbie does 120 miles a day, but takes breaks, during which he or she can, in theory, stick it on a fast charger, so the engine might never awake during the average working week, which is good for the environment. Let's not get bogged down in where the electricity comes from for now; the main thing this system promises is no localised emissions of the cancerous kind that come from diesels.

On that note, the old TX4's engine was particularly clattery and nasty, just as its ride was sodding awful, particularly for something that ran endlessly over potholes and speed humps. The new cab sorts the first problem because it's smooth and quiet, as electric cars tend to be. The greater delight is to discover that, at last, there's a black cab that rides the scabby tarmac psoriasis of city streets without making your eyes defocus. In fact, in the environment for which it's designed it's actually quite a nice thing to drive. I can't imagine doorhandling it down the Col de Turini, but then I can't imagine a less relevant test short of seeing if it can float. After a bit of driving I sat in the back, where the ride also feels good, as does the view out through big windows and a massive glass roof. The fabrics and plastics are from the scuff 'n' sick resistance end of the market, yet it feels

luxurious because there's so much space and light. It might not seem that way when there's five of your mates in there with you and everyone's had a kebab, but on your own it's delightful.

I liked riding in the new cab. I liked driving it. I liked people's reactions to it on the street. I liked getting back to my house and having more of my neighbours coming out to look at it. At first I couldn't understand why this – a functional work machine – was so fascinating in a way that a Ferrari 488 wouldn't be. I think the answer is that the Ferrari feels distant. It's an unattainable dream for most. Whereas the cab is a machine of the people. You probably won't own one unless you're an actual cabbie, or Stephen Fry, but for a few quid you can ride in one.

'I've parked Ferraris and Porsches outside my house and no one's paid much attention, but everyone on my street went absolutely nuts for this'

Plus, there's something comforting about it. Stranded late at night in pre-Uber times the sight of that orange light approaching was one of the most welcome things an adult could clap eyes on. So we have a warmth towards cabs. And we feel a sense of ownership, too, because the black cab represents the country we live in, whether it's picking up visitors at the airport or just appearing in the background of their holiday photos. We need the black cab to be up to scratch, not only because it can take us places, but also because it represents us and what we can do as people of Britain.

I say that, but actually LEVC is owned by Geely, the Chinese firm that also owns Volvo. The TX's suspension is XC90-related and its controls are taken from a parts cupboard in Sweden, though

re-rendered in unpretentious, hard-touch plastic. And this relationship is another reason why I was interested in the new cab. We've seen what Geely has done with Volvo, which is to let it confect a brilliant range of desirable, modern, on-target cars. Now I discover it's allowed LEVC to come up with an equally fit-for-purpose machine that works beautifully. And which, like the latest Volvos, looks modern and yet instantly recognisable. All of which bodes well for another company under Geely control and closer to **evo** hearts: Lotus. If it can make the next Elise as bang on as this cab, we're in for a treat. Mind you, there's no Lotus in the world that would attract as much attention in my neighbourhood as a new London taxi.

 @sniffpetrol

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



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TED KRAVITZ

Farewell Fernando – a badass talent whose potential in F1 was never fully realised

DEAR FERNANDO, SO, NO F1 FOR YOU NEXT year? Farewell, then, you mad, bad, cunning, quick, sharp, handsome, troublesome bastard. I hope you don't mind me calling you a bastard, it's just that in our modern, easily offended world, you don't tend to see sportspeople who are so totally focused on victory that they're openly happy – proud, even – to show badass sides of their personalities like you do.

And what a personality! Out of the car, the tousled hair, the musketeer beard; you even carried off a bandana back in the Renault days, something only Tupac could get away with. But in the car, you were dynamite. Brave, consistent and ruthless. Maybe not always quickest over one lap, but in the right car, quickest from lights to flag. If Murray Walker sounds like he commentates with his trousers on fire, I've often thought the same about you when your radio messages are played out. It's like you drive angry – demanding to win.

That's also not to say you haven't been humble over the last 18 years; coming from the remote Spanish region of Asturias – a bit like Cornwall – taught you humility. You never looked at home with the Monaco and Switzerland tax exiles. I always respected that about you – you'd rather pay a hefty tax bill and live happily in Spain than live lonely but rich in soulless Monte Carlo, convincing yourself you're having an amazing time.

But happiness has been a bit thin on track in recent years. Actually, for the last ten years, ever since you left Flavio's Renault. Ah, good old Flav – I'm pretty sure he's the only person who ever really understood you in F1. Shame he couldn't stick around longer, what with that race-fixing scandal. By the way, did you really not know your teammate was going to crash to allow you to win the Singapore GP? You can tell us now that you're off! Only kidding mate, they didn't call you 'Teflonso' for nothing!

If only you'd stuck with McLaren after you left Renault. You (probably) would've won the 2008 World Championship. And if only you'd signed that Red Bull contract for 2009, you (probably) would've won the four titles that went Vettel's way from 2010 to 2013. That would have equalled Michael Schumacher's championships by the age of 33. Promise fulfilled, job done.

Instead, you're leaving F1 – for 2019 at least – with just the two titles from 2005 and 2006. It just seems such a waste for the best driver of your generation. I get why. Since 2015 you've been trolling round in an uncompetitive McLaren, and while it was easy to blame your Honda engines for the first three years (and did you ever), this season's switch to decent Renault power has proved that the problems at Woking run deep.

You've probably lost track of who's been shunted out and who's still at McLaren, Fernando, I know I have, but as it's likely to be at least three years before they are winners again I really can't blame you for cutting your losses and running, although McLaren did move heaven and earth to get you to stay. Paying for your Indy 500 programme, running your beachwear brand on its cars, hiring and firing to please you. That was worth it, then.

But that's you, isn't it? You'll do anything and everything to win, whatever the cost, just like your hero Ayrton Senna did. But while he was revered for his uncompromising approach, you've had career doors shut in your face. Let's consider, each of the top three teams has a seat free for next year. Mercedes could have offered you its drive but the last time you had Hamilton as a teammate it didn't work out too well, and besides, Mercedes had to pay a lot of money to help clear up that mess at McLaren in 2007 and people there have long memories. Ferrari? The management has changed since those

you fell out with in 2014, but the newbies also remember what you said about their inability to win titles. Not to mention how nervous Vettel would be of going up against you. And then there's Red Bull. The team best equipped to handle your implacable will, but who is it powered by next year? Oh yeah, Honda.

So you're either too good for, or have bad blood with, all three teams. What a shame. For everyone. Well, it's no good dwelling on the past, Nando. Have a great season in IndyCar; apparently anyone can win over there as the competition isn't strangled by money, so let your talent shine. Win the Indy 500 and complete the triple crown like you've always dreamed of and maybe, along the way, you might find the fulfilment you've been looking for. And when there's nothing left to fight for, maybe you can give the hard-nosed bastard act a rest, eh? We'll miss you. Peace.

'You're leaving F1 with just the two titles from 2005 and 2006. It just seems such a waste for the best driver of your generation'

 @tedkravitz

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by RICHARD MEADEN PHOTOGRAPHY *by* ASTON PARROTT & DEAN SMITH

LAP OF THE GO



DS

Lotus's Exige Cup 430, Mercedes-AMG's GT R, Ford's GT and Porsche's 911 GT2 RS – four track-biased but road-legal supercars – do battle at Anglesey to find out which can claim to be the best hardcore machine money can buy

A

S TESTS GO, THIS IS A BIGGIE. FOUR different takes on the ultimate track-biased road car, lapped head-to-head against the clock. Same circuit (Anglesey Coastal), same day (warm and sunny) and with the same driver (yours truly) behind the wheel. Fortuitously, they even have the same tyres – Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2s.

We'll be dividing our time evenly between the cars so as not to show favour by having 'one last run' to try to shave off potentially test-skewing tenths of a second. And, though the cars are supported by their respective manufacturers, there will be no plugging-in of laptops between runs. Finally, to see how these cars would behave on the way to your circuit of choice, we'll also be taking them for a run on some of our favourite roads near the Welsh circuit.

So without further ado, let battle commence!

FEW ROAD CAR BRANDS HAVE AS MUCH competition DNA as Lotus. Similarly, few road cars have benefited from such a prolonged and focused development as the Exige. Nevertheless, £99,800 is a colossal amount of money for a car we all remember costing well under half that amount just a few years ago. It's a sum that can only be justified by an uncompromising pursuit of performance and strictly limited production. Combine those two factors and you get the Cup 430 – the most extreme evolution of Hethel's evergreen baby supercar and the entry point of our hardcore group test.

It's always refreshing to get into a small and simple performance car with a manual transmission, no power steering and fixed-rate suspension. Lotus has experienced some tough times, but its purist ethos is as strong as ever. The cars reflect an admirable pragmatism from dedicated engineers charged with making the most of what they have to work with.

The Cup 430 is a big jump from where the V6 Exige began and a significant step up from the Cup 380. So while you might approach it with a mindset forged when the Elise and Exige were more modestly powerful, 430bhp and 325lb ft of torque are big



numbers for a car weighing just 1093kg. Factor in 220kg of downforce with an aero balance tweaked to help find more front-end bite and it's clear the Exige has truly come of age.

Fast laps reveal it to be a surprisingly physical car to push to its limits. The steering weights up the harder you work it into the corners, and there's the added hand-eye-feet coordination demands of changing gear yourself. It's a modern car with old-school challenges.

There are some frustrations – ones not unique to the Cup 430 but baked into the V6 Exige almost from day one. The gearshift can be snaggy when you're trying to snap the lever across the gate, and there's still a small amount of dead travel to the brake pedal, making heel-and-toe downshifts awkward.

Once the Cup 2s are warm there's a delicious sensation of agility. Combined with a stability-control system featuring five preset slip levels and the ability to be disabled completely, the Cup 430 feels equipped to cut a clean, quick lap.

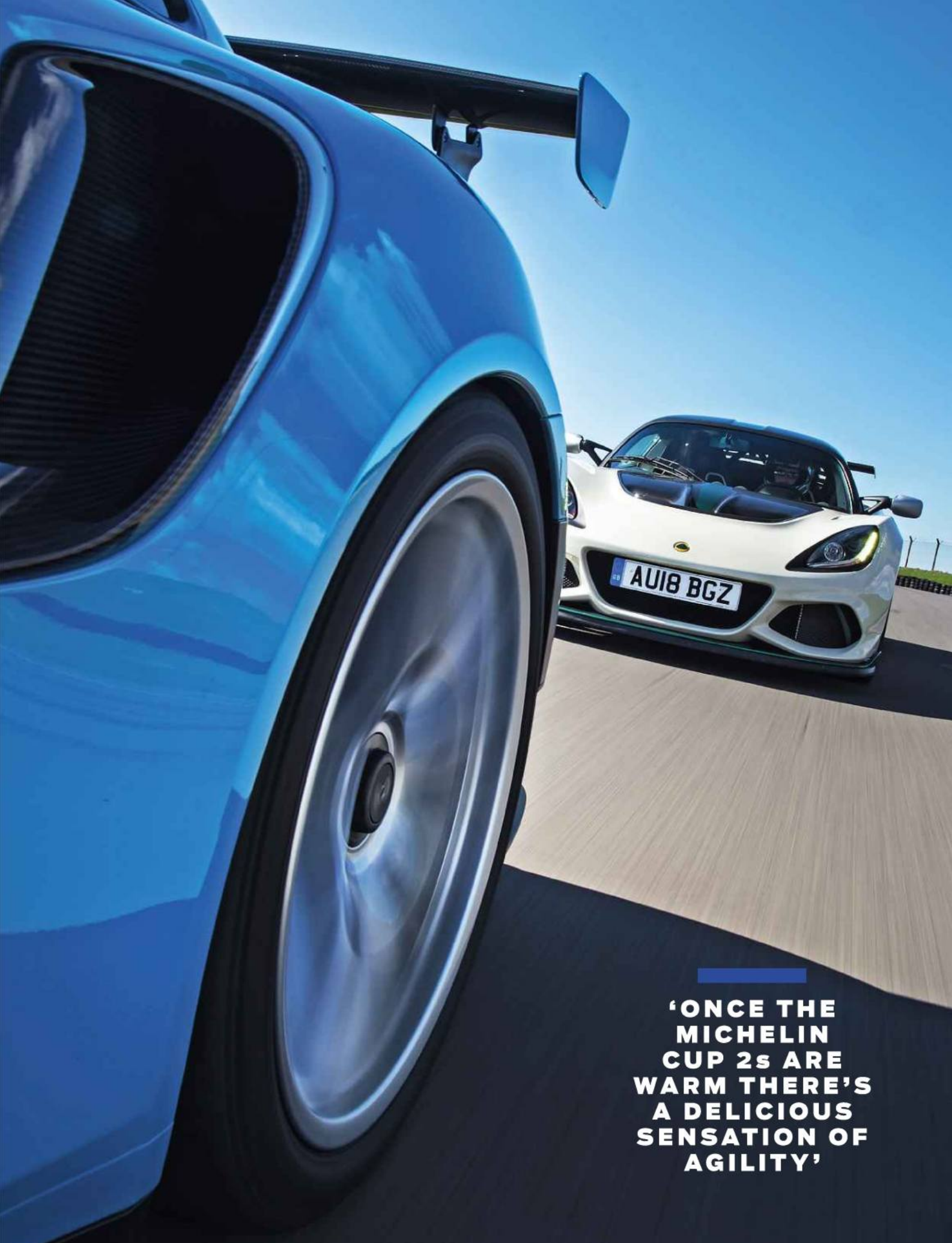
It's not surprising to discover that the window in which to get the best from the car is relatively narrow, for it's the Lotus way to create cars that are somewhat prescriptive in their dynamic repertoire. Fortunately it's communicative, so you quickly get a feel for how to make it work. That said, it makes *you* work for a time. Balance-wise it can either push the front if you turn in smoothly and squeeze at the throttle until you overcome the front end's limit of grip, or it'll oversteer on the way in if you try to rotate the car slightly more aggressively to get the rear to take some of the pressure from the front end. It rarely oversteers on the way out of a corner, but it's a challenge to find the quickest (neutral) sweet spot.

It could undoubtedly be dialled in or out to taste via adjustments to the three-way Nitron dampers and Eibach anti-roll bars, but on factory settings (as all our cars are set to for fairness) you have to dial yourself into the 430's preferred style.

The brakes have plenty of power and stamina, but it's hard to tread the line between maximum braking

Above right: finding the sweet spot can be tricky in the Exige; supercharged V6's 430bhp feels plenty propelling 1093kg





**‘ONCE THE
MICHELIN
CUP 2s ARE
WARM THERE’S
A DELICIOUS
SENSATION OF
AGILITY’**

**'YOU CAN TRUST
AND COMMIT IN
THE GT R, EVEN
THROUGH THE
HIGH-SPEED,
BALLSY
CORNERS'**





Left and above:

like the Exige, the GT R has a multi-stage stability control system to keep things tidy – or you can disable it completely...

effort and pushing into the ABS. When triggered, this has a tendency to take the car wide of its line, rather than allowing you to hold the brakes to the apex. Again, you have to develop an unusual degree of sensitivity.

As for the timed lap, a best of 1:14.7 puts it in some impressive company. Just a couple of tenths shy of a McLaren 570S is none too shabby. Perhaps the biggest question mark is that while it's a hugely desirable car that unquestionably punches above its weight, as a track tool the Cup 430 places more emphasis on precision and discipline than on pure entertainment.

It's a big jump from the Exige to the AMG GT R in power, torque, size and weight. Merc's answer to Porsche's 911 GT3 is significantly heavier than the Lotus – by 462kg according to the manufacturers' figures – but counters with a substantial power and torque advantage, its twin-turbo V8 producing 577bhp and 516lb ft. The GT R is a bruiser in the finest AMG tradition, but blessed with fleet feet and tailored around a package that's a bit more compact and a lot more focused and tied-down than the less-than-fit-for-purpose Black Series models, which simply don't feel cut out for track use.

The exception to this rule was the fearsome SLS Black Series – an all-time high point in AMG's track-biased road car history – but still I'd say the GT R is the best road car AMG has ever made with track use in mind. This said, it still has some issues familiar from other AMGs. The gearbox is much better, but there are times where this seven-speed dual-clutch unit delays before giving you a downshift, and traction is still at a premium when you're chasing the absolute limit. Likewise, the brake pedal is occasionally inconsistent in feel and response, going a bit long but then coming back at your foot. You never feel like you're running out of brakes – indeed you can work the GT R's very hard and deep into corners – but there's something about the pedal feel that lets the side down a little.

Chassis-wise there's a lot to celebrate. It certainly turns in really well, though there's a slight lack of

feel when doing so into the quick corners so you're mindful of unwittingly asking too much from the rear by rotating the front end too aggressively. This is often the case with grippy, stiffly suspended cars, so it's a statement rather than a major criticism, but it informs the way you drive the GT R on a fast lap.

It's in this split-second phase between initiating turn-in and collecting the throttle that the GT R will begin to oversteer. Fortunately the multi-stage stability control works extremely well, so you have the confidence to continue squeezing the throttle so that you can then use the electronics to maintain a slight oversteer stance and meter out as much power and torque as the tyres will take. Not losing time from being sideways, but not losing time from being held back by the electronics either, it's truly impressive and very enjoyable.

You can trust and commit in the GT R, then, even through the high-speed, ballsy corners. The gearing feels a little short – you're a gear up on the other cars in some corners – and this takes a little adjusting to as you expect AMGs to be big thumpers with a long stride, but once you've accepted this it's never an issue.

The GT R is an inherently excellent track car. Always under you, always encouraging you to push harder, there's never any question that it wants to be stretched. It's also willing to be driven for fun, rather than simply in the pursuit of a lap time. Given it's not a racing car this is important, for although we're benchmarking these cars for their outright pace – and the AMG beats the Lotus by 1.1sec – it's their ability to entertain that counts, or should count, more than bragging rights.

In the GT R you have a car that can remain tidy and lean on its high-fidelity electronics to transmit as much of its huge outputs to the track surface as its tyres will allow. Or, you can disable the electronics and drive it like a drift car. Of course, the irony is that both these extremes aren't especially appropriate in a trackday environment, but the fact there's some middle ground to inhabit and enjoy suggests it is a car you can use to educate yourself with the finer points of discipline and commitment, or you can forget all that and simply grab it by the scruff of the neck and enjoy. Either way, you won't find a more exciting, capable or competent driver's car wearing the three-pointed star.



**‘NOT UNTIL YOU STRAP YOURSELF
IN DOES THE REALITY OF A
690BHP 911 ON ROAD-LEGAL
RUBBER HIT HOME’**





Top left: GT's ride height drops by 50mm in Track mode, emphasising its flat cornering attitude. **Top right:** interior has a race-car vibe



But has a road car ever looked more ready to attack a race circuit than a Ford GT in Track mode? Switch to the most aggressive setting and it literally drops as though you've been let down by a set of air jacks, thudding into a race-ready squat that sees its belly sit 50mm lower, settling just 70mm above the tarmac. Not even a McLaren P1 beats it for race-car stance. It's such a serious statement of intent that with a crash helmet on you truly struggle to believe you're in a road car. It's an impression reinforced by the GT's cockpit surroundings – pared-back with plenty of exposed carbonfibre and little in the way of sound deadening to isolate you from the 647bhp V6 located just behind your shoulders.

With the seat fixed you pull on a strap to adjust the pedal box, bringing the brake and throttle towards your feet. The steering wheel is more of a rectangle, but it feels good in your hands, especially on the out lap of each timed run, when it feels appropriate to weave a little to help switch the tyres on.

The EcoBoost V6 may share more than half its DNA with the unit found in the Raptor pickup truck, but it sounds no-nonsense purposeful and provides immense

propulsion. The 647bhp peak power figure is the headline grabber, but torque is the order of the day – some 550lb ft of it to be precise. In the more aggressive dynamic modes the motor engages a system to mitigate what little turbo lag there is and delivers a more intense power delivery from 5500 to 7000rpm.

From the moment you leave the pitlane the GT feels quite unlike other supercars. It's flat and resistant to roll, and direct and responsive to small steering inputs, but not jumpy or overly reactive. That intuitive response is welcome, because while the steering isn't glassy exactly, you don't get much feedback through the wheel, and because you don't sense much body roll either, you soon realise this is a car that requires you to rely on faith as much as feel.

It contains its weight well (think c1500kg with fluids), both through the corners and in the braking areas, and if you're prepared to let it carry more speed than feels comfortable into the quicker corners you feel the aero catch you. As you'd expect (and want), it's the front end that lets go first. Softly and only fractionally, but enough to know you're reaching the limit of the front tyres, or need to keep the weight transfer working on the front axle as you ask it to peel into the corner.

When the process clicks it's a fantastic feeling. One I'm familiar with from racing, actually, which is a compliment indeed, as few road cars allow you to enter that zone. It's in this heightened sensory state that what feedback you do get from the Ford really makes sense, and where you appreciate just how precisely you're able to adjust your brake, steering and throttle inputs. In this respect, the race car genes are very apparent.

The weird thing is that the GT struggles against the stopwatch. The laps *feel* like they should be on the money. The best aren't ragged, but nor are they overly cautious; there's no running wide of the mark, or getting greedy on the throttle and then having to back off. We're hustling hard, but almost imperceptibly you reach a point where the car plateaus and you simply stop finding gains.

Despite its uncompromising design, which ruthlessly placed racing success ahead of more rounded road car objectives, the GT doesn't seem to have the innate

**'YOU SOON
REALISE THIS
IS A CAR THAT
REQUIRES YOU
TO RELY ON
FAITH AS MUCH
AS FEEL'**





**'IT DEMANDS
RESPECT, BUT
THE GT2 RS IS
INCREDIBLY
PRECISE AND
MAGNIFICENTLY
EXPLOITABLE'**





Left: rear-wheel steering helps the GT2 RS's agility, although with 690bhp some old-fashioned steering from the rear is also possible

aggression to attack a lap in the way you might expect. It has the grip and the traction, the braking power and the ability to carry speed into the trickier corners. It feels planted in a way 99 per cent of supercars don't. And yet, every time I cross the line its lap time is shaded by the AMG's – the best still being 0.6sec behind. Does the GT's reliance on aerodynamics hobble it when there aren't enough high-speed corners for it to strike home an advantage? Most likely, yes. Could I have found more time? A bit, perhaps, but the same could be said of all the cars. Bemused, mildly shocked and with time pressing on, we vacate the Ford and turn our attentions to the GT2 RS.

Much has been written about this most extreme of all Motorsport department 911s, but not until you strap yourself in does the reality of a 690bhp 911 on road-legal rubber truly hit home. This is the first time I've driven the GT2 RS. Quite the introduction, and a good explanation for why my tongue is currently showing a propensity to stick to the roof of my mouth.

The driving environment is familiar territory for anyone who has sat in a GT 911 before: functional but comfortable, fuss-free but full of occasion. Twist the ignition key and the first major difference becomes apparent. The big-boost flat-six is an absolute dragon of a motor, breathing heavily from the tailpipes and filling the cockpit with a menacing pulse.

Should there be a manual GT2 RS? There'll always be someone who wants one, especially if you get your kicks on the road, but I understand why a car so focused on track performance should only come with PDK. There's certainly nothing to complain about with the way this dual-clutch gearbox goes about its business. The shifts are synaptic whether you're working up or down the 'box, the latter changes complete with ultra-precise rev matching. I love stirring a gearlever, but when you're driving against the clock the 2RS's transmission is manna from heaven.

The steering is a bit lighter than you expect, but there's plenty of feel and the front end is perfectly tied-down, so the car changes direction brilliantly – helped

no doubt by the rear-wheel steering. You don't have to cajole or agitate the 2RS into corners as you do older 911s, and this is a big step on in depth of dynamics, as it allows you to concentrate on getting out of the corner rather than on how to get into it.

The 2RS isn't quite as laser-guided as the 991.2 GT3 RS. Some of that is down to the engine, which can't match the throttle response of the sensational 4-litre naturally aspirated RS motor. It's also because taming all that torque requires more measured throttle inputs. Fundamentally, it's because the thing gains so much speed from the exit of one corner to the braking zone for the next that it forces a different driving style.

The brakes are stupendously capable, and crucially allow you to change direction while on the limit. Likewise, the ESC electronics permit just enough slip under power without letting things go too far, allowing you to ride out of the corner with a hint of oversteer, driven wheels rotating slightly faster than the fronts.

There are occasions where you unmask the 2RS's well-hidden malevolence. If you're too hurried with your steering inputs the front end has the grip to turn faster than the tail wants to move (even with rear-wheel steer) or has the lateral grip to support, but it's a fleeting moment of instability that's soon contained.

Logic suggests a rear-wheel-drive 911 with this much power and torque should be almost uncontrollable in anything other than a racing driver's hands, but the reality is that, while it demands respect, the GT2 RS is incredibly precise and magnificently exploitable if you show it the requisite skill and confidence.

Like the other cars tested, there's pressure to nail a clean lap within the first two flyers, simply because although the Michelins remain admirably consistent over prolonged stints, they have a few laps where they are at their absolute best. With ESC and TC on, it sets a 1:12.1 – 1.5sec quicker than the AMG – while with ESC off I go a couple of tenths slower.

It's an emphatic display. Just as impressive – at least to me – is the fact that this utter beast of a 911 has such precision and control to go with the immense power and torque. You need your wits about you, and it's not a car for faint hearts or inexperienced hands, but we wouldn't want a GT2 RS any other way, right?



THE DATA

IT'S FUNNY THE THINGS YOU see in lap traces. The stopwatch may never lie, but what you feel from behind the wheel can paint a different picture to that delineated by the cold, binary heart of a VBox speed trace.

First the overriding truth: no car here punches from apex through corner exit to the next braking area with the ferocity of the GT2 RS. When its wheels are straight the Porsche is ballistic, pulling a noticeably steeper upward curve than even the Ford GT. Likewise, nothing quite matches the Ford for consistent stopping power; the plunging line charting truly epic levels of retardation combined with consistency.

The traces also reveal oddities that become character traits across the course of

a lap. There are significant moments where the GT2's ability to build your confidence can draw you into overcommitting and then asking too much of the brakes – never more so than on the hair-raising run through the compression that takes you up towards Rocket. Not only does the Porsche gain more speed, but on the quickest lap it encourages me to brake later than the Ford. Too late as it transpires, which then loses me time as I struggle to make the 90-degree left as the track flattens at the top of the incline. This temptation to overcommit manifests itself a number of times.

Cleanest and most consistent of the four is the AMG GT R. It can't match the Ford and Porsche on the longer bursts of acceleration (that's pure physics in action), but it claws back time by managing to avoid big troughs in minimum corner speed. Never the quickest between the corners, it consistently carries a little more speed – or

at least stays with the best of them – through the slower corners. And thanks to the excellent traction control it makes effective use of what power it has. Unfortunately, it simply doesn't have enough to slug it out with the GT and GT2 beyond 100mph.

It's much the same with the Exige. It carries admirable speed through all the corners, but where the others accelerate in a smooth line that gradually tails off as speeds get serious, the Exige's acceleration trace has a marked stammer – a sign of that slightly awkward gearshift.

Ultimately, the GT2's greatest single advantage is how it contains its unfavourable weight distribution to routinely match or exceed the other cars' ability to carry speed into and through both low- and high-speed corners.

It might be a monster, but few cars in our experience deploy their performance quite so completely as the GT2 RS.

Circuit

Venue Anglesey
Layout Coastal
Length 1.5 miles
Direction Clockwise
Conditions Dry, 15deg C

Lap times

Ford GT

1:14.2

Lotus Exige Cup 430

1:14.7

Mercedes-AMG GT R

1:13.6

Porsche 911 GT2 RS

1:12.1

BANKING

SPEED (mph)

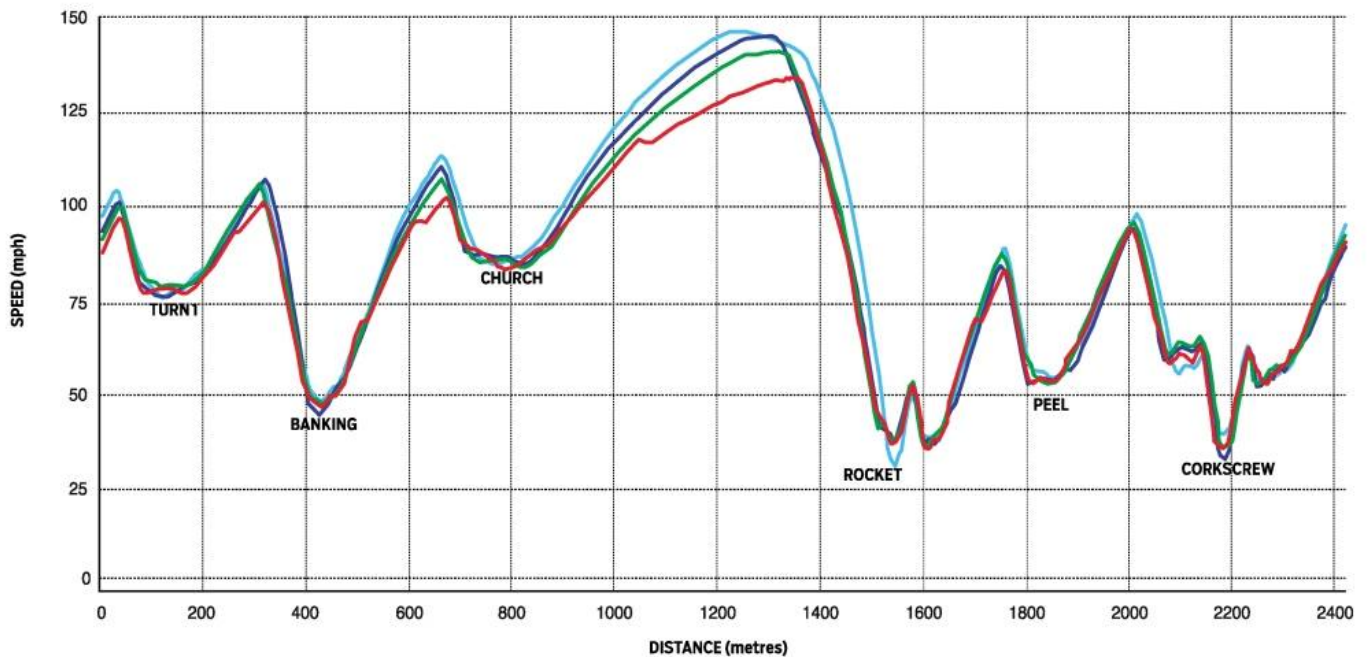
43 46 46 47

PEAK CORNERING G

1.3 1.1 1.0 1.4



Lap traces



ON THE ROAD

THE ROADS OF NORTH WALES HAVE BEEN evo's hunting ground for 20 years, so although this quarter is honed for the track, because they are also legit road-legal machines we couldn't resist taking them to our reference road routes to see how they fair.

I start in the Ford. On the road it's an intimidating machine. You know you fill every inch of your lane, often a little more as the *kerdunk-kerdunk-kerdunk* of the right-hand wheels hitting the catseyes telegraphs. Lamborghini Aventador aside, I've never driven as outsized a vehicle as this on these roads.

On the more open sections you can let the GT flow a little. Chippings clatter round the wheelarches, while the coarseness of the surface generates plenty of road noise. Coupled with the gruff, boosty soundtrack of the V6, driving the GT in the wild is an unfiltered experience. Torque is the overriding force at work, picking you up and pushing you to the next corner – which the Ford will slice through, a squeeze of steering input enough to tack through sweeping curves and a roll of the wrists for tighter turns.

