

evo

THE THRILL OF DRIVING



282

FEBRUARY

2021



EVERY THING THE WAY YOU NEED

LIKE
IT.



DESIGNED. SETUP. DRIVEN.
THE WAY YOU LIKE IT.



RODIN
FZED
RODIN-CARS.COM

FORD FIESTA ST

POWER OF CONTROL.

Model shown is a Ford Fiesta ST-3 3-Door, 1.5 200PS Manual Petrol with optional Full LED Headlamps.
Fuel economy mpg (l/100km), (Combined): 40.4 (7.0). CO₂ emissions: 158g/km.

Figures shown are for comparability purposes; only compare fuel consumption and CO₂ figures with other cars tested to the same technical procedures. These figures may not reflect real life driving results, which will depend upon a number of factors including the accessories fitted, variations in weather, driving styles and vehicle load.



ford.co.uk

FEATURES

052

LAMBO AVENTADOR SVJ v NISSAN GT-R NISMO

They're glorious anachronisms and more extreme than ever before. Jethro Bovingdon drives two evo favourites that are growing old disgracefully

064

VOLVO P1800 CYAN

It's the restomod that nobody expected, but who better to make it than the race team formerly known as Polestar? Adam Towler gets to grips with this most unlikely road-racer

076

GR YARIS v IMPREZA 22B v SPORT QUATTRO

Can Toyota's new homologation creation really go toe-to-toe with the best rally-bred specials of the past? Richard Meaden decides

094

AUDI, SUBARU & TOYOTA IN RALLYING

Our cover cars would never have existed were it not for their rallying counterparts. Adam Towler takes a look at these stars of the stage



102

**LIFE THROUGH A LENS:
DEAN SMITH**

The former evo staff photographer takes a look back over his career to date, and shares the stories behind some of his favourite images

110

**MERCEDES-AMG C63 S
ESTATE v AUDI RS4 AVANT**

They make practical look cool, but put very different ingredients into their super-estate recipes. Steve Sutcliffe decides which is most to his taste

116

ROCKETEER MX-5 V6

With a power-to-weight ratio to rival a modern Porsche Boxster's, Rocketeer's V6-powered Mk2 is an MX-5 like no other. Adam Towler finds out what makes it so special

122

BMW M SPECIAL

With BMW's new M3 and M4 imminent, we examine the 2021 M line-up, go for a spin in the latest M5 Competition, and take a closer look at M's greatest hits



Glug Glug Glug Plug



Switch it up

The new all-electric Corsa-e

[Search Corsa-e](#)



Fuel economy and CO₂ results for the Corsa-e 100KW (136PS). Mpg (l/100km): N/A. CO₂ emissions: 0g/km. Electric range up to 209 miles (WLTP).

The range and electric consumption figures mentioned comply with the WLTP test procedure, on the basis of which new vehicles are type approved from 1 September 2018. They may vary depending on actual conditions of use and on different factors such as: vehicle load, accessories fitted (post registration), speed, thermal comfort on board the vehicle, driving style and outside temperature. The charging time depends in particular on the power of the charger on board the vehicle, the charging cable and the type and power of the charging station used. Please contact your Vauxhall Retailer for further information.



014

FIRST DRIVES

This month: Radical's new SR10, BMW's M440i xDrive, a 720bhp Bullitt Mustang, and (at last!) Porsche's 992 Carrera S with a manual gearbox

034

IGNITION

Singer's created a spiritual successor to the rally-spec 959, and we've got details of all of 2021's most exciting new arrivals

043

LETTERS

We chose the right winner for eCoty, possibly, but the wrong Civic, maybe, and now know the optimum size for a cylinder, perhaps

047

COLUMNS

Meaden's been reminded of a McRae moment, Porter's hosting a Swaporama for unwanted Christmas gifts, and Bovingdon appears to have gone all soft

100

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Save £23.88 in your first year with a subscription to evo – and receive a special free gift too!

136

LONG-TERMERS

Our Toyota GR Supra has been squaring up to a German rival, two of our Porsche 911s have received upgrades, and both the Audi RS7 Sportback and Dacia Duster have departed

154

THE KNOWLEDGE

The evo verdict on every performance car that's worth knowing about. Is yours listed?

170

EVO ARCHIVE

Combining the finest supercars of their era with beautiful Italian scenery and unforgettable storytelling, 'The Test' is still talked about 20 years later. Peter Tomalin takes a trip down memory lane

SENSATIONAL

Another sensational performance by an outstanding Continental tyre. SportContact™ 6 delivered outstanding grip, precise handling and excellent braking performance.

Whatever the season, whatever the weather, we have the perfect tyre for you.





EDITORIAL

020 3890 3890

eds@evo.co.uk

www.evo.co.uk

evo, Dennis Publishing, 31-32 Alfred Place,
London WC1E 7DP, United Kingdom

EDITOR

Stuart Gallagher

MANAGING EDITOR

Ian Eveleigh

DEPUTY EDITOR

Adam Towler

ART EDITOR

Rich Browne

DIGITAL NEWS EDITOR

Jordan Katsianis

SENIOR PHOTOGRAPHER

Aston Parrott

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Sam Jenkins

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

John Barker

Jethro Bovingdon

Henry Catchpole

Richard Meaden

Richard Porter

Steve Sutcliffe

GROUP WEB EDITOR

Steve Walker

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Steve Fowler

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Antony Ingram

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS

Matt Howell

Andy Morgan

David Shepherd

Dean Smith

IT WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT

Peter Allen

Richard Groves

Richard Tipper

Peter Tomalin

Ed speak



FOR THE LAST EIGHT WEEKS THE ZOOM CONVERSATIONS

have been with manufacturers confirming what is actually happening with new products this year rather than what has been guessed on the internet. If you logged into the call, for the first five minutes you would be under the impression that there wasn't a great deal planned for 2021, especially for those with an eye for a new driver's car. Of course the complete opposite is true.

Audi, Bentley, Hyundai N, Porsche, Maserati, McLaren, Volkswagen, they all have either all-new performance cars heading our way or new performance derivatives of existing models to entice

us to browse the configurator and (hopefully) place an order. But will you?

There's a worrying trend for the industry suggesting that 2020 has made many re-evaluate what they actually need a car for, which is also impacting their decision on what type of car they want. Hence the increase in sales of electric vehicles coinciding with a pretty horrendous time in the showroom for new car sales and a boom for used sales.

Dig a little deeper and you soon discover that the second-hand and nearly-new car boom includes an upswing in interest in used performance cars. Some have put this down to 2020 being so horrendous that drivers have taken the decision that it's better to have owned and enjoyed their dream car rather than for it to remain just a dream. So back goes the PCP loaner and in comes the car they have always promised themselves.

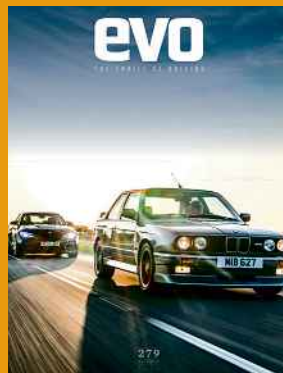
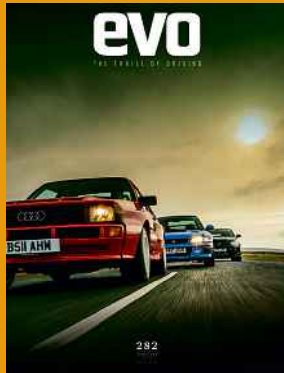
There is also evidence suggesting that the new-car bandwagon has come to an abrupt halt for many. The need to have something shiny and new every 24 to 36 months no longer appeals as it previously did, especially given how we live our lives and how we work has changed so much. Why spend £500 a month on a car for your colleagues to admire in the car park when they now only see you via video call?

If the amount of time we spend behind the wheel is going to be restricted for the foreseeable, we might as well spend it driving something interesting, shouldn't we? After all, life is too short to drive boring cars, and now it seems more people are waking up to this.

Stuart Gallagher, Editor @stuartg917

■ THE NEXT ISSUE OF EVO WILL BE ON SALE WEDNESDAY 17 FEBRUARY

evo



SUBSCRIBE!

Save £23.88 in your first year with a subscription to evo and receive exclusive collector's edition covers too. Sign up before 5 February to start with the next issue.

See page 100 for details

SUBSCRIPTION HELP

ManageMyMags.co.uk
0330 333 9491
subscriptions@evo.co.uk

For subscriptions in the USA and Canada, see final page

BACK ISSUES
0330 333 9491



ADVERTISING

020 3890 3890

ads.evo@dennis.co.uk

31-32 Alfred Place, London WC1E 7DP

CHIEF REVENUE OFFICER

Julian Lloyd-Evans

GROUP ADVERTISING DIRECTOR

Steve Machin

CLIENT SALES MANAGER

Pierre Clements

pierre_clements@dennis.co.uk

020 3890 3902

ACCOUNT MANAGER

Miles Taylor

miles_taylor@dennis.co.uk

020 3890 3989

DIRECT MARKETING MANAGER

Hannah Manning-Swallow

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Mike Hills

COMMERCIAL PUBLISHER

Sarah Perks

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR - AUTOMOTIVE

Ciaran Scarry

CLIENT SALES MANAGER

Neale Salt

neale_salt@dennis.co.uk

020 3890 3849

ACCOUNT MANAGER

Demi Davies

demi_davies@dennis.co.uk

020 3890 3731

NEWSTRADE DIRECTOR

David Barker

CREATIVE SOLUTIONS

HEAD OF COMMERCIAL DESIGN Rob Callaghan

GROUP PROJECT MANAGER Avril Donnelly

LICENSING & SYNDICATION

LICENSING MANAGER Carlotta Serantoni

LICENSING & SYNDICATION EXECUTIVE Nicole Adams

PUBLISHING

PUBLISHING MANAGER Holly Jerram

DIGITAL BRAND DIRECTOR Amrit Gill

DENNIS PUBLISHING

CHIEF BRAND OFFICER Nicola Bates

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER Pete Wootton

GROUP CEO James Tye

COMPANY FOUNDER Felix Dennis

EVO WORLDWIDE

Australia Jesse Taylor China Zheng Chen Croatia Nikola Curic
Czech Republic Petr Ehrlich Egypt Ahmed Wakil
France Patrick Garcia India Sirish Chandran Italy Piero Bacchetti
Korea Yushin Lim Middle East Bassam Kronfli Singapore Sheldon Trollope
Slovenia Matjaž Korošak Spain Javier Arús
Thailand Chettha Songthaveepol Turkey Bahadır Bektaş

evo is available for international licensing and syndication.
Email Carlotta_Serantoni@dennis.co.uk

Remember, if your local newsagent doesn't stock evo, just ask them to order it for you.
Subscription prices: UK £47.99, Europe £58.20, Rest of World \$95, USA \$115. All for 12 issues.
The editors and publishers of this magazine give no warranties, guarantees or assurances and make no representations regarding any goods or services advertised in this edition.

© Copyright Evo Publications Ltd, which is a subsidiary of Dennis Publishing Limited. Evo is a trademark of Evo Publications Ltd. Printed in the UK by Wyndeham Bicester Distributed by Seymour, 2nd Floor, 2 East Poultry Avenue, London, EC1A 9PT. Tel: 020 7429 4000. Fax: 020 7429 3625. Web: seymour.co.uk
ISSN 1464-2786 USPS 024-183



FIGHT BACK AGAINST THE ELEMENTS



SELF-CLEANING
PROPERTIES



PREVENTS
UV DAMAGE



GUARDS AGAINST
THE ELEMENTS



WATER
REPELLENT

PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE. AND FOR GYEON, PROTECTION IS NOT ENOUGH. THUS, WE GUARANTEE REAL AND ACTIVE DEFENCE MECHANISMS FOR EVERY SURFACE OF YOUR CAR. THE ELEMENTS DON'T STAND A CHANCE WHEN FACED WITH OUR UNIQUE QUARTZ COATING FORMULAS. FIND OUT MORE AT:

WWW.GYEONSERVICES.COM

GYEON®

Driven

by JETHRO BOVINGDON

Radical SR10

By combining intense trackday performance with enhanced durability, this latest Radical aims to offer the best of both worlds. Does it succeed?





LOTS OF MAGICAL SEQUENCES GET seared into the memory banks in this job.

I can close my eyes and relive so many drives: howling along the Pacific Coast Highway in the Ford GT in 2005 with its chief engineer alongside and a Ferrari 360 Modena (cheekily supplied by Ford as a benchmark) disappearing in the rear-view mirror; chasing 288 GTO, F40 and Enzo in the sublime F50 across our favourite road in Wales on a crisp autumn evening; watching Dickie Meaden slip and slide in a Carrera GT from the driver's seat of a Noble M600; and so many more.

You wouldn't expect a cold day in Lincolnshire to elbow its way into the files marked 'Thank

God I don't have a real job'. However, back in 2016 Radical rolled into our Track Car of the Year test with its RXC Spyder and made Blyton Park feel as epic as Spa-Francorchamps on a sunny day. I'll never forget trying to beat the lap time set the previous year by the 650S GT3. We missed out by three-tenths but my face is still aching from the smile and I'm still hoarse from all the whooping and hollering. The combination of real, tangible downforce, unbelievable approachability and a 3-litre V8 that produces 440bhp and revs to 10,500rpm was genuinely extraordinary. It's hard to imagine a car more thrilling.

Today the new Radical SR10 has even bigger



hurdles to overcome if it's to join its highly strung sibling and create a new unforgettable memory. The location is Bedford Autodrome, the weather is bleak and I've got just 20 minutes to find out about this new trackday offering from Radical. Furthermore, the key ingredient that made the RXC Spyder so utterly spellbinding is gone. Instead of a screaming 3-litre V8 mounted behind the cockpit, there's the familiar 2.3-litre turbocharged four-cylinder engine sourced from Ford (albeit heavily reworked and with a custom Garrett turbo and forged internals) that is, in my experience, rarely inspirational.

Let's not be too downhearted, though. The RPE-Ford (Radical Performance Engines) unit is good for 425bhp at 6900rpm and 380lb ft at 3900rpm, and the rest of the package is a further refinement of the familiar Radical recipe, promising a high-downforce LMP-style driving experience and – the crucial bit – very reasonable running costs. It slots into an extensive range starting with the baby SR1 (1340cc, 182bhp, 490kg) progressing through SR3 XX (1500cc, 226bhp, 615kg), SR8 (2.7-litre V8, 411bhp, 725kg) and heading up to the physically bigger RXC cars, which are now exclusively powered



by the EcoBoost 3.5-litre V6, twin-turbocharged for 650bhp. Think of the SR10 as an SR8 with lots and lots more torque, lower maintenance costs and a few refinements along the way. It costs £126,000.

The natural habitat for the SR10 is a very long way from a dank day in Bedfordshire. Radical has seen a huge upswing in US sales since the launch of various 'race resorts' such as Thermal in California, Spring Mountain Motorsports Ranch in Nevada and Monticello Raceway, New York, and so the SR10 is built very much with them in mind. The focus is on retaining the extraordinary performance and dynamics of the SR8 but ensuring they're much more of a turnkey proposition. An SR8 needs an engine refresh after every 40 hours of racing, the SR10 doubles that, and this will be extended further at less taxing trackday speeds. Of course, the SR10 will also be eligible for a number of race series around the world if the owners want to step up to competition.

Stand on the driver's seat and then wriggle down into position and the SR10 simultaneously spikes your heart rate and puts you at ease. The driving environment can't help but intimidate a little as it's



‘Your trackday supercar wouldn’t know which way a Radical SR10 went’

Such is the competence of the SR10 that it doesn’t take long to overcome the initial awkward exchanges. Radical has honed essentially this package for such a long time on racetracks the world over and it really shows. Beneath the mini-prototype bodywork there’s some lovely stuff: unequal length wishbones all round with adjustable pushrods, three-way adjustable Intrax dampers, centre-lock rims (8J x 15 front, 10.5J x 16 rear), four-pot brake calipers with 300mm discs and, of course, the spaceframe chassis with FIA-specification safety cell and crash structure. However, the real magic is how Radical creates high-downforce cars (this model produces circa 450kg against a kerb weight of 725kg) that feels so predictable and fluid at the limit.

The SR10 is true to that tradition and, surprisingly, finds tremendous traction despite the abundant low-down torque. Every time I think I’ve opened the throttle too soon, the SR10 simply hooks up and goes. From feeling overambitious to rueing your timid efforts in about half a second is part of the learning curve with the SR10. It simply does things your brain and experience tell you shouldn’t be possible. Even on a cold day and a green track, the way it changes direction, stops and then hauls out of corners is pretty incredible. The gearbox is simply superb – fast, positive, mechanical – and the brakes are full of feel. I won’t pretend I don’t miss the scream of RPE’s own V8 engine but there’s no arguing with the effectiveness of the in-line four. Your trackday supercar wouldn’t know which way a Radical SR10 went.

For all that there are issues. For a car so tactile and responsive, the heavy, kickback-prone steering is too much for me. I almost don’t want to admit it

so far from even the extreme road car norm, but at the same time it’s wonderfully uncompromised and the controls are perfectly placed. The oblong steering wheel feels fantastic and is, of course, a complete control centre, with everything from rotary dials for various engine maps to buttons for the pitlane limiter, headlight flash and Neutral for the gearbox, while short paddles are affixed to its rear. Plus, it looks a bit like an F1 or LMP wheel. Which is cool. You need cool stuff when you’re spending well over £100,000 on a trackday car.

Selecting first is easy. Depress the clutch, thumb the Neutral button, flick the upshift paddle with your right fingers and hear and feel the gear engage with a little jolt. The SR10 is the first Radical with a new Hewland TMT transaxle that was developed primarily for F2 and mid-torque GT applications, and is here fitted with a Wavetrac ATB differential. These helical-gear torque-biasing diffs again require less servicing than a plate-type set-up. Anyway, that’s the easy bit. Rolling away is a tad trickier as the clutch actuation is extremely unforgiving. I stall it once. Maybe twice. Luckily, I won’t have to touch the clutch pedal again until I roll back in and stop...

Top and left: LMP-inspired bodywork and bi-plane rear wing deliver exploitable downforce. **Above:** cockpit can be specced with one or two seats; race-style steering wheel contains a TFT display for the instruments

It takes one turn to know that the SR10 feels more physical than SR8 or the RXC Spyder from back in 2016. The (unassisted) steering is heavy, the torque hits hard and with startling urgency, and somehow the economy of movement required to guide a Radical around a track seems slightly at odds with the booming power and hefty rack. Without the manic motorcycle-derived powertrains of other Radicals even the messages coming back to the driver are slightly harder to decipher. It’s quieter, there’s less immediacy to the power delivery and yet it’s actually hitting much harder much sooner, and it’s all slightly disorientating. This is a bit of a stretch but I remember way back in 2006 speaking to the drivers of the then new diesel-powered R10 TDI Le Mans racer. They all struggled initially to find the limits because their usual aural reference points had all but disappeared. It’s a similar sensation here.

to the engineers but, reassuringly, when I do they nod in agreement and point to a development car in the next garage running their electric power steering system. It will be an option and it's one that feels essential to me. It's hard to tune into what the front tyres are doing when you're having to muscle the car from your shoulders, especially in high-speed turns as the downforce builds. The stakes are high and just when you want to feel every change in surface or loading you instead feel overburdened with the effort of just keeping the thing on line.

The bigger question is what you want from your trackday car. Do you want the quickest, most race-proven car, capable of generating the most eye-popping G-force (2.3 in cornering, now I come to mention it)? The Radical SR10 ticks those boxes. Especially if you want to graduate quickly

to motorsport. But there's none of the jewel-like detailing of an Ariel Atom here, nor the exquisite finish of the admittedly much pricier BAC Mono. The SR10 is awe-inspiring but it doesn't command quite as much wonder as those 'rivals'. It's all function and isn't offered as a road car.

The SR8 with its 2.7-litre V8 goes a long way to overcoming those issues. It's still a racecar in mind and body, but the engine gives it something akin to a soul. At the very least it will stir yours like little else. It's a gleeful, joyous, searingly sharp ingredient that you simply can't experience anywhere else. Think of it as three-quarters of a Valkyrie V12. Okay, maybe three-fifths. The point is that whilst the SR8 is special not solely because of its engine, to take away such a unique and exciting part and replace it with a more workmanlike four-cylinder turbocharged unit that

sounds the same at 3000rpm or 7000rpm strikes a blow to its appeal.

It's impossible not to enjoy the SR10. This really is a fantastically capable and durable trackday car that can easily handle intensive racing, too. Furthermore, the logic behind it is perfectly sound. Even so, the call of that V8 is strong. Bedford was fun. Big fun. But it was Bedford. In an SR8 it would have been Spa, Monza, Brands Hatch GP or wherever you dream about driving. ✕

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 2261cc, turbocharged
Power 425bhp @ 6900rpm **Torque** 380lb ft @ 3900rpm
Weight 725kg (596bhp/ton) **0-60mph** 2.4sec
Top speed 175mph (est) **Basic Price** £126,000

✚ Intense, neck-straining track performance; durability

✖ It doesn't rev to 10,500rpm

evo rating ★★★★★

‘It’s impossible not to enjoy the SR10. It really is a fantastically capable car’







by STUART GALLAGHER

BMW M440i xDrive

Range-topping 4-series marks a welcome return to form for BMW's mid-sized coupe line

IT'S THE GRILLE, ISN'T IT? YOU CAN'T stop staring at it, can you? The talk of the internet, the subject of memes, a design statement that has left many asking what on earth is going on at BMW under the design direction of Domagoj Dukec. Change, primarily. Just as Chris Bangle threw out the BMW design rule book nearly 20 years ago, so Dukec is doing the same again today as he moves the company away from what he considers years of play-it-safe styling.

We'll get the looks out of the way early doors, because the M440i xDrive is one of the best sports coupes you can buy and we'd rather focus on that. It's a shot in the arm for those who enjoy driving but have been left disappointed in recent times by manufacturers dressing up mutton and passing it off as a field-fresh lamb when it comes to cars in this class.

The design of the new 4-series is intended to provide the model with its own identity against the

3-series on which it is based. With it being one of BMW's most successful spin-offs (over 800,000 4-series Coupés, Cabriolets and Gran Coupés were sold in 2019) you can understand why the company would want to continue to nurture the model line by giving it its own unique appearance to differentiate it from the rest of its close-knit family. It's certainly unique, we'll give BMW that.

In a dark colour, with black trim (Shadowline Plus in BMW speak) replacing chrome, it's less jarring in the metal than perhaps the images suggest. But some will never get over it, others will soften to it, and there will be those who neither care about nor actually like such a bold design statement. And if it's purely the size of the grille that's an issue, BMW can only be accused of following Audi when it comes to oversized facial features.

For a BMW coupe the M440i's overall design is perhaps a little fussy for some tastes, too. In the past, 3-series-based coupes have always had a



Above: black wheels are a £300 option; grey and bicolour alternatives are also available, all measuring 19 inches in diameter. **Right:** cabin is a quality affair, bolstered by offering grand-tourer levels of noise suppression



Left: classic BMW dials are another victim of the company's new design direction, being replaced by these more stylised counter-rotating items



simplicity to their look, with clean lines and simple surface details, but there is no hiding from the fact that there is a lot going on with the 440i's look as a whole. Although black wheels don't help when it comes to defining where the body ends and the wheels and tyres start, being longer, taller and wider than the car it replaces there's a lot of pressed aluminium and steel to take in.

Beneath the M440i's new look is a further adaptation of BMW's modular CLAR steel and aluminium platform, as used by the 3-series. It also borrows that car's MacPherson strut front suspension and five-link rear layout, both retuned accordingly and with a shorter spring fitted along with adaptive dampers. The front geometry is adapted for the coupe's specific needs, too, and the model sits 15mm lower than the car it replaces.

The 440 rides with a GT-esque pliancy – even on 19-inch wheels and tyres – but not at the expense of its sports coupe aspirations. There's a tightness





to its body control when you begin to lean on the chassis and it feels incredibly fluid and linear as you begin to push on. It's easy to build a rhythm quickly, understanding how to get the best from it in a relatively short space of time.

A quick and heavy-handed approach to turn-in results in a glassy feel back through the variable-weight steering as the front begins to struggle to hold its line and the xDrive four-wheel drive is a little slow to divert the unwanted propulsion to the rear axle (a maximum of 40 per cent of the B58 straight-six's power and torque is sent to the front axle). Slow your entry speed and the M440i turns in sharper and with more clarity and allows you to hook up the throttle much earlier to drive out of the corner. In a car laden with technology it responds to a very traditional approach. As we have found with our M340i xDrive Fast Fleeter, slackening off the traction control a level allows the 440 to breathe with the surface a degree more, too. The wider slip angle results in no loss of forward propulsion, with the messaging coming back to you much clearer and the standard M differential in the rear axle able to perform with more freedom and a wider remit when the shackles are loosened.



Above: as in its other applications, BMW's 369bhp turbocharged straight-six feels potent and responsive

And it's welcome, because this is a quick car. Actually, make that a deceptively quick one. With 369bhp and the same number when it comes to torque, it doesn't hang around. At 1730kg it's not as sprightly off the line as those output numbers suggest, but when it gets into the meat of its power and torque delivery you find yourself traveling at a pace more akin to that of a full-blown M-car.

The 3-litre straight-six whips through the revs, instantly on the boil from the lowest of engine

'It's an engaging proposition for those unable to stretch to a full-blown M-car'

speeds before building through a meaty midrange and going on to a crescendo that's almost naturally aspirated in its crispness. The eight-speed torque-converter auto (no manual, sorry) is equally reactive when it comes to serving the next gear, especially so if you've opted for the transmission's quickest shift speed to accompany the engine's Sport Plus mode. Set up this way the 440i's powertrain is at its most responsive and its maximum potential. It's certainly a more authentic and engaging experience than that served by the Merc-AMG C43.

You sit lower in the M440i than you do in a 3-series equivalent thanks to the seat being positioned lower in the car and the windscreen being more steeply angled. This results in a feeling

of sitting in rather than on the car, your legs straight out in front of you like in BMW's of old. Ergonomically it's an inviting place to be, the three-spoke wheel – thankfully not full M-car fat in rim diameter – offers plenty of adjustment, too. The gearshift paddles lack tactility, though; like so many they are too small and feel more of an afterthought than a considered piece of design. It's time manufacturers started to offer different sized paddles as an option, or the aftermarket sector could up its game and steal a march on the slow-to-respond OEMs.

Yet this is a small blot in the copy book. As a sports car the M440i glides under the radar at quite a rate of knots. Its constituent parts combine to create an engaging proposition for those unable to stretch to a full-blown M-car, or who require the more practical approach a 4-series coupe offers over a fully fledged two-seat sports car. It's a properly well sorted and hooked up machine, too. Quick, regardless of the powertrain modes selected, and controlled and engaged when pushed, there's a layer of polish that has been missing from such models in BMW's recent past. This range topping 4-series also feels a step up from its smaller-engined cousins when it comes to enjoying the process of driving.

There's an added layer of duality, too. For while being an M Performance model the focus is naturally on performance, the 440i is also well rounded and an unexpected junior GT car. When you're not tearing



Top: M Sport bucket seats are an £890 option and feature black M logos and full electric adjustment

around the countryside it soothes and comforts. The interior is whisper quiet, solid too, and the whole car oozes a charm and a quality that creates enough distance between it and, say, a 420d. It's very reminiscent of the E46 330Ci in how it exudes a calm confidence when being stretched and a performance window that's both clearer and wider than anyone expected.

Big-engined, small-bodied coupes have been a BMW forte for generations. While it perhaps didn't invent the genre it did at least help shape it and most definitely led it while others followed some way behind. In recent years that hasn't always been the case, with the offerings from Munich feeling no more involving than the equivalents from Stuttgart or Ingolstadt. That's no longer the case, with the M440i xDrive being a demonstration that BMW's engineers have found their form once again. If you dismiss it because of its looks, or what others think of its appearance, you'll be passing over the best in class. ✘

Engine In-line 6-cyl, 2998cc, turbocharged **Power** 369bhp @ 5500-6500rpm **Torque** 369lb ft @ 1900-5000rpm
Weight 1740kg (215bhp/ton) **0-62mph** 4.5sec
Top speed 155mph (limited) **Basic price** £54,645

➕ Punchy drivetrain with a chassis to match...
➖ ...will be overlooked because of that grille

evo rating ★★★★★




Driven

by JOHN BARKER PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH

Ford Mustang Steve McQueen Bullitt Edition

Mustang tuner Steeda and Steve McQueen's son have collaborated to produce the ultimate, 720bhp tribute act





B LENDING INTO TRAFFIC ON AN ELEVATED section of the Nottingham ring road, I can't help thinking that the roller-coaster streets of San Francisco – or anywhere warm, in fact – would be a better place to appreciate a car of this potential. That said, there was no way I was going to turn down an invitation to drive the UK's one and only Steve McQueen Edition Bullitt Mustang... all 720bhp of it.

So here we are, treading warily on the cold, damp roads of middle England, willing the pale winter sun higher to warm and dry the glistening surface so that we can get at least one full-throttle sweep of the rev-counter. Yes, at **evo** we're all about judging cars in the round but when one comes along with outrageous horsepower you're not going to be

satisfied until you've felt the full force at least once.

The Bullitt Mustang that is the basis of this Steve McQueen Edition has been around for a couple of years now. It trades on the appeal of the Mustang driven by Frank Bullitt (played by McQueen) in the 1968 movie and is similarly subtle: painted Highland Green, lacking the usual badges and wearing a set of black five-spoke alloys with diamond-turned edges. You also get an extra 9bhp from the 5-litre V8, while the GT Performance Package is fitted as standard, adding six-pot Brembos, lower and stiffer springs, thicker anti-roll bars, recalibrated dampers and a Torsen limited-slip differential. All this adds £5400 to the price of the standard V8 GT, taking the total to £46,830. This Steve McQueen Edition, meanwhile, costs a

'You're not going to be satisfied until you've felt the full force at least once'



whopping £92,000. But what else can you buy with upwards of 700bhp for less than £100,000?

The car is the work of Steeda, a long-established American Mustang tuner, in collaboration with Chad McQueen Racing, the outfit run by Steve McQueen's only son, Chadwick. Visually, the McQueen edition is a subtle take on a subtle take, the only outward change being the wheels. These are upsized from 19in to wider 20s in the same attractive Fuchs/wobbly-web style but painted body colour and shod with appropriately wider Michelin Pilot Sport 4S tyres. And yet the McQueen edition looks fantastic, much better than the stock Bullitt, because those wheels and tyres sit perfectly in the arches, giving the car a superb stance. We couldn't help walking around it, admiring it from all angles, as it sat in the showroom of Sandcliffe Ford, the Nottingham dealer working with Steeda to supply examples in the UK.

The reason the McQueen edition looks so right isn't just down to the upscaled wheels and tyres. Most of Steeda's work is on the chassis and





Above: reworked suspension has brought greater control; the same modifications are available for other Mustangs, too, via Steeda's UK partner, Sandiccliffe Ford

includes dual-rate road springs that lower the car by a modest but visually ideal 19mm. The rest is a comprehensive package of proven upgrades that sets out to increase dynamic precision and control and includes extra bracing for the front and rear suspension assemblies, billet aluminium mounts for the new front and rear anti-roll bars and billet front suspension vertical links. There's also an anti-hop kit for the rear suspension, though you'd think that the severe axle-tramp Frank Bullitt induced by reversing enthusiastically in the iconic movie wouldn't apply to the latest Mustang because it has independent rear suspension rather than a live axle and cart springs.

That lot costs a cool £26k fitted. For another £19.5k you can dramatically increase the power of the 5-litre V8 by installing a huge Whipple

supercharger between its cylinder banks. The 3-litre, twin-scroll 'charger swells power from an already tasty 453bhp to a shirt-ripping, Hulk-like 720bhp with a similar uplift in torque. It also comes with Ford Performance half-shafts rated at 1500bhp. If you've gone that far, it's just a small financial step (another £1000) for 'Stage 2', which gets you a larger diameter throttle body that lets even more air in and helps generate even more power, taking the total to a stupendous 800bhp.

If you've not been in a Mustang in the last ten years you'll probably be surprised to find that although, at a glance, the cabin looks as retro as the exterior, it's actually packed with thoroughly modern kit and has all the features you'd expect to find in a Focus ST. There are Recaro seats, a central screen and multiple drive modes including 'Track' and 'Drag Strip', each with its own dashboard display. There are McQueen-specific details too, of course, including illuminated sill-plates and a numbered fascia plaque. Steeda also offers a 'club sport'-style option to delete the rear seats and

have a half-cage instead, although this car doesn't have that particular feature.

It's no secret that I'm a sucker for a traditional V8. The standard Bullitt Mustang sounds fabulous, and when you push the start button of the McQueen edition it fires up with exactly the sound you'd wish for: a deep, heavy pulse, full and rounded but with a hint of the jagged, angry edge of a slightly petulant competition engine. Awesome.

The gearknob is a glossy white cue ball marked with the shift pattern, as in the Bullitt edition, but here it sits a lot lower thanks to Steeda's 'Tri-Ax' short shifter. It feels initially like it might be a little *too* short, but it works well if you adopt a positive, wristy action, slotting home with an appealing, mechanical precision. The six-speed 'box has to handle massive torque yet the clutch is both well-weighted and easy to modulate thanks to Steeda's spring assist kit – one of its most popular mods. The shift is also enhanced by Ford's rev-matching feature, which works brilliantly. Further down the driveline there's a carbonfibre propshaft and



**‘V8 rumble overlaid
with supercharger
whine, like a *Mad Max*
Interceptor’**

limited-slip diff (both standard on the V8 Mustang), those heavy-duty half-shafts and, finally, a pair of 305-section Michelin Pilot Sport 4Ss. Racier Cups are offered but these will do fine for today, thank you.

