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Ed speak



FORD, JAGUAR AND VOLVO ALL RECENTLY ANNOUNCED their 100 per cent unflinching commitment to build and sell only electric vehicles. Good on them. Even if it does feel like a decision made in haste rather than with a clear strategy in place.

Jaguar has given itself just four years to reinvent itself as a luxury electric car brand, but won't start with its almost finished all-electric XJ – that would be far too easy. Instead it will turn to a third party and ask if it can borrow an existing platform for Gerry McGovern and Julian Thomson to design the brand's future around. It's a challenge that even the team who sent Perseverance to Mars would call extreme.

Ford has given itself a bit more time, with its $1billion investment allowing it to offer plug-in hybrids and EV models across its entire range of vehicles by 2026 before only offering electric vehicles from 2030. It's a similar timescale for Volvo, who will only offer electric cars from 2030 and you'll also only be able to buy them online.

The common theme with all three announcements is the time frame, all pinned to numerous government plans around the world to ban the sale of new petrol and diesel cars by certain dates, 2030 being the most popular. And this is the problem I and many others have with these recently announced plans.

Today's way of governing is no longer to introduce long-term strategies to benefit generations to come, they are predominantly knee-jerk decisions made in reaction to a situation that has been ignored for decades and now requires serious attention. But a policy announced by a government that won't come into effect until several years after they have left office is easily dismissed by the incumbents as no longer the right decision.

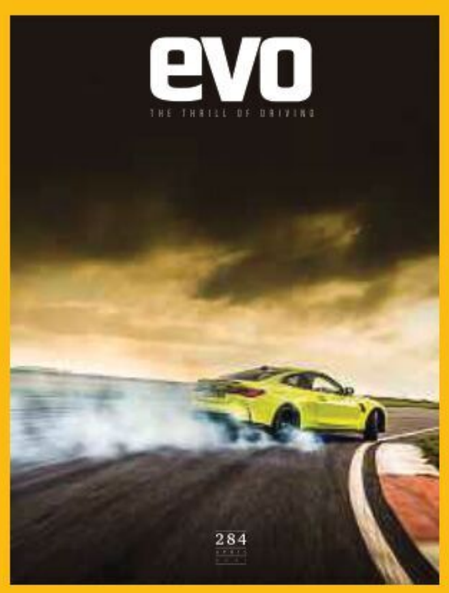
Electrification has its place, but it's not the one-size-fits-all solution many would have us believe and which so many manufacturers are betting the house on. It's time they stepped outside of their echo chambers and got a better understanding of the needs and requirements of the many rather than the few.

But before all this, there's plenty of good news, such as the new M4 confirming that BMW M really is back to its best. Enjoy the issue.

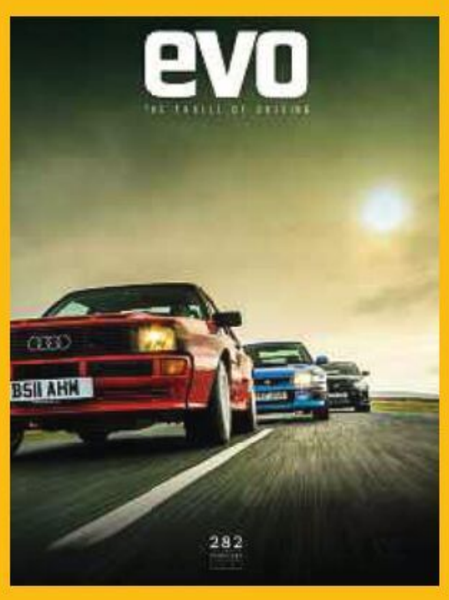
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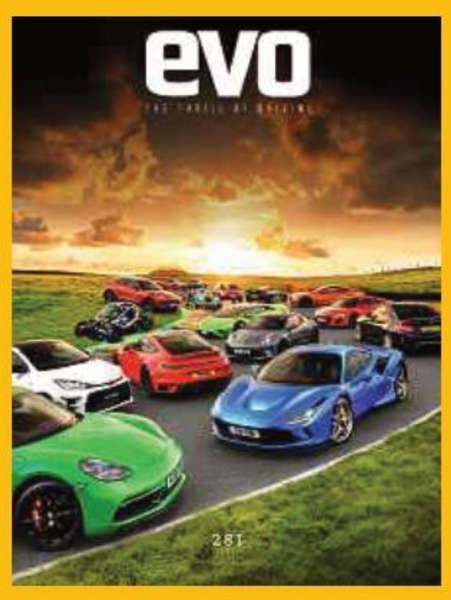
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by ADAM TOWLER PHOTOGRAPHY *by* ASTON PARROTT

Volkswagen Golf R

It's faster, more powerful and more sophisticated than ever, but can the Mk8 Golf R deliver the pure driving thrills we crave?

THERE'S A PROBLEM, AND I'M NERVOUS about breaking it to you. I've been driving for two hours this morning in the new Mk8 Golf R, on a variety of different roads, lightly trafficked, with the first of the year's sunshine gently warming the tarmac. As the R's Bridgestone Potenzas crunch on gravel at our first photography location for the day, I know Aston Parrott is going to substitute 'hello' for the inevitable question: 'So, what's it like then?' The same question that's no doubt uppermost in your mind, too, as you read these words.

The problem, Houston, is that my heart's BPM barely rose during those two hours. It's a new Golf R – a 316bhp hot hatch no less – and yet... If I'm really honest, I felt like I was driving any new Golf – even with a brief bit of driver-mode switching. It was just a device. A smart, quiet, quick, hugely capable modern car, with lots of mildly irritating software. But just a car. Not an inspiring **evo** one.

It didn't help that the Mk8's digital cockpit and infotainment system weirdly seems to get increasingly frustrating the more I use it, nor that – and not for the first time – the whole supercomputer thingy had a wobbly moment and declined to let me alter the interior temperature or to turn off any modern car's most annoying function: the dreaded automatic lane assist.



We'll return to the delights of the Discover Cockpit Pro shortly, but my nervousness is entirely due to the fact that we're talking about a new Golf R. A hot hatch icon. A car that a great many people care about, and one that, on paper, should have the power to leave you dazed and confused (in an entirely good way). It's a four-wheel-drive hyperhatch, the car that has come to define that breed of large, turbocharged iterations in the same way that a 205 GTI does the thin-tin, lightweight originals.

If you want a measure of how successful the R has become, look no further than VW UK's prediction that ten per cent of all new Golf sales in the UK will be for the R model. That's a lot of £39,270 hatchbacks (or £44,365, as tested here) with a correspondingly fat profit margin, or perhaps a volume win via the inevitable lease. Folklore suggests the R craze began when someone entered the wrong digit in a lease package, making the original Mk7 R ludicrously

'With no worries about wheelspin, a wrung-out 8R absolutely flies'

affordable; at £250pcm (or even less) it soon eclipsed the GTI as the must-have fast Golf...

Maybe the best policy is to tell you more about the new car, and in the meantime to keep driving. There is now just one Golf R model, where once there were four, thanks to the removal of three-door and manual permutations for the Mk8 R, which means it's now resolutely at the heavier end of the hot hatch spectrum, tipping the scales at 1551kg (albeit barely 20kg more than an equivalent-spec Mk7.5). The engine once again is the EA888 four-cylinder turbo, this time producing 316bhp and 310lb ft, so minor increases over the old car's yo-yo-ing peak figures while it fought a battle against increasing emissions control. It's four-wheel drive as well, obviously, but this time there's torque vectoring on the rear axle, meaning that up to 100 per cent can be sent to the outer wheel on a bend. And you won't be surprised to hear that it's driver-mode-tastic, with Comfort, Sport, Race and Individual modes as standard.

Want even more and you'll need the £2000 Performance Pack, which brings with it a Special mode designed for the Ring, plus a Drift mode for, er, drifting. The Pack also raises the limited speed from 155mph to 168mph and adds a larger roof spoiler and otherwise optional 19-inch rims (18s are still standard), though it's not fitted to the early-build car we're testing here. All Rs have larger brake discs now (357mm at the front), with lighter aluminium calipers than the old car.

The 8R looks a bit upright and anodyne to my

eyes, but the details are certainly slick, with a blue light-band across the nose and the usual other visual accoutrements that denote the type. There's plenty of blue inside as well, particularly on the standard cloth bucket seats with their prominent R logos and black/blue check pattern centres, and you get 30 different background lighting colours to choose from.

Select Comfort and the DCC adaptive dampers (a £785 option but an absolute must-have) soothe away any choppiness that might stem from having the 19-inch wheels, the car flowing along nicely even over poor surfaces, a big 'E' on the dashboard appearing and the throttle response simultaneously turning to mush. It coasts, too, saving vital drops of fuel, and I can't fault it as a long-distance companion: it feels mature, and hugely capable. Inevitably, the vast majority of that ten per cent won't be buying an R because they're interested in the thrill of driving, which probably has an awful lot to do with why the R feels like it does. If you're just after the fastest, most expensive VW Golf on sale, this is a painless way to have one in your life.

Switch back into the default Sport setting and it's patently quick, scampering effortlessly up the road with seamless shifts from the seven-speed DSG 'box. But despite a 0-62mph time of 4.7 seconds and peak torque coming online at just 2100rpm, somehow it doesn't feel as rapid as I had expected – as if at 3000rpm it's still getting a handle on that one and a half tons, preparing for something greater still.

Mercifully, we've found some quiet B-roads that look like just the sort of varied, awkward arena that a Golf R should shine in. I switch to Individual, largely set up for maximum attack but with a downplayed 'Pure' setting for the noise, then adjust the virtual damper slider to somewhere between the Sport and Race settings. But there's more. In fact, if you want to really unleash the R, there's a 30-second rigmarole to go through every time the ignition is turned on. Select a tastier mode, as above, then go burrowing in the menus until you press and swipe your way to 'Brake', where another press gives you the opportunity to partially or fully disable the ESP. You'll need to select at least the former, otherwise at the merest hint of load through the chassis the light flashes on the dash and you can sense power being taken away from the wheels, which is really frustrating. You'll also then need to use a mix of hard and soft keys to switch off the Lane Assist. Every. Single. Time.

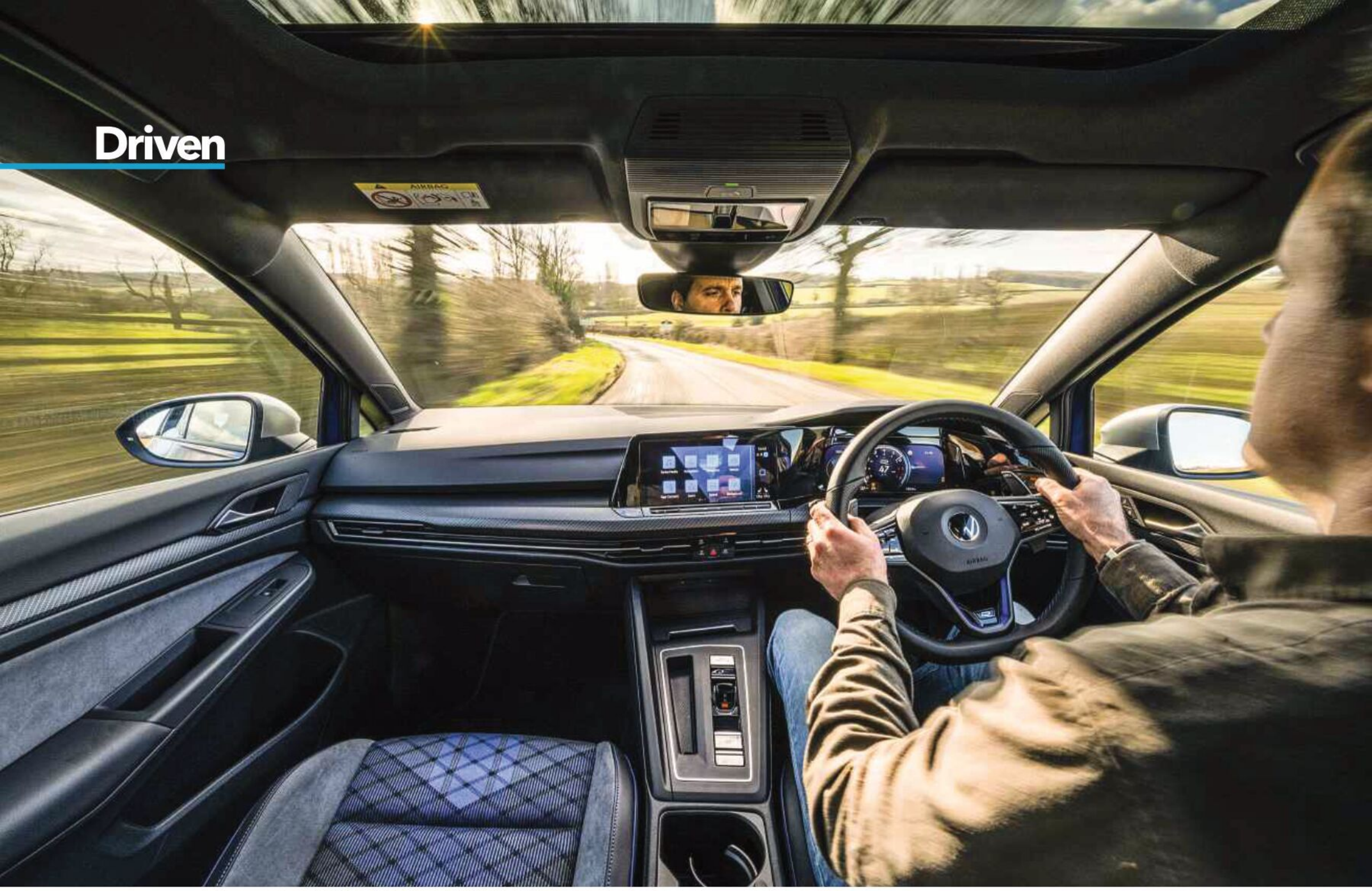
The R lacks the smooth, precise, uncorrupted steering feel of the GTI Clubsport, which itself improved markedly on the regular GTI's rack. The R's steering is notably heavier than the Clubbie's once you're turning, but there's a small sneeze-factor around the straight-ahead that has echoes of the Lane Assist's vagueness; it's the sort of thing you quickly learn to ignore, but it's there all the same.

Thankfully, between Sport and Race damping there's a setting that suits just about any road. I find I'm erring on the side of softness most of the time, but occasionally nudge it higher to cut out unwanted vertical motion on particularly bumpy

Below: the harder you push, the more the Mk8 Golf R comes alive; be aggressive with the brakes and you can get the tail swinging nicely on the way in to a corner



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19.0

sections. And it soon becomes clear the motor really comes alive at higher rpm. There's no point worrying about upshifting, even though I'm forever tempted to stick my oar in, because it's easier to let the electronics do it when the time is right, but I insist on manual downshifting, and the new, larger paddles are a definite step in the right direction over the hopeless standard items, even if they still feel a bit too much of a reach away from a natural hand-hold on the wheel.

With no worries about wheelspin, a wrung-out 8R absolutely flies, with a lack of drama that belies its ultimate pace. I'm trying hard: now that there are substantial loads being placed through the car it feels nicely poised, up on its toes, and an unusual, uphill hairpin is the perfect corner to uncover the R's new party trick. I trail the brakes into it, then resist the temptation to get on the gas too early. Be greedy and you'll introduce the inevitable understeer. You need to let the outer front dig in, load up, but get itself comfortable. Once the car's attitude has shifted towards neutrality, but you're still some way from the exit, simply give it everything, particularly if you want the car to move around. Maybe the Performance Pack's extra modes will introduce an additional layer of subtlety, but for now, in the dry at least, the standard R will take all 310lb ft and convert it into staggering traction – or, proper, half-a-turn, hairy-chested power oversteer.

Exiting a curve in this manner is a rare thrill in a hatchback (well, since the days of the Vauxhall Chevette HS, I suppose). In the Mk3 Ford Focus RS it felt artificial, part of a car that was compromised overall, constrained by its weight. In the latest A45 AMG it's there, too, albeit with a hefty price tag, but that car can feel a little nervous with all the stability systems switched off, whereas the 8R – in the dry – is very stable right up until it begins to slide. It rapidly becomes second nature to simply mash the right-hand pedal on the tighter corners and junctions, exiting with lock on, sensing through the seat as all four Bridgestones are smeared across the road's surface as they slightly over-rotate. It's absolutely bloody fantastic.

Armed with the knowledge that the R requires real commitment and confidence to reveal its wild side, it's not much of a leap to discover that it responds to this sort of approach in other respects, too. Be aggressive on the brakes and you can get the tail swinging nicely on the way in to a turn, which is a bit extreme for the road but an effective way of getting the nose into the apex. Driven in such a committed – some might say anti-social – fashion, the R is blisteringly quick and actually very engaging. It's almost impossible to believe that this is the same car that earlier felt no more appealing than a humble R-Line model, though part of me can't help lamenting that it needs to be driven so quickly to be fun.

In the old days we might have called this car a 'slow burner'. As I hand it back, my affections have grown markedly; I imagine if I kept hold of it they might continue to rise. It's not so much that its qualities take time to appreciate, rather that they're subsumed under an often impenetrably glossy layer of tech, refinement and general remoteness. There's a lot less initial fizz here than was possessed by a Mk7 three-door manual R.

But then the Golf R has always leant this way: the do-it-all everyday hyperhatch, which is either the core of its appeal or its undoing depending on your perspective; effective, but with neither the spirit nor interaction of an old Mégane RS. With this latest version, that's truer than ever, and depending on your standpoint, that's either a good or a bad thing.

Left: options fitted to this car include the panoramic sunroof (£1000), 'Estoril' 19in alloys (£825), Lapiz Blue paint (£755) and Dynamic Chassis Control (£785)

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1984cc, turbo
Power 316bhp @ 5200-6600rpm **Torque** 310lb ft @ 2100-5350rpm **Weight** 1551kg (207bhp/ton) **0-62mph** 4.7sec
Top speed 155mph (limited) **Basic price** £39,270

+ New R has a real wild side to its character
− You have to dig deep to find it

evo rating ★★★★½

'Its qualities are subsumed under an often impenetrably glossy layer of tech'



by STEVE SUTCLIFFE PHOTOGRAPHY *by* PETE GIBSON

AC Cobra 378 Superblower MkIV

With nearly 600bhp from its supercharged V8, this is the most powerful production Cobra ever. Hold on to your hat!

THERE ARE DEFINITELY FASTER, MORE sensible, less impractical sports cars on which you could spend just £500 less than one hundred and thirty thousand pounds. But there can be few cars on this earth that meet with such universal approval from the general public as you rumble past with your hair (or what's left of it) being blasted this way and that by the wind.

And there aren't many sports cars that sound like the new AC Cobra 378 Superblower MkIV either, or which will make you feel so uncaringly good about life when you're behind the wheel. Especially if the sun happens to be shining and, just for a moment, you allow yourself to forget about all the rubbish that's going on in the world right now.

So although it's an acquired taste, and at this kind of money is also very much a toy for the exceedingly well heeled, there really is nothing quite like the Superblower, and there are a great many different reasons why.

For starters, it's the only official, bona fide Cobra you can buy, except for the regular 378, also from AC, which we drove and were impressed by in 2018 (**evo** 254). So although there are a lot of perfectly decent Cobra replicas around, some of which are very good to drive, only this one is the real deal.

Secondly, it is quite exquisitely well made, with incredible paint quality and a sense of craftsmanship that runs deep throughout the car, nose to tail, door to door. It's better made than it was before to be honest, build processes having been 'significantly improved during the last three years' according to AC's owner Alan Lubinsky, having started from an already strong base.

Thirdly, this one has a supercharger attached to its 6.2-litre GM-sourced 'LSA' V8 engine, so it goes like the proverbial you-know-what when you find the right road on which to put your foot down, seemingly from any revs in the first five of its six









gears. This test car also has a pair of side exhausts, a system made for AC by Falcon in Norfolk, who complete the sign-off work on all of AC's cars when they arrive in the UK, having been part-assembled in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. It costs an additional £3500 and is worth every penny – once you've learned how to disembark without singeing your calves in the process.

Although the senses of drama and excitement were already vivid in the regular 440bhp 378 Cobra, adding a supercharger and then allowing the whole lot to breathe through all-but-unsilenced exhausts, the end of one of which is no more than two feet away from your right ear, well, let's just say it enhances the driving experience somewhat. By a factor of around 11 if you open the taps at anything approaching full steam and get the horizon firing itself towards you via the not-very-good-at-being-a-windscreen windscreen.

So what kind of power and performance are we talking about here? In the era of the hypercar, the Superblower's outputs of '580-600bhp' and

'It's quick by just about any standards, and feels twice as fast as it actually is'

'between 550 and 600lb ft' might not sound all that earth-shattering, but in a car that weighs only a couple of crisp packets more than 1100kg, these kinds of numbers mean the acceleration is not exactly for the faint of heart. Zero to 60mph is in the very low threes because, apart from anything else, the Cobra has a quite astonishing amount of traction – always has had thanks to its relatively soft but highly effective rear suspension and, in this case, a set of fat Avon CR6ZZ rear tyres. Just guessing (so not quoting) I'd say it could also reach 100mph in well under seven seconds. So it's quick by just about any standards, and of course feels approximately twice as fast as it actually is.

Top right: GM-sourced supercharged 6.2-litre V8 is good for over 580bhp – quite a step up from the 320bhp of the supercharged 5-litre Ford V8 fitted to the original Superblower of 1999-2002

The Superblower uses the same Tremec T56 gearbox as the regular 378, with the same ratios, and is likewise equipped with a limited-slip differential. Yet despite the generous outputs, only if you give it absolutely everything in first gear will it break traction when leaving the line on a dry road. (The photo you see here of it smoking its tyres required some fairly major gymnastics with throttle and clutch to achieve.) If you just drive away gently-ish in first then nail it, the tail merely squats dramatically and you go, with no wheelspin whatsoever. At the same time you'll generate an awful lot of raw acceleration plus an almighty crack of sound as you disappear up the road.

The gearshift is light and unusually good for a T56. The ride is also surprisingly decent, the



‘The best thing of all about the Superblower is that it drives well too’

suspension soft but not to a point where the car lacks body control. It achieves a good balance between ride refinement and suspension control, without too much roll when you lean on it, either. It’s a set-up that feels like it’s taken a great deal of time and effort to perfect, which is where Falcon’s other main contribution has occurred: a core team of engineers, some of whom used to work just around the corner at Lotus, now fine tune the cars to a much more detailed degree, working with individual owners to get their cars exactly how they want them. As a result, each car now ‘feels much more bespoke’ according to Lubinsky.

Even the steering has got better, feeling more cohesive since our last outing in the regular 378 model, and it was already not bad at all. Gone is the old rack, replaced by a fractionally slower but more modern VW Polo steering system, along with some of that car’s higher-quality interior bits and bobs, including its indicator stalks. And if you think Polo stalks don’t deserve a place in a 50-grand sports car, let alone one that costs £130k and comes from AC, think again. They look good and work perfectly well, managing to gel nicely within the rest of the distinctly retro interior.

But the best thing of all about the Superblower is not that it looks and sounds a million dollars, or that it goes like stink in a straight line (highly welcome though these factors undoubtedly are). It’s that it drives well, too, drives properly. Like a well-sorted sports car that might be from a different era dynamically, yes, but one which is actually pretty damn good to drive all in its own right, even beside the most contemporary sports cars from 2021.





There are no excuses required for this car, in other words. It stops well, despite not having anti-lock brakes. It steers well. It rides comfortably. It handles.

True, the driving position is from yesteryear, the active safety features are non-existent, the cabin is snug for two people to put it mildly, and the roof is nowhere beside the electrically powered pieces of street theatre you’ll find in modern two-seaters from Porsche, McLaren, Mercedes or Ferrari.

But not one of them, not even a Ferrari, will make you feel as good as the Cobra Superblower does, hood down, throttle wide open, side exhausts on full reheat on a bright, sunny summer’s day. And that’s priceless, with or without the VW Polo indicator stalks.

Above right: wheels are 7.5 x 15in front, 9.5 x 15in rear, and wear high-profile Avon tyres for a suitably period look; ventilated discs sit behind, with race-spec calipers

Engine V8, 6162cc, supercharged **Power** 580bhp+ **Torque** 550lb ft+ **Weight** c1100kg (c536bhp/ton) **0-62mph** 3.3sec (est) **Top speed** 170mph+ (est) **Basic price** £129,500

\+ The looks, the sound, the driving experience

\- Quite pricey

evo rating ★★★★☆

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by JOHN BARKER PHOTOGRAPHY *by* ASTON PARROTT

Litchfield McLaren 570GT

Limited-slip diff, chassis tweaks and a power hike to 720bhp take the 570's abilities to a new level

AMONG THE VAST ARRAY OF MODELS that McLaren has launched since the MP4-12C, it's some of the less potent that have found most favour. We're big fans of the 570S and GT, for example, models that don't feel like they need any more than their 562bhp because in a sub-1500kg car that guarantees sensational performance. You'll hear few complaints about their ride and handling, either.

Renowned tuner Iain Litchfield can spot an opportunity when he sees one, though. The market-wide shift to turbocharging over the last decade or so has played to his skills and he's doing good business uprating Porsche 911s and BMW M models that, like those McLarens, are impressive straight out of the box. So why is he turning his attention to McLarens now?

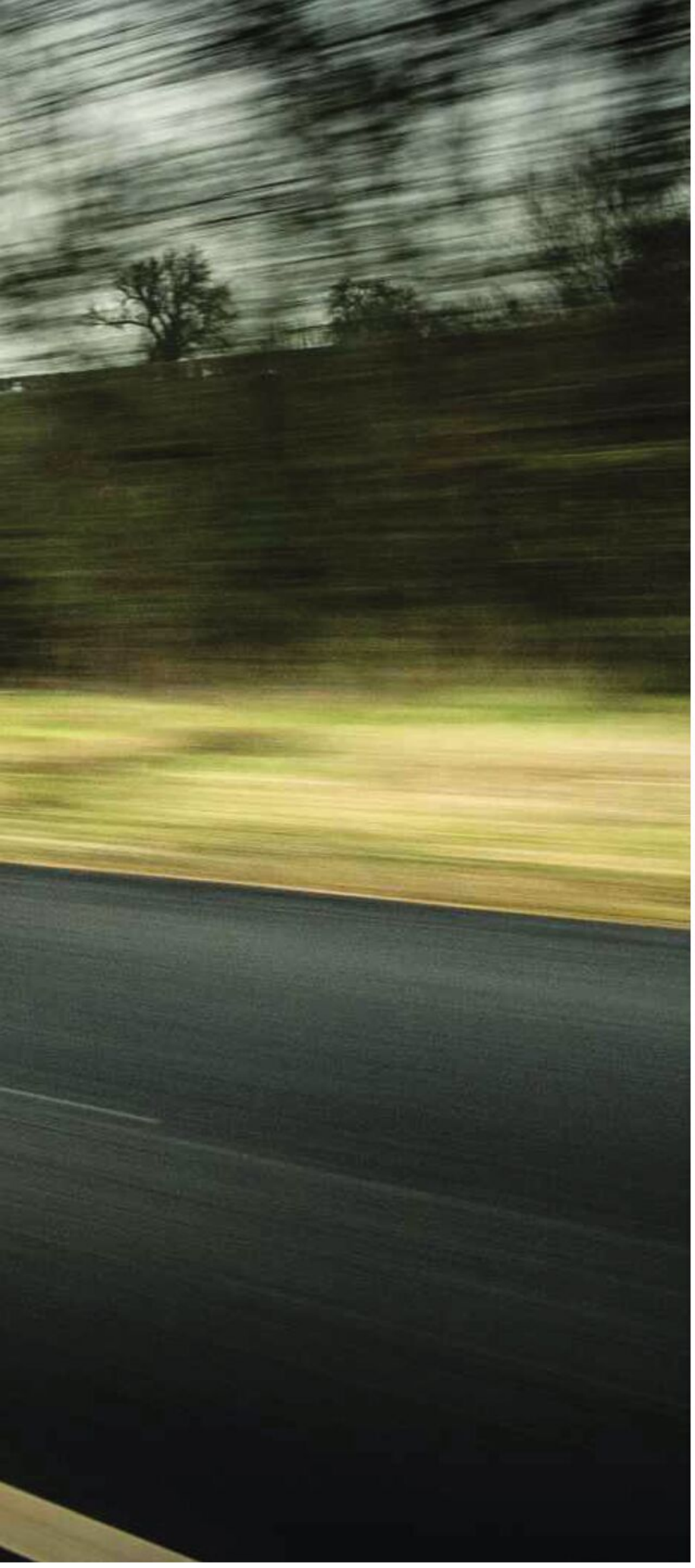
'Now that we can look after them and prices are around £60k-£110k we're seeing a number of our good customers moving into them as a fun weekend car,' says Litchfield. He got a great deal on one of the last 570GTs – optioned with the 570S suspension and slightly faster steering rack – and before deciding what to do with it he put lots of road miles and also some track miles on it, including visiting the Nürburgring Nordschleife.

Some things surprised him, the first being that the turbochargers used on the 3.8-litre, flat-plane-crank V8 are very old tech – the same items used on Saabs and early Impreza Turbos. However, before getting into the engine work proper, he did a simple ECU tweak, boosting power to 640bhp. 'It was an eye-opener at the Ring!' he says. 'I found the chassis inconsistent and not helped by the open diff and the brake interventions that are supposed to simulate the effect of a limited-slip diff.'

His car now has a mechanical limited-slip differential. He went looking for one and found a German manufacturer that supplies them to McLaren for their GT racers, so it drops straight in and only weighs 2.5kg. Litchfield then designed new road springs that are slightly softer initially for ride and traction and then get firmer, with adjustable platforms to enable greater scope for set-up and corner weighting. There are also wheel spacers front and rear that work with the company's own geometry to improve stability.

Litchfield has had a few McLarens through his workshops now and says that some have geometry that's a chunk away from specification. He suspects this is because camber adjustment is by shim spacers, which can make for a time consuming and laborious job. Once it's been set to spec it requires only minor annual tweaks, though. The final chassis element is a set of Michelin Pilot Sport 4 S tyres in the original sizes, replacing the OEM Pirellis.

Modifications to the engine are quite comprehensive but don't involve breaking into the 3.8-litre V8. Litchfield's vast experience with the Nissan GT-R's 3.8-litre, twin-turbo V6 showed that





Far left: wheel spacers work with Litchfield's own geometry settings and see the standard alloys fill the arches more purposefully; chassis upgrades also include a set of Michelin Pilot Sport 4 S tyres



the V8 ought to be much more responsive. The old-tech Mitsubishi TD04 turbos are replaced by bigger capacity, roller-bearing Garrett units with billet-machined, lightweight compressor wheels. Although larger, they spool up faster and require less boost to make the power, which means lower temperatures through the intercoolers.

The increase in power is almost a by-product of the pursuit of throttle response and control. The original Bosch ECU system is replaced in its entirety by a unit from UK firm Syvecs. 'This gives us even quicker processing, detailed data logging, everything is adjustable and we can use a proper motorsport traction control system on the engine to intervene faster and smoother,' says Litchfield. In Normal mode the output is 620bhp, and in Sport and Track that rises to a stonking 720bhp. More significantly and pertinently, torque swells well beyond standard, rising from 443 to 584lb ft and its delivered earlier, with an extra 128lb ft available at 3000rpm.





‘On roads that look filthy like rally stages it can be driven like a rally car’

Litchfield’s geometry and wheel spacers give the 570GT (should that be 720GT?) a different, more purposeful stance, and it’s always a thrill to slip under the butterfly door into a McLaren cockpit with its low scuttle and panoramic view. Today doesn’t feel like a McLaren type of day, though: it’s barely above freezing, wet and grey as I point the 570’s shark-like nose down the road. Although the chassis changes have given it a little more weight, the steering still feels rather light.

I’ve driven lots of McLarens and I’m always a bit wary of goading them. I imagine it will be quite a few miles before I’ll have the confidence to go for full throttle with 720bhp. Not so, it turns out. The power delivery of the standard 570GT is a bit flat until you get beyond 5000rpm, whereas in the Litchfield there’s plenty of low-down punch. More than enough for the grip, which sounds tricky... but after a few miles traction control is off and the engine is whooping. The key is that limited-slip differential and how it works brilliantly with the grip, the engine management and the suspension. It’s revelatory.

On cold roads that occasionally look filthy like rally stages, the Litchfield 570GT can be driven like a rally car. That’s to say confidently, riding the throttle on opposite lock, pushing forward on a rising note and a steady throttle opening, with a kick more angle available if you floor it. I’ve never felt this confident in a McLaren. You can feel the benefits of the diff and engine management with stability and traction control only backed off rather than fully



Top: limited-slip differential makes for an easy-to-read rear end; new traction control system is impressive, too

disabled. When the rear tyres start to overspeed you can hear the stages of intervention managing the torque. First the ignition gets knocked back, then the boost is modulated and finally the throttle is cut. All the while, the car is poised, balanced, and making progress. The standard electronic traction control is the last resort and if you’re playing the throttle precisely, often it doesn’t get involved.

I predict that on warm asphalt the Litchfield 570GT will be superb, digging for traction and breaking away reluctantly and gently so you can play on the limit of grip. Given the conditions, I didn’t expect to experience all 720bhp but did on numerous occasions, which tells you all you need to know, really.

Litchfield has developed its own low-backpressure exhaust system that helps the turbochargers spool up faster, and it offers K&N air filters too, though the engine note remains businesslike. The ride feels composed and nicely tied down, even down difficult back-roads, filling in hollows and scalping big bumps to keep the car level and calm.

You can have the elements individually, with the springs, spacers and geometry set-up coming in at around £2250, plus the tyres. The engine work including turbos, engine management and full exhaust, installation, dyno tuning and an engine service, plus the limited-slip diff, is £25,665. That sounds expensive, but drive it and it feels worth every penny. I can’t wait to try it in the dry.

Engine V8, 3799cc, twin-turbo **Power** 720bhp @ 7500rpm
Torque 584lb ft @ 5300rpm **Weight** c1500kg (c488bhp/ton)
0-62mph 3.0sec (est) **Top speed** 205mph+ (est)
Conversion price See text

\+ Improves an already great car
\- Such quality doesn’t come cheap

evo rating ★★★★★

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by STUART GALLAGHER PHOTOGRAPHY *by* ASTON PARROTT

Audi RS e-tron GT

Its Porsche EV underpinnings ensure true supersaloon performance, but is it RS enough?

THIRTY YEARS AGO AUDI'S FERDINAND Piëch turned to his family's business, Porsche, to build him a car that would redefine Audi and shake off its dowdy image. The RS2 was a project only Piëch could sanction and the result was an 80 Avant with so much Porsche knowhow thrown at it that it felt more of a fully fledged Zuffenhausen car than the 924.

Now Audi has taken a new generation of Porsche underpinnings to create a brand new EV in the same factory where its R8 supercar is built and where it assembled 924s and 944s for Porsche all those decades ago. Taking the J1 platform that underpins the impressive Taycan, Audi also utilises the same electric front and rear motors and their respective single- and two-speed gearboxes that Porsche has put to such good use in its Taycan Turbo and Turbo S models. The resulting Audi is the RS e-tron GT.

Despite the supersaloon power and torque figures – 590bhp in normal mode, 637bhp on overboost, and 621lb ft in either state – Audi talks about the e-tron very much in terms of the 'GT' part of its name, that is to say as a grand tourer rather than a rival for its other RS products or AMG and BMW's big-hitting, circa-600bhp saloons, coupes and wagons.

For a GT car the e-tron is still bloody quick. Not that this should come as a surprise because performance, specifically the off-the-line type, is every electric car's party piece. The paperwork suggests only 3.3 seconds is required to reach 62mph when launch control is engaged, which is rapid enough to feel uncomfortable, both in terms of the forces put through the slab of meat behind the wheel and for a car weighing 2347kg (the battery accounting for around 900kg of that). On a damp road, even with the electronic aids switched on, the rear tyres lose their fight with the surface and get a couple of over-



Above: standard brakes for the RS e-tron include ten-piston calipers at the front and cast-iron discs with a performance-enhancing and wear-reducing tungsten-carbide coating; carbon-ceramic discs are an option







Left: 12.3-inch Virtual Cockpit is familiar from numerous other current Audis and offers a variety of display options for the driver to choose from; it's accompanied by a 10.1-inch central touchscreen for Audi's MMI system

rotations in the bag before the RS gets off the line. Once hooked up it's up the road and hitting indecently high figures at a rate that would embarrass an R8. And yet this is the e-tron GT's least engaging feature; after the second run it's all a bit 'So what?'