It's an intense and effortless sensation, but one that is perhaps a little too matter-of-fact. Beyond the initial excitement of simply being in the GT you crave more connection and dynamic nuance.

Swapping to the Exige is a real culture shock, the undersized Lotus feeling like you're pulling on a T-shirt that's shrunk in the wash. There's connection and engagement in spades, and its size means you suddenly have so much more road to play with.


It's a firm car by Lotus standards, and the steering is heavier and less bright as a result, but you still have the satisfaction of reading the road surface like Braille. I'd be lying if I said you don't miss the epic reach of the GT, but the trade-off is sweetened by knowing you're working the Exige harder more of the time. The slightly knotty gearshift when pushing to the maximum on track isn't such an issue, though it's still awkward to execute sweet heel-and-toe downshifts thanks to the mismatched pedal heights. Overall though, this is a car that still shines on the road.

The AMG somehow feels even more bombastic on the road. You savour the torque that bit more and enjoy the part-throttle to full-throttle snap. It's hard and sharply responsive, but the chassis has a 911 GT3-like control, so the rear always feels like it can live with the front end's response. Traction is strong if you're sensitive with the throttle, and the electronics are there to be leant on. It really is a cracking effort from AMG – so much more of a cohesive and connected-feeling driver's car than the lesser GT models and a very credible rival to Porsche's best efforts. Speaking of which...

The wonder of the GT2 RS is that it combines a little of the other three and adds a whole heap of its own magic. Small enough to exploit, feelsome without being distracted, responsive without feeling edgy and stiffly suspended but with just enough 'give' to work with the road. Its performance is gut-wrenching, at once overwhelming and utterly absorbing.

The twin-turbo flat-six doesn't have the searing rev range of the GT3's normally aspirated motor, but it has its own character and a fierce delivery. One shaped by countless Le Mans victories, with a soundtrack so redolent of 956s and 962s. You can get to know it and explore its performance until common sense dictates enough is enough. Where you draw the line is down to you. Its greatness is rooted in how Porsche has managed to create a track-biased 911 so potent and yet so precise and exploitable on challenging roads.



A high-angle, aerial photograph of a winding asphalt road on a grassy, hilly landscape. Four sports cars are driving along the road, following its curve. From top to bottom, the cars are: a blue McLaren 720S, a green McLaren 720S, a purple McLaren 720S, and a white Lotus Evija. The road is bordered by a low stone wall on the right and a wire fence on the left. The surrounding hills are covered in dry, brownish-green grass. The lighting suggests late afternoon or early morning, with long shadows and warm tones.

**'AVENTADOR
ASIDE, I'VE
NEVER DRIVEN
AS OUTSIZED
A VEHICLE AS
THE FORD GT ON
THESE ROADS'**

THE VERDICT

WITH **FOUR** **SUCH** different takes on the hardcore supercar we were never going to arrive at a straightforward conclusion. Especially when our primary focus in this test is their outright ability on track.

The Lotus may be slowest, but it's punching way above its weight getting anywhere near the AMG and Ford. Physics is its friend, yes, but still it shouldn't manage to summon such speed from so little in the way of firepower and cubic capacity. On the road it strikes an enviable balance between rawness and refined precision, and while its a tougher proposition in which to cover big miles and feels like big money for an evolution of the once humble Elise, when you're in the moment on a great road it's a special car.

As Merc's first serious stab at a rival to Porsche's ultra-successful GT3, the AMG GT R is a great success. It's hugely desirable and genuinely credible, with

star quality (no pun intended) and its own distinct character. Its lap time is slightly confusing, for although it betters the Ford that's more an indication of the GT's underperformance at Anglesey than any heroics achieved by the Mercedes. As a road car the GT R delivers a distinctive and dynamic driving experience: one that's unique amongst front-engined, rear-drive supercars.

The Ford is something of an enigma. It's true Anglesey didn't suit its high-speed, aero-reliant design, but it shouldn't have been blown into the weeds by the GT2, just as it should have been able to drop the AMG GT R. It looks like a racing car, feels like a racing car, but never quite manages to hook-up the kind of lap a carbon-tubbed homologation special should.

If it had, you could forgive its somewhat industrial on-road demeanour and a V6 that's not an especially nice partner for prolonged periods. It's an easy machine to operate, but it never gives you enough

to feel fully at one with it on the road. You lean on the grip because you believe it's there, not because you feel it through the palms of your hands. Of course, it's never less than an event to be in, but you can't shake the fact it's unwieldy on all but the most open and flowing roads. I love the fact it exists and feel awe in its presence, but I can't help but feel disappointed at the sum of its parts.

By contrast, the GT2 RS is the embodiment of the hardcore, track-honed road car. Blisteringly quick and brimming with attitude, it is blessed with a depth of character and breadth of ability that shames the Ford and makes it as engaging on the road as it is extraordinary on track.

In isolation, all four of these cars excel as track cars and sit at the extreme end of the road-legal driving experience, but only one truly defines the breed. That car is the 991 GT2 RS. Ballsy, boosty and breathtaking in every respect, it's one of Weissach's modern masterpieces. **X**

Lotus Exige Cup 430

Engine V6, 3456cc, supercharger
Power 430bhp @ 7000rpm
Torque 325lb ft @ 2600-6800rpm
Weight 1093kg
Power-to-weight 400bhp/ton
0-62mph 3.3sec
Top speed 180mph
Basic price £99,800
evo rating ★★★★★

Porsche 911 GT2 RS

Engine Flat-six, 3800cc, twin-turbo
Power 690bhp @ 7000rpm
Torque 553lb ft @ 2500-4500rpm
Weight 1470kg
Power-to-weight 477bhp/ton
0-62mph 2.8sec
Top speed 211mph
Basic price £207,506
evo rating ★★★★★

Mercedes-AMG GT R

Engine V8, 3982cc, twin-turbo
Power 577bhp @ 6250rpm
Torque 516lb ft @ 1900-5500rpm
Weight 1555kg
Power-to-weight 377bhp/ton
0-62mph 3.6sec
Top speed 198mph
Basic price £144,460
evo rating ★★★★★

Ford GT

Engine V6, 3497cc, twin-turbo
Power 647bhp @ 6250rpm
Torque 550lb ft @ 5900rpm
Weight (dry) 1385kg
Power-to-weight (dry) 475bhp/ton
0-62mph 2.8sec
Top speed 216mph
Basic price \$450,000 (c£351,000)
evo rating ★★★★★





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ICON: PORSCHE 968 CLUB SPORT

ICON

PORSCHE 968 CLUB SPORT

Not all track-leaning Porsche specials are 911s. A quarter of a century ago, the unloved entry-level 968 was transformed with a Club Sport makeover

by JOHN BARKER

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

THE MOST FAMOUS EXAMPLE OF road car evolution at Porsche is, of course, the 911, but I'd argue that the transformation of the 924 into the 968 Club Sport deserves admiration. My first witness for the prosecution is the two-time WRC champion and latter-day consultant to Porsche, Walter Röhrl, who declared in the early '90s that the 968 Club Sport was the best-handling car that Porsche made.

It helped that some key elements were there from the start, notably the transaxle – the rear-mounted, combined gearbox and differential – which conferred a near-50:50 weight distribution. Lots of other components that helped create the Club Sport what it is made their debut on other models. For instance, the slant-four that is half of the 928's V8 in concept arrived as a 2.5-litre in the 944, supplanting the original 2-litre Audi four. Lightweight suspension components such as aluminium front and rear suspension arms, hollow anti-roll bars and aluminium wheel nuts were first seen on the 944 Turbo and the 944 S2, as were the bigger Brembo brakes.

Intriguingly, late in the 944's life – after production at Audi's Neckarsulm plant had ended in '91 and before the 968 began rolling down the lines at Zuffenhausen in '92 – there came what can be regarded as something of a precursor to the Club Sport. It was conceived by Porsche GB, was called the 944 S2 SE (Special Equipment), and only 15 were built, all for

the UK market. It was remapped to coax 225bhp from the S2's now 3-litre slant four (up from 208bhp), featured a limited-slip diff and oil cooler, and its chassis was lowered, stiffened and offered some set-up adjustability. At the very least, it showed there was untapped potential.

Porsche claimed that the 968 was 80 per cent new, though whether that was by number of parts, weight, cost or some other measure was not revealed. As well as the new 928-inspired front and rear ends there was a six-speed gearbox in place of the 944's five-speeder, and the 3-litre engine featured VarioCam, Porsche's new variable valve timing system which adjusted the inlet cam timing to give better low-down torque and high-rev power.

The Club Sport came along a year after and took all the best bits and combined them into a superbly balanced and unexpectedly satisfying whole, but there was also less to it than that. Deleted items

included the rear seats, air conditioning, rear wiper, electronic tailgate release and a chunk of sound deadening, while the electric windows became wind-up and the standard, electrically adjusted Recaros were replaced by lightweight, fixed-back Recaro buckets. The total weight saving was an impressive 50kg, providing, of course, that the customer went for this pauper spec.

'Club Sport' was an appropriate name, having been used first for a rather special 911 in the mid-'80s. Like that car, the lightweight 968 had its name writ (optionally) between the wheels in the same style that 'Carrera' had been on the 911 2.7 RS of 1972-73. The Club Sport's 17in alloys could be colour coded to the body, as the shell backs of the Recaros were, in one of just five colours: Speed Yellow, Guards Red, Maritime Blue, Riviera Blue, or Grand Prix White, as shown here.

The first time I got to drive one was for *Performance Car* magazine on the model's low-key UK launch in 1993, which was from a hotel somewhere near Aylesbury, I think. I don't recall how we knew it was going to be such a great driver's car, but we had a plan. As soon as we got the key to our Maritime Blue example we went straight to the Millbrook proving ground and took a full set of performance figures, then we did a photoshoot on the way back and had all the driving impressions bagged for a full road test before handing the key back again a few hours later.

**'WALTER RÖHRL
DECLARED IT
THE BEST-
HANDLING CAR
THAT PORSCHE
MADE'**





'PUT YOUR FOOT DOWN AND THE SHORT-STROKE FOUR DELIVERS A PROPER KICK'

It was a glowing test report. The Club Sport was fantastically rewarding when you were exploiting all of its grip, but because it was so approachable, intuitive and reassuringly well-sorted, it was also one of those cars that anyone who enjoyed driving could appreciate. I recall arguing that point with a tester from *Top Gear* magazine. In one of those rare alignments, three magazines published the same three-car test in the same month. The cars were the Club Sport, the Audi S2 and the BMW M3 (E36). We put the Porsche first, *Top Gear* put the Audi first, and the third mag, *Autocar*, put the BMW first. The *Top Gear* chap argued that the Audi was safer for more drivers, which might have been true, but only because it was joyless in comparison and so didn't encourage you to drive quickly. The BMW? Great engine, but its steering was far too low geared; on that car's launch, on the first run at a corner for the camera, *Fast Lane* magazine oversteered theirs into a ditch.

Later that year, the Club Sport went on to take *Performance Car's* Car of the Year title, seeing off a quality field including the Lancia Integrale, Ferrari 348 Spider, TVR Griffith 500, Toyota Supra, Ruf 911 and Lotus Esprit S2. And this despite an, er, incident at the venue, Cadwell Park racetrack. As someone observed drily at the time: 'We find this year's best-handling car – and crash it!' I confess that it was I that stuffed the 968. I cocked up an attempt at oversteer at the track's top corner, went onto the wet grass and travelled hundreds of agonisingly slippery yards before slamming nose first into the tyres. To add insult to injury, the poorly secured 968 fell off the back of the recovery truck and hit the tyres again, rear first, doing light damage.

There's a thing here, though, which has oft been repeated; cars that feel so good and make their drivers feel heroically invincible end up being crashed more. Cars like the Mitsubishi Evo and Light Car Company Rocket to name two. There was a happy(ish) ending, mind. The good bits from 'my' Club Sport were put together with the good bits from the rear-ended one crashed by *Car* magazine

to create the race car that I campaigned for *Performance Car* in the 1994 Porsche Club GB Championship. It was to be an eventful season. More of that later...

It has been more than 20 years since I drove a Club Sport. Lowering myself into the embrace of the steep-sided Recaro and taking hold of the fat, three-spoke wheel brings back a lot of memories, not least because the cabin still smells like it did back then. Will the magic still be there? By today's measure, the numbers aren't special at all; despite the weight savings the kerb weight was still 1320kg and the power doesn't make for a stunning power-to-weight ratio. At 3 litres the motor was the biggest four-cylinder engine fitted to a road car engine for many years, but even massaged by VarioCam it still made just 237bhp at 6200rpm, with 225lb ft at 4100rpm.

So I wasn't expecting the Club Sport to still feel gutsy, but it does. Put your foot down and the short-stroke four delivers a proper kick and energises the car beyond what the bald figures suggest. It defies the numbers partly I think because it responds crisply to the throttle and is so willing and smooth, the latter thanks to its contra-rotating balancer shafts, licensed from Mitsubishi. It's an engine that enjoys digging deep just as much as keening to the red line.

There's something else too, something that I didn't recognise back then or simply took for granted: just like the flat-six in a 911, the big four-banger in the 968 is a part of the car. Its exertions are subtly but physically felt through the shell and seat, so you're in tune with it, you know where it is in the rev range and what response is available.

Initially, the rim of the steering wheel feels fat – its design is unique to the Club Sport – and the weight of the power steering is similarly chunky. But the 968 conforms to another Porsche norm, which is that the efforts of all the controls – the steering, clutch, brake and throttle, and to a lesser extent the six-speed shift – are all matched. It's a reassuring consistency, a sign of quality of execution. Then there's the chassis. The Club Sport is one of those

cars that feels right pretty much from the off and just gets better, a car that turns a good road into a great road.

As soon as you start to lean on the grip you discover that the 968 pivots around its gearlever. Push a bit more and the precision and the balance and composure invite you to pitch it into corners and sort it out after. It's the layout. Mid-engined cars are described as having the masses ideally located between the axles, but in my experience there's nothing quite so poised and malleable as a front-engined, rear-drive car. Even more so, it seems, when you add in a transaxle.

In the Club Sport you feel so comfortable with what the chassis is doing beneath you that on a seriously twisty road you're flicking the steering left and right, the nose precise and glued to its line while the back end is fluid, the rear tyres smearing on the tarmac as the car drifts modestly from apex to apex. It's an absolute joy, performance and grip almost perfectly matched to create

Below: backs of the corduroy-trimmed Recaro buckets were colour-coded to match the car's exterior; rear seats were deleted for the Club Sport. **Bottom right:** 3-litre four-cylinder engine produced 237bhp, with 225lb ft of torque







a moment of transcendence that all the best-handling icons share. Cars like the Caterham Seven, original Lotus Elan and E30-generation BMW M3. Indeed, the Porsche is almost like an evolution of the four-cylinder M3; lower-slung and with a dollop more torque and grip.

Another characteristic common to these cars is a supple ride. The Club Sport's would be described as cosseting compared with that of most current performance cars, despite it riding about an inch lower than the cooking 968 and on lower profile tyres. Indeed, when *Performance Car's* race 968 was prepared by Mike Jordan's Team Eurotech, the spring and damper rates were increased substantially.

As I hinted, the '94 Porsche championship was eventful. The short version is that there was a win at Mallory Park, which marked the 968's first competition success, plus a few skirmishes, and a substantial impact with the Armco at Lodge Corner, Oulton Park. This wrote off the front end, again. The repaired car felt spot on and was part of the winning team at the Birkett Six Hour Relay. It was then sold to Ray Armes, who raced it in the Porsche series in '95, until Oulton Park. The engine blew up at Druids and he spun, ending up facing

'THE PLAUDITS AND TROPHIES IT WON MADE IT A GENUINE HALO CAR'

the wrong way in the middle of the track. His teammate was next along, hit the oil and crashed into the 968, writing off the front, again!

In Porsche dealerships 968 sales were slow until the Club Sport came along and won plaudits and trophies from the critical press. This turned it into a genuine 'halo' model that drove traffic into the showrooms. Once there, the partner of the person drawn in by the Club Sport would take a look in the back and ask if rear seats and many of the other 'goodies' deleted in pursuit of weight (and cost) saving were an option. If this still didn't meet their expectations they would be steered towards the newly created, still sporty but four-seat 968 Sport. And if they decided they wanted all the bells and whistles, there was always the standard 968!

Sadly, the Sport was just a final flourish, because at Porsche the end was already nigh for front-engined models; when the mid-engined Boxster took over from the 968 in '96, production of the 928 ended too. Ironically, I didn't quite trust the handling of the early, base-model Boxster, but today's 718 version with the flat-four turbo engine is almost supernaturally good, in the wet or the dry. Those engineers at Porsche know a thing or two about evolution, eh? The 968 Club Sport will always be a high spot, though, for combining great handling and a sweet four-cylinder engine. ☒

■ Thanks to RPM Technik for supplying the featured car.

Porsche 968 Club Sport

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 2990cc **Power** 237bhp @ 6200rpm **Torque** 225lb ft @ 4100rpm **Transmission** Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip diff
Front suspension MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar **Rear suspension** Semi-trailing arms, torsion bars, dampers, anti-roll bar **Brakes** Ventilated discs, 298mm front, 299mm rear **Wheels** 7.5 x 17in front, 9 x 17in rear **Tyres** 225/45 ZR17 front, 255/40 ZR17 rear **Weight** 1320kg **Power-to-weight** 182bhp/ton **0-62mph** 6.5sec **Top speed** 157mph **Price new** £28,975 (1993) **Value today** £25,000-55,000

evo rating ★★★★★

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by MATT JOY

**‘I WOULD
LIKE PEOPLE
DRIVING THE
A110 FOR TEN
YEARS TO HAVE
A BIG SMILE
EVERY DAY’**

Resurrect a famous brand, design and build
a new sports car and collect 5000 deposits.

Where next for France's Porsche rival?
Alpine MD Sébastien Erphelin reveals all



IT'S A GOOD TIME TO BE SÉBASTIEN ERPHELIN. WE

are sitting in a hotel courtyard, yards from the picturesque Dieppe beach. In his pocket he has the key to the head office at the Alpine factory across town. Having taken over from Michael van der Sande, Erphelin is interim managing director, as well as programme director. No pressure then.

'We've had positive feedback. We are meeting customers who come back to us with a big, big smile on their face. And that, to me, is what is most important,' he says. 'We have good momentum, we are clearly happy, but we all know we need to go step by step.'

The numbers for the first step speak for themselves. Production of the new A110 began in December 2017, over 1000 cars have already been built and 600 examples of the Première Édition are with their fortunate owners. Deliveries of the Pure and Légende versions will begin before the end of 2018, and this year will also see the Alpine network expand into Australia and Japan. Turn up at a dealer tomorrow and you can expect to wait 12 months for a delivery. A strong start to Alpine v2.0 undoubtedly, but what next for a brand that has to create a reputation outside its home country?

'My aim is firstly to be fully consistent with the idea of the brand – the idea of driving pleasure. So I want each car to put a smile on the face of the driver. That's the main goal,' says Erphelin. 'And not only in France, because in France you know we have a lot of Alpine enthusiasts. I want to have people in the UK, in Germany, in Japan saying "Oh, this car is quite amazing. It gives us lots of driving pleasure." This car is unique because it's so light, and you get driving pleasure at every kind of speed, and for every kind of customer.'

Erphelin also makes all the right noises about maintaining the purity of what is essentially still an infant brand. The idea of enhanced Renault Sport products wearing the Alpine moniker is swatted away immediately, although the need for a degree of parts sharing is understandable and necessary. Dieppe has built hot Méganes and Clios in the past and continues to do so, but at present there is no commonality between the two in terms of 'feel' or set-up.

No parts for the A110 are made on site: aluminium pressings are shipped in from an Italian specialist, then bonded and riveted into full shells before mechanicals, trim



and paint are added. There are specialist skills on site, too: the in-house Alpine school provides 140 hours of additional training for every employee, while the standards of finish and quality have been raised to suit a car priced in excess of £45,000. One car per day is pulled from the line and digitally scanned in 3D to ensure it meets those exacting standards.

All this represents part of a 36million-euro investment by Groupe Renault, so a bulging order book is only the beginning and something which Erphelin is clearly aware of: 'For Alpine and for the whole group it's quite a big change, because we are not only launching a new car, we are launching a brand, we are launching a network and so on, so you can see the challenge. We want to be sure that we are successful in these challenges. It seems like we will be, but obviously we need time. And the second challenge is to develop the life cycle of this car. Because we all know you can imagine so many new versions.'

There is an obvious logical progression for the A110. The car's 1.8-litre turbocharged four-cylinder unit currently offers 249bhp, but a higher-powered version with 296bhp – as will be fitted to the Mégane RS Trophy – is waiting in the wings, raising the prospect of a hotter version to take on the Porsche 718 Cayman GTS. However, Erphelin is understandably keen to keep the focus on the current line-up: 'No, it's not coming soon. Because currently we are confident with the position of the car. We would like to be



fully consistent with the Alpine DNA, so we are not talking about the power of the car, we are talking about the power and the weight of the car.'

What is happening is that keen Alpine owners are being given the opportunity to cheer on their marque at the weekends. The Signatech Alpine LMP2 car scored a third-in-class in the 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps in May and a class win at Le Mans in June. Meanwhile gentleman racers have been able to enjoy the debut season of the Alpine Europa Cup, and the GT4 car is completing its development programme, so the brand-building exercise is fully mobilised. But all that noise is nothing without the right road cars to feed off, which Erphelin is happy to acknowledge. 'I think we could have some special variants,' he says. 'Maybe more power or lighter cars. You can imagine a lot of things. But not in the coming months. Currently we are focused on development, quality and so on, and after that we can imagine something.'


That word 'quality' is repeated over and over in case of dictaphone failure: 'Our key priority is quality. There is no debate. I'm quite sure that you'll see that our first priority is quality, our second one is quality, our third one is quality. And after that we'll talk about quantity. So currently we are building between 15 and 20 cars per day. We'll see later if it's relevant to try to enlarge a little bit.'

So what is Erphelin's ultimate goal for Alpine? 'My dream? I want to be able to meet people who buy the first A110 and for it to have put a big smile on their face,' he says. 'We were at Le Mans Classic and we had the opportunity to talk with some former A110 drivers, and they are really enthusiastic about their cars. So I would like to have people driving the [new] A110 for ten years and be able to have a big smile every day. And I think that's very important for us.'

'But as you can imagine, it was quite a significant investment to relaunch the brand, so it was very great that our CEO decided to do that. So now we have to show to our parent company that we are able to have the right level of customer satisfaction. I think the first step is that you are able to deliver the right level of quality, that you are able to have a lot of enthusiasts. And after, maybe we'll be able to add to the story, but currently this is the first chapter and we need to show to you, the company and the customer that we are at the right level. I'm quite sure that we are.'

EVO COMMENT

Alpine's commitment to doing things right has been evident from the beginning of the A110's development. Before the car was launched *evo* was invited to drive a couple of early prototypes (issue 244) to provide feedback, and we did. And it wasn't very complimentary. But Alpine listened and the production cars are light years ahead. They're also a revelation in today's world of sports cars that are a bit 'me too'.

Alpine now faces an even bigger challenge, however. It has to build on this early success and its motorsport achievements, but to do so requires offering a wider range of models to consumers who thrive on choice. So sooner rather than later we would like to see an A110 that taps into the company's motorsport programme. More power isn't a must, but would be welcome, but there's clearly untapped potential in the car's already great chassis. Less weight is also always welcome, as would be a pared-back interior. An A110 R, anyone? 



'WE ARE NOT TALKING ABOUT THE POWER OF THE CAR, WE ARE TALKING ABOUT THE POWER AND THE WEIGHT'

BABY D



by ANTONY INGRAM

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

RIVERS

It's crunch time for Ford's new Fiesta ST as it squares up to not only its predecessor, but also two junior hot hatch greats: Peugeot's 208 GTi by PS and Renault Sport's Clio Trophy



HARD ACT TO FOLLOW, THE OLD FORD

Fiesta ST. Previous hot Fiestas were patchy affairs, but the ST of 2013-2017 was Ford returning to the top of its game. With the good fortune to coincide with a rare lapse from Renault Sport with the auto-only Clio 200 and average efforts from the likes of Volkswagen, Mini and Peugeot, that ST was an easy class leader. Affordable too, which is at least part of the reason why every second Fiesta you see seems to be one.

Officially it's one in ten, and if Ford has got its sums right the latest ST should match that figure. On early evidence, there's little reason why it shouldn't: the new car is heaps of fun, even quicker than its predecessor, and remains competitively priced, at £18,995 – though more than two-thirds of ST buyers will shell out at least £21,495 for the ST-3 with its satnav and leather trim, and more than a fifth of those will throw in the Performance Pack for £850, with its a Quaife limited-slip differential, launch control and shift lights.

Once again – for the time being at least – the Fiesta ST finds itself short of credible rivals on the new-car market. So to get a clearer picture of what this latest version is capable of we're pitching it against three former *evo* supermini heroes. First, and perhaps most intriguing, is the aforementioned previous-generation ST, here in run-out ST200 form. This received an on-overboost power hike from 197bhp (a figure matched by the new car's three-cylinder engine) to 212bhp, along with tweaked suspension in the form of softer springs and dampers, but a stiffer rear torsion beam and thicker rear anti-roll bar. Sophisticated? Nope. Fun? Plenty.

Next up is the Peugeot 208 GTi by Peugeot Sport, *evo*'s supermini class leader until the model went off sale a few months ago. Like the Performance Pack ST we're testing here, the 205bhp Pug also gets a slippy diff, and it's backed up by one of the most aggressive chassis we've seen in a front-driver, with throttle adjustability to make a 205 GTi cock a wheel in appreciation.

Last time we drove the 208 (*evo* 247) its stubby nose was bloodied by perhaps the best hot hatch ever to emerge from France – the Clio 200 Cup. I say 'perhaps' because the Cup's predecessor, the limited-edition Trophy version of the Clio 182, is considered by many to be even better, and so by definition is among the greatest of the breed. It completes our gathering here.

So if the new Fiesta ST can beat any of these past masters it'll deserve a place among the greats. However, all of our contenders face an extra challenge today: the weather. It's raining for the first time in well over a month and some stretches of road might as well be covered in ball bearings for all the friction they offer. But with the key to the Trophy in my hand





**'IF THE NEW FIESTA
CAN BEAT ANY
OF THESE PAST
MASTERS IT'LL
DESERVE A PLACE
AMONG THE GREATS'**



the day is already looking brighter. It's the only one of our quartet I've never driven, but its reputation has me buzzing in anticipation.

It feels tiny. Not quite as bijou as my 106 Rallye, but it's still nine inches shorter and four inches narrower than the new ST, and compared to the other three it's blissfully devoid of overwrought details. The multi-spoke Speedlines look like they've been half-inched from a BTCC pitlane, while a small front lip and the Clio V6's slightly taller rear spoiler offer clues for the connoisseur, should they somehow miss the Trophy lettering along the sills.

Neither bus-like steering wheel nor high-mounted Recaros are as troublesome as they might sound. As a person of modest height I prefer a slightly higher driving position anyway, and the wheel's angle improves as it drops. The cabin feels snug, but the view from my perch past the matchstick pillars and over the low scuttle immediately brings me closer to the road.

The Trophy chunters into an industrial-sounding idle, one unaugmented by sound generators. The naturally aspirated 2-litre engine's response to blips of the throttle is synaptic and the clutch has the heft of a Porsche Motorsport product. An exploratory squeeze of the brake pedal reveals half an inch of play followed by a firm and progressive action. Pretty much perfect.

Without turbocharging there's a risk the old F4R four-cylinder

Clockwise from

top: Trophy's turn-in grip is mighty; chassis benefited from Sachs dampers; ST200 got tweaked suspension

could feel wheezy in a modern context. True, it isn't as rampant as the other units from low revs, but nor is its power wasted on lost traction. The Trophy is also one of the lighter cars here and has close gearing, all of which combine to make you wonder whether the others' extra brawn is desirable, or merely effective. There's a gloriously slick feeling to the entire drivetrain, too,

sharp throttle, slightly notchy gearshift and calf-pumping clutch all gelling as you chase each red-line hit.

You'll know already that the remote-reservoir Sachs dampers contribute to the genial chassis, but you'll excuse us for delving into it once again. Body control is exceptional. It's firm from the outset but never punishing, and once you're at more than a saunter you feel exactly where the dampers stop reacting to bumps and begin to absorb them, only improving as you squeeze the tyres further into the tarmac. Composure through mid-corner bumps is remarkable. Dips and compressions are simply dismissed, the Trophy refusing to break step unless you're traversing lumps that force the tyres to lose contact with the road surface.

As well as control, those dampers help the Clio extract outstanding grip from the rubber. 'The grip as you turn in feels limitless,' says staff writer Will Beaumont. While you can overpower the front tyres if you jump on the throttle out of a tight corner, the noisy F4R lets you meter out power to the finest degree. At that point, you

can simply enjoy the endless roadholding, garrulous steering and adjustable balance.

Stepping into the Peugeot is not a disappointment, even after the Trophy. Beaumont has it down as the winner right from the outset, still pining for his old long-termer and gushing over its hilariously lively chassis. He likens it to the dynamic instability of a modern jet fighter, the entire chassis edgy and almost unbalanced for maximum response, accentuated by sharp brakes that press the nose into the ground and give the tail end a helping hand.

In the dry this means front-end response and turn-in grip that few cars of any sort can match, amplified by the response of the video-game-sized steering wheel, but in the wet it can give you white knuckles and make you take notice of a car many would dismiss – wrongly – as a tarted-up city car.

As with the Clio, wheel control is never an issue, but one thing we don't expect is that the 208 feels the softest and least compromised of all four cars, the firm ride smothering harsh edges that the others, particularly the Fords, seem to highlight.

That said, the ST200 feels more pliant than any other ST I've driven. Those spring and damper changes really work – had the ST been this easy-going from the start, it would have made things much trickier for Peugeot Sport. Where once the ST bounced from lump to bump and required a box of paracetamol in the glovebox on long trips, the ST200 feels... well, jolly firm still, but no longer agonisingly so.

It's not an old car but there's an old-school vibe to the ST200, with more noise than we've come to expect from small hatches even in the past few years. You sit higher than in the other cars, and Clio aside it feels the narrowest and nimblest on the tighter stretches of our test route. The gearshift is lightning fast and each of the controls feels well matched to its counterparts, from the light clutch and throttle to the smooth and consistent steering.

And there's bags of ability. The turbo 1.6 isn't as responsive as the Clio's atmospheric four and doesn't lunge the ST200 onto each straight with the brio of the Peugeot's 1.6, but it's free-spinning and the induction noise piped into the cabin goads you into hanging on to each and every rev. There's torque-steer and some wheelspin, but with no limited-slip diff and a calm rate of response to the steering, the Ford doesn't fight you out of tighter corners like the 208 can.

Or indeed the new ST. Like its predecessor, you hold a surprisingly large steering wheel, but sit lower in a wider, higher-quality cabin and in slightly softer Recaros. It's a calmer, less tinny environment, and that's echoed in the noise as the three-pot churns to life and settles to a bubbly, bassy idle rather than the old car's hollow hum.