By the time we've added fuel and got beyond the city limits, there are dry roads. I steel myself, give the throttle a decent squeeze and the engine note gets even better, the solid V8 rumble overlaid with light supercharger whine, like a *Mad Max* Interceptor. There's a delicious, heavyweight feel to the engine's response no matter which gear you're in, and it's easy to mistake sixth for fourth because the engine is quiet on a light throttle. Surprisingly, there isn't an excess of low-down torque to trouble the traction, the V8 building urge progressively and really hitting its stride from about 3000rpm. Mind, this isn't an engine that runs out of puff as the revs rise, the

tacho being redlined at almost 7500rpm.

While I'm a big fan of the noise of this V8 at idle and under load, there's far too much in the way of theatrics on the overrun. It's not that it's loud – the tailpipe pops are muffled and soft – but that they seem to go on forever on a closed throttle, like you're hearing the faraway finale of a grand firework display.

On interesting A- and B-roads you're conscious that the Mustang is a big car, and the seat doesn't seem to go low enough so you feel perched high, too, but at low and medium speeds it's calm and composed. Steeda's chassis mods work with the optional Magneride adaptive damping so the McQueen edition rolls smoothly over broken town surfaces and delivers good comfort on niggly B-roads, with only a hint of big wheel mass at each corner. In Normal mode, the steering is well-

weighted, quick enough and reasonably sharp off-centre but there's not a lot of feedback and although steering weight increases as the drive modes get sportier, you're always hankering after a bit more feel to know just how hard you're pushing the grip and to place the car with total confidence at speed.

The Steeda mods give more crispness to the responses and finer control, too, but as the speeds rise you start to feel the mass of the Mustang more. In combination with the car's scale and the lack of detail feel to the steering, this makes it less easy to hustle than you'd hope. In tighter corners it's satisfying to feel the car adjust its attitude as the torque arrives at the rear but, contrary to expectation, you have to be quite insistent if you want to break traction and play with opposite lock.

A long-travel throttle and long gearing (top is



Left and below: McQueen-specific details include illuminated sill-plates and the body-colour wheels



about 45mph per 1000rpm) help, but electronic traction and stability control are surprisingly conservative, closing down slip almost before it has begun, even in Sport mode. In fact, to properly stand down traction control and pit that monster engine against the mechanical grip of the chassis and those fine Michelins, you have to select Track mode. Happily, once you've unstuck the rear with a stab of throttle early in a corner it's quite easy to modulate the throttle and therefore the angle of oversteer, so it's not the wild ride you might expect.

I've driven a few cars with 700 horsepower plus, one of which was a Ford GT, and the full-throttle kick in the back from that was almost terrifying. When conditions were right and I finally got to pin the throttle of the McQueen edition, it didn't feel as mind-blowing. It's a heavier car, yes, but there

was also a technical issue: just when the power was swelling impressively the engine faltered, once at around 5500rpm and again at 6500rpm. Sadly, there wasn't time for us to try the car again after it had been debugged on the rolling road because it then went straight to its new owner.

The McQueen edition Mustang looks fantastic, perfectly stanced on its revised suspension and bigger wheels and tyres. It sounds magnificent too, the rumble of the V8 and the screech of its supercharger creating a sound that could be used to overdub race car scenes in films. The comprehensive chassis mods enhance its dynamics and the supercharger should turn it into a monstrously potent car, but it's not cheap.

A budget of £90k can buy all manner of excellent driver's cars, including our current car of the year,

the M2 CS, and while this is one of the best-sorted Mustangs we've driven, the best Europeans still have the edge in tautility and dynamic refinement. But that's not really the point. If you're drawn to the standard Mustang Bullitt, the McQueen edition ramps up its appeal, with a stronger connection to the actor and his most famous movie, and promised rarity, too – 300 units globally per year. New cars don't come much cooler. ❌

Engine V8, 5038cc, supercharged **Power** 720bhp @ 7300rpm
Torque 570lb ft @ 5250rpm **Weight** c1800kg (c4.06bhp/ton)
0-62mph c4.0sec (est) **Top speed** 155mph (limited)
Price c£92,000 (see text)

- ➕ Cool looks, monster power, epic soundtrack
- ➖ Pricey upgrade

evo rating ★★★★★

by ADAM TOWLER

Porsche 911 Carrera S manual

The 992-generation Carrera is finally available with a manual gearbox. Is it everything we hoped for?



YOU KNOW IT'S A SIGN OF THE TIMES WHEN PORSCHE releases a manual 911 Carrera and it's virtually a standalone, niche model in all bar name.

We've had a considerable wait for this three-pedal car, and now it's here it's an almost painful reminder that, while people like you and me may bang the drum for manual gearboxes in sports cars, for the buying public at large – even those purchasing a new Porsche 911 – the idea of not going for the eight-speed PDK is an anathema.

Still, Porsche's new offering certainly ticks plenty of boxes on paper. If you want a manual Carrera you have to order the S model for a start, and selecting the version with a stick automatically triggers the fitment of the Sport Chrono pack, which means torque vectoring, a mechanical limited-slip differential, active engine mounts, the steering wheel mounted mode switch and a temperature readout for the tyres, that last item a new bit of tech borrowed from the latest Turbo. The message from Weissach is clear: this is a 992 for the drivers.

There's more good news too in that forgoing the additional gear shafts and clutch brings a useful saving of 35kg, taking the 992's kerb weight below 1500kg for the first time. Sure, at 1480kg it couldn't exactly be termed 'lightweight', but then it does have a meaty 444bhp and 391lb ft of torque at its disposal. Predictably, the manual is annihilated in the acceleration stats (does anyone actually look at such things these days?), its 4.2sec 0-62mph time trailing the PDK car by 0.5sec, or 0.7sec if Sport Chrono is specced alongside PDK. But then the PDK's figures are aided not only by near-instantaneous shifts but also a violent launch

thanks to very short lower gearing. That's something the manual certainly doesn't have, but more on that in a bit. Incidentally, the top speed is identical to the twin clutcher at 191mph.

Naturally, the figures tell a pitifully shallow account of the real story. From the moment the 992's wheels begin to rotate it feels as though it has an extra 20bhp over the PDK car. I've no idea how the losses through the transmissions compare, but not having your input processed by an electronic brain first, however advanced it may be, just seems to free the 992 up, and its obvious enthusiasm immediately sets a more sporting tempo.

It's hard to believe this is the same seven-speed manual 'box that first appeared in the 991 back in 2011, so far has the quality of the shift progressed. This is now a really rewarding Porsche transmission to use, with a tight but effortless mechanism, and if you keep seventh as purely a long-distance cruising gear, it's no more confusing to operate than the six-speeder in the Boxster/Cayman.

So far so good, but as we found with the Cayman GTS in eCoty last month, what good work Porsche offers with one hand, it snatches cruelly away with the other in the guise of yawningly long gear ratios. In the 992, second gear stretches to an indicated 80mph-plus, and third is well on the way to, ahem, 120mph. Given there are seven ratios to choose from, it really rankles that they should be stacked thus; the car will nearly max out in fifth gear and seventh has a theoretical top speed of 284mph! Blame the EU emissions tests, but the overall result is that you could quite conceivably tackle a decent B-road in just one gear – second – rather negating the appeal of having a manual gearbox in the first place.



Driven

Below right: manual Carrera S gets Sport Chrono as standard (it's a £1683 option with PDK), which inside adds a dash-top stopwatch and a steering wheel mounted dial offering a wider range of drive modes

A contributing factor is the turbocharged 3-litre's broad spread of power. It pulls heartily from what feels like barely above idle, yet doesn't hit the limiter until 7500rpm. In many ways that's something to be applauded, although given it understandably sounds rather synthetic and one-dimensional compared to the old naturally aspirated flat-sixes, it's not always such a positive. Sometimes with a turbo motor you just want the bang and whizz and some good old whistling noise and be damned with revs...

Being more involved in the process of driving the 992 is a very good thing. Because you have to think a bit more about how the car is going down the road, you're automatically more receptive to what it's telling you, and subsequently more invigorated by the experience. To a certain degree. But as a car the 992 is, perhaps inevitably, just that bit further along the scale from sports car to GT than the 991, and however marginal the increases in weight and in width (okay, so it's just 44mm), somehow their cumulative effect has reached a tipping point that has taken the 911 away from being the sort of do-it-all sports car that effortlessly fitted on UK roads to something more capable, yes, but also more conventional in feel, glossy and deliberately undemanding. Such qualities make the 992 a supreme 'daily' performance car, but inevitably hamper the rewards it can offer. Given the mixed bag offered by the manual option, that conclusion hasn't changed. ❌

Engine Flat-six, 2981cc, twin-turbo **Power** 444bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 391lb ft @ 2300-5000rpm **Weight** 1480kg (305bhp/ton)
0-62mph 4.2sec **Top speed** 191mph **Basic price** £94,350

evo rating ★★★★★

+ More involving than the PDK ❌ The curse of emissions-friendly ratios



'From the moment the wheels begin to rotate it feels as though it has an extra 20bhp over the PDK car'



ORACLE[®]

CAR FINANCE



The UK's No.1 Funder for Prestige, Sports and Classic Cars

Discover our passion and expertise before you purchase your next car.

TALK TO ORACLE TODAY ON

0330 838 7491

oraclefinance.co.uk

   #FUNDED BY ORACLE

WE ARE A CREDIT BROKER AND NOT A LENDER. This means we deal with a wide range of financial institutions to give our customers a greater choice of competitively priced options. Oracle Finance is a trading name of Oracle Asset Finance Limited. Oracle Asset Finance is not affiliated to any motor manufacturer.

Trustpilot  4.9 out of 5

Safari, so good

Singer joins forces with Tuthill Porsche to create the outlandish All-Terrain Competition Study, a Safari-style 911 that picks up where the 959 left off

LOOKING DISTINCTLY LIKE PORSCHE'S 1986 DAKAR-winning 959 metamorphosed into the 21st century, this extraordinary device is the latest 'Porsche 911 reimagined by Singer'. We've become accustomed to the company's meticulously wrought 911s, with their endless customisation options, supercar performance and subtle embellishment of the early model's performance aesthetic. More recently we've been intrigued by the radically evolved Dynamic Lightweight Study that attempts to take the original 911's acceleration and handling into the stratosphere, but this All-Terrain Competition Study (or 'ACS') is something altogether different again. Conceived as a genuine competition car with the remit of tackling long-distance events on the loose such as the Baja 1000 and the Dakar, it's been developed with renowned 911 rally specialist Richard Tuthill in the UK.

The Tuthill name has become synonymous with the 911 and rallying, whether through its air-cooled 911s rasping through Africa on the historic Safari Rally, or with its 997 GT3 R-GT that won the 2015 R-GT class in the World Rally Championship. Now, with a commission incoming from a long-term Singer client, Tuthill has really delved deep into the toy cupboard to create not just its own take on a 'Safari style' 911 (something that's become increasingly popular in recent years), but to evolve that idea into a machine with cutting-edge technology and motorsport credibility. The ACS is much more about leaping over towering sand dunes than it is delicately quilted engine-bay leather.

As with all of Singer's projects, the ACS begins with a

964-generation 911, the late '80s step change in 911 evolution that saw coil-sprung suspension, power steering, ABS and modern aerodynamics for the first time on a regular 911. Yet the styling is clearly influenced by the 953 and 959, the former a 911 with the 959's four-wheel-drive system that won the Paris-Dakar in 1984, and the latter, of course, Porsche's landmark supercar, which in jacked-up rally-raid form contested the Paris-Dakar (and other raids) in 1985 and 1986. It's obvious every surface of the ACS, each and every last exterior detail, has been patiently thought through and carefully designed, the result being a vehicle that wouldn't look out of place if Porsche had worked it up as a concept itself. Close your eyes and you can almost see the Dakar 959 evolving into the ACS, complete with its 992 headlamps and much broader, flatter curves, its stylish yet restrained graphics giving it the air of something that's just escaped a shuttered doorway at Weissach.

Obviously, not much of that original 964 remains once Tuthill has set to work on the body. The central monocoque is extensively strengthened with the benefit of knowledge gained from decades of rallying: the 911 SC/RS bodysells that Prodrive rallied in European and World Championship events in the mid-1980s were prepared by Tuthill Porsche, run at the time by its founder, Richard's father Francis, and the company has been building rally 911s ever since. With an FIA roll-cage and all the necessary safety systems, the structure is then clothed in carbonfibre panels that open up via front and rear clamshells in spectacular fashion.

Underneath the bodywork things are arguably even more

SINGER ACS

by ADAM TOWLER



interesting, with the usual air-cooled flat-six displacing 3.6 litres and blown by twin symmetrical turbochargers (not sequential, as in the 959). Water-to-air intercoolers, with individual-bank chargecoolers housed within the plenum and cooled by a clamshell-mounted radiator, help the unit produce 450bhp and 420lb ft of torque as a minimum, with more available depending on the event being tackled. The engine's output is fed through a five-speed sequential dog 'box, with paddleshift control available if desired. The car is, obviously, four-wheel drive, with plated mechanical diffs front, centre and rear. No weight figure has been revealed, but performance should be very serious indeed, even on loose surfaces.

As you might imagine, the ACS's suspension is equally extreme. There's a massive amount more wheel travel available with a pair of long-travel five-way adjustable dampers at each corner (so eight dampers in total) and a greatly raised ride height, while forged aluminium 8x16in rims are shod with BF Goodrich All-Terrain tyres to cope

with pretty much any type of landscape you decide to task the ACS with.

Inside, there's that trademark Singer attention to every detail and design-led approach, but you'll also find FIA-homologated seats, what's described as a 'state of the art GPS navigation system', and even rehydration systems for both driver and navigator. No mistaking the giant meat cleaver of a handbrake, either. There are two full-size spare wheels on board, too – no use throwing a space saver on it in the middle of the desert – and a long-range fuel tank, for obvious reasons.

The ACS is far from being a one-off plaything. For a start, the commission was for two cars. There's the Parallax White machine you see in these images, which has been developed and set up for high-speed desert rallying, but intriguingly a second ACS, finished in Corsica Red, has been configured for what Singer refers to as 'higher-speed, high-grip tarmac events'. The 959 was Porsche's Group B car, but its complexity led to its weight ballooning and it always looked far

more suited to longer distance events such as the Dakar rather than stage rallying. In any case, the Group B formula ceased to exist before any further developments could be made, also ending the car's short-lived career on track, which saw just two Le Mans 24 Hours appearances in 1986 and 1987 against negligible class opposition. Just what exactly will the 'tarmac spec' ACS look like? We'll have to wait and see.

Thankfully, the client is not demanding exclusivity, so if you have the necessary funds – and we have no idea what that amount may be save to say it'll be a very large sum – you'll be able in time to order an ACS of your own. Tantalisingly, Singer also states that 'support packages for racing and maintenance will be available', which you'd have to hope might lead to an ACS tackling a rally or raid event of some description in anger. Creating beautiful, bespoke 911s is one thing, but seeing something like an ACS competing for real is a very exciting prospect indeed, and something we very much hope happens. ☒



**‘HOPEFULLY WE’LL SEE AN
ACS TACKLING A RALLY OR
RAID EVENT IN ANGER’**





2021's new model army

Regardless of what 2020 threw at us, the industry isn't holding back in 2021, with an onslaught of new models scheduled over the next 12 months to fire the enthusiasm of performance car fans the world over

1. Alfa Romeo

If there was one car we couldn't wait to drive in 2020 that got side-swiped by Covid it was Alfa's bonkers Giulia GTA. The £153,000 GTA (£158,000 for the GTAm version) has a tweaked version of the standard Giulia Quadrifoglio's 2.9-litre twin-turbo V6 with a small increase in power to 532bhp, but it's the look created after a spell in the Alfa Romeo-Sauber F1 team's wind tunnel that really grabs your attention. The new carbonfibre body means a 100kg drop in kerb weight, while the wider tracks, revised geometry and more focused chassis set-up is said to improve the Giulia's track performance further still. We can't wait to find out.

2. AMG

The big one, the One has been delayed and beset by problems ever since someone thought it was a good idea to put an F1 engine in a road car. Finally expected to make an appearance in Q3 as a finished production car that won't ingest its 1.6-litre turbocharged V6 engine every time you stop at a set of traffic lights, the One will be the halo model

for AMG's hybrid and electric future, it is hoped.

This strategy starts with the new C63, which will be revealed at the end of this year powered by a new four-cylinder hybrid engine. Before that, however, the 4-litre 'hot-vee' twin-turbocharged V8 will go out with a mighty bang when the GT 73 coupe arrives with 800bhp...

3. Audi

Audi's hottest hatch, the RS3, will return in September with an A45-rivalling 400bhp. It's expected the five-cylinder engine will be retained, along with four-wheel drive ('natch) and hopefully it will have at least 50 per cent of the AMG's dynamic panache to lift Audi's uber-hatch out of its flat-footed cycle.

This year will see Audi focus predominantly on rolling out its electric vehicle strategy, headed by the e-tron GT and RS GT. Based heavily on Porsche's impressive Taycan, Audi's electric-powered four-door coupe will be revealed in February and in top-line RS trim will provide the equivalent of 650bhp from its 93kWh battery, offer 250

miles of range and cost in the region of £130,000.

You can also expect additional updates to the RS6 and RS7 later in the year, with both expected to borrow the hardware from Porsche's Panamera Turbo S E-hybrid.

4. Aston Martin

Stability and survival will be top of Aston Martin's list of goals for 2021, but a strong end to 2020 on the stock market will have given chairman Lawrence Stroll reasons to be optimistic and CEO Tobias Moers one less distraction as he sets about remodelling the, er, model range.

Specials such as the V12 Speedster will start to be delivered throughout the year and the mid-engined Valhalla will be shown in production form with its new Aston-designed-and-built V6 hybrid motor, although deliveries won't start until 2022. Before then, and after some considerable delays during testing, deliveries of the company's other mid-engined supercar, the Valkyrie (above), are scheduled to start this coming summer.

At a more obtainable level (for



some at least) is the suggestion that CEO Tobias Moers has tasked dynamics chief Matt Becker's team to develop a harder, faster, more focused version of the Vantage. Watch this space.

5. Bentley

A number of supplements to existing product will mark the start of Bentley's 2021 and see the Flying Spur receive a third addition to the line-up in the guise of a hybrid derivative using more potent hardware to that of the recently announced Bentayga Hybrid (don't be surprised if there are some similarities to Porsche's potent Turbo S E-Hybrid models).

If you follow Bentley's portfolio strategy closely, you'll have noticed



9



7



8



6



10

that there is one model currently missing from the Continental GT line-up, so during 2021 expect to see the return of the Speed name on what's expected to be the most extreme GT model in the company's history.

6. BMW

It's all about the all-new M3 and M4 for BMW this year. The UK will only receive Competition models, which means 503bhp, an eight-speed gearbox and rear-wheel drive (four-wheel drive will also be available but UK customers will be denied a manual option for the first time) and that 'bold' new front grille...

Saloon and coupe (M4) body styles will be offered, though the first official M3 Touring is not expected until this time next year.

We will also see the first M5 CS in 2021, a lighter, more powerful variant of the current M5 Competition.

7. Ford

You'll be reading a great deal about Mustangs in 2021, both the traditional V8-powered kind and an all-electric version, the Mach-E.

The Mustang Mach-1 is a 454bhp limited edition with a track-biased chassis, more downforce and a number of exterior and interior upgrades from the Shelby tuning catalogue. The Mach-E Mustang is Ford's first all-electric car; towards the end of 2021 the GT version will arrive with a claim to be the 'fastest accelerating car in its class'.

And if an electric SUV-coupe isn't your bag there's a new ST for 2021,

too. On sale now, the Puma ST (yes, the small crossover) is everything other sporting crossover claims to be but aren't, i.e. good to drive and able to deliver on its promises.

8. Hyundai

Another big year for the Korean firm and its sporting N division. Hot on the heels of the highly regarded i30N comes the i20N, which will rival Ford's brilliant Fiesta ST and hopefully fill the gaping hole created by the absence of a Renault Sport Clio.

Producing 200bhp, weighing 1190kg and with a limited-slip differential fitted as standard, the i20N impressed us during an early drive in a prototype and should give the team at Ford Performance plenty to think about.

9. Maserati

This year will see Maserati relaunch itself (again) with the MC20 supercar at the heart of its ambitious plans.

The mid-engined coupe is built around a carbonfibre tub with double-wishbone suspension front and rear. At 1470kg, the MC20 weighs close to McLaren's outgoing 570S, and with 621bhp and 538lb ft produced by its 3-litre, twin-turbocharged 90-degree V6, it ought to go like one, too.

Drive is to the rear wheels via an eight-speed wet-clutch automated gearbox. Deliveries will commence towards the end of 2021, and the starting price is £187,000.

10. McLaren

You wait for one new mid-engined supercar to come along... McLaren will replace its Sport Series models (540C and 570S) this year with the arrival of the new Artura.

Powered by a new hybrid-twin-turbo V6, the Artura will be revealed in all its glory next month (17 February to be precise, visit evo.co.uk for the lowdown) with the first cars due to be with customers in the autumn.



11. Peugeot

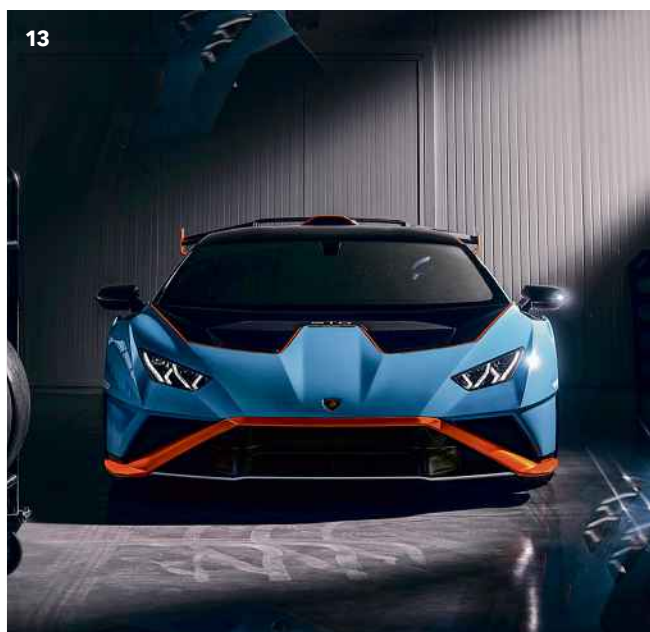
In March we will see the first fruits of Peugeot Sport's electrified endeavours in the shape of the 355bhp 508 PSE. The plug-in hybrid is powered by a 197bhp 1.6-litre turbocharged four-cylinder engine supplemented by electric motors on both the front and rear axles producing 111bhp and 109bhp respectively. Drive is via an eight-speed automatic gearbox to all four wheels.

The 508 PSE will lead the way for Peugeot's (and Vauxhall's) upcoming performance products, with the next 308 GTi incorporating a similar drivetrain and the new 208 GTi a detuned, front-wheel-drive variant, although the PSE branding will replace GTi.

12. Porsche

When isn't it a busy year for Porsche? There's a new 911 GT3 just around the corner (its reveal is scheduled for mid-February) and the new Carrera GTS models will arrive this year, too. A special Boxster 25th anniversary edition, based on the 4.0 GTS, was revealed this month, and we'll finally see the much-rumoured Cayman GT4 RS in 2021, too.

There will be further iterations of the hugely successful Taycan arriving this year, including a rear-



wheel-drive model, and while we're on the subject of electric Porsches, the final update to the Macan will take place before its all-new electric-only replacement arrives.

13. Lamborghini

Always wanted to drive an example of Lamborghini's Huracán Super Trofeo one-make race car on the road? In 2021 you will be able to with the arrival of the Huracán STO. Based on the rear-drive Huracán Evo, its V10 is tuned to 631bhp, its chassis upgraded with the majority of the Super Trofeo's settings, and its aerodynamics are as wild as you would hope for from Lamborghini.

14. Lotus

A big year for Lotus with the first deliveries of the all-electric Evija, while the firm is also set to confirm that it's to launch a new mid-engined super sports car that categorically won't be called Esprit.

This all-new hybrid car will set the blueprint for Lotus's future

range of sports cars, including the Elise and Exige (the Evora is not expected to be replaced). But while Lotus will reveal its new mid-engined hero this year, it's unlikely we'll drive it until early 2022.

15. Volkswagen

The performance variants of the new Mk8 Golf are arriving thick and fast. Hot on the heels of the GTI and GTI Clubsport, this year will also see the arrival of a new Golf R. Powered by a tuned version of the EA888 four-cylinder turbo engine from the GTI Clubsport, power increases to 315bhp and drive is sent to all four wheels via a DSG gearbox. Against the A35 and GR Yaris, the new Golf R is going to need more than a bargain basement lease deal to win people over this time round.

Another 'R' addition to the Volkswagen family will be the Arteon R, VW's posh Passat. Available as a four-door coupe or shooting brake, both share the Golf R's drivetrain.

WATCHES



Yema LED

From €249 yema.com

Yema has joined the digital revival with a reissue of its first LED watch. And yes, just like in the '70s, you have to push a button to see the time. Available in stainless steel or with a gold-plated finish.



Soldat Promessa

From \$1150 soldatwatch.com

Relative newcomer Soldat has the classic chronograph look nailed with this, its debut timepiece. It's Swiss-designed, Japanese-made, and is available in three colour schemes.



Sinn R500

€3950 sinn.de

This new Sinn has its crown and pushers in a 'bullhead' configuration, while its titanium case is thicker at 12 o'clock than at 6, to better angle the dial towards the wearer. Just 300 will be made.



DOA: Opel Omega V8

It would have been the understated successor to the Lotus Carlton, if only it could've stayed cool

THE LOTUS CARLTON MAY BE A HERO car today, but it was not an unqualified success in its time. Its bespoke engineering was expensive, not least the engine rebuild that gave it new pistons, conrods and crank plus a pair of turbochargers. The car's overall assembly process was complicated, too, involving completed Carlton 3000GSs being shipped from Germany to the UK so Lotus could dismantle them, rework their straight sixes, snip out their wheelarches, widen their transmission tunnels, and give them a retrim.

And while a 377bhp saloon might have made headlines, much of the coverage was negative, accusing GM of being irresponsible for selling such a car. Indeed, the furore became so great that the Carlton was namechecked in a parliamentary debate on road safety, during which Alex Carlile, Lib Dem MP for Montgomeryshire, declared that it 'should not be available for public purchase'. The honourable member shouldn't have worried so much because in the end just 286 Lotus Carltons were sold in Britain.

In Germany, however, Opel shifted more Lotus Omegas and attracted fewer negative headlines, which might explain why the company had an appetite for a higher performance version of the

new-generation Omega launched in 1994. What it didn't want was the complexity and expense of the controversial Lotus. So, rather than creating a made-to-measure modified engine, Opel went to GM's global parts cupboard, pulled out an off-the-shelf 5.7-litre LS1 V8 as used in the Corvette, and with minimal wrangling, and therefore relatively minimal cost, dropped the big American engine into the Omega's engine bay, bringing with it 311 rumbly horsepower.

This being near the dawn of the 21st century, extended arches and an attention-grabbing wing in the style of the Lotus were considered passé, so the V8 Omega would have an understated design that, to all but sharp-eyed car spotters, would make it identical to the four-cylinder diesel version.

Development work on this low-budget, low-visibility muscle car was carried out with a fleet of V8-equipped saloons, but the engine was also installed in some Omega estates, and this configuration was considered amusing enough to make for a one-off taster car, the V8.com concept, which was shown at the 1999 Frankfurt motor show and featured various bits of mobile office tech, including touchscreens in the front seat backs and built-in video conferencing.

A few months later, at the Geneva show in

March 2000, a production version of the Omega V8 was announced, the press bumph boasting of special spring and damper settings, an impressive 51/49 front-to-rear weight distribution, a 0-62 time of 'under seven seconds' and a limited top speed of 155mph. With only a different grille, darkened tail lights and an easily removed V8 badge on the back, this Omega looked as if it would be a very handy Q-car when it went on sale in late 2000.

Unfortunately, soon afterwards Opel quietly announced that the Omega V8 would not go on sale later in 2000, or indeed ever. Officially, lack of interest had forced the change of heart. Unofficially, engineers were not happy with the LS1's ability to withstand long periods of full-throttle running, conditions unlikely in its American homeland but common in cars that plied the autobahns. With no money in the budget for re-engineering, the simplest course of action was to kill the whole thing before it went on sale.

Some 30-odd cars were used in developing this ill-fated project and all seem to have been crushed. But if you really want an LS-powered Omega a few people have home-made them since, or you could buy a '99-'08 Holden Commodore, which was based on the same platform and available with an LS1 from the factory.

THE SIMPLE WAY TO BUY NEW TYRES

At checkout, use code

EVOFIVE
for 5% OFF*

2 or more eligible tyres

T&Cs Apply



2,500+

UK Fitting Centres



1.5 MILLION+

Motorists Buy Their Tyres Online With Us



RATED EXCELLENT

Over 80,000 reviews on Trustpilot



blackcircles.com

click & fit[®] tyres

**Auto
EXPRESS**

BEST SITE

2020

Blackcircles.com is the simple way to buy new tyres. Purchase your next set of tyres today to enjoy low prices, a tyre fitting appointment that suits you and first class customer care. *Offer applies to Avon, Bridgestone, Kumho, Michelin and Yokohama tyres only and valid until 31/03/2021. Offer only eligible on qualifying orders of 2 or more eligible tyres. Blackcircles.com reserves the right to withdraw this offer or reduce discount value without prior notice. Code cannot be used in conjunction with any other Blackcircles.com promotion. Discount on cost of tyres only and excludes fitting, balancing, valves and disposal on fully fitted orders and excludes cost of delivery on mail order orders.



Back in the saddle

Two years after unsubscribing (after ten years as a subscriber before that), what can I say? eCoty was fabulous. The prose, the thoroughness of the analysis, the photography... Just fabulous. **evo** is back and I'm so pleased to have renewed my subscription.

I was kind of hoping the Cayman 4.0 GTS would win so I could find an excuse to park one next to my 1972 911 (owned for 22 years). Then, when I realised it wasn't a winner, my money was on the Yaris.

Still, absolutely fabulous. I didn't mind which car won – I was right there, vicariously, in the action. Well done, and what a joy to escape from an awful year.

David Blackburn

The wrong Type R?

Congratulations on another epic eCoty. As a life-long hot hatch fan and owner of a 2020 revised Honda Civic Type R it was great to read how highly this car and the Toyota GR Yaris are regarded by the **evo** crew.

I find myself wondering, though, why the new Type R Limited Edition was tested on UK soil in the Driven section in the very same issue but it was the regular GT model that featured in the Car of the Year test. Surely the Limited Edition deserved a place at the table, especially with its review stating that it is possibly the greatest hot hatch of all time. A missed opportunity perhaps?

Neil Crayford

More a matter of unlucky timing, Neil: the eCoty shoots took place a couple of weeks before the Type R Limited Edition landed in the UK, so it missed out on a 2020 entry. But there's always next year...



The wrong winner

As a keen **evo** and Porsche fan – not unusual, I know – I was very disappointed with the result of eCoty 2020. I recognise that Stuttgart cars can't win every year, but with your chosen winner – BMW's M2 CS – you seem to have settled for the safest, most 'middle ground' car amongst some really exciting and fun ones. But I shall definitely not be cancelling my subscription!

Tony Ireson

The right winner

Congratulations **evo** on eCoty 2020. The winner seemed spot-on to me: rear-wheel drive, manual, LSD, thumping six-cylinder engine up front. The last of this breed as we move into the future.

However, have we also arrived at a true performance car reflection point? What do I mean? Well, eCoty 2020 demonstrated (to me) that we have never had such a choice and such hyper performance in every class – even the GR Yaris was monstrously rapid and enough to satisfy the fastest wheelman or woman. I sensed that this made the judging a headache this year – so much choice and every car amazing.

So have we finally, finally reached the point where it is almost impossible for manufacturers to make their cars more enjoyable to drive by adding more performance?

I don't want to sound like a party pooper (having owned many supercars), but how can anything north of 450bhp really be enjoyable on the roads now (especially in turbo form)? Not just for the licence-losing factor but for the actual enjoyment of the rush to the red line or sheer driving fun?



LETTER OF THE MONTH

Go Toyota!

IT WAS UPLIFTING TO READ OF THE TOYOTA GR YARIS'S stellar performance in eCoty (**evo** 282). Here, finally, is a mainstream car maker that didn't just look at but seemingly swallowed the **evo** Blueprint: manual gearbox, punchy engine, non-granite suspension, lightweight and balanced, small enough to chuck about on back roads, yet also affordable(ish) and just about practical enough to justify.

Indeed, it strikes me that eCoty would benefit from an Honourable Mention award for the contender delivering the most 'Thrill of Driving' for the money. The Yaris appears to have walked away with it for 2020 – especially in the eyes of those who actually have eyes, and therefore simply couldn't bear a Civic Type R.

The same issue's Ignition section contained some other heartening news, meanwhile: that the forthcoming GR86 – now without the GT86's anaemic motor, but keeping the core formula of rear-wheel drive and a manual 'box – is still expected to come to the UK in 2021. Then there's the recent Supra, which despite its foibles remains an undeniably attractive grand tourer. I also understand that a hot Corolla is planned using some version of the Yaris's engine/gearbox combo.