So where does it impress? As with the Taycan, the RS e-tron GT is a very fine grand tourer, with a far broader bandwidth of ability than you'd ever expect, whether you're an electric car sceptic or admirer. It's the serenity behind the wheel that defines the e-tron GT. Audi fits what it calls 'e-tron Sport Sound' – a fake noise generator – to mask the sounds that are normally inaudible because there's a twin-turbocharged V8 running at a couple of thousand rpm. So where early EVs provided a stage for wind and road noise, the GT smothers them with a soft, slightly muted bass-filled grumble. It sounds a little too 'industrial hoover' from the outside, but in the cockpit it's a



background sound that's borderline white noise and certainly inoffensive.

Also on the GT's side is a ride quality that your preconceived ideas of an Audi running on 21-inch wheels wouldn't have you believe possible. There's a multi-link set-up for the rear of the car and double wishbones at the front, with the VW Group's three-chamber air-suspension system fitted as standard and accompanied by active dampers. Together they provide an exceptionally compliant ride with sophisticated levels of body control and impressive reactions to poor surfaces, smothering them to near obscurity.

On a dual carriageway or motorway the combination of near silent running and high refinement puts the GT in its element, conveying a calmness many would consider only a Rolls-Royce capable of achieving. It's the biggest USP and most appealing attribute of this type of EV: an ability to smooth and soothe on journeys that deliver zero thrills. The obsession with how quickly these two-ton cars can accelerate



Above: e-tron can be charged from 5 to 80 per cent in 23 minutes if you can find a suitable 270kW+ DC terminal

misses the point, deflecting from the wider, more welcome talents of grand touring EVs.

On rather more interesting routes, this four-door coupe – not Mark Lichte's finest work, especially so the front that looks out of proportion (too long) to the rest of the car – is no less impressive. The electromechanically assisted steering is unexpectedly good in terms

'You soon find yourself covering ground at a rather serious pace'

of its linearity and lack of kickback, giving the RS an incredibly accurate and predictable front end. There's a very natural feel to its weighting, and while there isn't anything to work with in terms of feedback, the way you can be very precise with the amount of lock you need to apply feels very Porsche-like. Funny that.

The combination of strong body control, supple ride and precise steering means you soon find yourself covering ground at a rather serious pace, but with a feeling of being detached by a layer or two from what the car is doing beneath

you. With the performance available and the sheer weight of the vehicle, it does get your senses on a higher level of alert than they might be in an equivalent ICE car, which despite also suffering from a similar lack of feel would still deliver a more organic sense of connection.

Rather perplexing is Audi's decision not to showcase a next-generation cockpit inside the GT. Yes, there's a unique design to the interior, the swathe of carbonfibre that runs through and around the cabin providing the e-tron with an identity all of its own, but the Virtual Cockpit and multimedia interface are as per the majority of today's Audi models, which seems like an opportunity missed to present tomorrow's new interior design and technology to accompany the hardware underneath.

In terms of range, our car had a predicted 228 miles available when we collected it, and it chewed through this at a similar rate to an RS7 drinking V Power when driven in the same manner. Of course, the RS7 would be easier to refuel due to the infrastructure working when it comes to selling petrol.

And that's the rub once again. Like the Taycan, the e-tron GT is one of the best electric cars of its type but it's let down by a poorly managed recharging infrastructure and the inability of such cars to cover 300-plus miles in one go, as you can in, say, an RS7. Although I think I'd be prepared to sacrifice the RS7's superior touring capability and go for an RS e-tron GT on the grounds that it's the better and more interesting car.





Top: 93kWh battery sits between the e-tron's two axles and contributes to a near 50:50 weight distribution – and a 2347kg kerb weight; rear-wheel steering is standard to enhance agility or stability as required

Motors 175kW front, 320kW rear **Power** 637bhp **Torque** 612lb ft
Weight 2347kg (276bhp/ton) **0-62mph** 3.3sec
Top speed 155mph (limited) **Basic price** £110,950

+ Refinement and ride; a fine GT
− Range not up to grand touring

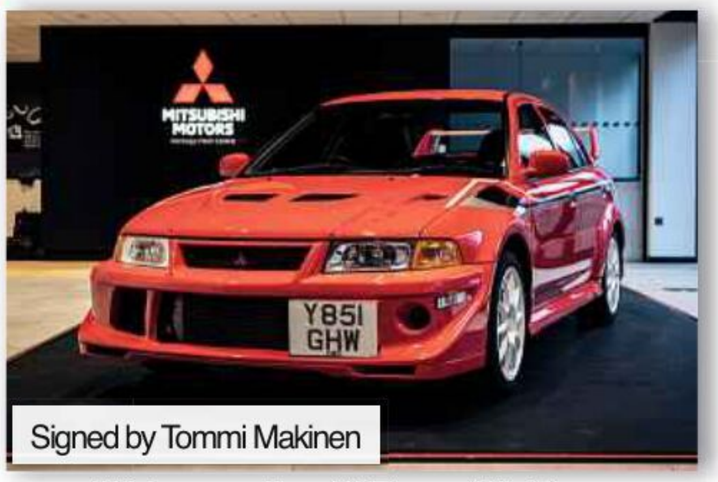
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Fantasy in blue

Imagine an Alpine A110-derived endurance racer. That's what designer Arseny Kostromin did, and the results are stunning

by STUART GALLAGHER





Above and below: GTA concept places the driver deep inside a carbonfibre tub, accessed via striking butterfly doors



SADLY THIS IS NOT ALPINE'S ENTRY TO a new GT racing formula, and, unless something very dramatic happens, it will not be appearing at Le Mans any time soon.

What you're looking at is a design study by Arseny Kostromin, a young Russian designer who has gained over a decade's experience working in the studios of Renault and Volkswagen and the Genesis Advanced Design Studio in Frankfurt and now works from his own Berlin-based studio, focusing on automotive design techniques and processes.

His latest project is this stunning interpretation of the Alpine A110 as a fully fledged racer. He's called it the A110 GTA and, while it may have familiar Alpine design cues, it is spectacularly bespoke and – to our eyes – off-the-chart desirable.

Kostromin's GTA is based on a carbonfibre monocoque and a rear-mounted flat-six engine, but he tells us the concept started with the driver and he designed the car around them. As he acknowledges, it's an inside-out way of doing things, but it does mean the GTA is as driver-orientated as possible.

As a result the cockpit is narrow, the occupants wrapped in a carbonfibre shell with the two bucket seats positioned well within the tub rather than on it. This makes for a rather wide sill, though the sensation of falling into the car would no doubt add to the sense of occasion if one were able to drive it.

At a little over four metres long and 1100mm tall, it's lower and shorter than the road car, but 30mm wider at 1826mm, which gives it an extremely purposeful stance. Though clearly recognisable as an A110, when you take a closer look and drink in the details it's immediately apparent that this is an Alpine whose design is optimised for the track.

There are enlarged openings in the front bumper for the proposed oil-coolers positioned behind them, a pair of carbonfibre air intakes for the rear-mounted engine, and an adjustable carbon front splitter.

The heat from the oil-coolers is expelled through the bonnet openings and over the GTA's roof for optimised aero efficiency.

Aerodynamics define the flanks and the rear of the car, too, with deeper sills and enlarged wheel housings with en vogue cut-outs. The carbonfibre underbody is aero-optimised and blends into the rear diffuser. The rear bumper has been cut away to accommodate both the diffuser and the lightweight Akrapovič exhaust, while the swan-neck supports for the sizeable rear wing are pure GT race car.

Yet for all the aero and retro design touches, Arseny's decision to incorporate a pair of butterfly doors into the carbon structure is perhaps the most inspired. It provides the GTA with exactly the sense of drama you expect and want from a concept, especially one designed to stand out in a crowded pitlane. It also calls to mind the Renault Sport RS01 one-make racer and GT3 contender.

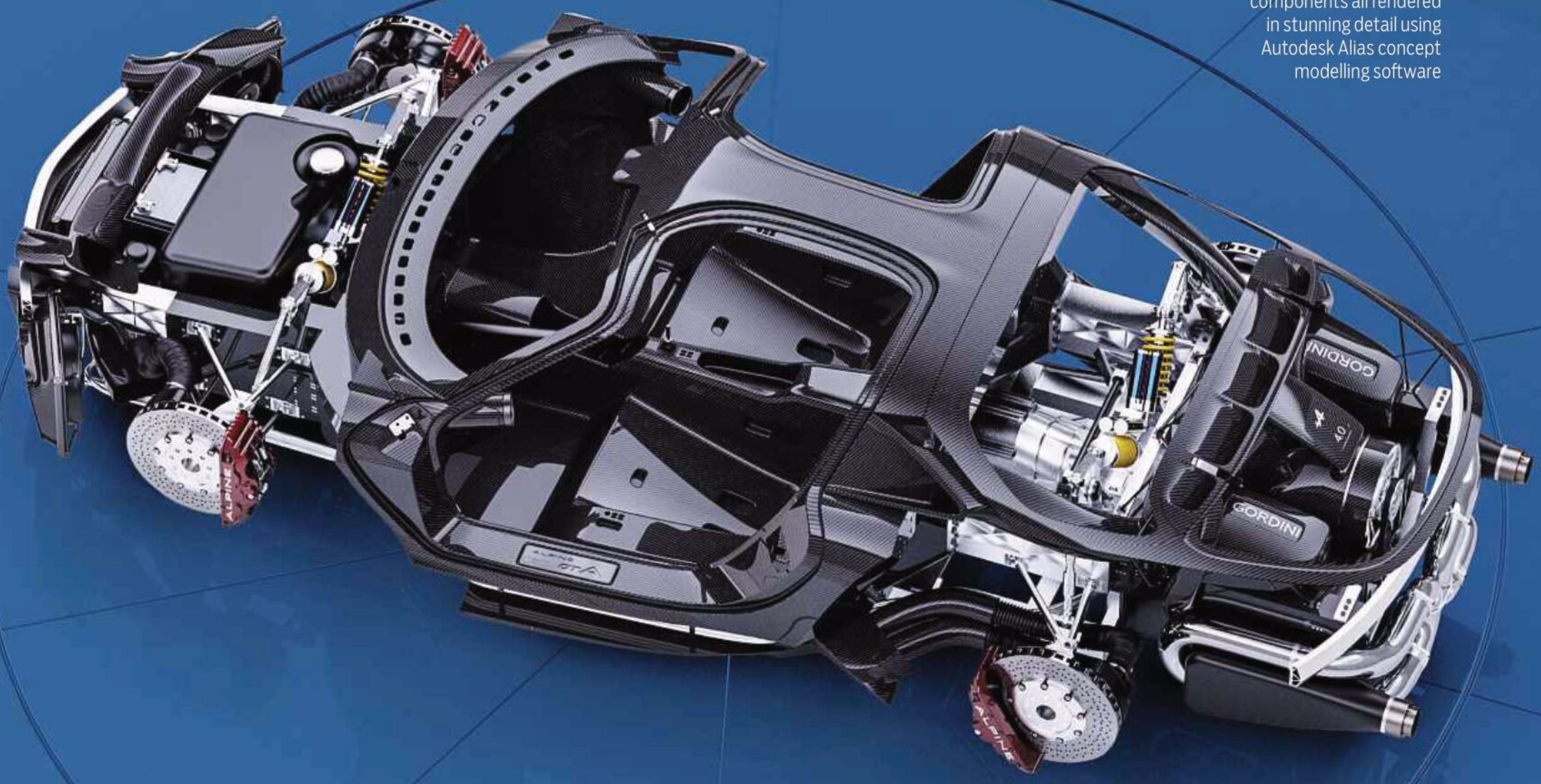
Another bit of inspired thinking involves the powertrain. According to Arseny, out would go the road-going A110's 1.8-litre four-cylinder turbocharged engine, and in would come a naturally aspirated 4-litre flat-six built by Gordini and producing in the region of 500bhp. And yes, that's a gearlever sprouting from the transmission tunnel. Well, if you're going to create a dream concept, it might as well be to your own exacting spec, right?

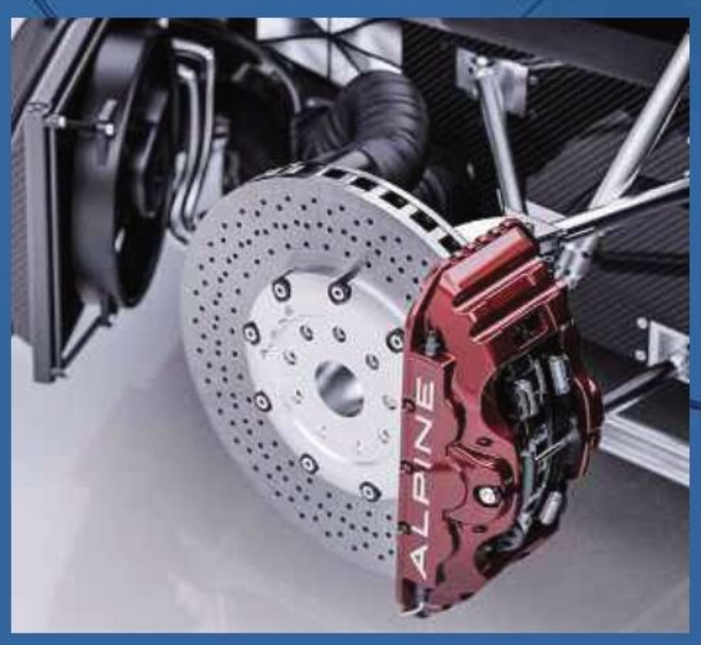
Inboard suspension, six-piston brake calipers, titanium exhaust and lightweight racing wheels fitted with 245 x 18 front tyres and 315 x 19s rears tick all the motorsport essentials boxes. The steering wheel, gearshifter and the instrument cluster housing would all be machined from individual blocks of aluminium, and the steering wheel would also house switches to adjust the brake balance and engine map and control the lap monitoring software.

'I created the Alpine GTA project to highlight the modern design processes available using a single piece of 3D modelling software called Autodesk Alias,' explains Arseny. 'The finished car is perhaps what could be created if the expertise of the Alpine F1 team met Alpine's design heritage.'

Now there's a thought. Perhaps Alpine should contact Arsney to help design its proposed LMH and LMDh prototype racers scheduled for 2022. Based on what we've seen with the A110 GTA, he certainly wouldn't be short of ideas.

Below: structure and components all rendered in stunning detail using Autodesk Alias concept modelling software









by STUART GALLAGHER

Vantage goes hardcore

Aston Martin's return to Formula 1 is marked by a new Vantage F1 Edition with a strong bias towards track work

IT'S SAFE TO SAY THAT FORMULA 1 WILL be a significant part of Aston Martin's world throughout 2021 and beyond. Along with the new AMR21 race car for Seb and Lance, Aston will also provide F1 with its new medical car (DBX) and safety car (Vantage).

Meanwhile, to bring some track attitude to the road car range, there's the new Vantage F1 Edition. Available as either coupe or roadster, the latest addition to the Vantage range is CEO Tobias Moers' first step to creating a wider offering within the GT and sports car portfolio. So while it's the first, it won't be the last addition to the Vantage family.

But the F1 Edition hasn't been created just to form a link to the company's new F1 activities. Moers tasked Matt Becker and his team with creating a Vantage that was capable of lapping the Nürburgring in 7min 30sec or under. And no, they weren't allowed to just put some super-sticky rubber on each corner and a Ring specialist behind the wheel...



INTERIOR

The F1 Edition is available in satin Aston Martin Racing Green to match the F1 car, Jet Black or Lunar White, all with contrasting grey stripe. Inside gets carbonfibre trim, black leather and Alcantara for the seats, and contrasting stripe and stitching colour options.

CHASSIS

Structural stiffness was key to improving steering feel and response. Damper internals have been reworked to improve vertical body control in high-speed compressions, the rear spring rates increased along with lateral stiffness to improve traction.

ENGINE

The 4-litre twin-turbo V8 is no stranger to Ring lap times, having powered the AMG GT Black Series to a 6min 43sec lap in 2020. Without the Black's flat-plane crank, however, the F1 Edition gains a modest 25bhp, making 528bhp, with peak torque staying at 505lb ft.

AERO

There's a full-width front splitter and front dive planes fitted as standard, with underbody turning vanes added, too. There's also a fixed rear wing for the first time but the rear diffuser stays the same. The result is 200kg of positive front and rear aero over a regular Vantage.

CHASSIS

The carbonfibre tub is mostly the same as the T.50 road car's, with only fixings, carriers and other supplementary changes required to support the track car's differences. The double-wishbone suspension design remains at all four corners, although the springs, dampers and anti-roll bars have all been respecified to support the higher aerodynamic loads. GMA has also swapped the road car's 19-inch wheels for smaller, 18-inch forged magnesium units weighing less than 6kg each.



One Lauda

Gordon Murray's T.50 supercar gets turned up to 11 for the £3.1m, track-only T.50s Niki Lauda

THIS IS THE GMA T.50s NIKI LAUDA, A stripped-out, track-only variant of the T.50 road car. Named after the late Formula 1 world champion, the T.50s is more than just the street-legal car with a big wing and slick tyres added, rather it's a different interpretation of Gordon Murray's perfect driver's car, this time without the constraints of road car regulations and useability expectations.

The T.50s was always part of the plan for GMA, the additional 25 units factored in on top of the 100-strong run for the road-going T.50. The two variants share many of their key components, but Murray and his team have been able to push the track variant's development in a different direction, resulting in a supercar with more power, even less weight and considerably enhanced on-track performance.

The headline figures are suitably extreme, the T.50s having a kerb weight of just 852kg (134kg lighter than the T.50), with the ability to produce 1500kg of downforce at its top speed and generate 725bhp from a modified version of the Cosworth-built V12 engine. At £3.1million before local taxes, the T.50s is also nearly £750,000 more than the road-going T.50. Production will commence after the road cars have been built.

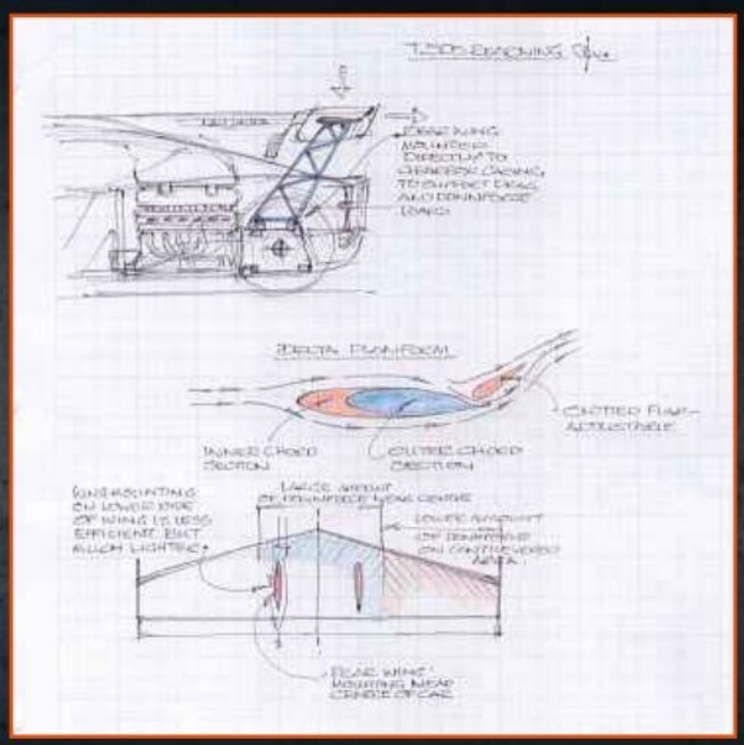
by JORDAN KATSIANIS

DRIVEABILITY

At its 200mph-plus top speed, the T.50s is able to generate up to 1500kg of downforce, a figure that was trimmed down considerably from an ultimate capability of 1900kg so as not to require stronger and therefore heavier components around the suspension and body to support it. Murray was adamant that a balance between high downforce and driveability was key to the T.50s, rather than outright numbers, to ensure that all drivers would feel engaged with the driving experience, rather than finding it intimidating.

AERO (REAR)

The rear-mounted delta-wing is the most obvious aero addition to the T.50s, one that works in conjunction with the ground-effect fan and a much more aggressive rear diffuser to create the bulk of the gains in downforce. The active vanes within the diffuser are gone, and the fan now only has one full-speed function in one high-downforce setting. The wing is mounted directly to the gearbox casing, as you can see in Murray's sketch (right), and is connected to a central fin that aids lateral stability.



AERO (FRONT)

The large front splitter and canards help balance out the rear wing's downforce. Murray found that the subesquent increase in aerodynamic load on the front axle required large wheelarch cutouts and wing-top vents to reduce pressure within the arches. Three NACA ducts feature in the car's nose, the outer two directly cooling the brakes, the central one feeding air into the cabin for ventilation.

ENGINE

Cosworth has given its 3.9-litre V12 a new cylinder head and camshafts, a higher compression ratio of 15:1 (up from 14:1), and has removed the variable valve timing system. Peak power is now rated at 701bhp at 11,500rpm, rising to 725bhp with a ram induction effect, a total that is 71bhp up on the road-going engine. Torque rises slightly, by 14lb ft to 358lb ft at 9500rpm. And the V12's overall weight has been reduced to just 162kg, 16kg less than the standard engine, which was already the lightest non-competition V12 ever.

TRANSMISSION

From a philosophical perspective, the biggest change between the T.50 and T.50s is the transmission. Gone is the six-speed manual, in its place a six-speed Instantaneous Gearshift (ISG) semi-automatic from Xtrac. This transmission has only a single clutch, but it's claimed that its pre-selector design enables shifts as instantaneous as those of a dual-clutch unit, yet without the associated weight.


R6 KET

by COLIN GOODWIN

CHRIS CRAFT, 1939-2021

The racing driver and LCC Rocket co-creator, who has died aged 81

GO DOWN TO GOODWOOD I WAS TOLD, WHERE Gordon Murray and an ex racing driver called Chris Craft are launching a new sports car. I'd never met either of them before but knew all about Murray; Craft's name rang vague bells from reading old race reports in *Motor Sport*. The car they were launching was the Light Car Company Rocket. Unbelievably, this was 30 years ago.

The next time I met Craft I was sitting behind him in a Rocket as he blew past every other car on the circuit at a Silverstone trackday, including an F40. The combination of a lightweight car with excellent dynamics and an outstandingly talented driver.

Chris Craft was born in Porthleven, Cornwall, in November 1939. His racing career started in 1962 with a Ford Anglia while working in Ford's public relations department. It's a job he quit in 1964, after which, he would proudly declare, he never again had a proper job. Seen as a promising talent right from the start, Craft finished the 1960s driving Broadspeed Escorts, coming second overall in the 1969 British Saloon Car Championship while dominating Class B.

It was an era in which the world's most talented drivers didn't stick to one discipline. In 1966, at the wheel of a Superspeed Ltd Anglia, Craft was sharing the track with the likes of Jim Clark, Graham Hill and Jack Brabham. The experience of running with the giants would serve him well later.

Craft was a member of a generation of professional British drivers that included Tony Lanfranchi and John Fitzpatrick, who raced anything, anywhere, often jumping from a saloon car into a sports car at the same meeting. Craft drove in F3 for Italian team Tecno while at the same time driving sports cars in Europe and further afield.

In the late '60s Craft met Alain de Cadenet and a lifelong friendship and partnership in racing was formed. Chris had won the Interserie round (driving a McLaren M8E) at the Norisring in 1971 in which Mexican Rodríguez was killed. The press referred to the race as a minor event, which seriously upset de Cadenet. To prove that his Evergreen Racing team wasn't some hick outfit, de Cadenet bought a year-old Brabham BT33 and entered it in the US and Canadian Grand Prix of that year.

With the team running on a minimal budget, the Brabham crossed the Atlantic in a ro-ro ferry on a trailer attached to a Transit van. To save money, Craft joined a Page & Moy tour for motorsports enthusiasts that was heading to the same events, swapping his racing stories for the price of the ticket. Arriving late at Watkins Glen, de Cadenet almost had to put on Chris's kit and qualify the car himself. Asked if he felt daunted racing against F1 drivers, Craft answered, 'No, I've raced against most of them in sports cars and saloons and beaten them. It's their teams and organisations behind them that I find daunting.' A DNQ at Watkins Glen and then a retirement with suspension failure at Mosport Park were disappointments, but Craft later proved his point by finishing 5th overall in the Brabham at the Oulton Park Gold Cup against similar opposition.

Although Craft continued to hop from Ford Capri to Chevron Formula 5000 to light and nimble Lola 2-litre GTs (winning the European championship in 1973), it was at Le Mans that he really excelled. His first year was 1971, driving a David Piper-entered Ferrari 512M to 4th place. The next year de Cadenet commissioned a young Gordon Murray to build a ground-up sports car using some parts from the Brabham BT33 and a Cosworth DFV. Craft and de Cadenet were running well until Craft, in heavy rain, had an off and damaged the car. It was, he said, the worst moment in his racing career.

The pair's best result at Le Mans was 3rd in 1976 in a de Cadenet Lola T380. Craft's last outing at Le Mans was in 1984, sharing a Porsche 956 with de Cadenet and Australian Allan Grice, and ended in retirement. And with that disappointment Craft retired from racing.

Obviously, getting paid to test and drive great cars makes for a fantastic working life, but the cars come and go; the friendships that you make along the way, with both fellow journalists and people in the motor industry itself, are what I treasure above all. And very few people have influenced me as profoundly as Chris Craft. His taste in road cars was eclectic and entertaining, his two favourites being the Cadillac Seville and Porsche 928.

Never living in the past, Chris rarely attended historic events. His enjoyment came from developing cars like the Rocket and, alongside his son Luke, the Vemac RD180 sports car for Tokyo R&D. Besides the car projects there were forays into property development in Docklands, furniture making, and the purchase of ridiculously impractical and hideously expensive-to-run boats. Like a former lightship supply vessel and an old trawler.

Above all else Chris Craft knew how to have fun. Jackie Stewart, who'd raced alongside Craft in Broadspeed Escorts, reckoned he was easily good enough for Formula 1, but ultimately that world didn't appeal. It was too stuffy for the exuberant Craft, who knew how to win and enjoy everything else that the '60s and '70s had to offer.

WATCHES



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by RICHARD PORTER



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DOA: Leyland Force 7

This V8-powered hatchback was all set to take on the Australian muscle car establishment until the twin 1970s woes of the oil crisis and Leyland build quality intervened

IT WASN'T JUST BATTLING GIANTS Ford and Holden that once built cars in Australia. For many decades British Leyland and its forebears assembled various Austin, Morris and Wolseley designs there, and in 1973 the company went one better when it announced its first unique, made-for-Australia model, the P76.

Marketed on its Aussie-centric design, including the ability to fit a 44-gallon steel drum in the boot, the P76 was a large, rear-drive saloon powered by a 2.6-litre straight-six or a 4.4-litre version of Rover's Buick-derived V8. It was big, it was rugged, it was available in punning colours such as Home On Th'Orange and Oh Fudge, but it was not especially exciting. That didn't matter though, because a year after the saloon went on sale Leyland planned to launch a coupe version, called the Force 7.

This would be way more alluring than the dowdy saloon, not least for its more rakish Michelotti styling, which shared no panels with its four-door sister. Running a meaty V8, offering a choice of manual or automatic gearbox, and with options including a performance kit, lower gearing and a limited-slip diff, the Force 7 had the potential to be a Down Under muscle car with the added utility of a massive hatchback (if not the barrel lugging capacity of its saloon sister). Leyland Australia reckoned it would be ideal for anyone who needed an exciting but practical car but steadfastly refused to buy an import, and the company had such faith in its potential that they spent what was left of the meagre P76 development budget on seeing it through to production at the expense of the planned estate version.

The Aussie car media shared Leyland's excitement about the Force 7, running regular rumours about its imminent arrival until *Wheels* magazine was able to splash a spy shot of a bright orange example across the cover of its August '74 issue, two months after the car was supposed to have gone on sale. It turned out what they'd actually published were photos of a dead man walking.

By 1974 Leyland's Australian outpost was in trouble, not least because early quality issues and the ongoing oil crisis had turned the P76 into a sales disaster. Realising that a fully home-grown car had been an ambition too far, Leyland decided to save its skin by killing off the P76 and closing the Sydney factory where it had been in production for little more than a year. When the saloon died, the unlaunched Force 7 coupe went with it.

Of the 56 coupes that made it down the production line before the axe fell, eight were auctioned off on the understanding they were not road legal, one was kept by Leyland Australia and one was shipped to the UK where it briefly became the personal transport of BL boss Lord Stokes. These ten survivors exist to this day. The remaining cars were stripped of any useful parts then crushed by dropping redundant panel dies onto them with a forklift.

Despite the model's untimely death, *Wheels* got hold of a Force 7 for a road test and printed their findings under a robustly Aussie headline that made clear their feelings about the fate of this stillborn local hero: 'What a bloody shame'.

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MY LIFE & CARS

David Mountain

Founder, Mountune

From autocross Anglias to championship-winning BTCC and WRC machines, David Mountain recalls the cars that have made the biggest impressions on his personal and professional lives

by ANTONY INGRAM

"I WAS LUCKY ENOUGH TO GET interested in cars from a very early age. As kids we lived close to farmland, and we'd play around with cars there. I got involved in something called junior autocross, which from memory was for 12 to 16-year-olds, so we started racing things like the old 105E Anglias. That was way back, around '72 or '74 when I won the championship. So basically before I could drive on the road, I'd just be fiddling around with cars and motorbikes on fields and farmland, and that led to getting into motorsport, in this junior autocross category.

I was always doing something in the garage, too. Part of it was because of a friend, Kevin Taylor, whose father was a motor mechanic, a guy called Fred Taylor, and he helped me in the preparation of the 105E Anglia. That's what really got my interest going, and I went from that to building my own cars, and ultimately building engines for friends is how I really got started.

I knew I wanted to be involved in messing around with engines, and I was lucky enough to get a job with Glyn Swift of Swiftune Engineering. I was doing a sort of basic motor vehicle apprenticeship at the time, which I hated really but I did see it through. Dad said I had to get qualified! I saw it through and the week after I qualified I left because I had the job lined up at Swiftune. Then I was doing my dream job of building racing Mini engines.

My first road car was a Mini. It was a pretty highly modified car, a typical tweaked Mini of the day. I think I built a 1380cc engine for it, which actually was one of the reasons I got to meet Glyn in the first place, because I was using Swiftune to do some of the machining and to supply the parts for the engine I was building. I always built my own cars and built my own engines. We were all roaring around in modified Minis in those days. It was a very early Mini too – I think I must have had that for a couple of years at least, first as a road car and then I converted it into an autocross car.

The car that I had after the Mini was a Consul Capri – the one with the sloping back. It was based on the Ford Classic with that cutback to the rear windscreen. The Classic wasn't a pretty car, but the Consul Capri had a sort of American style to it. That was a great car, but ended up being stuffed into a telegraph pole when I ran out of talent on a rainy day!

One car I really did enjoy owning was quite a few years later: a Jaguar XJR, with the supercharged six-cylinder, and it went like a bloody rocket! I've got a MkII Jaguar at the moment, which is in very nice condition. I totally restored an E-type too, from the ground up, a 3.8 flat-floor. That was a lovely project.

The best car I've owned is probably a Ferrari F430. Coupe, F1 gearbox – I've still got it today in fact. I've had it quite a long time. I'm a bit of a Ferrari fan; I owned a couple of 360s, and then I




mountune



got the 430, which I'd find difficult to sell because every time I drive it, it just makes me smile. It's such a fabulous car to drive, even though you're struggling to use a car like that these days. But when you do get a chance it's just so exciting. It doesn't need touching, it's just a beautifully balanced car. I've done a couple of trackdays in it, where you realise that actually you're gonna run out of brakes, and you could do something better with the suspension, but as a road car I just think they're phenomenal.

I was one of the first people to buy the V10 M5 when it was new. I thought that naturally aspirated engine was absolutely fabulous, but there were a lot of things I didn't like about that car. One was the gearbox, which was very clunky, so I didn't like that at all. It had such a small fuel tank too, and I just got fed up with filling it up almost every time I went for a drive. I've had a couple of Porsche 911s, which are a fantastic everyday car, but compared to the Ferrari they don't have the same sense of occasion.

My daily car is a bit boring I suppose, a Range Rover Sport, which I love. I've had four Range Rovers, and this one is just an Autobiography, with a 3-litre V6. I can tow my trailer with it, I can drive to Scotland in it and jump out at the other end and feel refreshed. It's just a fabulous all-round vehicle.

Above: Robb Gravett's BTCC Sierra RS500s used Mountune engines. **Above right:** a 'very nice' MkII Jaguar (top) is among the cars in Mountain's current garage; he cut his teeth building and racing 105E Anglias in junior autocross in the early 1970s

I started Mountune back in 1980, when Glyn Swift retired from Swiftune. All we did initially was build A-series Mini engines for various forms of motorsport. That would've been up to about 1985. At the time, anyone racing a Mini was really doing it because that's all they could afford to race. So there weren't the sort of budgets that there are today; it's crazy what people are spending on Mini racing and road cars now, but at the time we were doing things like Minicross, autocross, rallycross, all of that sort of stuff for private customers, and their budgets were really at the lower end of motorsport.

After a while, a chap called Terry Hoyle dropped in to see me at my little workshop. Terry was quite famous, as he'd built all the works rally engines for Ford, BDAs and stuff like that. He's now a Ferrari man but back then he explained how much money he was charging to build these Ford engines, and I just fell off my chair and said to the guys, "Right, we're gonna get into Fords!"

That's how it started, and our big break really was the Sierra Cosworth. We realised that was a real game-changer, and teamed up with Robb Gravett. I built Robb's engines from the production saloon car days, all the way through to him winning the BTCC in 1990 with the RS500, and that Cosworth YB engine absolutely launched the business.

They'd obviously done a very clever job in putting this car together with motorsport in mind, particularly the RS500, as it had all the necessary bits, like a huge turbo, eight injectors, massive intercooler, and all of a sudden you had this car... well, we used to get people popping in with their road cars, they'd drive them in, and then drive them up the road with 400 horsepower an hour later! It was just mind-blowing really.

With road cars, in some respects I suppose the tuning industry hasn't massively changed over the years. We've still got people that buy their RSs and want them hugely modified, which is why our top-spec RS Focus has more than 500 horsepower. You've still got that, but I guess the volume is in the Fiesta STs and the Focus STs, where people have got a limited amount of money, and we can do much more cost-effective road car conversions these days.





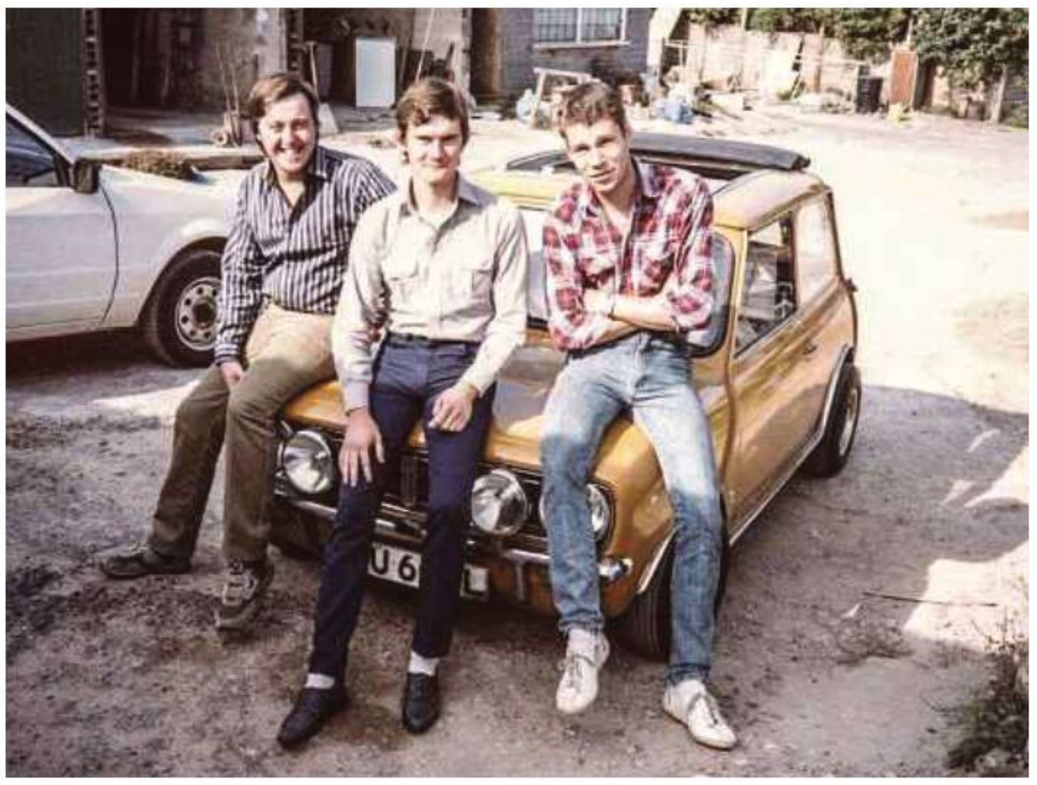




The other big break for us was being approached by Ford Motorsport in Boreham and a guy called John Taylor. He had been following the fact we'd been building all the race-winning Sierras at the time and he said, 'Do you think you guys could build a rally engine? We've got a young driver called Carlos Sainz doing the Spanish championship, and we'd quite like you to have a go at this.' So we got into rally engines, after understanding what the requirement was and how different it was – it took a bit of time to sort it. Carlos went on to win the Spanish championship, then one thing led to another and next thing you know we got approached to build the works rally engines, which we did for more than ten years.