Most of the noise is now emanating from behind you through a valved exhaust, and while Ford continues to pipe sound into the cabin, that sound now augments the growling tailpipes rather than the roar of induction. It's a cleaner tone too, as if any harshness has been digitally removed. That feeling also pervades the gearshift – which is tighter but no less slick than that of the ST200 – plus the smooth pedal actions and the glassier steering.

I'm not quite sold on that last feature, certainly. Ford has gone down the Mini route with its steering set-up, with ultra-quick responses just off centre that give the car an eager feel, but like modern Minis there's no corresponding increase in the effort required until you're deeper into a corner. Fine on dry, familiar roads, but slightly disconcerting on greasy, broken tarmac where your fingertips crave indication that the front tyres have hooked up. At the same time the ST follows cambers and ruts to a greater degree than the ST200 and gives you a workout out of tighter turns, thanks to the Quaife diff. It's firmer over bumps than the old car, too, which is a surprise. Not as sophisticated as we were expecting, then, and certainly not with the 208 and Clio in close company.

But the new ST hits more than it misses. For straight-line punch



**'LIKE THE BEST SMALL
HATCHES, THE FIESTA IS
NOT SO FAST YOU CAN'T
EXPLOIT THE MAJORITY OF
ITS PERFORMANCE'**

it's right up there with the Peugeot, despite a deficit of one cylinder and a tenth of a litre, and the rowdy exhaust soon displaces the electronically enhanced engine noise once the valves open. Like the best small hatches (and like the others here) it's not so fast you can't exploit the majority of its performance, so every straight becomes another opportunity to sink the throttle and hang on for as long as you dare.

Experience on track suggests the ST's brakes can wilt under pressure, but you don't notice on the road and instead enjoy their power and feedback. The steering starts to talk, too, once you've fed in another eighth-turn. The extra width and porky-ish kerb weight (1187kg, making it the heaviest here) should count against its ability to flick-flack through compound curves, but it grips as hard as the others and that quick off-centre steering response allows you to place the nose with verge-skimming accuracy.

Ford has done it again, in other words. The new ST feels a more modern car than the old one – which you may or may not see as a positive – but it remains as much fun as a student foam party while costing about as little as a couple of beers in the union bar.

But on the day, Ford at the top of its game still can't quite match the French at the top of theirs. The 208 is a masterclass in making a modern hot hatchback, and illustrates how engaging an edgier chassis can be. The Clio? Proof that ingredients and portion size matter as much as the recipe, and a hard act for anyone to follow. ☒

Ford Fiesta ST

Engine In-line 3-cyl, 1497cc, turbocharger
Power 197bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque 214lb ft @ 1600-4000rpm
Weight 1187kg
Power-to-weight 169bhp/ton
0-62mph 6.5sec
Top speed 144mph
Basic price £18,995
evo rating ★★★★★

Peugeot 208 GTi by PS

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1598cc, turbocharger
Power 205bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque 221lb ft @ 3000rpm
Weight 1160kg
Power-to-weight 180bhp/ton
0-62mph 6.5sec
Top speed 143mph
Value today £13,000
evo rating ★★★★★

Ford Fiesta ST200

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1596cc, turbocharger
Power 212bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque 236lb ft @ 2500rpm
Weight 1088kg
Power-to-weight 198bhp/ton
0-62mph 6.7sec
Top speed 143mph
Value today from £15,000
evo rating ★★★★★

Renault Sport Clio Trophy

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc
Power 180bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 148lb ft @ 5250rpm
Weight 1090kg
Power-to-weight 168bhp/ton
0-62mph 6.9sec
Top speed 140mph
Value today from £5000
evo rating ★★★★★



'FOR STRAIGHT-LINE PUNCH THE FORD IS RIGHT UP THERE WITH THE PEUGEOT'

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PICK AND MIX

**More and more cars now
come with driver modes.
But do they offer genuine
benefits, or is it all just
marketing hype?**

by JOHN BARKER



THE FASHION FOR DRIVER MODES HAS taken hold in the last few years, with the majority of new performance cars equipped with a button or switch labelled Sport, Dynamic, DNA, Corsa or similar. On the face of it, driver modes look like added value, promising a bit of extra tuning, an increase in performance, for seemingly no cost, but increasingly we here at *evo* are finding such systems frustrating rather than fulfilling.

There are several reasons for this. Some don't provide enough tailoring of the systems – throttle, engine mapping, gearshift speeds, damper control – so you can't select the combination you want. Others require an off-putting trawl through menus and subsequent submenus to make your choices. And sometimes whatever the permutation selected, the end result is still unsatisfactory or offers little improvement over the default state of tune.

For instance, in the otherwise excellent Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio, to get the loud, growly best from its 503bhp V6, you have to select the sportiest setting (Race mode), which simultaneously disables the traction control – in a twin-turbo, rear-drive saloon equipped with trick Pirelli Corsa tyres. Fine in the dry, less so with a drizzle of precipitation. Meanwhile, on some VW Group performance models almost everything is tuneable – even the air conditioning – so if you can be bothered to trawl through the menus it might take weeks to get the car set up to your taste.

Driver modes have become more commonplace for a number of reasons. The roll-out of electrically assisted power steering (EPAS) makes it simple to offer different levels of steering effort. Similarly, electronic damper control is more affordable than ever and so is more common, and can easily offer 'comfort' and 'sport' damper forces. Then there is drive-by-wire throttle, which can be given a more responsive setting, and to complement this you can have an uplift in engine sound that increasingly is delivered by piping

supplementary 'engine/exhaust' sound through the car's speakers.

It's simple and cheap to bundle up packages of settings into driver modes, too, which looks great in the showroom, of course; configurations that allow you to have, say, a more comfortable ride and smoother gearchanges for when the family is in the car, then something more dynamic for when you're on your own. More cynically, perhaps, driver modes offer a way for the salesman to overcome an objection on the test drive: 'The ride feels too stiff/soft? At the press of a button you can make it softer/firmer...'

When I ran *evo*'s Fast Fleet SEAT Leon Cupra 300, which offers multiple tuning opportunities – damper stiffness, steering weight, auto gearbox alertness, engine response and more – it took me months to settle on my ideal set-up. I say ideal, but 'best compromise' is more accurate, as became clear every time I drove my Golf GTI Mk5 (which has nothing more than a traction control button) and rediscovered what a superb ride and handling balance it has straight out of the box.

It's obvious: dynamically some cars are better than others – more fun to drive, more engaging, more intuitive. Cars are complicated devices, chock-full of compromises, and some engineers and manufacturers are better at resolving these conflicts than others. Multiple tuning options via controls won't turn a mediocre car into a great one; if it was possible to make something really good just by light tinkering, surely the car maker would have done so during the car's development? You can only make it more to your taste.

There will usually be only so much scope to tune on offer – car makers have a duty of care and a dramatic shift in character might catch a customer out. Even the legendary Mitsubishi Evo's Tarmac, Gravel and Snow settings were not far apart in terms of the changes they brought. For anything greater, such as making the new all-wheel-drive M5 rear-wheel drive, there is an unlocking process, with messages and confirmations along the way.



Then there are cars that are fine in the start-up configuration (a default necessary to meet emissions and noise regulations) but which make it a laborious process to make adjustments. Take our long-term Mercedes-AMG C43. In order to set it to his liking, deputy editor Adam Towler has to go through six button presses: three to select Individual mode, one to put the gearbox in manual, another to select ESP Sport, and one more to turn up the exhaust. How many owners persevere with such processes?

Not that many, by all accounts. Frank van Meel, CEO of BMW M, revealed to *evo* the truth about those who buy and run M models: 'Owners of M-cars only experiment with the M modes early on in ownership. Some will settle on a set-up they like – damping and throttle changes, normally – and that will be the one they always drive in. Others will leave the car in the default modes after experimenting, and a tiny percentage will save settings in the M Drive buttons and use them regularly.' Insiders at other car companies confirm this reality.

Driver modes shouldn't be ignored, though, because they do work brilliantly on some cars. Take a Porsche 911 on track and you'll discover that the Sport and Sport Plus modes adjust, among other things, the on-limit balance for less understeer and better turn-in. This is not a simple 10 or 15 per cent uplift in damper firmness but a change to adjust the weight transfer. It's up to you if you then want to go all the way and turn off the stability control.

Ferrari creates complete dynamic themes for the various drive modes offered by the steering wheel-mounted manettino, aligning handling with ride and throttle and gearbox responses and, in the racier settings, the level of traction and stability control

'OWNERS IN THE U.S. AND U.K. ARE MOST LIKELY TO USE DRIVER MODES'

interventions. There's a definite sense that each of the modes is a balanced, considered, self-contained set-up, not just a variation on the original theme. It's a set menu rather than à la carte, the only divergence allowed being a 'Bumpy Road' damper setting, added at the behest of one of Ferrari's more influential employees – one M Schumacher.

Interestingly, BMW is offering a different take with its new M850i, which has a very high-tech chassis. For that car, it has restricted the number of chassis options, going as far as to offer only one wheel and tyre size, because it says it knows what the optimum set-up is.

It's hard to argue. Its engineers have driven for many thousands of miles in many scenarios fine-tuning the set-up, going to the very extremes of the abilities of the car and themselves. What they have given you is their best shot at the car they set out to make. So why then does the M850i have driver modes at all? Van Meel again: 'Some customers may not use them at all but we offer the choice because markets are very different. From what we see and the feedback we have from customers, the US and the UK are the most likely to use the modes.'

That's probably you, dear reader. But if a car is outstanding in its default mode, spend some time in it before changing it. Every time I drive *evo*'s Fast Fleet Honda Civic Type R I do so without changing anything because I feel it is just right in its default mode. I only push its buttons when it comes to setting lap times.

So do driver modes add to a performance car's DNA? If you drive a car and you're not impressed, walk away. Don't expect to fix it via a dial or a touchscreen. Sometimes what you're offered is more a product of the marketing department than chassis engineering.

EVO SAYS

What we think about driver modes

The Hyundai i30 N does things right. Initially the number of permutations it offers seems ludicrous – three engine modes, four rev-matching options, two for the E-LSD, three exhaust volumes, three damper settings, a trio of steering weights and three levels of ESP intervention. Crucially, though, you can set everything to a custom button to enjoy at leisure. It takes a while to figure out your perfect combination, but it wouldn't be perfect without all those options to play with.

Antony Ingram, Staff Writer

I like how driver modes allow you to alter a car's personality to suit your mood, the terrain, etc. Also, one needs to appreciate that without ESP and very clever TC systems we simply wouldn't have cars like the GT2 RS and McLaren 720S with around 700bhp, or BMW M5s and AMGs with circa 600bhp. They'd be unmanageable for most punters without safety-net modes, so wouldn't go on sale. But some systems, have become far too complex – we ain't all F1 drivers – and done badly they are a pain in the arse. And they are often not needed at all on lower-powered stuff. Plus, they add weight, cost and complication, especially for subsequent owners ten years down the line.

Steve Sutcliffe, Contributing Editor

I tend to use the modes to tailor the car's ride/response/sound to how I'd like it, then stick with that combination. I don't tend to think, 'Right, I'm going to drive in a Sport Plus manner now.' I suppose I try to use the digital tech to find my optimum analogue set-up.

It can feel stupid having umpteen modes on a hot hatch or chunky RS Audi as you never seem to find a sweet spot that you're prepared to stick with. But it can be great when you're driving, say, a Ferrari 488.

Ferrari does it very well indeed. As much for the way it makes the cars safe and manageable in tricky weather conditions as for the way it enables the car to perform so well on track. Porsche is also very good at it on the regular model 911s. The way each mode focuses

or relaxes the car as a whole is very impressive. It never feels contrived.

I'm not sure I've driven a car that's handicapped by its dynamic modes, but it does annoy me when there's very little perceptible difference between them.

Richard Meaden, Contributing Editor

In too many instances driver modes feel more like a case of 'we've done this because we can' rather than 'we've done this because it improves the car', the result often an overly complex and baffling array of options that can leave you in no man's land.

Unsurprisingly, it's the top-end manufacturers that seem to get it right (Ferrari, Porsche and McLaren, for example), with mid-tier manufacturers (Audi Sport, BMW M, Mercedes-AMG) mistaking an all-you-can-eat buffet of choice as a good thing. Less really is more. I'm unconvinced that hot hatches and superminis offer any meaningful improvement with them.

The biggest frustration is when the bandwidth between two different settings is so narrow you need a laptop to be able to spot the difference.

Stuart Gallagher, Editor

As a rule, I'm not a fan, even if from a legislation point of view it isn't going away. However, Steve makes a great point: without different layers of ESP and traction control, there's no way manufacturers would get away with selling 500-, 600- and 700bhp cars. The hedgerows would be littered with M-cars and AMG metal, let alone the latest crop of supercars. So once you're offering these different settings, why not add in suspension, steering and engine behaviour?

Nevertheless, I rarely feel modes actually improve a car: all too often it feels like the manufacturer is trying to hoodwink the buyer into thinking they're getting more 'car' for their money. Of course, they're not, and a car where you're never quite in the right setting is hugely frustrating. In an ideal world there'd be road and track suspension settings, and that's about it.

Adam Towler, Deputy Editor

THE GOOD

ALFA ROMEO

Ferrari-aping Bumpy Road mode allows a good mix of sharp engine maps with a balanced chassis

AMG

Engine and gearshift options work well together

BENTLEY

Offers a 'Bentley' mode that the engineers feel is the best fit for the car, but allows further personalisation

FERRARI

You can't separate individual settings but the choices offered are perfectly matched. Bumpy Road mode inspired

HYUNDAI N

At first glance blindingly complex, but the spread of choice allows a perfectly personal set-up

LAMBORGHINI

Its individual mode is called 'Ego' – what more do you want?

MCLAREN

Simple adjustability of throttle and chassis settings allows maximum flexibility

PORSCHE

Perfect choice for real-world roads (and the Nürburgring) or a billiard table-smooth F1 track

THE BAD

ALFA ROMEO

Can only experience the Giulia Quadrifoglio's V6 in full-bore mode with ESP turned off

AMG

Always tricky to find the damper setting for the situation you find yourself in

BMW

Mix 'n' match approach to the three core elements (engine, steering, dampers) should work, but rarely does

ASTON MARTIN

Not enough differentiation between any of the settings when different modes are selected

AUDI/SEAT/VOLKSWAGEN

Plenty of choice but adds little to the mix unless expensive hardware options also selected



by ADAM TOWLER

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

THE LAST DANCE

Subaru's WRX STI Final Edition is the last in a long line of illustrious Imprezas to grace our roads. We drive it to the scene of one of its forebear's greatest WRC triumphs, and to the homeland of its most famous driver





AS THE DAY GROWS LONG, THE glaring sun lies at its most inconvenient, illuminating the sprawl of dead bugs on the Subaru's windscreen like tiny diamonds. It has been a long haul. There were those who expressed pity when I told them of my plan to drive the WRX STI Final Edition to Scotland, an indication of the common perception of this car, but the A1 is being dispatched, and there's the palpable sense of a machine beneath me, not just modern white goods. We have an understanding already; a bond, essentially, and I'm partisan about it – protective even. With *evo* celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, it feels so right to be in an Impreza once again, truly, as the model is part of the very fabric of what this magazine represents. And yes, I know, it's not called Impreza any more, but please forgive me just this once...

This will be a rather personal journey in search of the ultimate: the ultimate rally stage, the ultimate Impreza and its ultimate driver – a young plumber from Lanarkshire who changed the world; the only real sporting hero I ever had. Colin Steele McRae, MBE.

The Impreza and *evo* got off to a fine start: issue 001 contained a road test of the mystical 22B in all its wide-arched gorgeousness, and barely a subsequent month seemed to pass without an Impreza of some sort being featured. At the time of the magazine's launch, the UK Impreza Turbo's originally meek exterior and laughably low-rent interior had already evolved, gaining a substantial rear wing, sharper creases to those gently contoured body panels and deeply bolstered sports seats in step with the car's burgeoning sporting persona. The chassis, with the assistance of Prodrive, had been honed from a formidable but slightly blunt cosh of all-wheel-

drive traction and turbocharged grunt to something far more nuanced, finely balanced and glintingly sharp: mention of the 1999 RB5 – a UK Turbo with Prodrive handling pack and engine remap – still elicits appreciative gasps from *evo*'s John Barker, the subsequent explanation suggesting it may just be one of his all-time best drives, full stop. That's quite some praise.

Inevitably, this kind of exposure infuriated some, the letters pages raging with 'not another Impreza!' rants as ubiquity bred resistance when confronted by the P1, the Type RA and WRX STI 4, 5 and 6 imports, and all the other nerdy nomenclature that's a right of passage for any Subaru scholar. Yes, 2000's 'Bug Eye' was a bucket of cold water over the phenomenon, and never again did the Impreza possess quite the same kind of appeal that seduced both schoolboys and new-M3 drivers alike, but there were still some fantastic, memorable cars, sold in plentiful numbers, up until the end in 2007.

Then came the hatchback. And then it went. And then in recent years we had the return of the saloon, wallowing in obscurity, with Subaru seemingly embarrassed to talk about its rallying heritage, and at a loss as to how to promote its performance cars without any motorsport involvement and in the face of a class of similarly powerful hot hatches that were more attractively designed, just as fast, and cheaper to run. The Impreza stood largely still, and history simply swallowed it whole.

And what of Colin? There were highs and lows here too, of course. Those wild early years, the blinding speed, the destruction of successive Sierra

Above: the WRX STI at its spiritual home in Kielder Forest.
Top right: driven sedately the Final Edition can feel awkward, but push harder and there are times when it all comes together





**'THE IMPREZA IS PART OF THE VERY FABRIC
OF WHAT THIS MAGAZINE REPRESENTS'**







‘YOU REALLY HAVE TO WORK AT IT TO ACCESS THE PERFORMANCE IT ULTIMATELY OFFERS’

RS Cosworths, rallying rock ‘n’ roll. The glory years of Subaru Group A, of outright wins on Rally GB and, in 1995, becoming the youngest ever World Rally Champion, and Britain’s first ever. Then there were the Ford years, the diversification into other forms of motorsport, and then that terrible, tragic helicopter crash in 2007, and, along with the loss of that other motorsport hero and Subaru warrior, Richard Burns, an unpatchable hole in the heart of British rallying.

I’ve had more than enough time to ponder all of this and more on the way here – here being our first destination of Kielder Forest, a place I find unable to refer to without the prefix ‘killer’. If you were a car enthusiast growing up in the ‘70s, ‘80s and ‘90s, ‘Killer Kielder’ was as much a part of the British winter as frozen milk bottles in the playground and the overpowering aroma of satsuma peel ground into the luridly hued seat fabric of the school bus. With the Lombard RAC Rally portrayed on the BBC with the kind of gravitas the broadcaster now reserves only for royal weddings, the reverential, downright fearful tones used for the commencement of the Kielder Forest stages made it seem almost otherworldly, particularly if, like me, you grew up in the quiet security of the home counties. The Romans had called it quits just up the road and built a wall; for a car-mad youngster, the difficulties facing the Abarth-run factory Lancia army, in the dark, dense forest, at night, seemed to hold a similar peril for its superstar Scandinavian drivers. These are surely the world’s ultimate forest rally stages, a place that Colin conquered on his way to that 1995 RAC win. Holy ground.

Ironically, then, that you’ll find no mention of the forest’s rallying history on any of the websites associated with it, and recent news articles are dominated by attempts to reintroduce the lynx here after 1300 years, not the fact that the British Rally Championship visited in 2018. Motorsport is an uncomfortable fit these days with the green-conscious world of forest management. Today, Kielder is host to a very blue WRX STI Final Edition, although that’s due to some cheeky inquisitiveness on our part and an unlocked gate. It is spectacularly beautiful amongst the towering Sitka spruces, with shafts of sunlight illuminating the mossy trenches and nearby gushing streams, dancing playfully across the Subaru’s blistered bonnet; driven at speed in the middle of a November’s night it must be hell on earth.

I expected to get frustrated with the Final Edition on the way up here, but I wasn’t. It is now an old car,



Left and above: the Impreza (for that’s what it will always be to us) in its element. **Bottom left:** after Kielder, on into Scotland

and in many ways feels it: the larger wheels and the upgraded brakes, headlamps and infotainment system on this 1-of-150 run-out model can’t change that. It’s not a car to make life easy for the driver, because you really have to work at it to access the performance it ultimately offers. I’ve never liked the rather flaccid 2.5-litre engine, which lacks the steely anger and the extended rev range of the gritty old 2-litre lump, especially compared to earlier engines with their unequal-length manifolds and characteristically gruff and thrummy exhaust bark.

Moreover, the greater swept volume doesn’t appear to bring plentiful torque, in spite of the claimed 300lb ft figure, because the Final Edition is fairly uninterested below 4000rpm. However, from that point on you have a reasonable band of blissfully smooth, boost-fed urge, where the flat-four makes almost any in-line four appear uncouth thanks to its inherently inertia-free delivery. Yes, the gearshift is stiff from cold and the interior functional – doubtless hard-wearing, but lagging so far behind in that modern touchy-feely sense it’s laughable. The driver’s seat is supportive but also set so ludicrously high I am almost peering out from underneath the header rail.



And despite the claimed 'quick rack' the steering still seems slightly slow compared to the current wrist-flick norm, with just a hint of vagueness immediately around the straight-ahead. Driven at five-tenths the Final Edition often seems out of sync – recalcitrant, loose of limb yet needlessly stiffly sprung, and awkward like a teen on their first date.

But there are also times when it seems to gather itself together and almost float above a demanding road – still, yes, even in 2018. Get it right and it's so involving, authentic, and you realise that however good the modern turbocharged hot hatch is, there isn't, and never will be, anything quite as effective and exciting as a blown flat-four partnered to a full-time four-wheel-drive system. Most onlookers think it's a bit naff; many find it downright embarrassing, verging on offensive. But I like that: it's the opposite of middle-class conformity, of a fast Golf or Audi. The tuts, the withering glances of disapproval? Fantastic.

Leaving the dust of 'Summer Kielder' behind, we're on our way to a secret location where the ultimate Impreza road car awaits us. A 22B, but not just any 22B: Colin McRae's 22B. One of three prototypes built by Prodrive during the development of the model, Colin eventually sold the car to its current owners, the Noble family, who own the local Subaru dealership, AF Noble in Penicuik. It's just a short time

we have with the car, but I'd be lying if I said I'm not comprehensively star-struck, sitting in the driver's seat making engine noises and working the wheel like Toad of Toad Hall. Few cars, whatever their power or price, have the road presence of a 22B; it constitutes everything I love about motorsport-bred road cars.

We're well into Scotland now, and as night comes, the cooler air is gobbled up by the bonnet scoop, each wheel clawing at the road in the kind of furious quest for traction usually the preserve of a cartoon cat. The stone wall-lined lanes become a greyish tunnel, a wild-eyed luge run lit by the Scoob's headlamps, my left arm a blur of cog swapping, chasing the rev limiter, attempting to extract everything the car has to offer, feeling the tail edge out under power, the whole experience so much more vivid, of depth, than that of say, a Golf R, albeit probably no faster.

Unsurprisingly, it's not long before we have to pull in for more superunleaded, and there, parked at the pump in front, is a lowered, modded, obsessively clean Polo BlueMotion of all things, two youths standing alongside, the bootlid adorned with an 'If in doubt, flat out' Colin McRae sticker. The man's memory lives on, even on the most unlikely of cars.

I chuckle to myself as I fill the WRX's tank, and then drive the last few miles quietly to the hotel, for tomorrow is going to be a very big day.



MORNING BRINGS A SHORT DRIVE TO

the town of Lanark. Never did the 16-year-old me imagine I'd be walking up Jimmy McRae's driveway one day, but here I am, notebook in hand, knocking on his front door. It's easy to overlook just what a talent behind the wheel Jimmy was in his own right. The owner of a successful plumbing and heating business in the week, he became a national sporting star, winning the British Rally Championship five times in the 1980s when it was one of the most prominent series in the world. The footage of him wrestling with his chattering, giggling, three-door Sierra Cossie is hardwired into my brain, and now I'm sitting across from him in his living room as he answers my questions about his late son's working relationship with Subaru. It's a strange life indeed.

We talk about how he prioritised Colin's career over his own. About how Prodrive's David Richards approached Jimmy after the 1990 RAC and said, 'We should talk'. Prodrive didn't really have the budget to run a Legacy in the British Championship: 'David asked me, "How much is a plumber's wage?" I said 25 quid a week. So that's what David paid him. Colin was still working in the week for our firm until the end of that year.'

Jimmy recounts how a fatherly word from both himself and Richards calmed Colin down, stopped the run of accidents, and then about the difficulties of the 1996 season: 'I think in any sport, when you get to the top, you relax a bit, and I think that's what happened to Colin. Maybe you take your eye off the ball a wee bit. There wasn't the same relationship with DR that year, either, but it came back after that.'

You can see Colin, perhaps the shier, younger Colin,

'HERE I AM, NOTEBOOK IN HAND, KNOCKING ON JIMMY McRAE'S FRONT DOOR'

from the early Subaru days, in his dad, and never more so than when Jimmy recounts the first test Colin did with the mighty Legacy RS Group A: 'He came in with a smile and said, "Oh, that was good."'

That was it, apparently. 'Oh, that was good.' Softly spoken, enormously understated, but once you're attuned to the McRae way, you know that, 'Oh, that was good,' really meant, 'This is absolutely MEGA!'

I'd never ask Jimmy about the crash that claimed his son, grandson, his grandson's friend and a further family friend, but I do wonder whether the fan interest still shown in his son has made, and continues to make, Jimmy's grieving process harder. 'There are times when I think I've had enough, but to talk about it positively – well, I should probably do more of it,' says Jimmy quietly, the emotion plain to see. I don't mind admitting I have to bite my bottom lip to hold it together, too, and we just sit in silence for a moment. 'I'd like his legacy to be what it is: he was an enthusiast man, an enthusiast driver,' adds Jimmy. I tell him about the sticker on the back of the Polo and he smiles: 'It makes you proud, where that came from.'

As our conversation comes to an end I feel compelled to tell Jimmy one more thing: how his son meant so much to me, even though we never met; how I would

Far left: Jimmy McRae chatting with evo's Towler and (top left) taking the cover off L555 BAT. **Left:** brief encounter with Colin McRae's 22B prototype



cut out pictures of him on the limit in the 555 Subaru and stick them onto my school work folders; how he showed how anything was possible, taking on and beating the world. 'Inspirational' is a terribly modish word, but it genuinely applies to Colin. But as the words leave my mouth they seem so insignificant, and Jimmy just smiles quietly and says, 'Oh, aye,' and I realise that it sounds kind of daft really and wish I could convey more effectively how much that time back then meant to me.

And then we follow Jimmy in convoy to a very special place, where behind an innocuous-looking garage door lives Colin's cars, dozing, and there, parked at the front, is a deceptively plain-looking, 555-liveried Impreza, with no wings, no big arches, riding high on gravel suspension: pure Group A. It's L555 BAT. The car. The Impreza Colin won the 1995 RAC Rally in, virtually fresh from the end of the stage. The ultimate Impreza, no doubt. For me it's like Clark's Lotus 49, Senna's Lotus-Renault 98T, Bellof's Porsche 956: that perfect symbiosis of man and machine, motorised royalty; possibly the coolest car ever.

Jimmy turns on the ignition and the electrics buzz, the fuel pumps whirr, and then with a percussive clatter the flat-four cranks over, repeatedly, finally firing on some, then all cylinders, with an unsilenced, savage, lumpy roar so loud I laugh out loud. Colin's dad, Colin's cars, the ultimate Impreza – my journey with the Final Edition has reached the perfect conclusion. It's allowed me to rediscover my love of driving Subaru's four-wheel-drive legend and, perhaps, to get closer to a hero of mine in a way I never thought possible.

And as the racket falls silent as abruptly as it began, a million thoughts suddenly, overwhelmingly barge their way to the front of my mind. Reading that first group test of an Impreza Turbo 2000 in *Performance Car* magazine, circa 1994; the cheeky test drive of a new Impreza Turbo wagon, even though the ink was barely dry on my driving licence; standing in the dark in a Welsh Forest, walking past the smouldering and unidentifiable wreckage of a privateer Impreza WRC, beams of torchlight flickering across its bodywork as it lay suspended in the bracken; a wild night-time drive in a 'Blob Eye' WRX STI as a young road tester. So many snapshots, sounds, faces: these are my Impreza memories, and so many of you, I know, will have your own, probably far more impressive, more vivid than mine, of places you've been, drives you've had in a Subaru, and of the people associated with them. And then the internal video reel lurches to a stop, while behind me a father, with surely the heaviest of hearts, carefully drapes a fabric cover over a now-silent car with which his son gave so much joy to so many.

It's not just this journey that's over: it's the end of the Impreza Turbo in the UK. No more. Finished. And then we leave, and I rinse that flat-four for the next ten minutes, until the beep of the upshift is a near-constant, for one reason, and one bloody glorious reason only: if in doubt, flat out. ☒

Subaru WRX STI Final Edition

Engine Flat-four,
2457cc, turbo

Power 296bhp @
6000rpm

Torque 300lb ft @
4000rpm

Weight 1534kg
(196bhp/ton)

0-62mph 5.2sec

Top speed 158mph

Basic price £33,995

evo rating

★★★★★

**'IT'S THE CAR
COLIN WON THE
1995 RAC RALLY
IN, POSSIBLY
THE COOLEST
CAR EVER'**



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UV Purple, Exclusive paint, 2,300 Miles

£72,995

Our Demonstrator



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HEART v HEAD

EXIGE S2 v GT86

Each of these four-cylinder, rear-wheel-drive coupes offers heaps of driver appeal, but which gets your £30k?

by WILL BEAUMONT

PHOTOGRAPHY by OTIS CLAY

YOU'VE GOT JUST UNDER £30,000 to spend on something fun. Something with two doors, that's rear-wheel drive, that'll cope with a trackday or two. At this price you're spoiled for choice, but at either end of the spectrum you'll find these two:

a new Toyota GT86 and a used Series 2 Lotus Exige S.

On paper, there's little commonality in this pair. The Lotus may have a Toyota engine, but then the Toyota, essentially, has a Subaru motor. Power is vaguely in the same ballpark, with the Japanese coupe producing 197bhp from its 2-litre naturally aspirated boxer and the Brit making 218bhp from its supercharged 1.8 in-line four. But with an extra 310kg to lug around, the GT86 can't get close to the 930kg Exige in terms of performance: the Lotus hits 62mph in 4.3sec, the Toyota 3.3sec later. The real connection here is that, despite going about it in extremely different ways, both of these cars appeal to the innate driver in us.

First impressions of the GT86 suggest Toyota has succeeded in making it a proper driver's car. You can find the ideal driving position for a start, your bum low, legs stretched out, steering wheel high with arms bent at the perfect angle, and the gearstick close and with a tight

'TOYOTA HAS MADE THE GT86 A PROPER DRIVER'S CAR'

action. There's plenty of room around you, too, and there's even good visibility.

It's clearly built to a price inside, but those worries evaporate on the move because so much of what you feel mechanically is of great quality. The structure is stiff, the body control tight, and there's just the right amount of pliancy for the car to be completely comfortable. Even the engine – lambasted as dull and weak when the GT86 was launched – has an appeal after a raft of four-cylinder turbo motors. OK, it's a little breathy at low revs, but there's a hollow induction gurgle at full throttle and – praise be! – it revs beyond 7000rpm. The oft-reported lack of grunt isn't a major issue, either, as there is a far more significant obstacle to overcome before you really feel happy to push the GT86: every time you lean on the car in a corner there's a substantial delay before front and rear axle dig in and grip, and it's rather disconcerting.