All of this leads me to a startling conclusion, and to writing words that have – quite possibly – never been written before: Toyota is currently the most exciting car company in the world.

Dave Blagden

The Letter of the Month wins a Straton watch

The writer of this month's star letter receives a Straton Vintage Driver Chrono watch worth £270. It takes inspiration from a 1970s Alfa Romeo rev counter and is available in a variety of colour schemes, each supplied with three different straps.

Straton Watch Co.



THE UK'S BEST USED CAR WARRANTY

INCLUDING ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE & RECOVERY!

WHY WE ARE THE BEST:

- ✓ CAR HIRE & ONWARD TRAVEL
- ✓ PARTS AND LABOUR COSTS
- ✓ UNLIMITED REPAIRS
- ✓ NO EXCESS

WE GUARANTEE
TO BEAT YOUR
RENEWAL
OR YOU GET
£20

GET A
QUOTE
NOW!



warrantywise.co.uk/EVO

or call **0800 678 3705**



Warrantywise

Terms and conditions apply. Accurate at the time of printing.

INBOX



Yes, I know we have heard all this before and human nature (and manufacturer ego) always wants more, but can we imagine a time in the not-too-distant future when eCoty is reviewing, say, 1000bhp supercars as the new normal benchmark? I could easily lose interest in reading about 'road' cars with this sort of power – they would be truly pointless as road cars, even for the most die-hard fans.

The M2 CS may be one of the last truly great driver's cars before we all go EV, but perhaps this eCoty winner was a landmark in other ways, too.

Brian Thompson, Bexhill, Sussex

eCoTV

As a subscriber to **evo** for many years I would just like to congratulate you all on the TV showing of eCoty 2020. It was a really enjoyable watch. It is credit to the journalistic skills of the whole team in the written word that you all came through on screen just as I imagined, like meeting up with old pals again. Such a pleasure to watch a car programme presented in a calm manner by a bunch of really nice guys, instead of the usual over-the-top celebrities leaping about and shouting like demented Muppets! Well done to you all and I hope it's on again for 2021.

Oh and did I detect a smile from John Barker right at the end?

John Saunders

Can't please 'em all

I must say that the recent eCoty was one of the longest, most disjointed, nauseating, self-congratulatory pieces of motor verbal diarrhoea I have ever read. It skips around incessantly, doesn't really elaborate in any technical detail on any points made, the writers talk more about themselves and their day than the

cars, and it is endlessly repetitive. What a complete waste of half a magazine. I appreciate you were trying to 'tell it like a story' but you have spectacularly failed. Only the most sad fantasist would enjoy reading this.

Good choice of cars on the whole, but why is the SUV in there. Totally ridiculous. It reads like you are trying to justify its inclusion, which you always seem to do with the 'odd pair' in every such group test where you are trying to make the best of the cars you've been lent.

Patrik Askert

Credit due

I know Richard Meaden is a skilled and rapid wheelman at the best of times, with racing pedigree and huge experience, but to stay with a small white van while only driving something 'exotic and Italian' (column, **evo** 280) takes my admiration to new heights. All that night-time endurance racing wasn't wasted!

Congratulations Richard for hanging on to the coattails of the quickest vehicle on the planet

Euan Gibson, St Abbs

EV-no

I couldn't disagree more strongly with Reinis Cakuls (Inbox, issue 282) and his call for more EVs in **evo**.

Many years ago I had half a dozen car magazine subscriptions. Increasingly the magazines filled up with automatics, diesels, SUVs, hybrids and EVs. Increasingly I lost interest and now only subscribe to **evo**.

evo is a bastion of unreconstructed petrolhead dinosaurs – or you could say 'true enthusiasts who appreciate the finer automotive things'. Long may it continue!

Trevor Crowter



The magic number

In response to the letter from Chris Stacey (evo 281) suggesting that 500cc is the optimum cylinder capacity, it's certainly the most common, but to the best of my knowledge the magic number is 333cc per cylinder, both for efficiency and maximum power.

I recall Daihatsu saying this was the reason its Charade GTi used three and not four cylinders to reach its 1-litre capacity (or, to be precise, 993cc, meaning 331cc per cylinder). You will also recall fondly, I'm sure, the Ferrari 333 SP. The name gives the game away, with its 12 cylinders totalling 3997cc (I'm not sure where the extra cc came from). This engine made 82.5lb ft of torque per litre.

Roll forward to the GMA T.50 V12, which all true enthusiasts hope will stop the race for more and more power, and it too utilises the optimum size of 333cc per cylinder, and makes 86lb ft per litre. So this means the GMA is producing more torque per litre than any other naturally aspirated road-going production engine.

If you want the real proof that 333cc is the figure for peak efficiency, look no further than Fiat's new FireFly modular engines, which come in three- and four-cylinder forms with 999cc and 1332cc respectively. Fiat did, after all, make the world's most successful motorsport engine based on a road engine: the legendary Twin Cam.

On a different note, please keep on *not* featuring electric cars as well. At least until someone makes one like a Caterham but with a brushed motor, sparks on show from the commutator viewing window (near the gearstick), 12,000rpm potential and a five-speed manual gearbox. And no driver aids. Oh and it must weigh about

700kg max. Until then, they are just appliances, not the Thrill of Driving.

Julian Spender

Weight a minute

There seems to be a shift towards quoting 'dry weight' for the cars tested in *evo*. To my understanding 'dry weight' means weight 'without liquids' – so no fuel in the tank, no coolant in the radiator(s), no oil in the engine, gearbox or diff.

While I understand manufacturers want their latest offerings to appear to be as light as possible, this is a completely meaningless figure. Would it not be reasonable, for the sake of a level playing field among competitors, to always quote vehicle weight with all fluids and with a full tank of fuel – as you would usually drive it?

Peter Jaggs

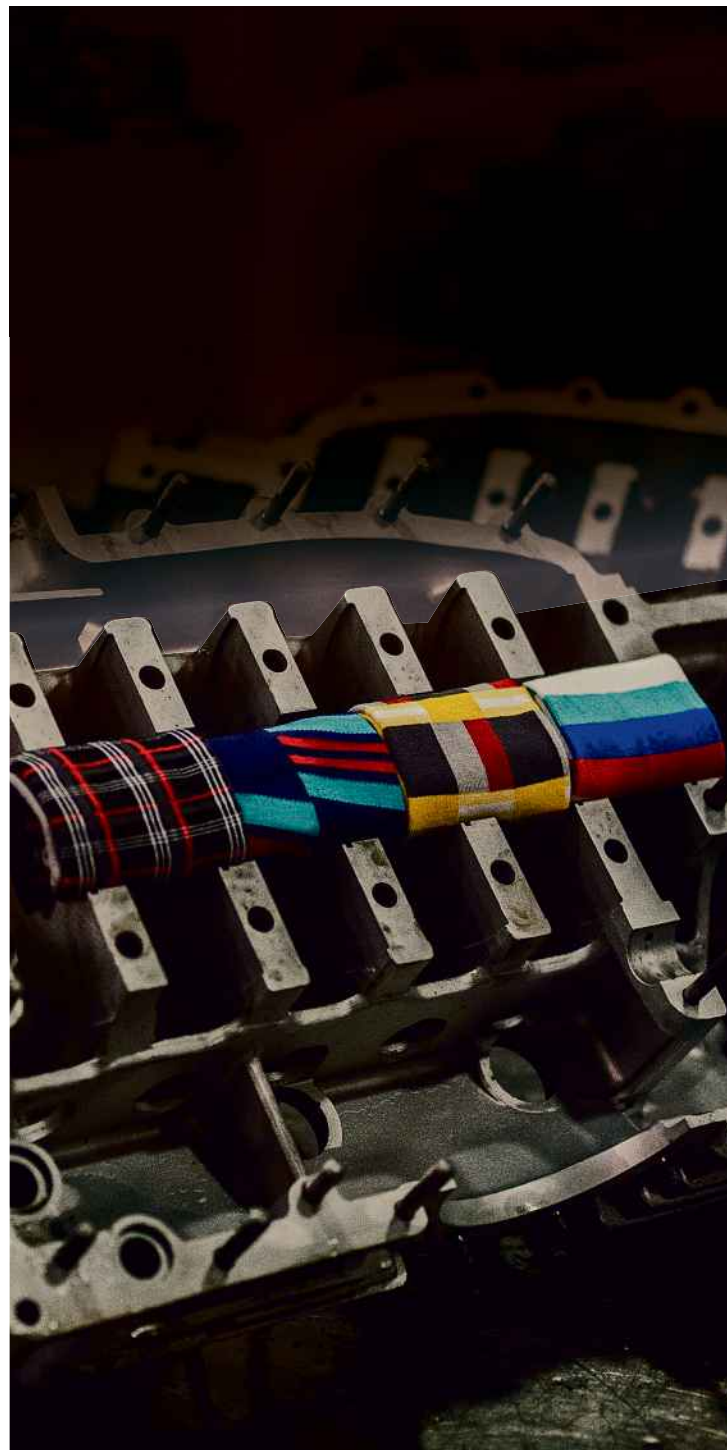
Whenever possible evo quotes weights to the DIN standard, this being the car with a 90 per cent full fuel tank and all other fluids present. However, a handful of manufacturers only quote dry weights. As this gives an unfair on-paper advantage, potentially to the tune of 100kg or more, we always label dry weights as such to bring this to your attention, while in The Knowledge they are marked with an asterisk.

eCoty 2021's loser is...

After you generously gave a Morgan a place in eCoty 2019 and it proved truly out of its depth, I was shocked that you wasted one of the 16 precious spaces in 2020 on a Morgan again. And again it proved to be charming but out of its depth.

If you are intent on wasting one of the available spaces each year, you may as well bring a Mitsubishi 3000GT to eCoty 2021...

Alex Chester



Socks Fuelled by Passion.

With patterns inspired in the most iconic cars and racing liveries, Heel Tread is a brand for the ones that look beyond wheels and see art. From Le Mans, Formula 1 and Rally legends to quintessential automotive icons, in an ever-growing collection tailored for the true petrolhead.

Designed and produced in Portugal, we use seamless knitting to create high-quality, comfortable and durable cotton socks.

See the whole collection at heeltread.com

USE CODE **HT-EVO-10**
AT CHECKOUT TO SAVE 10%



GIFT BOX
AVAILABLE

**HEEL
TREAD**



COLLECTING CARS®

NO ORDINARY PLATFORM.
NO ORDINARY CARS.

24/7 ONLINE AUCTIONS

LIST FOR **FREE**. SELL FOR **FREE**. HASSLE **FREE**.

VISIT » WWW.COLLECTINGCARS.COM



RICHARD MEADEN

How a close encounter with Colin McRae left a lasting Impreza impression

A

SIDE FROM THE RARE PLEASURE OF DRIVING a 22B for this issue's cover story, getting back behind the wheel of a late-'90s Subaru stirred some very welcome memories. Securing an exclusive UK first drive of the 22B for the very first issue of this magazine back in 1998 was a highlight for obvious reasons. However, it's a memory from the year before – when spectating on the 1997 RAC Rally with a mate – that's my ultimate Impreza moment.

The ditch wasn't very deep, or indeed that wide. But then the forest track that it fringed looked almost straight to me, so I was sure we'd be fine. It had taken us about half an hour to get there, hiking from a car park through the endless pine trees, shoulders hunched against the biting November cold.

Despite the remoteness of the location we were far from alone, gaggles of other people trudging through the woods in the same direction, bobble-hatted zombies in a scene from *The Walking Dead*. Some were more prepared than others, stout hiking boots finding purchase on the slippery ground, shooting sticks and umbrellas tucked under arms, rucksacks packed with Thermos flasks and sandwiches. Others slithered along in trainers and lightweight jackets, cursing their inadequate kit, but too wet and muddy to care.

By the time we emerged onto the forest track there were several hundred of us. A ragtag and slightly bedraggled army, we marched along the hard-packed and heavily cambered gravel road, animated chatter and the occasional burst of raucous laughter rising above the squelch and scuff of our collective footfall.

At strategic points along the way we'd pass small huddles of marshals dressed in brightly coloured waterproofs. Hoods up, attention divided between the crackle of a walkie-talkie and eyes focused back down the track, they hurried us along with encouraging banter, telling us to stay sharp as we had ten minutes to find our vantage points.

We pressed on, jogging the last few minutes until we reached what looked like a prime place to watch. Slightly out of breath and now overheating thanks to the exertion and the insulating effects of heavy coats and hats, we shrugged off our rucksacks and got into position in the gully, smothered by an ear-straining silence.

The shrill blast of a whistle cut through the quiet. Then another whistle, followed by what sounded like distant gunfire. The atmosphere crackled with energy. He was coming...

The blue Impreza smashed into view 100 metres to my right. When we picked our spot the track appeared to scribe the faintest of arcs towards a vanishing point where the ditch and trees converged, but now, closing on us with shocking speed, 'P12 WRC' was already pitched at an improbable angle, front wheels steering right, nose pointing left, throttle pinned to the boards, Colin McRae plotting a trajectory between the trees with a steadfast quarter-turn of opposite lock.

In a moment of white-hot clarity my brain calculated McRae would be apexing precisely where we were standing. In that same moment his steely, thousand-yard stare burned straight through me while Nicky Grist's head stayed down, buried in the pace notes. With no time to move there was little choice but to breathe in and hope for the best.

In a blur of blue and yellow accompanied by clattering stones, the Impreza ripped by without a lift, another gunshot signalling the upshift into top gear as the car straightened up and disappeared from view even more rapidly than it had appeared. It was so close I swear I felt the heat from the engine, brakes and exhaust.

Looking back up the stage, a perfect set of tracks scribed four lines in the pristine gravel,

from the far right of my peripheral vision to less than a metre from where my boots were planted in the gully, then drifting back out to the far edge of the track another 100m or so to my left.

Buzzing with a euphoric mix of adrenaline and near-miss giddiness, we whooped and hollered at the absurdity and intensity of what we'd just experienced. Yes, we'd been fools to stand where we did, but the lasting significance of that point-blank experience was unequivocal, even as we hastily clambered out of the ditch and up the bank before the next car came through.

We stayed to see the top 20 cars through the stage, but no one attacked 'our' kink as quickly as Colin. Nor did they use quite so much of the gully. I never met him, but briefly serving as Colin's organic apex marker surely told me more about the most exciting driver of his or any other generation than any stilted interview opportunity. It also cemented my love of the Impreza. Those were indeed the days.

'In a moment of white-hot clarity I calculated McRae would be apexing precisely where we were standing'

@DickieMeaden

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



OMOLOGATO



HERITAGE RACING SPECIAL

CHRONOGRAPH

OMOLOGATOWATCHES.COM

T : +44 1753 622555



RICHARD PORTER

Received a car-themed gift for Christmas? You'll be wanting to offload...



I KIDS! TIDY OF BEARD AND EERIE OF manner, it's Noel Evomonds here with another rip-roaring edition of *Swap Shop*, and what a bumper show we've got for you now that Christmas has been and gone. I asked all of you boys and girls for the car-themed Christmas presents you wanted to swap and our post bag has been bulging with the results, so let's get cracking!

Our first letter is from Graham in Stevenage and he says, 'Dear Noel, I once vaguely mentioned to my aunt that I liked cars and every year she now sends me contrived car-related gifts that make no sense. This year it was a kitchen knife set, but the handle of every knife has a gearknob on it for no readily apparent reason and then the bit you grip is made of carbonfibre, and it comes with a chopping board that's got pictures of not-quite-right-looking F1 cars from 30 years ago on it.' Graham adds that he'd like to swap this for a normal knife and chopping board set that doesn't make his kitchen look like the set to a bad '80s movie about a nine-year-old boy who has his own apartment.

Let's pop that on the board and move on to our next letter, which is from Iain in Dundee who says, 'Dear Noel, I have a Renault Sport Mégane R26.R that I love, and for some reason my family mistakenly believes that I would like this love to be reflected in a new wallet which has a Renault logo on it. But I don't because I'm 34 and perfectly capable of separating out different aspects of my life rather than requiring every element of my existence to radiate from a single item that others seem to think defines me!' Well Iain, that's a very good point and we'll put your baffling wallet on the board here.

Anish writes in from Stockton-upon-Tees and says, 'I try to watch Formula 1 racing when I can and I suppose I'd say my favourite team is Ferrari. For some reason that has led my girlfriend's parents to think I would like a T-shirt with an airbrushed picture of Charles Leclerc on the front and maybe if I was seven that would be true, but I'm not so I don't and I would like to swap it for a normal T-shirt that doesn't needlessly reflect a passing interest of mine.' Okay Anish, your T-shirt is on the board.

Gavin writes from Exeter and says, 'I subscribe to *evo*

magazine and have owned a few interesting cars including a Lotus Elise 111S, a Golf GTI Edition 30 and a Porsche Boxster Spyder, and I now have a Porsche 991.2 Carrera GTS. On this basis, my family decided what I needed for Christmas was a shaving set called Maximum Revs that comes in a chequered flag pouch containing a razor made of fake carbonfibre and a shaving balm labelled "Speedway" that comes in a bottle styled to look like an alloy wheel from an unspecified car of the 1990s.' Gavin goes on to say, 'I'm also a fan of modern South Korean cinema but I notice they've never bought me a bottle of *Oldboy* after shave, only car stuff.'

A very good point, Gavin, and your shaving set is going on the board so hopefully someone will phone in for that. 01 811 8055

is the number and our operators are ready to take your calls. None yet, so let's keep going with another letter, this time from Mark in Worcester who says, 'Dear Noel, in November I had casually mentioned that I needed a new watch. Unfortunately, my wife knows that I like cars so for Christmas she bought me something made by a company called Technomechatronical, specifically a watch called the Autobahn 300, which is inexplicably designed to look like a rev counter, except of course the numbers on a rev counter don't go all the way around the dial and the numbers on a watch should, so it

doesn't work as a design conceit, and then they've made things worse by labelling the sub-dials on the chronograph with "Fuel" and "Boost", which makes no sense whatsoever, and if you look carefully the dial has a fake carbonfibre texture, but in white, and there's a red and black chequered flag effect running around the edge. Also, I think the strap is meant to resemble a harness belt. I would like to swap it for a normal watch that just looks like a watch rather than something a toddler might come up with because they were thinking about cars that day.'

That's smashing, Mark, and I'll certainly pop that up on the board with all the other car-themed things we've received. Let's just see if we've had any calls about any of this... No. Not one. So I'm just going to take these car-themed objects and throw them onto this bonfire. Lovely! Okay, that's enough swapping for now. Here's Jethro, who's been re-examining the direction of performance cars...

'Each kitchen knife has a gearknob on it for no apparent reason and the bit you grip is made of carbonfibre'

@sniffpetrol

Richard is an author, broadcaster and award-winning writer of short autobiographies



THE MARKET



1969 Ford Mustang
Sold £34,000 Nov '20

RECORD YEAR IN 2020

**SELL WITH THE MARKET - Use our Concierge Service to host you classic
New classic & collectable cars going live daily**

The most successful online auctions - No Buyers' Fees - Returning 94% to sellers

themarket.co.uk

+44 (0) 1865 521 088 Unit 38A Innovation Drive, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, UK, OX14 4RT





JETHRO BOVINGDON

Is it time for a rethink about what we want from the chassis of a driver's car?

I DROVE SOMETHING RECENTLY THAT MADE me re-examine the direction of performance cars. It came after a run of test cars wearing big wheels and low-profile tyres and unashamedly tuned towards locked-down body control and, I suspect, pretty mighty performance on a track. The best of which was the A45 AMG. Wow! This thing had completely passed me by but absolutely blew my mind. I'd expected the furious power but the chassis shone brighter still. Scalpel sharp, beautifully adjustable and with agility more than skin deep.

Bloody hell it's stiff, though. Not helped by seats that appear to stretch leather over carved granite. My 11-year-old daughter described it as 'the least comfortable car I've ever been in'. I ignored her, of course, but grudgingly came to realise she had a point. Over the worst roads near my house it felt a bit like a pinball as it jinked, yumped and scratched its way from A to B.

Then it arrived. In Python Yellow. God, it looked um, okay, I suppose. And it promised, well, hardly anything at all. It was called – I've just looked this up to be sure – the Audi A1 citycarver 35 TFSI 150PS S-tronic. Can you picture it? Probably not. Do you care? Almost certainly you don't. Does it have an absurd name that somebody in the marketing department should be strung up for? Absolutely. Was it fun? Well, weirdly, I think it was. Especially on those rubbish roads I mentioned before.

The citycarver follows in the illustrious footsteps of the Rover Streetwise (google it, kids) in that it's a supermini with slightly raised suspension and a sliver of crossover in its genes. I know. I used the 'c' word. Disgusting. However, this massively unpromising formula delivers a surprising driving experience. As our roads get worse and worse (and worse) the chubbier sidewalls, longer travel suspension and focus on fluidity instead of determinedly shutting down body roll, pitch and dive results in a compact, relatively light car (1205kg) that floats where so many crash and thump, and telegraphs any breaches in grip about a week before they happen.

I'm not going to pretend the citycarver (the marketing team insists on the lower case) is perfect or deeply thrilling. However, because it's not a fully fledged hot hatch and doesn't have to be hung up on lap times and lateral G, it seems to have discovered

some other great attributes almost by accident. Imagine the same formula deliberately employed on some of our favourite cars...

The most obvious candidate is the GR Yaris. Maybe it should come in two versions: the tough, immediate and punchy GR Yaris Tarmac and its wildly extroverted brother, the GR Yaris Gravel, with ride height up 70mm (just like the competition versions), light pods fitted and a super supple, highly expressive set-up that would let it glide over ravaged road surfaces and feel truly unique at any speed. My feeling when I drove the Yaris at eCoty was that it could do with being sharper and more hard-edged, but the little Audi has sparked the inspiration for this even more appealing approach.

Wherever you look there are candidates for this alternative treatment. Lambo even flirted with it for the Huracán when it let

a few journalists loose in the Sterrato ('dirt road', according to Google Translate) concept in 2019. Guess what? They all loved sliding around a rally stage in a mid-engined V10-powered rally refugee. But I bet they would have enjoyed it just as much on a crappy B-road or a craggy C-road in Spain.

Sadly, not a peep has emerged about the Sterrato since. However, there is hope. Alpine showed the SportsX concept along similar lines in early 2020 and even more recently pictures and video have emerged of a mysterious 911 testing around the Ring. Strange cladding stuffed into the wheelarches

conceals a much more generous ride height, and the internet, quite rightly, has gone crazy over the possibility of a 911 Safari. Sounds pretty enticing to me.

Of course, such mouth-watering cars would be built in small numbers and sold at a huge premium. Cool, but frustrating for many of us. So for now I'm daydreaming about the next S1 offering a citycarver variant (please change the name, though). With 250bhp, four-wheel drive, a six-speed manual 'box and sophisticated gravel rally-spec dampers, it could be a fantastic way to reinvent the hot hatch, fool crossover fans into a hatchback (providing good volume and hence a real legacy) and gift driving enthusiasts a unique experience and a car tailor-made for our appalling roads. Fluid, accessible, adjustable and involving... Forget Nürburgring times, maybe the new benchmark could be how fast these things get through the Ouninpohja stage on Rally Finland. Extra points for the longest jump, obviously.

'I'm daydreaming about a car tailor-made for our appalling roads. Fluid, accessible and involving'

@JethroBovingdon

Jethro has been writing for **evo** for nearly two decades and is a host on *Top Gear America*





by JETHRO BOVINGDON

PHOTOGRAPHY by ANDY MORGAN

ALL GUNS BLAZING

Lamborghini's Aventador SVJ and Nissan's GT-R Nismo are two old warriors at their fiercest and most brutal, determined to go out on an adrenaline-fuelled high

IT'S ALMOST SPOOKY. The driving environments couldn't be more different: one elevated on an extreme-looking but nicely squishy seat, your legs bent as they would be in a saloon car, visibility easy and reassuring; the other set behind a vast, raked-back windscreen, seat just a carbon shell with some woefully unsupportive padding and set bolt upright, your legs splayed beneath the fully extended steering column, widescreen door mirrors filled mostly with intakes and huge, sharp-edged wheelarches, and a whole lot of carbonfibre aero addenda visible through the venetian blind-style engine cover when a little more of a rear view might be welcome.

Yet as the road wiggles into the gloom, puddles clawing ominously from the edges of narrow lanes and hiding god-knows-what, these two wildly different machines have the same appetite and enthusiasm; they summon the same unbelievable speed. Extracting it is an exercise in restraint, occasional moments of full-throttle joy and many more in a kind of blind panic as tyres skate over standing water and bumps shuffle the cars off line in a heartbeat. Two cars so extreme they seem to have wholly forgotten about the real world. Especially when it's gripped by winter.

Of course, you could argue that the Lamborghini Aventador never cared too much for the real world. Despite the quantum leap it represented when it replaced the Murciélago way back in 2011, its dynamic qualities always felt as though they looked to the past for inspiration. As Ferraris became ever more useable, embraced electronics to make good their inherent hyper-agility and deliberately prised open their operating window, Lamborghini surged ahead with material technology and pushrod-operated suspension but kept the driving experience resolutely old school. The Aventador was always vast, intimidating, deeply uncomfortable at low speeds and seemingly created

Right and below: a decade of evolution (more in the case of the GT-R) has seen both cars swap early design purity for added aggression

'TWO CARS SO EXTREME THEY SEEM TO HAVE WHOLLY FORGOTTEN ABOUT THE REAL WORLD'

for a 30-minute blast of adrenaline rather than a regular dose of more cerebral thrills.

Things change. A little. Magnetic dampers, introduced with the SV in 2015, improved low-speed ride and high-speed control, the purity of the spectacular shape has gradually been supplemented by tricks, flicks, splitters and spoilers and each variant has focused increasingly on track performance. The latest and final of these, the Aventador SVJ you see here, even set an astonishing lap record around the Nürburgring, only to be beaten by a Manthey-modified 991 GT2 RS and, latterly, by the Mercedes-AMG GT Black Series. The Aventador has been around a full decade but those terrifying 6 minutes and 44.97 seconds demonstrate it's still relevant in a world of 765LTs and SF90s. At least on a track in the Eifel forest.

Here and now the weather feels distinctly Eifel. Persistent drizzle hangs everywhere, fog comes and goes in great patches and gusts of wind rattle the bare trees and pelt water at the windscreen in great sheets. Later, we'll thwack and thump around London for photography, but for now the Lambo's job is to keep four round tail lights in sight on wickedly slimy roads built for cars a size smaller.

Those lights belong to the GT-R Nismo. Another last hurrah, this time for the oldest performance car on sale today. Unbelievably, production of Nissan's game-changer started in December 2007. It's a teenager. Which might explain the fact that it seems so difficult to reason with, refuses to fall in with convention and is so belligerently angry. The SVJ's 6.5-litre V12 may have 759bhp but hell hath no fury like a hormonal teen. Those tail lights are starting to edge into the distance...


So it's no ordinary match-up. These cars aren't 'rivals'. In fact, neither of these cars has rivals. You don't choose a GT-R Nismo over, say, a 911 Turbo S. Any more than you weigh up the pros and cons of stretching to an Aventador SVJ instead of a 765LT. You buy them because you can, and because they speak to you. More than any other performance cars on sale today, Nissan's ultimate GT-R and Lamborghini's maddest of madmen are statements of devotion. We've brought them together not to rationalise their existence, but to remember why they command such affection in the first place.

What's surprising is that familiarity doesn't breed even a trace of contempt. Not for me, anyway. How could it when both of these cars specialise in the extraordinary – and do it completely on their own terms? If you don't smile when you heave the door of the Aventador upwards and then









duck beneath it to drop into the cold, hard embrace of the carbonfibre seat, then you're beyond hope. The GT-R doesn't require such ceremony but there's something about the size of this car, the lofty seating position and the blocky, unsophisticated architecture that has a drama all of its own. A Porsche collector poring over shades for the leather-covered air vents on their 14th wildly overthought limited-edition 911 or a Ferrari client perusing Atelier options wouldn't get it. Which is exactly the point. The GT-R Nismo comes in red, white, black or grey. The interior is black and red. There are no options. You pay your £180,095 and, erm, there aren't any choices to make.

In return you get a GT-R that's benefited from well over a decade of evolution and is now laser-focused. The big numbers are 592bhp at 6800rpm and 481lb ft from 3600 to 5800rpm, a top speed of 196mph and a kerb weight of 1703kg. The little ones are 0-62mph in 2.8 seconds and a whole host of incremental weight savings and other measures introduced to cut response time. The new turbochargers are lifted directly from the GT3 racing car and each turbine wheel has ten vanes, one fewer than previously. Those vanes are also 0.3 millimetres thinner. In combination, this reduces inertia by 24 per cent.

Forged wheels are lighter by 25 grams each. Oh yes. The trick Dunlops have one groove fewer in the tread pattern, increasing the contact patch by 11 per cent, and have a slightly rounder shoulder to maintain that advantage even under extreme loads. The roof is now carbonfibre, reducing weight and the centre of gravity. The vents in the wheelarches increase front downforce by 7kg. The carbon-ceramic brakes, with huge, 410mm front discs and 390mm rears, gripped by six- and four-piston calipers respectively, reduce unsprung mass by 16.3kg. The Recaros have a new core structure to increase rigidity by 20 per cent while shedding yet more fat. Each seat is 1.4kg lighter. You can only admire the dedication of the engineers who have made polishing the GT-R formula into a life's work.

This obsession raises questions and concerns, too. It's inescapable that, as the GT-R has been painstakingly updated bit-by-infinitesimal-bit, the rest of the world has been tearing up tree trunks. Porsche has launched two entirely new generations of its own sports car in the GT-R's lifespan and four iterations of 911 Turbo among dozens of variants. Hybrid hypercars have been and gone, a new generation of extreme EVs is just around the corner and the car that once felt as if it had been beamed from the future in terms of sheer ability is now very clearly a throwback to a different time. Look closely enough at the 25-gram-lighter wheels and you might just see Rome collapsing into flames.

**'THE CAR THAT
ONCE FELT AS IF
IT WAS BEAMED
FROM THE FUTURE
IS NOW CLEARLY
A THROWBACK'**



Then the Nismo hits you right in the face. The philosophical questions evaporate and you're suddenly in the thick of the action: eyes wide, knuckles clenched and nervous system on high alert. Thanks to a 30kg weight saving, the switchable Bilstein dampers have been backed off five per cent on compression and 20 per cent in rebound, but you'd barely know it. This is a physical car that finds bumps wherever they might be and shimmies and shuffles on these heavily crowned roads that challenge the suspension with wildly varying conditions across each axle. Throw standing water into the mix and the Nismo feels almost unstable, skipping and slipping and darting as it hunts for grip. The cliché that paints the GT-R as a car that drives itself has always been inaccurate, but in the case of the Nismo on a winter's day like this it's nothing short of laughable. Right now, even blinking seems ill-advised.

Unlike that of early GT-Rs, the steering is light and doesn't have much in the way of texture. Perhaps it's

Right: latest version of GT-R's 3.8-litre twin-turbo V6 makes 592bhp, but Lambo's naturally aspirated 6.5-litre V12 trumps it with 759bhp





configured to impart a sense of inertia-free response, but when there's precious little heat in the tyres you crave more detail and something to lean against. Instead you get a chassis that seems painfully stiff, mixed with steering that's overly responsive. At least that's how it feels in those first few minutes. You must adapt to the Nismo. Learn to trust in the front end, which finds fantastic grip even in the wet. Then relax your grip on the wheel and let the car find its own path, nudging it back on line gently rather than chasing the car every time it tramlines or gets deflected by a sharp bump. As you calm your inputs, so the car finds its rhythm. It's not a fluid, effortless approach but the combative, aggressive style is about as raw and exciting as it gets.

The improvements are real, too, chiefly in terms of engine response with the new turbochargers. The Nismo has superb throttle reactions and the 3.8-litre V6 feels and sounds better than ever. There's so much torque and it arrives hard and early and builds in a measured but almost overwhelming way. This is precision and savagery blended expertly and the VR38DETT just keeps on going as the limiter approaches, all that muscle carrying you



'EVEN WITH THE GT-R STILL FRESH IN THE MEMORY BANKS, THE LAMBORGHINI FEELS OUTRAGEOUS'

up to the angry part of the power band and the titanium exhaust spitting its approval.

Get greedy with the throttle and the Dunlops spin up quickly; if you're in a corner when you decide to achieve full boost the GT-R likes to oversteer first and then start to drag itself straight. The process is manic – everything about the Nismo is manic – and can feel pretty scary. They might keep polishing the GT-R format but some rough edges will never be knocked off.

I know all of this as the GT-R's distinctive lights edge inexorably away from the Aventador SVJ. There's no doubt in my mind that a standard GT-R would be a faster car than the Nismo in many, many situations. But even compromised by those track-ready spring rates, extreme tyres and weather that gets filthier by the moment, the GT-R is still a mighty thing across a give-and-take road. To give chase seems pointless. The Nismo is out of its comfort zone, certainly, but the SVJ is a Great White in a village pond.

Even with the GT-R still fresh in the memory banks, the Lamborghini feels outrageous. The ride is perhaps a sliver more refined, but such is the noise from the vast tyres and the total lack of sound deadening that it feels even harsher. Those torturous, terrible seats don't help and everything you touch is cold, bare and hard. To say it's not a friendly sort of character would be an understatement. I do rather fear that in seeking out lap records the Aventador has lost its warm sense of humour.