Looking back, we've won countless races, countless championships, but there are always ones that stand out. The big wins were fantastic. Winning the BTCC with Robb Gravett was unbelievable, and beating the likes of Andy Rouse, that was fabulous. Winning the Safari Rally with Colin McRae in the Ford Focus. Winning the Monte Carlo Rally with François Delecour in the Escort Cosworth. Before that, Ford hadn't won the Monte Carlo Rally for something ridiculous like 40-odd years as a works team, but we won it in 1994. The year before we'd been leading it up until the last stage, and the rear suspension broke. I've gotta say, grown men were crying. The following year was just unbelievable.

There are some big victories, and you think, wow, that was really special. And of course we got to work with John Wheeler, who was the father of the RS200 and the Escort Cosworth and later worked on the Mk1 Focus RS. His son Scott Wheeler actually works in the business for us now! So working with people like that over the years has been fabulous.' ✖





Right, from top: Ferrari fan Mountain currently owns an F430, and before that had a 360 Spider; modified Minis were a permanent fixture at home and at work for many years; Colin McRae's Safari Rally-winning WRC Focus was another Mountune engine recipient

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INBOX



Artura afterthought

After reading the section about the interior of the new McLaren Artura (**evo** 283), my eyes were drawn to the accompanying image. To my disgust, sticking out of the middle of the dashboard is what appeared to be an inch-thick original iPad! What a terrible piece of design work that is.

It cannot be a surprise to designers of cars launching in 2021 that they will be required to integrate a screen into the dashboard, yet in the Artura it looks like an afterthought. In cheap cars it's forgivable, in £180,000 supercars it's not.

Dom Holmes, Oxford

Taycan notes

I recently had a drive in a Porsche Taycan. Despite what I have read about the car and the fact that it is indisputably a very impressive engineering achievement, I have to question if it is a sports car. It is very one-dimensional compared with what we currently perceive as being sports car material, with a real lack of emotional connection. Surely the primary goal in a sports car is to have that connection.

Are all sports cars going to be forced to go down this route now? Readers of and writers at **evo** already lament the loss of a manual gearbox; when you also remove any noticeable gearchanges and a meaningful engine soundtrack, the vehicle becomes more of a mode of transport rather than a thing to enjoy. Does this future have to be a formality?

Electric propulsion is well suited to the vast majority of vehicles on our roads in the future. However, electric isn't suitable for HGVs or sports cars. So why is there so much focus on electric as the



panacea for almost all future modes of transport? Could more diversification be the better option, with hydrogen allocated to HGVs, electric to mainstream and luxury cars, synthetic fuels to sports cars, and even the retention of diesel for agricultural or other limited vehicles?

The public mindset has already changed enough to ensure mass take-up of electric cars. Indeed, with electric and hybrid sales already gaining traction, is the proposed 2030 ban really necessary? Perhaps sports cars could be temporarily carved out of the legislation, allowing more time for the further development of synthetic fuels. The pollution from sports cars during this period would be negligible and the extra cost of synthetic fuels would ultimately be absorbed by enthusiasts as an acceptable price to pay for the retention of our hobby as we currently know it.

Surely the complete abandonment of the internal combustion engine isn't absolutely necessary to achieve our environmental ambitions.

Neil Patten

Current fun

I imagine that once upon a time a fellow riding a horse looked at the newfangled automobile and reasoned that with no petrol station infrastructure his horse was far superior, as all it needed was readily available hay and water. I imagine he would have thought cars had no personality compared with a living, breathing animal: how could anyone be passionate about a lump of metal?

I love cars, and cars with big V8s



LETTER OF THE MONTH

Black flagged

FLICKING THROUGH EVO 283 THE MERCEDES AMG GT Black Series caught my eye. Oh look, I thought, a pretty tasteless incarnation of a Mercedes that will no doubt have a ridiculously powerful engine, little finesse, but a relatively affordable price tag. And then I looked at the figures. £335k?! They have to be kidding, surely?

The GT Black Series looks like it's been driven through a branch of Halfords in 1995 at the height of the *Max Power* era, and whilst the overall power output of 720bhp sounds impressive, a car like the McLaren Arturo that's featured a few pages before has a higher top speed, a lower 0-62mph time, is virtually half the price and will undoubtedly hand the AMG its bum on a plate around corners where it matters. The McLaren also looks like a bespoke supercar as opposed to a production car that's been fed drugs and dressed aggressively.

I can't imagine who is going to buy the AMG… Oh, hang on: Premier League footballers, US wrestling stars and American football heroes. I think that possibly sums it up.

AMG seems to have cornered a market for fast but increasingly taste-free versions of production cars with ever-increasing price tags. Why is it that more seems to be better in the German car industry these days?

Peter Garforth

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 £265. It takes inspiration from a 1970s Alfa Romeo rev counter and is available in five different colour schemes, each supplied with three different straps.

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INBOX





in particular, but I also acknowledge that EVs are likely to be a large part of my driving future. To label them white goods or appliances is small-minded. If Lotus can embrace the EV and produce cars that look like the Evija, maybe we should all be more receptive.

We are in the early part of the EV journey. From a performance car point of view the limits appear almost endless: torque vectoring, motors in wheels, etc. I'm not saying we should love every EV that comes along, but to ignore or deride them completely because they don't run on petrol is nonsense.

Sam Ibitson

Virtual sanity

The monthly fix of **evo** and *Octane* helps. I love **evo** cars, and older cars in particular. I bought a 1970 911E Targa in 1998 – phenomenal car, so much character. With Weber carbs it sounded like a Le Mans racer. It taught me a valuable lesson, though: don't sell a classic 911. Never, ever.

I then raced a Caterham for a couple of years in the early 2000s. The memories are etched into the grey matter and muscle memory, and I still have the Seven.

So many cars are incredible, but I feel that new **evo** cars have become too expensive, too polished and too fast. Even the 'analogue' ones. Progress, for sure, but in the right direction? And the classics? They're too far out of reach. There is good news, though, as I think I may have found myself a solution...

Simulators. Honestly. I'm blown away. Yesterday I raced with one of my brothers (mid-to-late 40s, 300 miles away) in 1999 Lamborghini Diablo GTRs at Le Mans. Phenomenal track, detailed visuals, and the sounds of the V12s, the gearbox whine and the brake squeal were all quite unbelievable. Then there's the driving. You really have to concentrate, build up the speed as you would if lucky enough to drive the beast for real, move those hands and feet fast, even break a sweat.

Then switch to a Caterham Seven 620R at Oulton Park – surely a track made for the Seven. Wow! The sights, the sounds and how the Seven feels on the edge, with a little slide through the corners. I was transported back to my real-life racing days.

So after many years in denial, I've realised that racing simulators are to be embraced! It's different for sure, but so, so enjoyable. Oh, and it's a great opportunity in these socially distant times to stay connected with family and friends – a much-needed boost for our mental health.

Maybe my next step is to attack one of my other senses and recreate some of the old smells. Time to get the old Arai helmet and Sparco suit out of the loft...

Chris Widdowson

Blast to the past

I enjoyed the Toyota GR Yaris v Audi Sport Quattro v Subaru Impreza 22B article in **evo** 282 so much that after reading it twice I wound the clock back to issue 011.

The cover story of that September 1999 issue set out to name the greatest 4x4 of all time, and featured all the four-wheel-drive greats to date, from Delta Integrale to a pair of Skyline GT-Rs, via numerous Subarus, Audis and Mitsubishis.

If I turned up to MIRA for that 4x4 megatest in my GR Yaris (due on my driveway in June) I think that once Mr Barker and chums had finished laughing at my futuristic space car,





they'd be well impressed. I've got my Air Max 95s, wrap-around sunglasses and baggy jeans packed, and I've got three seats left, though I'll probably need the takers for the two in the back to be shorties. Who's in?

Please keep featuring older driver's cars and those that are at the more affordable end of the **evo** spectrum – especially hatches that corner on three wheels, don't cost a bomb and are still out there being used and abused as per design intention.

Dan Jones

Fit for purpose

I think Jethro Bovingdon is really on to something! In his column in issue 282 I think he hit upon something many of us performance car enthusiasts have been thinking about for a while: a lightweight, supple, softly sprung but well-damped, adjustable hot hatch with proper-sized wheels and tyres suited to gnarly British B roads, lanes and even urban roads.

Case in point: whilst my little Panda 100HP is huge fun, I often fantasise about putting its engine, or better still a turbocharged version as in the Abarth 500s, into a Panda 4x4 to make a brilliant cross-country fun-box and a proper little mountain goat. At the other end of the performance and price scale, Ariel's Nomad R is probably much better on the majority of British roads than the Atom.

Jethro's ideas of a raised GR Yaris 'Gravel' and a production version of Alpine's A110 Sports X concept sound hugely tempting for me, and most likely also to a growing band of enthusiasts who realise that ridiculously sized wheels, massive spring rates and painted-on tyre sidewalls actually detract from the thrill of driving on British roads.

Martin Mees

No need for speed

It was so refreshing to read Richard Meaden's end-of-term Fast Fleet report on the Dacia Duster (**evo** 282), and great of him to highlight that we don't need 400bhp (or is it 500 now?) to enjoy the drive.

I remember my first car well: a Vauxhall Viva SL90 – so the fast one with 60bhp! I had some epic drives in that car, convinced on many occasions that there was no way I could have got from A to B any faster with what I had. After a while I replaced it with a Triumph 2.5 PI. It seemed like a rocketship at the time. With the best part of 150bhp on 175/70 tyres it taught me an awful lot about car control, and there were many times I had to reach for the full extent of opposite lock. But the key part of all this is that the speeds were sane, and if I ran out of talent it would probably have only resulted in a red face and a dented wing.

The years and income have progressed since then and I'm now fortunate enough to run an M3 and an Exige – both hugely capable and very fast cars. But Dickie made me think: am I actually having more fun? And I hate to say it, but I'm probably not. Yes, they are better, faster and more capable on every scale, but I virtually never have that old feeling of 'there was no way I could have done that any quicker'. To explore that sensation now would necessitate ludicrous speeds, and if it went wrong the consequences don't bare thinking about, never mind that sinking feeling upon spotting a speed-camera van.

So we might smirk when we are driving our '**evo**' cars and look across at a Dacia. But, whisper it, if there's an '**evo**' driver behind the wheel, he's probably having more fun.

Derek Hunt



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RICHARD MEADEN

Meaden's warming to EVs, but he isn't convinced they're the only way forward

IT'S LONG BEEN A SOURCE OF PERSONAL amusement that the only hybrid cars I've spent any meaningful time with are the LaFerrari, SF90, McLaren P1 and Porsche 918 Spyder. Oh, and Audi's R18 e-tron and Porsche's 919 Hybrid LMP1 cars. Electric cars? A Tesla Model S, in the EV wonderland of Norway. As exposure to clean tech goes that's pretty niche, even by **evo** standards.

Or at least it was, until I made the concerted effort to bring myself up to date and drive as many hybrids and EVs as I could lay my hands on. As it happens, last month proved momentous. Not because you could find me hurling profanities at the sky in various EV charging points, but because Ford of Europe and Jaguar Land Rover both announced they were betting the farm – presumably a mix of wind and solar – on going 100 per cent EV before the decade is out.

When a volume player like Ford commits to an all-EV range in Europe you really have to sit up and take notice. Or in my case, bite the bullet and try to understand what our four-wheeled future holds. When you're in a Polestar 1 I can assure you it feels pretty bloody wonderful. A Bentley without the bling, it drives as it looks – clean, sharp and fresh, with a character that manages to push all your petrolhead buttons but also pique your interest in new technology. Yes, it's a hybrid and a halo car, but its an indication that Polestar understands us. The Polestar 2, meanwhile, though very clearly not in the 1's league, proves to me that EV driving in an everyday context is supremely refined and soothing.

The Taycan Turbo S is also extraordinary. It performs in a way you wouldn't believe and still retains some Porscheness, but like all EVs it is hobbled by the double whammy of underwhelming real-world range (in sub-zero winter weather a full charge never offered more than a stated 189 miles) and the misery of relying upon the UK's public charging network for longer journeys.

It's a crying shame. Rare is the car that covers motorway miles more majestically, yet at most you have a couple of hours of blissful cruising before the gnawing stress of finding a charger invades your headspace. Porsche says the Taycan can take the best part of a full recharge in less than 25 minutes, but that becomes two hours unless you're tethered to one of the UK's beefier Ionity chargers. Far longer on your typical Starbucks charge points.

Having a home charger would make daily use easy, but you don't spend £130k on a car to remain within an 80-mile radius of your home. The frustration of out-of-order chargers, a fragmented network of providers and taking seven-and-a-half hours to complete what would comfortably be a three-hour journey by ICE is a trauma that will never leave me. This is not Porsche's fault. Whichever EV I was driving the spectre of range anxiety and the reality of adding unwanted dead time for top-up charging soured the experience. For now, and despite their obvious inefficiencies, hybrids are infinitely more useable.

This said, I know EVs absolutely have their place in our futures. Yet I can't help thinking brands who have recently gone all-in on EV risk waking up and wondering what the hell they've done, a bit like beer fear after a boozy party. It's all very well seeing Tesla stock skyrocketing and Lucid, an EV start-up that hasn't even sold a car yet, being valued at a faintly ludicrous $24billion, but deciding the ICE age is at an end seems hugely premature.

'Do brands who have gone all-in on EV risk waking up and wondering what the hell they've done?'

I'm sure it's no coincidence Porsche chose the very same month to announce more details of its synthetic fuel development, which makes existing ICE cars as green as EVs. Of course, the whole concept pivots on being able to produce the magic juice in sufficient volumes, but it's proof that there are less disruptive ways to achieve massively reduced emissions.

Here in the UK we are apparently still going to sink £100billion or more into the HS2 railway. If it's anything like the rest of our rail network it will be so expensive for passengers to use it will be cheaper to lease a car. Surely that money could be put to better use invested into the development of synthetic fuels and in creating a genuinely world-class infrastructure for the EVs we're being forced to embrace?

Again and again the automotive industry has proved itself to be one of the world's most responsive, innovative and capable. Instead of being pressured into gambling on VHS, Betamax or LaserDisc (google it, kids) and reacting to legislation concocted in the vacuum of Government office, now is surely the time to stop, assess, consult and produce a plan that encourages appropriate solutions for particular applications. The industry is hugely capable and the consumer is increasingly receptive. The future of the car should not be shaped by a one-size-fits-all strategy.

@DickieMeaden

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

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RICHARD PORTER

It's time for some home truths about the GR Yaris, reckons Porter

ON 1928, AFTER MORE THAN A DECADE OF experimentation and perseverance, American inventor Otto Rohwedder finally built and sold his first power-driven, multi-bladed cutting machine to the Chillicothe Baking Company of Missouri. They put it straight to work on their products to give the world something new: sliced bread. And that was pretty much it until the Toyota GR Yaris was launched.

Oh God, the GR Yaris, that pugnacious 1280-kilo frotting pole for the nation's car media. You must be sick of hearing about the GR Yaris by now, especially since everything you read is so damn gushing. Well, let me tell you a few home truths about the bloody GR bloody Yaris. I mean, it's not really a looker, is it? There's something a little off about its stretched and contorted appearance, like someone who's had too much cheap plastic surgery, and the whole thing has a curious stance which I think can be blamed on the drooping line that carves down its sides. Plus, it's also only available with black alloys, and black alloys make even the most handsome car look like it's wearing supermarket own-brand trainers.

'It looks stretched and contorted, like someone who's had too much cheap plastic surgery'

The interior is hardly going to arouse an Audi engineer either, though some of its Tic Tac-packet plastics pale into insignificance next to the much greater crime of a driver's seat that's set far too high. It's so high, in fact, that if you're tall you will feel as if you're being shoved towards the ceiling, peering out from under the peak of the roof like you're cowering in a bin shelter, and the less-than-ideal view out is further spoilt by the thickness and rake of the pillars, the lowness of the massive rear-view mirror and the highness of the central dashboard screen, all of these things conspiring to give you an absurdly small letterbox through which to squint at the outside as it rushes briskly by.

It's quite expensive for a small car too, and don't get the idea that it's some limited-run special that will be worth more than dinosaur diamonds in ten years' time because it's not: Toyota has said it'll keep making the car for an indefinite amount of time, not just until the rallying regulations have been met.

That's what's wrong with the bloody GR bloody Yaris. Bloody. And let me also tell you that these gripes will fade away as soon as you drive it because it is fan-frigging-tastic. There's a tendency among room-temperature thinkers on the internet to assume that if a car gets universally rave reviews then all of those reviews are wrong. In fact, you see this kind of leaden thinking applied to all sorts of things. Apple can't make acceptable mobile phones because too many people have one. *Succession* can't be a good TV show because it got too many favourable reviews. Another Porsche won eCoty because, oh I don't know, someone in Stuttgart has compromising photos of **evo**'s editor doing mucky stuff with a goat. It's a remarkably warped logic and it ignores a very simple fact: sometimes when lots of people say something is good, it's because it is.

This is the case with the very good Toyota GR Yaris. There are some technical reasons why it's a tremendous car, not least the way it grips, the way it revs, the delightful quality of its gearchange. But it's more than that. It's about the way it flatters you with its absurd ability to carry speed into corners without giving the fun-sapping sense that it's doing all the hard work. Like many great cars, it feels as if it's meeting you halfway. Put in the effort, my friend, and I will too. It's not the most responsive or the most sensitive car, far from it, but by moving around a bit and by flowing with the road it feels alive and human, rather than simply like a machine designed to cover ground as efficiently as possible.

I can't deny that there's an additional piece of appeal in the whole rally backstory too. It's impossible not to enjoy the sense that this car was created with a higher purpose in mind, and this can't be detached from the thing itself. It certainly doesn't hurt. But the bigger point about the GR Yaris is that it reminds us that the cars we love are greater than the sum of their talents, or indeed their failings. They have a vibe to them that is greater than precise technicalities. It reminds me of a story I heard about John Lennon going to see Bob Dylan and playing him a new song. 'It's great, John,' Dylan mumbled. 'But what are the words about?' Lennon replied: 'Don't worry about the *words*, Bob, listen to the *sound*.' And when it comes to the GR Yaris, I agree with John Lennon. The overall feel of the thing is more important than the finer details. It's not the greatest car in this history of everything, but right now it's as close as we've got to the day Otto Rohwedder went to see his friend Frank Bench at the Chillicothe Baking Company and said, have I got a machine for you…

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

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JETHRO BOVINGDON

The increased abilities of today's cars could also be their undoing, thinks Jethro

I'VE LONG WINCED WHEN READING ROAD tests and the phrase 'too good' has cropped up as a criticism. How can a car be Too Good? Just think about what that actually means: the steering is too accurate and intuitive; the way the suspension copes with the road is so effective that you can exploit all of the available performance; the brakes inspire confidence and offer total consistency; the engine has a sweet, linear delivery that allows the driven wheels to transmit its power without shock or scrabbling wheelspin. In essence, the whole car comes together like the world's greatest symphony orchestra. There is no such thing as Too Good.

My ire over this lazy concept is only heightened because, more often than not, it's thrown at performance cars that patently aren't too good. So how does one qualify for this strange status? Usually it simply means that the car has a very narrow dynamic identity. That doesn't mean that it's only good at one thing. In fact, it may well perform to a high standard in a whole host of conditions. The crux of the issue is that its approach to going quickly is deeply prescribed. Put simply, these cars that are labelled Too Good don't allow the driver to shape and manipulate the way they go down a road. You steer and brake and accelerate rather than drive.

To me this isn't a sign of brilliance defeating fun, but a fatal flaw. The entire premise of a driver's car is that the, erm, driver gets to do the, um, driving. If you can't dictate the car's balance with steering, throttle, brakes and the use of weight transfer then what's the point? Far from being 'too good', these cars have wildly missed their target. In short, they are the sorts of cars very often described in **evo** editorial meetings as 'a bit shit'. A horribly reductive phrase but so often laser accurate.

However, recently I've noticed we're entering a whole new world. A place where cars that allow you to do all of those amazing things – juggle grip and slip, tease the car in all sorts of directions and fully interact with the chassis and drivetrain – are so capable in so many ways that you'd never know it. Brilliant on the limit but almost disinterested until you get there. We've heard this before (think GT-R, Golf R) but I contest it's never been true. Until now. Maybe cars are finally becoming Too Good?

Such is the proliferation of systems available that the old compromises required to get that last degree of handling finesse at the limit are no longer required. The result should be spectacular but instead feels initially mesmerising followed, in short order, by a sense of complete deflation.

I need to be clear. We've had cars before that are boring unless you're going too fast for public roads. Think of a number of, say, old Audi RS models. However, these cars started to unravel the more you pushed them. Understeer would creep in, the suspension would run out of ideas; they felt optimised for bludgeoning their way along at seven-tenths, then the superpowers melted away into a mess of inertia and clumsiness when you went beyond. This new breed only get better and better. It's just you rarely feel the urge to go looking for their ultimate talent because it's hidden by other, seemingly incompatible ones. The dream of a car that feels like a luxury saloon 90 per cent of the time but handles like a sports car at the limit is getting closer and closer to reality. Only it's not a dream. It's a nightmare.

'You rarely feel the urge to go looking for their ultimate talent because it's hidden by others'

How so? Well, let's take an extreme example: the Porsche Taycan. Extreme because it's unbelievably fast and capable and yet, obviously, refined in a way that an ICE car never can be. Set aside the weight and all the other EV arguments and just feel the quality. Such precision, body control and simply fabulous balance under power. It's quite a remarkable achievement and also huge fun the faster you go. Sliding a Taycan around is a real hoot. However, such is the ride quality and the easy-going nature of the car that, more often than not, you simply forget to enjoy it as a sports car. It's so good at nailing the luxury thing that it doesn't even occur to you to push on and experience the other side of its character. This is a trend you can spot in cars at all price points and configurations.

I still firmly believe that cars can't be Too Good. Yet their breadth of talent is becoming a problem in itself. Now there's a new phrase to make me wince: 'increased bandwidth'. It's a brilliant engineering goal but ultimately feels like a very dark, blind alley. Configurability is great, so long as it embraces the core values of the car's purpose. If the systems are used to superimpose a whole different genre atop the fundamental DNA and mission statement, then we are in danger of forgetting the very thing that made those cars special in the first place. Imagine the tragedy of having the best driver's cars ever built filling our road network, but nobody having any idea they exist.

@JethroBovingdon

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


Lamborghini
L2055954

SIÁN IS BELIEVING

Boosted by an electric motor, Lamborghini's Sián can unleash a mighty 808bhp. It's ferociously fast, but is it really worth its ferociously expensive £2.6million (plus taxes) price tag? A cross-country drive reveals all

by STEVE SUTCLIFFE PHOTOGRAPHY *by* ASTON PARROTT

WOULD MARCELLO GANDINI APPROVE OF THE Lamborghini Sián? I can't help wondering as much when I first encounter this extraordinary-looking car, not on a neon-lit show stand in Frankfurt but as it makes its way silently out of the back of a transporter in an otherwise-deserted car park near Beachy Head.

It's 6am, and for the time being no one else is up in this part of the world to care about such things. It's just me, a small crew of Lamborghini support bods and **evo**'s ebullient-as-ever staff photographer, Aston Parrott.

Aston is hyper-keen to get going, to start shooting, because the light is getting spookier and sexier by the second. Bathed in that light, the Sián's Verde Gea (green ice) paintwork is already starting to sing. But I want to stand there for a while and drink it all in – because in the flesh, in ordinary surroundings such as these, the Lamborghini Sián (pronounced *see-an)* is truly a sight to behold.

Its looks were reportedly influenced by the work of Gandini, who was, of course, responsible for some of Lamborghini's best-known and most outlandish models, including the Countach and Diablo. Just as those cars would stop passers-by in their tracks, so too would the Sián – if only there were any about at this early hour.

It looks massive and beautiful and scary, all at the same time. And when its V12 engine fires, I'm not kidding, my mouth goes dry and my scalp goes all tingly for a second. I am having what is commonly referred to in the north as 'a bit of a turn', right here in a car park at the side of a road I've been coming to for 30 years or more.

And then, wham, reality kicks back in as Aston firmly points out that we really do need to be getting on with it now, mate, otherwise we'll miss what we came here for.

So I climb aboard, or to be more accurate I aim my coccyx timidly towards the Sián's leather-lined carbonfibre bucket seat then basically free-fall down into it, trying not to lose an ear in the process. Once in, I press the long, firm throttle as gingerly as I can to begin the rigmarole of manoeuvring the car into a position that Aston doesn't hate, while also trying to keep the noise down as much as possible so that the nice folks in the cottages nearby don't wake up and start shouting at us over their boiled eggs.

But keeping the noise down and not drawing attention to yourself in a car that costs two point six million pounds before taxes (so let's say a cool three million and be done with it) and whose 6.5-litre V12 engine appears to be all-but-unsilenced when cold isn't easy. Despite this, the lights stay resolutely off inside the cottages – maybe it's too early even for them – and 25 minutes later we have a decent portfolio of sunrise images in the bag and a happier version of Aston to work with for the rest of the day.

The Sián, you may already know, is based unashamedly on the Aventador Super Veloce Jota (or SVJ). It has the same chassis and suspension, the same four-wheel-steering system, the same carbon-ceramic brakes, the same cartoonishly vast 20 and 21-inch Pirelli tyres front and rear, and mostly the same interior, give or take a flurry of fresh design touches, all of which are intended to make the Sián feel as bespoke as possible inside without Lamborghini's designers having to burn money by altering the fundamental architecture.

'IT LOOKS MASSIVE AND BEAUTIFUL AND SCARY, ALL AT THE SAME TIME'

Even the 6.5-litre V12 engine will be familiar to anyone who knows what distinguishes the SVJ above a regular, run-of-the-mill Aventador, with the same friction-reducing internals and titanium intake valves, but here with peak power raised again, from 759bhp to a cacophonous 774bhp at 8500rpm.

Except that there's one key difference: the Sián also boasts a mild hybrid system in the form of a supercapacitor cell and a 48V 'e-motor' that's incorporated within the otherwise-unchanged seven-speed automated manual gearbox. This not only helps fill the torque gaps between upshifts and recharges itself via a regenerative braking system, but it also provides an extra 34bhp. This gives the Sián a whopping 808bhp in total, deployed across all four wheels.

Thanks to extensive, perhaps even excessive, use of carbonfibre, the Sián's dry weight has been pegged to a claimed 1600kg, with the hybrid system contributing just 34 of those kilograms. Lamborghini also claims the system delivers 'a remarkable weight-to-power ratio of 1.0kg/hp'. In other words, it adds both 34kg *and* 34hp. The overall result is a power-to-dry-weight ratio of 513bhp/ton, which just pips the 506bhp/ton of the 1525kg SVJ. Similarly, zero to 62mph is quoted as 'less than 2.8sec' rather than the 2.8 of the SVJ, while top speed remains 'over 217mph'.

Of greater significance is the claim that the Sián is ten per cent quicker than the SVJ in third gear from 30 to 60kph, and fully 20 per cent/1.2sec quicker between 70kph (43mph) and 120kph (75mph), despite boasting no additional torque; both are quoted at 531lb ft at 6750rpm. So it's only once you're on the move and specifically at medium revs that you'll notice any quantifiable difference. Not that the SVJ feels especially lacking in potency in the low to mid ranges.

What we are talking about here is a technological toe in the water, then, a nod in the direction of hybridisation, not a 'ground-breaking' advance towards a cleaner future, as Lamborghini would have us believe. It's an attempt to keep the old girl relevant and desirable for a little while longer while working out how to make the next big Lambo a little bit less unacceptable to Greta Thunberg.

The Sián – or Sián FKP 37 to give it its full name, more on which in a moment – could thus be accused of being a smart but cynical move on Lamborghini's behalf, given how similar it is to the SVJ mechanically, and how much more it costs to buy but not necessarily to produce. But then as a means of boosting the R&D budget for whatever comes next, the Sián has already made a handsome contribution, and if the bosses at Sant'Agata are confident they can sell all 63 examples at £2.6million a pop, then good luck to them. They've succeeded by the way: all 63 sold seconds after they went on sale in 2019.

Right: building on Aventador SVJ underpinnings, the Sián ramps up the visual drama inside and out, with nods to earlier, Gandini-penned cars




Lamborghini
SIÁN



What grates slightly is the nomenclature. The name Sián is a local Italian word for a flash of lightning that appears only above northern Italy (they have rights to natural events in that part of the world, apparently). The number 63 on the tail refers to 1963, the year in which Lamborghini was founded; I bet that took at least five minutes to conceive. And the FKP 37 in the name is in honour of one Ferdinand Karl Piëch. Born in 1937, he ran VW during its takeover of Lamborghini and was, of course, an engineering mastermind. Even so, it's all a little bit tenuous.

And then you actually see and hear the thing with your own eyes and ears, simmering in a seaside car park just after dawn, its cooling fans already blowing hard to maintain a constant core temperature, aided by a quartet of hexagonal vents in the rear bodywork that open by expanding springs when excessive heat build-up occurs inside the engine bay. At which point the cynic within is very quickly replaced by one's wide-eyed inner schoolboy.

Time to drive this car, you then think. Time also to refine your entry technique so as not to look like a man who's just discovered a tarantula beside him inside a telephone box. But it's tough. In fact, it's impossible. All you can do is collapse into the cabin as gracefully as you can and hope that nothing gets caught on the way down.

It doesn't, and once you're in, you're in. The seat is very firm but seriously supportive beneath your backside; the wheel adjusts through a vast range, and the two pedals are almost perfectly in line with your eyes and torso, which ain't

how it used to be in Lamborghinis. Rearwards visibility is scary-bad, and the left-hand-drive layout makes turning left out of a car park a quite horrendous prospect, given that everything on your right is in a gigantic blind-spot. So you check the right-hand mirror, check it again, hold your breath and go, your sphincter doing its best not to chew straight through the thin layer of leather that covers the carbon seat.

Once on the move, the first thing you notice is the ride. It's firm but actually not too bad. There is some calmness and control to the damping that you simply weren't expecting from a car like this on a road like this, not even in Strada mode. At the same time, however, the throttle response isn't wonderful in this setting and the gearchanges are surprisingly shonky. They always were in Aventadors when left to their own devices in Strada/auto, and with the same ISR single-clutch automated manual 'box fitted to the Sián, it's clear nothing much has changed.

So you instinctively switch to Sport mode pretty much immediately and the throttle response becomes much more natural, much sweeter. The ride also gets firmer and noisier but not necessarily worse, while the steering doesn't feel much different at all, with a grainy precision that's neither genuinely lovely nor especially awful to experience. You want there to be more feel through the rim, for sure, but there's enough going on at your fingertips to keep you sufficiently well informed about what's happening down at the front tyres. It's just that the conversation isn't sparkling. It's more like an exchange of information, nothing more, nothing less.

At least the gearchanges become crisper in Sport, although

‘ACCELERATION IN THE LOWER GEARS IS RIDICULOUS, EVEN PHYSICALLY UNCOMFORTABLE’

even then the gearbox is still not what you'd want it to be ideally. It lacks snap and clarity beside the best dual-clutch transmissions, which is a pity.

On the other hand, the exhaust noise and the flow of torque do get a lot sharper but also smoother when you select Sport, and that's before you've done anything meaningful with the throttle or switched to manual shifting, the latter a key move if you're ever going to feel truly at one with this car. Left in auto, unless you're just pootling, the gearbox has a mind of its own, and one that's not particularly in tune with the mind of a (relatively) normal human being.

So I select Corsa and thumb the button marked with the letter 'M' (for manual) to the right of the drive mode selector. I then put my foot down hard in second gear, third gear, then fourth – and that's when the Sián explodes, no, positively erupts into life and feels, at long last, like it might just be worth the heinous amount of money that it costs. Maybe…

The quality of the noise that comes out of the tailpipes, and which fills the cabin entirely as that V12 screams demonically up through 5000rpm to its 8500rpm cut- out in second gear, is not something you will forget in a hurry. Quite apart from anything else it's just very, very loud – to a point where even Ms Thunberg might feel her beloved earth rotate more quickly, just for half a second perhaps, were she ever fortunate enough to hear a Sián in full flow. And if anything it gets louder and more magnificent still when you shift to third and fourth and the motor takes that little bit longer to chew through its revs, giving you more time to appreciate the complexities – and sheer volume – of the sounds it emits.

The acceleration the Sián produces in its lower gears (in any of the first four gears above 3000rpm) is also completely ridiculous, physically uncomfortable even, when experienced within the confines of a public road. Which makes it a rather wonderful thing *not* to unleash for much of the time, because you know it's there and will freak you right out when you want it to. A little bit like a nuclear deterrent, I imagine.

Subjectively, the e-motor does seem to fill the gaps nicely between the ratios, too, smoothing out full-bore upshifts where lesser Aventadors deliver an unwanted thump to the back of the head under the same loads. The gearbox, once in Corsa/manual, does work beautifully, it must be said.

Yet it's what happens to the chassis and steering in Corsa/manual that arguably leaves the longest and deepest impression of all. In this respect, it's quite astonishing how the Sián's core personality can be altered so radically – and so successfully – at the press of just two little buttons. It's a serious Jekyll and Hyde transformation that takes place, to a point where it feels quite a lot like a full-blown competition car, but one that's still just about useable on the road with a bit of imagination.

After all, if you're going to drive a car like the Sián, are you going to be more concerned



Opposite and right: mighty 6.5-litre V12 makes a raucous 774bhp; e-motor, combined with the gearbox, adds 34bhp; exotic detailing is what the Sián is all about








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about whether a) it can deliver a nice comfy ride and half-decent drivetrain refinement, or b) that it can make your heart explode when, as Nigel Ernest James Mansell once so succinctly put it, you give it the berries? The answer is obvious, of course, but remarkably it can make a pretty decent fist of both – if you select the right mode.

Don't imagine that the Sián can't do body control or turn-in precision, either, or that it doesn't really stop properly because it's still just a big old Lambo at heart, one that falls apart at the seams if you ask it the more difficult questions. In Corsa mode the Sián is stiff, yes, but it's also millimetrically precise in its responses and has pretty much total traction in the dry. Its big body is wide but not at all clumsy in its control, and its vast carbon brakes have immense power and feel when you use them hard.

Once you appreciate all of this, you can drive it and really lean on it along a road like the one at Beachy Head far, far harder than you might imagine. To be honest there's not much I can think of here and now that would be capable of staying with it on a road like this. It's that quick, that sorted, that dramatically effective at covering ground – so long as you're in the right mood for it, and the car itself is in the right settings. And that's probably the most surprising thing of all to discover about the Lamborghini Sián, given how much of a peacock it would appear to be on the surface.

'The Sián is a masterpiece in possibilities.' So said the outgoing boss of Lamborghini, Stefano Domenicali, before he left to head up F1 inc. And its biggest achievement, you could conclude, has been to trouser Lamborghini as much money as it has by being styled so differently to the SVJ while being fundamentally the same car to drive (and to produce). Hence the possibility for it to be a masterpiece of pure profit-making.

But then one good look at the Sián in the flesh, in amongst normal everyday traffic, and you might be inclined to think less cynically about it. And if you're fortunate enough to have one good drive in it, you might even start to think that it's actually worth that astronomical price tag.