Experience tells us that so much of this vagueness can be solved by a set of grippier tyres, which will reveal a really sharp and well-balanced chassis, one that feels as though it has been slaved over by engineers who really care about driving. Also, rather than sacrificing that GT86 selling point of low-speed oversteer fun, which never really materialises on the standard Michelin Primacys (in the dry anyway), decent tyres create a car you're happier to throw around, a car that feels more precise.

Changing the tyres is the thin end of the wedge, as it's an ideal car to modify. So much of the Toyota's basics are so well executed, yet there's still lots you'll probably want to change. There's an abundance of tuning options: turbo or supercharger conversions, lowering springs, coilovers, big brake kits, aluminium radiators, roll-cages... the list goes on. All might erode its well-mannered everyday usability, but you can turn the GT86 into a far more serious sports coupe.

Then you try to insert yourself into an Exige and you wonder why you'd want to sacrifice any of the GT86's ease of use. The Lotus's door aperture is narrow in height and there's a wide sill to clamber over too. All dignity has to be abandoned to post yourself through the slot. Once you're finally inside and the rigid chair has caught you with a jolt, the Exige feels more premium than the GT86 (most things do). But it's not because there's lots of luxurious, well-fitted gadgets, of course, it's because there's hardly anything in

Right: GT86's handling is improved by a switch to sportier tyres – and that's just the tip of the tuning iceberg; Exige can be tuned too, but it's already brilliant as it is







Top: Interior of the GT86 is a little low-rent, but it offers an ideal driving position. **Above:** Exige's cabin is awkward to access and spartan at best

here in the first place: a steering wheel and gearstick, a couple of dials for the air con and very little else, not even any carpet.

You can't get as comfortable as in the Toyota – the steering wheel is too far away, there's no support under your legs and it's cramped. It's awkward. But awkward is something you're going to have to get very used to when owning an Exige. Even changing a front indicator bulb can be a chore, as Rob Good, the owner of this car, explained to us. To get to the back of the light, you have to take the front wheel off. Fine, except the Exige has a completely flat floor, and most of the jacking points are covered by the aero panels. There is a location each side that will lift both wheels if you jack from it, and it's identified by a blue sticker. If it's still there, that is...

Greg Lock from Lotus specialist Hangar 111 describes how they're not for the amateur mechanic: 'They are straightforward, but set up in a complicated way. In a single job you do touch on quite a few other elements. And most of it's like keyhole surgery, too, up through small gaps at arm's length and using endoscopes.'

All the tight packaging and complex set-up is worth it, though. After the Toyota, the Exige recalibrates your perception of how a sports coupe should feel. There's a familiar chunter as the engine idles, not dissimilar to the GT86's low-rpm puffing and panting. But that's where the similarities end because, in most respects, the Exige is the absolute antithesis of the GT86. It's all about grip and security. Riding on a set of Yokohama AD08R tyres, this Exige feels infallible.

Everything is absolutely alert. The quick steering requires minute inputs to make direction changes, the chassis instantly following every impulse. There's a little slack in this car's shift when you first push on the gearstick, but as soon as you work the linkage you find that it's short, narrow, weighty and accurate.

As you use more throttle you hear the supercharger whine, pulling air into the engine. Every corner you go through you feel you're nowhere near what the Exige is capable of achieving. It may not move and sway like the Toyota, but it communicates absolutely



everything that's happening between car and road.

With such an intense understanding of how the car behaves, you occasionally want for more power. Like the Toyota, there's an abundance of aftermarket parts available. Exhausts are often replaced (and then changed again for a quieter, trackday-appropriate one), brakes, suspension and supercharger upgrades are all available, too, and if the upgrades are done well, they'll likely add value to the car. Maybe not covering what you've spent, but it won't harm the car's desirability.

In Lock's experience, Series 2 Exiges are less likely to have seen track use than first-generation cars – only about a quarter will have been on a circuit compared to around half of S1s. Cars that have clearly spent a lot of time on track can be bought a little cheaper, but overall prices of S2 Exige Ss are on the rise. Over the past four years Lock has witnessed them increase by about £800 a year, so if this trend continues, the Exige has the capacity to offset some of your servicing and maintenance costs, too.

Both the GT86 and the Exige appeal to the same sort of driver, perhaps just at different stages in their experience. The Toyota's approachable limits, safe balance and absolute usability make it a great entry-level sports coupe, but to make it the car that many think it should be – or that you might eventually to want it to be – it requires some major tweaks. The Exige, meanwhile, is so right, so serious, so impressive straight out of the box. Its performance is on a totally different level, so it's a car you need to graduate to, and be prepared to accept more compromises with – but the rewards will make it all worthwhile.

**'THE EXIGE
COMMUNICATES
ABSOLUTELY
EVERYTHING'**

SPECIFICATIONS AND COSTS

LOTUS EXIGE S (S2)

Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 1796cc, supercharger
Power	218bhp @ 7800rpm
Torque	158lb ft @ 5500rpm
Transmission	Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip diff
Weight	930kg
Power-to-weight	238bhp/ton
0-62mph	4.3sec
Top speed	148mph
Price new	£36,000 (2011)
Value today	£27,000

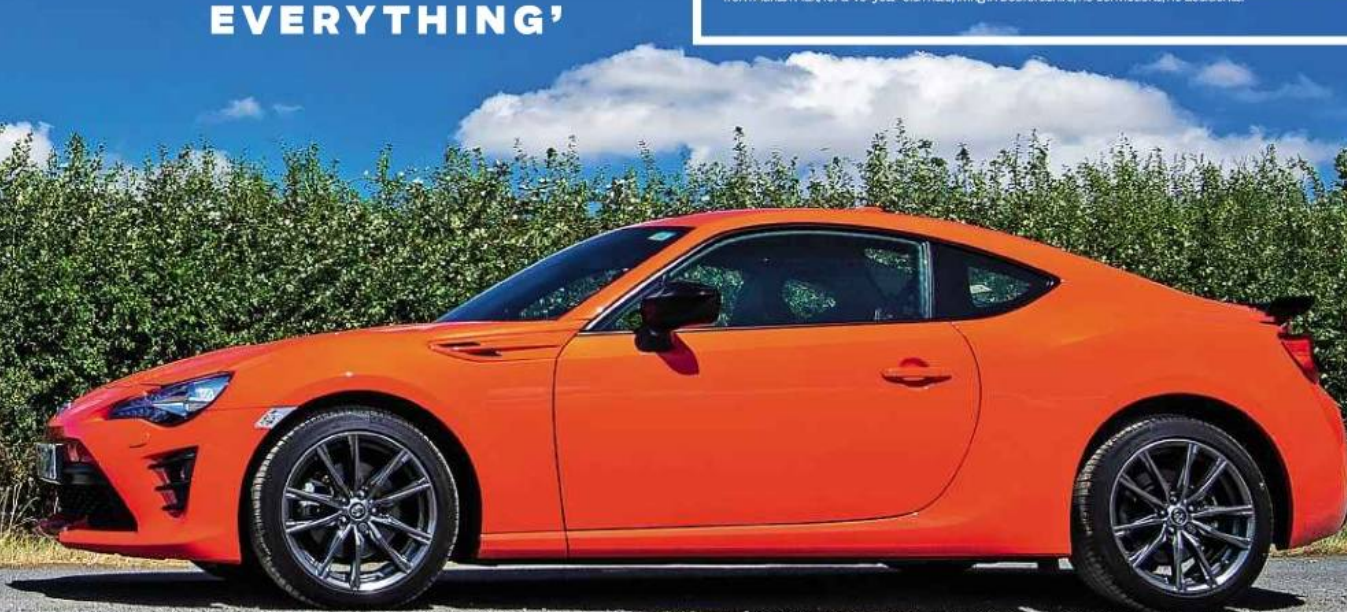
Full service	£549
Short service	£229
Front damper/spring assembly	£170
Rear damper/spring assembly	£306
Front discs	£214 each (£94 aftermarket)
Front pads	£191 per axle set (£62 aftermarket)
Rear discs	£214 each (£94 aftermarket)
Rear pads	£188 per axle set (£64 aftermarket)
Exhaust	£868 (£474 aftermarket)
Tyres	£95 each, front £110.94 each, rear (Yokohama AD08R)
Insurance	£375 (£350 excess)

TOYOTA GT86

Engine	Flat-four, 1998cc
Power	197bhp @ 7000rpm
Torque	151lb ft @ 6400-6600rpm
Transmission	Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip diff
Weight	1240kg
Power-to-weight	161bhp/ton
0-62mph	7.6sec
Top speed	140mph
Price new	£26,410

Full service	£365
Short service	£205
Brake fluid replacement	£45
Pollen filter	£71
Front discs	£68 each
Front pads	£162 per axle set
Rear discs	£67 each
Rear pads	£144 per axle set
Tyres	£106.09 each, front and rear (Michelin Primacy HP)
Insurance	£400 (£375 excess)

Parts prices include VAT but exclude fitting. Lotus costs from Hanger III. Tyre prices from Blackcircles. Insurance quotes from Adrian Flux, for a 40-year-old male, living in Bedfordshire, no convictions, no accidents.





Clockwise from top left: rivals for your £30,000 or less include an older Caterham Seven R400, while staying British can also see you in a TVR Tuscan from the early noughties; alternatively, the Porsche route offers up a 997 911 Carrera 4S or 987-era Cayman S; if you want new, then Mazda's MX-5 RF might do the trick

THE RIVALS

Alternatives from home and abroad are within budget

TO FIND A BETTER BALANCE BETWEEN usability and performance than either the Exige or GT86 can offer, you can't go too far wrong looking at the Porsche alternatives. For £25,000 to £30,000 a 997 911 Carrera S or 4S with 60,000 to 80,000 miles is achievable. Thanks to the disappointing turbocharged flat-fours in the current 718 Caymans, the previous-generation 981s don't dip below £30,000 very often, even in non-S form. An earlier 987 S from 2010 with around 50,000 miles would be within budget, though.

If it's a Lotus that you have your heart set on, newer Elises and Evoras can be bought for S2 Exige S money. Much older Esprit Turbos – both the Giugiaro- and Peter Stevens-designed cars – are still in the £20,000s, but their values are rising.

If the Exige's track-ready attitude

appeals but you prefer the idea of the GT86's less edgy front-engined, rear-drive balance then a Caterham Seven might fit the bill. For around £30k you can get a 2013 Supersport with very few miles on it, or an older, well-used R400. A 310R can be bought new for less than £30k, as long as you're willing to build it yourself.

If a Seven sounds like too much hassle, you probably won't be tempted by a late '90s TVR Cerbera or early 2000s Tuscan. However, a 2012 Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG or '06 BMW Z4 M Coupe will offer a good proportion of the TVR's brawny persona with greater sophistication.

The Toyota's new rivals all offer one difference – a convertible roof. However, although the Mazda MX-5 RF and Abarth 124 Spider allow limitless headroom, neither is quite as sharp as the GT86.

LOTUS EXIGE EXPERT VIEW: GREG LOCK

OF HANGAR 111

'THE TOYOTA 2ZZ ENGINE IN THE EXIGE IS durable. It lasts because it's been designed to take high revs for sustained periods, and not many people will do that with them.'

'We've had cars that have come in with 140,000 miles on the clock and are regularly used on trackdays. They're a bit rattly, a little noisy, but the customers keep servicing them, changing the oil frequently, just keep using them and they just keep on going. But if you are using the engine on the upper cam all the time, getting what I'd consider the best of the engine, then yes, they do definitely wear quicker.'

'A lot of people say the camshaft lift pins snap all the time, but in 15 years we've only seen one set of these pins that have actually been worn. Even though some cars have shown very similar characteristics to what is described as being lift pin wear, it's generally wear in the camshafts themselves.'

'Exiges can easily be over-revved on downchanges, because there is an issue with the gear cables. They're about seven to eight feet long and they go from the middle of the car, past all the heat sources, underneath the gearbox, then back over the top of it. Over time they will stretch. We find that most of the time they can be easily corrected with a brief test drive followed by a couple of adjustments. Or you can say those cables are definitely done and they need changing. It's not a hard science; there is no perfect way of getting the gearshift to perfectly relate to the internal selectors in the gearbox. It's trial and error, and it needs a bit of knowledge and experience to get them set up right.'

'Bodywork is not cheap – front and rear clamshells are £3000 to £4000 each. There are a lot of cheap copies out there that don't quite fit properly. The factory ones are still far and away the strongest, and the best in terms of getting them to look right on the car.'

'It's important to use a bodyshop that knows and is comfortable with glassfibre, too. Lotuses don't take well to being baked at all. If you stick them in an oven at 60deg C, the panel that's just been prepared will come out all lovely but the rest of the car will potentially bubble up, as there can be moisture under the surface of the gel coat that turns into little bubbles if the car gets hot.'

'The worst thing you can do is leave a black car sitting in the sun with a cover over it, but every single colour I can think of, apart from Chrome Orange, is prone to having the paint bubble up.'



Lotus Evora GT410 £95,500

The stunning new GT410 Sport is here, finished in Dark Metallic Grey and Carbon Fibre with Black Alcantara and leather interior with contrasting yellow stitching. This next evolution of Evora takes the Evora's unique attributes to spectacular new heights. Small car agility, precision and response meets big car refinement and comfort like never before. Masterfully sculpted composite body panels from the flagship GT430 bring major advances in aerodynamic efficiency. Generating over three times the Evora 400's maximum downforce without any increase in drag, the GT410 Sport is now the most aerodynamically efficient Lotus of all. As a pure driver's car it remains unchallenged in its class. Optional extras: Metallic Grey paint, alcantara steering wheel, cruise control, sub woofer and amplifier, air conditioning, sound insulation, 7-inch premium infotainment and sat nav, Sparco seats with yellow stitching, mud flaps.

Transmission: Manual • Colour: Dark Metallic Grey • Engine: 3456cc V6



Lotus Elise Sprint 220 £49,950

The new Sprint edition captures the spirit of Lotus by offering the latest in efficient engineering to deliver a car that sets the standard at under 800kg. Featuring a host of weight-saving Carbon Fibre items as standard, the new Lotus remains true to the company's founding principles. Benefitting the range as a whole, all new Elise editions receive the car's new look and new interior options, and every single one of the Sprint's lightweight components can be specified on the standard Elise Sport 220 variants. This example is presented in the iconic Gold Leaf colour scheme.

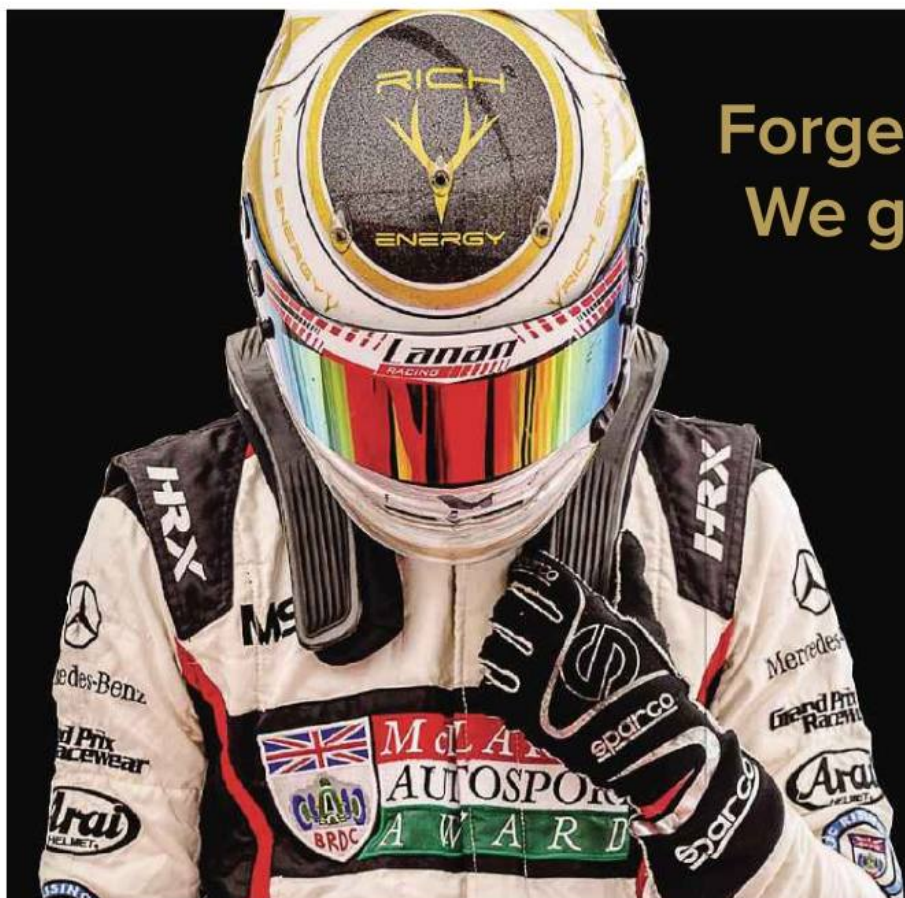
Transmission: Manual • Colour: Gold Leaf • Engine: 1798cc Inline 4



Lotus Exige Sport 350 70th Anniversary £66,950

Castle Lotus is offering this 70th Anniversary Exige in Metallic Grey, with gloss Phantom Black front panel and red cat strips on both the front panel and colour coded roof. It boasts the following options at a reduced cost: alcantara trim pack, floor mats, alcantara steering wheel, alcantara trimmed fascia vents, double stitching (red and white), interior colour pack in red, air conditioning, stereo plus two front speakers, sound insulation, cruise control, lightweight silver forged wheels, two-piece performance brake discs.

Transmission: Manual • Colour: Metallic Grey • Engine: 3456cc V6



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Fast Fleet

Porsche 911 Carrera

It hasn't turned a wheel in anger for months, but at least Adam Towler's 996 is looking the part



p126 Suzuki Swift Sport

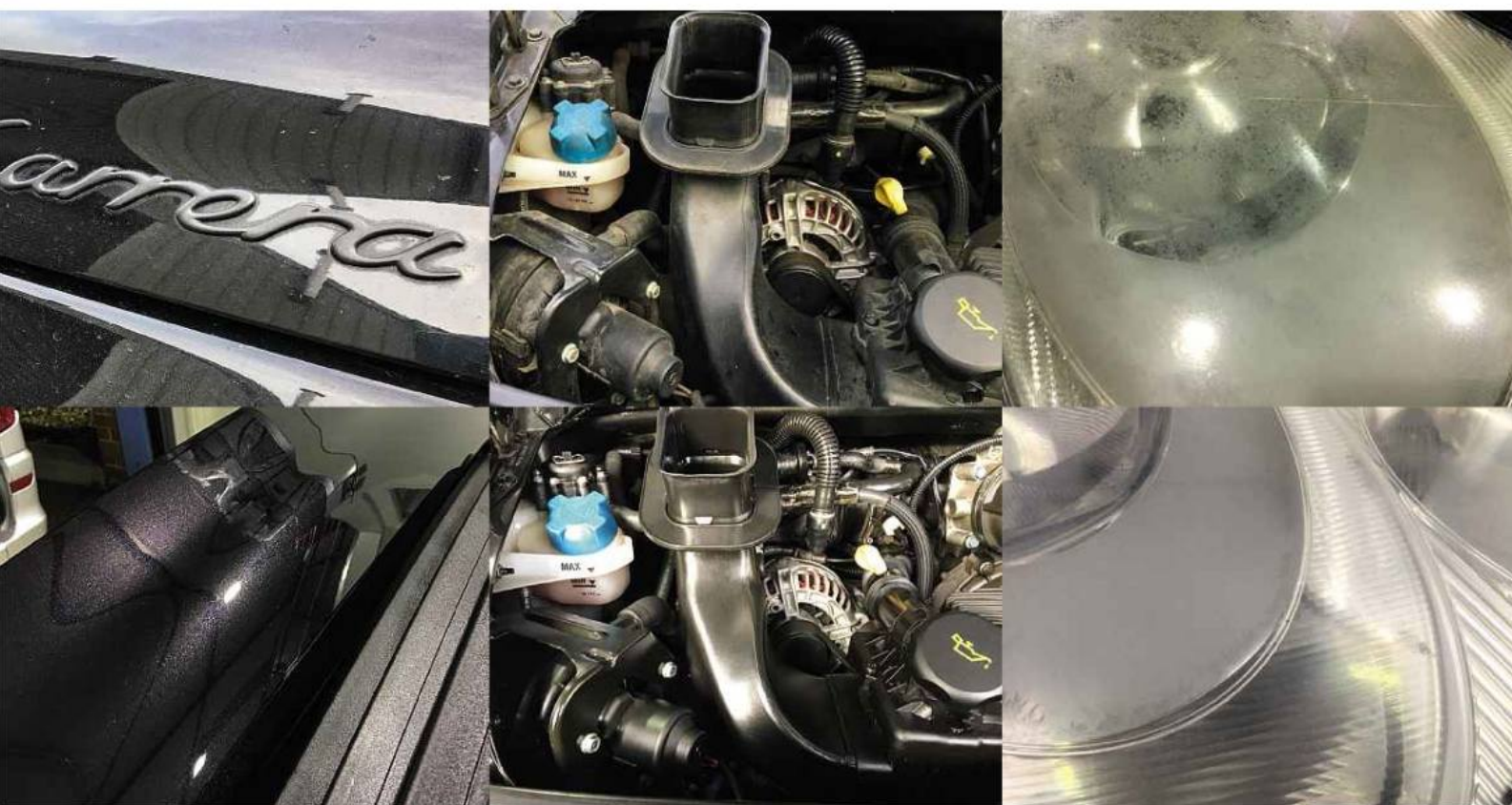


p130 Aston DBS Volante



p132 Honda Civic Type R

PLUS: Peugeot 308 GTi by PS ■ Hyundai i30 N Performance ■ Audi RS3 Saloon ■ Lamborghini Aventador Roadster
■ Volkswagen Up GTI ■ Caterham Seven 310R ■ Ford Mustang 5.0 V8 Convertible ■ Kia Stinger GT S ■ SEAT Ibiza FR



SOMETHING HAS HAPPENED to my beloved 996 Carrera. Something that actually made me cry. No, the dear old M96 flat-six hasn't succumbed to one of its much-publicised ailments, nor have I understeered off into the flora and fauna of the Bedfordshire countryside. In fact, the 996 has had a wash. But not any old wash – a wash conducted by Richard Tipper, of Perfection Detailing fame, and the results left me embarrassingly emotional. Let me explain...

When I bought my 911 a couple of years ago, I felt an overwhelming sense of pride, satisfaction and excitement; it was undoubtedly one of the more memorable days of my life to date. Integral to that was how the car looked, the Basalt Black paintwork gleaming, those optional 18-inch five-spoke rims complementing it perfectly. Every time I caught sight of the car during those first weeks of ownership I felt like dancing on the ceiling.

Inevitably, though, over the following year of using it as a sometime daily driver, the car lost a bit of that lustre, and not being someone who obsesses over cleaning cars, and because I have to keep it outside, I admit

I let standards drop somewhat. A miserable sponge, occasionally applied, then the gritty friction of a sorry-looking chamois dragged mercilessly across the bodywork. Shameful. By this year the car was a mess of hazy scratches and ingrained dirt, and suddenly its 16 years and 80,000-odd miles seemed so much more apparent. The headlamp lenses were so crazed and cloudy that driving it at night had become a bit alarming.

Enter The Tipper, who regular readers will know has transformed a number of Fast Fleet machines over the years. I deposited the 996 at the workshops of RPM Technik in Hertfordshire, where Richard would work his magic, and then I waited. And waited some more, constantly checking my phone for updates. Daft, but I always get nervous when the 911 is being, er, interfered with.

Then the photos started to ping through. First, the 'as was' shots; all those tucked-away areas I hadn't even thought about: the exhaust silencer boxes, the door apertures, underneath the bonnet catch. Next arrived the pics of said parts getting cleaned, and then came the really gobsmacking images – the engine bay, like new; the silencers, in spite of all those heat cycles, gleaming. But

it was the bodywork that was particularly bemusing. I'd even thought about saving for a respray, but what I was seeing in Richard's photos was hard to comprehend: was that the door, or a reflection showing the other side of the workshop?

Which brings us neatly to the morning I came to collect the car, after Richard had spent two whole days working on it, inside and out. The moment I saw it I felt a lump form in my throat, and then my eyes well up, simply because the 996 parked in front of me was so perfect. I imagine it must have looked no better when its first owner collected it from the factory in Stuttgart 16 years previously. It was my car, yet a brand new one; the same car, yet 100 times better.

'Your reaction drives my enthusiasm,' said Richard. 'It's that passion from people like yourself that gives me the satisfaction in this job. I knew you'd be amazed.'

I was most excited about just how much the car had been neglected in certain areas, but there's very little on a Porsche that can't be recovered. I spent most of the first day just cleaning, removing contaminants, baked-on tar, taking the wheels off and getting to the exposed areas... It was



Above: from bodywork to exhaust boxes, via engine bay and headlights, a two-day professional detailing session has brought some much-needed sparkle back to Towler's 996 Carrera

obvious the car had never had an intense detail and clean before.

'Once it's clean, it's a case of clay-barring the body, machining it, and then coatings and dressings. Experience is vital to know what pastes and pads to use for machining: the 996's paint is soft, so it's about knowing what's going to bring out the best in it. It's so rewarding to polish a 996, the depth and quality of the clear coat means I can remove so much of the damage.'

So there you have it. Not cheap, but relative peanuts next to the cost of a respray. Now, if only the rear suspension bushes were quite so pristine, but more on that next time...

Adam Towler (@AdamTowler)

Date acquired May 2016 **Total mileage** 84,012 **Mileage this month** 112 **Costs this month** £1200 **detailing mpg this month** n/a

Peugeot 308 GTi by Peugeot Sport

The Pug makes a rewarding stand-in for an absent M5

WITH OTHER MEMBERS OF THE team coming up with various excuses to borrow 'my' M5 long-term this month, the Peugeot and I have had the chance to get to know each other a little better.

I've always been a fan of the 308 GTi by Peugeot Sport, because it provides a perfect antidote to its Volkswagen Group rivals, which at times feel like little more than facsimiles of each other, and also to Ford's Focus ST, which promises so much but delivers so little most of the time. Peugeot Sport, however, appears to have nailed it.

There is a rawness to how the 308 engages you on every drive, encouraging you to extend its 266bhp 1.6-litre turbo four to the red line, thriving on revs as it piles on the speed. Its gearshift is incisive and precise, although our car's has developed a noticeable graunch when selecting third (either up from second or down from fourth), which is something we'll keep an eye on. And those Alcon brakes are at their best when you call on them late and hard. Add in a limited-slip differential that is unapologetic in its application and Michelin Pilot Super Sport tyres that offer endless grip and our GTi is a great clear-your-head car.

It doesn't try to be a suave sophisticate one minute and a hair-raising hound the next. It is what it is, which is an unabashed hooligan of a hot hatch. It brings back memories of my much missed 306 Rallye, a car from an era where we put driving thrills ahead of infotainment systems. (I still do, which is good news for the 308, because it's a joke.)

Yet the 308 still retains that hot hatch duality that made this genre of car so successful and desirable in their heyday. On my 80-mile commute that mixes every conceivable road type, the Peugeot delivers across the board. On the boring stuff it's quiet and rides well, then on the interesting stuff it's like an excitable puppy desperate to be let off its leash to chase something. Anything.



Above: the 308 is in its element on a demanding B-road, but it's not too shabby tackling the daily grind either

Switch to Sport mode and the keener throttle encourages you further still and every crown in the road has the diff pulling this way and that. For some the diff will be too busy, but with no tractors or directionless HGVs getting in the way, the last dozen B-road miles to *evo*'s offices in the 308 are a riot of full-throttle red-line buzzes and snatched gearchanges as the front tyres paw at the surface and the diff bullies the torque between the two. This car just comes alive the harder you drive it.

More supportive seats wouldn't go amiss, and while I don't find the steering wheel's size as distracting as some others do, I agree that it would definitely be improved by being an inch or two larger in diameter, but these issues aside, the 308 remains the dark horse of the *evo* fleet.
Stuart Gallagher (@stuartg917)

Date acquired June 2018 **Total mileage** 6856 **Mileage this month** 692 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 37.1



New arrival

Suzuki Swift Sport

It struggled in our early tests, so can this Japanese supermini make a case for itself as an ownership proposition?

WHAT MAKES A GREAT SUPERMINI? Lots of fancy technology? I don't think so. Some tough looks with red highlights inside and out? They may be common, but they're not really necessary. A low kerb weight? Certainly. A powerful engine? Perhaps, but not entirely essential. A keen, eager and lively chassis? Now that's an absolute necessity.

Pore over the specification of the Suzuki Swift Sport and it looks to tick all of those boxes, so as a long-term prospect it's very encouraging: all the excitement of a compact hot hatch but with a few everyday comforts.

Or lots of them, as it turns out. Our new Swift Sport is totally standard, with no options to increase its price from the basic £17,999. Yet it still comes with satnav, climate control, DAB radio, Bluetooth connectivity, keyless entry, infotainment controls on the steering wheel,

a rear-view camera, auto-dipping headlights, adaptive cruise control and a lane departure prevention system. None of which are strictly necessary in a supermini, and only some of which are welcome, but we'll find out just how useful they all are over the coming months.

The SSS looks like a ball of fury, thanks to a more aggressive front grille and bumpers than a regular Swift, a bigger boot spoiler, 17-inch wheels and, in the case of our car, Champion Yellow paint – a hue so bright that the government Department for Health and Social Care recommend you only look at it directly through solar viewing glasses. Possibly.

In the metal it's a bigger car than you might expect, its five-door body now more Polo- or Clio-sized rather than having Up or Twingo dimensions like the old Swift. Still, even though it's grown outwards, its laudable 975kg kerb weight means it is lighter than either the Up

'A 100bhp 1-litre would have sufficed, but the Sport's engineers didn't get that memo'

GTI (995kg) or the Twingo GT (1001kg).

With such little mass to move, a 100bhp, maybe 115bhp, turbocharged 1-litre three-cylinder engine would have been sufficient to make the Sport fast enough. The engineers clearly didn't get that memo, instead fitting a turbocharged 1.4-litre four with 138bhp and a mildly astonishing 170lb ft of torque. The official 0-62mph time is a rather disappointing 8.1sec, but from the driver's seat the car feels much faster than that, and the 7.6sec 0-60mph time we've recorded ourselves with this model would confirm that it is.

So the new Swift Sport is well-equipped, sporty-looking and, more importantly, light and fast. Yet, there's still one very important



Top left and left: how much more yellow could it be? **Far left:** cabin is loaded with all the kit you could possibly hope for in a supermini – and more. **Above:** front seats are suitably bolstered

box left to tick: does it have the sort of vibrant, fun-loving chassis that can make a smaller hot hatch as enjoyable as a thoroughbred sports car down a tortuous country lane?

Again, on paper it's very promising. The Sport's track is 40mm wider than a regular Swift's, the car also rides 15mm lower, and Suzuki claims it has tweaked the suspension to significantly reduce roll. New hub and bearing units for the front wheels and redesigned rear trailing arms minimise unwanted suspension geometry changes during cornering, and to complement a thicker front anti-roll bar there's a stiffer rear torsion beam.