In contrast to the Nissan, the steering is heavy and pulsates with the road surface. However, it's not a pure system and, more so than in the GT-R, you can feel that the Lambo is four-wheel drive at all times. The steering seems to get almost bound-up by the torque transmitted through the front axle and it feels as if the assistance is battling to counter the effect. It's a curious sensation and creates a sense of heft and reluctance. It's funny, the square-edged GT-R had felt almost hyperactive and now the Lambo – the car that literally looks like a giant arrow with a great firework up its backside – offers a disparate blend of unyielding, brittle aggression and reluctance to zip into turns. The Nismo almost begs you to feel its agility whereas the Lambo hides it away.

To discover what lays beneath requires the opposite approach to the one demanded by the Nissan. Don't relax and let the car chart its course. Grab hold and bully it. The Pirellis cut through the standing water incisively so you can place the SVJ with pinpoint accuracy, while despite the adoption of rear-wheel steering this huge car behaves all-of-a-piece. It's never jumpy, it requires deliberate

inputs, but it doesn't take long for the cold handshake of the SVJ to turn into a big bearhug. Essentially, just as with the Nismo, the SVJ is on your side. You just have to talk its language.

The engine, of course, speaks all of the languages. For the SVJ the 6.5-litre V12 received a new intake system with revised runner lengths, titanium intake valves and a reworked cylinder head, plus a new exhaust system with less back pressure. The result is 759bhp at 8500rpm and 531lb ft at 6750rpm, enough to push the SVJ through the air at over 217mph and cover 0-62mph in 2.8 seconds and 0-124mph in 8.6. Like the Nismo it has been subject to a raft of tweaks and changes – stiffer anti-roll bars by 50 per cent over the SV, damper force increased by 15 per cent, 70 per cent more downforce and active aero with the ALA 2.0 system, and a recalibrated four-wheel-drive set-up that sends three per cent more torque to the rear wheels – while lightweighting brings the kerb weight down to 1525kg. Not bad when you consider that a new 911 Turbo is 1640kg (though that's a dry weight for the Lambo).

ALA switches off automatically in cold weather and so any chance of feeling 'aero vectoring' disappears. Let's not kid ourselves, there was no chance of this on the road anyway. However, who needs aero efficiency when you have a V12 that revs to 8500rpm and never runs out of breath? The engine, more than anything else, elevates the SVJ beyond merely being a car. Or even a supercar. You don't drive this thing, you experience it, swim around in its excesses and hope, just once, to find the opportunity to feel the car climb an entire gear and butt momentarily into its limiter before the seven-speed 'box fires home a shift... With light fading and water hanging in the air and pooling on the road surface it takes determination to use 6500rpm without lifting the throttle. The full 8500rpm is a tantalising dream that you keep on chasing.

The ISR 'box remains a frustration. It's improved and you can smooth things out with a well-timed lift, but to do so seems to melt the crispness of the shifts. Keep the throttle pinned and things go too far the other way, the engineered-in thump feeling crude and slightly stupid. It's such a shame that you only experience the true potential of the 'box at full throttle and very close to full revs. Here you can keep the throttle wide open and the upshift is phenomenally fast and perfectly judged. There's still plenty of theatre but it comes from precision and speed rather than being whacked over the head by a virtual sledgehammer of 'emotion'. Luckily, the scale of the performance on offer and the reach of, say, third or fourth gear is such that you can make stunning progress without relying too much on the gearbox.

Left, from top: GT-R Nismo's cabin isn't lacking in drama, but compared with the Aventador's carbonfibre-swathed cockpit, it looks and feels almost mainstream

Enough to start to zero-in on those four red circles dancing through the gloom? Not easily, but it can be done. The Nismo should get out of the corners so much better but the boost takes careful management in the wet and so the mighty V12 with all its linear power is a big advantage. The Lambo gains a few yards every time. Surprisingly it eats into the gap on the brakes, too. It just deals with the puddles with more composure, staying faithfully on line, which gives you the confidence to squeeze the brake pedal late and hard. The problem is that while the Nissan is a wilder ride as it skates across the surface, the Aventador doesn't shrink around you at all. Not on the straights, at least. Such is the relentless acceleration that the road

**'FLAWED, SOMETIMES
FRUSTRATING, THEY
NEVER FAIL TO RAISE
A SMILE, A SHOT OF
ADRENALINE, A SHARP
JOLT OF FEAR'**

Lamborghini Aventador SVJ

Engine V12, 6498cc

Power 759bhp @ 8500rpm Torque 531lb ft @ 6750rpm

Weight (dry) 1525kg Power-to-weight (dry) 506bhp/ton

0-62mph 2.8sec Top speed 218mph Basic price £360,000

evo rating ★★★★★



just seems to get more and more claustrophobic. The Nissan is no waif but with greater visibility and a more conventional driving position you feel better armed to deal with the unexpected. Again, it's not outright ability that counts here, but confidence.

The gap ebbs and flows. The Lambo feels more neutral and tends to push at the front before threatening to oversteer. The GT-R is edgier thanks to the explosive power delivery and greater front-end grip. I guess if you wanted to get from A to B as fast as possible you'd probably just about go for the Nismo. Or a 911 Turbo S, McLaren 720S, a Ferrari F8 Tributo, maybe even a Civic Type R when conditions are as challenging as they are today.

You see, despite being designed to travel as quickly as possible on road and track, neither GT-R Nismo nor Aventador SVJ feels

defined by those criteria. They transcend lap times. They make a nonsense of caring about 'point-to-point' speed. Maybe that's by accident but it's a very, very happy accident. By focusing so intently on ultimate performance you could very cogently argue that Lamborghini and Nissan have reduced the real-world abilities of GT-R and Aventador. In fact, I think that's indisputably true. However, by going to the extreme, they've allowed each car's character to grow and develop to such an extent that they become unforgettable. Flawed, sometimes frustrating, often completely inappropriate for our roads but at the same time completely and utterly absorbing. They never fail to raise a smile, a shot of adrenaline, a sharp jolt of fear. For that, I salute them. Here's to being a teenager forever. ✕

Nissan GT-R Nismo

Engine V6, 3799cc, twin-turbo

Power 592bhp @ 6800rpm Torque 481lb ft @ 3600-5800rpm

Weight 1703kg Power-to-weight 353bhp/ton

0-62mph 2.8sec Top speed 196mph Basic price £180,095

evo rating ★★★★★



B O L T F R O M





by ADAM TOWLER PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH

THE BLUE

Cyan Racing has reimaged the classic Volvo P1800 as a rabid, 414bhp road-racer - with a £450,000 price tag





THE SHUTTER CLATTERS SLOWLY UPWARD

on a nondescript industrial unit near Silverstone circuit to reveal a vast, near-empty expanse of shiny concrete floor and a small, shockingly blue car – of which I know little – sitting in the middle of it. I'd vaguely noted a press release that had arrived from Cyan Racing about its new P1800-based restomod, and thought then how tasty it looked, but it was a busy week, and when the subsequent email came through inviting us to drive it at short notice I thought it best to say 'yes' first and ask questions later.

To be honest, I'm not exactly a fount of knowledge when it comes to Volvo's P1800. It was already a classic when I was still in short trousers, and often seemed to be mentioned in the same breath as Roger Moore – who the young Towler simply knew as James Bond – because he'd driven one in a '60s crime caper that people occasionally mentioned in passing and that by then already seemed as though it hailed from a different planet, let alone decade. I do know that the standard P1800 is a sports car that trades on the lighter side of 'sport' but nevertheless has a huge following through its sense of style and individuality, and that one example also holds the record for the most miles driven by one car (over three million). It's not an overstatement to say that the P1800 is an icon of the Swedish motor industry, and one that generates a good deal of pride.

What I'm about to understand is that the P1800 in front of me really isn't like a P1800 at all, and that while that in itself makes it a fascinating project, executed with appreciable skill and expertise, it also makes a more profound statement about what the enthusiast cars of the future might be like, and how they might drive. As the world grows increasingly bored with £1million-plus, 300mph hypercars that often don't even get built, bespoke, low-volume restomods (or whatever you want to call them) that fuse some of the most evocative car styling of all time with genuine driver interaction and modern-era performance seem increasingly appealing if you've the means to indulge.

The Cyan P1800 was born out of necessity as much as anything else. Cyan Racing, you may be aware, was once known as Polestar, before the Polestar name was acquired by Volvo (Polestar had raced Volvos on behalf of Volvo for a long time, and with great success). Initially Polestar branding was applied to Volvo's road-going performance upgrades, but latterly the whole operation was acquired, parent company Geely then repurposing it as its all-electric brand. Do try and keep up at the back...

When the TCR rules came into force for the 2018 touring car season, the sport went from being a serious works team endeavour to a lowest-common-denominator engineering exercise with the focus on cost-cutting. Cyan had won the World Touring Car Championship with Volvo in 2017 (it won it in 2019 and 2020, too, with other manufacturers) but around 60 engineers, typically used to developing new

parts for every race, were suddenly sitting on their hands with little to do. Enter project P1800.

You wouldn't know at a glance, but what you're looking at actually shares very little with a P1800 and arguably much more with a top-flight touring car racer. Most of the classic original can be found in the centre section of the car, which in effect has become almost a 'tub', with spaceframe structures at the front and rear. The centre section has been vastly strengthened with triangular box-sections for the sills, while the floorpan and transmission tunnel are some of the few original components; just 50kg of metal is left over from the original car. Even more clever is that the body is made completely from carbonfibre and is bonded to the structure in such a way that it also takes some of the loads. How it's attached is fascinating. Mounting points are glued to the metal chassis, then the complete chassis is placed on a milling machine and these points are milled to precise dimensions to fit the carbon panels. The panels, shaped on the underside to fit these points, are then stuck on, with the touching surfaces also glued. Not only is the fit totally precise, but it also strengthens the body considerably.

The entire running gear of the car is bespoke, with double wishbones at the rear replacing the archaic live axle set-up, while a new rack-and-pinion steering design replaces the old steering box. There is no ABS, no ESP, no traction control or even a brake servo, but the brakes are massive AP Racing items and one concession to modernity is an electric power assistance system for the steering to take away the heft at parking speeds. Its effect decreases as the speed rises.

The powertrain is no less special, while retaining a pleasing family link with Volvo. You'd never guess from the photos, but that's the current VEA 2-litre modular four-cylinder engine as found in every modern Volvo, whether petrol- or diesel-powered. Now, you may feel, like me, a certain sinking sensation at this point; in my experience the VEA, vying with BMW's modular four-cylinder lump in this regard, is one of the most boring internal combustion engines known to man. Then again, on the positive side, Cyan was racing this engine long before it appeared in a road car: Cyan's Hans Baarth tells me that for the 2011 season the team raced with one of the first 25 blocks ever cast of what would become such an important engine for Volvo, further proof of the close cooperation between the two companies then and now.

Naturally, this isn't an XC90-spec VEA born to shuffle gently from private school to stable yard. For a start, Cyan has done everything it can to make it blend aesthetically in the 1800's engine bay, even hiding the turbo down low out of sight. So redolent of the '60s does its cam cover look that I'm told even the VEA's original designer didn't recognise his own engine when shown it in the car. The other significantly good news is that it's producing a walloping 414bhp and 336lb ft in this guise, more than enough grunt when you also consider that one result of all the careful engineering is that the Cyan P1800 weighs less than a ton. Cyan has built these engines with over 500bhp, but in this state of tune has concentrated on calibrating it with as



**'IT SHARES
MORE WITH A
TOP-FLIGHT
TOURING
CAR RACER'**





authentic a power and torque delivery as it can, in keeping with the retro vibe.

The engine is hooked up to a Holinger five-speed manual transmission with a dog-leg first gear, the thought of which gets me almost as excited as the headline power figure, and is then deployed through a Wavetrac Torsen-type LSD. Those stunning wheels are shod with Mercedes-spec Pirellis, Cyan having found the 'Porsche' ones to be too grippy, then too sudden in their breakaway. Incidentally, you don't have to have the blown wheelarch extensions; you could keep it narrow, fit a chrome luggage rack and still go for 414bhp. You can have absolutely anything you want, if you're paying the bill...

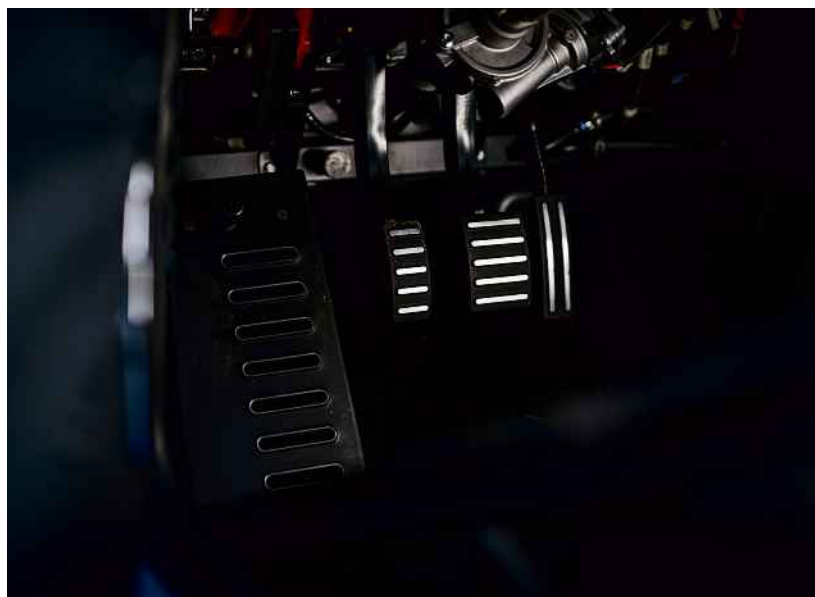
I thread myself rather inelegantly down into the 1800 and take in the view: a gorgeous ensemble of cosy sportiness and evocative details, perfectly encapsulated by the contents of the instrument binnacle. Even with my lack of Swedish, *olja* and *vatter* temperature gauges seem obvious, and the way traditional features and modern equipment such as the titanium half-roll-cage have been integrated really gets you in the mood for driving.

The same can be said once the car comes to life. Cyan is deep into a test and development programme, and Hans stresses that drivetrain refinement is something the team are still working on. It's obvious what he's referring to from the first few yards of travel by the way the transmission makes some pretty industrial noises, but part of me loves the raucous turbo whistle and touring car-esque gear whine. It's most definitely not boring.


I am also rapidly getting a handle on what Hans meant by careful engine calibration. Shift up at 5000rpm and it's a seriously quick car, but let the engine continue to rev out and it keeps building power so that by 7000rpm the little Volvo is absolutely flying. It feels brutally, intimidatingly fast, believe me, in a wild and utterly fabulous way, and, of course, being devoid of any nannying shackles intensifies the whole experience. In very quick order my concentration levels have shot through the carbonfibre roof: the weather is foul today in the Peak District and I'm well aware that it's just my hands and feet that will keep this P1800 on the streaming wet road – or see it careering off down a grassy hillside that will inevitably end with a sickening crunch of very expensive carbonfibre.

That, though, is the essence of the thrill of driving. Here's a light, very powerful car that requires driver input at all times – it's an unambiguous proposition. In return it offers, for example, a gearshift as precise and mechanical in feel as any I have ever experienced. Its operation reminds me of the 'rocket' 'box I once tried in a friend's beautifully restored Ford Escort Mexico, and there's no restriction on how fast you can slice through the gate to the next gear. Currently the bushing is metal-on-metal below the gaiter, and on the overrun the wand-like lever rattles like loose change in the bottom of a tin can, although even

Right: Cyan's background is in modern touring cars, and it shows, though delightful period touches also abound; modern Volvo 'VEA' four has been given a convincing '60s makeover (with the turbo tucked well out of sight) and comprehensively reworked to produce a walloping 414bhp and 336lb ft: more than enough in a car weighing just 990kg





A blue sports car is driving away on a winding asphalt road that curves through a hilly, grassy landscape. The road has white dashed and solid lines. In the background, there are rolling hills, a utility tower, and a dark, overcast sky. The overall mood is dramatic and scenic.

**'IT'S ALMOST
A BONUS TO
DISCOVER IT'S
TREMENDOUS
FUN TO DRIVE'**

that's drowned out by a curious and deafening hum at certain frequencies that seems to be coming from the gearbox area. As the man said, it's work in progress.

Another major plus is the chassis set-up. As it stands, it's remarkably impressive, particularly in the way it rides bumps and manages to put the exertions of that frothy-mouthed rabid animal of a turbo four-pot down to the road's surface. The car is supremely agile, but there's enough body roll to get an intrinsic feel for the grip on offer, and even on really badly maintained B-roads it never feels clumsy or as if it's working beyond the limits of its suspension. That's a surprise, frankly, because for some reason I thought it might be all grip and no finesse, but not so at all.

What still needs a little work is the electric power steering, adopted because the low-speed effort required of the unassisted set-up was thought to be a little too strenuous with the wide rubber fitted to this car. I've no issue with the steering now being on the light side, but rather that there's a moment's pause before the assistance seems to have an effect. Get beyond that slightly unnerving dead zone and the car's

nose turns very quickly, with little weight once you've got beyond that initial point, but more linearity would definitely breed more confidence, particularly in slippery conditions. Imagine the steering plot on a graph and the line would be a gentle slope for a surprisingly long time and then suddenly kick upwards. We're told this current set-up is 'out of the box', and that fine tuning will now commence; if that's successful, the dynamics will be very impressive indeed.

There are so many delightful details to be found all over the Cyan P1800 that it feels almost like a bonus to discover that it's actually tremendous fun to drive as well. Then again, at £375,000-ish before taxes, you'd hope it would be. Undeniably, that's a very large sum of money, but given the completely bespoke nature of every P1800 that Cyan will build (around ten a year is the plan), its ability to swivel heads like few other cars I can remember, and the sheer enjoyment and challenge of driving the thing, it suddenly doesn't seem like an outrageous ask at all. If you're in the market for a similarly priced supercar, ask yourself which one you would prefer. I think I know my answer.



—

**'ONCE SET
UP, IT WILL
SLIDE IN
A REALLY
SATISFYING
MANNER'**



AT THE TRACK

ASTON MARTIN'S SILVERSTONE STOWE

Circuit would be referred to as 'Mickey Mouse' by any self-respecting FF1600 entrant from the formula's heyday, let alone an F1 driver, but no way am I going to complain about Gaydon's generosity at letting **evo** sneak a turbocharged Swede onto its test and development circuit for a few precious laps. It wasn't that long ago that I was standing on top of the Aston Martin offices watching rallycross (or whatever it's called these days) in the circuit's previous role, and that's also exactly what comes to mind when I exit the penultimate corner in second gear. There's a sudden towering wave of boost, the tail squats, the nose goes light and almost paws the air, and the power that's so addictive just keeps building and building, immediately bringing to mind those extreme competition machines with their massive turbocharged power outputs and relatively soft suspensions. The Cyan's acceleration is deeply naughty, in a delightfully unhinged way.

There's a wintry sun in the Northamptonshire sky today but the track's surface is cold and damp in places, and it's here again that you notice the 1800's slightly odd responses to steering inputs. That fractional delay in response and assistance build-up just takes the ultimate shine off a drive that's otherwise completely immersive and ridiculously good fun. As with most things, you adapt with time, and in all other respects you feel really at one with the car, from the embrace of the fixed-back bucket seat to the lovely Momo Prototipo wheel, which is a thing of beauty in itself.

The AP Racing brakes really come into their own, the sturdy pedal feel providing a perfect pivot point for heel-and-toe work, and while you're always conscious somewhere deep in the recesses of the brain that there's no ABS to get you out of trouble if you're too aggressive with them, the feedback you get through the pedal means triggering a lock-up is unlikely.

It doesn't take much effort to get the tail scribing a wider arc if you hold the brakes on into a corner – in fact it's easy to overprovoke the P1800, and it responds better to a lighter touch, which initially feels a bit at odds with the whooshing, screaming engine and brutal accompaniment from the drivetrain, but once you've got it set up it'll slide in a really satisfying manner. Just occasionally does the Torsen-style diff send confusing messages as to its intentions: sometimes it seems to be all about the traction, sometimes it's very willing to let the rear of the car swing out, and at others – probably exaggerated by the constantly changing conditions below the tread-blocks – it doesn't seem to quite know what to do. A traditional plated LSD might be a bit more predictable in extremis, although it's rarely a factor on the road. Cyan says this demonstrator has been set up mainly for road use with the occasional track foray, but with more of a focus on circuit work it would be an unlikely looking but very effective trackday car.

However, most of all it's the power that lodges firmly in the mind, accompanied by the whine of the 'box, all so totally at odds with the polite little 1960s sports coupe image, yet somehow all the more ferocious because of that giant-killer combination. The Stowe Circuit's short straights are shrunk to little more than moments to catch a breath, and the bark from the chunky single tailpipe echoes off glistening Armco and patriotically painted tyre-walls, warming the spirits of anyone within earshot. ☒

Volvo P1800 Cyan

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1969cc, turbo

Power 414bhp @ 7000rpm Torque 336lb ft @ 6000rpm

Weight 990kg Power-to-weight 425bhp/ton 0-62mph sub-5.0sec (est)

Top speed 170mph+ (est) Basic price c£450,000

evo rating ★★★★★



by RICHARD MEADEN PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

GANG OF FOURS

Subaru's Impreza 22B and Audi's Sport Quattro are rally-inspired, four-wheel-drive legends. Could Toyota's GR Yaris match them for charisma and ability? We find out





GY70 GMZ

GR



THE EVE OF A BIG TEST IS NEVER conducive to a sound night's sleep. Predictably I'm awake just before my alarm goes off, bleary eyes peering at the bedside clock's bright digits. The time? 05:55. Three hours north of my cosy bed, one of the UK's very few Subaru Impreza

22Bs not hidden away in a dehumidified vault awaits my arrival. Even at this ungodly hour the serendipity is clear, '555' being the tobacco sponsor propelled to global prominence during Subaru's all-conquering efforts in the World Rally Championship. An auspicious portent of an epic few days to come? I reckon so.

Also inbound for our North Yorkshire rendezvous is a lorry containing Audi UK's 1986 Sport Quattro. And last but by no means least, *evo* deputy editor Adam Towler is heading to the same spot in a Toyota GR Yaris, thereby completing our trio of celebrated rally specials brought together for this unique comparison test.

So much has been written about the Sport Quattro over the decades it's almost impossible not to catch yourself thinking in clichés. Thankfully it continues to inspire fresh awe and curiosity. Never more so than when it's being unloaded from a truck and the keys are handed to you. If you grew up revering Group B rally cars and viewing their road-going counterparts as mythical beasts of the road, it's a real pinch-yourself moment.

For the best part of 40 years this abruptly abbreviated Audi has stood as the epitome of Group B; a sawn-off shotgun of a car, designed and built with the sole intent of stealing the World Rally Championship. Unlike its purpose-built mid-engined rivals, the short-wheelbase Quattro was far from a clean-sheet design. Audi's commitment to maintaining a clear connection between this highly evolved rally weapon and regular showroom stock might have been a marketing masterstroke, but whatever they lopped from the wheelbase couldn't compensate for the front-engined Quattro's nose-heavy balance.

Conversely, while the short-wheelbase Quattro may have struggled to keep pace with the Peugeots and Lancias on the rally stages, the road cars built and sold to facilitate its homologation were by far the most complete and fully developed of all the Group B contemporaries. This much is obvious from the quality of fit and finish and the luxurious levels of interior trim. Then again, when you consider its price wasn't so far from that of Ferrari's 288 GTO when new, you'll appreciate Audi's need to build a 'proper' road car.

It's hard not to feel star-struck in the Quattro's presence. Shocked, too, at just how brutal the reduction in wheelbase is. Audi chopped just over a foot from the



middle of the car, more in an attempt to help it rotate into corners than to save weight. Mass was shaved with carbon-Kevlar body panels, although, as we know, the road version was far from stripped-out.

Lift the bonnet and you'll see that the motor sits forward in the engine bay, pulleys and a cylinder or two sitting on or beyond the front axle centre line. Kevlar shrouds with their exposed yellow and black weave hint at the Sport Quattro's motorsport pedigree, as do the 2.1-litre in-line five-cylinder's outputs of 306bhp and 258lb ft – numbers that were on a par with the Porsche's 911 Turbo of the day.

Once behind the large steering wheel, you're treated to a view of large and clearly marked analogue dials, heavily grained plastics and chunky switchgear. Switchable ABS and a control for the four-wheel-drive system's centre differential

are curiosities, as is the sight in the rear-view mirror, which reveals a rear windscreen that's considerably closer than you would expect it to be!

Twist the ignition key and the starter motor chunters momentarily before the engine comes to life with a brief flare of revs and then settles into a resonant idle. The pedals are slightly offset to the centre of the car, but are spaced okay for heel-and-toe work. The brake pedal is firm, the clutch pedal heavy by modern standards. This particular car's five-speed H-pattern gearbox is a little bit tired if I'm honest, with a lack of spring-bias to the gate and a somewhat discombobulated looseness to the way the lever slots between gears. No matter, as it's nothing that can't be minimised with a little patience and mechanical sympathy.

Encouragingly, once you build speed you feel the Quattro



**'IT'S HARD NOT TO FEEL
STAR-STRUCK IN THE
QUATTRO'S PRESENCE'**





begin to get underneath you, suspension settling nicely and steering feel increasing with load. With faster and more meaningful miles you build a picture of a car with two distinct modes. The first is the major league performance car from the same mould as the Porsche 930 Turbo, with long-striding gears, plenty of torque and an uncanny ability to generate speed and carry it across country with little apparent effort. Then you have the lunatic mode. The one that sees a switch from mellow to maniacal. I'd stop short of saying it's agricultural, but there's real brutality to the way it delivers its full straight-line and cornering performance. There are two reasons for this: the turbo lag and the four-wheel-drive transmission, both of which require a particular kind of commitment to fully uncork the Sport Quattro.

Below 4000rpm the engine is having a bit of a nap, but from 4500 to 7000rpm it really does rev like the clappers once the boost arrives. You're certainly glad each gear has plenty of reach as it would otherwise be hard to keep from bouncing off the rev-limiter. The warbling soundtrack is a little less musical than memory serves, with a harder, harsher edge when you work it hard, but it's still richly characterful and a true echo from rallying's past.

On the wide open expanse of the North York Moors the short Quattro feels mighty. There's so much traction and lateral grip it romps across the terrain, sure-footed, impervious to the conditions and brimming with confidence-inspiring poise as it shoulders its way through the curves and bludgeons down the straights.

Attacking a corner crystallises all that's good and bad about the car. Plentiful grip and monster traction belie the small 15in rims and modest rubber, but the nose-heavy balance, prolific turbo lag and relatively primitive four-wheel drive present a unique set of challenges. Take a conventional approach and you place most of the workload on the front axle, which is fine until the boost arrives, at which point the Quattro pulls itself wide of your chosen line. The knack is to get the weight transferred to the rear with an early, sharp lift of the throttle as you turn in, then get back on the power as quickly as you dare.

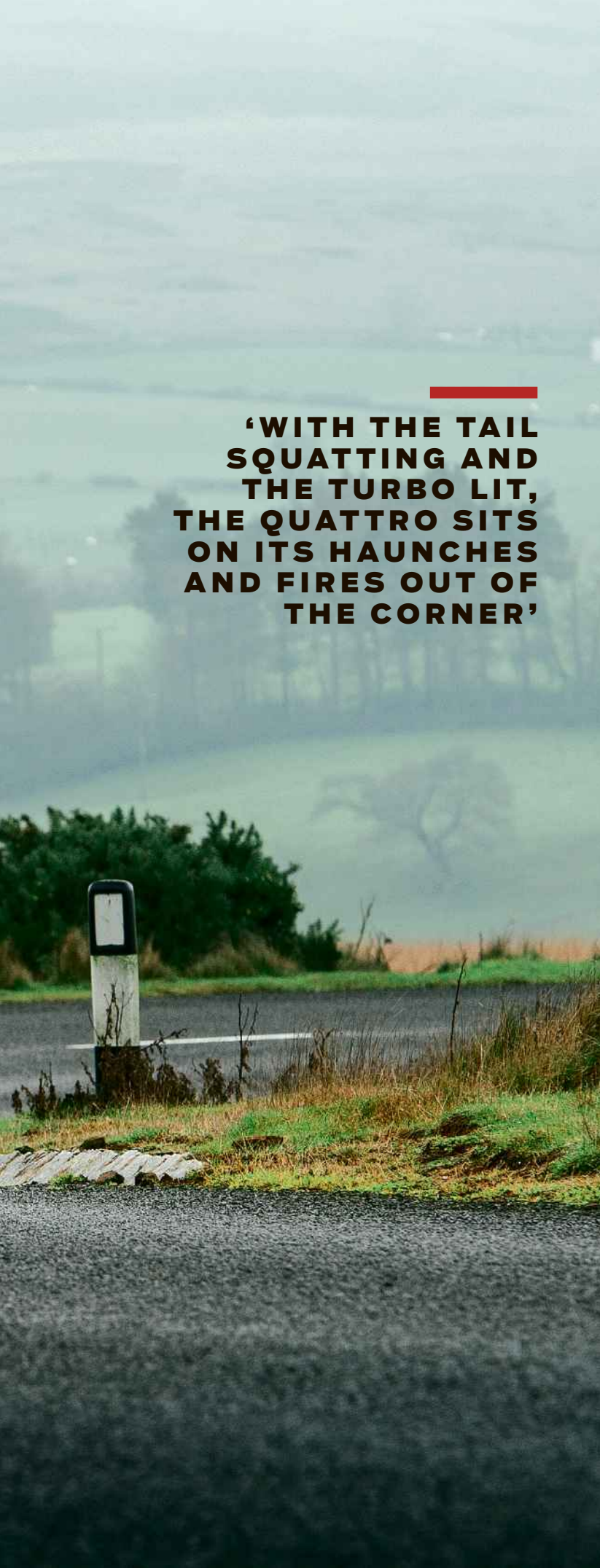
With the tail squatting and the turbo lit, the Quattro sits on its haunches and fires out of the corner, rear wheels digging into the road, front wheels pulling just enough to keep things tidy, and with a satisfying smidge of opposite lock. Few cars tackle a corner with more ruthless efficiency or greater effectiveness. If it feels hugely impressive now – and it does! – it must have felt mind-blowing 36 years ago. Now, as then, the legend is well deserved.

Amongst the plethora of Subaru Impreza derivatives one stands supreme. The 22B. Strictly speaking, and rather ironically, it's not a homologation special. Rather it was built to celebrate Subaru's 1997 World Rally Championship title, which was won by the beautiful, Peter Stevens-designed Impreza WRC, the first Impreza to embark on

Left and above: Sport Quattro has lost none of the charisma that made it an icon of the Group B era; GR Yaris has similar pace – and its own rich character



B511 AHM



**‘WITH THE TAIL
SQUATTING AND
THE TURBO LIT,
THE QUATTRO SITS
ON ITS HAUNCHES
AND FIRES OUT OF
THE CORNER’**

rallying’s journey beyond the Group A era in which both Subaru and Mitsubishi forged their formidable reputations.

All credit to Subaru that the 22B was taken just as seriously as any homologation special. In fact it could be argued it went further, such was the bespoke nature of the car. As its name suggests, a special engine – the 2.2-litre EJ22 – complete with unique forged pistons was developed for the car. Due to Japanese market restrictions of the day, power was officially put at 276bhp, but few doubt it was actually developing more than 300bhp.

Short gearing maximised the in-gear performance, while the all-wheel-drive system featured a driver-adjustable centre differential. Indeed, up and down the specification there are uprated motorsport components, including a twin-plate clutch, forged aluminium and rose-jointed suspension, bigger brakes, gorgeous gold BBS alloys, inverted Bilstein dampers (hence the ‘B’ in 22B), special Eibach springs and a seam-welded bodyshell.

STI limited production to just 399 cars for the Japanese market, with a further 25 or so for overseas territories. It may not have been built to homologate the 1997 Impreza WRC, but the 22B’s blend of pedigree and purpose guaranteed it immediate cult status.

Even so, it might come as something of a shock to discover how values have skyrocketed. There was a time not so long ago when £30k would buy you a 22B. These days you’ll need at least five times that to get a decent one, and six or seven times that to get an immaculate car with modest miles. Freakish delivery-miles cars go for considerably more.

Armed with that information, and given how few 22Bs are in the UK, you can perhaps imagine that finding one for this test was something of a challenge. Especially given the time of year and the need to not only photograph the car but drive it as Subaru Technica International intended. I’d begun to abandon all hope when my old mate Richard Tipper of Perfection Detailing came up trumps, putting me in touch with Richard Groves, a client of his who had recently acquired a pristine, 5000-mile 22B. An *evo* reader since issue 001 (which, incidentally, featured the first UK test of a 22B), Groves committed his car without hesitation, his only proviso being we drive it ‘properly’. What a legend.

Like the Audi, the Impreza has been transported to North Yorkshire. No point in accruing unnecessary ‘dead’ miles on the motorway. Besides, it means we’re treated to another unloading ceremony, which never fails to raise the sense of occasion and anticipation. It looks absolutely perfect, like all your Prodrive/555 blue ‘n’ gold fantasies made real. The wide arches are absolute perfection, the larger diameter WRC rims a forgivable deviation from the standard BBS rims, which are tucked away in Groves’ garage, still shod with their original tyres.

The driver's door swings light on its hinges, the frameless windows a classic Impreza signature. The simply styled interior is as new, the plastics unmarked, sculpted seats ultra-comfortable, Nardi steering wheel perfect to hold. The soft green backlighting to the instruments takes me back to memories of many happy miles in Imprezas over the years, as does the bonnet scoop poking into view. It's good to be back.