It isn't, of course, but that's not the point with cars like this. Either way, Marcello Gandini would surely approve.

Left: Sián name comes from a local Italian word for a bolt of lightning; the number 63 references the year Lamborghini was established

Lamborghini Sián FKP 37

Engine V12, 6498cc, plus electric motor **Power** 808bhp @ 8500rpm (combined)
Torque 531lb ft @ 6750rpm **Weight (dry)** 1600kg **Power-to-weight (dry)** 513bhp/ton
0-62mph <2.8sec **Top speed** >217mph **Basic price** £2.6million (plus taxes)

evo rating ★★★★★

by STUART GALLAGHER & ADAM TOWLER

ICONS

We choose six cars we believe are well on the way to securing icon status – and identify five others for which the 'icon' label just didn't stick


RS
RENAULT
SPORT




WX20 JVZ


RES




GV12 DXD

TOYOTA GR YARIS

The Yaris has secured future icon status in a matter of months

SKYLINE, NSX, IMPREZA WRX, MITSUBISHI EVO... *Yaris?* Before the end of 2020, had we listed Toyota's city car alongside such luminaries from Japan's performance car past and present, you would have been within your rights to send for the men in white coats. But you don't need us to tell you that the GR Yaris is no ordinary Yaris. It's no ordinary hot hatch, either. But future icon material? Bit bold for one so young, no?

Not one bit of it. In its short time on the road, the GR Yaris has proven itself to be capable of mixing it with the best of the best, not least when finishing fourth at eCoty 2020. Of even more significance is how it has captured the imagination not only of those who live and breath hot hatches but also those with a barnful of Pistas, LTs and RSs, the sort of people whose only previous exposure to a Toyota would have been when towing their classic to the Goodwood Revival behind a Land Cruiser Amazon.

As with the 205 GTI, Civic Type R and Clio Williams (and Renault Sport Clios in general), the GR Yaris cares little for social or financial boundaries, appealing to all who share a love of great driver's cars. As the best icons always do.

Its motorsport connection helps, of course. Just as Lancia's exploits on the world rally stage lifted the Delta from a dreary hatch to a world champion, and from there to a cult hero and a performance car icon, the GR Yaris has all four of its box arches firmly rooted in a WRC stage. And while it wouldn't have existed without a specific motorsport need, it's quite possible that the tiny Toyota would still be drowning under the accolades had the special stage not come calling and Toyota built it anyway.

'IT CARES LITTLE FOR SOCIAL OR FINANCIAL BOUNDARIES'

Few modern performance cars at this price point hit the spot so sweetly. But an icon needs to be about more than simply how it drives. So set aside the GR's giant-slaying ability and how it commands your complete attention so as not to miss a single moment of its intoxicating enthusiasm, and instead consider what this unlikely performance car hero stands for. It's accessible (a production run of at least 25,000 cars helps), affordable (relative, obviously, but there will be a broad spread of used examples for generations to enjoy in years to come) but above all else it's a performance car you will want to drive at every opportunity, whether it's a decade old or you have just taken delivery of a factory-fresh example. It's an infectious, fun and thrilling hot hatch from one of the biggest car companies in the world. It also shames Toyota's rivals who said they couldn't build such a car for the money, or because the market wasn't there. Just imagine what the motoring landscape would look like with a fully fledged Polo R or Fiesta RS roaming around if either brand had the vision and the confidence of Toyota.

Thankfully the GR Yaris provides that answer today – and will continue to do so for generations to come. ***SG***



RENAULT SPORT CLIO 200

The RS engineers had pretty much free rein – and it showed

THE LAST OF THE GREAT RENAULT SPORT CLIOS IS A decade old now, and while you'll be surrendering a turbocharger and a driven axle to the GR Yaris, you'll be gaining a cylinder and a naturally aspirated engine that loves to zing away near the red line. More than that, you'll also be buying a hot hatch shot through with a quality that the Toyota shares in abundance: authenticity. Let me explain…

Renault Sport absolutely dominated the hot hatch world when the 200's earlier evolution, the 197, was launched in 2006. Perhaps because it was on a high, or in order to maintain its supremacy, the engineers at Les Ulis didn't hold back on the specification for its new junior family member.

The Clio 172/182 models were a triumph of cooking a hot hatch to a traditional recipe, but the 197/200 series was something more sophisticated; more grown-up. Then again, it had to be; the gen-three Clio was part of a new wave of much larger, far heavier superminis, and to retain the type's performance and effervescent character required more radical solutions than simply more power and a sporting chassis.

All of which explains the introduction of a six-speed gearbox (initially with amazingly short fifth and sixth gears to assist the marketing team's mantra of new being quicker than old); the luxury of bespoke, blistered body panels front and rear; a working underbody diffuser, the 'PerfoHub' split-axis front suspension from the Renault Sport Mégane, and so on. In the metal, and particularly for the money, the effect was truly exotic, and it was only many years later that **evo** was quietly told that this budget-busting approach had led in part to the lacklustre turbocharged successor: the Renault accountants weren't going to allow that sort of profligate spending again, with predictable results to the quality of the end product in the fourth generation. The Clio 197/200 wasn't a homologation car like the Yaris per se, but like the Yaris it was developed by a close-knit team of enthusiastic engineers allowed reasonably free rein to make the best driver's car they could, and of course, the Clio had a successful career as a one-make racer, popular rally car and trackday weapon of choice.

'IN THE METAL AND FOR THE MONEY, THE EFFECT WAS TRULY EXOTIC'

Today you can pay from £3000 to £10,000 for one, depending on spec, condition and mileage. They're plentiful now, but won't be forever, just like all those other great peoples' champions that now command eye-watering prices. They can be a trickier, more expensive proposition to run than the earlier Clios, with gearbox woes among a list of weaknesses that need mitigating against. But I don't think you'll care too much. The 200's four-square stance on the road translates to your fingertips and backside as a feeling of extreme agility and a readiness for anything a good road can throw at it. Its manic energy can make you feel like you're on the Tour de Corse even on the commute to work. It's a bargain and an **evo** classic: grab one while you can. ***AT***



TOYOTA GT86

We weren't its biggest fans initially, but its time has now come

THE TOYOTA GT86 IS NO MORE. SAME GOES FOR THE mechanically identical Subaru BRZ. And you'd be forgiven for thinking it's a bit rich, us now proclaiming it to be a future icon, when we've never shied away from criticising it in the past. I've heard it said many times by the car's loyal fan-base that magazines like ours spent years calling for a proper sports car that traded outright pace and grip levels for driver involvement, then Toyota goes and makes one and we all we do is complain that it isn't fast enough. Cue the vitriol.

Well, I can understand that frustration, so I think it calls for a little clarity. We've never criticised Toyota for making this car, nor the concept behind it; the reason it's never quite won us over is entirely due to its execution, on two particular fronts.

Firstly, the idea behind fitting low-grip tyres is brilliant, but the reality of eco-biased Michelin Primacys is not just low grip levels, but a snatchy, awkward transition from grip to slip exposing tyres that were never designed to be driven up to their limits. Heavy braking, particularly on a circuit, sees the ABS working overtime as the tyres struggle to cope, while driving in the wet with the ESP off can really make your palms sweat.

Secondly, there's nothing wrong with the engine's outright power, but rather the coarse, hard-edged way it builds through the rev-range. If it span up sweetly like an old Alfa you might accept whatever progress you're given, but there's something about adding the Toyota direct injection to the Subaru flat-four that gives it an engine note that sounds like you're asking it to do something it'd rather not be doing. Subjective, yes, but hard to deny.

'SO MUCH IS INTRINSICALLY RIGHT ABOUT THE "TOYBARU"'

I don't have an answer to the latter other than 'just put up with it', but I'm sure a decent set of rubber does wonders for the former: it's just that we can't go changing tyres on a press car to something it doesn't come with just to help it do better in a review.

As an ownership proposition, though, and with prices currently starting from £10,000 (or potentially even a little less), the GT86 is a quite brilliant choice, particularly if it's your first proper, rear-wheel-drive **evo** car. Sure, you could go out and buy a Boxster for the same money, but the beauty of the used GT86 is that it should cost mere pennies to run in comparison to the Porsche – and if you keep up to date with the Fast Fleet you'll know why I shudder when I speak from experience.

There is so much that's intrinsically right about the 'Toybaru', from its lovely steering to a great gearshift and brake pedal feel and, not least, a superb driving position. It's light, practical, easy on consumables and you'll learn more about driving trying to get the best from it than you will from a decade behind the wheel of a Golf R. Sometimes icon status takes a little time to formulate, and the GT86's time is finally now. ***AT***





ALPINE A110

This was the lightweight sports car we'd all been hoping for

ALPINE'S A110 SAYS MORE ABOUT THE PERIOD IN which it arrived and the state of the performance car sector than any other car here (although the GR Yaris runs it close). Its launch came just as the fast car world was getting tired of the horsepower game, embarrassed by the obesity of new cars and wondering exactly when and where a two-metre-wide, 700bhp supercar could be enjoyed on the public road.

Enter the diminutive French sports car. As with our other future icons, how it drives and how this reflects on its potential iconic status can be taken as read. It drives exactly how you'd hope a compact, lightweight, expertly set-up, mid-engined, rear-drive sports car would drive. Simple in its execution, sublime in its actions and offering an equal mix of challenge and reward regardless of the driver's skill-set.

What makes the A110 tomorrow's sports car icon is what it stands for and the appeal this has to such a wide audience. Like the GR Yaris, it breaks down barriers, removes any stigma and snobbery from the conversation and allows those who cherish cars designed and developed to put the driver plum in the centre of the action to enjoy and savour every moment.

Its retro design makes you smile on approach. Its cabin doesn't overplay its credentials. Its soundtrack is a little parpy and lacking in culture, but it doesn't matter because the A110 is, above all else, a first-50-metre car. That is, during those first two dozen or so rotations of both axles you can feel and sense everything that's right about the car. Delicate steering, a suppleness to its reactions, an immediacy to its controls. You just know it's special.

'IT'S THE 21ST CENTURY EQUIVALENT TO THE SERIES 1 ELISE'

You *wear* an A110 rather than drive it. It's the 21st Century equivalent to the Series 1 Lotus Elise. And, like the diminutive roadster that will soon end production at Hethel, the A110 is a go-to car whenever you require a refresh as to how a sports car should drive. It will remain so for generations to come: already a tonic for the modern world, it will always be there to provide the answer when you need a reset and recalibration for what a top driver's car should be.

It is these credentials that assure it of iconic status. Those fortunate to own one today will find every excuse they can not to move it on, whatever work, financial and household pressures might be applied. Those unable to realise ownership today will be prepared to bide their time until their name appears on the V5 of their own A110. Long after production ends, and sadly that will happen soon as Alpine embarks on its all-electric model plan, it will still be in demand by those requiring a near-perfect sports car fix.

And while production numbers are not the be-all and end-all of determining iconic status in these pages, that today's A110 will be the only Alpine of its type in the modern era is sure to help maintain its status as a true icon way beyond the lifespan of any electrically powered replacement. ***SG***

ALFA ROMEO GIULIA QUADRIFOGLIO

The Quadrifoglio came from nowhere and re-ordered our world

FOR THE DIEHARDS, EVERY ALFA ROMEO IS ICONIC. For the rest of us, they tend to be cars we're happy to love and admire from a distance rather than own. This all changed in 2016 with the Giulia Quadrifoglio, Alfa's very best for several generations and a car that, five years on, stills leads its field. And this is key to identifying future icons – if they excite and enthral half a decade on, with no excuses or caveats applied, you just know they'll continue to do so for decades to come, too. They become cars you'll go out of your way to drive over and over again. As with BMW's E30 M3, the hot Giulia is a sports saloon you never turn down an opportunity to drive.

The Quadrifoglio not only delivered above and beyond expectations for an Alfa, but it moved the whole genre on, too. Its brilliance came out of nowhere. We hoped it would be as good as it is, but that it goes beyond those expectations tells you just how special a performance car it is.

Light, compact and straightforward in approach, the Giulia focuses with total intent on what really counts in all great driver's cars: peachy steering, dynamics that come alive when required but settle back when the kids are on board, and an engine that punches so far above its weight in terms of delivery and flexibility that rivals' engines leave you cold. There's an overall sense that the Quadrifoglio is a car engineered from the top to feed down to the lesser models in the range, rather than vice versa as is so often the case.

'IT'S A CAR YOU NEVER TURN DOWN AN OPPORTUNITY TO DRIVE'

Like all iconic sports saloons, the appeal of the Quadrifoglio is tied up with the back-story of the men who developed it – in this case a team of dedicated engineers led by Roberto Fedeli, the same man who gave us the Ferrari F12 and 458 Speciale. Pedigrees come no better than that. And then there are the looks: even as the years roll by, you just know that it will continue to turn heads.

Knowing what's to come when you press the starter button to wake that Ferrari-lite V6 and pull back on the shift paddles – themselves pure engineering artistry – will never fail to arouse a sense of anticipation that things are about to get fruity. Those carbon-shelled Sparco seats will be as welcoming in the next decade as they are today. The ergonomics will continue to plug you in to the action, hardwiring you to the car's core. The bespoke super-soft Pirelli Corsa rubber won't last long but will grip like a limpet mine, and with the rear diff no longer crying enough after three corners of a track, tomorrow's drivers will continue to set the pace wherever they find themselves.

Today, some of the Alfa's rivals are more powerful; newer ones most certainly will be. Many offer a more 'premium' experience, others are more accommodating; but few ignite the senses like the Alfa. It's as keen and precise to drive as a pure-bred homologation special, more than worthy of comparison and inclusion in groups that also include the E30 M3. The Giulia is that good. And it always will be, because a true icon never fades. ***SG***



FERRARI 430 SCUDERIA

The Scud blended technology and savagery to winning effect

TIME CHANGES MOST THINGS. WHEN THE 430 Scuderia was launched, its cutting-edge tech made it seem the smooth, digital foil to Porsche's more analogue 997.1 GT3 RS; the future of performance driving, locked in a tussle with a near-perfect exponent of the past. The showdown took place during eCoty 2007, and Stuttgart triumphed, just, relegating the Ferrari into second place, yet no one was in any doubt that the Scud was one of the all-time great Ferraris.

There was that screaming F136 Ferrari V8, offering 530bhp and 347lb ft of torque (compared with 483bhp and 343lb ft from the standard F430); the 'F1 Superfast 2' version of the single-clutch gearbox, said to switch cogs in just 60ms, in itself comparable to Ferrari's F1 challenger from just a few seasons before; and, most of all perhaps, two further key elements: electronics, and the involvement of a certain Michael Schumacher.

The 430 Scuderia marked the point where Ferrari's mastery of chassis electronics passed from expert to guru level. By combining the operation of the E-Diff and the F1-Trac set-up with the brain for the engine and gearbox, it was the first Ferrari to offer superlative dynamic abilities with an accessibility and friendliness that defied the numbers in question.

But it was Schumacher's involvement in its development, not least his request for a 'bumpy road' mode that allowed maximum-attack everything bar damping, that will be one of the car's lasting legacies. Given the fate of the multiple world champion in more recent years, there's an added poignancy to having his paw-prints on the car's gestation.

'I'D PREFER ONE TO MOST OF THE CURRENT CROP OF SUPERCARS'

However, the last time I was fortunate enough to drive a Scud, it wasn't really any of the above that stuck in mind. It was simply that it weighed nearly 100kg less than an F430 at just 1350kg, and the fact that it has a stonking, naturally aspirated V8 that revs to the heavens and above 3500rpm emits a shriek that's a heavenly choir to enthusiasts of the internal combustion engine.

It feels small(ish), gloriously direct, and still patently very fast, yet wieldable and enjoyable on our roads in a way that often escapes its more capable, faster but larger descendants. It seems daft to think of the Scuderia as somehow analogue, especially in light of my opening paragraph, but there's something to that, given its relative unambiguity.

The market doesn't quite seem to share this view, because at the moment you can pick up a low- mileage Scud for around £170,000 (higher mileage cars in left-hand drive can be had for around £120,000 and upwards) when a 360 Challenge Stradale of similar mileage and condition can be £200,000 and the Scuderia's successor, the 458 Speciale, a quarter of a million quid or more. The Stradale is arguably more evocative and raw, the Speciale even more impressive, but I know I would never be disappointed with a Scud, and I'm pretty sure I'd prefer one to most of the current crop of supercars. ***AT***




TGM 593


OY08 HHK


EN67 JJF


M MM 6604


AK51 WXX

THE ICONS THAT NEVER WERE

Lauded at the time (including often by us) these cars never quite nailed the icon thing. We'd better explain ourselves

SOME OF YOU ARE GOING TO BE UNHAPPY WITH the following 900 words, but there are times when the elephants in the room have to be dealt with. So here goes.

Ford Puma. The original, not today's crossover (and excluding the Racing Puma). Penned by the expert hand of Ian Callum, there is no denying the Puma's looks remain as fresh today as they did on debut in 1997. Its Yamaha-finished engine adds a touch of the exotic and we should remember that its arrival coincided with the hot hatch market reeling from the 'twocking' epidemic of the early '90s, which meant Ford's coupe offered a welcome alternative for those willing to pay for their performance car rather than steal it.

Yet the Puma hasn't stood the test of time. Its appeal waned as quickly as it ignited, and it became an almost forgotten car as quickly as it had become a dynamic hero. When discussions turn to cheap driver's cars today, truth is the first-generation Ka holds more appeal.

Now, not one but two V10-engined Germans on a list of cars that should be icons but aren't? How much lockdown gin had we consumed when we composed this list?

Surely a Lamborghini V10 stuffed into the nose of an Audi saloon car is ultimate icon material, is it not? Not when the V10 in question is a shadow of the engine that was fitted to the Italian supercars, no.

'SURELY A LAMBO V10 IN THE NOSE OF AN AUDI SALOON IS ICON MATERIAL'

It's rare for cars that under-achieved when they were new to become tomorrow's icons, and the S6 V10 is no exception. Its engine isn't as demonic as that found in the Gallardo of the time, and with 429bhp tasked with pushing 1920kg around, it was more an exec express than a red-blooded supersaloon. With all 225kg of V10 positioned ahead of the front axle line, this was a nose-led Audi performance car of old.

Ultimately the S6 V10's biggest issue was the V8-engined RS4 also available at the time and the twin-turbo RS6 that arrived soon after. And, of course, the fact that BMW had done the whole V10 supersaloon thing so much better.

That said, Munich's most famous carmaker didn't enjoy a 100 per cent hit-rate with its Formula-1-linked-V10. In the M5 – saloon and Touring – the engine's thirst and the clunky gearbox were glossed over, yet in the M6 they just made for a flawed super-coupe that lacked the kudos of its M5 siblings. The M6 also had to square up to the 911 Turbo of the day, which was only ever going to end one way.

Spot a V10-engined M5 for sale, or parked up in town, and many of us look wistfully and start on the man maths. See an identically engined M6 and chances are you'll walk on by and not give it a second look.

The same can't be said of VW's third-generation Scirocco, primarily because you'll probably want to stop and wonder just what VW was thinking. On paper the rationale stacked up. Take the Mk5 Golf platform, add a Walter de Silva and Marc Lichte-designed body and offer the same engines available in the Golf GTI and R models. On the road, the Mk3 Scirocco fell some way short of its promise.

It may have managed to match its hot hatch cousins in the performance stakes, but it didn't offer anything above and beyond that, suffering from the VW malaise of it not being prepared to go that extra mile to create something a little more bespoke or a genuine alternative to the car on which it was based. It's not a car you'd make a sacrifice for to own. So while the Mk5 Golf GTI is a fully signed up member of the Icons Club, the Mk3 Scirocco isn't.

That there are two Fords in this list says as much about the power of the company's marketing machine as it does about the shortcomings of the cars themselves, the second being the Mk3 Focus RS. Ouch, that's going to cause a few mugs to be thrown at Dunton.

This third-generation Focus RS promised much and delivered on pretty much all of it. The 2.3-litre four-pot doesn't want for power or torque (345bhp and 347lb ft respectively) and what it lacks in smoothness and sophistication of delivery it makes up for with a furious performance punch once the boost arrives from 4000rpm. In its day it felt a little bit old-school compared to the seamless delivery of its rivals, but it gave the Focus its character.

And no, it's six-speed manual gearbox wasn't the slickest, but the ratios were perfectly matched to the Ecoboost engine's outputs, so all good there. So, too, the GKN four-wheel-drive system, upon which Ford spent a considerable sum and which allowed a drift mode to be selected, thus giving the Focus a genuine edge over its rivals.

So good, so far. The Mk3's problem – then as now – is that its operating window to wow you is letterbox-narrow. Across those dream roads that yump, dip, crest and buck, where sightlines are clear and traffic non-existent, it's a weapon. Surefooted, with instant reactions, it becomes an addictive driving experience. But denied such perfect conditions it lacks the magic and the desirability that makes you want to drive it for the sake of it. It should have been Ford's GR Yaris moment, but sadly it wasn't. ***SG***

Clockwise, from top left: Audi S6's V10 engine wasn't the Gallardo unit we'd imagined; Mk3 Scirocco was just a Mk5 Golf in a frock; third-gen Focus RS shone only in fleeting moments; Puma's appeal faded quickly, and E63-gen M6 was never as cool as its saloon sibling

by HENRY CATCHPOLE PHOTOGRAPHY *by* ANDY MORGAN

MAXED GRILLE

On some epic roads and flat-out at the test track, we find out if the G82-generation BMW M4 has what it takes to join the ranks of iconic M-cars. Just don't mention the you-know-what


YA70 TWM

FIRST THERE WERE THE ICONIC E NUMBERS: 30, 36, 46 and 92. Each one with its own story to tell, from homologation special to glorious V8. Then came the F82, which had a difficult start but came good in the end. And now there is this, the G82. Where will it sit on the grid of one of the great performance car dynasties? Knowing that I'm about to spend the day finding out is both exciting and a little nerve-racking.

As a quick recap, there are two levels of M4 (and M3, but we're dealing with the two-door today). The base spec car has 473bhp and 406lb ft of torque and comes with a manual gearbox as standard. However, that version is not available in the UK. The only variant that we get is the M4 Competition, which has 503bhp at 6250rpm and 479lb ft from 2750rpm and comes with an eight-speed automatic gearbox as standard. For the moment, all the power goes to the rear wheels, but all-wheel-drive models will arrive in the coming months.

By the way, just in case you've come here for any commentary about… well, you know what… I'm afraid you're going to be sorely disappointed. I'm not even going to mention the gril… the slatted bit at the front. Won't even hint at it. If I mention kidneys, it will probably only be because I'm making an analogy about cooking. This is a magazine about the driving experience, not the design ethos. Thankfully.

Anyway, it wasn't the first thing about the new M4 Competition that caught my eye as I drove into the **evo** car park early this morning. Partly because I approached the car from the side. No, the first thing that assaulted the senses was the Sao Paulo yellow paint. Driving across various shires for the previous half an hour, I'd assumed that the glow in the eastern sky was dawn breaking. Now,

'WHERE WILL IT SIT ON THE GRID OF ONE OF THE GREAT PERFORMANCE CAR DYNASTIES?'

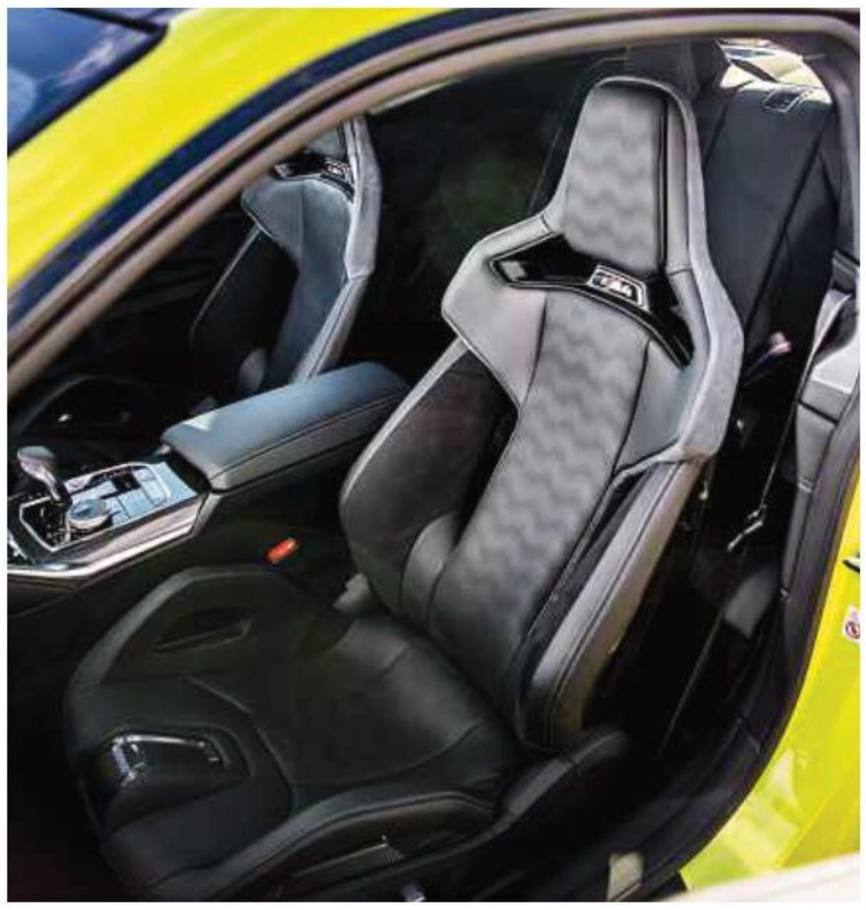
pulling up outside the office, I realise that the luminescence that had hung above the white layers of frost and morning mist was probably provided by the M4's arresting shade of sunshine. It's a no-cost option.

A quick perusal of the rest of the exterior reveals some other options on this particular car. The blue accents in the lights either side of That Which Will Not Be Mentioned indicate that the laser lights are fitted (£1500). The M Carbon Pack is a hefty £6750 and on the outside it renders the rear spoiler, diffuser, front inlets and mirror caps in carbonfibre to match the standard carbonfibre roof with its distinctive aerodynamic ridges. On the inside, the same pack switches the standard M Sport seats for M Carbon bucket seats, which saves a useful 9.6kg per chair. The rest of the carbon in the interior, and there is quite a bit of it, comes as standard. If you want carbon brakes (this car is on standard brakes) then you'll need to shell out nearly £8k for the M Pro Pack, which also includes the M Driver's Pack (£2095 on its own) that raises the top speed to 180mph.

The fact that I don't have to remove the key from my pocket to unlock the door, plus the way the boot powers itself open, is proof that the £990 Comfort Pack is present and correct. Given that there is a thick frost sparkling on the grass, my hands are thankful for the heated steering wheel this pack also brings (heated seats are standard). There is also a Technology Plus Pack, of which more in a bit, that costs £1750 and takes the total price of this M4 Competition from £76,055 up to £87,745. That's a lot of money, but competitive with a Mercedes-AMG C63 S Coupé, while a Porsche 911 Carrera S starts at over £94,000.

If you like buttons then you'll certainly feel like you're getting value for money when you get into the M4. Festooned is the word. Better than every function being accessed via a touch-screen though. The other thing that immediately catches your attention is the seat. With the grab handles on the sides of the base and the raised ramp between your legs, there is a lot going on. It takes me a moment or two to work out what it reminds me of, but then it hits me – if you could take the base out, then it would make an excellent little toboggan. The bucket's bolsters hold you well, though, and the overall driving position is perfect, with the seat going nice and low and the wheel extending a good way out from the dashboard.

Press the bright red starter button, which is down next to



Opposite page: retina-challenging Sao Paulo paint is a no-cost option; among the cost options fitted to this car is the M Carbon Pack, which includes carbon-shelled bucket seats (right)


YA70 TWM



the little gear selector, and the S58 engine wakes quickly with a familiar BMW timbre. Gruff yet smooth, but not exactly musical. Nudge the selector across towards you, feel the creep as you let off the brakes and you're away.

There are myriad settings to investigate, but for the first few miles it's nice to leave all the buttons alone and concentrate on the fundamentals. Instant impressions are that the M4 feels light and laterally stiff. There is an ease to the steering thanks to relatively little weighting, but as soon as you turn the wheel there is also a directness of response that immediately makes you feel connected and confident.

With a DIN weight of 1725kg, the new M4 Competition is no featherweight, but mass can come from muscle as well as fat and the whole car feels taut and much more honed than I was expecting. Despite the responsiveness, there is also enough relaxation in the suspension travel to deal comfortably with the speed bumps and potholes that litter the first few miles. Imperfections are actually heard more than felt, the stiff structure of the car creating quite a lot of NVH but the suspension keeping you isolated from the impacts.

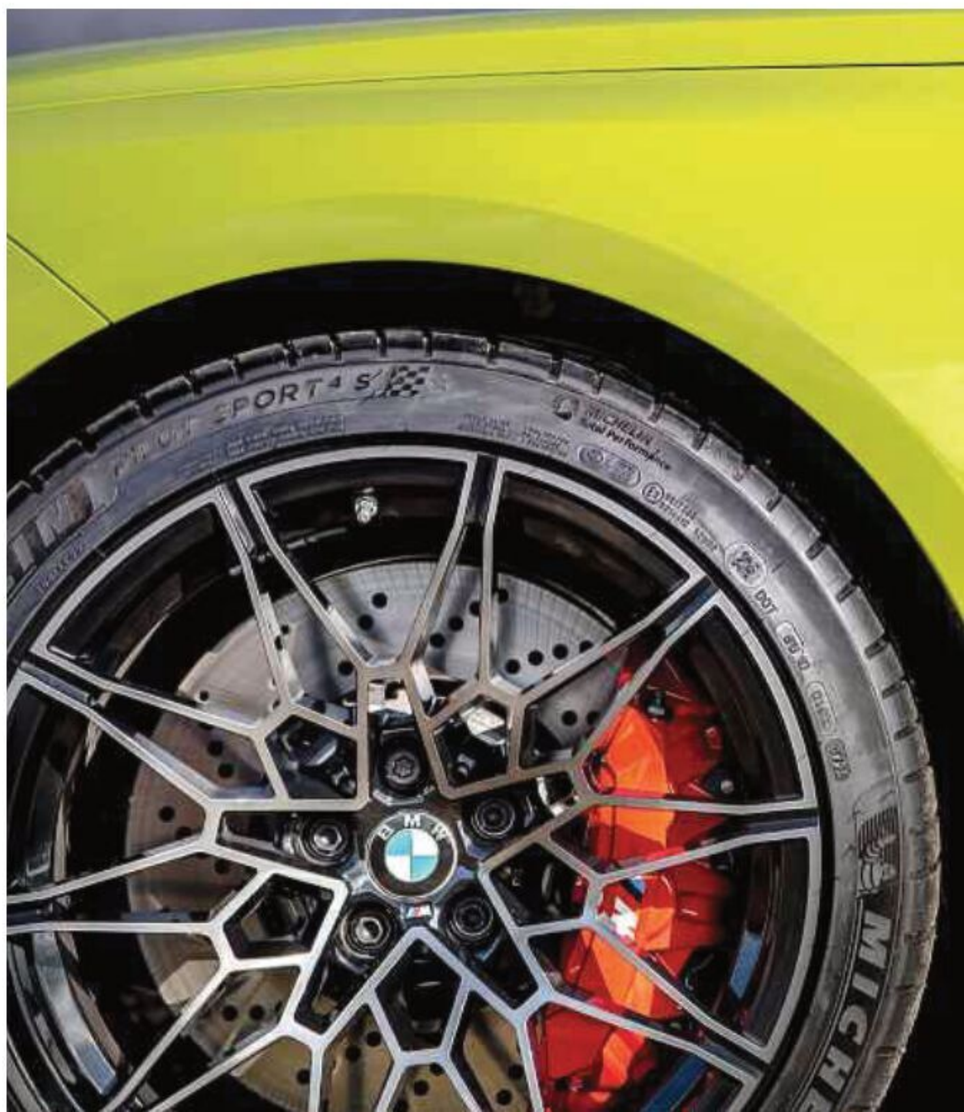
Put all this together and it means you have a car that offers plenty to enjoy even when you're just pottering and patiently waiting for temperatures to climb. You can guide the G82 M4 cleanly through bends and feel the potential without in any way troubling the grip. It's a good start.

A roundabout approaches and instinctively I find myself reaching a finger or two for the left-hand paddle. It's textured with dimples on the back, like Braille. I have an exploratory feel of the right-hand paddle and find raised dots. I begin wondering if they could or should have gone one step further and written Down and Up on the respective paddles in the bumpy code. Having an auto is, on paper, another of the questionable aspects of the new M4, but in everyday driving like this it certainly offers smoother shifts than the old DCT. It will be interesting to see if it can keep up when we reach the moors and the pace increases.

For the rest of the journey north I have a play with the technology with which this latest M-car is laden. It all seems a bit much for a product from the Motorsport division in my opinion, but it also seems to be what is expected these days. George Foreman, the boxer and face of a range of gril… cooking equipment, once said: 'My kids' idea of a hard life is to live in a house with only one phone.' I know what he meant.

Anyhow, the driver assistance tech that's controlled by the buttons on the left-hand spoke of the steering wheel is rather fascinating. The combination of lane-keeping, adaptive cruise control and sign recognition is nothing new these days, but the display in the dash showing the cars and trucks in the lanes around me is an intriguing depiction of the car's awareness. I still don't entirely trust it though, and feel like a parent sitting next to a child learning to drive and anticipating all the possible pitfalls it might not have seen.





Right: standard cast-iron brakes on this car; if you want carbon discs, you'll need to shell out £8k for the M Pro Pack, which also releases the M4 from its electronic shackles and allows it to run to 180mph; as with every other aspect of the chassis and drivetrain, the brake response has different modes, in this case Comfort or Sport


BMW
M4
competition


M4


YA70 TWM


BMW MPower
YA70 TWM

‘THE TARMAC IS EMPTY FOR MILES AHEAD. TIME TO STRETCH THE NEW ENGINE’

Incidentally, the lane-keeping turns on automatically every time you start the car. The quickest way to turn it off is to press and hold the M Mode button on the transmission tunnel, then confirm the offered Track option. This also disables the central screen, but you’re hardly short of information given that a fairly detailed head-up display comes as standard.

After a couple of reasonably relaxed hours, the Armco stops, then the kerbstones disappear and dry stone walls eventually begin to line the road. It’s a beautifully clear day and I can see the single pale-grey strip of tarmac squirming off along the ridge, empty for miles ahead. Time to stretch the new engine…

Pulling hard through a couple of gears, the first thing that strikes me is just how linear the delivery is. The first iterations of the old S55 engine in the previous M4 felt pretty spiky in their turbocharged delivery, with the boost kicking in hard and often unsettling both car and driver. Things certainly improved massively over the next few years and thankfully that learning has been carried over into this new S58. The turbocharged nature of the engine is almost completely hidden and it means you can extend it all the way through to just over 7000rpm, happy in the knowledge that it will rev cleanly and smoothly. It feels incredibly responsive, too, which makes it a good match for the tone set by the chassis.

Talking of tone, the only real disappointment is that the turbocharged straight-six doesn’t sound better. It’s not unpleasant and there is a definite sense of purpose about it, but it’s hardly mellifluous. AMG’s turbocharged V8 or Alfa’s turbocharged V6 would be much more likely to get recording contracts.

One particular section of the road seems to rise and fall like the back of a cartoon Loch Ness monster, necessitating a certain amount of rise and fall in speed between the blind crests. It’s a good chance to really exercise the gearbox, and by and large it responds well. The shifts are quick and smooth and although they lack the staccato crispness that you’d get with a really good dual-clutch ’box, they never threaten to upset the rear axle with the abruptness that the old BMW DCT could display. Given the choice between the two, I’d stick with this auto, but a refined DCT would arguably have been even better.

A couple of Bear Gry… outdoor types are marching across the moors to my right, but other than that it’s deserted up here. The roads are quite wild, too, and present a really exacting test of the M4’s body control. It isn’t found wanting. Some of the bumps on the ragged outer edges of the road are obvious and some are just plain deceptive, but expected or surprising, the M4 copes. Wheels sometimes leave the ground and then you momentarily feel the true weight of the car, but there never seems to be any real loss of composure.

To me it feels like this G82 continues a chassis trend that began with the E92. That V8-engined M3 coupe had a memorably pointy front end and its sense of nose-led grip continued into the F82. It’s a sensation that is present here, too, but allied to suspension that seems a little more planted and a touch more composed. It has retained the sense of tremendous agility but polished the edges very subtly.