But in reality these changes aren't enough. The car feels stodgy and inert with some truly dreadful steering – at first I thought the lane-keep assist function had been left on, but no, the self-centring really is that aggressive. Meanwhile the soft suspension allows too much body roll so the car feels scrabbly and easily ruffled as soon as you get enthusiastic behind the wheel. So at the very last hurdle – the most important one – the Sport stumbles.

On first impressions, then, it doesn't look to have the minerals to join the club of truly wonderful superminis that the previous Swift Sport and the old Renault Sport Twingo 133 are members of. But perhaps it's a slow-burner. Or perhaps it's now a different kind of car altogether. It's certainly very comfortable when you're just moseying around, and with all that kit and the effortless pace it can offer, it has the makings of an unlikely grand tourer. With the miles that our Sport is likely to cover, that's not an idea to be sniffed at.

Will Beaumont

Date acquired July 2018
Total mileage 3110 **Mileage this month** 2105 **Costs this month** £0
mpg this month 39.0

Hyundai i30 N Performance

The wider evo team is canvassed for thoughts on the N

C ROWDSOURCING. IT'S ALL THE rage these days, whether you're looking for a name for a new Antarctic research vessel, or if you make crisps and you've run out of good ideas for flavours.

While I've no intention of renaming our i30 N Hatchy McHatchface, and I'm pretty sure I can come up with a better crisp flavour than Cajun squirrel, it struck me that several colleagues have had the pleasure of thrapping around in the Hyundai recently, which seemed to me like a good opportunity to try crowdsourcing some opinions.

Editor Gallagher took the wheel most recently, quickly tweeting his approval and returning full of praise for everything but the clutch, which 'is too light and has no feel', and noting a few concerns over seat support and the dull cabin. I'd agree on the clutch, but I'm quite a fan of the seats, which make up in comfort for what they lack in outright support.

He added: 'It feels like a proper hot hatch: alert, responsive, fun. Love the aggressiveness of the diff, the engine has an unexpected punch and loves revs – wasn't expecting that – and the gearshift is pretty sweet.'

Content editor Jordan Katsianis returned less keen, but then he's an Australian who doesn't like barbecue food and is therefore to be treated with suspicion. The heavy steering came in for criticism (like a good BBQ, I like its meatiness), but the engine's punch and the gearbox both got the up-vote.

Subeditor Jonathan Baker is a much more trustworthy fellow, ensuring grammatical error's (ahem) are kept to a minimum in **evo**, but his impressions had been clouded slightly by a recent drive in the remarkable Civic Type R. That's fair – the Civic does feel more serious, but I reckon the i30 N might be as close as you can get for excitement without spending the extra dosh.

Either way, it's been interesting hearing the varied opinions of those who've taken the i30 for a spin, and it's given me a little more time to work on new crisp flavours. Wasabi hamster?

Antony Ingram (@evoAntony)

Date acquired February 2018
Total mileage 8330 **Mileage this month** 1130 **Costs this month** £0
mpg this month 33.2



End of term

Audi RS3 Saloon

It had handsome looks, a magnificent engine and unstoppable performance. So what more could you want from a long-term?



WE GET ALL SORTS ROLLING INTO **evo**'s car park, from superminis to supercars, but few cause quite such a stir on their entrance as our RS3 did when it first arrived. It wasn't the bassy gurgle of its sports exhaust-equipped five-cylinder engine that had people out of their seats, but the car's Viper Green paint finish. Throughout the Audi's six-month stay with us the £2400 (yes, really) hue was a constant talking point, and most of the chatter was positive.

Wherever I went with the car it would start a conversation or elicit eager thumbs up. There were exceptions, of course, such as the lady who mouthed an extravagant 'horrible' from behind the wheel of her VW Touran (that said, she could have been talking about me), but overall it was all extremely positive.

The engine was well received by all who experienced it, too, and it got better and

better as the miles piled on. Not only did the 394bhp turbocharged five-pot sound epic, emitting a nape-prickling howl that was part Ur-Quattro and part R8 V10, it also delivered a blistering turn of speed – in a similar RS3 in streaming wet conditions I saw 0-60mph in 3.7sec. So it was a shame this magnificent piece of engineering was undermined by the seven-speed S-tronic transmission (there's no manual alternative). It delivered quick and crisp shifts via the steering-wheel paddles when you were in a burning hurry, but if you took a more laid-back approach the twin-clutch unit got into something of a muddle. It was at its worst at roundabouts and junctions, where the need to suddenly accelerate would startle it, causing it to engage gears with the subtlety of a dyspraxic bull negotiating a particularly compact yet well stocked china shop.

The chassis proved to be a similarly mixed

bag. As you'd expect, the quattro-enhanced traction and grip were phenomenal, and the Audi's ability to get extremely quickly from point A to point B verged on teleportation. And when the heavens opened its rock-steady composure gave you the confidence to push on when others were throttling back. Yet this focus on ultimate control robbed the car of any real depth. No matter how many times I tried to have a laugh with the RS3 it always remained slightly aloof, unwilling to countenance anything but a (very) fast in and (very) fast out approach to corners. There was next to no adjustability, just a dogged adherence to your chosen line. Only on track and at the absolute limit did the Audi start to loosen up and let its hair down.

What couldn't be faulted was the sheer quality of the car. At £43,765 basic, and nearly £60,000 with options (£4965 carbon-ceramic



Above: minimalist tyre sidewalls fell victim to potholes. **Top:** cabin was hard to fault. **Top right:** five-cylinder engine was a masterpiece, but also had a negative impact on the RS3

brakes, £995 upgraded stereo, that paint...), it might sound pricey for what is at its heart an A3, but I never felt shortchanged by the RS3. Even ignoring the colour it looked the part, all squat and purposeful, while the panel gaps were millimetre perfect. It was a similar story inside, where the elegantly designed cabin and top-notch materials created a classy yet understated ambience. No matter how rough your day had been or how long the journey ahead, climbing into the Audi always instilled a welcome sense of calm. The only real criticism was reserved for the driving position, which was set just a bit too high. Reliability was impressive too, with the

only visit to a workshop being for a pair of replacement front tyres after potholes did for both of the skinny-sidewalled 30-profile fronts. And apart from washer fluid and unleaded, there was no need to touch the fluids now that the new five-cylinder has kicked its predecessor's thirst for oil.

I wanted to love the RS3, I really did. The compact sports saloon formula is just so cool, and every time I climbed aboard and fired that magnificent engine into life I got a small tingle of excitement. And when undertaking the daily grind the car was brilliant – overly firm ride aside – mixing effortless pace and refinement with a decent dose of practicality. Yet when I wanted to exploit the RS3's considerable performance potential I was always left a little cold by its one-dimensional grip 'n' go personality. In the end the glorious five-cylinder engine was both its salvation

and curse. Yes, it delivered a memorable soundtrack and epic performance, but despite being 26kg lighter than before (thanks in part to an aluminium crankcase) it was still a hefty old lump, and all that weight over the front axle left the RS3 feeling lead-footed when others were up on their toes. The structurally similar but four-cylinder VW Golf R shows you what can be done with this platform.

So I'll miss the fast and flawlessly finished Audi, but I'm not going to feel green with envy when I see another on the road.

James Disdale

Date acquired February 2018
Duration of test 6 months **Total test mileage** 9582 **Overall mpg** 28.5
Costs £420 two tyres **Purchase price** £58,625 **Value today** £48,700



Lamborghini Aventador Roadster & Aston Martin DBS Volante

The drop-top Lambo pays a visit to its birthplace - and takes a British friend with it

FOR PETROLHEAD NIRVANA, THERE'S little in my book that beats driving an Italian supercar in Italy, and especially so when driving such a car back to where it was built. So with tickets booked for a tour of the Lamborghini factory, the Aventador Roadster was pressed into action to reprise its recent Italian Riviera performance (see *evo* 250). It would once again be joined by a Black Fleet Brit, but this time it wouldn't be the McLaren 720S. Instead the tunnels and viaducts would be subjected to the sonorous wails of two V12s, as doing aural battle with the slightly unhinged Aventador would be the charismatic Aston Martin DBS Volante.

I've been lucky enough to do this trip a few times and now know some great routes that involve quick motorway sections, sweeping A-roads and challenging mountain twisties. I was joined by a good friend who is used to these cars and roads, but also by a couple of friends who were not familiar with either, so the road from Monaco to Genoa proved

a good introduction before striking inland to Lamborghini's homeland in Bolognese.

I can thoroughly recommend the Lamborghini factory guided tour if you ever get the chance. It provides some real insight into the quality of the engineering and bespoke, hand-built nature of these cars. There's only one robot in the whole facility (a super-low-tech motorised cart!) and every V12 is assembled by hand on site.

The surrounding roads are fabulous and include the wonderful Raticosa and Futa passes which, as well as being ideal for Lambo's test drivers to assess their latest creations, also provide truly epic driving roads for us mere mortals. These roads are also car-brand agnostic, so don't worry about turning up in a hire car. I've seen well-driven Fiat Pandas keep Italian exotica at bay here! The scenery is amazing, too, albeit often flashing by in a bit of a blur; the fantastic local cuisine, wine and hospitality simply add to the event.

A visit to the nearby Ferrari museum

followed the next day, and should the opportunity present itself, Pagani is within a short drive, as are Ducati and Maserati. So if you're short of ideas for destinations for that next road trip, there are far worse places to head to. Let me know at the Twitter handle below if you're heading down and I might well see you there. Until next time...

John Black (@john_m_black)

LAMBORGHINI AVENTADOR ROADSTER

Date acquired November 2015 **Total mileage** 10,692km **Mileage this month** 1035km **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 10.7

ASTON MARTIN DBS VOLANTE

Date acquired May 2014 **Total mileage** 29,314km **Mileage this month** 1035km **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 13.9

Volkswagen Up GTI

Another big trip for the little VW, while those early fears of compromises are assuaged

THE UP GTI AND I HAVE BEEN pretty much inseparable in the two months since it was delivered. I've done umpteen airport runs, bombed my local back-roads, made trips to numerous racetracks and completed countless shopping runs. Lived life, in other words.

If I had any misgivings about downsizing they were rooted in the literal lack of space, but also the scaled-down performance. The former concern has been comprehensively allayed, thanks to the Up's brilliant packaging. I especially like the false floor in the boot. It's perfect for stowing work bags, race overalls or anything else a bit squidgy. With the hinged floor in place I can then pile more bags on top, and if I have to carry a big kit bag I simply fold one half of the rear seat down and slide it in.

I've done another big trip this month, to Le Mans Classic. It may be small, but the Up covers the miles effortlessly, more than happy to cruise at swift but (relatively) gendarme-friendly speeds, while a realistic cruising range of 300-plus miles means you can cover the ground without interruption.

'It may be small, but the Up covers miles effortlessly at swift but gendarme-friendly speeds'

Spending prolonged time in the Up as a driver and passenger has exposed a couple of minor gripes: the first a lack of reach adjustment for the steering wheel, the second a lack of grab handles in the headlining. Neither is a big deal, but it would be nice to be able to pull the wheel out a little. Likewise, I like to hang my hand off something when I'm bored in the passenger seat. It's a habit I never realised I had, but I lost count of how many times I reached for the invisible grab handle on the way home from Le Mans. I should hasten to add the urge to hold on to something had nothing to do with Mrs M's driving. Honest.

There's no built-in satnav, but it's a cinch to pair your phone to the car and have instructions from Google Maps or Waze broadcast through the car's speakers. Shame then that the adjustable cradle you're supposed to clip your phone into is too small to hold an iPhone 8. If anyone knows of an aftermarket version that uses the standard dashtop fixing point, please shout!

That's an unusually practical Fast Fleet update from me, but don't worry, normal service will be resumed in the next report. The Up may be a surprisingly good motorway mile-muncher, but a great hot hatch should come into its own scratching along good country roads. First impressions are promising, but I've yet to really chuck it around. I fully intend to address this over the coming weeks.

Richard Meaden (@DickieMeaden)

Date acquired May 2018 **Total mileage** 4268 **Mileage this month** 1267 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 43.6





'To add insult to injury, the punctured tyres were just five days and 250 miles old'

Honda Civic Type R

A pair of punctures brings the suitability of no-profile rubber into question once again

SLOWING TO A CRAWL FOR THE first red light on the approach to Norwich, I was suddenly aware that the Civic's low-speed ride felt even firmer than usual. I hoped I was just being paranoid; perhaps the tyre pressures had increased during the sustained 70mph run up the A11 in baking summer temperatures and I'd somehow tuned in to the difference. But just to be on the safe side I pulled over, hopped out and circled the car. The driver's side was all good, but upon reaching the passenger side my heart sank. I could hear air escaping... in stereo. *Both* nearside tyres had punctures.

I cast my mind back over the last couple of miles and recalled a nasty raised joint between two sections of the A11's concrete surface. Not pleasant when encountered at speed, but not enough to break the conversation in the car, nor to cause the side of the road to be littered with incapacitated vehicles. Only the Civic had fallen victim, the imperfection causing the

inner edge of the 20-inch wheels to pierce the minimalist sidewalls of the 245/30 tyres. To add insult to injury, those tyres were the brand new Michelin Pilot Sport 4 Ss that I'd had fitted just five days and 250 miles earlier. Tyres that cost £229 apiece.

The Type R has no spare, and its electric pump couldn't outpace the rate at which air was leaking out, so when I'd finished swearing I logged a breakdown in the AA app (much quicker than waiting in the telephone queue), cancelled my planned day with friends and settled in for a long wait. Not helped by it being a Sunday, the AA couldn't find anyone locally who could supply tyres in the appropriate supercar-spec size, so a transporter was requested. After four hours at the roadside it arrived, and another two hours after that the Civic and I were deposited at my home. Why home? Because when I had the four Michelins fitted I kept the half-worn rear Continentals, just in case I needed an emergency spare or

two. A wise precaution, as it turned out.

The next morning I rang a mobile tyre fitter to get the two Contis on (£30), but because he didn't have enough jacks to swap wheels diagonally, I then had to revisit the tyre depot that fitted the Michelins in order to get the two new tyres on the front and the two older ones on the rear (for which they kindly didn't charge). And finally the palaver was over.

So were the Michelins to blame? There's certainly no reason to suspect anything was amiss. They carry exactly the same rating as the factory-fitted Conti SportContact 6s: 90 Extra Load. This means they have a reinforced construction and should be good for 600kg per wheel, and we know from our own scales that the Civic's left-hand corners weigh in at around 428kg front and 275kg rear, so even with a driver and passenger on board you're still well within the limit, especially at the rear. And besides, it's not like the Civic's OE Continentals have fared much better, having



themselves failed to protect the Civic's rims from pothole damage a couple of months ago (see *evo* 251). Oh, and in case you're wondering, the Michelins were correctly inflated: I'd double-checked that the tyre fitters had inflated them to the correct pressures only the day before.

So, sadly, I think this is more evidence that a tyre sidewall height of just 73.5mm is simply not compatible with the rough and tumble of UK roads. In an attempt to avoid any further damage, cost and inconvenience, I've now raised the pressures on the Civic's tyres from the regular recommended psi values of 35 front, 33 rear, to the 42 front and 36 rear advised for doing 137mph-plus with four occupants and luggage. It hasn't done the ride quality any favours, but hopefully it can provide a more robust buffer between rim and road. The Type R certainly needs that if it's to stand a chance of winning back my trust.

Ian Eveleigh

Date acquired January 2018 **Total mileage** 7635 **Mileage this month** 1194 **Costs this month** £30 tyre (re)fitting **mpg this month** 33.5

Caterham Seven 310R

What's it like to get behind the wheel of a Seven for the first time? *evo*'s web content editor finds out

WHEN I WAS GROWING UP, THE Ford Mondeo was considered a small family car, the average engine size was somewhere around 3.5 litres, and models such as the VW Golf were ostensibly 'girls' cars'. You see, as *evo*'s resident Aussie, my experience with cars, and specifically their size, is probably a bit different to that of most of you locals. So when I was asked to live with our Fast Fleet Caterham for a week, I won't lie, there was a little bit of trepidation.

The warnings from others about the feeling of vulnerability on motorways and other such hazards associated with driving the Seven only served to confirm my fears, and once strapped in the intimidation factor didn't waver. Sitting virtually at road level, legs stretched out into the tiny, dark footwell, and with the engine buzzing away like an irritable hornet stuck in a megaphone, my initial few miles were... tense.

But after an hour or so my hands stopped gripping the tiny Momo wheel quite so tightly and everything began to change. I started to see through the noise and instead focused on the nuance. The steering is totally unassisted, of course, and so is totally wonderful. It makes the road surface as easy to read as a Roald Dahl novel, and so your confidence in the

car, and yourself, quickly grows. With yet more time behind the wheel your right foot adjusts to the throttle's sensitivity and the rest of your inputs start to match the weights of the other controls, too.

It's only now that you really begin to feel the Caterham's sweet chassis balance. Load up the front tyres and the translucent steering gives you a crystal-clear understanding of how far you can push before they'll give way. Feeling out the limit of the rear tyres is a cinch too, thanks to the telepathic throttle response and the fact that the back wheels sit only an inch or so behind your butt.

It's safe to say that my week in the Caterham taught me more about real driving dynamics than months spent in other cars have. In contrast to what James Disdale suggested last month – presumably with tongue at least partly in cheek – I found that the Seven is a chore to use every day, but it also delivers a hit that is completely unique.

Jordan Katsianis
(@JordanKatsianis)

Date acquired March 2008 **Total mileage** 4167 **Mileage this month** 313 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 32.3



End of term

Ford Mustang 5.0 V8 GT Convertible

The idea of running a big V8 pony car has enduring appeal. But now it's officially available over here, what did we think of the reality of living with one?



THE MUSTANG JOINED EVO'S FAST Fleet on a groundswell of Mustang Mania. Once a Stateside curiosity imported by dedicated fans, this generation of pony car was the first to be designed with a world market very much in its sights.

It's easy to see why people fall in love with the idea of a Mustang. It's a handsome brute, even with the famous fastback swapped for a canvas notchback. True, it's big-boned, but that's the point, and it's nicely proportioned, with plenty of road presence. The interior was less easy to love, largely because it had that uniquely American ability to look a bit basic and cheap, yet it proved to be nicely functional and well put together. The 'Shaker' stereo was punchy and the satnav was easy enough to

use, but it all lacked the sense of sophistication you get from something German.

A number of **evo** staffers spent some time with the Mustang, and we all seemed to follow the same experiential arc. That's to say feeling the jolt of a culture shock compared to what we'd been living with previously, followed by a delayed honeymoon period and culminating in a readiness to return to something more to our taste.

Dynamics-wise, I don't think any of us got beyond the sense of being in a *big* car, even when familiar with it. The large-diameter steering wheel and generous seat set the tone, and were compounded by the high-waisted body. We chose a manual gearbox for obvious purist reasons, but it came with its

own downside, namely a propensity to shunt in stop-start traffic, making you feel clumsy. Sharp brakes didn't help, either.

The star of the show was the 410bhp 5-litre V8. Unstressed, smooth and nicely vocal without being intrusive, it provided exactly the style of propulsion you'd hope: muscular and responsive, with no real need to extend it but generous rewards when you did. Good job, really, as you'd rarely see more than 23mpg, and often little more than 20.

The V8 was certainly as much as the softly set-up chassis could cope with. In the dry you could hustle along well enough, so long as you made allowances for the compliant damping and were happy to wait for the car to settle into corners. It needed more respect



in the wet, but as in the dry it maintained a nice balance. Small, twisty roads were not its forte, but it would raise its game when the roads opened up a bit, threading nicely through sweeping curves and well able to maintain a strong pace.

I never drove it as I would, say, a BMW M4 – it simply didn't possess the body control or quick wits to truly attack a road – but there was a certain satisfaction to getting pleasure from a car without having to go balls out.

As you're probably gathering, the trouble with the Mustang was the delta between the few things it did genuinely well and the greater number of things it didn't. It pulled at the heartstrings more insistently than the equivalent European for the same

money, but no matter how enjoyable I found the engine or however much I liked the idea of a ragtop Mustang, I – and the rest of the **evo** team – never really warmed to it as an all-round proposition. It just felt like you had to make too many allowances.

Being car fans I think that left us all feeling a little traitorous. I wouldn't pay the £3500 premium for a Convertible over a Mustang GT, and £40k-plus is far from an insignificant chunk of change. That's why I always felt if I were choosing between it and something European, I'd instinctively sink my notional cash (or finance) into the latter – even if it meant going for something pre-owned. A quick scan of the online classifieds suggests that similar money buys you a well-specified

used M4 Convertible, or if a full four-seater isn't essential, a lovely Aston Martin V8 Vantage Roadster or Gen 2 Porsche 997 Cabrio. All of which are better cars and are at or closer to the bottom of their depreciation curve.

The Mustang is an endearing car, then, but in our collective experience the reality of the day-to-day driving experience rarely lived up to the American Dream.

Richard Meaden (@DickieMeaden)

Date acquired September 2017
Duration of test 9 months **Total test mileage** 7213 **Overall mpg** 21.9 **Costs** £249 service **Purchase price** £43,985 **Value today** £30,000



SEAT Ibiza FR

The unassuming Ibiza is happy to let others hog the limelight

I'D BARELY HAD TIME TO PULL UP THE driveway to our house in Yorkshire when my neighbour's head popped up over the garden fence. 'Transformer!' came the shout from his two-year-old son in his arms, though it was probably the Civic Type R's menacing low rumble that had first given the game away.

Borrowing the Fast Fleet Honda for the weekend reminded me just how much attention certain cars attract (the driver of an older Type R clapping and bouncing up and down in his seat was already testament to that). So too did the bright blue Aventador S Roadster we tested in a recent issue (251), which easily garnered more looks – and requests for rides – during its brief stay than any car I've seen since I joined *evo* in January.

I think it's safe to say the Ibiza FR goes about *its* business in a more unassuming way – perfect if you don't want your car compared to a Decepticon. I can't say anyone's asked for a lift in it just for the hell of it, or that crowds have thronged the road like an '80s Group B rally stage to get a better look, but that doesn't matter, because part of the FR's charm is that it *isn't* in your face. It doesn't feel the need to shout: 'Look at me!' Yes, like you, Viper Green RS3.

It's a neighbour-pleaser in that it won't have them coming over all jealous or seething with anger when you start it up at six in the morning. And it also still looks as fresh as it did when I first clapped eyes on it. So while it's fun to sometimes be the centre of attention, and in the Type R it was hard to avoid it quite frankly, it's good to remember that there are benefits to flying under the radar, too.

Jonathan Baker

Date acquired January 2018 **Total mileage** 7699 **Mileage this month** 488 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 50.1

Kia Stinger GT S

The Stinger gets some unexpected challengers, and trumps BMW's M5 – in one respect, at least

MAYBE IT WAS THE HOT weather. Maybe that and the fact that we were keen to get home and travelling briskly. Whatever it was, the generally high level of interest in the Stinger took on a different slant earlier this month.

Photographer Alex Tapley and I were returning from a shoot down on Salisbury Plain and over a 40-mile stretch no fewer than five vehicles seemed to think they were in a race with us. There was a grubby Kia Ceed on the A34 that was so close to my bumper that I could work out the brand of the driver's sunglasses but not his car, until he stormed past. Then there was an old C-class Merc doing the same until we came to the roundabouts. I enjoy the challenge of the Brackley bypass and was disappointed at the four-up Merc's lack of commitment. And there was even a white van, which was more keen on maintaining momentum but whose driver eventually conceded that a high centre of gravity conspires

against snappy direction changes.

I wondered if they all lacked air conditioning and were desperate to maintain a crucial level of cabin air flow. With the Stinger's cooled seats cranked up to maximum and Sport mode selected, we maintained our cool throughout. I love the Stinger's steering and overall demeanour, though the rear suspension can feel a bit squishy at times, laterally and over bumps. It's pretty handy for a big car, though, and not lacking in go, either, thanks to the 365bhp twin-turbo V6. This seems plenty until you borrow the editor's near-600bhp M5 to run a mate's son and his best man to the church. Feeble seat coolers in comparison, though.

John Barker (@evoJB)

Date acquired April 2018 **Total mileage** 6447 **Mileage this month** 1635 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 28.2



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Buying Journey

Alastair McIlroy has caught the Alfa bug, but he's also let plenty of British cars into his garage too

Alfa Romeo Alfasud TI Cloverleaf 'This was a hand-me-down from my dad when I was 17. I added some Koni dampers to sharpen an already wonderful driving experience.' **Renault 5 GT Turbo** 'It was so fast for the time and had a more benign chassis than a Peugeot 205 GTI.' **Citroën 2CV** 'I needed a cheap car to get to my first proper job. Loved the engineering and I ended up buying two.' **Austin Mini** 'I had two Minis interspersed with the 2CVs. Absurdly, they could carry the same speed round corners as on straights.'

Alfa Romeo Alfetta GTV 'I restored it with all-new panels and it's still going 27 years later.' **VW Golf GTI (Mk1)** 'This felt so light and I loved it as an everyday driver.' **Alfa Romeo 145 Cloverleaf** 'My first Fiat-era Alfa. It didn't ride as well as a Sud.' **Volvo 740GL** 'My dad's last car. I eventually gave it away with 300,000 miles on it.' **Lotus Elise (S1)** 'I loved my Elise. It managed to do so much with so little.' **Lotus Elise 111S (S2)** 'This was a fantastic car and a little more civilised than the S1.' **Volvo 940 Turbo Estate** 'I had many enjoyable wet roundabout experiences in this.' **Caterham Seven SV 150 (1)** 'After I rented a Caterham I was hooked and just had to buy one.'

Caterham Seven SV Supersport (2) 'I made sure my second Caterham had an LSD and short gear ratios. On twisty roads it could keep up with anything.' **Lotus Elise 111S (S1) (3)** 'When I noticed the S1 Elise starting to creep up in value, I found a low-mileage 111S. It is still a revelation in ride and handling.'

Alfa Romeo Alfasud Sprint (4) 'I found and restored this Sprint. It's red and I love it. Even today it's still a wonderful driver's car.' **Alfa Romeo Alfetta GTV6 (5)** 'My GTV6 is an ex-race car that was put together by the same guys who built the BTCC dealer team Alfa cars. I'm building a very special Busso V6 for it. It is the last car I'd ever sell.' **Fiat Panda 100HP (6)** 'I love this – it's like a rollerskate. The stiff ride reminds me of my old Minis.' **Land Rover Defender 90 TD5 (7)** 'I had a strange urge for one of these and bought one last year that had been rebuilt. Let's just say it has been an experience...' **Alfa Romeo Giulietta (952) (8)** 'I never thought I'd be able to buy a rear-wheel-drive Alfa again. This has everything I love in my old Alfas without any of the foibles.'

What's next?

'The only thing I might change is the Sud. I'd swap it for a white 105-series Alfa Giulia Ti; it would be great to own the car that started it all. For modern motoring, I need Alfa to build me a smaller, rear-wheel-drive car with 350bhp – they can call it Giulietta.'

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Lexus LS 500h

Stylish hybrid saloon ultimately disappoints against its German rivals

THE NEW LEXUS LS IS NOT AN AUDI A8, BMW 7-series or Mercedes-Benz S-class, and for some people that will be reason enough to buy it. Not many, admittedly, but then Lexus UK only plans to shift 100 LSs in 2018.

Those buyers will find several features to reassure them of their decision to eschew the Germans. First and foremost is the styling. It's an acquired taste, largely down to the now-signature Lexus 'spindle' grille design that suggests the Predator might be one of the hundred early adopters. But it's a handsome car in profile, imposing on the road and just conservative enough overall to not frighten off more traditional customers.

The cabin is also a highlight, avoiding the ostentation of an S-class or the relative dourness of an A8. Standards of build are impeccable and the detailing exquisite. Space and comfort are never in doubt, either, and when a press of the anodised starter button results in little more than the whirr of some servos and the awakening of instruments – a hint at the hybrid powertrain – you know you're in for a relaxing drive.

It's the only powertrain available, and comprises a 3.5-litre naturally aspirated V6, a lithium-ion battery pack, a three-speed



power-split device and four-speed planetary final drive, and a pair of motor-generators. It's fiendishly complicated on paper: the planetary gearbox operates like a CVT but provides ten virtual ratios, and each electric motor serves a largely different job – one handling start/stop and acting as a generator, the other powering the vehicle and occasionally boosting regenerative capabilities. The upshot is a combined output of 354bhp, an ability to drive on electric power alone in some situations, and claimed fuel economy of 39.8mpg. Sixty-two mph arrives in a brisk 5.5sec.

Yet on the move the £72,595 LS 500h starts to lose its lustre. True, it is effectively silent at start-up and low speeds, near-silent at a cruise and unobtrusive as it switches between combustion and electric power, but in the

intervening moments it lacks the easy-going performance and refinement of its rivals. Requests for even moderate acceleration see the revs rising and falling with abandon as the virtual ratios slur through changes at what seem like random intervals. Knocking the gear selector into manual and doing the job yourself improves matters, but throttle response is poor whichever mode you choose.

The hybrid set-up dissuades you from exploring the chassis to any real degree, and perhaps that's for the best – at nearly 2.2 tons the LS 500h has considerable mass to carry. Adopting a brisk pace results in body lean through corners, floatiness during undulations and uncertainty through the feel-free steering. The LS can be hustled, but it's best driven more sedately, ignoring the occasional jarring thumps that put a black mark against an otherwise serene ride.

We were hoping for a little more from the LS, but based on this there's a good reason why the majority will continue to put their money into Ingolstadt, Munich and Stuttgart.

Antony Ingram (@evaAntony)

- + Stunning cabin; low-speed and cruising refinement
- Compromised drivetrain, floaty handling, jarring ride

evo rating ★★★★★

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Mini Cooper S

The Mini gets another layer of polish, but is it at the expense of fun?

W E'VE ALREADY DRIVEN THE GENTLY updated Cooper S, at the model's international launch in Mallorca (evo 248). However, when a car has Union flags embedded within its tail lights, you can't really consider it fully assessed until it's been tested on a British B-road. So here goes.

If you've driven an R53 or R56 Mini, the familiar environs of this £20,635 F56 Cooper S will initially put you at ease. But the driving position, although much lower than that of many rival superminis, isn't as ground-hugging as you might recall, and the still-very-upright windscreen feels a few feet further away, too.

The 189bhp 2-litre engine is full of torque, and quickly spins to a plump mid-range. Hold on to the throttle, though, and the torque recedes faster than you might expect as the engine strains its way to the upper end of its rev-band.

Start leaning on the chassis and the Cooper S responds, remaining balanced and flat through corners without getting thrown off-line by mid-corner bumps. Unfortunately, chassis adjustability is a forbidden notion, and although the car gulps down challenging sections of road with supreme competency, its lifeless steering and dull engine don't do much

to encourage you to push any harder than is absolutely necessary.

The latest Cooper S is effective, then, and its torquey engine makes it surprisingly rapid around town, but there's little sense of fun out in the wild. The driving involvement that underpinned the modern Mini's popularity is all but gone. In its place is a better car, perhaps, but one that leaves us cold.