There's always been a friendly warmth of character to the Subaru flat-four engine's soft *dugga-dugga-dugga* note at tickover. The 22B is typical in this regard, though its EJ22 motor responds particularly keenly to a blip of the throttle, suggesting an unusual freeness and appetite for revs. It's a feeling that's amplified by the shorter gearing, which increases the sense of energy and urgency, even when stroking along on modest throttle openings.

It quickly becomes clear that the 22B has a unique character. One rooted in the familiarity and rightness of fast Imprezas, but a step above and beyond the RB5 or P1. It's more vibrant and explosive, and there's even a little bit of GT-R-like recalcitrance and lack of refinement in some of what it does. The twin-plate clutch is juddery at low speed, and you can feel the diffs winding themselves up a little bit when shunting around with lock applied at walking pace.

Imprezas were never the last word in front-end feel and this remains the case with the 22B. Cold, wet conditions certainly don't help, but there's a slightly glassy sensation to pointing it into fast, sweeping curves that leaves you guessing for that millisecond or two between committing to the corner, easing some lock into the steering and knowing the car is going to stick.

Past experience tells me it's simply a case of believing.



The grip is there, you just don't get a sense of there being much to lean against until the front end has some lateral loading. Get your head around this and the 22B is a formidable partner, carving its way across the sodden moorland roads with a lightness of touch that's in stark contrast to the Audi's heft.

This lightness pervades the whole car. It weighs 1270kg but feels as though it's 200kg less, such is its ability to change direction and the way it copes with crests and compressions. The clutch is sharp, while the gearshift has a tight gate and a positive but slightly brittle feeling as each gear engages that means you're measured and precise when guiding the lever. The brakes bite strongly and require only modest pedal pressure. There's a cohesion to what it does that suggests it was considered and honed rather than uprated without thought to how each component works with the other.

As a result there's an athleticism in the 22B that's hard to restrain and impossible to resist. Find some tighter corners and you have the opportunity to be more aggressive with your inputs, braking hard and late, working straight through the glassy phase and finding plenty of front-end purchase. There's an inherent neutrality to the Impreza that's the key to its point-to-point speed, its limit marked by a gradual push of understeer rather than anything spiteful. However, where the 22B raises its game is in its ability to be provoked into lift-off oversteer, which can then be balanced and sustained on the throttle.


It takes some effort to get the tail moving, but once it's in motion the throttle response and perfectly judged steering ratio mean you can slide it smoothly, applying just the right amount of lock and then – perhaps more importantly – straighten things up again equally smoothly. It's a joy to



‘WHAT’S WONDERFUL ABOUT ALL THESE CARS IS THEIR SENSE OF PURITY AND PURPOSE. THE YARIS IS A PROPER LITTLE WEAPON AND NO MISTAKE’



VI47 JGS



exploit and a great demonstration of the 22B's wider and more expressive dynamic repertoire.

And so to the GR Yaris. In the short time since its introduction, this headline-grabbing Toyota has become a sensation. Rightly so, at least so far as people like us are concerned, for it's the first true homologation special in a generation. Having created such a buzz, the risk of overpromising and underdelivering was high, yet our first proper UK drive in last month's eCoty confirmed it as a hugely desirable and readily affordable car with abundant talent and a distinctive character.

Shining against its 2020 peers is one thing, but seeing how this little bombshell stacks up against two of the most iconic rally specials of the past is a very different test. Judged purely on car park presence you'd have to say that while it lacks the brutality of the Audi and the knee-knocking looks and McRae magic of the 22B, the GR Yaris does possess something of their aura.

Pumped arches, hungry intakes, squat stance, fat tyres and big brakes. They all add up to a car that expresses its intent without resorting to weird proportions or wild wings, though the rakish roofline and exposed carbon roof are decidedly un-Yaris. Ultimately what's wonderful about all three of these cars is their sense of purity and purpose. The Yaris is a proper little weapon and no mistake.

Another quality the Yaris shares with its spiritual forebears is an unusual and characterful powertrain, its gutsy turbocharged triple deviating from the norm just as Subaru's forced induction flat-four and Audi's in-line five-cylinder turbo did in their day. It's potent, too, despite its apparent lack of cylinders and cubic capacity, with 257bhp and 265lb ft comparing well against the 22B's official 276bhp/268lb ft and the Sport Quattro's 306bhp/258lb ft. It carries very similar weight, too, at 1280kg.

Some people criticise it for not having the exaggerated agility of a Mitsubishi Evo, but personally I don't mind that so much because there's a calmness in the steering and handling balance that gives you confidence to commit. Ultimately it's down to you to put the energy in the car. If you want it to rotate quickly, you steer it aggressively and use weight transfer to try and bring the tail into play. You can enhance this effect by switching to Sport mode (in this, a Circuit Pack car), which delivers a 30:70 front-to-rear torque split and has a tangible effect on the way you can power the Yaris through a corner. I hear the argument regarding wanting Evo-like yaw, but I'm not sure I would trade the way the Yaris finds grip and traction for overly exaggerated dynamic instability. As it stands, in difficult conditions or on an unfamiliar road you always know the GR Yaris is underneath you.

Character-wise, the engine has a really enjoyable mix of low and mid-range torque with a pleasing appetite for top-end revs – not something triples are noted for. The sound is piped into the car and does lack something in the way of





organic musicality. You feel the car's working harder, but it doesn't build to a crescendo the way the Sport Quattro and 22B do. However, the gear ratios are great, as is the gearshift, which has a precise, weighty, connected feel. Likewise the steering weight and rate of response is pretty much spot-on, so you know exactly where you are with it within the first mile.

Another real highlight is the brakes, which have terrific power and brilliant pedal feel. You can just squeeze into the pedal and have great confidence in what the car's doing. The damping is equally sweet: firm but nicely rounded, so it copes with imperfections that would jar in a car that's too sharply damped or sprung. The Yaris has this compact, four-square feel on the road that exudes confidence and encourages you to drive it quickly, yet it's also very happy to settle at steady speeds.

What you're left with is a sense that there's real maturity to the Yaris. Toyota has thought about it, not just thrown a load of performance parts at the car, cranked a load of support into the chassis and not really worried about its refinement or its ability to cope on a difficult road in tricky conditions. And difficult roads and tricky conditions are what these cars have always been about.

Somewhat unexpectedly, you could argue that of the three the Yaris is the most focused, for it was conceived solely with rally success in mind. The Sport Quattro was an extreme evolution of an already revolutionary rally car, but the Ur-Quattro went rallying as a marketing exercise to prove the advantages of its all-wheel-drive transmission in all weathers and on all surfaces. Group B took this to extremes, but in truth by then not only had Audi's point long since been proved, but its first mover advantage

Audi Sport Quattro

Engine In-line 5-cyl, 2133cc, turbo **Power** 306bhp @ 6700rpm **Torque** 258lb ft @ 3700rpm
Weight 1298kg **Power-to-weight** 239bhp/ton
0-60mph 4.9sec **Top speed** 155mph
Price today £450,000-500,000
evo rating ★★★★★



had actually become an impediment against what were effectively prototype Lancias and Peugeots.

Meanwhile the Impreza Turbo was a high performance series production variant of a rather ordinary family saloon. The genius of Group A's regulations, plus Prodrive's expertise, 555's cash and a roster of great drivers, saw them blossom into world-beating rally cars. Nevertheless these were cars that were made into winners rather than being born to the task.

With three such different cars from such radically different eras it's hard (some might say foolish) to attempt to bestow some kind of pecking order. What I can say is that the Audi is the greatest event to be in and around, the 22B is the most exciting and, for me at least, the one I connect with on the deepest level. And the GR Yaris? Well, it's easily the most exploitable, the most connected, the most complete

and genuinely characterful, even in this company. That it's also the quickest across the ground – especially in dicey conditions – feels like it should be a surprise, but is actually inevitable given decades of advancements in tyre, chassis, engine and brake technology.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about this whole test is that not only have we felt compelled to compare a £35,000 Yaris with an iconic Impreza that now commands £150-200k and an illustrious Audi that's now pushing £500k, but it goes toe-to-toe with both convincingly. On its own terms and in memorable style. If that's not something to celebrate, I don't know what is. ❌

Many thanks to Richard Groves for the use of his Impreza 22B. If you'd like to see more of this car, take a look at Richard's new YouTube channel 'Challenge The Road'

Subaru Impreza 22B

Engine Flat-four, 2212cc, turbo **Power** 276bhp @ 6000rpm **Torque** 268lb ft @ 3200rpm
Weight 1270kg **Power-to-weight** 220bhp/ton
0-60mph 5.3sec **Top speed** 150mph
Price today £150,000-200,000
evo rating ★★★★★

Toyota GR Yaris

Engine In-line 3-cyl, 1618cc, turbo **Power** 257bhp @ 6500rpm **Torque** 265lb ft @ 3000-4600rpm
Weight 1280kg **Power-to-weight** 204bhp/ton
0-62mph 5.5sec **Top speed** 142mph (limited)
Basic price £29,995
evo rating ★★★★★



**'WHEN AUDI ASKED
IF THE RULES
COULD BE AMENDED
TO INCLUDE FOUR-
WHEEL DRIVE,
NO ONE MINDED'**



 by ADAM TOWLER

TRACTION HEROES

The road-going Sport Quattro owes it all to Audi's AWD rallying giants

AUDI'S QUATTRO REALLY WAS A paradigm shift in rallying. Before its arrival, physics decreed that rally cars could only harness a certain level of power before more became pointless on loose surfaces; with four-wheel drive, however, there was virtually no limit. But so unlikely did its advantage seem that when Audi quietly asked if the rules could be amended to accept four-wheel drive, no one minded. After all, wasn't Audi working on some little military vehicle that featured it?

The Quattro made its WRC debut in the Group 4 class at the 1981 Monte Carlo rally. Proving a technologically advanced car in such tough conditions was the ideal way to establish the relatively new Audi brand as a premium marque, and the budget reflected this. Audi signed superstar driver Hannu Mikkola, partnered by Michèle Mouton in a second car.

That first season was one of extremes: when the Quattros worked, their superiority over two-wheel-drive opposition – such as Mk2 Escorts and Talbot Sunbeams – on gravel was verging on the absurd, but there were many retirements too as Audi Sport grappled with new technology. By 1982 the team was on a roll, Mouton taking three wins and just narrowly missing out on the championship to Opel's Walter Röhrl, with Mikkola in third, although Audi did clinch the manufacturers' title.

New Group B regulations arrived in '83, and the Quattro needed to be re-homologated to retain its eligibility. Henceforth, the car was known as the A1 Quattro (the 'A' standing for aluminium cylinder block), although this model was short lived, as Audi used the evolution rules to unveil the A2 in May the same year. The A2 had a marginally smaller engine, with capacity down from 2144cc to 2109cc, allowing it to duck out of the 'over 3-litre' class once the 1.4 equivalency factor for turbocharged engines had been applied. This made the A2 eligible for a lower permissible minimum weight of 960kg rather than 1100kg, and while Audi never got the car below a ton, every bit helped.

That's because Audi was locked in a fierce battle with Lancia for the 1983 championship, and the Italians' featherweight, rear-drive 037 was exposing inherent weaknesses in the Quattro's package. For a start, the in-line five was mounted longitudinally well in advance of the front axle, with strong understeer the predominant handling characteristic. It was also a big car, ungainly on tight, twisting

stages, and all that technology made it very heavy alongside something like an 037, while its reliability – particularly the engine and ancillaries – was also still in doubt. In a classic season, Hannu Mikkola just seized the drivers' crown, but Lancia pipped Audi to the manufacturers' title.

By 1984, Audi had the A2 well honed, the car producing up to 400bhp, and items such as Kevlar doors helping to reduce weight. Walter Röhrl joined the team from Lancia, but it was Stig Blomqvist who became drivers' champion, with Audi also seizing the manufacturers' crown. Even so, it was obvious the Quattro's days at the top were numbered: Group B gave manufacturers the chance to create bespoke, mid-engined rally cars that the relatively conventional Quattro was never going to be able to equal, yet Audi's suits insisted on a continuing link to the firm's production model.

The rally team's response was the Sport Quattro, which had 32cm chopped from the wheelbase and was 24cm shorter overall. The engine was still mounted far forwards and the new car's handling looked wild, as did its performance: a new 20v cylinder head meant power was listed at 450bhp but probably soon exceeded that figure. The Sport Quattro first appeared at 1984's Tour de Corse and suffered a disastrous debut with an overheating engine. The same round also saw the arrival of Peugeot's 205 T16, the car that would win the drivers' and manufacturers' championships in Group B's final two years, 1985 and 1986.

In July '85 Audi homologated the Evolution 2 (pictured), with its snowplough front end and roof-high rear wing. While the aerodynamic gains were appreciable, the key element was moving all the radiators to the boot, thereby improving the weight distribution. Röhrl scored a victory in San Remo, and Audi began experimenting with different differentials, as well as adopting the twin-clutch PDK gearbox pioneered by Porsche on its Group C cars. Power was now well on the way to 600bhp, and probably an awful lot more.

But the Quattro never won another Group B rally, Audi abruptly pulling out of the sport after the fatalities at Corsica in 1986. Meanwhile spy photos that appeared of a mid-engined Quattro, worked on in secret much to the later disapproval of the Volkswagen board (see DOA, **evo** 277), gave a tantalising glimpse of one of motorsport's great 'what might have beens'.

by ADAM TOWLER

BLUE BROTHERS

The 22B's rallying relatives that created the Impreza legend

SUBARU'S INVOLVEMENT IN RALLYING

began in the 1980s with 4WD variants of the quirky Leone, but it wasn't until 1990, when the firm debuted the Group A version of the Legacy RS, that a credible challenge on the world stage seemed possible. The step change was twofold: not only did the Legacy feature the larger, more powerful, 2-litre turbocharged DOHC 'EJ' engine, but the rally car was also designed and developed in Britain, not Japan, by Banbury-based Prodrive. It was a partnership that in time was to write a significant page in the annals of motorsport history.

The car's pace was obvious from the off, and Prodrive employed two rallying greats in Markku Alén and Ari Vatanen to drive it, but reliability from the STI-prepared engine was lacking. Meanwhile, Colin McRae's Prodrive-run Legacy RS dominated the 1991 British Championship with a Prodrive-built engine, and the point was obvious: soon, Prodrive would take complete control of the works effort.

The Scot progressed to making appearances for the WRC squad in 1992, while securing a second British title, and then moved up to the works team full time in 1993 alongside Vatanen. It was McRae who finally delivered that crucial first win at the 1993 Rally of New Zealand, while Prodrive also secured another British Championship, this time with a young English driver by the name of Richard Burns...

The new Impreza, homologated for Group A as the Impreza 555 after the team's sponsor, effectively took the running gear of the Legacy RS and placed it in a smaller shell with a shorter wheelbase. It would be a more demanding car to drive, but a faster one all the same. Vatanen nearly won on the car's debut in the '93 1000 Lakes Rally, and by 1994 both car and team were a formidable force at the top of the WRC.

McRae was now partnered by Carlos Sainz, and the Impreza was steadily crafted into arguably the ultimate Group A car. While Sainz couldn't prevent Toyota's Didier Auriol from pipping him to the 1994 championship (McRae was fourth), in 1995 it was finally Subaru's year.

Prodrive was at the forefront of developing 'active' (electronically controlled) differentials, and the Impreza 555 was effective on any surface, for any rally. In a classic season, it came down to Sainz versus McRae, with the Scot triumphing on home soil in the RAC rally.

McRae couldn't repeat the feat in '96 thanks in part to the emerging threat of Tommi Mäkinen

and the Mitsubishi Evo, and then change came for 1997 and the introduction of the World Rally Car rule set, finally breaking the homologation link with road cars and meaning now just the basic shell had to be homologated.

Subaru was an early adopter of the new rules with the Impreza WRC. Styled by Peter Stevens, it used the two-door JDM Impreza as its basis and ran an evolved EJ20 engine that was no longer restricted by links to a road car. These 'World Car' Imprezas (known as S3, S4 and S5) enjoyed varying fortunes over the next three seasons. They were fast, but reliability issues, particularly with the engine, prevented McRae from securing any more titles. Disgruntled, he left at the end of '98 to join Ford, and for 1999 Richard Burns joined Subaru's WRC team alongside Juha Kankkunen. The year got off to a slow start, but by the season's close the Subarus were right back in contention.

The final year of the classic Impreza shape was 2000, and the Impreza WRC2000 (pictured) may have looked virtually identical but in reality was a completely new car beneath the skin, being lighter and with a lower centre of gravity – achieved at great expense. Burns narrowly lost out to Marcus Grönholm and Peugeot for the 2000 title, but the guts of the WRC2000 were put into a four-door Impreza 'Bugeye' for the WRC2001 (S7), and the Englishman clinched his first and sadly only WRC crown at the final 2001 round in Britain.

With Burns moving to Peugeot, for 2002 Subaru fielded Tommi Mäkinen and Petter Solberg in S8 models, and while the former had a poor year, his younger teammate finished runner-up in the title race. The following year he went one better in his 'Blobeye' S9, securing Subaru's final championship title.

Gradually, Citroën and Sébastien Loeb became impossibly powerful, with Ford increasingly its main opposition, particularly in the manufacturers' championship. Solberg finished runner-up in 2004 and 2005, but by now Subaru was struggling. Burns had been due to return to the team but had fallen ill, while WRC cars had become increasingly bespoke, hi-tech and big-budget creations.

During 2008 Subaru debuted the new GE-based (hatchback) WRC2008, but at the end of the year withdrew completely from WRC, citing the world economic situation. The days of blue, yellow and gold were over, and it's unlikely we'll see their like again.





**‘THE PRODRIVE
PARTNERSHIP WOULD
WRITE A SIGNIFICANT
PAGE IN THE ANNALS OF
MOTORSPORT HISTORY’**

**‘TOYOTA ONCE
AGAIN OCCUPIES
THE POSITION
OF “THE TEAM
TO BEAT”’**



 by ADAM TOWLER

RETURN TO THE WILD

How Toyota got back in the WRC game, paving the way for the GR Yaris

FROM ROUGH AND RUGGED CELICAS in the '70s and '80s that excelled in tough African events, to the legendary ST165 and ST185 Celica GT4s that took the drivers' championships in 1990 and 1992 for Carlos Sainz, 1993 for Juha Kankkunen and 1994 for Didier Auriol, plus the manufacturers' prize in 1993 and 1994, Toyota's rallying back catalogue is a formidable one. It was Toyota and the GT4 that smashed the stronghold Lancia had over the sport at World Championship level during the early Group A years, and it was a dynasty that was expected to continue with the ST205 Celica GT4 in 1995, had Toyota not become embroiled in scandal. Under pressure with a new car that was proving difficult to tame, it resorted to cheating so blatant that the team was immediately banned from the sport.

Toyota, represented as usual by Toyota Team Europe in Cologne, would be back part way through 1997 with its new World Rally Car, based on the Corolla, a machine that came within mere metres of delivering a drivers' title for Sainz in 1998 until it blew up on the final stage. The manufacturers' prize was clinched the following year, with both Sainz and teammate Auriol showing strongly in the drivers' standings (fifth and third respectively), whereupon Toyota then left the sport to concentrate on WEC and F1, leaving a big hole behind.

It would be a long wait for Toyota's return, but in early 2015 it was announced that Cologne (now known as Toyota Motorsport GmbH) was working on a new contender for the 2017 season. In due course Tommi Mäkinen was revealed as team leader, with the real surprise being that the car would be designed and developed in Finland at Tommi Mäkinen Racing, with Cologne only assuming responsibility for the engine.

Testing of the car began in 2016, with the 2017 season being a pivotal one for the sport. New technical regulations took the 1.6-litre turbo WRC car formula and turned the heat up, prescribing a bigger air restrictor that increased power from 300 to 380bhp, and allowing significantly larger aerodynamic devices. Suddenly, from looking rather tame during the 2011-2016 seasons, rally cars had an air of Group B wildness about them once again, and stage times were set to tumble, too.

Toyota Gazoo Racing – as it was now known – unveiled its new challenger at the end of 2016, and it was even more radical in looks than anyone could have hoped, and barely

recognisable as a Yaris at all. The drivers would be Jari-Matti Latvala and Juho Hänninen, with Esapekka Lappi joining midway through the season as a third entry.

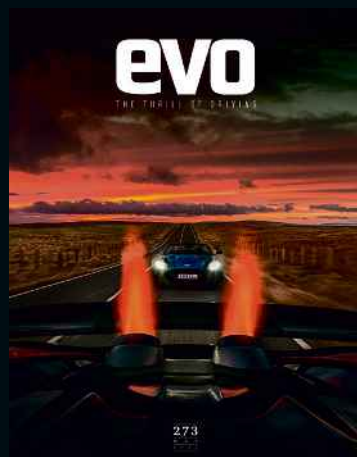
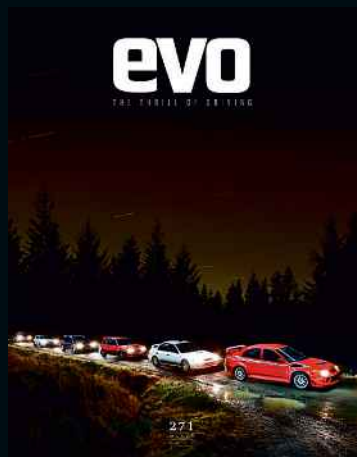
The 2017 season got off to a brilliant start for Toyota, with Latvala finishing an incredible second overall on the car's debut in Monte Carlo, and then winning outright at the second round in Sweden. Results were a little harder to come by after that, but the team still finished third in the manufacturers' standings, beating a troubled Citroën.

During that year the French ace Sébastien Ogier tested the Yaris with a view to signing for the team in '18. Footage appeared on YouTube of the Frenchman battling tremendous under- and oversteer, and he subsequently decided to stay with Ford, winning his sixth drivers' title in 2018. It's believed a mistake in setting up the car led to its handling being well off the mark on the day, which raises the interesting question about what might have been if Ogier had joined Toyota earlier than he eventually did. As it was, Latvala and new signing Ott Tänak had a strong year, the latter taking four victories, and Toyota claimed the manufacturers' title.

Tanak was the rising star now, and he put the momentum to good use in 2019, clinching the drivers' crown, much to the delight of Toyota chairman Akio Toyoda – presumably up until Tanak announced his move to Hyundai for the following season.

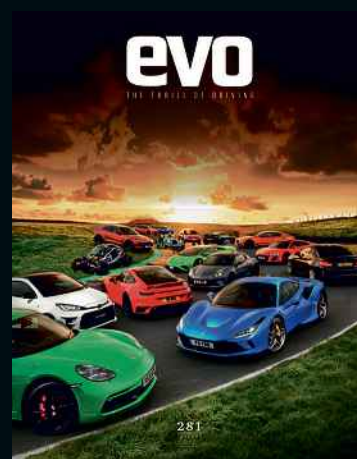
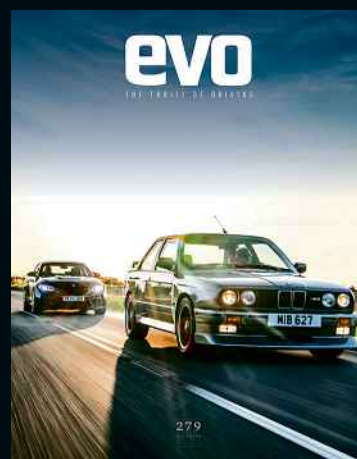
Last year, in a truncated season due to Covid, Toyota's line-up of Ogier, Elfyn Evans and Kalle Rovanperä was even more formidable, and while Evans was in contention until the end at Rally Monza, it was Ogier (pictured, at Rally Estonia) who took his seventh driver's title.

The Yaris WRC's replacement – based on the new GR Yaris road car, with its chopped-down roof and squat proportions – was due to compete this year, but with testing in 2020 restricted by Covid the team weren't able to develop it in time for 2021 and have elected to use the current car for one more year before switching to the new formula for 2022. The GR Yaris will have a role in the lower classes, however, while for WRC the driver squad of Ogier, Evans and Rovanperä continues, but with Latvala taking over as team principal from Mäkinen and the team structure changing behind the scenes. Nevertheless, Toyota once again now occupies the position of 'the team to beat' in world rallying, just as it did with those Celicas 30 years ago. ❧



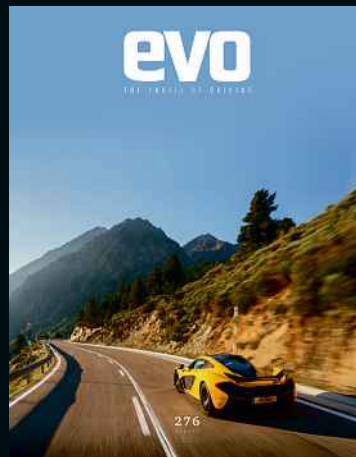
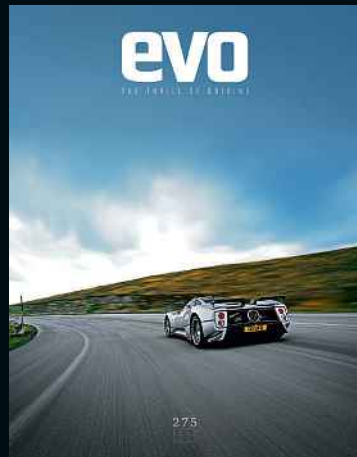
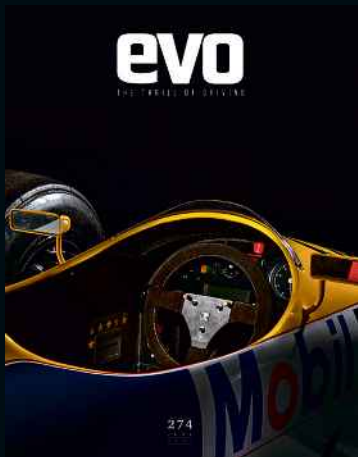
SUBSCR

TODAY AND GET 5 ISSUES FOR JUST £5 + AN



ORDER ONLINE AT [DENNISMAGS.CO.UK/EVO](https://www.dennismags.co.uk/evo)

OR CALL 0330 333 9491 QUOTING CODE D282



IBBE

SUBSCRIPTION PACKAGE INCLUDES:

- Pay just **£1.00** an issue instead of £4.99
- Continue to save **9%** on your subscription thereafter
- Free **evo Poster Book** as a welcome gift
- Save **£23.88** per year on the shop price with an annual subscription
- Free **delivery** of every issue straight to your door
- Access to exclusive subscriber competitions
- Money off **evo** track events – only for subscribers
- Receive unique, collectable covers only available to subscribers

EXCLUSIVE GIFT

Subscribe to **evo** today and get your first 5 issues for just **£5!** Plus get a **FREE evo** detachable poster book as a welcome gift

20 high-quality detachable prints featuring the greatest cars on the greatest roads from **evo** magazine.

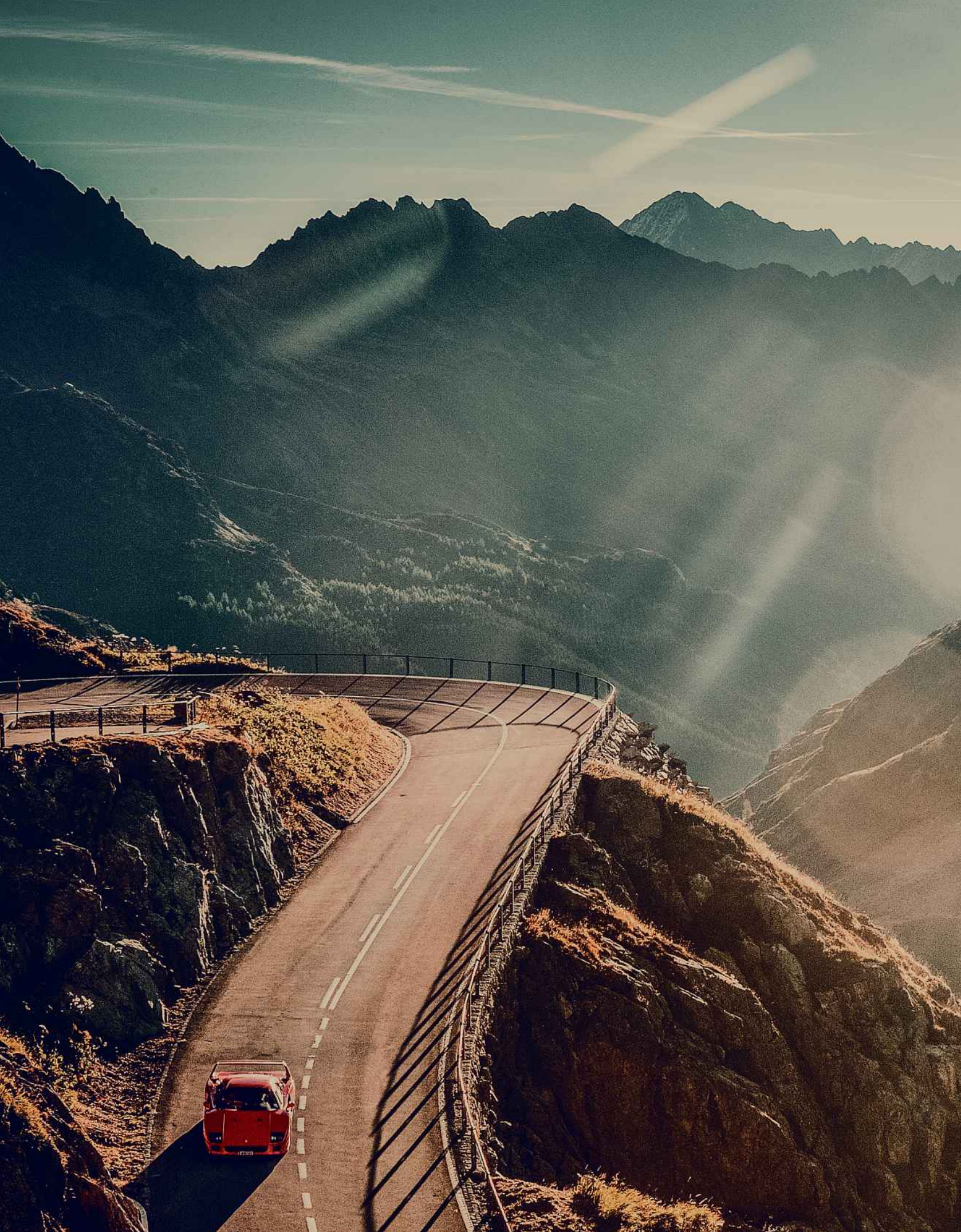
evo is the global magazine for performance cars. From iconic classics to the latest supercars, **evo** explores the greatest roads around the world in the most exciting cars, putting the reader behind the wheel and at the heart of the action. This unique poster collection features 20 images from a selection of **evo**'s greatest drives that bring to life the thrill of driving, and each high quality print can be detached, ready for display.

We hope you enjoy the posters and thank you for supporting **evo**.

**YOURS
FREE**



Calls to 03 numbers will be charged at your standard local rate. Please allow 28 days for delivery. UK only offer. Dennis Publishing Ltd reserves the right to replace this gift. You will be able to view your subscription details online at ManageMyMags.co.uk. Live outside the UK? For our best overseas subscription offers visit magazinesubscriptions.co.uk/evo or call +44 (0)330 333 9491. For subscriptions in the USA and Canada, visit imsnews.com or call 1-757-428-8180



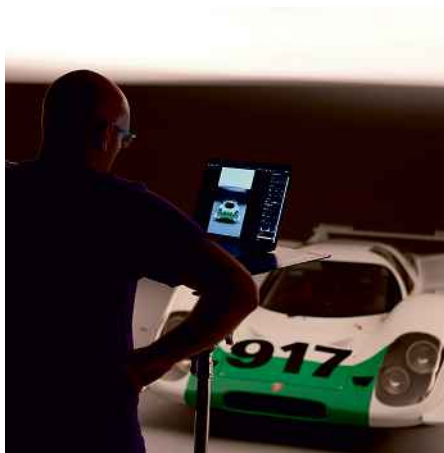


LIFE THROUGH A LENS

DEAN SMITH

Former evo staff photographer Dean Smith is responsible for some of the most memorable automotive photographs of the last decade. Here he explains how he developed his style and shares some of his favourite shots

by RICHARD MEADEN



'I WAS NEVER INTO PHOTOGRAPHY WHEN I was growing up. In fact I'm pretty sure I didn't pick up a camera until I was 21.' Not words you'd expect to hear from one of the brightest talents on the automotive photography scene. But as you quickly come to learn, very little of Dean Smith's career trajectory can be termed conventional.

'I hated school. Left at 16. If I could have left earlier I would have! I didn't go to college or uni. I ended up working in a glass factory. Then I did a two-year National Training Scheme with IBM as I had a vague interest in computers at school, but then the recession hit so the IBM thing went kaput. So I went back to the glass factory. Then Tesco, then a bike shop and then, eventually, what you could call a "proper" job in IT, working on the Government Gateway. Then I jacked that in to take photos full-time and then, just when I was thinking I'd have to go back to Tesco, I landed the staff job at **evo**.'

It's fair to say that Dean's work as staff photographer from 2011 until 2014 quickly came to transform the look of the magazine, his raw talent and tireless – if well cloaked – enthusiasm (more on which later) driving him to take ever-more extreme action images that brought the pages of **evo** to life.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about Dean's unconventional path is that he is entirely self-taught, the young Smith cutting his teeth not by pointing his camera at cars, but by pointing a borrowed camera at his mates on their BMXs.