Press the Setup button on the transmission tunnel and the main touchscreen will allow you to deliberate between all the many tweaks you can make. There’s no one around, so, like a good road tester but an apparently drunk driver, I waggle the three-spoke wheel while toggling between the steering settings. Then I lurch for a few hundred yards while testing the difference between the Comfort and Sport settings for the brakes. Once these simple either/or choices are nailed, I move on to the triple choices (Comfort, Sport and Sport Plus) for chassis and powertrain. Finally there is the Dynamic Stability Control (DSC) to consider, because as well as the normal options of On and a halfway house M Dynamic Mode (MDM), when you turn it to Off, this latest M4 then gives you a ten-stage adjustable scale for the traction control. I decide to leave detailed investigation of that to John Barker, who’ll be driving the M4 on track later, but I do go so far as to determine that 0, not 10, is fully off.

And, after giving all the settings a good grilli… interrogation, what I discover is that they all do what they say they do. This might sound more predictable than the outcome of an **evo** road tester being left alone in a room with a Fox’s selection box, but what I mean is that they are all useable settings. Which might still sound odd, but usually there is a definite sweet spot for set-ups such as these – the Goldilocks combination with perhaps the dampers in



Opposite: new 3-litre twin-turbo straight-six delivers a searing 503bhp and in such a linear fashion that you’d hardly know it was turbocharged; another revelation is that even the firmest damper setting is useable on a typical British B-road

Comfort, the drivetrain at its most alert and the steering in Sport. Often one or more of the settings only seems to have been added simply because the engineers could, not because it improves the car.

With the M4, the options all make exactly the changes you think they should. Around town, the lighter steering and more gradual response of the brake pedal in their respective Comfort settings is welcome. If you're driving quickly then they both feel a little better dialled up to Sport, with a greater sense of connection and immediacy through palm and sole. The powertrain settings ratchet up the alertness from Sunday on the Sofa through to Concerned Cat.

Perhaps most surprising of all, however, is that every one of the chassis variations is useable on the road. From past experience I would have expected the firmest damper setting, Sport Plus, to be unbearable on a British B-road. But although the car is busier down a bumpy road, it doesn't feel like it is bucking and uncontrollable. Yes, you would probably choose Sport most of the time, as it gives a more flowing feeling, but Sport Plus imbues the car with a supreme feeling of agility and response. It's really quite addictive. As soon as you turn into a corner the car seems to rotate and lean hard on the outside rear tyre, poised and prepared for you to steer it with the throttle if you want. It's so reactive that it's actually nice to dial back the powertrain setting to Sport so that you calm that element down a fraction and ensure smoothness in the way you load up and use the M-diff as you toy with the traction.

If you do provoke it, then there's no snappiness, just a nice

BMW M4 Competition (G82)

Engine In-line 6-cylinder, 2979cc, twin turbo **Power** 503bhp @ 6250rpm
Torque 479lb ft @ 2750-5500rpm **Weight** 1725kg **Power-to-weight** 296bhp/ton
0-62mph 3.9sec **Top speed** 155mph (180mph with M Driver's Pack) **Basic price** £76,055

evo rating ★★★★½

fluidity and predictability to the slides so that you can really sit into the oversteer with confidence. It all comes back to that sense of tautness and connection that was evident in those first few miles this morning. The M4 Competition is a very accomplished car but it's also a really fun car.

On paper, its weight gain and auto 'box look questionable, but neither of these feel like impediments on the road. Driving home and then getting back into it a few more times over the next couple of days cements my feeling that while the torque converter and modern tech might make it slightly more refined as a daily driver, enough of an understated sense of purpose still pervades the overall experience that it feels like a proper M-car every time you get in. I'd be amazed if John doesn't have a ball on track, too. I'll have mine in a dark colour to hide the gri… because I like dark colours.

'NEITHER THE WEIGHT GAIN NOR THE AUTO 'BOX FEEL LIKE IMPEDIMENTS ON THE ROAD'

by JOHN BARKER PHOTOGRAPHY *by* ASTON PARROTT

ANALYSE THIS!

If, like us, you're a fan of oversteer, you'll love the new M4's Drift Analyser function, which measures the length and angle of your slides and awards them a star rating. We put it to the test around Bedford Autodrome's West Circuit

SOMETIMES IT'S GOOD TO COME INTO A test 'blind'. I drove the M4 on track for an hour before reading the spec and was surprised that it had 503bhp and weighed 1725kg; I thought it was lighter and less powerful. There's a degree of cancelling-out there, but it's impressive that the M4 feels light in the corners where weight usually dulls response and agility. This is on the standard Michelin Pilot Sport 4 S tyres; with the temperature struggling to rise above 5deg C, we've decided to save the optional Cup 2s until later in the day.

The M4 feels right as soon as you drop behind the wheel. The busy-looking seat is reassuringly snug and supportive and the amount of adjustment impressive. The steering wheel rim isn't too chunky and the ratio and weight (in Sport) quickly feel right. There's granular feedback, too, a flow of surface detail that connects you to the tarmac. It's matched by a small-bump sensitivity in the ride (in Sport Plus) that finds and amplifies imperfections in the track that don't exist in most cars. Before the tyres warm up, the M4 feels a bit jumpy, but things soon smooth out and the pace picks up.

It might not feel like 500bhp but the twin-turbo straight-six delivers a weight and depth of response that is at odds with its six-cylinder drawl. Pin the throttle and there's a solid, irresistible urge and a superb, usefully linear quality to its delivery. Most impressive of all is that once you start winding off traction control and playing with oversteer, you forget that it's a turbocharged engine; modulate the throttle and the response is always there for you.

I dived into the various drive modes and settings before we started, and I'm glad I did. What intrigued me most was the new Drift mode, because it's a shortcut to appraising the essential dynamics of the M4, and the new 'M Traction Control' feature: a race-car-style, ten-stage traction control. A long press of the DSC button turns off all the safety systems and the central display then asks if you want Drift mode. Accept, then confirm that you know this mode is not for road use and you're now in the training mode for wannabe oversteer kings… or challenge mode if you feel you've already achieved this status and have selected the intriguingly named 'M Drift Analyser'.

The analyser will measure the elapsed time, maximum degrees and total yardage of your oversteer moments and will also score your drift, giving it a star rating out of five. We'll come back to that. First, let's marvel at the usefulness of the new M Traction Control function.

It does exactly what you'd hope: set to 10, full traction, it doesn't allow a sniff of slip even when you get on the throttle early in tight corners. The interesting bit comes when you wind it to halfway, level 5. It doesn't so much change the degree of slip, but rather manages at what point in the corner slip arrives. Stamp on the throttle at the apex and there's no slip at all, but keep the throttle wide open and the slip comes as the corner opens up. Then it's all very neat, a moderate amount of tail swing that you can easily catch and which comes back into line with ease.

Because it doesn't kick out the instant you hit the throttle, there's no scrabble for opposite lock and jumping off the throttle in surprise. Once you're comfortable with that, if you want you can wind off the assistance progressively, the slip starting earlier and earlier. When you've wound it off completely, all five stars in the Drift Analyser are up for grabs; you can only score a maximum of three with traction control set at 5. And if you like an oversteer slide as much as I do, you're soon hooked on the challenge of getting a five-star drift…

With traction control at zero, the M4 kicks early in the corner and you're throwing a fast armful of opposite lock at it as the rear slews. Then, if you're good, you're riding out the slide, making yards, the throttle pretty much pinned, adding and subtracting opposite lock until the engine gets close to the red line and the power fades. You'll probably be grinning at the poise of the M4, revelling in the reach of the wailing straight-six and how comfortable the chassis makes exploiting it feel. Then you check the stats of your drift: 4.7sec, 148 yards and 19.7deg. Not bad! But just four stars. What the…?

Many more four-star ratings follow. Frustrating. Perceptively, photographer Aston Parrott says: 'Do you need to add a transition?' The key section of the West Circuit turns out to be early in the lap: the left-right chicane that leads into the long, long left and then the even faster right. Hang it out through the long left in third gear and it feels heroic, but that's only four stars all day long. So I induce oversteer out of the chicane then flick into the left, slewing very wide off line but holding onto it and getting to the top of third on opposite lock. The stats look better: 6.0sec, 168yds, 20.9deg and… four and a half stars!

I reckon you could 'game' the analyser, oversteering up a runway by sliding left and right with little jeopardy, but on the West Circuit it takes some old-fashioned commitment to score the full five stars. Deep breath… into the long left early, nail that, then just as the car straightens, upshift to fourth and chuck it into the fast right, riding out the slide well into three figures for as long as it will. The numbers look amazing: 9.5sec, 347yds and 11.8deg… and five stars! To be honest, I'm disappointed there's no fanfare or tickertape to celebrate the unlocking of the next level.

Back to business. Switching to Cup 2s changes the detail but not the essential character of the M4. The surface sensitivity they induce is astonishing, like the regular Michelins have been pumped up to 90 psi. It takes a good three laps on the still-cold track (7deg C) before they're up to temperature and delivering the extra grip you'd expect. But grip they do, and the turn-in is more decisive, too. The M4 feels better tied-down and more positive, carrying more speed, and although the limit is higher, it steps beyond it as smoothly as on the regular rubber. A mention here for the standard and pleasingly huge brakes, which cope with four properly quick laps without a hint of fade or rumble. It probably helps that there are baffles you can take out of the front end to increase air flow to the front discs.

I'm impressed by every aspect of the M4 on track. It's fast, it's capable and you can tailor its settings so that it's exactly as entertaining as you can handle. It feels built for it, too; it spent a ridiculous amount of the day sideways but felt as fresh at the end as when we started.

BMW M is on a bit of a roll at the moment, what with the M2 CS being our current Car of the Year too. The two are not far apart in terms of performance or price. I prefer the looks of the M2 but prefer the spec and seats of the M4, its greater tactility and feedback, though what gives the M4 the edge is its longer wheelbase, which makes it calmer on opposite lock. Get hooked on the M Analyser and you'll really appreciate that.

'YOU CAN TAILOR IT SO THAT IT'S EXACTLY AS ENTERTAINING AS YOU CAN HANDLE'




YA70 TWM




YA70 TWM


M Drift Analyser
Last drift
0
00:03.5 min
91 yd
11.9 °
Activate
Best drift
0
00:09.5 min
347 yd
11.8 °
Reset
3:03pm


V20 WKW
A 45 S

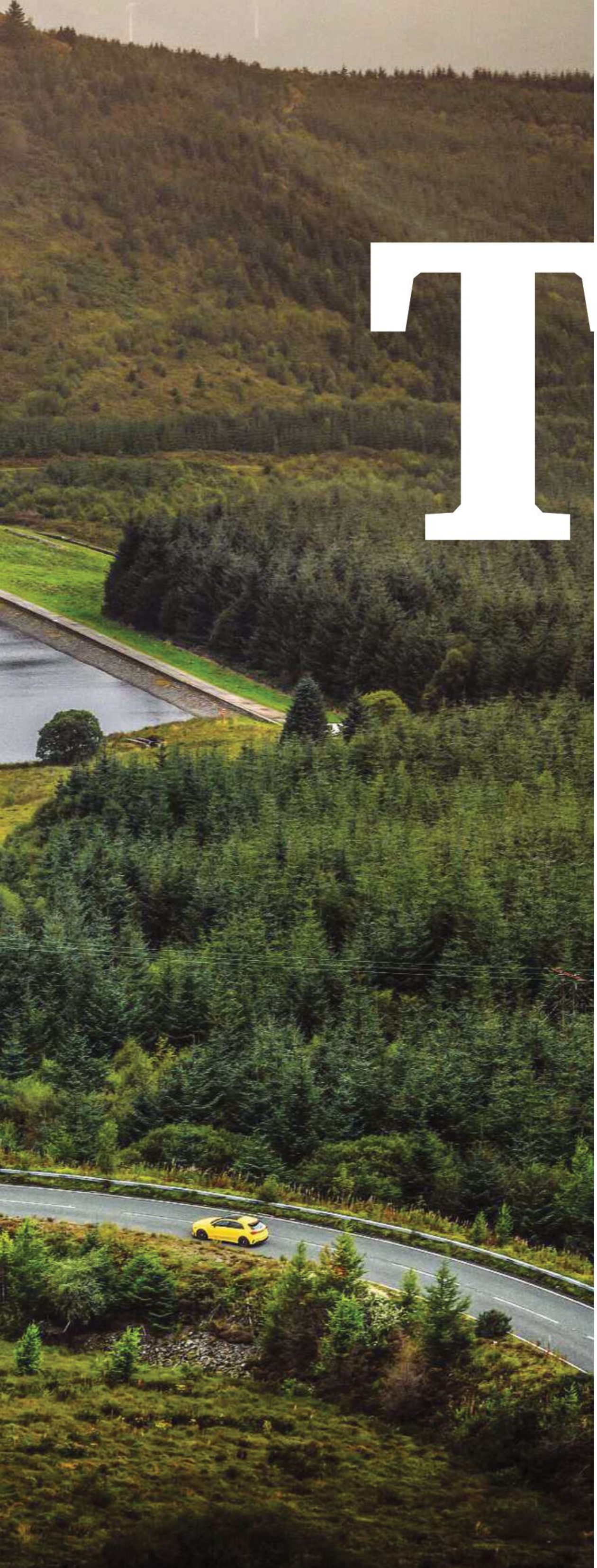
by JOHN BARKER PHOTOGRAPHY *by* ASTON PARROTT

A STING IN THE TAIL

Icons don't come much bigger than Porsche's 911 Turbo, so are we seriously suggesting a Mercedes hatchback is on a par? Read on...







HERE IS A THEORY THAT THERE'S ONLY SO MUCH performance you can use on the road. That when it comes right down to it, you're only on full throttle for a few seconds at a time, so while the potential may be huge, be it in terms of grip, horsepower or both, in reality only a percentage of it can be deployed. I've seen it in action, from the seat of a 911 GT3 while tailing a Ferrari Pista, the Ferrari's 700bhp unable to 'gap' the 500bhp Porsche. This is on sinuous driving roads, of course, not autobahns.

So I'm hopeful that the fat rump of the 911 Turbo S is not going to get much smaller in the windscreen of my Mercedes-AMG A45 S, despite the chunky little Merc having a deficit of over 200bhp. We've ambled down this road a couple of times, dep ed Adam Towler and I, while **evo** photographer Aston Parrott trains a long lens on us from the top of the valley, so we have an idea of its twists and turns. When we get Aston's radio message to say he's got the shot, I'm expecting the 911 to take off.

And it does, leaving the A45 and, it seems, that theory choking in its wake… But there are only short straights, there are tight corners and there is Armco on the right and hillside on the left. This is a road that demands you stay in your lane, within the white lines, and that should help the narrower, lighter Merc. So why isn't it?

I already know: it's because the Turbo S's astonishing, explosive performance can exploit any straight to devastating effect. I'm flat-out in the Merc, upshifts popping keenly, yet the Porsche zooms away in a surreal fashion. It's as freaky to see as to feel. But I still reckon the Porsche won't have the upper hand everywhere. Further on, I hit the brakes later than I have been to claw back ground, knowing the wide-hipped 911 needs to be carefully, precisely threaded.

The Mercedes doesn't have the sustained stopping power of the Porsche and its carbon-ceramic brakes, but it has another advantage: you can chuck it in and sort it out as you go. Even in its latest form, the 911 still behaves like a 911. With so little wiggle-room, you don't want to provoke it on the way in and you want to have it pretty much straight before unleashing another massive slug of performance. Hustling the Merc into the corners gains back a few yards and, encouraged, I go for an even more ambitious braking lunge into the next series of flick-flack, left-right turns, unintentionally finding the limit of the A45's composure.

The Mercedes' discs bite positively but the chassis gets all squirmy and vague beneath me so I can't tell exactly what's going on. Alarmingly, the rump of the Porsche is reversing towards me, its brake lights blinking like hazard flashers. Despite such efforts it remains a fruitless pursuit, because as soon as the road unwinds into the next short straight, the Turbo S is gone. I have to accept that while the A45 S can cover ground at a terrific pace, even when everything is stacked in its favour it will never seriously pressure the Turbo S. But although the A45 and that theory may have just taken a beating, that's only one aspect of this twin test.

I've lost count of the number of tests won by the 911 over the years. Tests against more powerful, bigger and more expensive rivals, tests against aspirants with the same power

‘MOST UNEXPECTED OF THE A45 IS ITS WILLINGNESS TO OVERSTEER’

or layout or objective… and every time the same result. Why? As well as hitting bullseyes in performance and dynamics, the 911 has always been remarkably efficient, handily sized and, for rivals, annoyingly practical, with two small rear seats and a front boot that seems deeper than the car itself. It also delivers character and engagement when you're just ambling and you can park it anywhere, so really it's no mystery why it has long been the default everyday sports car.

By extrapolation, ever since the first four-wheel-drive 911 Turbo arrived back in '95, it has been the default everyday supercar, the supercar for all seasons. The 993 variant was a revelation, the Turbo's reputation for being fast but frightening transformed by all-wheel drive that made 402bhp astonishingly exploitable. It became an instant icon.

Sure, it wasn't as sharp or absorbing as the lighter, simpler RS but it quickly cemented its place in the range as the 911 with massive performance that could cover continents in comfort. Power and sophistication have increased with every generation until here we are in 2021 with a 641bhp Turbo S that hits 62mph in 2.7sec and 205mph. The non-S Turbo has a piffling 572bhp and manages a tardy 2.9sec and 199mph.

The status quo has been upset, though. Last June we group-tested the all-new 992-generation 911 Carrera and – shock, horror! – the 911's recent run of road test wins came to an end. It felt like a pivotal moment. The 992 was a beautifully polished product but the physical scale of it and the lack of character from the new turbocharged flat-six and the car in general left us a little underwhelmed; it didn't feel like a 911 until you were properly pushing on.

That doesn't mean that the status of the Turbo has been similarly downgraded. The key thing is that the changes from 991 to 992 suit the Turbo better than they do the base car; there's only one body, the wide body (aka the Turbo body), and of course the loss of engine character through the fitment of intake-muting turbochargers is just business as usual. But it's so *big*. I've had a few supercars on my driveway and the Turbo S is almost as wide as they come, and with its size comes weight: a not-inconsiderable 1640kg unladen. In part that explains why it needs the grip of 20-inch wheels at the front and 21s wearing 315-section Pirellis at the rear.

The 200-mile journey to the photo location answered a few of the questions regarding the Turbo S's touring ability. Its seats are comfortable enough, though I never did discover how to adjust the lumbar. Maybe it was in a sub-menu of the touchscreen HMI, the buttons on which, for me, are too small. One of the few hard keys, for the damping, was soon pressed, because although the ride is quite busy it also feels too free, with an unchecked lurch over bigger bumps. The sportier damper setting sorts it, the car a little firmer but usefully flatter and not to the detriment of comfort.

Historically, the Turbo got firmer after Nissan put a bat up Porsche's nightdress by claiming a stellar Nordschleife lap time for its new R35 GT-R. Before then there was a feeling that the Turbo's Ring time was a figure of no more significance than peak brake temperatures on the Stelvio or mean intercooler pressures at Arjeplog. But once Nissan had destroyed it, Porsche seemed spurred into getting more track speed out of the Turbo, inevitably making it more taut.

Mind, with almost 650bhp to contain and deploy, it would have gone that way anyhow. Just a small squeeze of the throttle in the



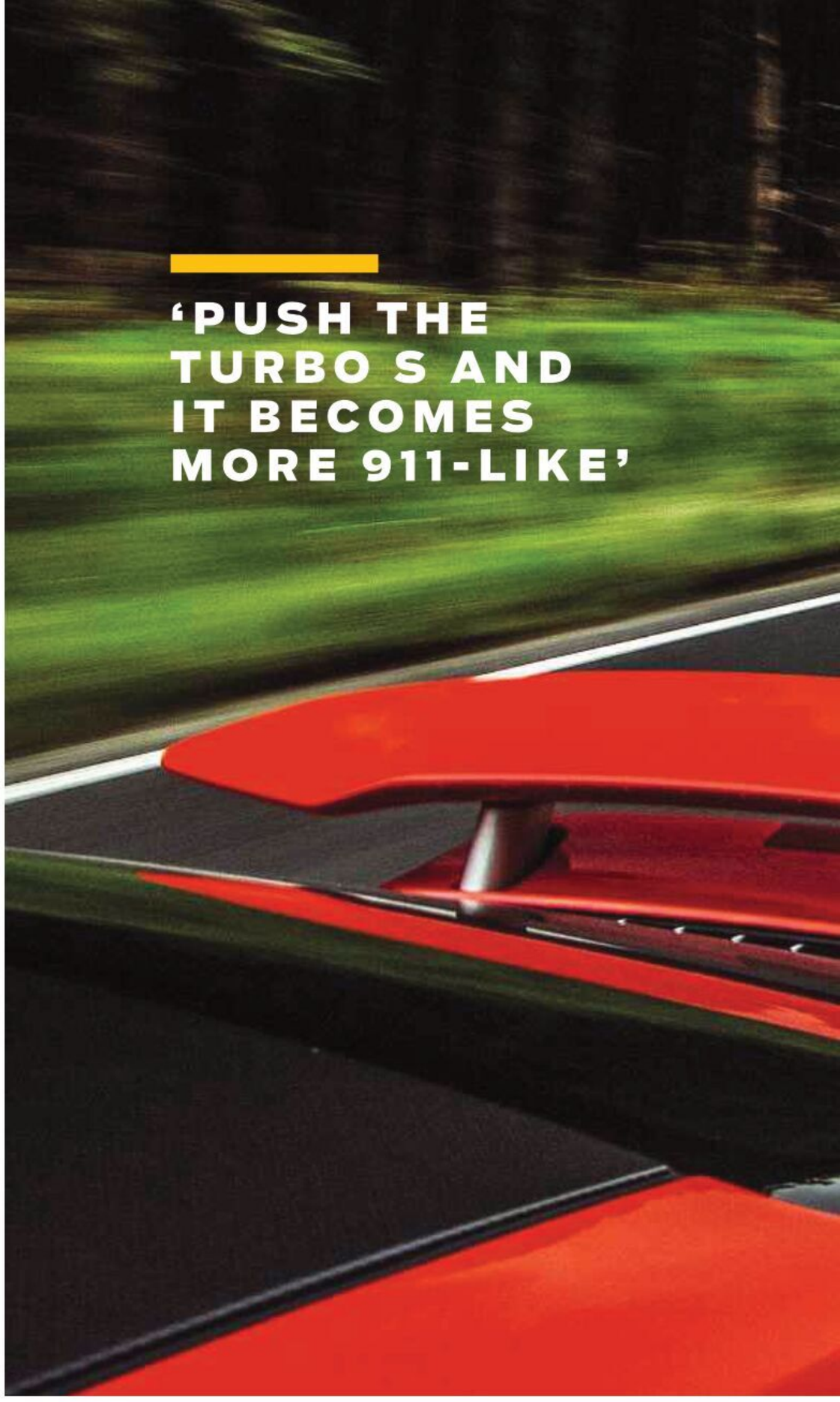




From top: Turbo has become progressively more tautly sprung with each generation – and larger, too; it now takes real precision to thread down a winding road







Turbo S induces a massive, almost instant outpouring of urge from the twin-turbo flat-six. Ambling along, the first time you give it full throttle is nuts; the dual-clutch gearbox seems to magnify the response, the thrust ramping up as it drops rapidly through the ratios to find the optimum gear, the engine then unleashing the full torrent of power and torque. It’s so responsive it caught itself out when I nailed it out of a roundabout: the ’box found first and full boost arrived so quickly that the engine clattered into the limiter before it could get second gear.

Simply travelling briskly is what the 911 Turbo should excel at. There will be other models in the range for those happy to trade some ride quality for dynamic precision, so the Turbo should be one of those cars in which you feel less obliged to nail it through the corners. More of – dare I say – a point-and-squirt car, the four-wheel drive there to help deploy the performance with little fuss in all weathers rather than to strengthen cornering ability. The performance itself should be immense but with an appealing, huge-striding elasticity to it. The latter the Turbo S has – if you manually select high gears and make the motor dig deep – and it sounds good, too, with the optional sports exhaust, which is refined and quiet in Normal but gutsy and growly in Sport.

The ride can be a bit lumpen on some surfaces though, leading us to wonder if the standard Turbo set-up, as opposed



to the optional 10mm-lower sport suspension fitted here, is more rounded. The steering isn't especially sharp or detailed and the same goes for dynamic feedback, so it feels as though you're not benefiting greatly in that regard.

Can the (deep breath) Mercedes-AMG A45 S 4Matic+ teach the Porsche anything about everyday, all-weather performance then? Well, it impressed the pants off us at eCoty in 2019, delivering like no Mercedes fast hatch before it. It's not short on grip, being four-wheel drive, and it's not short of grunt either. In fact, as a measure of how far we've come, the A45 extracts 415bhp and 369lb ft of torque from its 2-litre, four-cylinder engine. That's more power and only marginally less torque than produced by the 993 Turbo's 3.6-litre, twin-turbo flat-six (402bhp and 398lb ft). And with its eight-speed dual-clutch gearbox, the Merc gets to 60mph in 3.9sec, nearly half a second quicker.

Given the A45 S's cross-spoke alloys, front winglets and high-mounted tailgate spoiler, I never fail to be gobsmacked by its ritzy interior. It carries on the black-and-yellow external colour theme, the emphasis thankfully reversed, but with a dashboard, centre console and wheel finished in polished metal and piano black that is gloriously glitzy, plus mood lighting that gives it a Hollywood Boulevard look at night. It manages to make the Porsche's cabin look a bit low-rent when it really isn't.

A difference in quality is immediately apparent in the steering, the underlying feel of the A45 no match for the solidly engineered tactility of the Turbo S. There's a raw, looser edge to the A45 and an unvarnished sportiness in how it sounds, the growl of a potent 2-litre four quickly subsumed by the sound of air being ingested and compressed as the short gearing of the DCT gets the A45 smartly up to speed. It feels potent and agile and also unexpectedly supple for a hatch with so much ready torque at its disposal.

In fact, the A45 S is not only smoother riding than the Turbo S, it's also more refined, better isolating its occupants from road noise and feedback. I reckon I could write the *i-SPY Book of Major Road Surfaces* after the trip down in the Turbo, identifying them by the level and quality of tactility through the wheel and floorpan. You certainly appreciate smooth asphalt in the Porsche.

One thing the two cars share is a usefully accessible drive mode button hanging off the steering wheel. The Merc's firmest damper setting – Race – is fine for choppy B-roads, the ride still rounded but with better vertical control. There's the option to tailor most of its dynamic character, apart from steering weight, which is a shame because the effort required at the chunky rim is always a fraction heavy for me.

It's an intense drive in Race with the full-on exhaust blare and keenest throttle and upshifts, yet there's still a calm

Above: Merc can't match the Turbo S for straight-line pace, but it counters with a chassis that's unexpectedly supple and a real feeling of potency and agility

edge thanks to that supple ride. It's brilliantly effective, the energy from the engine an endless rush, perfectly managed by the DCT gearbox and effectively deployed by the four-wheel-drive system and Michelin PS4 tyres. After a few miles there is, you feel, not much that could show it a clean pair of tailpipes on demanding roads like these…

Perhaps the most unexpected aspect of the A45's dynamics is its willingness to oversteer. There's minimal understeer and if you keep the throttle pinned through a long corner the drive will gradually shift to the rear, yet when the back end pushes out you correct it instinctively. 'You're never a prisoner to that weight somehow,' says Towler, 'never searching for traction or dealing with understeer. The way it'll exit under power properly sideways has to be experienced to be believed.'

Push the Turbo S and it becomes more 911-like, more tail-heavy in feel, so you wind back its stability control with due consideration for the avalanche of near-instantaneous torque that could be unleashed. While Towler has the A45 opposite locked mid-corner like a Vatanen Escort, I'm catching a jink of the 911's hips right at the exit in PSM Sport. Even that feels brave, the Porsche still driving hard and exploding from the damp corner like a champagne cork. Having learned how much throttle unsticks the rear, I do one run with PSM off, purely in the name of science.

Thing is, you don't have to take risks to make sensational

Porsche 911 Turbo S (992)

Engine Flat-six, 3745cc, twin-turbo **Power** 641bhp @ 6750rpm
Torque 590lb ft @ 2500-4000rpm **Weight** 1640kg **Power-to-weight** 397bhp/ton
0-62mph 2.7sec **Top speed** 205mph **Basic price** £155,970

evo rating ★★★★★





pace in the Turbo S. Just driving neatly, dipping into its enormous performance and leaning on the terrific grip is enough to see off pretty much anything else on the road. 'It feels more like low altitude flying than driving,' says Towler, adding: 'You only sustain its full-on pace for a short period before a fuse blows somewhere in the grey matter.' The Turbo S is an astonishing piece of engineering, no question; it's just a shame it doesn't amble along as effortlessly and quietly as you'd hope when you're not going for it.

The A45 S is not in the same league in many respects but we always come away impressed. It only ever feels short of grunt when it encounters a ground-based missile like the Turbo S. In reality, it's shockingly fast too, but what's remarkable is that it gives up its performance so freely and in a way that, at times, looks way more dramatic than it feels; the tail slipping out under power is no more threatening than lift-off oversteer in a front-drive fast hatch.

Then there's the ride. Suppleness is a key element in the A45's pace, adding a calmness to its dynamics that in turn makes you relaxed, and after an exciting day in the hills, it makes the Merc cosseting and stress-free on the motorway run home. If we're honest, the ride could take a bit of stiffening. You know, just for a bit more control when chasing supercars. Details, mere details. Truth is, while you might want more from an all-season performance car, the A45 S gives you all that you need.

Mercedes-AMG A45 S

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1991cc, turbocharged **Power** 415bhp @ 6750rpm
Torque 369lb ft @ 5000rpm **Weight** 1550kg **Power-to-weight** 272bhp/ton
0-62mph 3.9sec **Top speed** 167mph **Basic price** £50,570

evo rating ★★★★½





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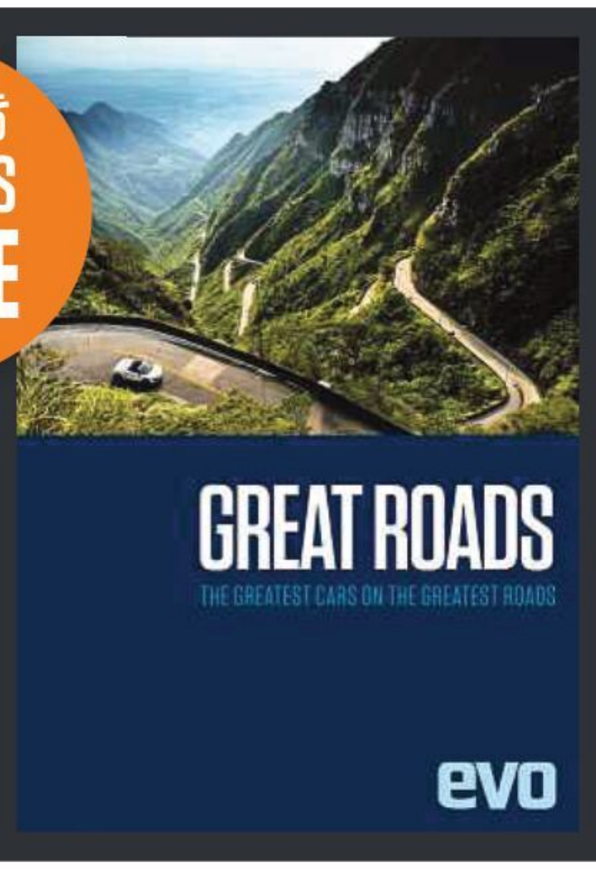
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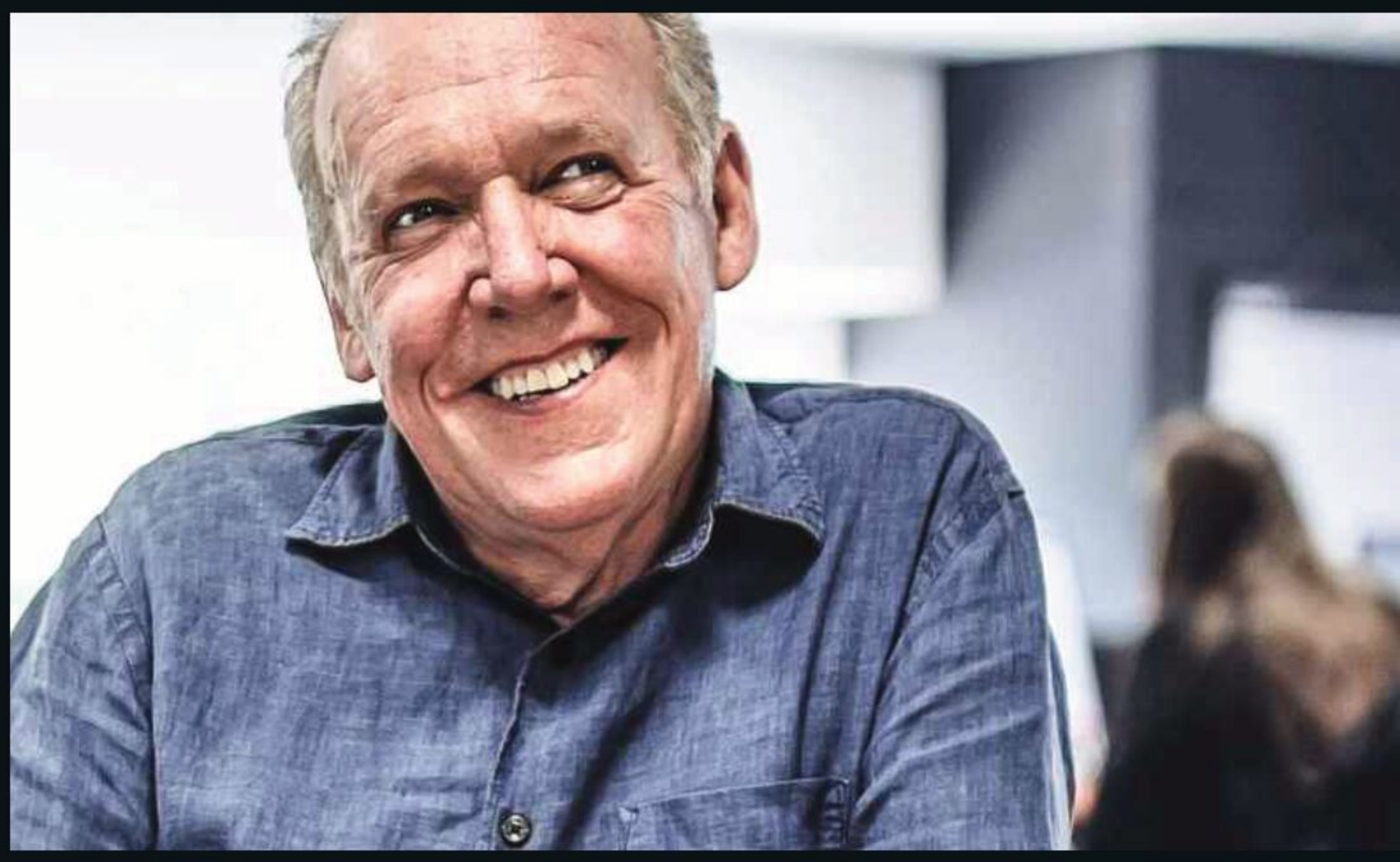
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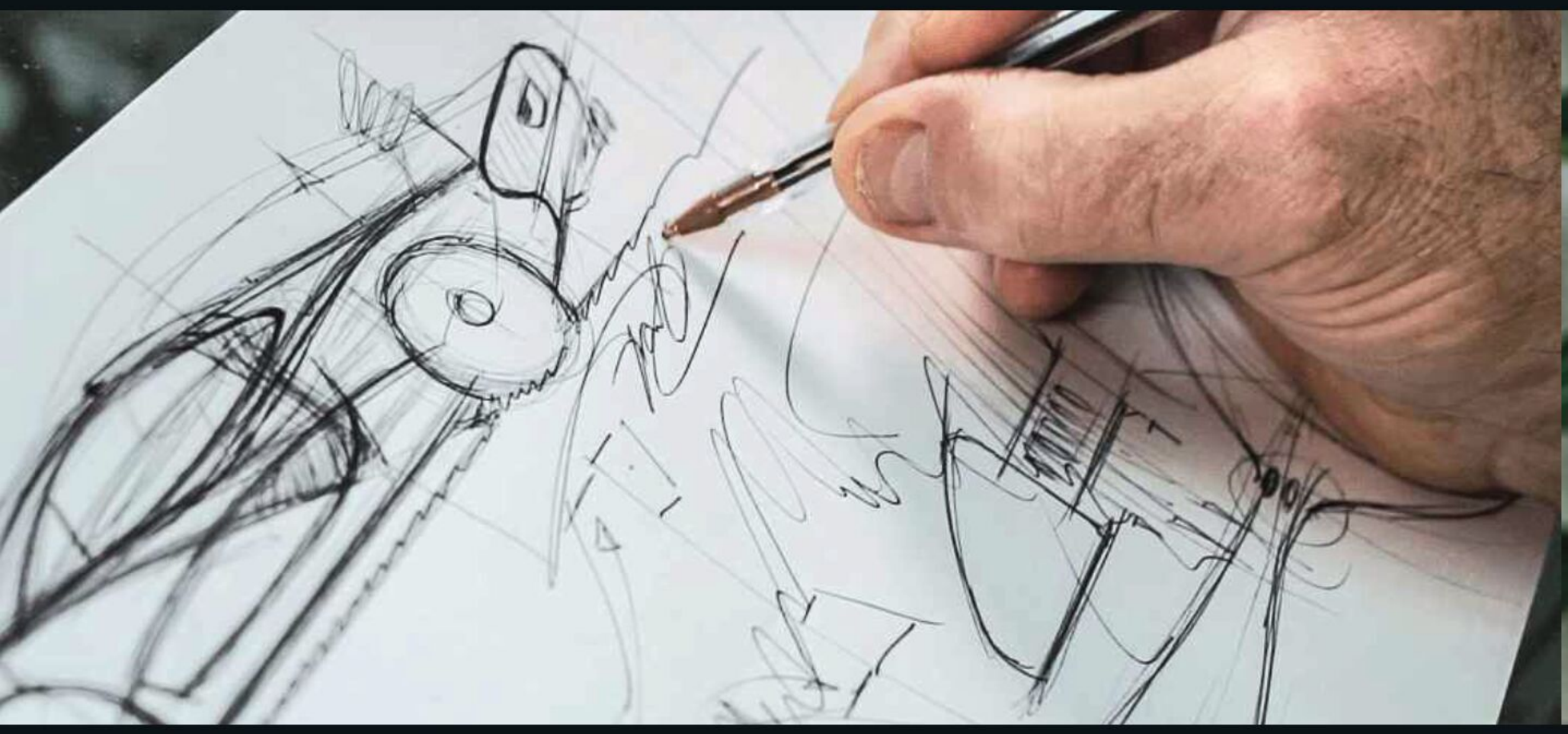