Jordan Katsianis (@JordanKatsianis)

➤ Refined, sophisticated and efficient
 ➤ Dull engine, forgettable steering

evo rating ★★★★★

VW T-Roc 1.5 TSI EVO R-Line

New SUV has its strong points, yet a Golf still makes more sense

S HOWROOMS AND FORECOURTS ARE awash with compact crossover SUVs these days – if you're a mainstream car buyer then resistance is futile. The latest to join the fray is the Volkswagen T-Roc, which is the German firm's decade-late response to the now ubiquitous Nissan Qashqai.

Even in relatively racy R-Line trim the T-Roc gets all the usual quasi-off-roader visuals, including the raised ride height and chunky black bodywork cladding, while inside it's typically slick VW, with an air of understated class and the option of hot- and cold-running TFT screens. So far, so predictable.

However, look beyond the ridiculous 'lifestyle' marketing hype and you'll find there's a pretty decent machine lurking underneath. The 1.5-litre TSI is smooth and reasonably gutsy, dusting the 0-62mph sprint in a satisfyingly growly 8.4sec, while the optional seven-speed DSG 'box is crisp and quick in

its delivery whether you choose to change gears yourself or leave it to its own devices. Yet perhaps most impressive is the handling, which is remarkably well resolved for an SUV.

The steering isn't overburdened with feedback, but it's quick enough and naturally weighted, plus it's connected to a front axle that has decent bite thanks to a smooth-acting torque vectoring system. There's less roll than you'd think, too, and the dampers do a fine job of reining in even big body movements, helping give the car a poised and planted feel. A firm but far from uncomfortable ride is the trade-off for this agility.

Yet, all of these positive statements could be suffixed with the words 'for an SUV'. Good though the T-Roc is, it offers only marginal practicality gains over the dynamically sharper, even quicker and, in similar engine and trim combination, £1290 cheaper Golf.

James Disdale



➤ Surprising agility, brisk performance, roomy cabin
 ➤ Golf it's based on is better and cheaper

evo rating ★★★★★

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Porsche Cayenne S

New 'surface coated' brakes impress on both track and road

IF THERE'S ANY BENEFIT TO WAR it's that it forces creativity and innovation, and technology moves ahead in leaps. The battle to make SUVs ever more capable is no different: we've seen four-wheel steering, active aero, electronic diffs, variable anti-roll bars, torque-vectoring and launch control all appear on 4x4s, tweaked, re-engineered and cajoled to help the vehicle they are fitted to defy physics as much as possible.

Porsche has now brought a new technology to the fight – Porsche Surface Coated Brake (PSCB). At face value PSCB looks just like conventional vented cast-iron discs with ten-piston front and four-piston rear calipers. But where they differ is that the braking surface of the discs has had a tungsten and carbon compound fired onto it under high temperature and pressure. This 100-micron-thick layer is much harder than uncoated



cast-iron, meaning 90 per cent less brake dust is produced and a more consistent response is achieved as temperatures rise. In fact, Porsche says it has found the brakes withstand heat almost as well as its carbon-ceramics.

PSCB is standard on the new Cayenne Turbo and an option on the £68,330, 434bhp Cayenne S, where they cost £2105 – or a third of the price of carbon-ceramics. Even after repeated 100mph-to-zero stops of the 2020kg car on track the brakes resisted fade well, with no sign of pedal travel increasing. Crucially, they feel perfectly normal on the road, too.

Impressive stuff. But now we'd really like to try them on one of Porsche's sports cars.

Will Beaumont (@WillBeaumont)

- + New brake tech works well and feels natural
- Currently only available on Porsche's biggest SUV

evo rating ★★★★★

Aston Martin DB11 V8

Mercedes-AMG twin-turbo V8 proves a better fit for Aston's GT

BENTLEY'S ORIGINAL CONTINENTAL GT was a car not transformed, but significantly improved upon when Crewe fitted it with a V8 engine. Yes, the V8 model had less power, fewer cylinders and a considerable drop in cubic capacity compared with the W12 it was sold alongside, but it felt no slower. It was a sweeter steer, too, lighter on the nose and keener across all four corners.

Now Aston Martin's DB11 has followed the downsizing philosophy. The original V12 was an admirable machine, but it never excelled in any single area and always felt a bit undercooked

(hence why it's been replaced by the DB11 AMR – see **evo** 250). So when the time came to install Mercedes-AMG's 4-litre twin-turbo V8 in the DB11, Matt Becker and his team also set about tweaking the car's underpinnings – with pleasingly good results if our first drive in sunny Portugal (issue 241) was anything to go by. Thankfully those changes work away from the high-gloss shine of a meticulously planned press launch drive, too, and the lion's share of those improvements come from the engine.

There's a precision to the 503bhp V8's throttle response that's lacking from the

600bhp V12, providing you with a wider bandwidth in which to operate when a more instant, crisp and fulfilling reaction is favoured over the silky-smooth delivery that a dozen cylinders offer. In turn you can get the DB11 up on its toes and enjoy the improved flow and finesse Becker has injected into the chassis he inherited when he joined Aston in 2015.

As a GT the £144,900 V8 does nothing to damage the DB11's credentials. If anything it glides with the same grace as the £158k V12 but with a more manicured body control. Now all it needs is a sprinkling of AMR fairy dust.

Stuart Gallagher (@stuartg917)

- + V8 gets the best from revised chassis
- Still lacks that final layer of detail

evo rating ★★★★★



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New ways to enhance your car that have taken our fancy this month



H&R adjustable springs for BMW M2, M3 and M4
From £502 mstyle.co.uk

This new kit not only allows you to lower your M-car by between 10 and 55mm, but you can also keep the standard dampers – even the M3 and M4's adaptive units. Rather than swapping dampers for coilovers, the kit has adjustable, threaded platforms that new springs, designed to work with the factory dampers, sit on.



Forge hard boost pipe kit for Mini Cooper S (F55/F56/F57)
£426 forgemotorsport.co.uk

Up the boost on the current Cooper S's 2-litre turbocharged engine and you'll soon find the limitations of the OEM boost pipes. The safest option is to replace the factory plastic pipes with stronger 'hard' pipes. Forge's kit comprises of aluminium pipes with machined couplers that follow the path of the original boost pipes.



Goodridge Phantom braided brake lines for Porsche 911 GT3 (991)
£79.80 goodridge.com

If you regularly use a 991 on circuit, why not opt for the safer back-up of braided brake lines, especially when they cost less than £80. The kit comes with square fittings at one end and a banjo type at the other, so not only are they incredibly secure, they simply replace the standard rubber lines.



Powerflex anti-roll bar bushes for Lotus Evora
£17.94 powerflex.co.uk

The Evora's suspension has been known to make a bit of a racket as it starts to wear. The cause, more often than not, is the anti-roll bar bush after it's dried out and perished. Powerflex's polyurethane ARB bush is more durable and is available in a selection of stiffnesses.



AC Schnitzer upgrades for BMW i8 Roadster
c£38k ac-schnitzer.co.uk

New 21-inch forged wheels help save a total of 4.4kg of unsprung, rotating mass, while new springs lower the front and rear by 20mm and 25mm, respectively. Aluminium pedal and footrest covers, and carbonfibre front spoilers, side wings and skirts and a rear wing also feature.



TechArt Formula V alloy wheels for new Porsche Panamera and Cayenne
£TBC techart.de

TechArt's new multi-spoke Formula V wheels come in a huge 22-inch size. They are available in either gloss black or grey, but for an extra cost they can be painted any colour you wish. They will also be available in other sizes and for other Porsches soon.



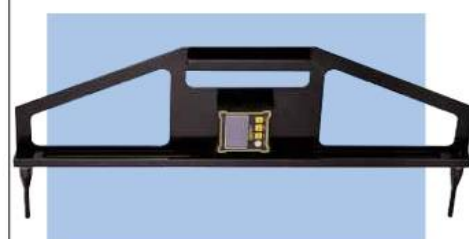
Fidanza flywheel and clutch for Lotus and Toyota
£TBC fensport.co.uk

Appealing to owners of the four-cylinder S2 Lotus Elise and Exige, Fidanza's lightweight flywheel is machined from aluminium but has a steel friction surface that can be replaced once it's worn, rather than the entire flywheel. The clutch plate is also available in three grades depending on the power and uses of the car.



Gaz Gold coilovers for Ford Fiesta XR2
£1114.88 gazshocks.com

Gaz's new kit for the XR2 comes with telescopic dampers and lowering springs for the rear and coilovers for the front. Not only is the front set-up height adjustable, but the damping rates can be changed on the front and rear units, too. Although part of Gaz's Gold range, the coilovers and rear dampers get a black zinc coating.



BG Racing aluminium camber adjustment tool
£185.99 bg-racing.co.uk

BG Racing's new camber frame tool allows you to easily measure the camber of any wheel up to 20 inches in diameter without any other equipment thanks to its dual-axis digital gauge. If you have turn or caster plates you can measure caster, too. BG's frame will measure caster and camber from -90 to +90 degrees in increments of 0.02.



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The Knowledge

RATINGS

★ = Thrill-free zone ★★ = Tepid ★★★ = Interesting ★★★★ = Seriously good ★★★★★ = A truly great car

⊕ = new entry this month. Cars in *italics* are no longer on sale. **Issue no.** is for our most recent major test of the car (D = Driven, T = Driven Too, 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 **Renault Mégane RS** runs it very close for cross-country pace and thrills, while the **Hyundai i30 N Performance** is an intriguing – and impressive – alternative to the usual suspects. If it's a smaller hot hatch you're after, look no further than the new **Ford Fiesta ST** (left).

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE Cyl./Dsc	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	£20,890	4/1368	178/5500	184/3000	1035kg	175	6.8	-	-	140	★★★★★
Abarth 695 Biposto	205 F	£33,115	4/1369	187/5500	184/3000	997kg	191	5.9	-	-	143	★★★★★
Alfa Romeo Giulietta Veloce/QV	199 D	£30,205	4/1742	237/5750	251/2000	1320kg	182	6.0	-	-	152	★★★★★
Alfa Romeo 147 GTA	187 F	103-'06	6/3179	247/6200	221/4800	1360kg	185	6.3	6.0	15.5	153	★★★★★
Audi S1	246 F	£27,140	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	£44,755	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	106-'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	£32,310	4/1997	221/5200	229/1400	1400kg	160	6.4	-	-	155	★★★★★
BMW M140i	-	£33,925	6/2979	335/5500	369/1520	1445kg	236	4.8	-	-	155	★★★★★
BMW M135i	212 F	12-'15	6/2979	321/5800	332/1300	1430kg	228	5.1	5.2	-	155	★★★★★
BMW 130i M Sport	106 F	105-'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	£24,030	4/1598	186/6000	221/3000	1175kg	177	6.5	-	-	143	★★★★★
Fiat Panda 100HP	132 F	106-'11	4/1368	99/6000	97/4250	975kg	103	9.5	-	-	115	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST-Line 140	251 F	£17,965	3/1998	138/6000	133/1500	1144kg	123	9.0	9.2	26.4	125	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST	249 F	£18,995	3/1497	197/6000	214/1600	1187kg	169	6.5	-	-	144	★★★★★
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 Focus ST TDCi Estate (Mk3)	219 D	£26,860	4/1997	182/3500	295/2000	1488kg	124	8.3	-	-	135	★★★★★
Ford Focus ST (Mk3)	207 F	£25,930	4/1999	247/5500	265/2000	1362kg	184	6.5	-	-	154	★★★★★
Ford Focus ST Mountune (Mk3)	187 D	£26,430	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)	246 F	£32,795	4/2261	345/6000	347/2000	1547kg	227	4.7	4.9	12.6	166	★★★★★
Ford Focus RS Edition (Mk3)	246 D	£36,295	4/2261	345/6000	347/2000	1547kg	227	4.7	-	-	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	339/2200	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	149/4500	1174kg	132	7.9	7.8	23.2	137	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (FK8)	252 F	£31,525	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 (FN2)	126 D	09-'10	4/1998	198/7800	142/5600	1267kg	158	6.6	-	-	146	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R Mugen (FN2)	248 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 (FK9)	210 F	97-'00	4/1595	182/8200	118/7500	1040kg	178	6.8	-	-	135	★★★★★
Hyundai i30 N Performance	245 F	£28,010	4/1998	271/6000	279/1450	1429kg	193	6.1	6.6	14.9	155	★★★★★
Kia ProceeD GT	217 D	£23,510	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	£41,890	4/1991	376/6000	350/2250	1480kg	258	4.2	3.9	-	155	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz A45 AMG	194 F	12-'15	4/1991	355/6000	332/2250	1480kg	244	4.6	4.3	10.6	155	★★★★★
Mini Cooper (F56)	194 D	£17,345	3/1499	134/4500	162/1250	1085kg	125	7.9	-	-	130	★★★★★

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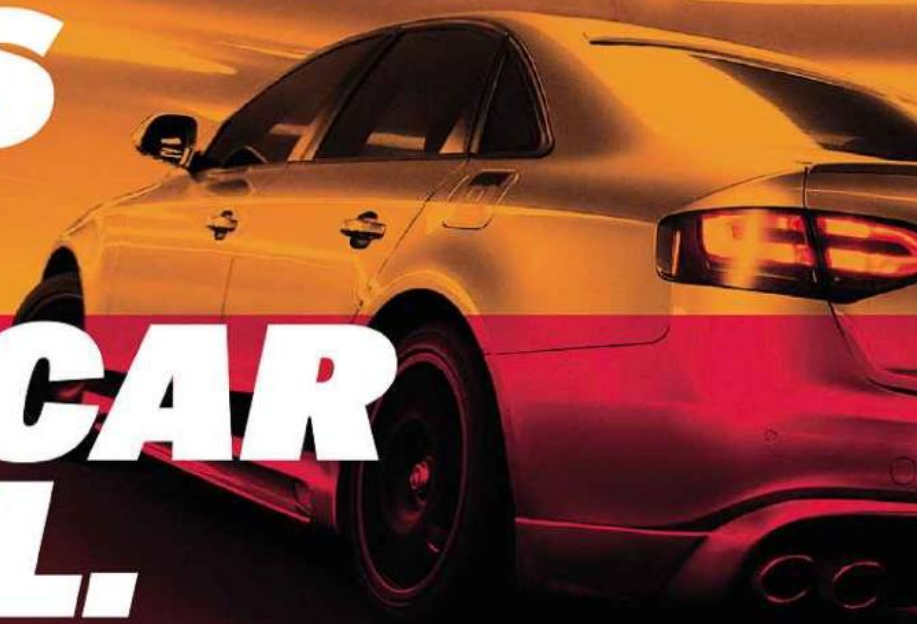


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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CV/L/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (s)	0-100MPH (s)	0-100MPH (0-100MPH)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
Mini Cooper S (F56)	248 D	£20,635	4/1998	189/4700	221/1250	1195kg	161	6.8	-	-	146	+ Competent and fun chassis - Not as lively as some other small hot hatches	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works (F56)	211 F	£24,430	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	£16-17	4/1998	228/5200	236/1250	1215kg	191	6.3	-	-	152	+ A more hardcore JCW - The ride could be considered a little too hardcore	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S (R56)	185 F	£9-14	4/1998	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	£6-14	4/1998	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	£8-14	4/1998	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	4/1998	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	4/1998	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	£12-16	4/1998	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	£16	4/1998	215/7100	184/4600	1090kg	200	6.5	-	-	149	+ Storming engine, agility - Tacky styling 'enhancements'	★★★★☆
Nissan Juke Nismo RS	208 D	£15-17	4/1618	215/6000	206/3600	1315kg	166	7.0	-	-	137	+ Quirky character and bold styling - Not a match for a pukka hot hatch	★★★★☆
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 2)	-	£97-98	4/1587	103/6200	97/3500	865kg	121	8.8	-	-	121	+ 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	£97-104	4/1587	122/6600	107/5200	950kg	128	7.4	-	-	127	+ Fine handling supermini - Looks its age	★★★★☆
Peugeot 208 GTI by Peugeot Sport	247 F	£15-18	4/1598	205/6000	221/3000	1160kg	180	6.5	-	-	143	+ A highly focused small hatch - 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 by Peugeot Sport	245 F	£28,590	4/1598	266/6000	243/1900	1205kg	224	6.0	6.0	13.8	155	+ A great entertainer with a cracker of an engine - Tiny steering wheel obscures the dials	★★★★☆
Peugeot 306 GTI 6	020 F	£93-101	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1215kg	139	7.9	7.2	20.1	140	+ One of the great GTIs - They don't make them like this any more	★★★★☆
Peugeot 306 Rallye	095 F	£98-99	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1199kg	142	7.8	6.9	19.2	137	+ Essentially a GTI 6 for less dosh - Limited choice of colours	★★★★☆
Renault Twingo GT	248 F	£14,255	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	£108-13	4/1598	131/6750	118/4400	1050kg	127	8.7	-	-	125	+ Renault Sport experience for pocket money - Optional Cup chassis gives bouncy ride	★★★★☆
Renault Sport Clio 200 Auto	184 F	£20,300	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	£23,000	4/1618	217/6050	206/2000	1204kg	183	6.6	-	-	146	+ Willing chassis - Awful paddleshift gearbox	★★★★☆
Renault Sport Clio 200 Cup	247 F	£99-13	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 'em like this anymore	★★★★☆
Renault Sport Clio 197 Cup	115 F	£7-10	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	£104-105	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	£104-105	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	£105-106	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	£101-103	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	£102-103	4/1998	170/6250	147/5400	1071kg	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	£100-101	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	£103-105	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	£99-102	6/2946	227/6000	221/3750	1410kg	164	6.6	5.8	17.0	145	+ Pocket supercar - Mid-engined handling can be tricky	★★★★☆
Renault Mégane RS	252 F	£27,495	4/1798	216/6000	288/2400	1407kg	199	5.8	6.3	14.6	155	+ Outrageous grip and agility - Four-wheel steering takes some getting used to	★★★★☆
Renault Sport Mégane 275 Cup-S/Nav 275	223 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	£9-12	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	£107-109	4/1995	173/3750	265/2000	1470kg	179	8.3	8.3	23.5	137	+ A diesel with a genuinely sporty chassis - Could take more power	★★★★☆
Renault Sport Mégane 230 FI Team R26	195 F	£107-109	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1345kg	171	6.5	6.2	16.0	147	+ The car the R26.R is based on - FI Team stickers in dubious taste	★★★★☆
Renault Sport Mégane R26.R	231 F	£108-109	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	-	£10,560	3/999	59/5000	70/3000	854kg	70	14.4	-	-	99	+ Like Volkswagen's Up but more expensive - Still predictably slow	★★★★☆
SEAT Ibiza Cupra	225 F	£16-18	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	£30,495	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	£18	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	£107-11	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 rivals; only 24 came to the UK	★★★★☆
SEAT Leon Cupra R 225	067 F	£103-106	4/1781	222/5900	206/2200	1376kg	164	6.9	-	-	150	+ Cross-country pace, practicality, value - Not as thrilling as some	★★★★☆
Skoda Citigo	-	£8860	3/999	59/5000	70/3000	854kg	70	14.4	-	-	101	+ Like Volkswagen's Up, but 20mph 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	£103-107	4/1896	230/4000	229/1900	1315kg	100	9.6	-	-	127	+ Fun and frugal hot hatch - A little short on steering feel	★★★★☆
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk3)	187 D	£13-17	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	£25,690	4/1984	221/4700	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 245 (Mk3)	250 F	£28,095	4/1984	242/5000	258/1600	1370kg	179	6.6	-	-	155	+ A credible, entertaining performer - You won't get out of bed at 4am to drive it	★★★★☆
Skoda Octavia vRS TDI 4x4 (Mk3)	223 D	£29,015	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	£105-13	4/1998	197/5100	206/1700	1395kg	143	7.3	-	-	149	+ Drives like a GTI but costs much less - Green brake calipers?	★★★★☆
Subaru impreza WRX	125 D	£108-10	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	£108-10	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)	251 F	£17,999	4/1373	138/5500	170/2500	975kg	144	8.1	7.6	20.1	130	+ Composed and brisk - Adjustable chassis and character have been diluted	★★★★☆
Suzuki Swift Sport (Mk1)	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	★★★★☆
Toyota Yaris GRMN	132 F	£105-11	4/1586	123/6800	109/4800	1030kg	121	8.9	-	-	124	+ Entertaining handling, well built - Lacking in steering feedback	★★★★☆
Vauxhall Corsa VXR	248 F	£26,295	4/1798	209/6800	184/5000	1135kg	187	6.3	-	-	143	+ Appealingly feisty supercharged supermini - Artificial steering; they're only making 400	★★★★☆
Vauxhall Corsa VXR	211 F	£14-18	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	£7-14	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	£12-18	4/1998	276/5500	295/2500	1475kg	190	6.0	-	-	155	+ Loony turbo pace - Lacks the Renault Sport Mégane's precision	★★★★☆
Vauxhall Astra VXR (Mk1)	102 F	£105-11	4/1998	237/5600	236/2400	1393kg	173	6.4	6.7	16.7	152	+ Fast and furious - Lacks a little composure and precision	★★★★☆
Volkswagen Up	171 F	£9325	3/999	59/5000	70/3000	854kg	70	14.4	-	-	99	+ Accomplished city car is dynamically sound... but predictably slow	★★★★☆
Volkswagen Up GTI	248 F	£14,055	3/999	113/5000	147/2000	995kg	115	8.8	-	-	122	+ Infectious appetite for fun - City car roots are still there	★★★★☆
Volkswagen Lupo GTI	034 F	£101-104	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	★★★★☆
Volkswagen Polo GTI	244 D	£19,500	4/1984	197/4400	236/1500	1272kg	157	6.7	-	-	147	+ Decent performance; mature ride and handling - Lacks driver involvement	★★★★☆
Volkswagen 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	★★★★☆
Volkswagen 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	★★★★☆
Volkswagen Golf GTI (Mk7.5)	233 D	£27,865	4/1984	221/4700	258/1500	1289kg	179	6.4	-	-	155	+ Still the most capable all-round hot hatch - Should be more thrilling	★★★★☆

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MAKE & MODEL

Volkswagen Golf GTI (Mk5)
Volkswagen Golf R32 (Mk5)
Volkswagen Golf R32 (Mk4)
Volkswagen Golf GTI 16v (Mk2)
Volkswagen Golf GTI (Mk1, 1.8)
Volvo V40 T5 R-Design Polestar

ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CV/L/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (s/LIMIT)	0-100MPH (s/LIMIT)	0-100MPH (s/LIMIT)	MAX MPH
195 F	'04-'09	4/1984	197/5100	207/1800	1336kg	150	7.3	6.7	17.9	145
087 F	'06-'09	6/3189	246/6300	236/2500	1466kg	170	6.5	5.8	15.2	155
053 F	'02-'04	6/3189	237/6250	236/2800	1477kg	163	6.6	6.4	16.3	154
195 F	'88-'92	4/1781	139/6100	123/4600	960kg	147	7.9	-	-	129
224 F	'82-'84	4/1781	112/5800	109/3500	860kg	132	-	-	-	114
242 D	£36,010	4/1969	250/5500	295/2000	1507kg	169	6.2	-	-	149

EVO RATING

+ Character and ability; the GTI's return to form - Lacking firepower? ★★★★★
+ The traction's great and you'll love the soundtrack - We'd still have a GTI ★★★★★
+ Charismatic - Boomy engine can be tiresome ★★★★★
+ Still feels everyday useable - Too many have been modified ★★★★★
+ The car that started it all - Tricky to find an unmodified one ★★★★★
+ An intriguing alternative to the norm - Rivals offer more for less ★★★★★

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	234 D	£31,180	4/1995	197/5000	243/1750	1429kg	140	6.6	-	-	146	+ Keen engine, enjoyable handling - Firm low-speed ride ★★★★★
Alfa Romeo Giulia Veloce	244 F	£38,260	4/1995	276/5250	295/2250	1429kg	196	5.7	-	-	149	+ Supple and satisfying - Engine reluctant to rev ★★★★★
Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio	244 F	£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	234 D	£43,690	4/1995	276/5250	295/1750	1660kg	169	5.7	-	-	143	+ Agile feel, quick steering, attractive cabin - Engine not truly inspiring ★★★★★
Alfa Romeo Stelvio Quadrifoglio	244 D	£69,500	6/2891	503/6500	442/2500	1630kg	279	3.8	-	-	176	+ Rivals the Macan GTS - Needs optional P Zero Corsa tyres to give its very best ★★★★★
Alpina D3 Biturbo (F30)	192 D	£47,950	6/2993	345/4000	516/1500	1585kg	221	4.6	-	-	173	+ Huge performance under a subtle exterior - Low-speed ride can be poor ★★★★★
Alpina B5	249 D	£89,000	8/4395	600/5750	590/3000	1940kg	314	3.5	-	-	205	+ Better than its B89 sibling - More of a 2+2 than a proper four-seater ★★★★★
Aston Martin Rapide	141 F	'10-'13	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1990kg	240	5.3	-	-	188	+ Oozes star quality; gearbox on 2015MY cars a big improvement - It's cosy in the back ★★★★★
Aston Martin Rapide S	201 D	£147,950	12/5935	552/6650	465/5500	1990kg	282	4.4	-	-	203	+ On paper a match for the original S4 - In reality much less interesting ★★★★★
Audi S3 Saloon	192 D	£35,405	4/1984	306/5500	280/1800	1430kg	210	5.3	-	-	155	+ Mini RS4 looks; stonking pace - Not the most involving driving experience ★★★★★
Audi RS3 Saloon	243 F	£45,250	5/2480	394/5850	354/1700	1515kg	264	4.1	3.6	8.8	155	+ Strong response and delivery from turbo engine - Chassis feels softer than before ★★★★★
Audi S4 (B9)	225 D	£44,600	6/2995	349/5400	369/1370	1630kg	218	4.7	-	-	155	+ Great supercharged powertrain, secure chassis - The RS4 ★★★★★
Audi S4 (B8)	166 D	'08-'16	6/2995	328/5500	324/2900	1650kg	202	5.0	-	-	155	+ Very 'real world' fast - Some may feel it lacks character and drama ★★★★★
Audi RS4 Avant (B9)	246 F	£62,175	6/2894	444/5700	442/1900	1790kg	252	4.1	-	-	155	+ Looks and sounds the part, thunderously fast - Unnatural steering, dull dynamics ★★★★★
Audi RS4 Avant (B8)	216 F	'12-'15	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1795kg	251	4.7	4.5	10.5	174	+ 414bhp at 7800rpm! And there's an estate version too - Busy under braking ★★★★★
Audi RS4 (B7)	250 F	'05-'08	8/4163	444/7800	317/5500	1650kg	255	4.7	4.5	10.5	155	+ Effortless pace - Not the last word in agility; bends wheel rims ★★★★★
Audi RS4 (B5)	192 F	'00-'02	6/2671	375/6100	325/2500	1620kg	236	4.9	4.8	12.1	170	+ Storming performance (thanks to Porsche) - Try finding one ★★★★★
Audi RS2	214 F	'94-'95	5/2226	315/6500	302/3000	1595kg	201	4.8	4.8	13.1	162	+ More capable than you think; strong V6 engine - Gearbox frustrating in auto mode ★★★★★
Audi S5 Sportback	233 D	£44,000	6/2995	349/5400	369/1370	1660kg	214	4.7	-	-	155	+ Performance, foolproof powertrain, beefy looks - Feels a bit one-dimensional ★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant (C7)	203 F	£81,355	8/3993	552/5700	516/1750	1935kg	299	3.9	3.6	8.2	155	+ The extra power is no hassle for the chassis - But it is a stern test of your self-control ★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant Performance (C7)	224 D	£88,270	8/3993	591/6100	553/2500	1950kg	311	3.7	-	-	155	+ Was the world's most powerful estate - Power isn't everything ★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant (C6)	116 F	'08-'10	10/4991	572/6250	479/1500	1985kg	293	4.5	4.3	9.7	155	+ The ultimate estate car? - Numb steering ★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant (C5)	052 F	'02-'04	8/4172	444/5700	413/1950	1865kg	242	4.6	4.8	11.6	155	+ Looks and drives better than the S6 it's based on - Costs several thousands more ★★★★★
Audi S7 Sportback	171 D	£65,950	8/3993	414/5000	406/1400	1945kg	216	4.6	-	-	155	+ Stonking performance, great looks - Numb driving experience ★★★★★
Audi S7 Sportback	208 F	£86,985	8/3993	552/5700	516/1750	1930kg	291	3.9	-	-	155	+ Fantastic drivetrain, quality and refinement - Dynamic Steering feels artificial ★★★★★
Audi S8 Plus	217 D	£100,510	8/3993	591/6100	553/2500	1990kg	305	3.8	-	-	155	+ Surprisingly characterful; better than many RSs - High centre of gravity ★★★★★
Audi RS Q3	206 D	'13-'16	5/2480	335/6100	332/1600	1655kg	206	4.8	-	-	155	+ Fine chassis; deceptive pace - Lacks excitement ★★★★★
Audi SQ5	237 D	£51,200	6/2995	349/5400	369/1370	1870kg	190	5.4	-	-	155	+ Effortless performance with real top-end kick - Determinedly unsporting ★★★★★
Bentley Flying Spur V8	200 D	£132,800	8/3993	500/6000	487/1700	2342kg	217	5.2	-	-	183	+ Old-school approach to comfort and luxury - Old-school tech ★★★★★
Bentley Flying Spur V8 S	230 D	£142,800	8/3993	521/6000	502/1700	2342kg	226	4.9	-	-	190	+ For those who still want their Flying Spur with a W12 - Car feels its weight; engine sounds dull ★★★★★
Bentley Flying Spur	185 D	£154,900	12/5998	616/6000	590/1600	2400kg	261	4.6	-	-	199	+ The pick of the Bentayga range - A top-end Range Rover is still more polished ★★★★★
Bentley Bentayga V8	247 D	£136,200	8/3996	542/6000	568/1960	2313kg	238	4.5	-	-	180	+ Sublime quality, ridiculous pace - Inert driving experience, SUV stigma ★★★★★
Bentley Bentayga	178 D	£162,700	12/5950	600/5000	664/1350	2365kg	258	4.1	-	-	187	+ Drives like a modern Bentley should - Shame it doesn't look like one too ★★★★★
Bentley Mulsanne	178 F	£229,360	8/6752	505/4200	752/1750	2610kg	197	5.3	-	-	184	+ Extravagant; effortless performance - Passengers have more fun than you do ★★★★★
Bentley Mulsanne Speed	250 T	£252,000	8/6752	530/4000	811/1750	2610kg	206	4.9	-	-	190	+ Great engine, fine handling, good value - Steering confuses weight with feel ★★★★★
BMW 330d M Sport (F30)	180 D	£38,590	6/2993	254/4000	413/2000	1540kg	168	5.6	-	-	155	+ Feelsome rear-drive chassis - Easy to drive it beyond its comfort zone ★★★★★
BMW 340i M Sport Touring (F31)	228 D	£42,055	6/2998	321/5500	332/1380	1650kg	202	5.5	-	-	155	+ New-age four-pot 328i is great all-rounder - We miss the six-cylinder soundtrack ★★★★★
BMW 328i (F30)	165 D	'11-'15	4/1997	242/5000	258/1250	1430kg	172	6.1	-	-	155	+ Superb straight-six, fine ride/handling balance - 335i saloon weighs and costs less ★★★★★
BMW 435i Gran Coupe	203 D	'14-'16	6/2979	302/5800	295/1200	1585kg	194	5.5	-	-	155	+ Looks, performance, practicality - Body control on rough roads; engine lacks character ★★★★★
BMW M3 (F80)	211 F	£59,905	6/2979	425/5500	406/1850	1560kg	277	4.3	4.1	8.6	155	+ The car the F80 M3 should have been from the start - Less refined at low speeds ★★★★★
BMW M3 Competition Package (F80)	237 F	£62,865	6/2979	444/7000	406/1850	1560kg	289	4.2	-	-	155	+ Improved chassis and mid-range urge - Costs over £20k more than an M3 Comp Pack ★★★★★
BMW M3 CS (F80)	250 F	£86,380	6/2979	454/6250	442/4000	1585kg	291	3.9	-	-	174	+ Every bit as good as the E92 M3 coupe - No carbon roof ★★★★★
BMW M3 (E90)	123 F	'08-'11	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1605kg	262	4.9	4.9	10.7	165	+ Saloon chassis + weight savings + GTS engine = best E90 M3 - Just 67 were made ★★★★★
BMW M3 CRT (E90)	179 F	'11-'12	8/4361	444/8300	324/3750	1580kg	285	4.4	-	-	180	+ Fun in two- or four-wheel drive - Insufficient steering connection and engine character ★★★★★
BMW M5 (F90)	244 F	£89,640	8/4395	592/5600	553/1800	1855kg	324	3.4	-	-	155	+ Incredible performance, sharper handling - It's still a big old bus ★★★★★
BMW M5 Competition (F90)	252 D	£96,205	8/4395	616/6000	553/1800	1865kg	336	3.3	-	-	155	+ Twin-turbocharging suits M5 well - Can feel heavy at times ★★★★★
BMW M5 (F10)	208 F	'11-'16	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1870kg	300	4.4	-	-	155	+ Close to being the ultimate supersaloon - SMG gearbox feels old-tech ★★★★★
BMW M5 (E60)	129 F	'04-'10	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1755kg	289	4.7	-	-	155	+ Magnificent V8-engined supersaloon - We'd be nitpicking ★★★★★
BMW M5 (E39)	110 F	'99-'03	8/4941	394/6600	369/3800	1795kg	223	5.3	4.9	11.5	155	+ The Godfather of supersaloons - The family can come too ★★★★★
BMW M5 (E34)	110 F	'92-'96	6/3795	335/6900	295/4750	1725kg	197	5.8	4.9	13.6	155	+ The original storming saloon - Understated looks ★★★★★
BMW M5 (E28)	182 F	'86-'88	6/3453	282/6500	251/4500	1431kg	200	6.1	-	-	156	+ Enormous performance, stylish looks - Price looks silly next to rivals, M5 included ★★★★★
BMW M6 Gran Coupe	190 D	£95,665	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1875kg	299	4.2	-	-	155	+ More capable than you'd think; strong engine - Too much of a limo to be genuinely exciting ★★★★★
BMW M760Li xDrive	233 D	£132,310	12/6592	602/5500	590/1550	2180kg	281	3.7	-	-	155	+ Straight-line pace - Driving experience identical to standard X5, despite the M badge ★★★★★
BMW X5 M50d	191 D	£67,220	6/2993	376/4500	546/2000	2190kg	174	5.3	-	-	155	+ Big improvement on its predecessor - Coupe roofline still of questionable taste ★★★★★
BMW X6 M	212 D	£95,430	8/4395	567/6000	553/2200	2265kg	254	4.2	-	-	155	+ Caddy's S-class rival scores on comfort - But not on driver involvement ★★★★★
Cadillac CT6	226 D	£69,990	6/2977	411/5700	409/2500	1950kg	214	5.7	-	-	149	+ One of the finest front-drivers of all time - Convincing your friends of that ★★★★★
Honda Accord Type R	012 F	'98-'03	4/2157	209/7200	158/6700	1306kg	163	7.2	6.1	17.4	142	+ Good powertrain, promising chassis - Lacklustre steering, strong rivals ★★★★★
Infiniti Q50S Hybrid	195 D	£41,450	6/3498	359/6800	402/5000	1762kg	207	5.4	-	-	155	+ Talented chassis gets more traction - Shame the engine isn't as polished ★★★★★
Jaguar XE 2.0 180PS Diesel AWD	227 D	£35,865	4/1999	178/4000	317/7500	1675kg	107	8.4	-	-	132	+ Perfect. If you love diesels - A great chassis with a poor engine if you don't ★★★★★
Jaguar XE 2.0 240PS Diesel AWD	251 T	£39,180	4/1999	237/4000	368/1500	1718kg	140	6.5	-	-	155	+ Fine chassis, deceptively quick cross-country pace - Could use a bit more drama ★★★★★
Jaguar XE 300 Sport	252 D	£45,460	6/1997	296/5500	295/1500	1690kg	178	5.7	-	-	155	+ Engaging handling, decent pace - Expensive; cabin quality and space lags behind rivals ★★★★★
Jaguar XE S	237 D	'17-'18	6/2995	375/6500	332/3500	1655kg	230	5.0	-	-	155	+ A GT3 for the family - There will only be 300 of them, and all will be left-hand drive ★★★★★
Jaguar XE SV Project 8	250 F	£149,995	8/5000	592/6500	516/3500	1745kg	345	3.7	-	-	200	+ Outstanding ride and handling balance - Engine lacks appeal ★★★★★
Jaguar XF S	214 D	£51,100	6/2995	375/6500	332/4500	1710kg	223	5.3	-	-	155	+ Great chassis, good looks, better engine than V6 petrol - It's still a diesel ★★★★★
Jaguar XF S Diesel	219 D	£50,100	6/2993	296/4000	516/2000	1750kg	172	6.2	-	-	155	+ Brilliant blend of pace and refinement - Doesn't sound as special as it is ★★★★★
Jaguar XFR	181 D	'09-'15	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1800kg	284	4.7	4.8	10.2	155	+ XF turned up to 12 - Tyres aren't cheap ★★★★★
Jaguar XFR-S	208 F	'13-'15	8/5000	542/6500	501/2500	1800kg	306	4.6	-	-	186	+ Hot-rod vibe, fine cabin - Opinion-dividing looks ★★★★★
Jaguar XJR	191 D	£91,755	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1875kg	294	4.6	-	-	174	+ Big performance, genuine sporting spirit - Unfashionable package; depreciation ★★★★★
Jaguar XJR575	251 T	£93,780	8/5000	567/6250	516/3500	1875kg	307	4.4	-	-	186	