'I raced mountain bikes cross-country when I was 14,' he explains. 'I did pretty well, but the bits I loved were the jumps and crazy stuff rather than the cross-country bit, so I stopped doing it after a few years and started riding a BMX at our local skate park instead.'

'There wasn't much that was great about growing up in Winchester, but what we did



Ferrari F40 in the Alps
(previous pages)

'We lost the first day of this shoot sorting the F40's dead battery. Nightmare! The next day we got up super early to catch the sunrise. We came out of a tunnel and the light was amazing, so I jumped out and started panicking. Then I looked over the barrier and I saw that shot. Click. Done.'

Aston Martin V12 Zagato in the Cairngorms

'This was the first time I tried bolt-on tracking – with the

camera attached to the chase car – and this was the first frame. Pin sharp! We'd driven the Zagato up the night before and had no way of cleaning it, which was great, because I bloody hate cleaning cars. It just tells the story, doesn't it?'

Ford GT

'I couldn't sleep on my left side for three weeks after taking this shot! I was shooting out of the sunroof of a sliding Panamera Turbo doing at least 70mph. It's such an expressive shot, all the smoke and the

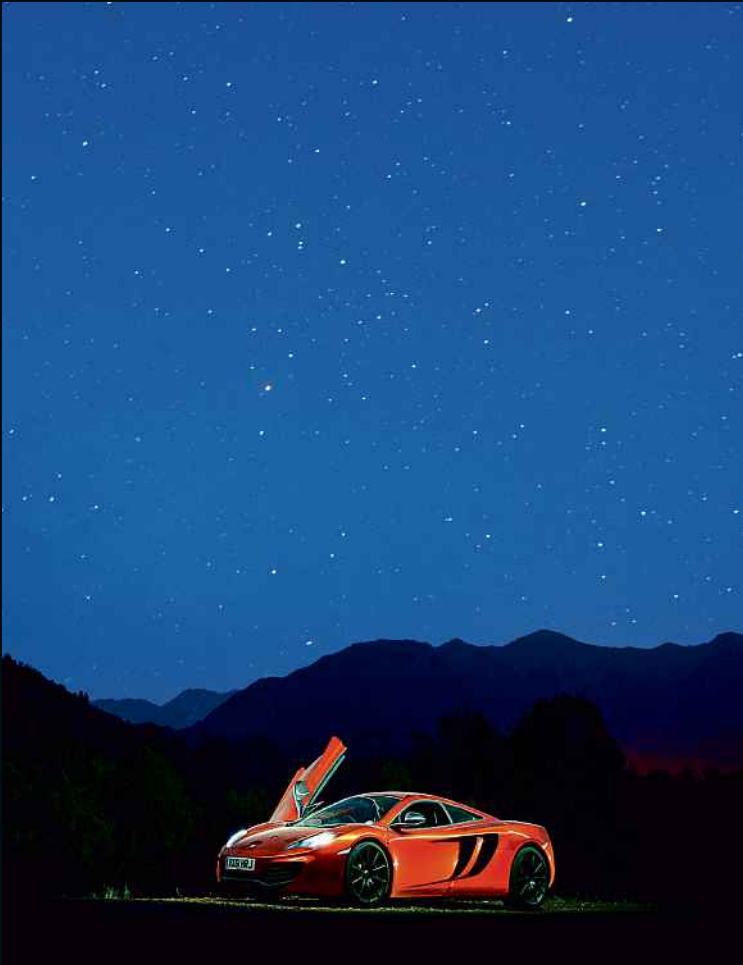
angle of the car. It's the kind of stuff I love to shoot'

Aston Martin DBS Superleggera in the desert

'This was a marketing shot for Aston Martin Middle East. Basically, where I took this photo you're not supposed to take photos; it's a deeply religious place. Although it was sunrise there were still people there, so we parked support cars around me so I couldn't be seen. It was just perfect light, perfect background. Pure, if a bit dicey!'







McLaren Senna

'You can blame Andy Morgan for this one. I've been obsessed with a shot he took of a Rothmans Group C Porsche 956, where he wangled a massive shadow of it up the studio wall [evo 117]. Here I just wanted to get over how insane the Senna is. Especially that rear spoiler. I loved using the car's shape to create an extreme image.'

Eagle E-type

'The Eagle is the perfect shape for this shot, isn't it? I

just like everything about it. I always think panning shots are a bit of a fluke, especially when you're shooting through trees. You're at the mercy of the light and the foliage. And this was the best fluke of them all, I think.'

Porsche 911 twin drift

'I remember this day and this shot so well. It looks fake, because it's almost too good to be true. In fact we did it on the first run. That's what I love about working with **evo** – there's a handful of

journalists you could get to drive for a shot like this, and two of them happen to be Dickie and Jethro.'

McLaren 12C in Morocco

'We'd just come down off the Atlas Mountains. I lit the car with my iPhone's torch because I didn't want to take any lights with me on this trip in case they got confiscated at the border. I really wish I'd shut the McLaren's side window, but I couldn't see anything because it was so dark!'

have had a genuinely world-class set of dirt jumps. Along with my mates I spent every waking minute down there, building and digging and riding. People would travel from the States to come to our trails, so occasionally we'd get some mega riders there, plus a few good local guys. It was around this time I started taking photos of them, really just for my own amusement, using a borrowed camera and some borrowed flashes.

'I had absolutely no plan for photography to be my career, because I didn't think I was good enough. I have an obsessive drive to get better at things, so as my interest in cars grew I progressed from the bike stuff to shooting friends' cars as well – often night shoots as I'd literally be doing my day job all day – and then posting the images on forums for feedback. Not because my objective was to be a car photographer, but because I just loved doing it.

'My first paid work was for James Baggott, who published some trade magazines for car dealership networks. I was still working in IT at the time. Then *Autocar* got in touch and tried me out on a few shoots. By this time I was an avid **evo** reader, so I got in touch with them, but I kind of got brushed-off, which was fine because in truth I wasn't good enough.

'I took the plunge to go freelance in late 2010. The way I jacked-in my IT job was possibly a bit impulsive. To be honest, within six months I thought it was a massive mistake. I'd done a trial shoot for the staff photographer's job at **evo**, but it didn't lead to anything. At least not immediately, but then months later Paul Lang [**evo**'s then art director] called me to say they'd been let down by a freelancer and asked if I could do a last-minute job that weekend shooting Darren Turner at Silverstone. I'd never shot anyone before, but obviously I couldn't turn it down. I'm bloody glad I didn't...'

Since then Dean has become that rarest of automotive photographers: one who takes the most natural, intuitive shots, yet relishes the opportunities new technology brings.

'I've never shot film,' he confesses. 'I've never even touched film. Digital was my way in. Since then I've enjoyed the rapid advancements in technology. The new Sony cameras have been the big leap, but so much has come in recent years.'

'I just want to experiment and keep things fresh, so people wonder how I achieved an image. For example, I'm now attaching lights to drones and lighting cars from above. It's ridiculous when you think about it. If ten years ago someone said I'd be doing this kind of stuff I'd have said they were mad.'

I distinctly recall working with Dean when he started using a zoom lens to do car-to-car

shots. I'd never seen a photographer use a big lens rather than a wide-angle to do tracking shots, so to be honest I thought we'd probably have to do them again. How wrong was I...

'Hah! There's a reason no one does it. It's because it's f*****g hard. I don't know where it came from. I don't think I copied it. I was just trying to do it a different way to add more "everything" to it: car bigger, and bigger in the frame, more blur, more... just seeing how crazy you can make it look. For me regular tracking shots look so boring, and I hate the distortion you get from going too wide with shots. I was looking for something fresh.'

Finding new and exciting ways to shoot may be one of Smith's primary motivations, but the jobs that excite him are very much rooted in the finest traditions of motoring magazines: the road trips.

'Before I ever worked for a car magazine I always said my dream shoot would be an F40 in the Alps. Even now, having been fortunate enough to do just that with Henry Catchpole some years ago, if I could have just one more shoot – kind of a last meal, if you like – it would be the Alps, in the sunshine with an F40 and someone who can pedal it.

'I think that's one of the things I miss about working full-time at **evo**. When you're freelance you have to be efficient if you're to enjoy the benefit of being your own boss. When you're a magazine staffer you get worked to death, but the pay-off is countless opportunities to go on big, time-consuming trips to shoot really cool cars in really cool places. That's what I wanted – and what I got – from my time at **evo**. It was an incredible period.'

Aside from an extensive repertoire of hilarious but entirely inappropriate mum jokes, Smith is also known – fondly, I should say – for his relentlessly downbeat outlook. Eeyore on a bad day has nothing on Deano. Which is odd as he's blessed with so much natural talent he makes shooting exceptional images look effortless. As is often the case, things are not as easy as they seem.

'I always really struggle with anxiety before a job,' he explains. 'I can't relax until the shoot's done. Doesn't matter what it is. If I get more than three hours' sleep on the eve of the job that's a good night for me.'

Learning that Smith suffers for his art is distressing – I've worked with him for years, but never knew of his pre-shoot fears until interviewing him for this story – but it's further proof of his determination to always come back with great images.

'Taking the shots I've picked to accompany this story is all I ever wanted to do. Still is, truth be told. Road trips, crazy sideways action, technically challenging night shoots. Doing really amazing jobs with great human beings. It's the dream, isn't it?' ❌



McLaren P1

'We had so little time to get this done. Plus a video. It was all the pressure in the world on all of us. The camera struggled a bit with the artificial light, especially as the back of the P1 is all mesh. I normally don't like shooting cornering from this angle, but the flame shows Dickie's got his foot in.'

Mountain bike jump

'I suppose this is an example of me wanting to push myself to take better shots. I zip-tied a remote trigger to the handlebars of my bike, and I'm triggering the camera mid-jump with my left thumb. I suppose I should have photoshopped in a 50-foot canyon to make myself look really cool!'

Ferrari Enzo and LaFerrari

'This is a pretty standard tracking shot made special by the subject matter, the shadow, the sunlight and the wet road. It's a dreamy result, isn't it? A proper "wish you were here" image that's exactly how I, as a reader, would love to imagine a scene involving these sorts of cars.'



by STEVE SUTCLIFFE PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

ESTATES OF P



L A Y

The Mercedes-AMG C63 S Estate and Audi RS4 Avant both combine practical bodies with punchy performance. But which of these junior super-estates is the most entertaining, and does that also make it the best road car?





SO THERE'S THIS CORNER ON THE West Circuit at the Bedford Autodrome that always separates the wheat from the chaff. It's not so much a corner as a high-speed chicane, and it comes towards the end of the lap, just when you're (hopefully) thinking: 'Right, this has been a good one, so let's not blow it here – keep it nice and tidy.'

The approach speed is high, as in 100mph-plus in fourth gear, and in most cars you'll probably want to downshift to third just before you turn in, although in high-torque cars – such as the Audi RS4 and Mercedes-AMG C63 S – you're better off staying in fourth and nailing the throttle as early as possible towards the exit.

Before you can get anywhere near doing this, however, you need to manage the turn-in phase, which is crucial because it's followed by a serious transfer of weight in the middle of the chicane as you flick decisively from left to right. Get this corner right and it feels delicious. Get it wrong and you'd better hope the ESP system on whatever car you're pedalling is good, and is on your side. Except, of course, we usually turn such systems off when possible to generate the quickest lap times, meaning you're very much on your own...

So it's a key corner, and the way in which the recently revised Audi RS4 Avant and the well-established Mercedes-AMG C63 S Estate deal with it is intriguing, because here, possibly more than anywhere else, they behave quite differently from one another. The reason why, of course, is because the RS4 is four-wheel drive whereas the C63 S remains rear-wheel drive, and although most of the time – on the public road for example – you'd be hard pushed ever to spot the difference, on track, and especially on this specific corner, they really are like chalk and cheese.

The Audi feels planted, secure and stable but ultimately just understeers a bit when you turn in, then understeers a

bit more when you change direction. The AMG, on the other hand, is more responsive and alert on turn in, and during the shift in direction. It feels far lighter on its feet but also like it could get away from you more readily if you do the wrong thing with the throttle at the crucial moment. It dances in a way that the RS4 does not, and is a fair bit faster through this corner sequence as a result, but it also requires more skill to keep in check and more bravery in terms of your commitment to the throttle.

Which is the better car through here? The AMG, no question. Yet for someone who still wants to go quickly without needing to go anywhere near the edge, the RS4 has a lot going for it. So it's up to the individual behind the wheel which approach, and therefore which car, you might prefer. And this is a theme that pervades throughout this comparison from start to finish.

But before we delve deeper into the dynamic differences between these cars, some brief bits of housekeeping, because there are some crucial elements that separate this pair in the showroom. Like the fact that the Audi costs almost ten grand less than the AMG, despite boasting a pretty much identical amount of kit inside plus a highly sophisticated four-wheel-drive system on top. That said, the RS4 tested here has an on-the-road price of £81,600 with options, many of which you'd surely plump for when specifying an RS4, such as the deeply sexy 20-inch wheels, the full-house sports exhaust system and the various carbonfibre bits and bobs inside. So in reality they are closer to one another on price than they might at first appear.

What separates them more obviously is the engine and transmission specs. The RS4 has a twin-turbo 2.9-litre V6 that produces 444bhp and 442lb ft and is mated to an eight-speed dual-clutch gearbox. The AMG uses the ubiquitous 4-litre twin-turbo V8 that also appears in most Astons as well as most AMGs, and it produces 503bhp and 516lb ft. In this case it's mated to AMG's new nine-speed dual-clutch 'box – one of the few mechanical things to have changed on the C63 since it was unleashed in 2015.

Above right: C63 S lacks Mercedes' 4Matic four-wheel drive, so is a playful thing on track. **Bottom right:** RS4's rear can be coerced into stepping out, but it's far from the car's natural cornering attitude







Far left and left: RS4's V6 produces a healthy 444bhp, while the AMG's V8 puts out an additional 59bhp; the Merc is 75kg lighter than the Audi too, further strengthening its power-to-weight lead

of the AMG but also easier to use. Both cars feel high on quality inside, but the RS4 especially so.

Then you fire them up and start to drive them hard, and the AMG's more bombastic personality bursts to the fore, at which point the RS4's overall appeal doesn't so much wane as merely alter in stature within your subconscious. It doesn't cower beside the AMG but no longer does it seem quite so butch, despite being the more muscular of the two visually, what with its He-Man Quattro-esque rear arches and those enormous wheels and tyres contained within.

Beside the Merc the Audi instantly sounds quieter and appears more restrained than it actually is, but only because the exhaust noise the AMG emits dwarfs the RS's by comparison. Same goes for the Audi's straight-line performance. In isolation it feels, and indeed is, a seriously rapid car. The 0 to 62mph claims are identical at 4.1sec, yet because the Merc is that much more dramatic in everything it does, subjectively it feels the quicker of the two. It's also just better suited to lapping the likes of the West Circuit, due in part to the RS4's mildly inert on-limit handling characteristics but mainly because the AMG is fundamentally a rear-wheel-drive hot-rod at heart.

On a track such as this, the first thing you do in the AMG is thumb the ESP/traction control button to off (you do the same in the RS4 to be fair, although doing so has far less effect than it does in the Mercedes), then you go hunting

The differences continue inside, the AMG feeling busier, with more buttons and switches to play with (or get confused by) both on the centre console and on the steering wheel. The RS4 is simpler and more intuitive by design, its new MMI central touchscreen being similar to that

for a corner through which you can indulge yourself in the AMG's ability to go sideways seemingly for a hundred yards or more, and at that point the key differences between the two cars become blindingly apparent. Not only is the C63's steering sweeter and more detailed in its feedback, the chassis also feels much better balanced front to rear, side to side, in yaw, under braking or even during acceleration; you name it, in every single dimension the AMG feels more alive and more responsive than the RS4. And it sounds twice as tasty in the process, with a hard-edged growl to its exhaust note that the more refined, quieter RS4 can't compete with. Which begs another question: why does this engine sound so much fruitier in AMGs than it does in Aston Martins when surely it should be the other way round?

Anyway, I digress. Point is, the AMG is unquestionably the more indulgent and is just the better car to drive on a track, and by some margin. However, out on the public road the roles reverse, the RS4's smoother ride and arguably more sophisticated dynamic personality putting the AMG right back in its place. The Audi undoubtedly feels far more suited to the road than it does the track, the AMG's skateboard ride letting it down quite badly beside the RS4, even with both cars' drive programmes set to maximum comfort.

You could therefore argue that the RS4 is the better car for the real world, the world in which the ability to pull gigantic powerslides and to lap circuits faster has no great relevance to anyone, given that these are fast estate cars we're comparing here, not a pair of hypercars or stripped-out lightweights. And in most respects you'd be entirely right to think that. But give me the choice and I'd go for the AMG every time, because while its on-road ride isn't great, it isn't that bad, either. And when the time comes to truly let rip in them, it remains in a different league, despite the RS4 being a very good car indeed. In isolation. ☒

Mercedes-AMG C63 S Estate

Engine V8, 3982cc, twin-turbo **Power** 503bhp @ 5500-6250rpm **Torque** 516lb ft @ 2000-4250rpm **Weight** 1670kg **Power-to-weight** 306bhp/ton **0-62mph** 4.1sec **Top speed** 180mph **Basic price** £75,458

evo rating ★★★★★

Audi RS4 Avant

Engine V6, 2894cc, twin-turbo **Power** 444bhp @ 5700-6700rpm **Torque** 442lb ft @ 1900-5000 **Weight** 1745kg **Power-to-weight** 259bhp/ton **0-62mph** 4.1sec **Top speed** 155mph (limited) **Basic price** £65,700

evo rating ★★★★★



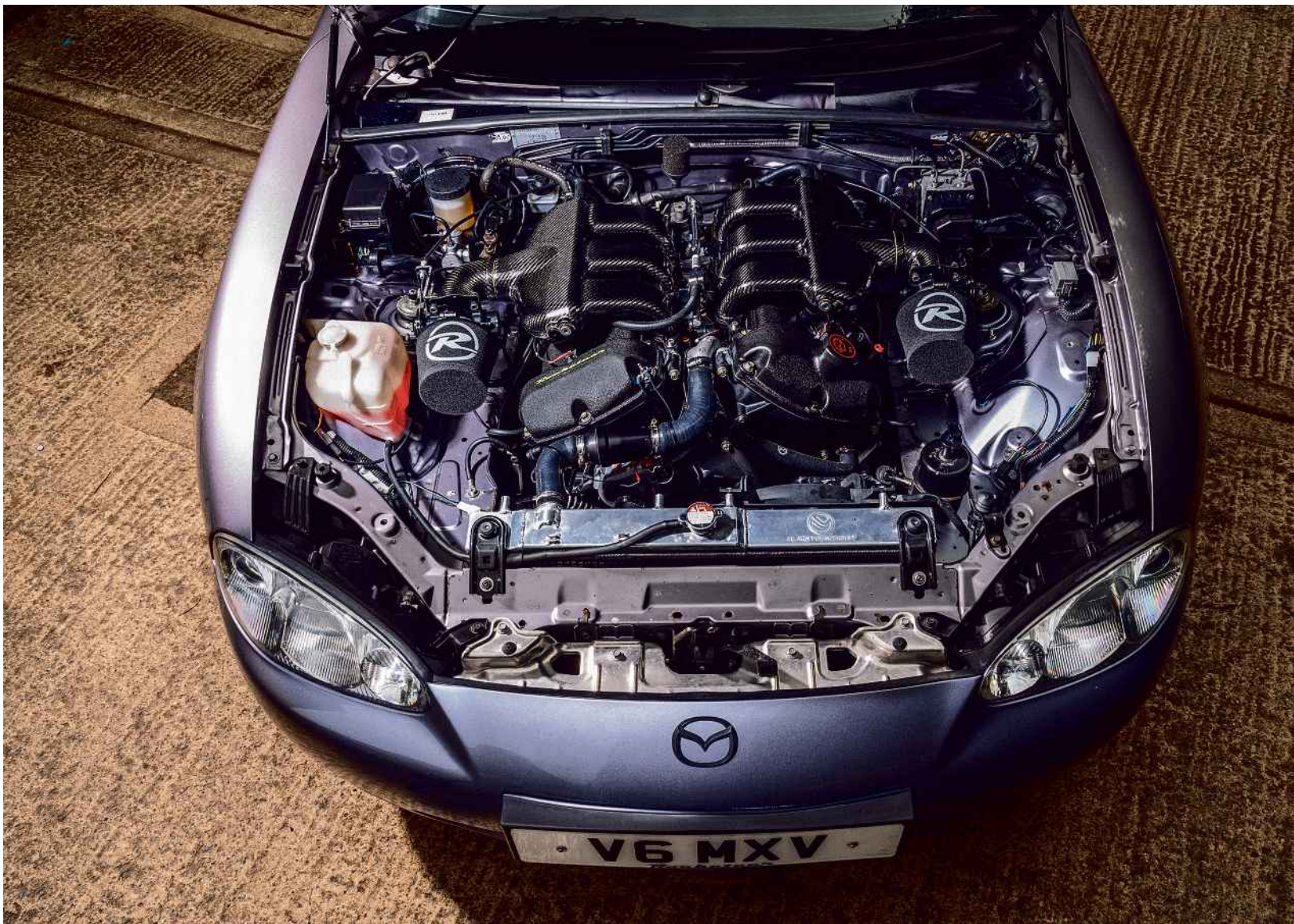
A landscape photograph showing rolling hills under a dark, overcast sky. The hills are covered in various shades of green and brown, suggesting different crops or stages of growth. In the middle ground, a tractor is visible, pulling a trailer across a field. The foreground is dominated by a blurred green field with some yellow flowers. A paved road runs horizontally across the lower part of the image.

by ADAM TOWLER
PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

MX POWER

*British company Rocketeer squeezes
3-litre Jaguar V6s under the bonnets of
Mazda MX-5s, with intoxicating results.
We drive its latest demonstrator*





IT'S BEEN QUITE A JOURNEY FOR BRUCE Southey. When *evo* first turned up at his front door to drive his V6-powered Mk1 Mazda MX-5 (issue 237), it was a fledgling proposition built up around his own road car; a project that had begun when he took his wife's identical MX-5 and shoehorned a Jaguar V6 under the bonnet as a birthday present to her (I know, what a kind-hearted soul...).

Pretty soon Bruce found himself with 25 cash deposits, cementing his conviction that giving the little Mazda the engine it deserved really was a path worth pursuing. Enter then *evo* and our drive in his black car that so charmed us with its raucous spirit, significant power gain and unaffected – maybe even improved – dynamics. While by Bruce's own admission there were a few areas that needed further work, such as the engine's induction system, the potential of this conversion package to provide a cracking little driver's car was blatantly obvious.

Until recently, Bruce's pursuit of his goals was on a part-time basis, while he worked the day job as a design engineer for Ford and, more recently, McLaren. However, redundancy from the Woking firm during its recent troubles has meant Rocketeer is now a full-time occupation, and progress has gathered pace as a result.

All of which explains why I'm heading down to Hungerford to drive Rocketeer's new demonstrator, this time based on the similar but slightly more grown-up Mk2 MX-5, and with a host of changes that I'm told have really moved things on. Rocketeer is now based out of the workshops of Basset Down Balancing, one of those enthralling small British engineering companies that keep the passion for performance cars and racing burning. Everywhere I look there are MX-5s in various states of undress, yet there's also a full race Ford 289 V8 from a proper AC Cobra about to be run up in the dyno room. It's a cool place to be.

Just to recap, the Rocketeer proposition is centred on the fitment of the 3-litre Jaguar 'AJ30' V6 engine, as used in the X-type, the S-type and in early versions of the XF saloon. This engine was a significantly upgraded version of the Ford Duratec V6 and features forged rods along with other modifications to allow it to rev higher and make more power. It's not to be confused with the supercharged 'AJ126' V6, as seen more recently in Jags such as the V6 F-type, which is an AJ-V8 engine with the rear-most pair of cylinders blanked off and smaller bores for the remaining six cylinders, with new heads to fit. Not perhaps the British firm's finest hour in engineering terms, even with the ludicrously over-the-top exhaust note.

The all-aluminium AJ30 is a free-revving motor that's found its way into quite a few racing cars, and it's also light; in fact it weighs less than the iron-block four-cylinder original MX-5 engine, which is one of the key tenets of this conversion. Namely, that you're not adding any more weight into the nose with the larger displacement, far more exotic engine.

Since we last drove a Rocketeer MX-5, every component involved in the conversion has changed, says Bruce. One of the key areas was the induction system and throttles, because Bruce was very keen that everything should fit under the standard bonnet. The car we drove in 2017 suffered from a



Opposite and above: Jaguar V6, now with bespoke carbonfibre plenum, fits snugly under the MX-5's standard bonnet; engines are stripped and rebuilt at Basset Down Balancing; demonstrator features Brembo brake upgrade

restrictive induction set-up, but since then he's designed a completely new carbonfibre induction plenum based on the actual cylinder head flow data that Ford used in designing the engine. A number of different designs were tried in batches before arriving at the final iteration, while the Mazda throttles have been junked for Rocketeer's own design.

The new kit is fitted to an AJ-V6 that has been stripped down, balanced and rebuilt at Basset Down, whether it's from the firm's dwindling supply of 'new old stock' engines or a used example. Second-hand units tend to be in excellent condition, as they've usually been hooked up to a torque converter and spent years gently plodding around in an S-type.

Having originally used an ME442 aftermarket ECU, Rocketeer now fits an MBE set-up as also utilised by Morgan, with a lambda sensor for each bank and much more control. The result is around 260bhp and 240lb ft (the engine gave 240bhp and 221lb ft in an XF), with 80 per cent of the latter available by 3000rpm, delivered via a lighter flywheel and Helix clutch to (in this case) the Mk2 Sport's six-speed manual gearbox. The way you buy a Rocketeer has changed, too, but more of that in a bit: for now I just want to get out and drive.

This Mk2.5 Sport may look fairly unassuming, sitting



Above: MX-5 easily handles the extra power with just a few simple tweaks to the chassis

just a little lower on a Fox suspension kit and with a Brembo brake upgrade, but the moment you turn the little ignition key it becomes – amusingly literally – a tiny car with a big heart. *BOOM!* Fire up the V6 and it's like you've been working on the innards of a Dino 246 and someone's shut the engine lid with your head still in there. It's a strident, loud, deliciously melodic note, and will surely provoke some disbelieving double-takes from anyone with even a small knowledge of cars. Moving away is straightforward, and in fact it doesn't take long to realise that in virtually all regards the Rocketeer drives exactly as the original MX-5 did – apart from the acceleration and soundtrack.

Yes, this is now a properly quick car. Given that an 'NB' MX-5 weighs somewhere in the region of 1100kg, with 260bhp the Rocketeer should have a power-to-weight ratio of around 240bhp per ton, putting it somewhere between a current Porsche 718 Boxster and 718 Boxster S. Not that you'll be buying it for outright performance alone, but it's nice to know that it's right on the money in terms of raw speed. The engine's linear delivery encourages you to use all the revs. It's not an instant gratification, 'big hit of torque' type engine, but rather one that you learn to use enthusiastically with all the gears at your disposal.

As for the rest of the car, it really is just as a Mk2 MX-5, which by and large is a very good thing. I've never managed to fit in them, and don't particularly fit in this one, but Rocketeer is working on a new seat installation that lowers the driving position, which should help a great deal. The car feels light and crisp and very agile; perhaps it could do with a little stiffening of the structure by modern standards, but it remains one of the essential and pure driving experiences.

The Rocketeer proposition is now attainable in three ways. You can still buy the conversion in kit form at £5994, or even individually with the V6 costing £4794, the fitting kit £1794

‘IT DRIVES EXACTLY AS THE ORIGINAL MX-5 DID – APART FROM THE ACCELERATION AND SOUNDTRACK’

and the electronics package on top (all prices including VAT). Or you can go with a 'turnkey' installation, which on a Mk2 like this one starts at £15,000 including a rebuilt, blueprinted engine. Then there's the 'restomod' option, where Rocketeer will source, strip down, completely restore and rebuild the MX-5 (Mk1 or 2) of your choice, and fit the V6, chassis upgrades, etc. These completed cars start at around £42,000, but this includes new panels where required, not just patch repairs, and we all know how old Mazdas can rust. It also allows you to have any form of colour, trim and performance modifications you can dream of, something Bruce with his design background is only too happy to contribute ideas to.

Would you really spend nearly-new Boxster money on an old MX-5? I think the reason why you might be tempted is betrayed by the massive grin on your face as you thread the Rocketeer down a great B-road, how it demands actual driving at all times, how it feels so useable on any road, the soundtrack, and how you can tailor it exactly to your own tastes – all elements by and large missing from new sports cars. Rocketeer has now sold 100 units, made up from all three options and including a German partner who builds the cars to TUV standard. This is one homegrown project that has already left the launch pad. **x**



Rocketeer MX-5 V6

Engine V6, 2976cc **Power** c260bhp @ 6800rpm **Torque** c240lb ft @ 4500rpm

Weight c1100kg **Power-to-weight** c240bhp/ton **0-62mph** c5.0sec (est)

Top speed n/a **Basic price** See text **Available from** rocketeercars.com

evo rating ★★★★★

PHOTOGRAPHY by ANDY MORGAN

POWER OF M

*The 2021 M5 Competition is the
latest in a long line of great M-cars.
We go for a celebratory drive and
recall some of its forebears*



IN ASSOCIATION WITH





M
Competition

PX



**'THE M5 REMAINS
A CAR YOU WILL
ALWAYS WANT IN
YOUR CORNER'**

IN ASSOCIATION WITH





D ID THE 33-YEAR-OLD JOCHEN Neerpasch know what he was starting when he agreed to lead BMW's new dedicated motorsport division in 1972? A sidearm of a car company that was already well on its way to positioning itself as the preferred alternative to the rather steadier approach favoured by Audi and Mercedes-Benz, Neerpasch was to grow BMW's motorsport activities to suit the needs of customers who wanted to compete with a BMW on track as well as enjoying them on the road.

It was an exercise that started with the 3.0 CSL, a lightweight, two-door, rear-wheel-drive coupe powered by a 3-litre six-cylinder engine built to meet the homologation requirements of the European Touring Car Championship. Today it embraces a mix of eight coupes and saloons (including the forthcoming M3 and M4 models) and four SUVs, and this takes into account only the UK line-up, which comprises the Competition models; include the regular non-Competition models sold around the globe and the two dozen M-cars on today's product plan is only 11 shy of the total number of employees Neerpasch had working under him during M's early days.

It is even less likely that 40 years ago Neerpasch and his M team could have envisaged that their first properly sporting saloon, the understated E12 M535i, would evolve into a 616bhp, four-wheel-drive supersaloon that's just as capable of reaching not far off the double-ton as it is carrying five passengers and their overnight bags in a level of opulence that wouldn't be out of place in a 7-series. Today's M5 Competition remains the definitive supersaloon, even in a sector that has seen the number of incumbents increase over the last four decades by at least a factor of ten.

Challengers and pretenders to the throne have been more powerful, faster, more accelerative, more luxurious, more exclusive. A few have carried more prestigious names or arrived with closer family ties to sports and supercars. Yet few have come close to matching any generation of M5 in all the key areas that define the breed, and this new M5 Comp is no different. If there is a chink in the M5's armour, it could be that it is such an accomplished all-round package – and one that has stuck steadfastly to its original remit – that it can often be overlooked because its rivals shout louder while the M5 just gets on with it.

There is a great deal for the Bavarian beast to be confident about today. That confidence has been ever-present since the days of the E28, through E34 and E39, and not forgetting the divine madness of the E60's screaming V10. Today's twin-turbocharged V8 formula might have calmed the revs but the M5 remains a car you will always want in your



corner. One that exudes a calm superiority as you approach. It may lack the visual drama of some of its rivals, but then the M5 has never been the extrovert type, preferring the subtle approach of squeezing the hardware required to let it sniff the exhaust of a 911 into the outline of a four-door saloon that is also available as a tax-efficient plug-in hybrid.

On a filthy winter's night, the facelifted M5 Competition (new front bumper, splitter, bonnet and adaptive LED headlamps at the front; new bootlid and lip spoiler, exhaust system and LED lights at the rear) continues to demonstrate M's expertise in creating a saloon car with a level of performance to embarrass a supercar. It starts with its S63 twin-turbocharged 4.4-litre V8, which has a depth and an authenticity to its tone right from start-up: an old-school gentle rumble as those eight cylinders calmly tick over, no shouty start-up procedure, no unnecessary bark from the exhaust to draw attention.

Yet once on the move this V8 certainly knows how to grab your attention. There's a straight-six smoothness to how it builds revs, a crispness to its responses that's a throwback to the days of the M88 motor fitted behind the shark-nose of the E28, and the first incarnation of the S38 six found behind the softer face of the E34. Even at half-throttle and using barely half the revs available to you, today's engine responds with an eagerness that's closer to its junior sibling the M2 coupe than a large-capacity V8 in a saloon car.

Above: technology has proliferated in cars like the M5, but it's still true to the original concept

It's when it hits its peak that today's M5 demonstrates its power advantage with an explosive-inducing explosion of performance as the pair of turbos spool up. And it keeps on revving, dispelling the myths associated with large-capacity forced-induction engines. Its tone might not reach the demonic high notes of the E60's Formula 1-derived V10, but this 'hot-vee' motor is every bit as keen to rev as the 5-litre, naturally aspirated V8 in the E39-gen car.