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DESIGNING THE ICONS

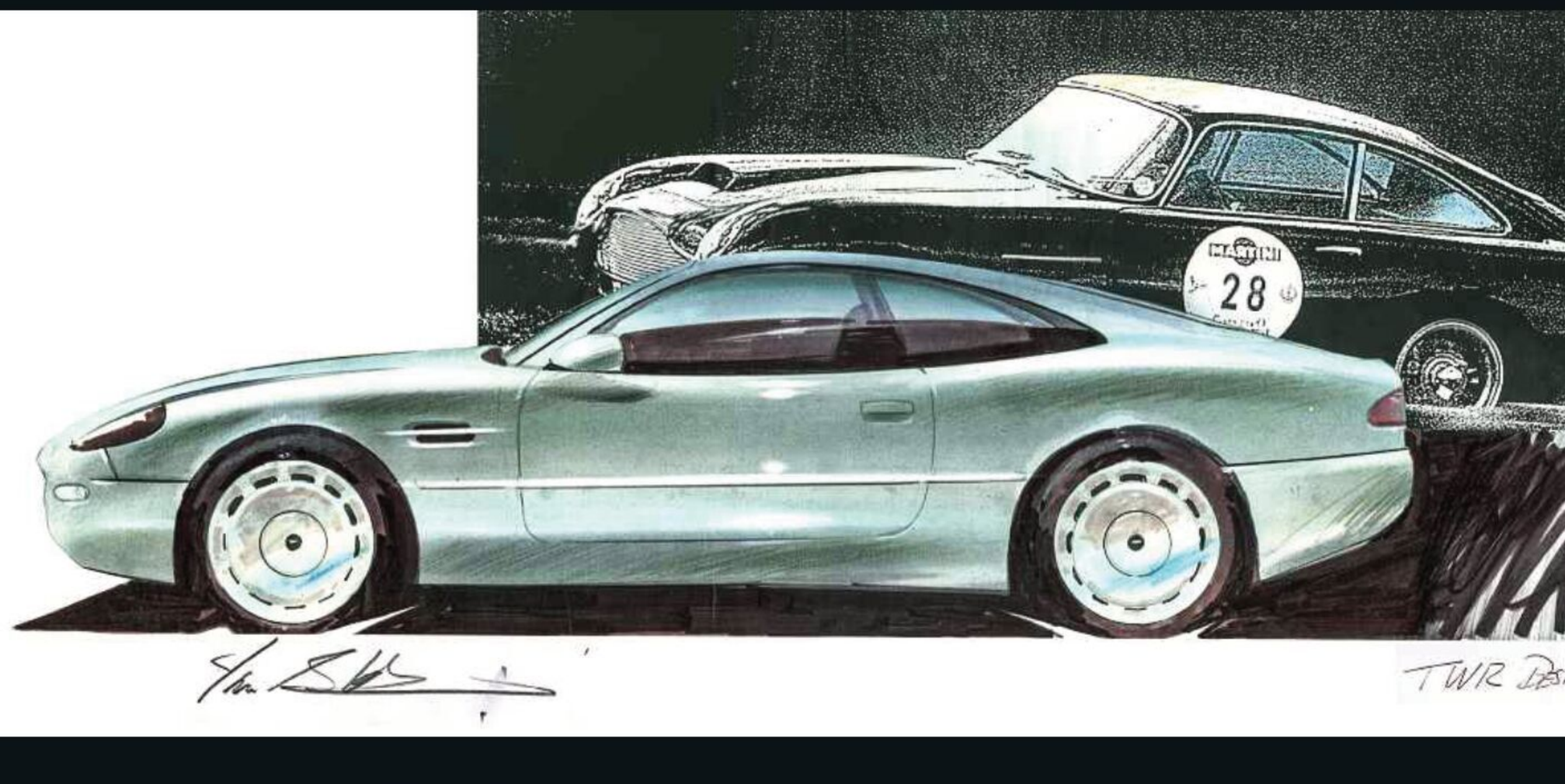














What makes for an iconic car design? We ask Ian Callum, Frank Stephenson and Peter Stevens – each responsible for many iconic designs themselves – for their takes, and find out if there's a secret for success

by BRETT FRASER





Below: Ian Callum reckons the iconic status of the Mk1 Golf GTI (right) owes a lot to Giugiaro's groundbreaking styling; Callum's own iconic designs include the original Aston Martin Vanquish (bottom)



WHEN MUSING UPON THE MAKE-UP OF ANY automotive icon it's natural that the conversation starts with design. It's the way the human mind works: we're often told not to judge a book by its cover, but we forge right ahead and do it anyway.

But what of the guys who create those covers? What do car designers think about the business of producing an icon? Can you pick up a pen and proclaim, 'Today I shall style an icon'? And if not, are there visual flourishes and necessities that give your creation a fighting chance of one day becoming iconic? What obstacles stand in the path of a car design achieving societal greatness, and what other factors are involved?

To ponder the essence of an icon, we've assembled a small group of car designers who have – whether they care to acknowledge the fact or not – created iconic cars. We have Frank Stephenson, whose repertoire includes the Maserati GranSport and MC12, new Mini, Fiat 500, Ferrari F430, and McLaren's MP4-12C, P1, 675LT, 570S and 720S. Also joining us is Ian Callum, the man behind the Aston Martin DB7 and Vanquish, and Jaguar's XK, XF, XJ, C-X75, F-type, XE, F-Pace and I-Pace. And last but by no means least is Peter Stevens, whose back catalogue includes the McLaren F1, Jaguar XJR-15, Lotus Esprit Mk2, Elan M100 and Excel SE, the Le Mans-winning BMW LM99, MG's X-Power SV and ZT-T, and with Prodrive the exterior packages for the 1997 WRC-winning Subaru Impreza rally car and later WRX STI road cars.

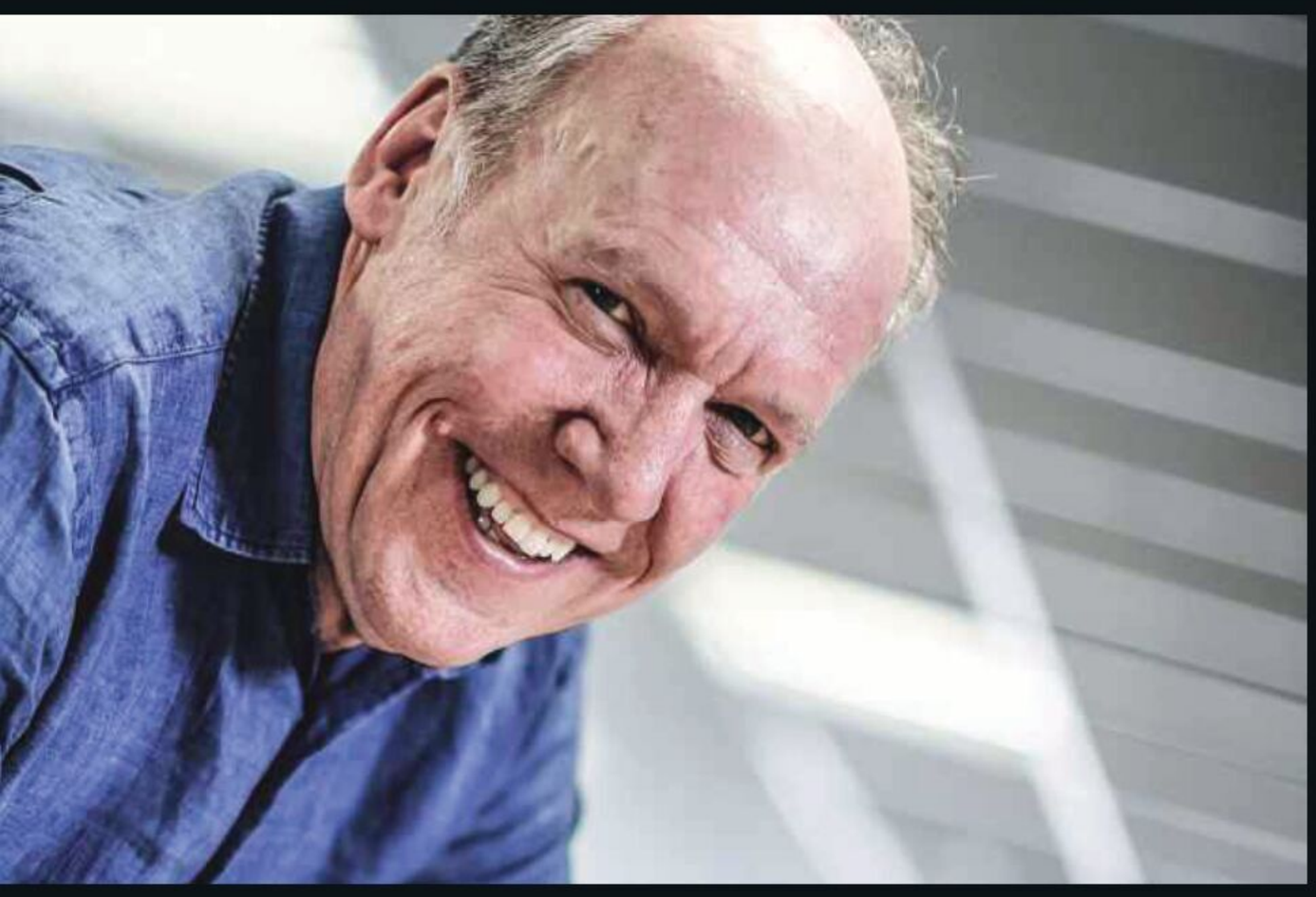
All three have been in the game a long while and therefore know better than most how the spirit of an icon might be conjured, yet they are all equally swift to dispel the notion that you can set out intentionally to produce an iconic design. 'There are certain people who either want to create something iconic or have been asked to create something iconic, but that's absolutely naïve,' says Ian Callum emphatically. 'Because you're never going to know if something's iconic until time has passed and tells you so, no matter how good you may think your design is at the time.

'You can't consciously create something iconic, that's just a nonsense, but you can set out to create something that is timeless: good design is always good design and perhaps one day it might achieve iconic status. If you want to have an icon you have to hope for it, but don't hope for it! That's what I have told one or two of my peers. "I'm going to create an icon today!" Yeah, go on then…'

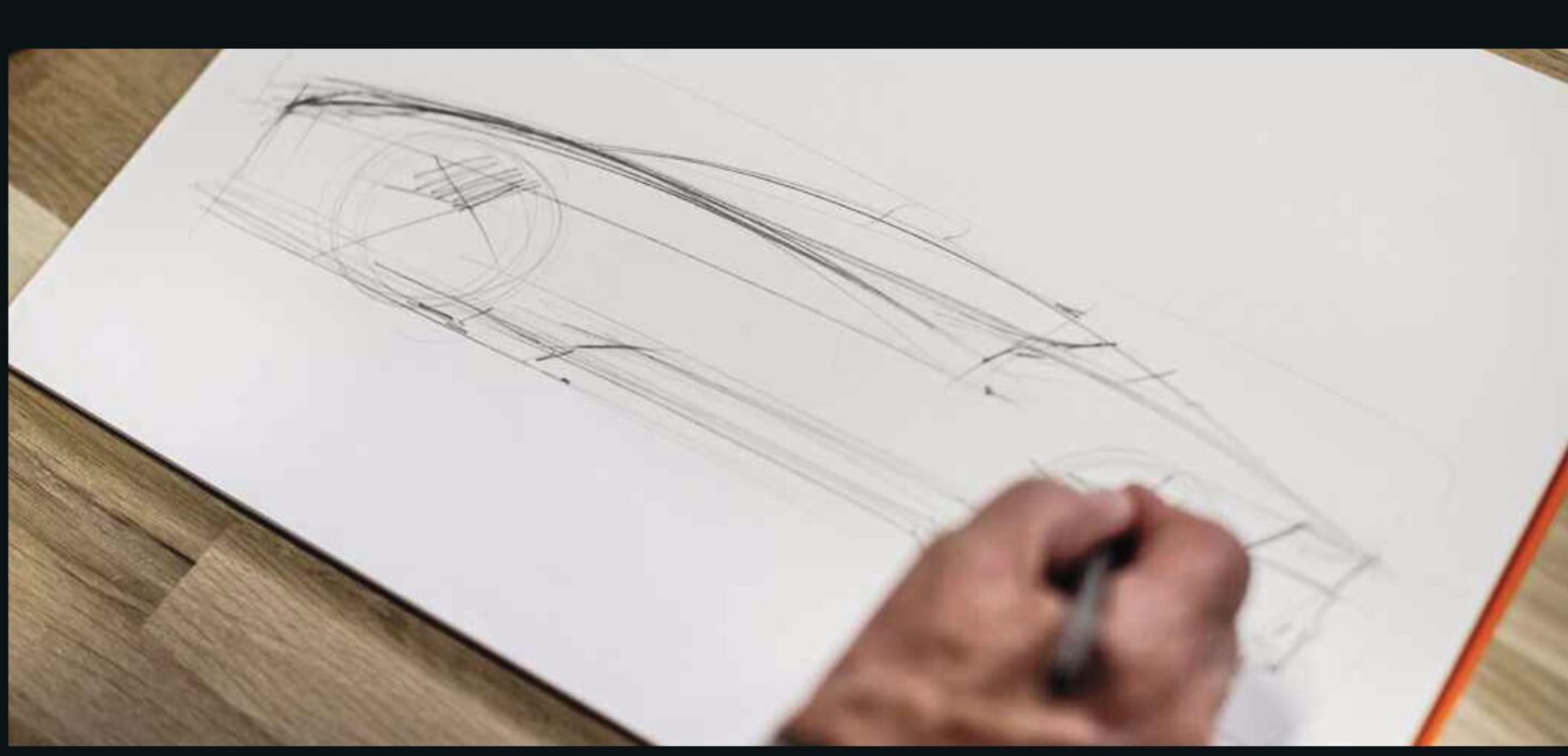
Peter Stevens agrees: 'I'm trying to work out what iconic is, because people say it about certain cars. It's certainly not something you set out to do at all, that's absolutely for sure. But although you might not set out to create something iconic, you could set out to produce something that's gorgeous and quite long lived – which is good design – and over the passage of time others, perhaps, might conclude that your car is worthy to be considered iconic.'

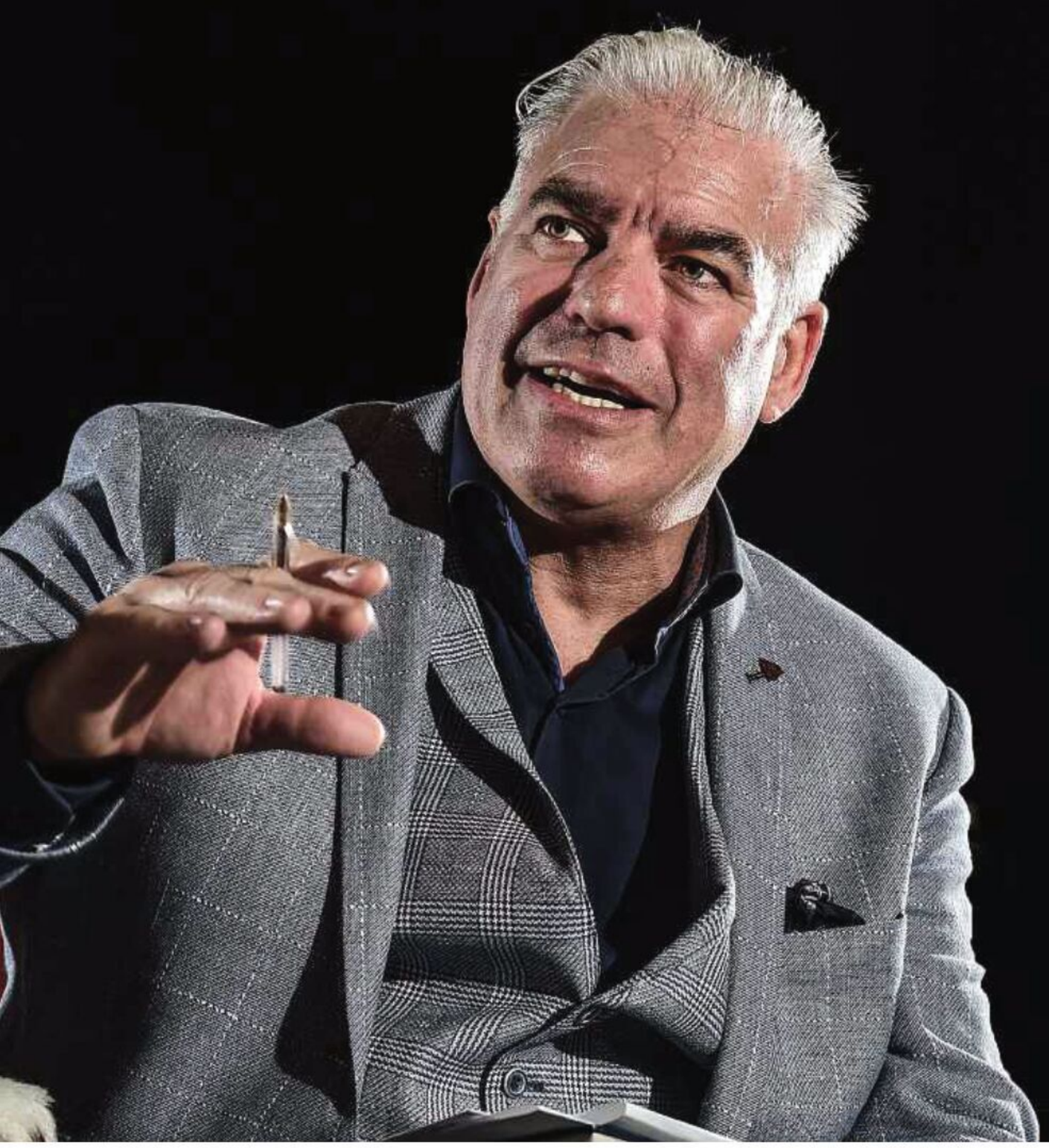
Stevens continues: 'I don't know what happened with the McLaren F1. For all of us involved with it, it was no part of our intention at all for it to be iconic. It sounds weird to say, but we didn't get to the end of the project, look back around at the car and have a strong belief that we'd created something really special. We knew it was pretty darned good and it was as good as we could make it and it was as safe as we could make it at the time. It took ten years for it to dawn on us that it had





‘GOOD DESIGN IS ALWAYS GOOD DESIGN AND PERHAPS ONE DAY IT MIGHT ACHIEVE ICONIC STATUS’







‘THERE’S ONE CONSISTENT FORMULA OF SUCCESS – THE ABILITY TO DRAW THE CAR WITH JUST THREE LINES’

probably come out quite well. Sounds kind of foolishly modest, but really you don’t know on the launch day – and anybody who claims that they did know that they’d done a good job on the launch day is absolutely fooling themself.’

‘I approach all my design projects hoping they’ll be iconic one way or another,’ confesses Frank Stephenson. ‘Really you have no idea, though, if what you’re working on is going to become iconic: that’s for others and for history to decide. Can you look at the clay, stand back, and say, “Well yeah, that looks bloody awesome”? Yes, you can look at it and say that it looks awesome, but at the same time you can’t say, no way, that it’s going to be iconic. Iconic is based upon staying power, desirability over a long period of time.’

Yet Stephenson does have a theory on how to give your car design a leg-up in life: ‘I’ve found from my 30-plus years in the business, and researching which designs stand the test of time, that there’s one consistent formula of success – the ability to draw any of these iconic cars with just three lines.

‘Fewer and it’s too boring to be iconic, more and the designer is trying too hard. It’s the same in architecture, furniture and product design: you can boil the design down to three key lines. It’s about a simplicity that can be interpreted broadly as artistry, knowledge or sensitivity, proportions and balance. If I was to draw those three maestro lines of any car that is iconic you should be able to recognise it. There’s a science to design which is good proportion and if we adhere to that then we’re not going to end up with animals that have too many feet. What I’m talking about is simplicity – basic, good, beautiful design.’

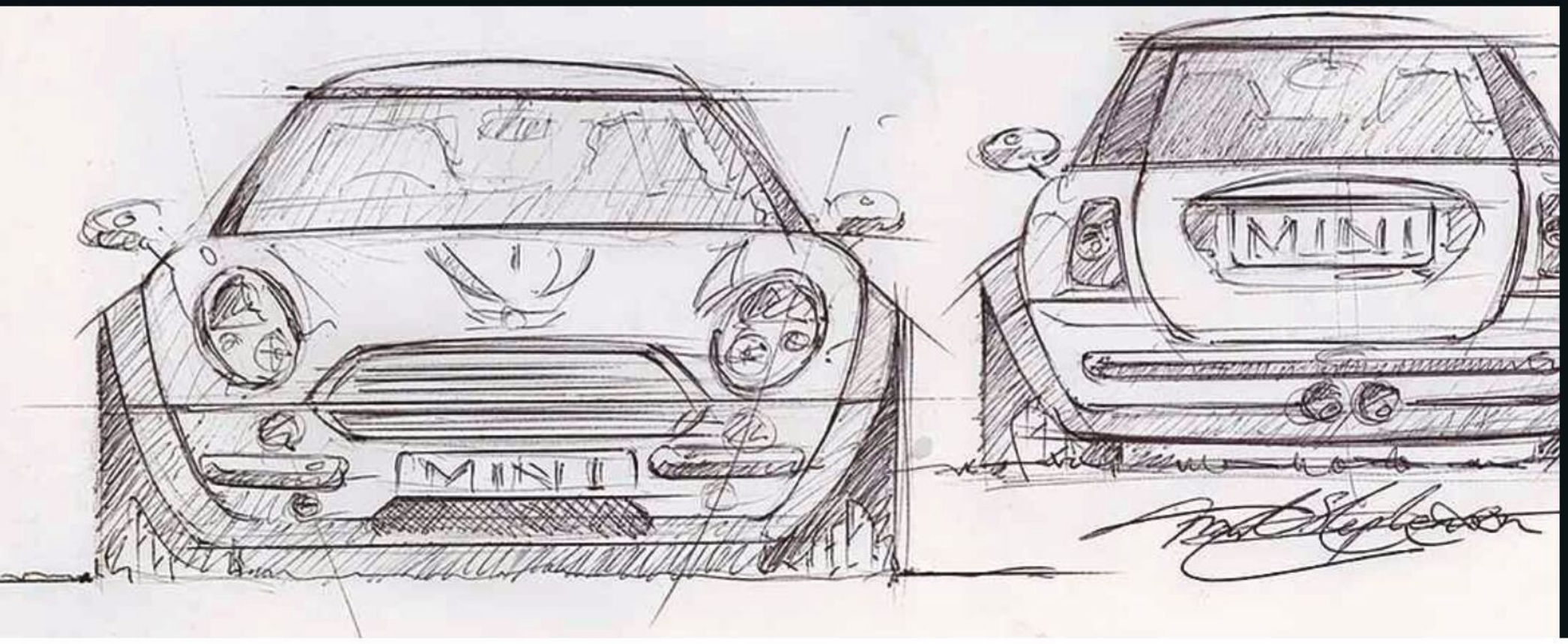
The importance of simplicity is echoed by Callum: ‘My view is that you go for the shape of the car first, you get that right, and then make the surface as simple as possible – it has always been my point of view. There’s a current fashion to make cars surface-wise very complicated. And I don’t particular like that fashion. It’s born out of a few reasons. One is the design team’s bosses telling them they have to do something different, so they try harder by expressing form in a very exaggerated way, and in isolation from the rest of the car.’

Those thoughts are expanded upon by Stevens: ‘The original Land Rover, that we now refer to as the Defender, is iconic. It represents all the kind of stuff we used to like about Britishness, it would take you to Africa and you’d have an adventure and all that. And you can look at one and know exactly what it’s for, what it means and what it’s done. It’s the same with a Porsche 917. I think that part of being iconic is that there is a message and that message is fulfilled by the car.

‘There’s a degree of honesty to it. A lot of modern cars aren’t







Far left: Frank Stephenson had to reinterpret a long-established icon when he penned the R53 Mini (left); his favourite work of his own is the Maserati MC12 (top row), including the road version's interior

honest: the problem is that with the hybrid business you have to make something look like an SUV to accommodate the batteries. And it's not an SUV. A lot of them have got such low ground clearance and weigh two tons, so that's a message that isn't fulfilled by the car.'

Stephenson concurs: 'You want me to believe that's an air intake? So many companies are doing it these days – c'mon, be professional! It's like boy racer design. It's lying to the customer, visually lying to the customer, just trying to be something it's not. Sure, it did happen in the past, but visual subterfuge seems more prevalent today.'

Despite earning their daily bread from their mastery of aesthetics, all three designers acknowledge that good looks alone are no guarantee of a car's iconic potential. Charm, character, history, sporting endeavours and social significance are also vital ingredients; interestingly, none of them dwell long on performance.

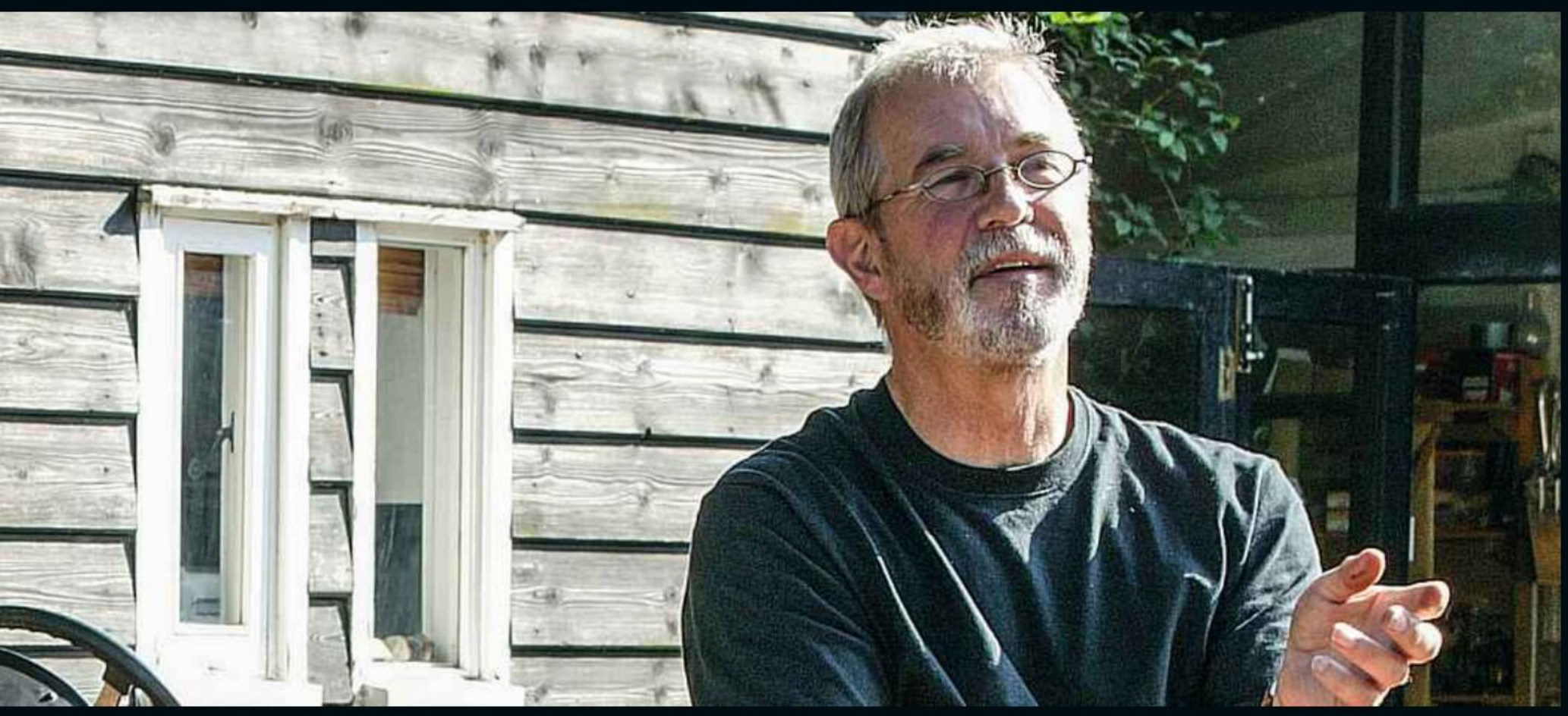
'Non-emotional products never become iconic,' reckons Stephenson. 'When I say emotional I mean desirable, because for one reason or another it doesn't need to be the most beautiful car or the most powerful car, but it definitely does need to stand out in one of those two areas. You don't buy it because it's the most aerodynamic car in the class, it doesn't become iconic because it has the lowest Cd ratio, or the biggest boot or the longest overall length. None of that makes a car iconic.'

Callum also cites the importance of character and emotional connection. 'Character has a lot to do with it. A Mini has huge amounts of character. By the way, the Mini aesthetically is great because of its proportions. Same as the Beetle. People love the Mini and the Beetle because the wheels are at each corner. Honestly, it's that simple, they look like toys. You have the wheels stuck at each corner, and everything else wraps around the wheels. The Beetle is iconic. Lots of people either love or loathe them, but they represent so much in the history of the motor car

'So there are many reasons why a car is iconic and the aesthetic side is only one of them. The Escort Mk1, for instance, became iconic because it was one of the most famous rally cars in the world. The Mini was also a superb rally car and it was the most innovative piece of technology, plus it's got such a unique style. And the Renault 5! There was something very special in its design, it was unique, and simple and was of massive intelligence. And it had real, genuine character about it, it was so French.'

Stevens points out how an iconic model can impact





Above: Peter Stevens had no idea the McLaren F1 (right) was iconic until years after its launch; he's a fan of design that expresses function, as with the Land Rover Defender (top) and his own Mahindra Gio (top right)



the fortunes of a car company and also shape the public perception of a brand long after it has moved off in a different direction. 'The first Elise could be called iconic because it was an interesting turning point for Lotus – they've got a lot out of that platform. Some cars define a company regardless of what they're doing now. Mention a 205 and that's how many of us would like to think that Peugeot is now. And the DS is what we'd like to believe that Citroën is about.'

Callum shares that train of thought: 'The original Golf GTI was iconic. It had the performance and it drove so well: it handled like a giant Mini. But what really made it stand out was Giugiaro's groundbreaking styling: it's one of the most iconic pieces of design ever, ever! And it also saved Volkswagen from the tyranny of its iconic Beetle. The legacy of the Mk1 lives on: the Volkswagen design team is excellent, they design some of the most well styled cars in the world still. Look around at all the others and they are losing their heads. I think that the Volkswagen guys retain an element of taste.'

As alluded to already, motor racing boosts the chances of your car's elevation to iconic status. 'There are some guys in Wales building Mk1 and Mk2 Escorts,' Callum continues. 'They're doing so because the cars are iconic, and they're iconic because of their rally exploits. Truth is, the regular Mk2 Escort has no character at all, it's just a box, but because of what it stands for on the rally stages, to the people from that generation, it's held in equal esteem as the Mk1. But me, I'd much rather have the Mk1 – in wide-body form, aggressive stance and in Alan Mann Racing red and gold colours – because it's a much prettier car.'

And it can be great fun to work on competition cars, as Stevens reveals: 'The rally stuff with David Richards and Prodrive was always good. I'm a competitive bastard and if you have to wait three years to see whether a project has turned out all right, well… Within the first few stages on a rally you'd know if you'd got things right. During the Subaru Impreza period at Prodrive there were so many good-looking cars; these days rally cars are such crude-looking things it's as though they were cobbled together in the bodyshop around the corner. Back then I always thought we were trying to sell Subarus – if you produced something hideous, why would anyone want to buy a version of that?'

Stephenson also enjoyed his motorsport experience with the Maserati MC12: 'The fun part was doing the race version and then trying to water it down slightly yet still have a huge effect on the road, and we did it pretty well. The interior was entertaining to do on the road version, because on the race version you strip everything out but on the road version you still have to have that racy feeling to it, yet it needs to be safe.'

Do regulations and the need to adhere to a 'family look' hinder creativity and iconic potential? Well, yes and no… 'When a new regulation comes in there's lots of squealing and stuff,' recalls Stevens. 'I can remember with American crash bumpers there was so much angst, and then Porsche went and did the 928, and you couldn't even see the bumpers because they were hidden behind these thin plastic mouldings. It was extraordinary that Porsche had thought of that and nobody else had. And then designers went, oh, why didn't we think of that?'

As for the 'family look', Stephenson has this to say: 'As a designer it is a challenge – but not an obstacle, not a problem, it's what you're paid to do as a designer. You're there to innovate, but also to be loyal to the company that you're working for – you haven't been hired to just put your stamp





on there, you've been brought in because of your sensitivity to company values and you've done things good in the past to prove that you're worthy of that responsibility.'

More of an issue for the hope of future iconic design, reckons Callum, is the age of collective data: 'When I did the Jaguar XJ I didn't want it to look like any of the other sedans out there. And that was a battle. The default is that you amass all the dimensions of the BMWs and Audis and Mercedes and ape these dimensions, and if you follow this default you're likely to create a car that looks very similar. It's one of the big problems with digital input, you end up with the same answer.'

And what of our trio's own golden moments? 'I saw an XF-R on the road the other day and I thought to myself, thank god that's still a good-looking car,' admits Callum. 'I wouldn't say that it's iconic, but at the time it was right. The I-Pace is probably the most significant: in its design I was determined to take every possible advantage of the fact that because it was electric the engineering and package inputs were somewhat unknown. So we could do what we thought was correct: we had cab forward, short bonnet, big wheels. But for something that is going to pass the test of time I will always have a soft-spot for the F-type – when I see one I do think that it's every bit as good-looking as a Porsche 911; I'm very proud of that.'