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CIRCUIT PORTIMAO

MAKE & MODEL

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CV/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (secs)	0-100MPH (secs)	0-100MPH (MPH)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING
Jaguar E-Pace P300	243 D	£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
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
Jaguar I-Pace HSE	251 D	£74,445	-	394	513	2208kg	181	4.8	-	-	124	+ Impressive chassis and point-to-point pace - Range anxiety and hefty kerb weight
Kia Stinger GT-Line 2.0	247 D	£31,995	4/1998	244/6200	260/1400	1642kg	151	5.8	-	-	149	+ Out-Jaguars Jaguar's XE and XF - Except in the looks department
Kia Stinger GT-Line 2.2 CRDI	251 T	£34,225	4/1999	197/3800	324/1750	1735kg	115	7.3	-	-	143	+ Smooth daily driver with a decent interior - Frustrating auto 'box, heavy kerb weight
Kia Stinger GT S	242 D	£40,495	6/3342	365/6000	376/1300	1780kg	168	4.7	-	-	168	+ Playful handling, deep-chested performance - Engine lacks soul, steering lacks feel
Lamborghini Urus	249 F	£185,000	8/3996	641/6000	627/2250	2200kg	296	3.6	-	-	190	+ A freakish manipulator of physics - But also rather one-dimensional
Lexus GS F	243 D	£73,375	8/4969	471/7100	391/4800	1790kg	267	4.6	-	-	168	+ Glorious engine, balanced handling - Gearbox is off the pace
Lexus IS F	151 F	£77,12	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	377/5200	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	£14,08	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	£18,12	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	£18,12	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 feelsome - Lacks the ultimate finesse and response of the C63 S
Mercedes-AMG C63 Estate (S205)	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-AMG C63 S Estate (S205)	252 D	£77,000	8/3982	503/5500	516/2000	1750kg	292	4.1	-	-	174	+ One of the finest all-round compact performance cars - Baffling array of driver settings
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG (W204)	151 F	£18,12	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	£14,08	8/5439	367/5250	376/4000	1635kg	228	5.2	-	-	155	+ Furiously fast, commendably discreet - A little lacking in originality
Mercedes-Benz 190E 2.5-16	185 F	£19,92	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	327	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)	246 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 (W121)	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 (W121)	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 (W121)	165 F	£13,16	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 (W121)	134 D	£19,11	8/6208	518/6800	465/5200	1765kg	298	4.5	-	-	155	+ Indulgent chassis, brilliant engine - Steering still vague
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W121)	096 D	£16,09	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	£13,06	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	246 D	£125,090	8/3982	604/5500	664/2750	1940kg	316	4.3	-	-	155	+ Performance doesn't come at the expense of luxury - But pure driving thrills do
Mercedes-AMG CLS53 4Matic+	247 D	£72,095	6/2999	451/6100	567/1800	1905kg	302	4.5	-	-	155	+ Impressive chassis and hybrid powertrain - 4Matic only, and heavy, too
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG S	199 D	£14,17	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	516/1750	1795kg	293	4.4	-	-	155	+ Monster performance, 549bhp an option - Not as desirable as a Bentley or Aston
Mercedes-Benz GLC63 AMG S	218 D	£96,950	8/5461	577/5500	560/1750	2270kg	258	4.2	-	-	155	+ Stinking pace, extreme refinement - Feels remote
Mercedes-Benz GLC63 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-AMG G63	250 D	£143,305	8/3982	577/6000	627/2500	2485kg	236	4.5	-	-	137	+ Vastly improved chassis, fabulous engine - Dynamic ability still limited
Mercedes-Benz G63 AMG	172 D	£12,18	8/5461	537/5500	560/2000	2475kg	220	5.4	-	-	130	+ Epic soundtrack - Ancient chassis
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-300 SST	118 F	£18,12	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	£18,12	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	£18,12	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	£19,10	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	£15,08	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	£15,08	4/1997	366/6887	363/3200	1400kg	266	4.0	-	-	157	+ Well-executed engine upgrades - Prison food
Mitsubishi Evo VIII	055 F	£13,05	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	£13,05	4/1997	305/6800	289/3500	1400kg	221	4.9	-	-	157	+ Extra pace, extra attitude - Extra money
Mitsubishi Evo VII	031 F	£12,03	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	£10,01	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	1995kg	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 rival
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	-	-	176	+ Staggeringly quick and hugely capable - Do you really need this much power?
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (Mk3)	243 D	£99,291	8/3996	542/5750	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				

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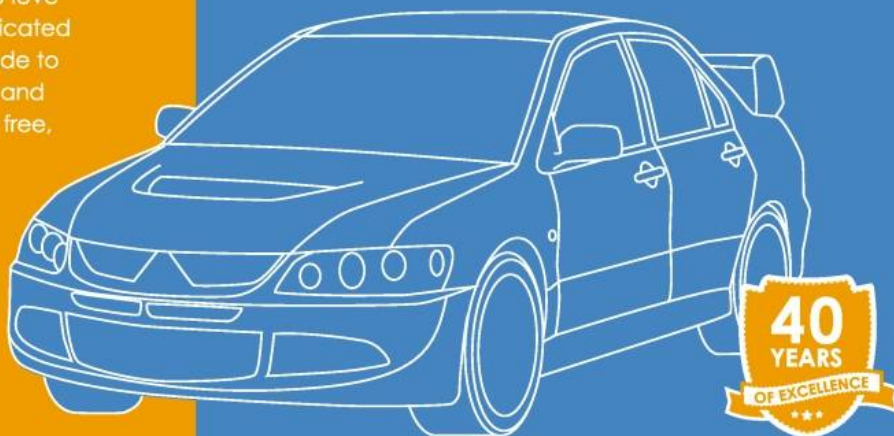
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MAKE & MODEL

Vauxhall Vectra VXR	102 D	'06-'09	6/2792	276/5500	262/1800	1580kg	177	6.1	-	-	161	Great engine, effortless pace, good value - Numb steering, lumpy ride	★★★★☆
Vauxhall VXR8 GTS	215 D	'15-'17	8/6162	576/6150	546/3850	1834kg	319	4.2	-	-	155	Monster engine; engaging driving experience - Woeful interior	★★★★☆
Vauxhall VXR8 GTS-R	245 F	'17	8/6162	587/6150	546/3850	1880kg	317	4.2	-	-	155	Blistering performance; bursting with character - The end of an era	★★★★☆
Volvo V60 Polestar	222 D	£49,665	4/1969	362/6000	347/3100	1721kg	214	4.8	-	-	155	Subtle, well-executed performance car - Plays a little too safe	★★★★☆

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 430** 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.

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	248 F	£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	248 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	170kg	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	★★★★☆
Aston Martin DB9 Volante	150 D	'04-'15	12/5935	510/6500	457/5500	1890kg	274	4.5	-	183	Consummate cruiser and capable when pushed - Roof-up wind noise	★★★★☆
Aston Martin DB11 Volante	247 F	£161,900	8/3982	503/6000	498/2000	1795kg	285	4.1	-	187	Impressively wide range of dynamic personalities - Cabin could be better at this price	★★★★☆
Audi TTS Roadster (Mk3)	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 TT RS Roadster (Mk3)	250 T	£54,230	5/2480	394/5850	354/1700	1530kg	262	3.9	-	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 i8 Roadster	249 D	£124,735	3/1499	369/5800	420/3700	1595kg	235	4.6	-	155	Unique and engaging - Still more GT than sports car	★★★★☆
BMW Z8	026 F	'00-'03	8/4941	400/6600	369/3800	1585kg	256	4.7	4.8	111	M5-powered super-sportster - M5's more fun to drive	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven 160	239 F	£19,495	3/660	80/7000	79/3400	490kg*	166	6.9	-	100	The fabulous Seven formulae at its most basic - Gets pricey with options	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven SuperSprint	247 D	£29,995	3/660	95/7000	82/5600	490kg*	197	6.9	-	100	Accessible limits with proper pace - You need to enjoy being exposed to the elements	★★★★☆
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	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 Roadsport	165 F	'11-'14	4/1596	140/6900	120/5700	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*	528	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	The K-series Seven at its very best - No cup holders	★★★★☆
Dallara Stradale	250 F	£162,000	4/2300	394/6200	369/3000	855kg*	468	3.3	-	174	Startling performance - Its limits always felt slightly beyond your reach	★★★★☆
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 Portofino	247 F	£166,180	8/3855	591/7500	560/3000	1664kg	361	3.5	-	199	Better than the California - Not better than a DB11 Volante	★★★★☆
Ferrari California T	229 D	'14-'17	8/3855	553/7500	557/4750	1729kg	324	3.6	-	196	Turbocharged engine is a triumph - Still places daily useability above outright thrills	★★★★☆
Fiat 124 Spider	228 F	£12,050	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	£59,550	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	£70,300	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 AWD	-	£98,145	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	£118,165	8/5000	567/6500	516/3500	1720kg	335	3.7	-	195	Huge performance - Unpleasant soundtrack; unsettled on bumpy roads	★★★★☆
Jaguar F-type S Convertible	183 F	'13-'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	567/6500	501/2500	1585kg	363	3.9	-	186	Noise, performance, adjustability - Expensive, and not the GT3 rival we would have liked	★★★★☆
Jaguar XKR Convertible	130 F	'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	-	'17	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	-	'17	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 - Lightest, 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	A most thrilling 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	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	Brilliant entry-level Elise - Precious little	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise T1S	049 F	'02-'04	4/1796	156/7000	129/4650	860kg	197	5.1	-	131	A genuinely useable Elise - Air-con? In an Elise?	★★★★☆



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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE Cyl/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (s)	0-100MPH (s)	0-100MPH (MPH)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING
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	'555,900	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 3-Eleven 430	248 F	'102,000	6/3456	430/7000	325/4500	920kg*	475	3.2	-	-	180	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ A fitting send-off for a brilliant Lotus - Just 20 being made, and they're not cheap
Lotus 3-Eleven	220 F	'16-'17	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 MC	185 D	'112,400	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1973kg	234	4.9	-	-	179	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Most powerful GranCabrio yet - The GranCabrio is starting to show its age
Mazda MX-5 i.S. (Mk4)	230 F	'18,795	4/1496	129/7000	111/4800	975kg	134	8.3	-	-	127	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Lightest MX-5 since the Mk1 - Lacks intensity
Mazda MX-5 2.0 Sport Nav (Mk4)	228 F	'24,195	4/1998	158/6000	147/4600	1000kg	161	7.3	-	-	133	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Brilliant basic recipe - The desire for stiffer suspension and more power
Mazda MX-5 RF 2.0 (Mk4)	234 F	'23,395	4/1998	158/6000	147/4600	1045kg	154	7.4	-	-	134	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Drives just like its soft-top brother - Significant wind noise with the roof down
Mazda MX-5 2.0i Sport Tech (Mk3.5)	212 F	'09-'15	4/1999	158/7000	139/5000	1098kg	146	7.6	-	-	138	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Handles brilliantly again; folding hard-top also available - Less-than-macho image
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk3)	091 F	'05-'09	4/1798	124/6500	123/4500	1080kg	108	9.3	-	-	122	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Gearchange, interior - Lost some of the charm of old MX-5s; dubious handling
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk2)	017 F	'98-'05	4/1839	146/7000	124/5000	1065kg	140	8.5	-	-	123	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Affordable ragtop doesn't get much better - Cheap cabin
Mazda MX-5 1.6 (Mk1)	131 F	'89-'97	4/1597	115/6500	100/5500	971kg	120	8.8	-	-	114	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ The original and still (pretty much) the best - Less than rigid
Mercedes-AMG SL C43	222 D	'547,600	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	1651kg	262	4.6	-	-	155	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Quicker and more economical than ever - Needs to be sharper, too
Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG	087 F	'05-'10	8/5439	355/5750	376/4000	1575kg	229	4.9	-	-	155	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Superb engine, responsive chassis - No manual option, ESP spoils fun
Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG Black Series	110 F	'07-'08	8/5439	394/5750	383/3750	1495kg	268	4.5	4.9	11.2	174	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ AMG gets serious - Dull-witted auto box, uneven dynamics
Mercedes-AMG SL63	228 D	'116,430	8/5461	571/5500	664/2250	1770kg	331	4.1	-	-	155	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ More than 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	'1140,660	8/3982	549/5750	501/1900	1660kg	336	3.7	-	-	196	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ As above but with more show - Road noise can wear on long journeys
Mercedes-Benz SL500	169 D	'12-'16	8/4663	429/5250	516/1800	1710kg	255	4.6	-	-	155	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Wasty 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 SL63 AMG	183 D	'13-'16	12/5980	621/4800	737/2300	1875kg	336	4.0	-	-	155	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Chassis just about deals with the power - Speed limits
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	117 D	'08-'13	8/6208	518/6800	464/5200	1970kg	278	4.6	-	-	155	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ More focused than old SL55 AMG - Lost some of its all-round appeal
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG	071 D	'04-'10	12/5980	604/4800	737/2000	2035kg	302	4.2	-	-	155	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Gob-smacking performance - Costly to run
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	'594,665	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	'544,758	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	'553,714	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 718 Boxster GTS	249 T	'561,727	4/2497	360/6500	310/1900	1375kg	266	4.6	-	-	180	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ The best Boxster spec - Doesn't come cheap
Porsche Boxster (981)	238 F	'12-'16	6/2706	261/6700	206/4500	1310kg	202	5.8	-	-	164	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Goes and looks better than the 987 Boxster - Shame about the electric steering
Porsche Boxster S (981)	186 F	'12-'16	6/3436	311/6700	265/4500	1320kg	239	5.1	-	-	173	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Boxster steps out of 911's shadow - But gets 911's less appealing electric steering
Porsche Boxster GTS (981)	203 D	'14-'16	6/3436	325/6700	273/4500	1345kg	246	5.0	-	-	174	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Superb dynamics, fantastic engine, great looks - Sport suspension is very firm
Porsche Boxster Spyder (981)	223 F	'15-'16	6/3800	370/6700	310/4750	1315kg	286	4.5	-	-	180	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ An even faster, even more rewarding Boxster - Feedback trails the Cayman GT4's
Porsche Boxster S (987)	161 F	'05-'12	6/3436	306/6400	266/5500	1355kg	229	5.3	-	-	170	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Second-gen Boxster's as brilliant as ever - It's a typically Porsche redesign
Porsche Boxster Spyder (987)	188 F	'10-'12	6/3436	316/7200	273/4750	1275kg	252	4.9	-	-	166	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Lighter, more driver-centric Boxster - Collapsed-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
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	212 D	'264,000	12/6592	563/5250	575/1500	2560kg	223	4.9	-	-	155	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Effortless driving experience - Driver involvement not a priority
Toyota MR2 (Mk3)	187 F	'00-'06	4/1794	138/6400	125/4400	975kg	141	8.0	7.2	21.2	131	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Tight lines, taut dynamics - Minimal luggage space
TVR Tamora	070 F	'01-'07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1060kg	335	4.2	-	-	175	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Well-sorted soft-top TVR - Awkward styling
TVR Chimaera 5.0	007 F	'93-'03	8/4997	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	4.4	-	-	167	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Gorgeous noise, tarmac-ripping grunt - Details
TVR Griffith 4.3	068 F	'92-'93	8/4280	280/5500	305/4000	1040kg	274	4.4	4.8	11.2	155	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ The car that made TVR. Cult status - Mere details
TVR Griffith 500	009 F	'93-'01	8/4997	320/5500	320/4000	1060kg	307	4.1	-	-	167	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Gruff diamond - A few rough edges
Vauxhall VX220	023 F	'00-'04	4/2198	145/5800	150/4000	875kg	168	5.9	-	-	136	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Absurdly good Vauxhall - The badge?
Vauxhall VX220 Turbo	066 F	'03-'05	4/1998	197/5500	184/1950	930kg	215	4.9	-	-	151	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Nothing comes close for the money - Marginal everyday usability
Vuhl 05	220 F	'559,995	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	'330,595	4/1999	250/7000	295/2500	725kg*	350	4.0	4.2	-	145	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Neutral and exploitable - Prescriptive balance

COUPES / GTs



OUR CHOICE

Porsche 911 Carrera 4 GTS. Turbocharging has given more muscle to the Carrera flat-six (here with 444bhp), while the GT3 chassis brings dexterity and delicacy to the party. Add practicality, usability and the security of four-wheel drive and you have a brilliantly rounded package.



BEST OF THE REST

The **BMW M4 Competition Package** is the car the M4 should have been from the start; the **Audi RS5** counters with an impressively wide bandwidth of abilities. The **Lotus Exige** continues to go from strength to strength in all its guises, and the **Alpine A110** (left) has finally given the **Porsche 718 Cayman S** a true rival to worry about.

Alfa Romeo 4C	209 F	'551,505	4/1742	231/6000	258/2200	895kg*	269	4.5	-	-	160	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Carbonfibre tub, mini-supercar looks - Hot hatch engine, clunky gearbox
Alfa Romeo 8C Competizione	120 F	'07-'09	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1585kg	288	4.2	-	-	181	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Looks, exclusivity, noise, balance - Cost more now than it did new
Alpine A110	249 F	'551,805	4/1798	249/6000	236/2000	1103kg	229	4.5	4.6	10.8	155	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Fast, fun and genuinely different - If only it had a manual gearbox
Alpine D4 Biturbo	206 F	'550,950	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
Alpine B4 S Biturbo	245 D	'563,000	6/2979	434/5500	487/3000	1615kg	273	4.2	-	-	190	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Stonking engine, stealthy speed - Steering is slow and lacks feel
Alpine 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 Vantage	250 F	'120,900	8/3982	503/6000	505/2000	1530kg*	334	3.6	4.5	9.1	195	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Performance that's a huge leap forward - Chassis struggles when really pushed
Aston Martin V8 Vantage (4.3)	251 F	'05-'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	'08-'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 rampanly 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	'09-'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	1685kg	303	4.0	-	-	187	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Potent and characterful engine; sharper chassis than V12 - Do we still need the V12?
Aston Martin DB11	235 F	'17-'18	12/5204	600/6500	516/1500	1800kg	339	3.9	4.0	8.1	200	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ A great GT - Suffers in outright handling terms as a result
Aston Martin DB11 AMR	250 D	'174,995	12/5204	630/6500	516/1500	1795kg	357	3.7	-	-	208	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ A more potent, better controlled V12 DB11 - Still at its best when it isn't trying too hard



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MAKE & MODEL

	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE Cyl/Val	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-125MPH (secs)	0-100MPH (secs)	0-60MPH (secs)	0-100MPH (1/4mi)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
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	'04-'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	'07-'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	'13-'15	4/1984	227/4500	273/1650	1230kg	188	6.0	-	-	-	155	+ Desirable, grippy and effortlessly agile - Still not the last word in interaction	★★★★★
Audi TT 2.0 TFSI quattro (Mk3)	203 D	'13-'15	4/1984	227/4500	273/1600	1335kg	173	5.3	-	-	-	155	+ Looks, interior, decent performance and handling - Lacks ultimate involvement	★★★★★
Audi TTS (Mk3)	252 T	'14-'15	4/1984	302/5400	295/2000	1285kg	239	4.5	-	-	-	155	+ Exceptional grip and traction - Excitement fades after the first few corners	★★★★★
Audi TT RS (Mk3)	249 F	'15-'16	5/2480	394/5850	354/1700	1440kg	278	3.7	3.5	8.7	-	155	+ Soundtrack; tremendous point-to-point pace - A bit one-dimensional in the long run	★★★★★
Audi TTS (Mk2)	193 F	'08-'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	'09-'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	'05-'06	4/1781	237/5700	236/2300	1390kg	173	5.7	-	-	-	155	+ Deliciously purposeful interior, crisp chassis - Numb steering	★★★★★
Audi S5	252 F	'14-'15	6/2995	349/5400	369/1370	1615kg	220	4.7	-	-	-	155	+ Chassis rewards commitment... - but doesn't offer a challenge. Plain engine, too	★★★★★
Audi RS5	240 F	'14-'15	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	'07-'15	8/4163	424/7900	317/4500	1560kg	276	4.6	4.1	9.9	-	188	+ A true 911 alternative - Exclusivity comes at a price	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT	244 F	'15-'16	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 driver's 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 driver's Bentley - Vast weight makes its presence felt in harder driving	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT	152 D	'03-'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	'17	12/5998	700/6000	750/2050	2205kg	323	3.5	-	-	-	209	+ Massive performance, surprisingly agile - Styling and soundtrack far from desecret	★★★★★
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	'13-'16	6/2998	335/6800	369/1520	1470kg	232	4.8	-	-	-	155	+ Adjustable and plenty of fun - Lacks finesse and precision	★★★★★
BMW M235i Coupe	225 F	'14-'16	6/2979	321/5800	332/1300	1455kg	224	5.0	5.2	12.7	-	155	+ Powertrain, chassis, looks, size - Limited-slip diff is an option, not standard	★★★★★
BMW M2	243 F	'16-'18	6/2979	365/6500	369/1450	1495kg	248	4.5	4.9	10.8	-	155	+ More progressive chassis balance than the M4 - Feels unsettled on rough tarmac	★★★★★
BMW M2 Competition	252 F	'14-'16	6/2979	404/5250	406/2350	1550kg	265	4.4	-	-	-	155	+ A more capable and involving M2 - More expensive and heavier, too	★★★★★
BMW 440i M Sport Coupe	233 F	'14-'16	6/2998	321/5500	332/1380	1540kg	212	5.2	-	-	-	155	+ Almost too-powerful engine - Doesn't feel special enough to drive	★★★★★
BMW M4	218 F	'16-'18	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	'16-'18	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	247 F	'19-'21	6/2979	454/6250	442/4000	1580kg	292	3.9	-	-	-	174	+ A further-honed M4 - It ain't cheap	★★★★★
BMW M4 GT5	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	'07-'13	8/3999	444/8300	295/3900	1580kg	266	4.8	4.3	10.3	-	155	+ Fends off all of its rivals... - except the cheaper 1-series M Coupe	★★★★★
BMW M3 GTS (E92)	232 F	'10-'11	8/4361	444/8300	324/3750	1530kg	295	4.4	-	-	-	190	+ Highly exclusive; one of the most focused M-cars ever - Good luck trying to find one	★★★★★
BMW M3 (E46)	066 F	'00-'07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1495kg	230	5.2	5.1	12.3	-	155	+ One of the best BMWs ever. Runner-up in eCoty 2001 - Slightly artificial steering feel	★★★★★
BMW M3 CS (E46)	219 F	'05-'07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1495kg	230	5.2	-	-	-	155	+ CSL dynamics without CSL price - Looks like the standard car	★★★★★
BMW M3 CSL (E46)	200 F	'03-'04	6/3246	355/7900	273/4900	1385kg	260	4.9	5.3	12.0	-	155	+ Still superb - Changes from the automated single-clutch 'box are... a bit... sluggish	★★★★★
BMW M3 Evolution (E36)	148 F	'96-'98	6/3201	317/7400	258/3250	1515kg	215	5.5	5.4	12.8	-	158	+ Performance, image - Never quite as good as the E30	★★★★★
BMW M3 (E30)	165 F	'89-'90	4/2302	212/6750	170/4600	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	'06-'09	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1420kg	242	5.0	-	-	-	155	+ A real driver's car - You've got to be prepared to get stuck in	★★★★★
BMW M Coupe	005 F	'98-'03	6/3246	321/7400	261/4900	1375kg	237	5.3	-	-	-	155	+ Quick and characterful - Lacks finesse	★★★★★
BMW M6 (F13)	218 F	'15-'16	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1850kg	303	4.2	-	-	-	155	+ Mighty ability, pace, technology - You'll want the Competition Package upgrade, too	★★★★★
BMW M6 (E63)	106 F	'05-'10	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1635kg	311	4.2	4.8	10.0	-	155	+ Awesome GT, awesome sports car - SMG gearbox now off the pace	★★★★★
BMW i8	210 F	'11-'12	3/1499	369/5800	420/3700	1535kg	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	'13-'15	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	'15-'16	8/6162	650/6000	650/3600	1598kg	413	3.7	-	-	-	196	+ Mind-boggling raw speed; surprisingly sophisticated - Edgy when really pushed	★★★★★
Ford Mustang 2.3 EcoBoost	222 D	'13-'14	4/2261	313/5500	319/3000	1655kg	192	5.8	-	-	-	155	+ Ninety per cent as good as the V8 - Missing ten per cent is what makes the Mustang	★★★★★
Ford Mustang 5.0 V8 GT	251 F	'14-'15	8/4951	444/7000	390/4600	1668kg	270	4.6	-	-	-	155	+ 2018MY version gets improved dynamics - Still some way off Europe's finest	★★★★★
Honda Integra Type R (DC2)	200 F	'96-'00	4/1797	187/8000	131/3700	1101kg	173	6.7	6.2	17.9	-	145	+ Arguably the greatest front-drive car ever - Too raw for some	★★★★★
Infiniti Q60S Sport 3.0t	228 D	'14-'15	6/2997	400/6400	350/1600	1799kg	226	5.0	-	-	-	155	+ Impressive tech - Electronic systems reduce feeling of involvement	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type Coupe 2.0 14 300PS	239 D	'15-'16	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	'14-'15	6/2995	335/6500	332/3500	1567kg	217	5.7	-	-	-	161	+ Drop-dead looks, brilliant chassis, desirability - Engine lacks top-end fight	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type Coupe 3.0 V6 380PS	211 D	'14-'15	6/2995	375/6500	339/3500	1584kg	241	5.5	-	-	-	171	+ Exquisite style, more rewarding (and affordable) than roadster - Scrappy on the limit	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type R Coupe AWD	227 D	'15-'16	6/2995	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	'16-'17	8/5000	567/6500	516/3500	1705kg	338	3.7	-	-	-	200	+ A marginally better drive than the AWD R - Not by enough to justify the extra outlay	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type R Coupe (RWD)	218 F	'14-'17	8/5000	542/6500	501/3500	1650kg	334	4.2	-	-	-	186	+ Looks, presence, performance, soundtrack - Bumpy and boisterous	★★★★★
Jaguar XKR	168 F	'09-'14	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1753kg	292	4.8	-	-	-	155	+ Fast and incredibly rewarding Jag - The kids will have to stay at home	★★★★★
Jaguar XKR-S	168 F	'11-'14	8/5000	542/6000	502/2500	1753kg	314	4.4	-	-	-	186	+ Faster and wilder than regular XKR - The F-type R Coupe	★★★★★
Lexus RC F	226 F	'16-'17	8/4969	470/6400	391/4800	1765kg	271	4.5	-	-	-	168	+ Great looks, noise, sense of occasion - Too heavy to be truly exciting	★★★★★
Lexus LC 500h	241 D	'17-'18	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	'17-'18	8/4969	470/7100	398/4800	1935kg	247	4.7	-	-	-	168	+ Glorious engine, rewarding chassis for a GT car - Numb steering, messy ergonomics	★★★★★
Lister Thunder	247 D	'13-'15	8/5000	666/6000	720/5940	1650kg	410	3.2	-	-	-	208	+ Deceptively fast reworked F-type - Never feels as ferocious as the figures suggest	★★★★★
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 Sport 350	221 F	'15-'16	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1125kg	312	3.9	-	-	-	170	+ Further honed Exige, with vastly improved gearshift - Still not easy to get into and out of	★★★★★
Lotus Exige Sport 380	231 F	'16-'18	6/3456	375/6700	302/5000	1110kg	343	3.7	-	-	-	178	+ Intense, absorbing and brilliantly capable - Perhaps not an everyday car	★★★★★
Lotus Exige Cup 380	240 D	'17	6/3456	375/6700	302/5000	1105kg	345	3.6	-	-	-	175	+ An absolute riot; feels worth the £83k (new) price tag - Limited build numbers	★★★★★
Lotus Exige Sport 410	252 F	'18-'19	6/3456	410/7000	310/3500	1108kg	376	3.4	-	-	-	180	+ A first-rate swansong for this generation of Exige - Some may balk at the price	★★★★★
Lotus Exige Cup 430	243 D	'19-'20	6/3456	430/7000	325/2600	1093kg	400	3.3	-	-	-	180	+ The ultimate Exige - Isn't cheap	★★★★★
Lotus Exige S (S2)	105 F	'06-'11	4/1796	218/7800	158/5500	930kg	238	4.3	-	-	-	148	+ Lightweight with a hefty punch - Uninspiring soundtrack	★★★★★
Lotus Exige (S1)	200 F	'00-'01	4/1796	192/7800	146/5000	780kg	247	4.6	-	-	-	136	+ Looks and goes like an Elise racer - A tad lacking in refinement	★★★★★
Lotus Evora	138 F	'09-'15	6/3456	276/6400	258/4700	1382kg	203	5.1	5.6	13.6	-	162	+ Sublime ride and handling; Our 2009 Car of the Year - The Evora S	★★★★★
Lotus Evora S	168 F	'10-'15	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1430kg	245	4.8	-	-	-	172	+ A faster and better Evora - But one which spars with the Porsche 911	★★★★★
Lotus Evora 400	216 F	'12-'13	6/3456	400/7000	302/3500	1395kg	291	4.2	-	-	-	186	+ Evora excitement levels take a leap - Gearbox still not perfect; punchy pricing	★★★★★
Lotus Evora Sport 410	230 F	'17	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	246 F	'18-'19	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	★★★★★
Maserati GranTurismo Sport	188 F	'13-'14	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1880kg	245	4.8	-	-	-	186	+ A real sense of occasion to drive; wonderful engine - Rather long in the tooth	★★★★★
Maserati GranTurismo MC	239 D	'10-'11	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1873kg	246	4.7	-	-	-	187	+ As above but with knobs on - Those knobs don't make it feel any younger	★★★★★
Maserati GranTurismo	114 F	'07-'17	8/4244	399/7700	339/4750	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	1880kg	256	4.5	-	-	-	188		