There's ample power and torque right across the engine's range, the maximum torque of 553lb ft being available from as low as 1800rpm, resulting in a mind-scrambling level of performance when the mood takes you. Let loose and allowed the freedom to breathe as much air as it needs to burn the 98 RON fuel being injected into its heart, this V8 punches harder and stronger than many give it credit for. Given its head on a circuit, you find yourself arriving at braking points far sooner and carrying much more speed than you perhaps anticipated was possible for a car of this size. And the M5 certainly has grown over the years; four decades of development – largely in safety and technology – have seen the model gain 35cm in wheelbase length, 20cm in width and 572kg in kerb weight.

Size and weight naturally have an effect on dynamics; manufacturers are open about such matters, and M division is no different. The on-its-toes feel of the early six-cylinder



DIAL M FOR MAGIC

IF YOU'RE GOING TO ANNOUNCE TO THE WORLD that you're entering the motorsport arena, what better way to do so than with a homologation special mid-engined sports car designed by one of Italy's highest profile designers, to be built by a bona fide supercar maker? That was the original idea for the M1...

But while the Paul Rosche-developed 273bhp M88 3.5-litre straight-six delivered the performance and Giorgetto Giugiaro's design the wow factor, Lamborghini, who had been contracted to build the sleek coupe around the Giampaolo Dallara-designed chassis, couldn't deliver on its side of the deal so at the 11th hour BMW asked Baur to assemble the 453 cars.

From that point forward, BMW M took on the responsibility of building its own road cars, starting with the E12 M535i, the first recognised series-production M-car. While its powertrain was stock BMW (the 3.5-litre M30 straight-six) its chassis featured M-developed springs and dampers along with unique wheels and aerodynamic bodywork add-ons. There would be one further M535i (the E28) before the first fully

fledged M-car, the E28-gen M5, was launched featuring a further development of the M1's straight-six, which also saw service in the M635i coupe (technically the first series production BMW to be badged an M-car, as it was called the M6 in America and Japan).

Initially built at BMW Motorsport Preussenstrasse plant in Munich, in 1986 M5 production moved to Garching, where its successor, the E34 variant would also be built, as a saloon and a very limited run Touring model. For the E39 M5 (5-litre V8, 400bhp) production moved to Dingolfing alongside regular 5-series models and that remains the case today for the twin-turbocharged V8 F10. Even when the E60 M5 saloon and Touring and M6 coupe and cabriolet models gained a V10 engine they were still built alongside regular 5- and 6-series derivatives.

There is one car, of course, that perhaps above all others defines M. An homologation special in the definitive sense, the E30 M3 has earned every bit of its icon status and remains the go-to car in which to experience the purest M-car DNA.

Its five-year production run saw continuous updates and iterations, with incremental increases to engine capacity and performance, chassis tuning and aerodynamic evolution, making trying to select the best E30 M3 a near

impossible task. The 2.5 Sport Evo is the pinnacle of the model's development, but many argue for the original, while the Ravaglia edition (or mainland Europe's equivalent Cecotto edition) combines the best of both for some.

Unlike the M5, the 3's evolutionary journey was rapid, with six-cylinder engines used for the E36/E46 and a V8 for the E90 before the F80 returned with a straight-six, albeit turbocharged. For 2021 six-cylinder turbo power remains, but it also gains four-wheel drive for the first time. The M3 has also donated much of its hardware in previous years to M's more extrovert models in the Z3 and Z4 M coupes and roadsters and the diminutive 1M, all a sideline of the division at its bonkers best.

All 21st century M-cars have turned to turbocharged power, from the pugnacious form of the 1M to the transformation of the M6 into the M8 and the Gran Coupe beyond that. Inevitably BMW's X range, too, has been through the M workshops in recent years; the market for high performance SUVs and the profits they deliver are too hard to ignore. Yet their introduction hasn't distracted Markus Flasch, BMW M's CEO, and his team from focusing on what nearly 50 years of motorsport engineering has taught them. The M2 Competition and M2 CS, the reigning evo Car of the Year, are conclusive proof of that.



cars evolved with the first V8 M5, its dynamic envelope broadened to embrace the performance leap that had taken place. And the pattern has been repeated ever since, the engineers honing each chassis to allow maximum exposure to the heightened performance offered with each new generation. Not all of the M5's rivals over the years have been able to pull this off. Where some have delivered precise dynamics with rather blunt instruments of motors, or effervescent motors tied to damp-squib chassis, the M5 can be relied upon to blend the best of both.

Inevitably we've seen the increasing application of driver aids and driving modes, and despite its Competition moniker the latest M5 is no different. In fact, the F90 is the most technologically advanced M5 of all time and sets the template for today's modern family of M-cars. What was once considered *Tomorrow's World* tech is now a default action, each journey starting with a press of a button to adjust steering, damper and throttle maps. 'Sport, comfort, sport' is the *evo* default, pre-set to one of the red, fingertip-sized 'M' buttons on the steering wheel.

Additional weight to the steering is just that, something extra to lean against rather than additional feel coming back from the front pair of Pirelli P Zeros wrapped around the 20in wheels. When it comes to ride quality, the 2021 M5 Competition removes a layer of pliancy from the pre-facelift standard car, resulting in some low-speed interference through the cabin that drifts away as you pick up the pace. This is the engineers sacrificing some level of comfort in

order to improve body control and tighten the chassis, thus providing a clearer step up from the standard M5 models. While the Comfort setting for the throttle map holds back none of the performance, you want Sport as your default; after all, why pay the extra to have that potent V8 at your disposal if you experience it in its most muted setting?

On smaller roads the M5 is no M2 CS, but then you wouldn't expect the same level of focus. In the M5 you take a more measured approach, with less throttle and calmer inputs through the steering, chassis and brakes to maintain a smoothness to your progress. Where Audi's RS6 needs poking to get a reaction and AMG's E63 always feels like it's straining at the leash, the M5 finds its rhythm early and happily builds upon it with you. It's why, regardless of its switchable four-wheel-drive system and eight-speed automatic gearbox, there are times when the F90 flows with the elegance and precision of an E34.

It's when you dive into the configurable menus that an even richer stream of M5 DNA percolates through today's example. On first acquaintances the switchable four-wheel drive xDrive system seems overly complex for a four-door saloon car designed to cover distances at a serious pace in sublime comfort. But it takes little time for you to start experimenting with it, even if it's primarily to confirm your cynicism for such systems.

And then it doesn't take long for the cynicism to subside. On the road your instincts (and sanity) persuade you that power and torque should still be sent to both axles, but with



**‘THE F90 IS THE MOST
TECHNOLOGICALLY
ADVANCED M5
OF ALL TIME’**





MDM mode engaged, which slackens off the traction and stability systems just enough to add a more textured layer of involvement. Your senses are heightened and the car feels less restricted, still tied down but with the safety straps loosened. It means that 616bhp and 553lb ft of torque isn't the intimidating combination your grey matter tells you it should be, rather it becomes a source of energy to enjoy.

But there's another dimension to the M5 experience. There's always been a sharpness to the F90's steering and dynamics and that's still clearly evident with this latest Competition model, so when you decide it's time to step up to the challenge of a 616bhp rear-drive supersaloon, switching to rear-wheel drive secures a sweeter connection between you and the car.

In the slower corners it's now up to you to manage the power and torque delivery as you take advantage of a front axle that now only has to deal with the task of steering – and a pair of rear tyres that could disappear in a plume of rubber smoke if your right foot goes all out. Yet, regardless of the drivetrain setting, if you're measured and precise this near-five-metre-long saloon car feels half its size, performing with a confidence that's totally unexpected, especially to those in the rear seats streaming Netflix through the in-built entertainment system!

Forty years ago the E12 M535i created a blueprint that resulted in the first M5, powered by the motorsport-derived 3.5-litre six-cylinder engine that had been the heart and soul of BMW's only bona fide supercar, the M1. Since then the M5 has evolved, grown in every measurable way, and while rivals have come, gone and stuck around, the original Bavarian bruiser remains a cult classic. So while its future will undoubtedly involve an element of electrification, if the last four decades have shown us anything it's that the M5 is capable of remaining true to its roots. ✕

BMW M5 Competition

Engine V8, 4395cc, twin-turbo **Power** 616bhp @ 6000rpm **Torque** 553lb ft @ 1800-5860rpm **Weight** 1895kg **Power-to-weight** 330bhp/ton **0-62mph** 3.3sec
Top speed 155mph (limited) **Basic price** £102,325

evo rating ★★★★★



M IS FOR MOTORSPORT: BMW'S TRACK RECORD

IT'S SAID THAT MOTORSPORT IMPROVES THE breed, but really it's consistency in motorsport that's the key. Rolling into a race paddock, blitzing the opposition for a couple of seasons and leaving again provides an instant hit, but it's those who compete week in, week out, year after year that reap the biggest rewards in terms of tin pots on the shelves and a loyal following of customers who want to be part of your success.

Which helps explain why BMW is the most successful manufacturer in not one but two legendary 24-hour races. Since 1965 a BMW has won the Spa 24 Hours a record 24 times and if you drive an hour up the road to the Nürburgring, you'll discover it has also won more twice-around-the-clock races on the Nordschleife than any other manufacturer with 20 victories, including in 1998 when a 320d took the chequered flag. Incidentally, Hans-Joachim Stuck, who shared the driving duties that weekend, also won the very first 24 Hours of the Nürburgring, also in a BMW when he and Clemens Schickentanz beat the field



Left: E30 M3 dominated touring car racing in the 1980s. **Below:** 3.0 CSL at the Nürburgring in '73. **Bottom:** V12 LMR takes the chequered flag at Le Mans, 1999



in their 2002 Ti in 1970. Rowe Racing's M6 GTE claimed BMW's 24th victory in 2020.

Twenty-eight European Touring Car Championship titles also belong to BMW, the first coming in 1966 when Herbert Hahne claimed the Division Three crown in his 1800ti, the last in 2004 with Andy Priaulx. The Guernsey-born champion would also win three consecutive World Touring Car championships with BMW (2005-07).

Roberto Ravaglia won the same in 1987. The Ravaglia name will be known by many E30 M3 and wider BMW M aficionados, for the Italian won no fewer than seven motorsport titles with BMW, including the European Touring Car crown to go with his world title, a DTM title and three Italian Touring Car championships. Little wonder they named an M3 after him.

Accompanying Ravaglia's 1989 success, Eric van der Poele won BMW's first DTM title two years previously with an additional three titles following in the new millennium in 2012, '14 and '16, the last two won by Marco Wittmann. Closer to home, Frank Sytner secured BMW's first British Touring Car Championship in a Prodrive-run E30 M3 in 1988 – the M3 is claimed to be the most successful touring car in history – and three more would follow between 1991 and 1993 from Will Hoy (E30 M3), Tim Harvey (E36 318iS) and Smokin' Jo

Winkelhock (318i). But it's been since 2016 that BMW has dominated the UK championship with five consecutive champions all driving a 3-series.

Including Formula 1 (Nelson Piquet, 1983), Le Mans (Winkelhock, Pierluigi Martini and Yannick Dalmas, 1999), six Formula 2 titles won with BMW engines between 1973 and 1982, and the Formula BMW single-seater series hosting future F1 world champions (Nico Rosberg and Sebastian Vettel), a series that also nurtured the talent of future Le Mans champions in Andre Lotterer and Earl Bamber, M's success reaches far and wide.

F1 champion Jenson Button cut his teeth with BMW's return to F1 in 2000, and touring and sports car legend Steve Soper was a force to be reckoned with when he slid behind the wheel of any BMW race car (just ask John Cleland!). There was also success off road, with a victory in the world rally championship when Bernard Béguin won the 1987 Tour de Corse rally in his Prodrive-built E30 M3.

Every single victory has either been based on a BMW road car you could buy, or resulted in a piece of technology available in one (V10- engined M5, anyone?). In fact, ever since Fritz Huschke von Hanstein and Walter Bäumer won the 1940 Mille Miglia behind the wheel of a BMW 328 Touring, motorsport has enjoyed an inextricable link with the BMW road cars we enjoy to this day.

'THE M3 IS CLAIMED TO BE THE MOST SUCCESSFUL TOURING CAR IN HISTORY'





MULTIPLE CHOICE

Just where does the 2021 M5 fit into M division's formidable line-up of sports saloons and coupes? Our handy guide will explain all



ONCE UPON A TIME IT WAS OH SO EASY TO FOLLOW

a manufacturer's model strategy: there was the small one, the slightly bigger one and the *grand fromage* at the top of the pile. You might get a spin-off or two, but it was generally pretty straightforward. And then the product planners discovered niches and before long convention was thrown out of the window and the high-performance people carrier was born (remember the AMG R63?) and limos were setting lap times. All very strange.

In the world of BMW M, more niches have been avoided than exploited, the focus trained on delivering coupes and saloons that more often than not set the performance benchmark.

Yet even M isn't immune from seemingly stepping on its own toes, and with the arrival of the new M3 and M4 this year, and the continued success of the M2, there are now two very compelling coupes to choose from. Or, depending how you look at it, two very compelling saloons to choose from. And then there's the M5 and the M8 family. The former a single entity, the latter a trio of options offering different ways to enjoy 616bhp. To the layperson such a spread of performance cars with very similar remits invites questions about fishing for the same drivers from a very shallow pool. But in M's case there's actually a clear rationale at work – as we discovered when we convened a family gathering...

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



M2 COMPETITION & CS

THE HERO

If you grew up worshipping the E30 M3 and long for a modern equivalent today, the M2 is your solution. In Competition – or even better CS – trim, it's pretty much unbeatable for pure driving thrills. Its compact size, power-to-weight and dynamic balance make for one of the most exploitable driver's cars available. The M2's compactness provides a pugnacious look reminiscent of the E30 with its box arches and four-square stance.

As with the limited edition 1M of the early noughties, the M2 family has firmly established itself as the 21st century remake of M's original all-action hero, allowing the division to showcase its DNA in its purest form.



M5 COMPETITION

THE LEGEND

The M5 has always been at the very core of the M division but today it arguably faces its biggest challenges from within. At its heels is the M3, a model that has evolved and grown into a junior supersaloon. Ahead is the M8, which in Gran Coupé form might be seen as a more exotic interpretation of the M5 formula. Yet the M5 still retains a clear identity. It's more focused than any of the M8s, and while the M3 offers space and grace, it doesn't quite pull off the effortless performance remit as convincingly as the M5. Forty years on, the M5 remains the go-to supersaloon. And if you want a little more edge, this year's new CS edition will provide it.



M3/M4 COMPETITION



THE ICON

Regardless of your feelings towards BMW's new design language, the arrival of a new M3 and M4 is big news in the performance car world. It's the original pace-setter, the sports saloon that all rivals still benchmark against. But its role has evolved. It's matured, it's grown and its performance has increased to levels previously unthinkable for a family saloon (and now an estate car). UK customers won't get a manual gearbox, but rear-wheel drive remains (four-wheel-drive models will come later). For some the M3 now blends elements of the M5 in its more measured approach, but it will also remain the car on which M is judged. No pressure.

M IN THE MODERN ERA

The first shift in what M stood for came in 1998, when the Z3 M Coupé made its debut and left many BMW followers scratching their heads. After all, the Z3 wouldn't be your first choice if you were looking to develop a focused, front-engined, rear-drive, short-wheelbase sports car. And yet the Z3 M turned out to be a brilliant example of what's possible when you let the engineers have free rein.

There was no need to build the Z3 M, no homologation requirements to go racing, no rivals to challenge. It was M having fun. It was also the beginning of M looking at what else it could apply its expertise to within the wider BMW range.

The Z4 M was an obvious successor but market forces saw the first BMW X- car roll into the M workshops for a workout before the first decade of the new millennium was over. In 2000, as a concept car, BMW had fitted a Le Mans-spec V12 into an X5. And then gave it 700bhp, all because it could. Less than a decade later, the X5 M and X6 M were revealed at the New York Auto Show in 2009, the first SUV-based M-cars and the first four-wheel-drive Ms, too.

It would take a full ten years for the X3 and X4 to gain M status. They would also be the first X models to donate an engine to a more conventional M-car, their 3-litre, twin-turbocharged straight-six being shared with the new M3/M4. And, like the saloons and coupes, all four M SUVs have their own distinct characters, which is an achievement in itself considering the purpose they were originally designed for.

In the near-50 years that M has been an entity it has never shied away from breaking new ground or breaking from its own conventions. Not being afraid to experiment and move into new arenas is how the subdivision has survived: change and adapt, because standing still isn't an option and you will only draw the attention of the accountants if you do! It's why M lets you buy an X3 M and an M8 GC and a broad selection in between.

M8 COMPETITION



THE FLAGSHIP

It's easy to consider the M8 family as an M5 reconfigured to whichever of the three body styles you've opted for: two-door coupe or convertible, or four-door Gran Coupé. Having two 616bhp four-wheel-drive, four-door M-cars might look profligate, but the M8 Gran Coupé delivers a different driving proposition to that of an M5. Its softer-edged approach makes it more a four-door GT than a hard-nosed supersaloon, yet it retains the level of performance you'd expect. Its two-door coupe relative is equally GT-esque. As driver's cars that straddle the world of mile-eating GTs, both coupe and Gran Coupé still offer a clear point of difference.



FAST FLEET

Toyota GR Supra

Our Supra hits the track and squares up to a rival in the form of Audi's TT RS. Which circa-£55k coupe would we choose? Place your bets

I'VE JUST SUCKERED A GOPRO TO the Supra's nose. Deputy editor Adam Towler is in front of me in the equally yellow Honda Civic Type R Limited Edition that led our Driven section last month, and we're ready to record some high-speed car-to-car video.

Adam exits the pitlane of Bedford Autodrome's West Circuit and heads out onto the cold and lightly moist track in the Cup 2-shod front-wheel-drive hot hatchback. I'm close behind in the 335bhp rear-wheel-drive coupe, progressively putting my foot down in third gear when – snap! – the Toyota's rear wheels are spinning and its back end has bolted sideways. And Towler? Well, he's gone.

Aside from helping me to look a bit

foolish in front of my colleagues, the Supra has just reconfirmed to me that it may have something of a traction issue. I catch up with Adam (who charitably slows down to give me a fighting chance), but for the next three laps the Honda surges ahead out of every single bend. When we return to the pitlane, editor Gallagher looks unimpressed and jumps into the Toyota to find out if my excuses wash. Two laps later he's back and considerably more sympathetic. Phew. It's not just me then.

At this point I quickly surmise that the Audi TT RS we've brought along to compare with the Supra might make the better chase car. And indeed it does.

In our time with the GR Supra, regular keeper Ian Eveleigh has proclaimed a





p142 Dacia Duster



p144 Porsche 911 Carrera (996)



p146 Audi RS7 Sportback



p148 BMW M340i xDrive



growing affection for it, but while driving (and living with) a car in isolation can allow you to gain a fuller appreciation for it, sometimes you just want to find out how it stacks up against a key rival, and alongside the £54,340 Toyota, the £56,655 Audi stands out as the other sports coupe whose approach is less focused than that of an Alpine A110 or Porsche Cayman T.

So as I've just discovered, the Supra is a slippery sucker, and one with a shortage of progression and clarity where it counts. The overwhelming glut of torque – the peak of 369lb ft arrives at just 1600rpm – hits the rear differential in a solid lump, then the short wheelbase, inconsistently locking differential and cloudy feedback of the softly calibrated transmission combine to make straddling the

limit an uncomfortable experience. Be more of a hooligan and it will do the sideways stuff nicely, but when trying genuinely to pull some neat laps it feels messy and uncoordinated.

The impression is similar on the road, making it a hard car to have faith in when occupying the upper reaches of its dynamic ability, especially as speeds rise. Eveleigh notes that this impression worsened significantly with the arrival of winter, with cold or, worse, damp asphalt significantly reducing the ability of the Michelin Pilot Super Sports to maintain purchase or relinquish their hold in a progressive fashion. But, ultimately, natural and intuitive at-the-limit handling is not the Supra's forte.

The Audi TT RS is a markedly different experience, but then these two small coupes

couldn't be more diverse under the skin, the TT's transverse engine and front-biased all-wheel-drive system being a real counter to the Supra's neoclassical front-engine, rear-drive layout.

Despite being a cylinder down, the Audi's 2.5-litre turbocharged in-line five punches much harder too, with a 59bhp advantage and two extra driven wheels to put that power onto the road.

You might be surprised to hear that the TT RS's tail is also quite mobile out on track, but only under braking, and it's something that is instantly neutralised when you get back onto the throttle. Unlike the AMG A45 S and incoming Golf R, the TT RS doesn't have a trick torque-vectoring rear differential; instead it leads with its nose regardless of the conditions. This sets it up perfectly for the car review cliché of



proclaiming the TT to be a safe, secure and slightly understeery experience on a circuit, but it describes its behaviour particularly aptly.

On the road, front-end grip is substantial enough that you rarely see the nose pushing wide, but where you're constantly prodding the Supra to see what it'll do next, the TT can reveal its entire dynamic spectrum within a handful of miles. The Audi is simply a more binary experience, which is not to say it's not capable – if anything its dynamics are arguably more complete than the Supra's – but it follows a very different, more one-dimensional path.

What happens on the confines of a track or favourite back road doesn't represent the entire repertoire of this pair though, and the Audi gains favour when considering these cars as daily drivers. The TT RS is one of few relatively affordable new

'The TT is a markedly different experience; this pair couldn't be more diverse'

sports cars that's totally and utterly dominated by its powertrain. Despite the recent adoption of some particulate filters in the exhaust and a more emissions-friendly calibration to its seven-speed dual-clutch gearbox, the Audi's 394bhp in-line five remains a brilliantly charismatic unit. It needs a moment to get its turbo spinning, but once it's up and running the TT RS feels incredibly rapid, while

the soundtrack is a superbly judged combination of induction noise and subtle speaker augmentation.

Admittedly, the transmission has lost its edge – the ignition cut that used to coincide with upshifts has been removed, no doubt for the sake of emissions, so too the propensity to ignite a few drops of unburnt petrol in the exhaust manifold on downshifts. But overall the TT RS's powertrain still delivers in a way that can't help but channel the romantic notion of flying down Finnish dirt roads in a screaming E2, even though you're actually driving around Bedfordshire in a grey TT with a tacky rear wing.

The Supra is not without nostalgia of its own, of course. Aside from its predecessor's starring role in a certain movie series, painted orange with stickers up the side and capable of endless upshifts

FAST FLEET



Left: the TT's interior feels more modern and polished than the Supra's (far left). **Below left:** the same can be said of how these cars drive, which could sway your decision in either direction

for dramatic effect, there are also memories of an engine family that's arguably even more hallowed than the Audi's warbling five-pot. Toyota's iconic JZ, particularly in earlier 1J form, isn't just a bulletproof base for 1000bhp tuners, but even in factory form has an incredible ability to rev into the stratosphere and sound like a miniature exotic while doing so.

On paper, Toyota's deal with BMW to utilise its in-line six-cylinder engine sounded like an opportunity to tap into this heritage, but the reality is somewhat different. The B58 twin-turbocharged 3-litre feels over-digitised, held back in some respects and poorly augmented in others, and its torque curve is too broad, perhaps to benefit other recipients such as BMW's X5 and X7. It just doesn't feel suited to the Supra or its expressive demeanour.

The reality is neither of these sports coupes really hits the mark as a driver's car, but as more rounded everyday propositions they

do offer their own, quite distinct experiences. The Audi is faster, more capable, better built (with a fabulous interior) and has that uncanny ability to rest on the laurels of its superb engine. But it's the Supra that has more to offer. Its snappy handling is a challenge, yet is unerringly entertaining in a self-sabotaging sort of way, and it's all wrapped up in a distinctive, mini-supercar-like package that draws more positive attention than just about anything we've run on the Fast Fleet in recent memory. We like the Supra, fake vents and all.

Jordan Katsianis (@JordanKatsianis)

Date acquired March 2020 **Total mileage** 11,011
Mileage this month 711 **Costs this month** £0
mpg this month 27.5

'As rounded, everyday propositions they offer their own, quite distinct experiences'



Dacia Duster

The Fast Fleet's odd one out leaves us with its head held high

U NLIKELY LONG-TERM TEST CARS HAVE long been part and parcel of **evo** Fast Fleet folklore. In the early days of the magazine I remember running a Subaru Forester Turbo (complete with Prodrive tweaks) and becoming completely smitten by its combination of plain looks, improbable pace and impressive practicality.

Some years later the magazine ran an early Skoda Yeti, which was another smash hit. Especially after it was fitted with Dunlop Direzza trackday rubber. Lapping the Nordschleife in it with three mates and all our luggage is one of the more amusing things I've ever done.

The Dacia Duster is the latest improbable, yet highly endearing Fast Fleet loaner. Originally secured by editor Gallagher as the real-world foil to his Aston Vantage long-termer, his plan was quickly thwarted when I 'borrowed' the Duster for a week or two and never got round to giving it back.

For some of you it simply won't compute to see

evo running a Dacia of any description. To be honest, were it not a Duster I would take some convincing that a bargain-priced 115bhp diesel-powered 4x4 estate car has any place in a magazine dedicated to The Thrill of Driving. But. Given the magazine has been advocating the 'faster doesn't mean better' perspective for some years now, what better way to put that to the test?

OK, so my heart sank at the colour. Especially when I encountered other Dusters in far classier hues of metallic blue or gunmetal grey, but try-hard ginger and glitzy alloys aside, our Dacia was admirably unpretentious. If you're used to Audis or Mercs then the look and feel of the interior would be a challenge, but much like flying EasyJet instead of BA, or shopping in Aldi rather than Waitrose, when you take a step back you realise all the things you need are there.

Besides, plain doesn't have to mean poor. Points were scored for simple, hard-wearing cloth trim,

intuitive touchscreen infotainment with Apple CarPlay (read this and weep, Aston DBX owners), plus a refreshingly honest approach to affordable everyday motoring. Put it this way, I'd far rather live with a Duster than some average, anonymous, anodyne hatchback.

I never got a chance to try the more potent diesel Duster, nor the petrol-engined model, which is a shame as the 115 DCi powertrain lacked refinement and was a bit hobbled by mismatched gear ratios. First gear should really be labelled as some kind of low ratio, such was its lack of reach. Thankfully some lateral thinking led me to pull away in second, thereby making a bit more sense of the ratios. It also effected an instant, cost-free conversion from annoying six-speed gearbox to more tolerable five-speed complete with dog-leg first.

If the engine/gearbox betrayed humble origins, the chassis had surprising sparkle, with plenty of poise, modest grip and a supple ride. In a funny sort of way the Duster helped me rediscover the joy of roads that had long since been lost to rampant progress in performance. Where top-end hot hatches can dismiss lumpy A and B-roads at three-figure speeds, the Duster could be happily hustled onto its door handles without any sense of recklessness.





'In so many ways it was like therapy, each trip providing further opportunity to find fun in not going fast'

Rain or shine, it put a smile on my face and spared me the lingering fizz of speeder's remorse.

I also did plenty of long days pounding the motorways and never found the Duster wanting. It would sit happily at a realistic outside-lane pace, but never generated that stress you get when driving cars that can happily cruise all day at 120mph. In so many ways it was like therapy, each trip providing further opportunity to find fun in not going fast.

My time with the Duster also happened to coincide with moving house. A planned hiatus living in rental meant shipping all our worldly chattels piecemeal from home to storage, with only the largest items reserved for a manic two days in

a rented Luton-bodied Mercedes. With seats folded flat, the Duster proved to be an excellent van, shifting countless boxes and smaller pieces of furniture without complaint or any lasting scuffs on the hard-wearing interior. In those stressful few weeks it became less a car, more a dependable life-saver.

I can't speak for the quality of my local Dacia dealership as I didn't cover enough miles for the Duster to require a service. What I can say is it only needed one modest top-up with oil, averaged 43mpg, hadn't developed any interior rattles or squeaks and drove as well when I handed it back as it did when I first took it home.

Would I have rather run an Audi RS6 or some bigger, ballsier 'premium' SUV? At times, yes, but I'm honest enough to say that most of those moments had more to do with my ego and worrying

about what other people might think of me than any shortcomings in the Duster. The longer I lived with it, the less I cared about projecting some kind of high-roller image, and the more I came to enjoy the fact I was once again enjoying driving as I did when I first passed my test.

If you're looking for a humble yet well resolved car that fulfils every aspect of family life, delivers plenty of harmless fun and possesses a genuine element of cult appeal, then you'd find a four-wheeled friend in the Dacia Duster.

Richard Meaden (@DickieMeaden)

Date acquired January 2020 **Duration of test** 10 months **Total test mileage** 5581 **Overall mpg** 43.0 **Costs** £0 **Purchase price** £20,355 **Value today** £14,200



Porsche 911 Carrera (996.2)

A tuning session cures the 996's reluctant running – and returns some impressive figures to boot

I KNEW THE 996 WASN'T ENTIRELY HAPPY because the fuel consumption had disappeared through the floor (22mpg average in normal driving). Fitting freer-flowing exhaust back-boxes shouldn't require any additional set-up work, but I'd also added less restrictive cats and a different system design that mixes the gas paths in the centre below the rear valance.

As I mentioned last month, it was also struggling for low-down response and torque, another sign that it was running too rich, even if top-end enthusiasm seemed to have improved. I described the situation to Rob Young at DMS Automotive, who said he'd seen such a problem on 996s many times before, so it was off to Southampton to investigate further.

I've never been up close to a car on a rolling road before, and certainly not my own pride and joy, so when it was strapped down and a giant – and deafening – fan was placed in front of its snout, I felt a little nervous. But I've known Rob for years and trust completely in his abilities and experience.

Rob's first run was merely to see where things

currently stood, not just in terms of the power and torque, but also to see how accurate the lambda sensor data being sent to the ECU was. Satisfied that his own readings (via a probe) matched the car's (a sign of a well-designed exhaust system, apparently – nice one Kline Innovation) it was time to delve deeper.

It would have been nice to know what the car was putting out before the fitment of the exhaust, but I was bursting with pride that after 18 years and 85,000 miles the 996 logged 310bhp and 280lb ft of torque on that first run – that's just 5bhp less and actually 6lb ft more than the claimed factory figures. Admittedly, the graph betrayed the rather limp delivery between 3000 and 4000rpm, but that's what we were there to sort out.

Rob then got busy with the laptop, increasing the ignition advance while seeking to optimise the target lambda, and then did another run on the rollers, then some more keyboard tapping, and then another run, and so on, eventually arriving at an amazing 339bhp and 300lb ft. Such figures put

it on a par with the factory X51 Powerkit (341bhp and 274lb ft), which had the benefit of different cams, cylinder head work and revised induction.

I was staggered, and, I must confess, in a state of slight disbelief, but Rob seemed very happy indeed with OCL's health and confident in what had been achieved. The actual 'proof' was the journey home, which is the best drive I've had in my 996 during the four years I've owned it. The mid-range muscle has returned, but the way the power now really takes off, particularly over 4000rpm, is addictive, and it really howls, too (helped slightly by deleting the Heimholtz resonator with a simple kit).

Tellingly, and in spite of not sparing a single horse for the entire slog home, we averaged a frankly baffling 29mpg. Love it.

Adam Towler (@AdamTowler)

Date acquired May 2016 **Total mileage** 85,447 **Mileage this month** 251 **Costs this month** £594 **tuning mpg this month** 29.0

Porsche 911 Carrera (993)

The weight-saving campaign continues with the fitment of a carbonfibre engine cover

MY GOAL FOR MY 993 HAS ALWAYS BEEN to enhance its abilities and turn it into my ultimate weekend toy. Part of this mission has been to reduce the car's weight in various ways – the recent new wheels being a prime example – but at the same time I've been careful not to go too far and make the car uncomfortable or unusable for long drives. This is why I haven't replaced the rear carpet with a lightweight RS-spec version as it might just tip road noise levels over the edge.

But I'm always looking for new ways to cut weight, and this is how I came across J-Tec Composites and got chatting to owner James Newman.

J-Tec specialises in the production of bespoke carbonfibre body panels, and it makes an engine lid for the 993 that saves 5kg over the OEM steel item. This sounded like a perfect upgrade for me as it should reduce weight at the rear of the car without any comfort disadvantages. Fitting promised to be easy too, as the panel follows the form of the original component exactly.

Newman explained that the panel's various components are built up from multiple layers of dry

fabric in individual moulds, with additional plies added in critical areas, such as for the hinges and latches, to ensure the strength is appropriate. These layers are then infused with resin, which for the likes of the 993's engine cover is one with a high temperature resistance to ensure the panel can withstand the heat from the engine and sunlight, which combined can see surface temperatures top 80deg C. The parts then undergo a two-stage curing process, before being trimmed and bonded together with epoxy adhesive, then sent to the paint shop for lacquering or painting.

'The carbonfibre weaves looked amazing - lining up perfectly like on a high-end supercar'

I had originally thought I would have the engine cover painted in Midnight Blue to match the rest of the car, but when I saw the panel I couldn't believe how amazing the carbon weaves looked – they all lined up perfectly, like you'd see on a high-end supercar – so it seemed a shame not to be able to appreciate the quality of the work.

True to J-Tec's claim, the installation was very straightforward and I managed to remove the old lid and fit the new one in just a couple of hours. All the original cables, hinges and rubbers fitted perfectly and the new panel works with the original gas struts.

I'm really happy with the final look and think the carbon finish goes nicely with the RS Touring wing and dark blue paintwork, giving a hint of motorsport flare and, importantly, saving another 5kg.

Aston Parrott (@AstonParrott)

Date acquired April 2016 **Total mileage** 86,411 **Mileage this month** 45 **Costs this month** £1200 engine cover **mpg this month** 28.0





END OF TERM

Audi RS7 Sportback

The big Audi Sport coupe has gone, but it's left a lasting impression

THERE WERE MANY TIMES DURING THE nine months with our RS7 that when you let the (£650) power-close frameless door shut and sank into its diamond-stitched seat, a much-needed barrier between you and the outside world was formed, a calmness washing over you, secure in the knowledge that, a stage from the Group B era of the World Rally Championship aside, Audi Sport's five-door coupe wasn't going to be phased by anything it might stumble across.