'People would probably expect me to say the [BMW] Mini or the Fiat 500,' says Stephenson, 'but the car I enjoyed the most at the time, for the joy of working with a team that was so good at what it did, and then feeling proudest of later, is the Maserati MC12. The task was twofold in that we had to design it in such a way as the competition version was a potential winner, but also to produce 25 homologated road cars. I think the MC12 came across as being more dramatic than the Ferrari Enzo on which it's based.'

Given he's responsible for the second-generation Lotus Esprit and M100 Elan, McLaren F1, Jaguar XJR-15 and various other performance and racing cars, Stevens's answer is a bit surprising, yet is revealing of what 'iconic' actually means: 'Which of my designs am I most proud of? It's a funny one, that… I did what's called an RUT, a Rural Utility Vehicle, for Mahindra, and that went to tens of thousands of people in rural India. It's a very simple vehicle for folk who can't afford a proper car – it's a pickup cum little van cum four-person people carrier, and when I go to India and I see them I think that kind of feels like a contribution.' ◼

LIFE THROUGH A LENS

GUS GREGORY

He began shooting cars almost by accident, but went on to take photographs that helped set the visual template for evo. Here Gus Gregory tells the story of his career to date and singles out some of his favourite images

by RICHARD MEADEN


Zonda S
XOPO
9512



‘THE FRAME YOU CAPTURE IN YOUR MIND is the best one. Always pin. Never grainy. Just the right amount of movement. The car caught at the perfect moment.’ So says Gus Gregory, a photographer for whom committing what’s in his mind’s eye to film or pixels has been an all-consuming quest from the moment he first picked up a camera.

Its been a while since Gus has shot cars for magazines (more of which later), but it was he who set the tone – and the bar – for the imagery that helped **evo** forge its reputation. From finding fresh locations to experimenting with a wide array of cameras or pioneering new ways of shooting, Gus and his trusty Subaru Forester were always to be found in the thick of it.

He came relatively late to shooting cars, but photography captivated him from childhood. ‘My mum bought me a Kodak 126 Instamatic when I was eight or nine,’ explains Gregory. ‘I always had it with me. I was always taking photographs. I always had things in my mind when I took them, but I remember being frustrated that the Instamatic couldn’t recreate what I was seeing.’

Instead of allowing that frustration to sour his passion, Gus continued to take pictures through adolescence into adulthood: ‘I left home at 16 and shared a house with a bunch of mates in Brighton. One of the lads at the house had a Zenit 35mm camera. He lent it to me and explained aperture and shutter speed and the relationship between those two. From that point I was off and away.

‘A lot of my friends were in bands at that time, so I did tons of pictures of them at gigs. I took a few nice shots – the images on the back of The Housemartins’ first album cover are mine – but I tended to fall short, because I was weak technically. Still, I knew photography was my thing.’

Much like motoring journalism there’s no set route to becoming an automotive



Zondas, Gran Sasso, Italy (previous pages)
‘I shot this [for **evo** 074] on a Hasselblad XPan. Pre-focused, pre-light-metered, camera attached to front of our chase car with one of my custom-made extra-long shutter-release cables fed through the window. This is one of those fantastical moments I felt so much pressure to capture.’

BMW 3.0 CSL, Nürburgring
‘I shot this on a Fuji 617 – a ridiculously massive camera to use for this kind of shot. I mean, you had to focus it with an old-school hood over you. But the superlandscapes it captured blew my mind. The significance of car and place, plus the movement of the leaves, made the image come together in glorious Technicolor.’

Land Rover Discovery & Mercedes taxi, Marrakesh
‘This was a *Car* magazine drive story to Timbuktu. I was shooting the Discovery coming around the corner with the Marrakesh sign, and the taxi just swerved through the shot. Right place, right time.’

Horsemen in Mongolia
‘In Mongolia, no matter how far you are from humanity, within 20 minutes someone will arrive on a horse to say hello. It’s the most bizarre thing. I was doing a scouting trip for Land Rover ahead of the G4 Challenge, driving from Ulaanbaatar to the border with Kyrgyzstan. It was just the most beautiful scene. I couldn’t not photograph it.’

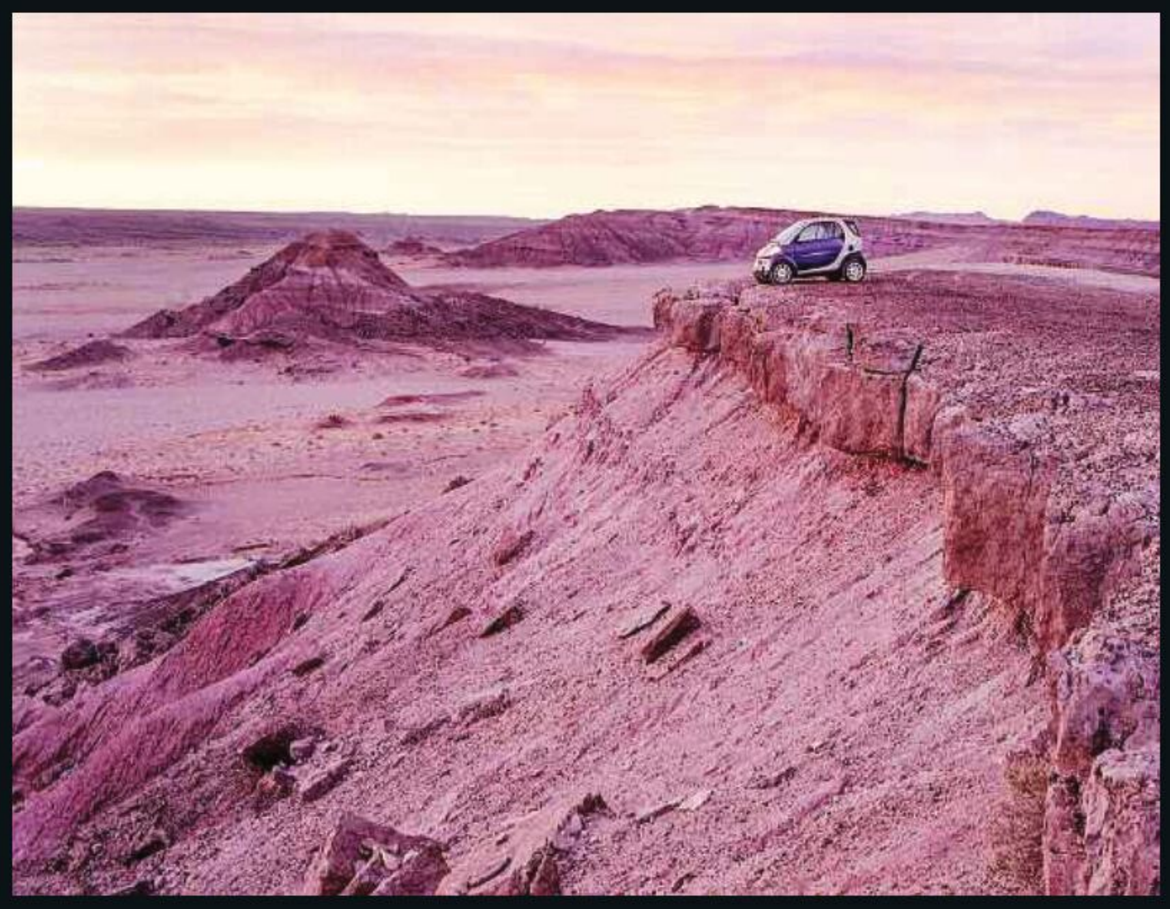


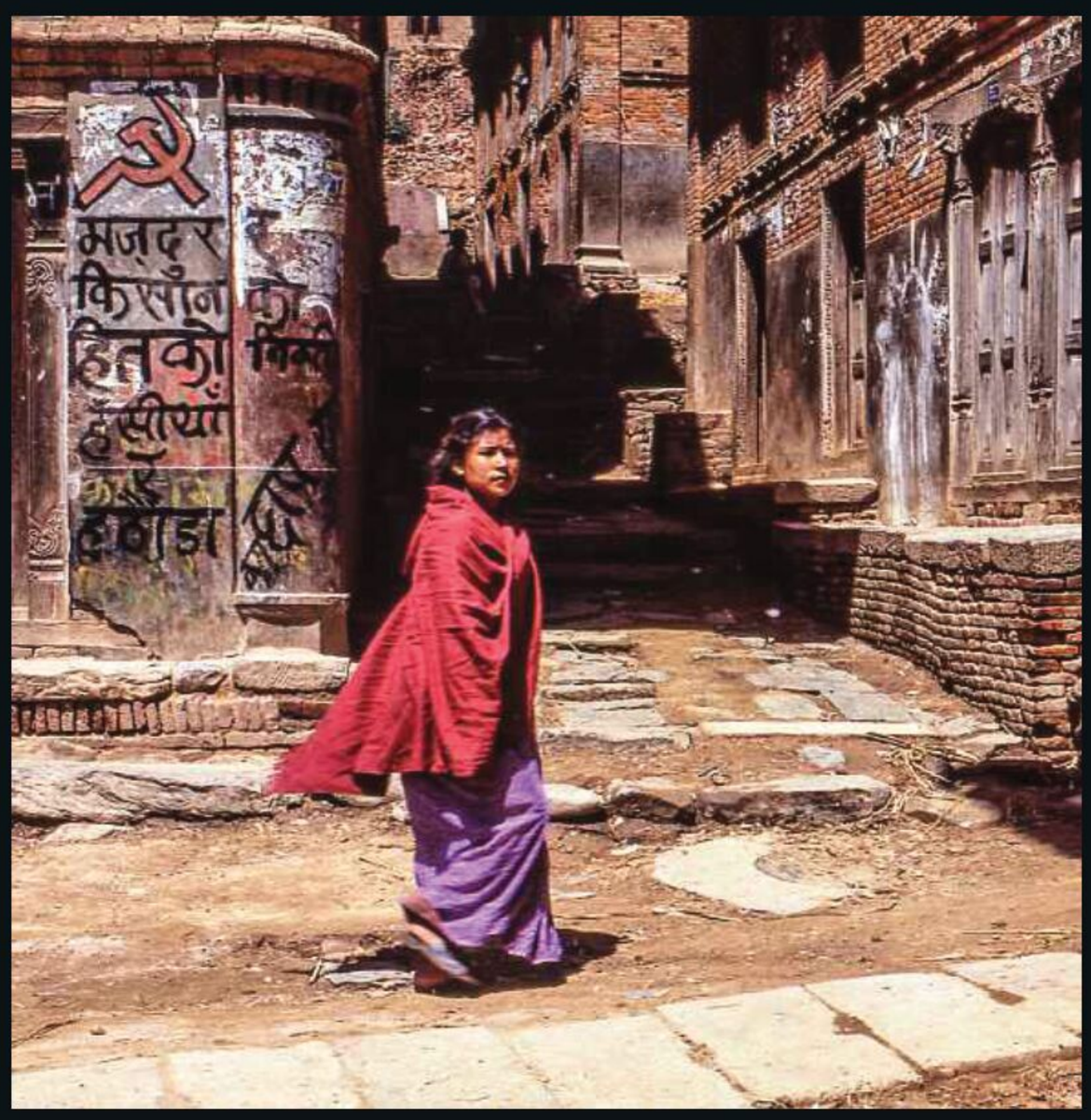

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Ford GT in the Alps
'The St Gotthard Pass was closed, so Dickie Meaden and I drove back and forth to the barrier, effectively having this amazing stretch to ourselves. I think this was shot from a tripod rig with my Hasselblad Superwide, which meant one frame per run. It was a laborious process, but the shot was worth it.'

VW Touareg, Morocco
'A *Car* magazine job, taking a VW Touareg to find a Touareg tribe. Being nomadic they're pretty hard to find, but we found this guy in the Black Desert in Morocco. He'd never driven a car before in his life, so we let him have a go. He nearly hit something, which is pretty good going in the middle of a desert.'

Smart in the USA
'This was a coast-to-coast drive story for *Car*, which took seven days to complete. This shot was taken when we decided to take a bit of an inconsequential-looking side turn. We kept going and kept going until this vista appeared, and I was like "F***me! This is the shot!"'

Nepalese street scene
'Henri Cartier-Bresson was a big influence on me, which is why I love this shot. I took it with one of my Nikon F3s, on an assignment to Nepal in the late '80s. The woman stands out against the background, and there's real texture in the shadows. It's an image of nothing in particular, but to me, it's an almost perfect nothing.'

photographer. Even so, Gus's journey is particularly circuitous. A stint at the BBC's Hulton Picture Library (then one of Europe's largest commercial photograph collections) saw him setting up a new darkroom facility there in the early to mid 1980s. It was here, with access to literally millions of images, including many iconic 20th-century reportage photographs, that he found true inspiration.

'It was a pivotal time for me. There was a group of us who were massively into photojournalism. We would shoot at weekends, then come back to work on Monday to process our films while we were processing other stuff. We'd print stuff up and critique one another's images. We took it very seriously.

'My grandfather had a garage so I grew up around cars and motorbikes. I'd seen *Car* magazine and was blown away buy the photography, but my heroes were Henri Cartier-Bresson, Josef Koudelka and the other Magnum photographers. Their style and the fact many of them were from working-class backgrounds really resonated with me.'

This spell at the BBC preceded a move to Hong Kong, where Gregory spent five years working as a freelance photographer. 'Hong Kong was an incredible place to live and work. Everyone was willing to give you a chance. I'd get amazing jobs coming from agencies in the UK – studio shoots, portraits, ad campaigns. I also went on assignments for titles like *Condé Nast Traveller* and *Tatler*. It was a massive learning curve, but it was brilliant for me, as I came back from Hong Kong a much better photographer and absolutely full of confidence.'

It wasn't until he returned to the UK in the early '90s that Gus started photographing cars. More by accident, as he freely admits. 'An old friend happened to be going out with Tim Wren, who was one of the automotive photographers at that time. It turned out Tim had a job the next day and needed an assistant. It was on that job that I bumped into Dom Fraser [the subject of Life Through a Lens in issue 278], who told me a new magazine called *Carweek* was looking for a photographer. I had nothing but reportage and portraits in my portfolio, but they gave me the job.'

For the 18 months that the weekly offshoot of *Car* lasted, it provided Gus the perfect opportunity to develop his skills. 'When I started at *Carweek* I can remember being very excited about taking moving pictures of cars, and not at all excited about taking static pictures of cars,' he recalls. 'Of course, I had to do both, but a moving picture of a car tells so much more of a story. Making cars look as exciting as possible soon became my mission.'

When *Carweek* came to an end, Gus went

freelance again, quickly becoming a regular shooter for *Performance Car* and *Car* amongst others. Then *PC* closed in the summer of 1998 and **evo** rose from its ashes in the autumn, and the role Gregory played in helping to create the look of the new magazine cannot be underestimated. 'When **evo** started it was us against them. Us against the world. I felt a very great weight of responsibility to make everything that I shot look exceptional. I'll never forget how special it was to be a part of.'

For Gus, making exceptional images meant constantly trying new things and pushing his kit to the limit. In the pre-digital age that meant attaching all kinds of unlikely, expensive and often unwieldy cameras to perilous parts of chase cars to get the shot.

'I loved using different formats of film cameras. I went through a phase of using a Fuji 617 landscape camera for tracking shots. It was a ruddy great thing, but it could take stunning images. After that I switched to a Hasselblad. My favourite was the XPan [a compact, Zeiss-lensed panoramic camera], but for years prior to that all I'd put on the front or back of a chase car was my medium-format Hasselblad. You'd have to set everything before each run – no auto-focus or auto-exposure. And it would have the cable release taped along the bonnet and in through the window so I could shoot while driving the chase car.'

Whether working for **evo** or *Car*, Gregory was in his element shooting road trips: 'I did find those jobs wonderful things to do. They were proper missions and they liberated me from the constraints of regular stuff. I could shoot things exactly how I wanted them seen. I also liked the fantasy of it. Capturing cars and journeys to roads and places that are just a dream for most people.'

You'll have noticed much of this interview is written in the past tense. As with camera technology, life moves on. In Gregory's case to an unplanned but energising switch from working behind the camera to a role in front of one, for the engaging and refreshingly down-to-earth TV show *Flipping Bangers*.

'I've always tried to be open to new things,' explains Gus. 'When you're approaching your mid-50s and a good mate with a great track record in television production approaches you out of the blue to develop and shoot a pilot for a new TV car show, well, you've got to run with it, haven't you? '

Will we see Gregory shoot new images for the pages of **evo**? 'I still think of myself as a photographer,' he says, offering a glimmer of hope. 'And I definitely enjoy the power and immediacy of digital. Everything looks better now. It reliably delivers what we were pushing so hard to do 20-odd years ago. Visually it's brilliant now. Absolutely brilliant.' C'mon Gus, let's get the band back together.





Aston Martin Vanquish, Scotland
'Another XPan shot for **evo**. For me it was a revelation to have all that space for a picture. I mean, this is just a shot of a car parked at the side of the road, but I love how XPan images are sharp right into the distance. You feel like you're there, on windswept Rannoch Moor.'

Man on donkey
'That's in the Atlas Mountains, on the way through... I don't remember the job, but this was another "moment". He is perfectly placed within that white wall, but surrounded by all the chaos that's going on in those mountain passes. Later we caught him up and he invited us to stop and drink mint tea.'

E-Type in the Mojave
'I shot this for a book celebrating the E-type's 50th anniversary. We took the car from Frank Sinatra's house in Palm Springs across the Mojave to a casino in Las Vegas. I just love the incongruity of that beautiful British car in that epic setting. You just want to be doing that journey. '





ICON

AUDI R8 4.2 FSI

Audi's first mid-engined car was utterly brilliant straight out of the box – and it proves every bit as seductive today

by DAVID VIVIAN

PHOTOGRAPHY *by* DEAN SMITH


V8 FSI



HOLLYWOOD MOVIE TRAILER COPY-writer might have put it thus: 2007, the year everything changed. Of course, anyone myopic enough to attach the gravel-voiced pronouncement to the advent of a mere car might find it hard to dismiss the following year's global financial meltdown as a minor diversion. But this was personal.

For well over a decade, nothing had come close to challenging the notion that the Porsche 911 might just be the world's most perfectly resolved driving machine. It was the benchmark that wouldn't rub out, the endlessly evolved marvel that confounded convention, bestriding the sports car/supercar divide with charisma to burn and the only serial winner of **evo**'s Car of the Year.

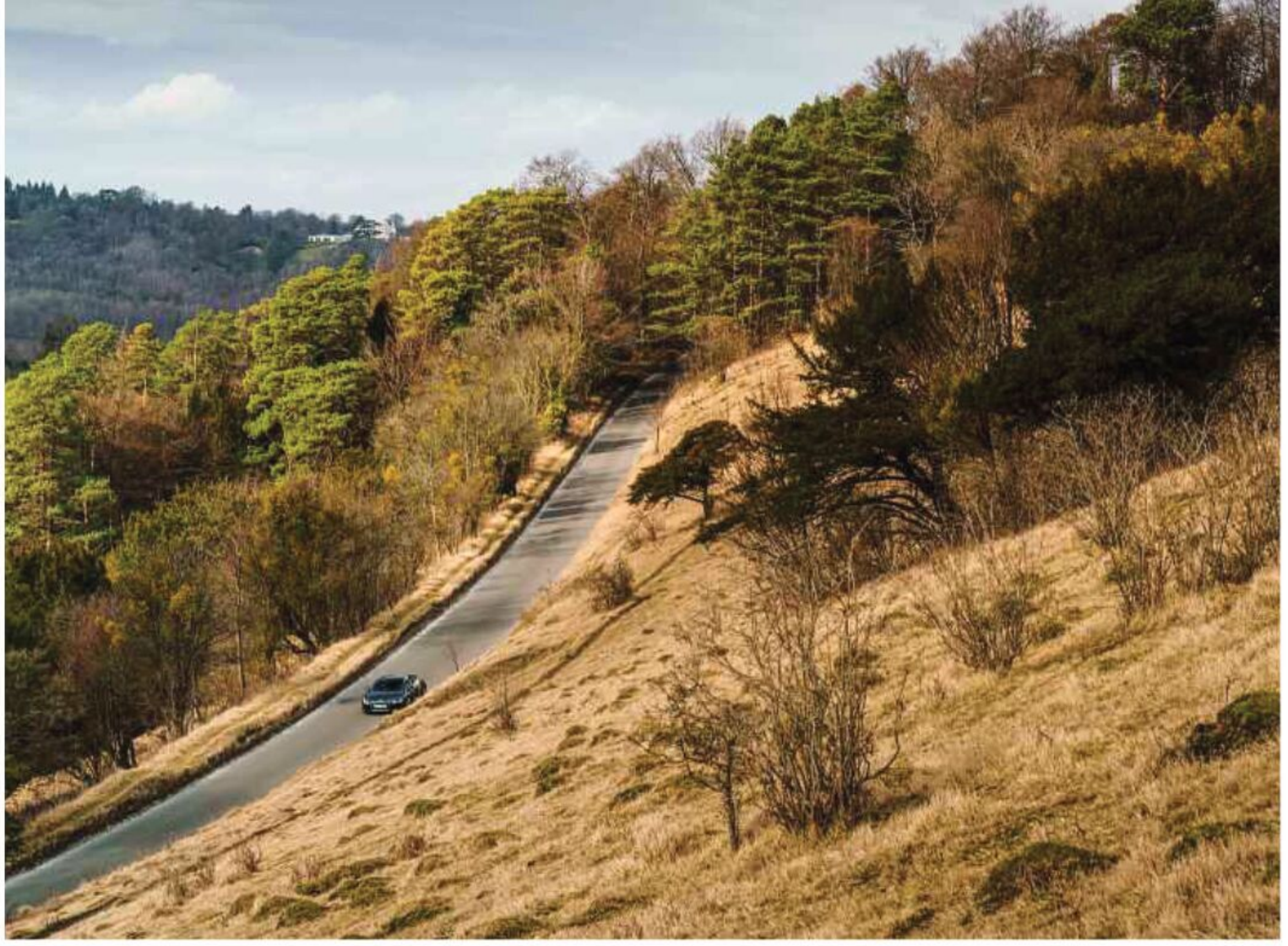
That the Audi R8 4.2 FSI quattro, launched in 2007, had it on the back foot straight out of the box quickly took on the look of the mythologised great reset, delivered in a bolt of lightning. Fourteen years on, the shock of the new has faded. The R8 – now V10-powered, heavier, brawnier, with aesthetic alterations that appear to have been pinched from cinematic Batman's recent muscle-suits – is more Lambo Huracán wingman (same powertrain and platform) than the lithe, supple, junior supercar that beat the naturally aspirated, all-drive 911 of the day at its own game.

Who says? Well, I did. Back in the summer of '07 we'd convened in the south of France, specifically at a hotel owned by Bernie Ecclestone near the Paul Ricard circuit, predictably nicknamed Bernie's Inn. Audi's chosen venue for the European launch of its first ever mid-engined road car had a conveniently long parking rank right outside, all the better to fill with pristine R8s, not so subtly multiplying the impact of the new car's futuristic shape and signature 'blades', the contrastingly hued panels behind the doors running from roof to sill. Parking a BMW M6 (E63), an Aston Martin Vantage (with Prodrive upgrades) and, yes, a Porsche 911 (997 Carrera 4S) on the end of one of the rows would rather have spoiled the effect, never mind given away our intention to introduce the R8 to some notably fit, fierce and talented friends.

So while I grabbed the R8 keyfob from the Audi desk at hotel reception after breakfast, Henry Catchpole, John Hayman and photographer Andy Morgan were waiting down the road with the six-, eight- and ten-cylinder welcoming party. As the group test convoy got underway, it didn't take long to realise that something extraordinary, indeed unprecedented, was afoot. Updating our impressions at every car swap, it became more and more apparent that while the Aston had the most dramatic soundtrack, the BMW the heaviest fists and the 911 a full measure of grip, grace and 911-ness, the R8 had simply moved the game on and beyond the reach of its assembled rivals.

I came to a pretty stark conclusion in **evo** 106: 'Purity of purpose and









Left: Audi's 4.2-litre V8 engine was dry-sumped for the R8 and delivers its full 414bhp with a creamy, hollow howl at 7800rpm

breadth of ability win the day and no car here – probably none under £100k – expresses the fusion more perfectly than the R8. There are faster supercars but we can't think of another currently in production that takes a demanding road apart with quite the surgical precision and cool-browed composure of Audi's hugely desirable R8. The outcome we doubted we'd ever witness. Audi humbles Porsche.' It meant something then, too. Over the next couple of years, the ties between the Volkswagen Group and Porsche became more binding, leading up to the Group's buy-out of Porsche in 2012 and the subsequent attitude adjustment of competing brand model-lines to form a more coherent and profitable whole.

But the R8's story began, as so many do, as a show concept. Covering the car's development genesis in **evo** 081 – coverline 'Look out Porsche!' – Harry Metcalfe related the pivotal meeting on Friday, April 22, 2005, when Professor Winterkorn and Dr Pischetsrieder met their fellow Audi board members to decide whether to green-light a production version of the mid-engined Le Mans quattro concept car, designed by Frank Lamberty and Julian Hoenig and first seen at the 2003 Geneva show.

After a day driving V8-engined prototypes built around the modified core structures of the first-generation Lamborghini Gallardo, the relevant bosses had no qualms in pressing the button and vowed to

fast-track what was assumed to be the R9 (R8 already taken by the actual Le Mans racer), setting the target launch date for late 2006. Details were sketchy back in 2005, but Harry correctly divined that the new mid-engined, four-wheel-drive junior supercar would be built at Audi's Neckarsulm plant, where the company's pioneering aluminium engineering expertise (A2, A6, A8) resided. More relevant still, in light of the tight timetable, the Gallardo's aluminium sub-structure and body panels were also fashioned there before being packed off to Sant'Agata for final assembly. No detective work required, then, as to what would lie beneath the final iteration of the revolutionary Audi's sleek form, finally manifested as the Audi Space Frame.

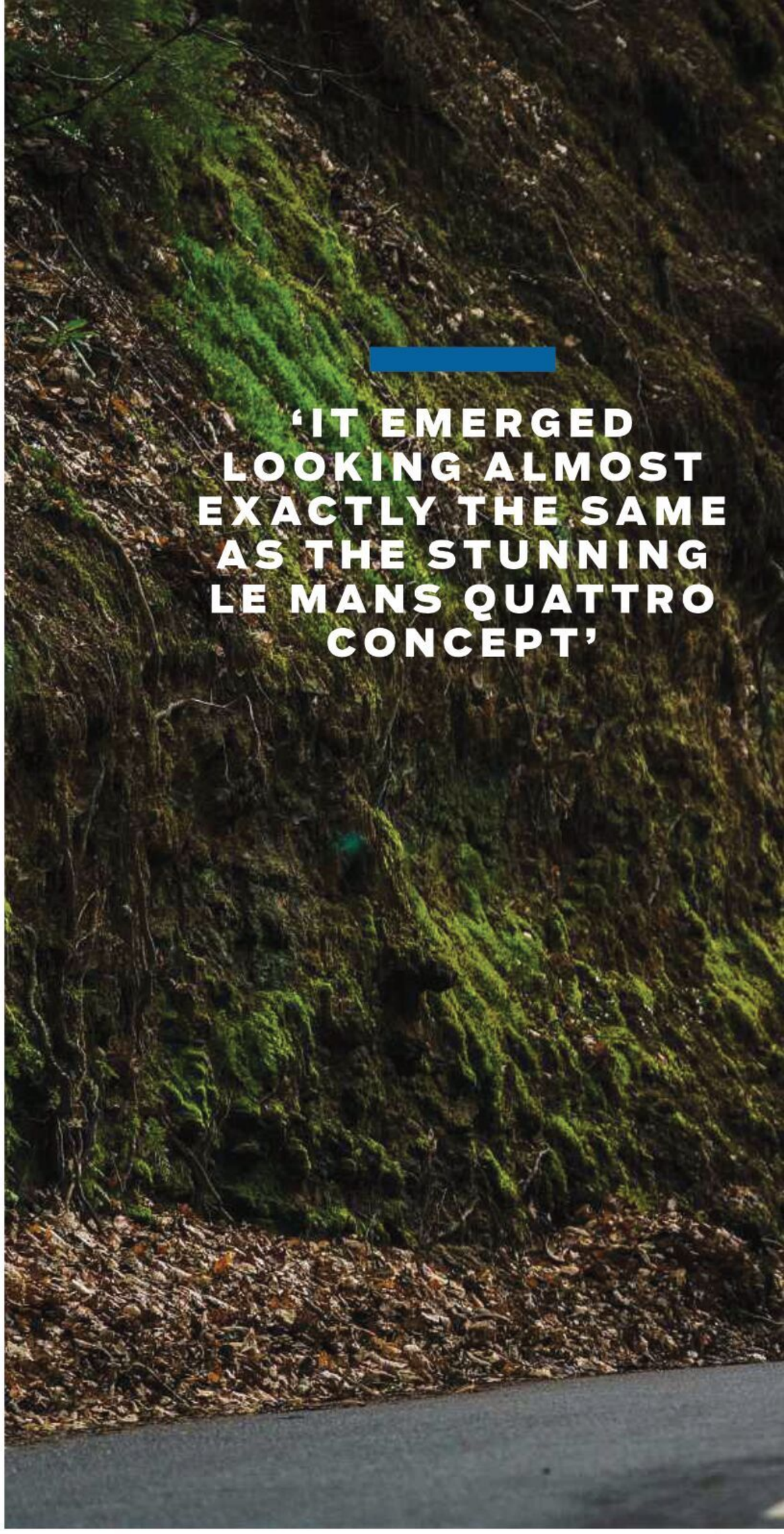
Helpful, of course, that Audi's sporting subsidiary, then called quattro GmbH, was also based at Neckarsulm, where it had previously developed the RS4 and therefore could quickly fit a dry sump to an otherwise 'oven-ready' naturally aspirated 4.2-litre, direct-injected V8 with north of 400bhp, to slot into the carbon cradle reworked from the Gallardo's. Not that the production R8 had anything of the crisply angled Lambo about it. Gratifyingly, it emerged looking almost exactly the same as the stunning Le Mans quattro concept. Talking to Harry, Stephen Reil (general manager of development at quattro GmbH) said: 'You'd have to be an Audi designer to spot the difference between them.' A slight exaggeration, but the R8 was as close to its show star progenitor as concept-spawned production cars ever get.

A priority from the start was useability. A 2+2 configuration was initially mooted, not inconceivable as the R8's wheelbase was 90mm longer than the Gallardo's, but soon dropped in favour of a spacious two-seater layout with a sizeable bench behind the seats to augment the deep but rather narrow boot in the nose. The Gallardo's V10 was slated to be added as a later option from the outset and there was even talk of shoehorning in the Group's 6-litre W12 (cripes!) but, again, a sense of proportion guided the project back towards a more focused remit.

No great fan of paddleshift transmissions, Reil championed a manual for the R8 roll-out, with an R-tronic single-clutch automated manual to follow at a later date. Thank heavens he did. The resulting open-gate, six-speed gearbox swiftly became a defining element of the car, subverting the idea that a good-looking 'scrape-clack' affair, which no self-respecting Italian exotic had been without for decades, was tricky to master by engineering a smooth and sublimely satisfying shift quality to rival that of any car on the planet. It brilliantly encapsulated what the R8 was about: pure supercar visuals and sensations unsullied by compromises, awkwardness and quirks.

Much more typically Vorsprung durch Technik, however, was Audi's decision to stick with a quattro drivetrain, albeit one with 30 per cent of the torque going to the front and 70 per cent to the rear – the same split as the all-drive Gallardo. With the 4.2-litre FSI V8 developing 414bhp and giving an estimated power-to-weight ratio of 271bhp per ton, the projected performance figures ran 0-60mph in the mid-4s, 100mph in a little over 10sec and 0-125mph in around 15sec, the R8 going on to a top speed of 177mph. The sprinting stats turned out to be pretty spot-on but the top speed fell 10mph shy of what the production R8 eventually recorded. In a world where a lot of high-performance metal was limited to 155mph, simply read 'very fast'.

While **evo** registered its unalloyed enthusiasm for the R8 at the first call, others weren't far behind: 2007 hosted the biggest love-fest for Audi since the original Quattro in 1980. My old magazine, *Autocar*, scarcely able to catch its breath, declared it 'the world's most sensible supercar' after its first encounter. In its formal road test, it





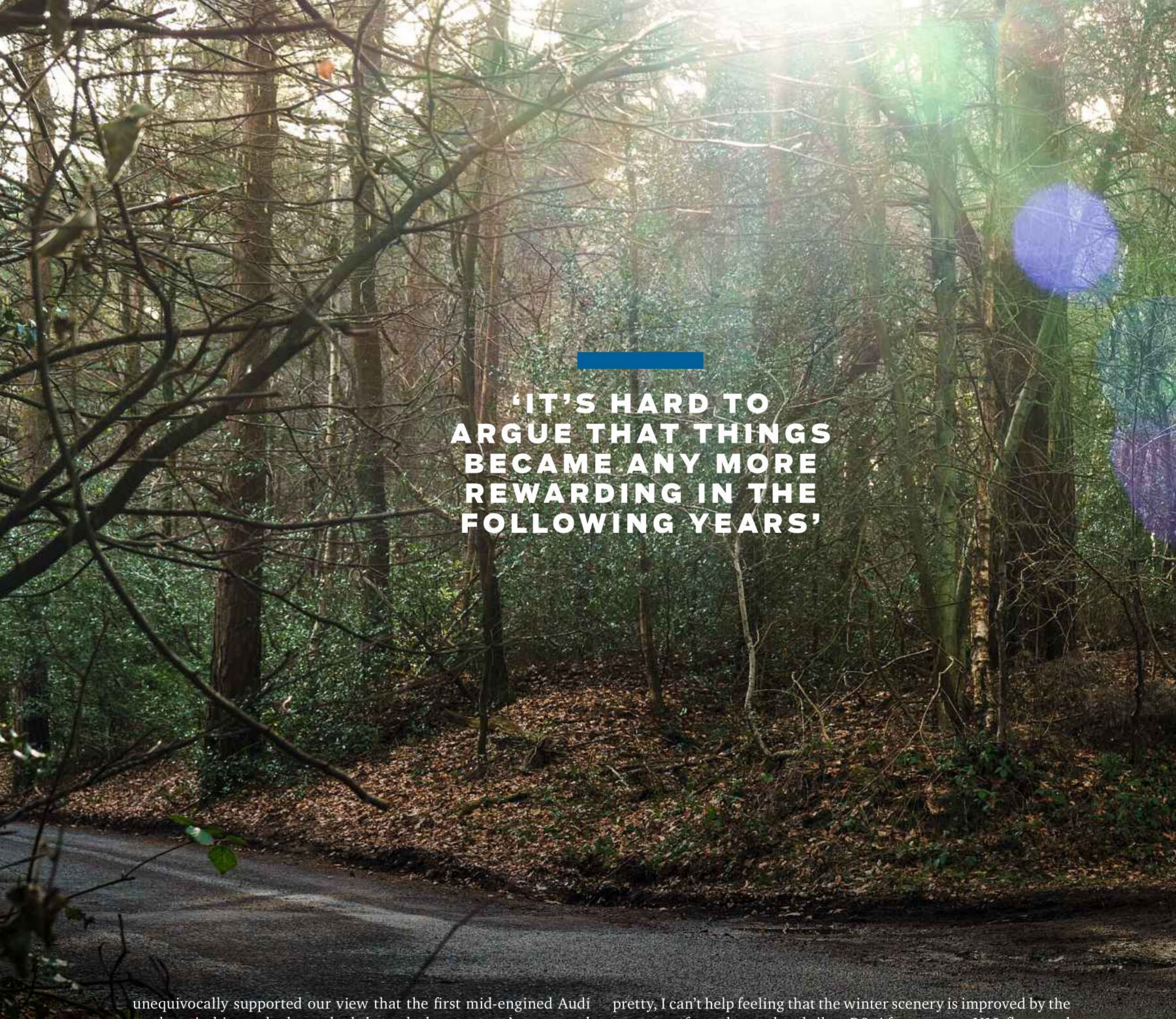
Right: the elegant analogue instruments are a delight, as is the exposed-gate manual gearshift, one of the best fitted to any car


OY07 MHL




OY07 MHL


ESP
OFF



‘IT’S HARD TO ARGUE THAT THINGS BECAME ANY MORE REWARDING IN THE FOLLOWING YEARS’

unequivocally supported our view that the first mid-engined Audi road car in history had smashed through the company’s presumed glass ceiling, writing: ‘We’d seen too many fast but dud Audis to doubt that this one could crack the dark art of supercar design at the very first time of asking. But it did.’