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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE Cyl/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (s/0-100)	0-100MPH (s/0-100)	0-100MPH (s/0-100)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
Mercedes-AMG GT	227 D	£99,960	8/3982	469/6000	465/1700	1540kg	309	4.0	-	-	189	+ A true sports coupe that also does luxury - Takes time to reveal its talents	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG GT S	216 F	£113,260	8/3982	515/6250	494/1800	1570kg	333	3.8	-	-	193	+ Fantastic chassis, huge grip - Artificial steering feel; downshifts could be quicker	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG GT C	241 D	£129,260	8/3982	549/5750	501/1900	1625kg	343	3.7	-	-	196	+ As good at being a GT as it is a sports coupe - Difficult to drive fast and smoothly	★★★★★
Nissan 370Z	204 F	£29,180	6/3696	323/7000	268/5200	1496kg	219	5.3	-	-	155	+ Quicker, leaner, keener than 350Z - Not quite a Cayman-killer	★★★★★
Nissan 370Z Nismo	209 F	£39,375	6/3696	339/7400	274/5200	1496kg	230	5.2	-	-	155	+ Sharper looks, improved ride, extra thrills - Engine lacks sparkle	★★★★★
Nissan 350Z	107 F	£13,09	6/3498	309/6800	264/4800	1532kg	205	5.6	5.5	13.0	155	+ Huge fun, and great value too - Muscle-car vibe not for everyone	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R (2017MY)	242 F	£82,525	6/3799	562/6800	470/3600	1752kg	326	2.7	-	-	196	+ More refinement, much improved interior, still fast - Feels a touch less alert	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R Track Edition (2017MY)	229 D	£94,525	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	£151,525	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 Track Edition (2017MY)	229 D	£93,875	6/3799	562/6800	470/3600	1745kg	327	2.7	-	-	196	+ GT-R regains its sharpness - Getting pricey these days	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R Nismo (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)	252 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	£8,10	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)	248 F	£9,12	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	£7,99	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 R	209 F	£14,15	4/1598	266/6000	243/1900	1280kg	211	5.9	-	-	155	+ Rewarding and highly effective when fully lit - Dated cabin, steering lacks feel	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Cayman	229 D	£42,897	4/1988	296/6500	280/1950	1335kg	225	5.1	-	-	170	+ Chassis remains a dream - Sounds like a Toyota GT86	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Cayman S	249 F	£51,853	4/2497	345/6500	310/1900	1355kg	259	4.6	3.9	9.3	177	+ Faster and better to drive than ever - Bring earplugs	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Cayman GT8	252 F	£59,866	4/2497	360/6500	310/1900	1375kg	266	4.6	-	-	180	+ Cracking package of upgrades - Flat-four soundtrack still disappoints	★★★★★
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	£16,13	6/3436	316/7200	273/4750	1350kg	237	5.2	-	-	172	+ Still want that 911? - Yeah, us too	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman R (987)	158 F	£11,13	6/3436	325/7400	273/4750	1295kg	255	5.0	-	-	175	+ Total handling excellence - Styling additions not to all tastes	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera (991.2)	218 F	£77,891	6/2981	365/6500	332/1700	1430kg	259	4.6	-	-	183	+ Forced induction hasn't ruined the Carrera - Purists won't be happy	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera T (991.2)	245 F	£85,576	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	£87,335	6/2981	414/6500	369/1700	1440kg	292	4.3	-	-	191	+ Blindingly fast - You'll want the sports exhaust	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera GTS (991.2)	238 F	£95,795	6/2981	444/6500	406/2150	1450kg	311	4.1	-	-	193	+ Everything a 911 Carrera should be - Costs nearly £20k more than a basic Carrera	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera 4 GTS (991.2)	250 F	£100,781	6/2981	444/6500	406/2150	1495kg	302	4.0	3.1	7.5	192	+ Arguably the most complete sports coupe you can buy - Turbo'd engine lacks character	★★★★★
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	£15,16	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	£10,11	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)	249 F	£14,08	6/3824	350/6600	295/4600	1420kg	246	4.6	-	-	182	+ evo Car of the Year 2004 - Do your homework on potential engine issues	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera (996, 3.4)	249 F	£9,10	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	£16,16	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	£240,768	12/6592	624/5600	590/1500	2360kg	260	4.6	-	-	155	+ Refinement, chassis, drivetrain - Shared componentry lets cabin down	★★★★★
Subaru BRZ	248 F	£22,495	4/1998	197/7000	151/6400	1230kg	163	7.6	-	-	140	+ Fine chassis, great steering - Weak engine, not the slide-happy car they promised	★★★★★
Toyota GT86	234 F	£26,410	4/1998	197/7000	151/6400	1240kg	161	7.6	6.9	16.5	140	+ More fun than its Subaru BRZ cousin - Same lack of torque, poor interior quality	★★★★★
Toyota MR2 (Mk1)	237 F	£84,89	4/1587	122/6600	105/5000	977kg	127	8.2	-	-	124	+ Mid-engined fun comes no more affordable - Finding a good one will take time	★★★★★
TVR Sagaris	097 F	£15,07	6/3996	406/7500	349/5000	1078kg	383	3.7	-	-	185	+ Looks outrageous - 406bhp feels a touch optimistic	★★★★★
TVR Tuscan S (Mk2)	076 F	£15,07	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	£98,14	6/3996	350/6800	330/5000	1130kg	315	4.4	5.0	11.4	160+	+ Accomplished and desirable - Check chassis for corrosion	★★★★★
Volkswagen Scirocco GT 2.0 TSI / GTS	155 F	£26,050	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1369kg	158	6.5	-	-	153	+ Golf GTI price and performance - Interior lacks flair	★★★★★
Volkswagen Scirocco R	200 D	£30,690	4/1984	276/6000	258/2500	1426kg	187	5.7	-	-	155	+ Great engine, grown-up dynamics - Perhaps a little too grown-up for some	★★★★★

SUPERCARS



OUR CHOICE

McLaren 720S. The looks take a little getting used to, but there's no arguing with the driving experience, which blends scalpel-sharp precision with mind-boggling pace and suspension that works with the road to make it all useable. And it's faster than a P1 on track, too. An electrifying experience.



BEST OF THE REST

The **Ferrari 488 Pista** (left) is an astonishing successor to the hardcore Speciale. The **Lamborghini Huracán Performante** counters with a rip-roaring naturally aspirated V10. The **Lambo's** relative, the **Audi R8 V10**, is a corking entry-level supercar, and the **Porsche 911 GT3 RS** is simply a superb road and track machine.

Aston Martin DBS Superleggera	252 D	£225,000	12/5204	715/6500	664/1800	1770kg	410	3.4	-	-	211	+ Broad spread of talents - It's not really 'Superlight'	★★★★☆
Aston Martin Vanquish S (Mk2)	235 F	£17,18	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	£15,07	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 RWS	247 F	£112,450	10/5204	533/7800	398/6500	1590kg	341	3.7	-	-	199	+ The first rear-wheel-drive Audi for 40 years - Drives largely like its 4WD counterpart	★★★★★
Audi R8 V10	234 F	£126,200	10/5204	533/7800	398/6500	1640kg	330	3.5	-	-	198	+ All the R8 you really need - Some may hanker after a manual gearbox	★★★★★
Audi R8 Spyder V10	239 F	£132,020	10/5204	533/7800	398/6500	1720kg	315	3.6	3.2	7.2	197	+ Open top even better for enjoying that V10 - Being mistaken for a poser; cramped seating	★★★★★
Audi R8 V10 Plus	250 F	£141,200	10/5204	602/8250	443/6500	1580kg	387	3.2	2.9	6.3	205	+ Timeless drivetrain, huge performance - Some may find it ordinary at steady speeds	★★★★★
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	£15,16	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	£62,5m	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	£15,11	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	157 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 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	£19,13	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 GTD	228 F	£183,984	8/3902	661/6500	561/3000	1475kg	455	3.0	-	-	205+	+ Staggeringly capable - Lacks a little of the 458's heat and excitement	★★★★★
Ferrari 488 Pista	251 F	£253,715	8/3902	710/8000	568/3000	1385kg	521	2.9	-	-	211+	+ Ferrari at the very top of its game - Can feel like it's being held prisoner on the road	★★★★★
Ferrari 488 Spider	216 D	£204,411	8/3902	661/6500	561/3000	1525kg	440	3.0	-	-	203+	+ All the usual 488 thrills, but with the wind in your hair - See left	★★★★★
Ferrari 458 Italia	221 F	£19,15	8/4497	562/9000	398/6000	1485kg	384	3.4	3.2	6.8	202+	+ An astounding achievement - Paddleshift only	★★★★★
Ferrari 458 Speciale	251 F	£13,15	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	£14,10	8/4308	483/8500	343/5250	1449kg	339	4.0	-	-	196+	+ Just brilliant - Didn't you read the plus point?	★★★★★
Ferrari 430 Scuderia	251 F	£17,10	8/4308	503/8500	347/5250	1350kg	378	3.6	3.5	7.7	198	+ Successful F1 technology transplant - Likes to shout about it	★★★★★
Ferrari 360 Modena	163 F	£19,14	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	251 F	£13,14	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	£14,99	8/3496	374/8250	268/6000	1350kg*	281	4.7	-	-	183	+ Looks terrific, sounds even better - Are you kidding?	★★★★★



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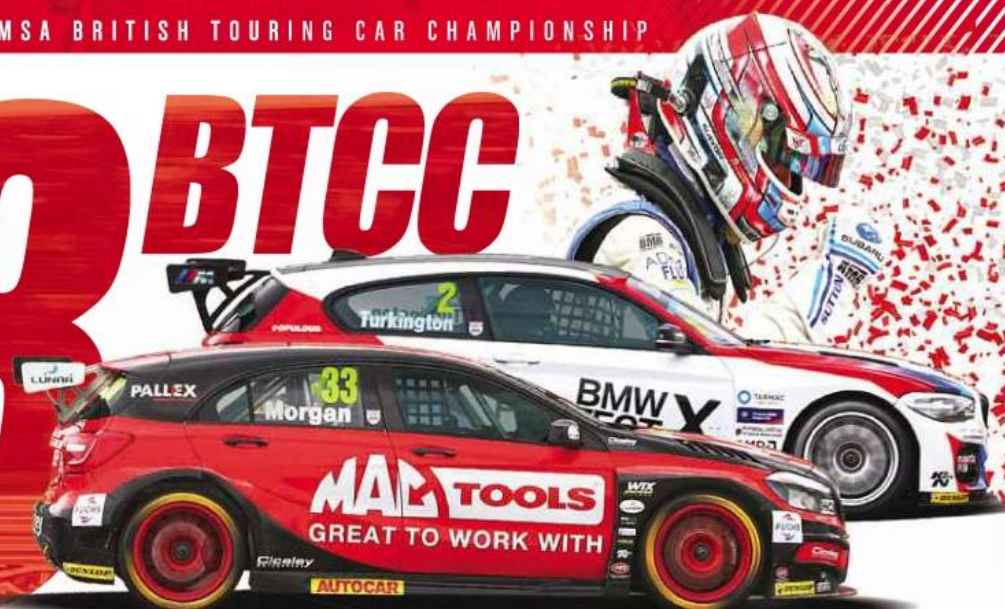
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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE Cyl/CC	BHP/RPM	0-62 LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (CLAMP)	0-60MPH (RATED)	0-100MPH (RATED)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
Ferrari 812 Superfast	251 F	\$262,963	12/6496	789/8500	529/7000	1630kg	492	2.9	-	-	211	+ Incredible engine - Finding opportunities to exploit it	★★★★★
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 F12tdt	230 F	17	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	457/6500	1605kg	418	3.4	-	-	208+	+ One of the truly great Ferraris - Erm, the air con isn't very good	★★★★★
Ferrari 575M Fiorano Handling Pack	200 F	02-06	12/5748	508/7250	434/5250	1688kg	298	3.7	4.2	9.6	205+	+ Fiorano pack makes 575 truly great - It should have been standard	★★★★★
Ferrari 550 Maranello	169 F	96-02	12/5474	478/7000	420/5000	1690kg	287	4.4	-	-	199	+ Everything - Nothing	★★★★★
Ferrari GTCA Lusso T	246 D	\$200,165	8/3855	602/7500	560/3000	1865kg	328	3.5	-	-	199	+ Effortless, comfortable GT - Misses the richer soundtrack of the V12	★★★★★
Ferrari GTCA Lusso	225 D	\$230,430	12/6262	680/8000	514/5750	1920kg	360	3.4	-	-	208	+ Rear-wheel steering increases agility - Not as engaging as other Ferraris	★★★★★
Ferrari FF	194 F	11-15	12/6262	651/8000	504/6000	1880kg	347	3.7	-	-	208	+ Four seats and 4WD, but a proper Ferrari - Looks divide opinion	★★★★★
Ferrari 612 Scaglietti	090 F	04-11	12/5748	533/7250	434/5250	1875kg	289	4.0	4.3	9.8	199	+ Awesomely capable grand tourer - See above	★★★★★
Ferrari LaFerrari	203 F	13-15	12/6262	950/9000	664/6750	1574kg	613	3.0	-	-	217+	+ Perhaps the greatest Ferrari ever - Brakes lack a touch of precision on track	★★★★★
Ferrari Enzo	203 F	02-04	12/5999	651/7800	485/5500	1365kg	485	3.7	3.5	6.7	217+	+ Intoxicating, exploitable - Cabin detailing falls short of a Zonda or F1's	★★★★★
Ferrari F50	186 F	95-97	12/4699	513/8500	347/6500	1230kg*	424	3.9	-	-	202	+ A better driver's 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	\$450,000	6/3497	647/6250	550/5900	1385kg*	475	2.8	-	-	216	+ Everything it does on track - Too many of the things it does on the road	★★★★★
Ford GT	200 F	04-06	8/5409	550/6500	500/3750	1583kg	353	3.9	-	-	205	+ Our 2005 Car of the Year - Don't scalp yourself getting in	★★★★★
Hennessey Venom GT	180 F	11-17	8/7000	1244/6500	1155/4000	1244kg	1016	2.5	-	-	270	+ 200+mph in 14.5sec, and it handles too - Looks like an Exige	★★★★★
Honda NSX	246 F	\$144,765	6/3493	573	476/2000	1776kg	329	3.0	6.9	191	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	c£2.0m	8/5065	1341/7500	1011/6000	1360kg	1002	2.9	-	-	273	+ One of the most powerful cars we've tested - It's sold out. We couldn't afford one anyway	★★★★★
Koenigsegg Agera R	180 F	11-14	8/5032	1124/7100	885/2700	1435kg	796	2.8	-	-	273	+ As fast and exciting as your body can handle - It's Veyron money	★★★★★
Koenigsegg 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	\$155,400	10/5204	572/8000	397/6500	1389kg*	385	3.4	-	-	199	+ More seductive than the 4WD Huracán - Feels like there's more to come	★★★★★
Lamborghini Huracán	209 D	\$186,760	10/5204	602/8250	413/6500	1422kg*	430	3.2	-	-	201+	+ Defies the numbers; incredible point-to-point pace - Takes work to find its sweet-spot	★★★★★
Lamborghini Huracán Performante	242 F	\$215,000	10/5204	631/8000	442/6500	1382kg*	464	2.9	-	-	201+	+ The realisation of the Huracán's ever elusive potential - Kitchen-worktop carbonfibre	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4	180 D	08-13	10/5204	552/8000	398/6500	1403kg*	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	1340kg*	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	1380kg*	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	246 F	\$271,146	12/6498	730/8400	509/5500	1575kg*	471	2.9	-	-	217	+ A more agile, more connected Aventador - Synthetic steering	★★★★★
Lamborghini Aventador S Roadster	251 D	\$301,754	12/6498	730/8400	509/5500	1625kg*	456	3.0	-	-	217	+ As dynamic as the coupe - Fiddly and (very) expensive roof	★★★★★
Lamborghini Aventador SV	216 F	\$321,723	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	2.0	7.3	212	+ A supercar in its truest, wildest sense - Be prepared for stares	★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago	089 D	01-06	12/6192	572/7500	479/5400	1650kg*	351	4.0	-	-	206	+ Gorgeous, capable and incredibly friendly - V12 feels stressed	★★★★★
Lamborghini Diablo VT 6.0	019 F	00-02	12/5992	543/7100	457/5500	1625kg*	343	3.9	-	-	208	+ Best-built, best-looking Diablo of all - People's perceptions	★★★★★
Lexus LFA/LFA Nürburgring	200 F	10-12	10/4805	552/8700	354/6800	1480kg	379	3.7	-	-	202	+ Absurd and compelling supercar - Badge and price don't quite match	★★★★★
Maserati MC12	079 F	04-05	12/5998	621/7500	481/5500	1445kg*	437	3.8	-	-	205	+ Rarer than an Enzo - The Ferrari's better	★★★★★
McLaren 540C	250 F	\$127,890	8/3799	533/7500	398/3500	1311kg*	413	3.5	3.2	6.4	199	+ An excellent junior supercar - The 570S is still better to drive	★★★★★
McLaren 570S	229 F	\$149,000	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	\$159,750	8/3799	562/7500	443/5000	1415kg	404	3.2	-	-	204	+ Feels like a 675LT that's been dialled down a couple of notches - Engine response lacks edge	★★★★★
McLaren 570S Spider	239 F	\$164,750	8/3799	562/7500	443/5000	1498kg	381	3.2	-	-	204	+ Even more fun and engagement than hard-top 570S - Industrial engine note	★★★★★
McLaren 570GT	228 F	\$157,000	8/3799	562/7500	443/5000	1495kg	382	3.4	-	-	204	+ Blurs the line between grand tourer and supercar brilliantly - 570S is more involving	★★★★★
McLaren 570GT Sport Pack	246 D	\$161,900	8/3799	562/7500	443/5000	1486kg	384	3.4	-	-	204	+ 570GT looks with 570S responses - It should be the standard set-up	★★★★★
McLaren 720S	244 F	\$218,020	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	248 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 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 Senna	252 F	\$750,000	8/3999	789/7250	590/5500	1198kg*	669	2.8	-	-	211	+ Astounding performance, stellar presence - Only 500 being made	★★★★★
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 P1	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	249 F	\$144,460	8/3982	571/6250	516/1900	1555kg	371	3.6	3.3	7.1	198	+ Fun and blisteringly fast; a true rival for the 911 GT3 - A touch showy, perhaps	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG	159 F	10-15	8/6208	563/6800	479/4750	1620kg	335	3.9	4.1	8.4	197	+ Great engine and chassis (gutting 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	c£200,000	8/4439	650/6800	604/3800	1198kg*	551	3.5	3.8	7.7	225	+ Spiritual successor to the Ferrari F40 - It's a bit pricey	★★★★★
Pagani Huayra	185 F	c£1m	12/5980	720/5800	731/2250	1350kg*	542	3.3	-	-	224	+ Our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Engine isn't as nape-pricking as the Zonda's	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda S 7.3	096 F	02-05	12/7291	555/5900	553/4050	1280kg*	441	3.7	-	-	220	+evo Car of the Year 2001 (in earlier 7.0 form) - Values have gone up a fair bit since then	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda F	186 F	05-06	12/7291	602/6150	575/4000	1230kg*	497	3.6	-	-	214+	+ Everything an Italian supercar ought to be - Looks a bit blingy next to a Carrera GT	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda Cinque Roadster	147 D	09-10	12/7291	669/6200	575/4000	1210kg*	562	3.4	-	-	217+	+ The best Zonda ever - Doesn't come up in the classfieds often	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (991.2)	247 F	\$111,802	6/3996	493/8250	339/6000	1413kg	355	3.9	-	-	198	+ Almost impossible to criticise - Not the easiest car to place an order for	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (991.2)	249 F	\$141,346	6/3996	513/8250	347/6000	1430kg	364	3.2	-	-	193	+ Even better than the 991.1 RS - See above	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT2 RS (991.2)	243 F	\$207,506	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	13-16	6/3799	468/8250	324/6250	1430kg	333	3.5	-	-	196	+evo Car of the Year 2013 - PDK only	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (991.1)	223 F	15-16	6/3996	493/8250	339/6250	1420kg	353	3.3	3.0	7.1	193	+ Sensationally good to drive - The Cayman GT4 is even better	★★★★★
Porsche 911 R (991.1)	229 F	16	6/3996	493/8250	339/6250	1370kg	366	3.8	-	-	200	+evo Car of the Year 2016 - Limited availability	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (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)	248 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)	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	★★★★★



AMALFI COAST

On days like these, something compact, nimble and sporty is just the (Italian) job

AS YOU LIE ON THE BEACH YOU close your eyes and feel the Italian sun warming your skin like heat soak from a transmission tunnel. Listening to the waves breaking on the shoreline you reflect how each one sounds just like a Veyron or McLaren P1 dumping boost. And lift off the throttle... And lift off the throttle... And lift off the throttle...

As you open your eyes you realise you're still on the coast but some way above the sparkling azure sea. A low wall offers scant protection from the drop, and on the other side of the road pale, slightly overhanging rock rises out of sight. There's not what you'd call a lot of run-off.

It's a narrow strip of tarmac, too, but looking across a large bay at the craggy green coastline you can see that it goes on for miles. Then it hits you: this is the road that you drove to get to the beach, but it seems unfamiliar, as before you couldn't

take your eyes off the road for Puntos and Piaggios flirting perilously with either the precipice or your rental's body panels. Now the road is empty. Not a soul around.

At first glance the car parked in the lay-by a short distance away still appears to be the holiday-hire grey Fiat 500. But as you walk up to it you realise it's sitting more purposefully, wheelarches fuller. Get inside and things take a turn for the van-like with no back seats. There is also a tall, spindly looking gearlever protruding from the floor instead of the dash. 'Biposto' reads the plaque beneath the supplementary race display...

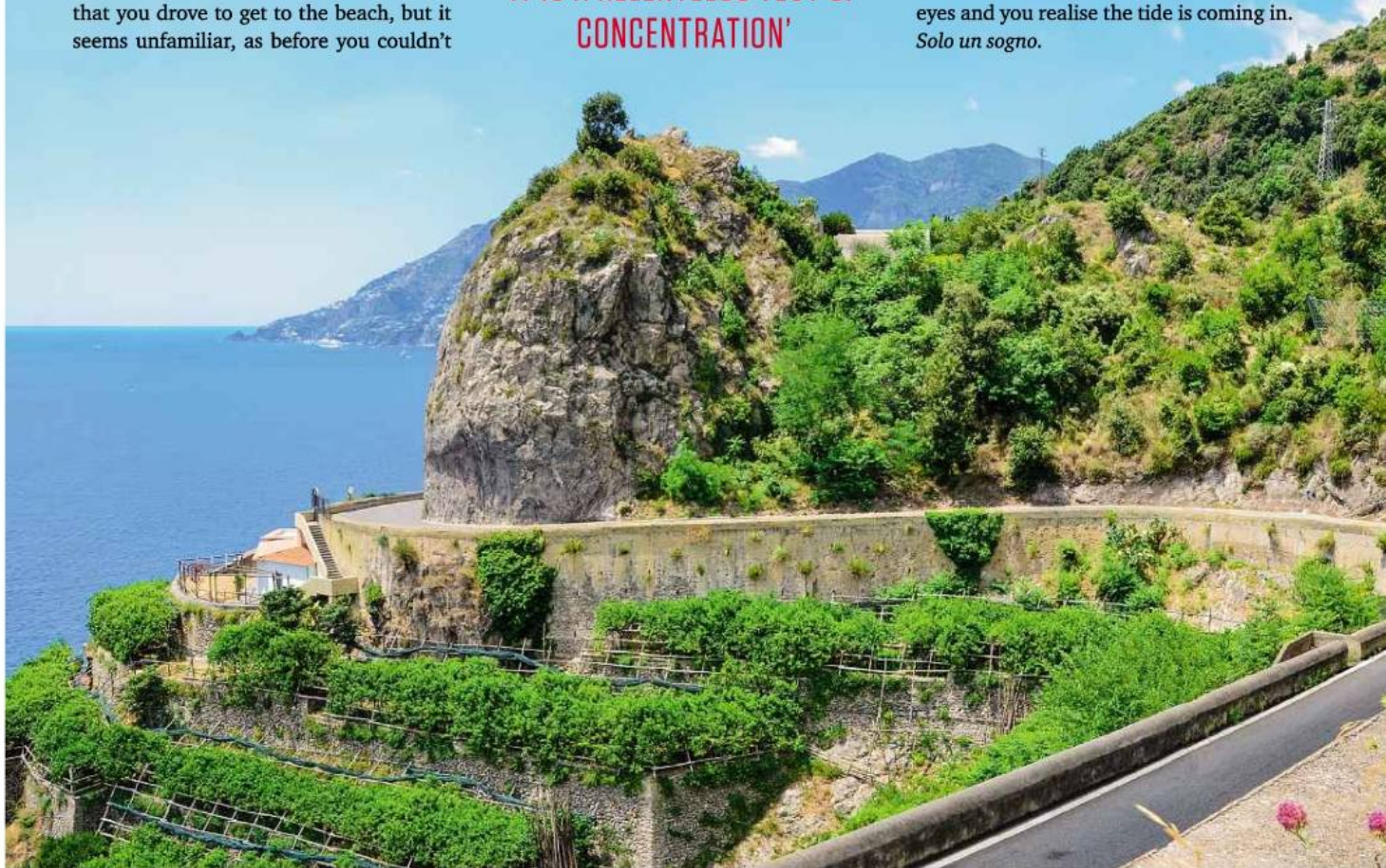
The lever slots into first gear with a surprisingly light but positive action, and because the mechanism is exposed you can't help but take it back to neutral and then slot first again to watch it at work and hear the *click-clack* of metal on metal. Then you're off and chucking the little

**'YOU CAN STRAIGHT-LINE
SOME OF THE SQUIGGLES, BUT
IT IS A RELENTLESS TEST OF
CONCENTRATION'**

hot hatch along the Amalfi Coast, sticky tyres bonding with the warm tarmac. The road never seems to rest in its wriggling route, and although the post-apocalyptic lack of traffic means you can straight-line some of the squiggles, it is a relentless test of concentration.

For some long stretches the road has a white line down the middle, but the really fun bits come as you head further east and it becomes single-track. There is a wild feeling to the road and yet you also never seem to be that far from some sort of building, with small towns and individual settlements scattered along the route.

Initially you use the clutch, but as confidence grows so you flash through each change of the dog 'box without troubling your left leg. The little turbocharged four-cylinder engine sounds rorty and feels very boosty, but while you can't hear any wastegate exhalations initially, as you drive further and further so the engine changes in note, a clear *shhhh* accompanying each lift of the Abarth 695's throttle. Then your feet start to feel damp. And you open your eyes and you realise the tide is coming in. *Solo un sogno.*



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