Knowing you had the key to the telephone box red Audi to take you home at the end of a challenging day or a long flight (remember those? Our RS7 arrived when regular trips to the airport were considered normal) rarely led to negotiations to swap into something a little more hardcore. The fastest of the Audi Sport coupes blended its violent performance with restrained sophistication and a chassis that made for not only one of the best driver's cars Audi

has produced outside of the R8, but one of the best supersaloons on sale, too. In short, there were more times than not when the RS7 proved itself to be worthy of its place on the *evo* Fast Fleet, even if there were some who would rather it had been an example of its more famous RS6 brother instead.

A number of things contributed to the RS7's great appeal. Its twin-turbocharged V8 lacked for nothing in the horsepower and torque stakes, with 592bhp and 590lb ft respectively. Wound up and let off its leash it could arrive at the horizon far quicker than any car the wrong side of 2000kg had any right to. Yet despite the V8's willingness to rev to the higher echelons of its range, it always felt more natural when you operated around its mid-range, surfing that torque and dipping into the more flamboyant power when required rather than all the time.

A good supersaloon has always managed to deliver its sizeable performance advantage over its more

restrained siblings without drawing unnecessary attention to itself and this was where the RS7 excelled. Its ability to clear slower traffic with such efficiency made the process not only effortless but also safe, your time exposed to danger reduced to the minimum. Add in the ability to run with the exhaust valves closed regardless of the engine mode selected and you could do so in relative silence, too.

Not that a Tango red RS7 blended in. In a more subtle shade it would have been far less overt and shouty, and a better match for the interior, which blended some fine materials with a design and ergonomics that just seemed to work. There was no standout element to why this was, it just did, with a simplicity that felt so natural.

While the seat didn't drop you low in the cabin like those of a Panamera, you did feel you were sitting in rather than on the RS7, which added a great deal to the feeling of connection and isn't always a given today. Only the lacklustre gearshift paddles let the side down. The powertrain responded so well to the driver using manual mode, the shift speeds snappy once you'd dived into the Drive Select software, but the paddles felt like cheap buttons rather than an



'It didn't make you work for the rewards or go looking for its ability, it was just always on'

extension to a sophisticated eight-speed gearbox; Audi needs to put a call in to Lamborghini's supplier and order the Huracán's paddles.

It's what's under the RS7's skin that made it capable of stepping out of the shadows of its more famous rivals, though. Our example was equipped with the optional RS Sport Suspension Plus with Dynamic Ride Control and carbon-ceramic brakes, these two adding £11,000 to the car's £97,090 list price, which includes four-wheel steering and a torque-vectoring rear differential as standard.

By ditching the standard air suspension in favour of fixed-rate springs and three-way adjustable dampers interlinked via diagonally opposed oil lines, KR69 FHX was the most dynamically tuned RS7 available. There

was no trade-off in ride quality and the combined chassis tech resulted in a big, fast Audi that was genuinely engaging to drive. It didn't make you work for the rewards or go looking for its ability, either, it was just always on. One minute you could be meandering along a high street, backside being chilled, V8 barely ticking over, the next you were alone on a road you know well and the RS7 was ready for whatever you threw at it. Alert, responsive, light on its 22-inch Pirellis; a car in complete control.

It had an unexpectedly welcome level of body control, it turned in with a keenness that's lacking in the supposedly more dynamic RS4 and 5 models, and its steering, especially in Dynamic mode, reacted exactly as expected with no surprises

and none of the numbness and remote feeling of Audis of old. It always felt like a totally resolved car. Until it went on track, that is, where its bulk worked against it, turning a lithe road car into a rather blunt instrument, as we discovered at eCoty last month.

Then again, you wouldn't buy an RS7 as a trackday car. You would, however, buy one if you were looking for a do-everything family performance car.

Stuart Gallagher (@stuartg917)

Date acquired January 2020 **Duration of test** 9 months **Total test mileage** 7798 **Overall mpg** 23.8 **Costs** £15 oil **Purchase price** £138,725 **Value today** £87,950



BMW M340i xDrive Touring

With a little massaging of its driver modes, the M340i can be turned into the car it was intended to be

B EING OF A CERTAIN AGE, THERE IS AN element of Luddism to how I approach technology in cars, particularly stuff that appears to be the answer to questions no one has asked. The M340i has a lot of technology packed within it: driver modes, driving assistance systems and the ability to adjust the radio's volume by twirling your finger, not that this last piece is new technology, just one I have yet to fathom a need for in the four or so years since it first appeared.

The driver modes I get, sometimes even welcome. Default settings allow manufacturers to get their car through emissions tests, while the configurable element provides you with the opportunity to experience the car as the engineers intended it to be before the bureaucrats stepped in. Thankfully the M340i's set-up is easy to tailor if you want to step outside of the pre-configured Eco Pro, Comfort and Sport modes.

Initially you're drawn to Adaptive mode, as it claims to adjust to your driving style without you needing to make the decision on any of the configurables. The reality is that it's hard to detect any changes, which is why I've dived into the Sport Individual settings for when the default Comfort

'In Sport Plus mode the engine has the eagerness a 3-litre turbo six should have'

leaves you wanting. Initially I went for a familiar set-up: Sport for the engine, Comfort for the chassis and Sport for the steering. But the 340i felt like it was still being held back, so Sport Plus for the engine was selected and I haven't felt the need to change it since. It delivers the sharpness and eagerness the on-paper spec suggests a 3-litre turbocharged six-cylinder engine should have, plus it requires more subtlety to how you apply the throttle rather than you simply trying to push the pedal through the bulkhead all the time.

Don't get me wrong, it's no GT2 RS with the traction off and its Cup 2 tyres at sub-zero temps if you do try to bend the throttle pedal, but it does encourage, and at times require, you to be more measured and less lead-footed so as not to wake

the stability systems or unsettle the xDrive four-wheel drive. I've also found that slackening off the stability systems makes for smoother progress, as it allows the car to take on a degree of slip angle before you or the electronics bring it back into line, resulting in a much more linear and progressive approach in the current winter conditions. Leave the systems in full control and they tend to grab the brakes at the earliest opportunity and at times with an unexpected jolt, but leave it to move around and flow with your intended progress and the M340i reveals the dynamic traits BMW has built its reputation on for so long.

The driver assistance technology, on the other hand, is less welcome. Just as it is in every car fitted with such systems. Thankfully, BMWs don't revert to their default settings every time you return to the car, so once you've turned everything labelled 'steering assist' off, you're left with the collision warnings that are designed to prevent one rather than cause one.

Stuart Gallagher (@stuartg917)

Date acquired October 2020 **Total mileage** 6531 **Mileage this month** 1427 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 32.3



"If you want one of the most rewarding and engaging sub-£100,000 sports cars on sale today, buy a Carrera T and send it to Litchfield. It's that good."

Autocar 5/10/18



"Nothing less than a revelation"

Car Magazine 25/09/18

9/10

"It is a very sympathetic, well integrated and engineered package that does nothing to remove comfort or usability, but plenty to enhance enjoyment."

Top Gear 13/10/18

9/10

"The throttle response is astonishing... one of my favourite three cars of the year"

@Drivenation_ 5/10/18



PORSCHE UPGRADES & SERVICING

litchfieldmotors.com/porsche
+44 (0)1684 216 000

ESSENTIALS

Must-haves for the *evo* reader and their car



Carparrel

Share your passion for motoring with Carparrel's new Italian Supercar Icons collection. Available on 100% cotton shirts, or as high-quality art prints, there are four designs to choose from, each showcasing the unique design features of Italian automotive machinery. UK orders include free shipping, and if you're an *evo* reader you can get 20% off with the code EVO20.

Visit carparrel.com

CXC Simulations Motion Pro II

A racing simulator for those with serious cash to spend, the CXC Simulations Motion Pro II accurately replicates the thrill of race car driving. Boasting a proprietary full-motion control system, braking feedback, virtual reality and vast choice of cars and tracks. The Motion Pro II starts at \$57,000 (around £44,000).

Visit cxcsimulations.com



Heel Tread Socks

These eye-catching Heel Tread socks are inspired by the world's most iconic cars and racing liveries. The fast-growing collection features quintessential automotive icons ideally suited for true petrol heads. Made in Portugal, Heel Tread socks use seamless knitting to create the highest-quality cotton products.

Visit heeltread.com



Q²M Tire Express

You always want your tyres to be at their best. Gyeon's Q²M Tire Express is the ultimate water-based tyre and rubber dressing, offering fantastic looks matched with easy application. Use it to restore that 'factory fresh' feel on both wet and dry tyres, and keep them looking great for many more miles to come. Q²M Tire Express is available to buy in 400ml and 1,000ml bottles.

Visit gyeonquartz.com





Joe Macari Performance Cars

Official Ferrari & Maserati aftersales

Performance and classic car sales

Restoration and Classiche services

2015 Ferrari LaFerrari



U.K. Supplied with taxes paid, 1 Owner, Giallo Modena, Full Service History, 475 miles

£2,299,950

2018 Ford GT



U.K. Supplied, 1 Owner, Liquid Blue Exterior with Lightspeed Interior theme, 475 miles

£699,950

1990 Ferrari F40



EU Supplied, Cat Adjust example, Fantastic service history and vast history file, 21,750 miles

£949,950

1966 Ferrari 275 GTB/6C



RHD U.K. Supplied, Ultimate specification Longnose Alloy 6 Carb, Classiche Certified, 46,300 miles

POA

2015 Dodge Viper TA 2.0



U.K. Registered and compliant, 2 owners from new, 6-Speed manual, 8.4 L N/A V10, 2,360 miles

£119,950

1963 Ferrari 250 GT Lusso



Fully restored, 1 owner for 50 years, Azzuro over Blu, Classiche Certified & matching numbers, 16,630 miles

POA

2019 Ferrari 812 Superfast



U.K. Supplied, Nero DS over Nero, Highly specified, Extensive carbon fibre options, 1,450 miles

£229,950

2017 Aston Martin Zagato



Zagato Volante, U.K. Supplied, 1 of 99, Lightning Silver over Grey, Full Service History, 1,250 miles

£434,950

2016 Ferrari F12 TDF



U.K. Supplied, 1 Owner, Full Service History, Giallo Modena over Nero Alcantara, Delivery miles

£649,950



@joemacari

T: +44 (0)20 8870 9007
E: sales@joemacari.com

249 - 251 Merton Road,
London, SW18 5EB,
United Kingdom

"M2 performance with newfound precision and control."

- EVO Magazine ★★★★★

"It's so much more composed with the springs and dampers combining beautifully to deal with everything that's thrown at them."

- BMWCar Magazine ★★★★★

"The result is a car damn near as quick and exciting as the M2 Competition and, whisper it, more balletic on the road."

- Autocar ★★★★★



**BMW M140i DYNAMICS &
PERFORMANCE UPGRADES**

+44 (0) 1753 657 444
sales@birdsauto.com
www.birdsauto.com

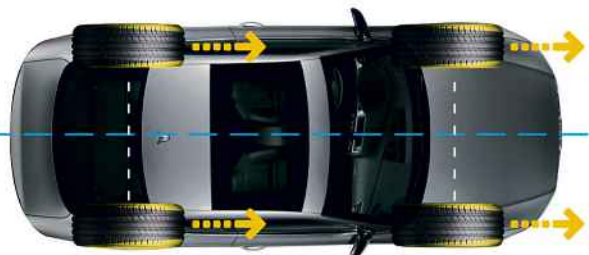
PERFECT BALANCE GUARANTEED...

WITH OUR **ROAD FORCE VARIATION** WHEEL BALANCING

Improper balancing or excessive wheel vibration if left unchecked can result in expensive damage to steering and suspension components and unsafe driving!

We have the solution to resolve these issues by using **Road Force Variation Balancing** which shows exactly how your wheels performs under simulated road conditions. Allowing us to quickly diagnose and eliminate any wheel vibrations, improving your ride and handling.

FOR PERFECTLY BALANCED WHEELS
BOOK YOUR CAR IN WITH US TODAY



WHEEL ALIGNMENT

Problems with your vehicles alignment? our technicians can diagnose and reset your alignment perfectly using the latest Hunter Wheel alignment equipment.

HUNTER ALIGNMENT



ZITO



WHEELS & TYRES

Over 5,000 Tyres in stock by all leading brands, available for all makes and models at the best prices! Plus we are the UK stockist for Zito Alloy Wheels.



PLUS BRAKES, EXHAUSTS & SUSPENSIONS

CALL OR VISIT US ONLINE

0208 531 2300 thetyreshop.com

THE TyreShop.com

2 LOXHAM ROAD • CHINGFORD • LONDON E4 8SE

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)

Table with columns: ISSUE NO., PRICE (ON ROAD INCL VAT), ENGINE CYL/CC, BHP/RPM, LB FT/RPM, WEIGHT, BHP/TON, 0-62MPH (CLAM), 0-80MPH (CLAM), 0-100MPH (CLAM), MAX MPH

EVO RATING

+ Charact and ability; the GTIs 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 unmoled one

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

The Jaguar XESV Project 8 delivers unapologetic supersaloon thrills aplenty - just be sure to order a Touring Edition. If you have a preference for German metal, consider the rampant Mercedes-AMG E63 S (saloon or estate) or BMW M5, or the Audi RS6 Avant. In the class below, try the Mercedes-AMG C63 S.

Main table listing car models with columns for price, engine, bhp, weight, acceleration, top speed, and EVO rating.

PERFORMANCE AWAITS

CONVERSIONS | PARTS | REMAPPING



01280 700 700
INFO@BBRGTI.COM
WWW.BBRGTI.COM



HARNESS THE PERFORMANCE OF YOUR PORSCHE

with the only specialist in the UK to have official
Manthey-Racing equipment and training.



01296 663 824
rpmtechnik.co.uk

Tring, Herts

Register your
interest for
2021

evo
TRACK
DAYS

EVO TRACK DAYS ARE BACK FOR 2021

Experience the thrill of driving with evo Track Days. Whether this is a gift for a fellow petrolhead, or a chance to put yourself behind the wheel, these shiny new track days promise to be fun and adrenaline-filled events.

Two and a half hours of track time not enough for you? Our full day track events will also be back for 2021, giving you seven hours to test your car's limits.*

To stay up to date with 2021 dates, locations and exclusive offers, register your interest today.

*All plans are subject to the outcome of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, and may have to change in line with the government's guidelines.

Register your interest at
evotrackdays.co.uk



DOUBLE SPEED-WAX

Auto EXPRESS PRODUCT AWARDS WINNER 2020

Award-winning paste wax with lasting shine and unbeatable durability.

"It was easily the best performer in our test. It topped the scores at every stage"
- Auto Express magazine

BILT HAMBER LABORATORIES

DOUBLE SPEED-WAX

carnauba polymer paste wax
250ml

Auto EXPRESS PRODUCT AWARDS WINNER 2012 **Auto EXPRESS PRODUCT AWARDS WINNER 2013** **Auto EXPRESS PRODUCT AWARDS WINNER 2014** **Auto EXPRESS PRODUCT AWARDS WINNER 2015** **Auto EXPRESS PRODUCT AWARDS WINNER 2016** **Auto EXPRESS PRODUCT AWARDS WINNER 2017** **Auto EXPRESS PRODUCT AWARDS WINNER 2018** **Auto EXPRESS PRODUCT AWARDS WINNER 2019**

www.bilthamber.com 01277 658899

ROUE

A BEAUTIFUL BLEND OF PERIODS

ONLY AVAILABLE AT
ROUEWATCH.COM



ADRIAN FLUX

Zero to sixty in three seconds?

It's enough to make your typical insurer run in the opposite direction just as fast. Thankfully, at Adrian Flux we do insurance differently.

Just like the world's best supercars, we constantly strive for innovation. From the UK's first driverless car policy to a multi-car scheme that covers vehicles of all shapes and sizes, we aren't afraid to cover new ground.

To see how much you can save on your insurance, call us today

0800 085 5000

adrianflux.co.uk

Authorised & regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority

Tailored Garage
Installation



High-End
Innovative
Design



Transforming simple garages
into breathtaking spaces

WWW.INNOVA-BOX.NET

[e. innovabox.uk@gmail.com](mailto:e.innovabox.uk@gmail.com)

t. 07853 933 642

MAXIMISE ENGINE PERFORMANCE



- Reduces System Pressure
- Prevents Boilover
- Eliminating water based corrosion
- Increases Combustion Efficiency
- Frost Protection down to -40°C

For details on our full range of Waterless Engine Coolants
or to find your local approved stockist visit our website.

www.powercool180.co.uk



WATERLESS ENGINE COOLANT

Non-Toxic All Year round protection

Table with columns: MAKE & MODEL, ISSUE NO., PRICE (on sale), ENGINE Cyl/Coc, BHP/RPM, LB FT/RPM, WEIGHT, BHP/TON, 0-62MPH (claimed), 0-60MPH (0.87G), 0-100MPH (0.87G), MAX MPH, EVO RATING. Lists various car models like Nissan GT-R, Porsche Cayman, and TVR Cerbera.

SUPERCARS / HYPERCARS



OUR CHOICE

McLaren 765LT. Runner-up at evo Car of the Year 2020, where it finished ahead of the Lamborghini Huracán Evo RWD and Ferrari F8 Tributo...



BEST OF THE REST

The Lamborghini Huracán Evo RWD (left) is Sant'Agata's V10 model at its most desirable, while the Ferrari F8 Tributo takes Maranello's mid-engined V8 line to a new state of the art...

Table with columns: MAKE & MODEL, ISSUE NO., PRICE, ENGINE Cyl/Coc, BHP/RPM, LB FT/RPM, WEIGHT, BHP/TON, 0-62MPH, 0-60MPH, 0-100MPH, MAX MPH, EVO RATING. Lists various supercars like Aston Martin DBS, Ferrari F8 Tributo, and McLaren 765LT.

Longstone CLASSIC TYRES



Hey Dolly, nice boots!

©JamieBubb

PIRELLI
CINTURATO™

www.longstone.com
Tel: +44(0)1302 711123





www.southdownssecure.com
info@southdownssecure.com
+44 (0) 1730 825692
+44 (0) 7715 346801

THE ULTIMATE CLASSIC & SUPERCAR STORAGE

HUMIDITY CONTROLLED STORAGE
Nestled in the heart of the South Downs National Park and within 20 minutes of the world-famous Goodwood Motor Circuit

CARSAFE
SECURE STORAGE FOR CLASSIC AND PERFORMANCE VEHICLES

WWW.CARSAFE.CO.UK TEL: CAMBRIDGE 01223 299011

THE FINE CAR STORE
'Caring for fine automobiles'

- Long and short term, dehumidified, purpose built, rural facility
- Comprehensively insured with 24hr CCTV
- Catering for classic, sports and performance car and motorcycles
- Single acquisitions and multiple collections
- UK & European enclosed transporter collection and delivery service
- 15 minutes direct access to Manchester Airport

Facilities in Knutsford and Macclesfield, Cheshire.
01565 872400 • enquiries@thefinecarstore.com • www.thefinecarstore.com

Discrete, accessible, climate controlled car storage in North Yorkshire / Derbyshire

- National and international delivery and collection options
- Insuranced approved CCTV and Intruder Alarm System
- Regular routine checks and gentle off road exercise
- Close to M1 junction 28
- Flexible terms

A1 WETHERBY CAR STORAGE
01423 411459
info@a1wetherbycarstorage.co.uk
WWW.A1WETHERBYCARSTORAGE.CO.UK

A38 CAR STORAGE
01773 843338
info@a38carstorage.co.uk
WWW.A38CARSTORAGE.CO.UK

Richbrook

Perfect fit indoor car covers, available in Red, Blue and Black only £99.

Auto EXPRESS RECOMMENDED 2019

Full info and shop www.richbrook.co.uk or call 01328 862387

Supersoft
Superstrong
Superstretchy

BuyaCar Buying Guide: Ford Fiesta ST (2013-17)

The second Fiesta ST was a junior hot hatch benchmark, and now its more affordable than ever. Here's what to look for, and how **BuyaCar** can help you find one

FIRST IT WAS PEUGEOT. THEN IT WAS Renault. And since 2013, it's been Ford: builders of the essential compact hot hatchback. There had been some fun Fiestas in the past, and a couple of entertaining fast Focuses too, but 2013's Fiesta ST was the first time Ford's smaller model had ever been a bona fide class leader.

With a dealer on every corner and typically competitive pricing, the ST was always going to sell well, but the recipe was just about perfect this time around too. Since the mid-'90s Fiestas have always had fundamentally good underpinnings, but the sixth-generation car was particularly agile, and in ST form was blessed with firmer suspension, broader tyres and a much stronger engine, giving it all the ingredients it needed to shine.

That power unit was a 1.6-litre turbocharged four-cylinder. It seems a little old-school now next to the latest ST's 1.5-litre three-pot, but it really did the business thanks to a 197bhp output on overboost and eager delivery that made it worthwhile hanging on to every rev. Ford followed it up with a special ST200 variant before the model went off sale, whose softer springs but stiffer front anti-roll bar and torsion beam rear axle took the edge off the ride but also perked up the handling, while overboost power rose to 212bhp.

If it was a bargain when new, then the ST is an absolute steal today. Late 2016 ST-2 spec cars with under 10,000 miles per year are now under the £10k mark on BuyaCar, and you can find a 2013 ST-2 with 66,000 miles for as little as £7600 – significantly

less than half its new price. That's a range of between £150 and £176 per month with a £300 BuyaCar contribution, which wouldn't even get you a base-spec Fiesta from Ford's current range.

Those cars are unmodified, too, which is something to look out for with this generation of ST – approved Mountune upgrades are worth considering, but mods will typically correlate with hard use. Previous owners should also have adhered to 12-month or 12,500-mile service intervals (whichever comes first, naturally), but all the options on BuyaCar should be well inside the 125,000-mile cambelt interval. Suspension, tyres and potentially bodywork can take a beating with hot hatches too, but buy wisely and Ford's feisty hatch will not disappoint.

buyacar.co.uk



Buyacar – the easiest way to finance an evo favourite online

Browse more than 60,000 deals on our website, personalise your finance package to suit your budget, and we'll deliver your performance car straight to your door – with 14 days to return it if you don't like it!



Simply the Test

It was a definitive story from evo's early years – although one small thing could possibly have been improved...

'THE TEST. BEST HEADLINE EVER,' SAYS Peter Tomalin, mockingly 'What the hell were we thinking?! The Magazine. The Car. I suppose it depends how you say it: THE TEST or the test.'

It's never really occurred to me before, because when I bought issue 022 back in 2000, the headline's bold, simple declaration seemed to make sense. It was definitive. A line in the gravel trap. I couldn't wait to read it, and it really was quite a read – 28 pages of the magazine being given over to six supercars: Diablo 6.0 VT, 550 Maranello, 360 Modena, 996 Turbo, Viper GTS and Zonda C12.

'The line-up of cars is perhaps fairly ho-hum looking back,' says Tomalin (evo's associate editor at the time), 'but I think we're spoiled now with the sheer number of supercars that are available. A new McLaren every month. But at that point in time these really were rare and the cream of the crop.'

And it was a huge test for evo magazine, which was still something of a newcomer in the market at that point, having been around for less than two years. 'Everything was still fresh and exciting,' Peter recalls. 'We were still getting to know each other in a way. This was also the first time we had been out to Harry Metcalfe's place – the almost mythical villa that he owned in Tuscany. To get out there and discover that it was everything you could hope for in a location, with the beautiful scenery, the light that was perfect for photography and the food that was a significant step up from the usual tube of Pringles and a curly service station sandwich... it was magical.'

It's fascinating looking back at the test and how the cars were perceived in their pomp. In 2000 the 911 Turbo was still settling into its new, sensible supercar persona and its discreetness was perhaps a bit of a disappointment. At the other end of the scale, the Viper was encapsulated in this description of shifting gear: 'The gearknob is almost baseball-size – it's a bit like pulling the lever on a one-arm bandit. You just hope you get two plums when the reels stop.' Meanwhile the Diablo was clearly converting people to the idea of Audi involvement and the Pagani was still just so fresh. 'Nobody else had really

'THEY REALLY WERE RARE AND THE CREAM OF THE CROP'

got into it at that point,' recalls Tomalin, who at the time described it as 'a Group C racer crossed with a Fabergé egg', before going on to paint a picture of John Barker emerging from the Zonda for the first time 'with the expression of a man who's just tasted a completely new flavour and found it very much to his liking'.

'The Pagani probably should have won,' says Peter, 'but there was a problem with the gearbox, which was quite heavy and stiff, and I think a few of us still had reservations about the bought-in Mercedes engine.' An engine that in the original C12 was putting out just

389bhp and delivered a positively yawn-inducing 0-60mph time of 4.5sec.

However, as much as I loved hearing about the cars, I also remember being captivated by the broader picture painted by Peter. It felt like there was no 'behind the scenes' because you were being welcomed wholesale into this very exclusive event. There was humour and nobody was beyond a bit of ribbing: 'Harry is metamorphosing into his alter ego, the hard-driving Italian count Arri Vederci.'

'I needed to include the colour, the characters and the chatter because I'm not a hard-edged road tester,' says Tomalin, modestly. 'Although some of the later eCotys would be more like small novels, this was probably the longest story I'd written at that point. And while you don't like to say it wrote itself, because of course you sweat over it terribly, this feature came more easily than most. Clearly struggled with that headline, though...'



THE ULTIMATE IN PERFORMANCE UPGRADES

AT DMS AUTOMOTIVE WE'VE BEEN UNLEASHING AUTOMOTIVE PERFORMANCE FOR OVER 22 YEARS

DMS MCLAREN 720S (EVO SEPTEMBER 2018)

"THIS IS A CAR THAT NOT ONLY DESERVES YOUR FULL ATTENTION, BUT REQUIRES IT"

DMS 911 TURBO (ULTIMATE SUPERCAR SPRING 2019)

"BALLISTIC PERFORMANCE IN AN EMINENTLY USEABLE PACKAGE"

DMS F10 M5 (EVO DEC '15)

"730BHP, 200MPH+ TYRE-SHREDDING MONSTER"

DMS MCLAREN 650S (EVO OCT '15)

"REAL MUSCULARITY AND THE STRENGTH OF THE MID-RANGE IS STAGGERING"

DMS M2 (EVO SEPT '15)

"MORE POWER DOES MEAN MORE FUN"

BELOW IS A SMALL SELECTION OF OUR MORE POPULAR UPGRADES:

AUDI

RS6 C8 4.0 T V8 » 740+BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
RS6 C7 4.0 T V8 » 700+BHP (DE-LIMIT)
2017 R8 V10 » 650BHP (DE-LIMIT)
RS3 / TT RS (8V MK2) » 500+ BHP (DE-LIMIT)
S3 / GOLF R » 378+ BHP (DE-LIMIT)
3.0 BI-TDI (ALL MODELS) » 400+ BHP
RS4 B9 / RS5 2.9T » 525+ BHP

BMW

F90 M5 / M8 » 770+BHP (+DELIMIT)
X3M / X4M » 630+BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
M850i » 700+BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
M2 COMPETITION » 530BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
M2 » 435BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
M3 / M4 » 540+BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
M5 F10/M6 » 730+BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
X5M/X6M F85 » 730+BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
X5M50D » 480+BHP
M140i / 240i / 340i/440i » 450+BHP
M135i / M235i » 410+BHP
120D / 220D/320D/420D » 240+BHP
320i / 330i » 320+BHP
M340i » 470+BHP
330D / 430D / 530D / 730D » 360BHP
840D / 335D / 435D / 535D » 400+BHP

MERCEDES-BENZ

A45S AMG » 480+BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
A35 AMG » 350+BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
E63S W213 » 700+BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
A45 / CLA45 AMG » 430+BHP
AMG GT/GTS » 624+BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
AMG GTR » 650+BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
C43 / E43 / GLC43 AMG » 480+BHP
C63 / 63S 4.0T AMG » 624+BHP
C63 6.3 AMG » 530+BHP
C63 AMG 5.5 BI-TURBO (ALL MODELS) » 700+BHP
55 AMG KOMPRESSOR » 600+BHP
S65 » 780BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
SL65 / BLACK SERIES » 720BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
220 CDI (ALL MODELS) » 230BHP
250 CDI (ALL MODELS) » 260BHP
C300E » 350BHP
CLS400D / E400D » 400BHP
350 CDI (ALL MODELS) » 315BHP

ALL 2019 RANGE ROVERS AVAILABLE

RR 50SC / SVO / SVR STAGE1 » 600+BHP
RR 50SC / SVO / SVR STAGE2 » 650+BHP
2.2 D (ALL MODELS) » 220+BHP
2.0 TD4 / SD4 (ALL MODELS) » 225 / 265BHP
VELAR 30Si6 » 420BHP
RR 4.4 TDV8 » 395 BHP
RR TDV6 / SDV6 3.0D » 305 / 350 BHP
DEFENDER 2.2 » 180BHP

PORSCHE

992 TURBO S » IN DEVELOPMENT
992 CARRERA / S » 570+ BHP
991.2 GT2 RS » 780+BHP
991 TURBO / S (ALL MODELS) » 750+BHP
991 GT3 RS 4.0 » 525/540 BHP
997 CARRERA GTS » 435 BHP
991.2 CARRERA / S - (ALL MODELS) » 500+BHP
991.2 CARRERA GTS - (ALL MODELS) » 540+BHP
997 TURBO 3.6 » 625+ BHP
997 GT2 RS » 670+ BHP
997 TURBO / S 3.8 INC PDK » 611 BHP
997.2 GT3 RS » 480 BHP
996 TURBO/GT2 » 600+ BHP
BOXSTER / CAYMAN 718S / GTS » 420+BHP
BOXSTER / CAYMAN 718 » 380+BHP
BOXSTER / CAYMAN 981 GT4 » 430+BHP
BOXSTER / CAYMAN 981 GTS » 375+BHP
CAYENNE TURBO 4.8 - (ALL MODELS) » 650+ BHP
CAYENNE 4.2 DIESEL » 450+ BHP
CAYENNE / MACAN 3.0 DIESEL » 320+ BHP
MACAN 3.0T S » 445+BHP
MACAN TURBO 2.9T » 525+BHP
PANAMERA 971 4.0 TURBO » 700+ BHP
PANAMERA 971 4.0T SE HYBRID » 800+ BHP
PANAMERA 971 2.9T HYBRID » 650+ BHP

EXOTIC / MISC

WRAITH / DAWN » 720+BHP
FERRARI 488 PISTA » 780+BHP
FERRARI 488 » 750+BHP
FERRARI PORTOFINO » 680+BHP
FERRARI LUSSO T » 710+BHP
FERRARI CALI T » 680BHP
FERRARI F12 » 780+BHP
FERRARI 430 » 525 BHP
MCLAREN MP4 /650S » 720 BHP
MCLAREN 675LT » 750BHP
MCLAREN 570/S » 680+BHP
MCLAREN 600LT » 680+BHP
MCLAREN 720S » 840+BHP
MCLAREN SENNA » 875+BHP
AVENTADOR » 750+BHP
HURACAN LP610 » 650BHP
BENTLEY 4.0 T V8 » 700+BHP
BENTLEY GT W12 » 700+BHP
BENTLEY SUPERSPORT 2018 » 780+BHP
BENTAYGA V8 DIESEL » 510+BHP
BENTAYGA V8 40T » 700+BHP
BENTLEY GT 2020 V8 40T » 700+BHP
MASERATI 3.0S PETROL » 470 BHP
MASERATI 3.0 DIESEL » 312 BHP

FURTHER OPTIONS

As well as installing the above engine tunes, we are able to further individualise your car with additional features. Some of which are shown here. Contact us for further details.



Exhaust tuning
(Cracks & pops)



Customized driving modes



Gearbox tuning



Sport dials calibration



Exhaust butterfly control



**MORE BHP
EQUALS
LESS RPM
EQUALS
MORE MPG**


 DESIGNED IN THE UK
 DEVELOPED AT OUR
NURBURGRING
 TESTING FACILITIES


**UK & WORLDWIDE
 INSTALLATION
 CENTRES**

SALES@DMSAUTOMOTIVE

UK: 0800 030 5555

INT: +44 800 030 5555

WWW.DMSAUTOMOTIVE.COM



NEW CUPRA FORMENTOR.

LET YOUR HEART CHOOSE FOR ONCE.

YOU CAN CHOOSE THE STRAIGHT PATH, LIKE ALWAYS.
IT'S EASIER, LESS TROUBLE. OR YOU CAN CHANGE
COURSE AND CHOOSE ANOTHER WAY, ONE THAT YOU'D
NEVER HAVE THOUGHT TO TAKE. AND IF THAT FEELS
RIGHT, THE NEW CUPRA FORMENTOR IS FOR YOU.

DRIVE ANOTHER WAY.

*Official fuel consumption for the CUPRA Formentor range mpg (litres/100km):
31.4 [9.0] – 44.8 [6.3]. CO₂ emissions 143-203 [g/km].*

Figures shown are for comparability purposes; only compare fuel consumption and CO₂ figures with other vehicles tested to the same technical procedures. These figures may not reflect real life driving results, which will depend upon a number of factors including the accessories fitted (post-registration), variations in weather, driving styles and vehicle load. Data correct at December 2020.

[CUPRAOFFICIAL.CO.UK](https://www.cupraofficial.co.uk)



CUPRA