Perhaps the least easily impressed R8 owner, but arguably the one who did most for the R8’s freshly hatched image, was Robert Downey Jnr, aka Tony ‘Iron Man’ Stark of the Marvel Cinematic Universe. Audi knew that the one area in which it couldn’t hope to match or better the 911 was lineage, provenance and iconic clout, so it had to spend some money creating its own. Hooking up with the biggest movie franchise on the planet was a shrewd move. A V8 coupe featured in the first of the *Iron Man* films, a V10 Spyder in *Iron Man 2* and an electric e-tron prototype in *Iron Man 3*. A 2016 V10 Plus cut a dash in both *Avengers: Age of Ultron* and *Captain America: Civil War*, with another Spyder popping up in *Spider-Man: Homecoming*. What else? Think what you will about Marvel and bare-faced product placement, but the sequence of films charts a neat timeline that parallels the evolution of the R8.

The Surrey Hills are a long way from the MCU but, although very pretty, I can’t help feeling that the winter scenery is improved by the presence of our charcoal and silver R8. After so many V10-flavoured encounters with the R8 in recent years, it’s good to be reacquainted with an original V8 from 2007 – especially one that’s covered a modest, well-cared-for 56,000 miles, has for the majority of its life called Audi’s press garage home, and now lives a comparatively quiet existence as part of the company’s heritage fleet.

It’s a beautiful thing. As beautiful as the Le Mans concept shown at Geneva 18 years ago. More beautiful than its aggressively angular and appended V10 successors. There’s a delicious juxtaposition of understatement, purity of line and, that ultimate supercar motif, a see-through engine cover. Like the seductively slick open-gate gearchange, it’s Ferrari through a Teutonic lens.

The leather seats may have grown a little baggy, the steering wheel a bit shiny and the aluminium gearknob’s once pristine gleam dulled by the contact patina of a thousand wedding rings but, all told, the years have been extremely kind. And I can’t begin to tell you what a joy it is to settle my gaze on a set of properly designed, exquisitely clear and readable analogue dials instead of cutesy-kinetic, solid-state virtual cockpit avatars. For me, it’s a no contest

of Rolex versus Casio proportions. As with the instantly comfortable low-slung driving position, the outstanding visibility, the naturally 'correct' control relationships and the perfect weighting of the hydraulic power steering, the original R8 makes it hard to argue that things became any more rewarding in the following years.

Today, when you can buy a hot hatch with over 400bhp, the R8 V8 posts performance stats that are fast rather than furious. I reckon that's no bad thing. We seem to have lost our sense of perspective when it comes to travelling swiftly down an enjoyably challenging road. Driving a 611bhp R8 V10 Performance with a mind to 'make progress' is more NASA high-G-force astronaut training session than elegantly choreographed ballistic ballet and you'd better have the stomach for it. The V8-engined car is entirely different and goes all the way from relaxingly anodyne – a smooth, low-energy state further massaged by an outstandingly supple ride – to properly awake and arcing excitement on a beautifully linear trajectory to the 8250rpm red line, the final 2000rpm supported by a creamy, hollow howl from induction and exhaust. It forms a kind of constantly fulfilling feedback loop, comfortably the right side of sanity: just enough thrust to widen your eyes, just enough aural stimulation to keep your toe heading downwards. You might not go any faster than a Volkswagen Golf R, but the experience will be one to savour long after you've parked up and walked away.

To buy an '07-plate R8 V8 in this condition would cost at least £40,000 and, although higher-mileage, lower-spec examples can be had for £30k or less, we'd still be looking at a stone cold (junior) supercar bargain. Successive R8s may have become faster and more brutally thrilling but the original V8 is a sweeter, more nuanced, more satisfying steer than any of them.

One final thing. So well balanced was the first R8, so effective at deploying its 414bhp, it recorded a time around Bedford Autodrome's West Circuit that beat the 911 GT3 by over a second and lagged just eight-tenths behind a Ferrari Enzo. Sensational.

Audi R8 4.2 FSI quattro

Engine V8, 4163cc **Power** 414bhp @ 7800rpm **Torque** 317lb ft @ 4500rpm **Weight** 1560kg
Power-to-weight 270bhp/ton **0-60mph** 4.4sec **Top speed** 187mph
Price when new £78,195 **Value today** £30,000-40,000
evo rating ★★★★★

FAST FLEET

NEW ARRIVAL

BMW M550i xDrive

It's an M-badged 5-series, but it isn't an M5. Yet first impressions of our newest Fast Fleet arrival suggest it may not leave you hankering for more



SOMEWHERE IN THE HMI OF THE M550i there's probably a tutorial to help you work through its many systems so you can 'unleash the full potential of your new BMW'. The amount of tech crammed into today's high-end cars is staggering, and that's before options, and our new long-term-test BMW has an awful lot of options, including the Technology Plus Pack (£5k). Altogether they add just short of £20k to the list price of just over £70k, which makes our M550i about £10k shy of 'the real thing', an M5 Competition (before options, obviously!).

You can just get in and drive though, which allows you to get a feel for the character of a car that shares a lot with the M5 but is positioned between the icon and the rest of the range. The M550i is new to the UK but has existed in other markets for



p130 Cupra Formentor



p131 Lamborghini Aventador SVJ



p132 Audi S3 Sportback



p137 Toyota GR Supra



a few years, and it looks like a compelling package. You get a less potent version of the 4.4-litre twin-turbo V8, the same tune used in the 850i, but that still means a thumping 523bhp. The M5 has almost 100bhp more but, heck, first time I got my toe in, the M550i felt epically accelerative, probably because its engine matches the monster torque of the M5's with 553lb ft available from 1800rpm.

It seems to have more traditional V8 rumble, too, which I thoroughly approve of, even if it is confected character that's piped in through the speakers. The tell is the moment after start-up, when it sounds more Ferrari 488 than big-block Chevy. Thereafter, what sound there is – just a very muted pulse on a light throttle – suggests a traditional V8 rather than the flat-plane-crank type it actually is.

What you can't do with the M550i that you can do in the M5 is configure the xDrive for rear-wheel drive only. I'm not sure I'm going to crave that feature because I'm not sure I'd ever use it much in the M5 either, at least not on the road. This is because, as it appears in pictures, the current 5-series is a big car, and a heavy one too; both the M550i and M5 are almost 2000kg before you add passengers. That's a lot of car to be teasing.

The other reason is that I'm not yet at one with the steering. It feels connected and there's some feedback but, just a few hundred miles in, steering input and output don't seem to quite tally up. This may be because another of our car's options is 'Adaptive M Suspension Professional'. The M550i comes with adaptive M dampers as standard; the 'Professional' bit adds active roll control and rear steer, either or both of which could be responsible for the slightly out-of-register feel. They both sound like useful features, containing roll and adding some agility/stability, but can create a slightly artificial feel.

Generally, the M550i feels confident and poised, and rides calmly and comfortably too. There are tweaking opportunities via the centre console mode switch: Eco Pro, Comfort, Sport and Adaptive. I still need to delve into those to see what tailoring opportunities there are. One bit of the HMI I have used (because it's at the top of a menu) shows average mpg for the miles covered that day, and so far this hasn't dipped below 20mpg, which I think is good.

One option that I'm in love with already is the Bowers & Wilkins 'Diamond' surround sound system. The sound quality is stunning. It costs £2500 and replaces a Harman Kardon set-up that I'm sure isn't too shoddy. It features 16 speakers, including tweeters in the A-pillars that use synthetic diamonds – hence the system's name. Listening to 6Music on DAB, the DJs sound like they are in the car with you or, rather, that the car is their studio. This is another feature that I'll be digging into because I want to know how the optional soundscapes compare: Studio, Concert, On-Stage, Cinema and Lounge. And speaking of cinema,







at night there's a wonderful cinema-like feel to the cabin, the door speakers lit in pale blue while thin light strips in the door rolls and facia bathe the rest of the interior with a diffuse, red light. It feels like a special place to be, and sounds like it too.

It might not be 'the real thing', but I think the M550i might prove to be just as compelling in its own way, blending everyday comfort with huge performance. There's lots still to discover, but I've always been a sucker for a big car with big performance, always enjoyed the unique, epic feel of lots of power moving lots of mass. For me, the fact that it's more discreet than an M5 only adds to its appeal.

John Barker *(@evoJB)*

Date acquired January 2021 **Total mileage** 3480 **Mileage this month** 501 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 20.8



BMW M340i xDrive Touring

A rare longer journey allows the M340i to show its many strengths

WHAT WAS ONCE SO SECOND NATURE that it didn't raise an eyebrow or register a flicker of concern on one's mind has now become an adventure laced with trepidation. Leaving the house at dawn for a 450-mile round (essential) trip now feels like a sortie behind enemy lines, and never have I been more grateful for the M340i's HMS battleship grey paintwork and black wheels to sneak under the radar.

Pre-dawn winter mornings also make you grateful for a few of the luxuries that have crept into modern cars over the last decade. In the Touring this means the heated seat and steering wheel activating once the temperature drops below a pre-set level, which is one less thing to fiddle with when trying to make a quick and quiet exit while the neighbours snooze. And yes, I know electric cars can do all kinds of pre-heating and silent running but it took less than 10 minutes to refuel the 340i after 330 miles into this trip...

Anyway, this was one of those days behind the wheel that the Touring was made for and excels at. It wasn't going to be a thrilling thrash through Kielder Forest or a jaunt around Snowdonia, rather it took in every kind of British road, from by-lane to motorway, and not once was I distracted by what the car was doing. Not because it's anodyne and plain, but because its design and purpose are perfectly suited to such a role. Agile enough to not feel ponderous and a liability on small, tighter roads; responsive when required to make progress on flowing, open routes; relaxed and refined on monotonous motorways.

'The B58 straight-six harks back to BMW's past sixes in its smoothness across its rev range'

Key to this is the 340i's powertrain. The B58 straight-six harks back to BMW's sixes of the past in its smoothness across its rev range and how it builds its performance without the need to scream and shout about it. In today's turbocharged world it's one of the best you'll find in a volume car. It lacks the raucous nature of the Alfa Giulia's V6 and the reach of Porsche's flat-six, yet for a motor that's designed to operate in everything from a small saloon to a behemoth of an SUV it's an impressive result. And so well suited to its eight-speed auto for 90 per cent of everything you need the car to do that I'm almost glad BMW doesn't offer a manual option, because the deliberation over which to choose would finish me off – something the M340i doesn't do to you after 450 miles and nearly nine hours in its driver's seat.

Stuart Gallagher *(@stuartg917)*

Date acquired October 2020 **Total mileage** 7068 **Mileage this month** 350 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 34.8

NEW ARRIVAL

Cupra Formentor 310

The first bespoke Cupra joins the **evo** fleet for long-term assessment

THE FORMENTOR IS THE SECOND SUV TO emerge from Cupra, joining the existing Ateca and distinguishing itself by being lower, longer and a little more coupe-like in its form. Perhaps more importantly, it's also Cupra's first bespoke model – there are no SEAT versions of the Formentor – so it could give a true indication of what the brand is capable of.

There is an entry-level, 148bhp, 1.5-litre Formentor, and also a 242bhp hybrid should you be so inclined, but this is **evo**, so it's the 306bhp, 2-litre version we've chosen to add to our fleet. As you may have already guessed, under the bonnet is the Volkswagen Group's ubiquitous four-cylinder TSI engine, familiar from the likes of VW's Golf R and Audi's S3. In the Formentor it produces the same power and torque (295lb ft) as in our S3, but a smidge less than the new Mk8 Golf R (see page 12). It gets the Formentor to 62mph in a claimed 4.9sec – just a tenth slower than the Audi – with help from a seven-speed dual-clutch transmission and the Haldex-style '4Drive' all-wheel-drive system. Chassis-wise, there are MacPherson struts at the front, a multi-link rear and adaptive dampers as standard.

Our Formentor is in 'VZ2' trim – the entry-level spec with the '310' engine, costing £39,830 basic – and the only option we've added is Midnight Black metallic paint at £555. Standard kit includes 19-inch 'Exclusive' machined matt black and silver alloys, and a rear diffuser with twin exhaust pipes on each side. When combined with the Formentor's chiselled lines, aggressively raked rear screen and long bonnet, you have a crossover that has real presence on the road.





Inside you'll find Petrol Blue nappa leather on the doors, dash and Cupra-logo'd bucket seats (black leather is a no-cost alternative), with stitching in the brand's signature copper colour. There's a 10.25-inch digital screen for the driver, complete with several display options, while a ginormous 12-inch infotainment screen dominates the centre of the dash. With the clean design lines of the cabin in general, plus that funky upholstery and the LED light strips that wrap around the dash and the doors, it's a refreshing interior to be in – something a little different from the norm.

It feels spacious, too – a benefit of having a longer wheelbase than the Ateca – although the boot is a little small for carrying all of my photography gear, so the stepladder will have to stay on the back seats.

So that's the spec. Driving impressions? It's early days yet, as the engine is still running in, but the various driver modes – Comfort, Normal, Sport, Cupra and Individual – which are selected via a large button on the steering wheel, promise to offer a useful degree of flexibility, and there are already signs that this could be a surprisingly rapid car along a tough B-road. I'm genuinely intrigued by it, and am looking forward to seeing what it's capable of when it can be fully unleashed.

***Aston Parrott** (@AstonParrott)*

Date acquired January 2021 **Total mileage** 484 **Mileage this month** 379 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 30.0









Lamborghini Aventador SVJ

Our daily-driver Lambo ploughs on through the worst of winter

SUPERCARS AND SNOW DON'T MIX. AT least not in the UK, where our perennial unpreparedness for proper winter weather inevitably sees us skating around on summer tyres for those few isolated days when we get a flurry of the white stuff. Chaos ensues, of course, but there's something typically British about battling against the elements with inappropriate equipment.

It's this Shackleton spirit that saw me heading out on that most middle class of lockdown missions – driving to Waitrose for essential food supplies – in a Lamborghini Aventador SVJ, just as snow began to settle on the roads of rural Northamptonshire. Naturally the Lambo was running on Pirelli P Zero Corsas, the sticky compounds from which they are made having gone into hibernation back in November. Had I considered that the inch or so of snow that had already settled as I set off would grow to four or five times that depth by the time I would be heading home I... still wouldn't have taken Mrs M's all-season shod Freelander 2, as where's the fun in that?

Suffice to say I got some slightly odd looks from my fellow shoppers as I trudged out through the car park, they loading the boots of their Range Rovers and Audis while I pushed my trolley towards the Italian-registered Lambo, popped the scissor door and loaded my bags into the passenger footwell and onto the seat. An intrepid Z3 M Coupé owner stopped for a chat (**evo** reader, natch), both of us acknowledging the silliness of our respective means of transport and pondering that the drive home might be more of a challenge than we thought.

You won't be surprised to learn that Aventadors are not the best machines for discreet, rapid getaways. When you have to wait with the cold engine bellowing away on fast idle while several hectares of windscreen slowly demist, it's actually slightly embarrassing, though the disapproving looks from appalled quinoa warriors lifted my spirits.

Off the main roads no gritting had been done by the council (too skint having spent all its money on Covid cycle lanes, presumably), so the road and verges were almost merging into one white blanket, but the Aventador managed to find plenty of traction, even on long inclines. It steered well, too, so although the pace was circumspect, it was a lot of fun to slither this ridiculous 700bhp wedge along the deserted lanes.

Braking was less enjoyable, especially when heading downhill on compacted snow, the dread sensation of a pulsing pedal, the *zizz-zizz-zizz* of the ABS and very little in the way of useful retardation causing a spike of adrenaline and a few muttered profanities. Nevertheless I made it back home without incident – only to have to head back out to take the SVJ to John Barker's house and swap into our Supra. The decidedly dicey homeward journey proved just how well the Lambo performed, and how daft it is to drive a two-wheel-drive car in proper snow on summer tyres. Will we ever learn? I doubt it.

Richard Meaden

Date acquired November 2020 **Total mileage** 9158 **Mileage this month** 401 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 13.1





Audi S3 Sportback

Some on-track training exposes the S3's strengths and weaknesses

WITH LOCKDOWN 3 IN FULL EFFECT AND travel limited to essential journeys only, it's been a challenge finding routes on which to really test our S3. Let's just say that the approach road to my local Sainsbury's has been getting a fair bit of use of late. So when the opportunity arose to lap Bedford Autodrome under the guidance of our very own Adam Towler, I jumped at it.

Although I've driven many a car around various circuits over the years, and as **evo**'s art editor have demanded on-the-limit track action from road testers during countless photoshoots, no one's ever really shown me the art of driving a fast lap; I've basically just been winging it.

Adam took the wheel first, changing all the Audi's settings to Dynamic before roaring off at speed towards the first corner, giving a running commentary of what to look for, what to do, and how to nail the racing line with the help of those little orange cones. It was great to hear an expert talking passionately about his craft, and for me the laps were like a fairground ride: exhilarating, but over in a flash.

Then it was my turn. Excitedly hopping into the driver's seat, I began following Adam's patient instructions, taking it easy at first until my confidence built enough for photographer Aston Parrott to take some shots of me 'on it' (stop smirking).

It was fabulous to finally push the Audi, and I soon found I was lapping quicker than I could have before. The S3 was the perfect tool to learn in, too, offering plenty of reassuring grip while also being fast enough to be fun. I was left giddy, impressed and keen to do more. However, in the spirit of balanced journalism I thought it only fair for a proper road tester to give their verdict on the S3 on track. Brace yourself...

Richard Browne *(@washlander)*

'Can you write a few words about driving the S3 at the track?' asked Rich, and of course I agreed. It was only a few moments afterwards that I paused and wondered what on earth I was actually going to write. That's the trouble with the S3, see: at best it's forgettable, at worst, well, it's not very good at all.

It's certainly quick enough, as you might expect, but the tiny paddles hardly encourage an immersive experience with the 306bhp engine. The grip levels are OK, the balance to the chassis safe and predictable, but without much in the way of inherent agility to be exploited. It brakes like an Audi. It steers like an Audi. I'm sure its lap time would be reasonable, and the crashy ride is never going to be a factor on a smooth circuit, but reflecting on the experience afterwards it's hard to pinpoint anything that would ever make me want to drive the S3 on a circuit again.

Adam Towler *(@AdamTowler)*

Date acquired December 2020 **Total mileage** 2400 **Mileage this month** 202
Costs this month £0 **mpg this month** 29.1

Toyota GR Yaris

How the GR harks back to hot hatches of old – and its GRMN forebear

AS HOT HATCHES HAVE EVOLVED – GETTING faster, growing bigger, riding firmer and becoming altogether more serious – they've also lost something that made them so appealing in the first place. I was reminded of this on a soggy winter's day back in 2018, when I found myself in a Yaris GRMN getting intentionally lost down a series of decreasingly narrow lanes. I hadn't planned to go exploring, but something about that little Toyota had me almost involuntarily taking unfamiliar turns just to see what I'd find. And as we bounced over humps and out of dips, gently slip-sliding here and there, getting mud splats right up onto the side windows, I realised I was having an absolute hoot.

It was the kind of drive I hadn't had for years, but which I used to indulge in all the time when hot hatches were more suited to such carefree fun. And the GRMN, for 400 lucky customers at least, had once again made it possible – desirable, even. No fretting about suspension hitting bump-stops, or the car being thrown off-line by a severe undulation, or there not being enough space to jink left or right to avoid a missing chunk of asphalt. Instead there was just that liberating feeling that comes with a quick, compact machine that's willing to work with whatever type of road you put in front of it.

Fast forward to 2021 and within five minutes of beginning my month with **evo**'s GR Yaris long-termer those feelings had returned, and my internal satnav was soon recalculating my route home to take in as many fiddly back-roads as possible, even though it was dark and drizzly. Much like its toe-in-the-water forebear, the GR Yaris has that same Scrappy-Doo spirit, feeling super-eager and up for anything.

It's even punchier this time around, of course, the GR's turbocharged triple producing 257bhp compared to the 209bhp of the GRMN's 1.8-litre supercharged four, and there's an extra 81lb ft of torque too, which in such a diminutive and lightweight (1280kg) package provides a terrific buzz.

I know some of my colleagues are a little disappointed that the GR-Four all-wheel-drive system doesn't add more to that buzz, but when working in tight confines its relatively restrained approach has its place. In fact, after a couple of hundred miles in Sport mode, with its 30:70 front-to-rear torque split, I found myself just leaving the car in Normal, its 60:40 split ensuring traction is rarely an issue, even on the grubbiest tarmac, yet still able to give a useful line-tightening nudge from the rear on corner exit.

Is there anything I don't like about the GR? Not including satnav in the Circuit Pack car seems nonsensical, especially as the screen is already there and even has a 'Map' button on it. The name 'Circuit Pack' itself is quite misleading, too, as it implies a harsh, filling-loosening ride, but in reality the 'GR circuit-tuned suspension' feels very much road-biased – brilliantly so, in fact. More significant is the oversized interior mirror: I'm not as tall as my 6ft-plus colleague Adam Towler, which thankfully means I don't have to permanently slouch to see out through the GR's windscreen, but I still have to duck or lean to see around that mirror in left-hand turns.

But that's it. Mostly I've just been marvelling at how the GR Yaris manages to pack so much joy into every journey you take in it – and wondering why on earth there aren't more cars like it.

Ian Eveleigh

'My internal satnav soon recalculated my route to take in as many fiddly back-roads as possible'



Date acquired December 2020 **Total mileage** 2258 **Mileage this month** 606
Costs this month £0 **mpg this month** 23.0

Porsche 911 Carrera (996.2)

A suspension set-up session cures the 996's disappointing dynamics

HAVING CONCENTRATED ON MAINTENANCE and powertrain mods for the bulk of last year, the final – well, final for now that is – piece of the puzzle with getting the Carrera driving sweetly was arguably the most important of all: the dynamic set-up.

I think it's fair to say that while the modifications to and replacement parts for the car's suspension and associated underpinnings were both comprehensive and promising on paper, in terms of creating a car to actually drive I had been somewhat less convinced. A wooden, harsh ride and unprogressive, unpredictable handling probably summed it up. I have to admit, I felt a bit lost with it all, and rather crestfallen.

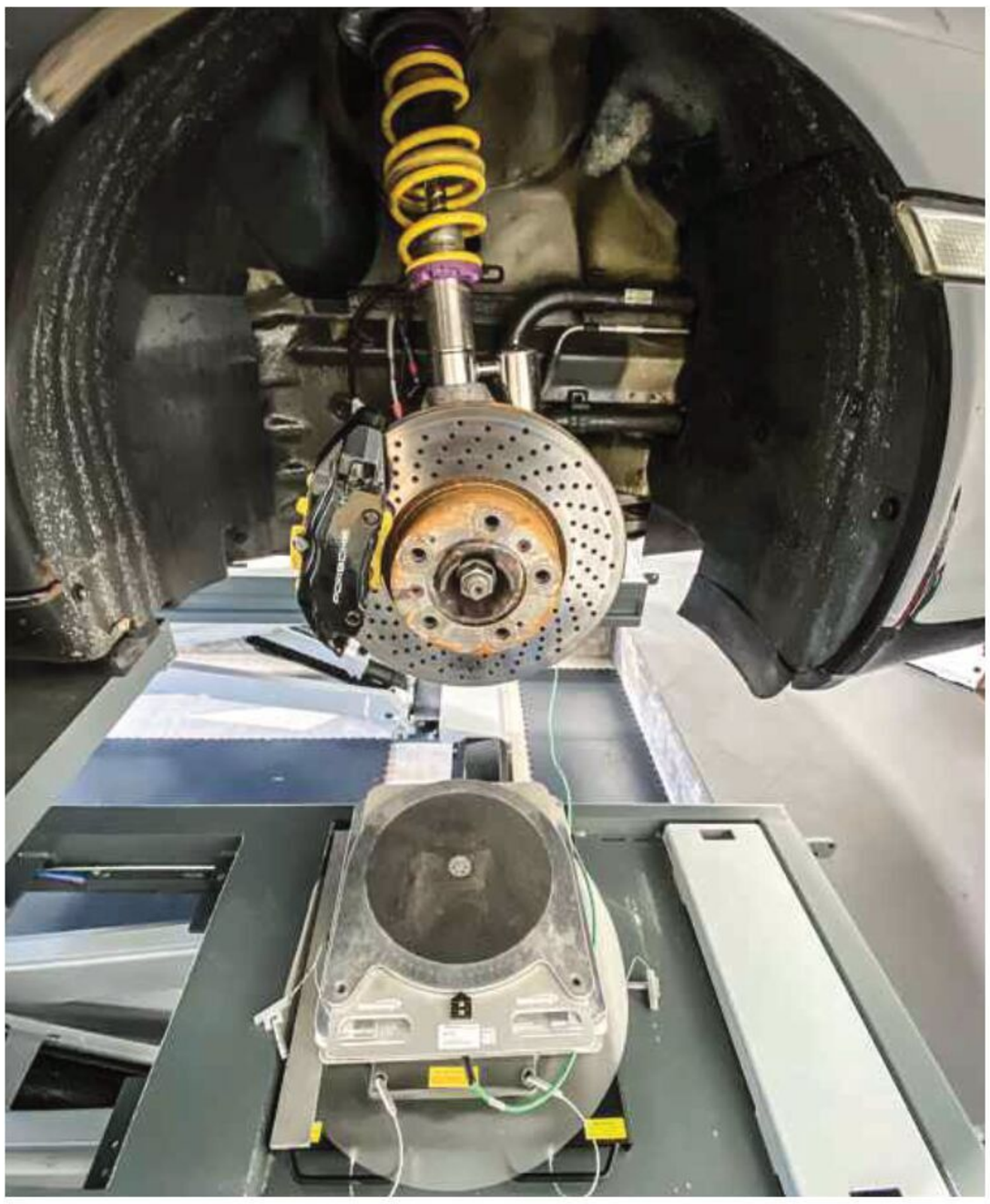
Did that mean I would have to eat a sizeable portion of humble pie over fitting 'upgraded' aftermarket parts to one of Porsche's finest? Partly, maybe. It has been a healthy reminder that the expertise, experience and development budget that goes into creating a car – any car, but particularly a Porsche sports car – is enormous, and that merely replacing parts with so-called 'performance upgrades' does not a better, or equal even, car make.

However, my counterpoint to that is twofold. Firstly, I didn't want a car that drove like the original; I wanted one that captured some of the GT3 magic without trying to be that car (and failing). Secondly, the new and often adjustable parts fitted can only be as good as the set-up that's been dialled in. That was the light at the end of the tunnel, and to help me reach it, enter Matt Spires.

Recommended to me by industry people 'in the know', Midlands-based Spires Tuning (spires-st.com) specialises in chassis diagnostics and set-up, based on Matt's huge experience as a time-served suspension engineer for UK OEMs, and someone who still has input to current new vehicle development. I







figured sorting my old 996 would be a piece of cake for someone with his innate understanding of the humble spring and damper.

Matt kicked things off by getting my car on his inspection ramp and making sure there was nothing obviously wrong. I'd actually supplied him with some replacement adjustable coffin arms from Eibach to try and sort the knocking noise from the front suspension, but his examination revealed I already had their most up-to-date versions fitted, and that the issue was that the pattern-part tension links fitted – before my ownership – are slightly thicker in section than OE ones, and are fouling the Eibach arms slightly. I'll need to get some OE or Eibach ones in there when the piggy bank allows.

Matt then took some simple ride-height measurements from the bottom of each wheel to the top of the arch, revealing a mismatch of heights, and commented that the car simply didn't look right to the naked eye. The next job was to adjust those ride heights to 'put the damper at the centre of its travel to optimise its capabilities,' as Matt put it. As you may have already guessed, not for Matt the idea of cars 'slammed' in the name of aesthetics...

So, the car was raised about 20mm front and rear. 'Your car had very little compression travel,' explained Matt with a wry smile. 'It was effectively sitting on its bump-stops, not on its springs, and on track it would have felt underdamped because the damper wasn't able to do its job.' No wonder it rode like a Steinway being pushed down the stairs.

'The ride heights simply didn't look right to the naked eye'

Then it was onto the set-up ramp for corner weighting and geometry. The first shock was the number on the scales. Gen 2 996s are supposed to be slightly heavier than the early 3.4-litre cars (1340kg versus 1320kg), but 1410kg?! And my car is a non-sunroof, fairly lean example, with the middle sound system and rear parking sensors the only obvious options.

How ironic: there's me, going around extolling the virtues of 996s and their light kerb weight versus the current 911's, and it turns out that they're not as light as I thought. Perhaps the weights quoted by Porsche back in the day were for base-spec German cars, which came with plastic trim for the dash and doors, no air-con, no leather, etc.

Anyway, you probably won't be surprised to hear that the corner weights were out, so through adjusting the spring pre-load and ride height these were put to 50:50 across each diagonal axis. Then it was on to the geometry, which revealed quite a few anomalies, including the left-rear toeing in much more than the right. I can't explain why these measurements should be out, but they were, so Matt dialled in the factory data but with a bit more negative camber.

The result? It takes something really profound to affect a car so much that you can tell the difference before you've left the car park, but the smile as I turned the wheel and drove 20 yards said everything you need to know. By the time I'd reached the first roundabout I was actually laughing out loud. It's a car completely transformed, unrecognisable from the one I drove to Spires earlier that day. The steering is consistent, the car breathes with the road, the poise is back. We've set the KWs a bit firmer but the ride is so much better; I may soften them off further still.

We all spend considerable sums on our pride and joys from time to time, so at just £300 for the full works of inspection, ride height, weighting and geo (prices start at £156 for an inspection and geo set-up) this was hands down the best money I've ever spent on a car. Full stop.

Adam Towler *(@AdamTowler)*

Date acquired May 2016 **Total mileage** 85,577 **Mileage this month** 130 **Costs this month** £300 **mpg this month** 29.1

NEW ARRIVAL

Volkswagen T-Roc R

It's the performance crossover you possibly didn't know existed, but could it be worth getting to know?

INSTINCTIVELY MY EYE WAS DRAWN TO the other car wearing the distinctive blue paint. And, as I parked up in another row, I realised that the driver of the Mk7.5 Golf R had been similarly eagle-eyed when the Lapiz Blue T-Roc R had driven into the car park.

'What's this?' came the socially distanced enquiry as I got out. Always happy to have a chat, I explained that it was essentially exactly the same powertrain as his car, but in a small SUV body that is 21mm shorter, 20mm wider and 121mm taller, with a 47mm shorter wheelbase. Under the bonnet is the same EA888, four-cylinder, turbocharged petrol engine, putting out the same 296bhp and 295lb ft of torque. It has the larger brakes from the Golf R Performance Pack but there is no three-pedal option, so the engine and Haldex 4Motion all-wheel-drive system are mated to a seven-speed DSG 'box. Weighing in at 1581kg it is 76kg heavier than a five-door DSG-equipped Mk7.5 Golf R, but it's still good for 0-62mph in an impressive 4.9sec, which is as quick as a Porsche Macan GTS.

'Well, I had no idea that this existed. It looks rather good,' replied Mr Golf R.

And that seems to have been the reaction of quite a large proportion of people. Like the hot crossover equivalent of a Trident submarine, the T-Roc R has slipped under the radar of most car enthusiasts. I'm almost certain that if this particular one had been specced in white, grey or black it would have gone totally unnoticed in the car park. Lapiz Blue is a £755 option, but if you pair it with a black roof like this car (which was previously on the regular VW press fleet) it's £1185. Given the choice, I'd stick to a matching blue roof as I think it sits slightly better with the chrome strip that arcs from the base of the A-pillar to the base of the C-pillar. Incidentally, if blending-in is something that worries you, then might I suggest the Turmeric Yellow Metallic paint option?

The wheels are standard 19-inch Pretoria rims wrapped in Hankook S1 Evo 2 rubber. From a chassis perspective the big addition to this car is the £695 Dynamic Chassis Control (DCC), which brings adaptive dampers to the party. Inside, the standard black and grey 'Carbon Flag' cloth interior is jazzed up a little by some Lapiz Blue inserts in the dash (£115), while selecting reverse will reveal that there is a £190 reversing camera.

By far the most extravagant option on this car, however, is the sports exhaust. It is titanium, saves 7kg over that standard system and is made by Akrapovič. If you're not familiar with the Slovenian manufacturer, Igor Akrapovič founded the company 30 years ago and initially it focused solely on motorbikes, but subsequently its pipes have found their way into almost all forms of motorsport, including F1. But I'm prevaricating. The price. It costs... £3050. Which is a lot.

All of which brings the grand OTR recommended retail total up from a starting point of £40,735 to £45,970. That equates to about £4000 more than an equivalent Mk7.5 Golf R with Performance Pack, and the question that will be teetering on the edge of many of your lips is 'Why not just buy a Golf R?



Or a Golf R Estate if you want more room?' Well, certain aspects of a higher car are undoubtedly advantageous – the ease of access being a big factor for those with hips, knees and core muscles that might not be all they once were. Hoisting children in and out of car seats is also slightly easier. What's more, when it flooded near me recently I managed to make it through the raging torrents in the T-Roc – something that I'm not sure a Golf would have managed.

So, sometimes a crossover might be the right option. In which case, the real question is 'How close can the T-Roc R get to the Golf R?' And that's something I intend to find out over the next few months.

Henry Catchpole (@

Date acquired December 2020 **Total mileage** 4515 **Mileage since arrival** 2803 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 30.7



Toyota GR Supra

Meaden has finally had his first go in a Supra. Here are his thoughts

I'D NEVER BEEN ANYWHERE NEAR A Supra prior to borrowing the **evo** Fast Fleeter, but I do recall the grumbling and general whataboutery that centred upon its shared underpinnings with the BMW Z4 when it was launched. It probably helps that I've not driven a Z4 either, but I can honestly say that for the whole time I spent with the Supra the Bavarian DNA didn't bother me in the slightest.

For starters I love the way the Supra looks. The shape is bold and individual in a way that's unmistakably Japanese. I suspect it also helps that the nameplate means something to me, but isn't so dear to my heart that I feel the BMW bits are a betrayal. I'm simply pleased to see another powerful rear-drive coupe being made.

The interior clearly owes a lot to BMW, but that's no bad thing. It looks good, works well and feels decent quality, which is important given the near-£60k price point. The Supra sounds very BMW, too, but given that sound is coming from a smooth and characterful 335bhp turbocharged straight-six I struggle to see that as a bad thing.

One thing I never got comfortable with was the lack of visibility when reversing – it's a long time since I've been in a car that hides its extremities so completely and proves so tricky to reverse with any confidence. Fortunately, though you're slung low and a long way back in the car, forward visibility is much better and you can place the Supra with accuracy and confidence.

'There's plenty of torque and an appetite for revs that encourages you to hold on to gears'

The performance is immediately impressive, with plenty of low and mid-range torque and an appetite for revs that encourages you to hold on to gears. Traction is strong on smooth roads, but if you uncork it on stretches with a few bumps you hear those telltale rev spikes and feel the traction and stability control momentarily catch the car.

The damping can feel a bit lumpy and the steering response is perhaps a fraction too sharp, though I think this sensation is amplified by sitting so far back from the front axle. Still, there's something pleasingly simple about the way the Supra does what it does, and the demands it places on you to get the best from it.

Given the attention the Yaris is attracting, some might regard the Supra as the 'wrong' GR. You certainly won't see many of them on the road, but this too is part of the appeal of what is a thoroughly enjoyable and individual car.

Richard Meaden

Date acquired March 2020 **Total mileage** 11,612 **Mileage this month** 301 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 27.1



END OF TERM

Mazda 3 Skyactiv-X AWD

It was tantalising technically, but our 3 never excited us dynamically

AFTER A HAND WASH AND INTENSIVE vacuuming, the Mazda looked as good as the day it arrived with me six months earlier. The fact that I was its third custodian in three months had nothing to do with the fact that its first, Jordan Katsianis, thought that it wasn't delivering full power, or that its second, Antony Ingram, agreed and said it wasn't what he'd expected having been on the technical launch for the car and its intriguing drivetrain.

The top-of-the-range Mazda 3 Skyactiv-X AWD features a small supercharger and mild hybridisation to give it the torque that is missing since it's not turbocharged like all its rivals, and there are plenty of those at a shade over £30k. The promise from its innovative, 178bhp in-line four was frisky performance with diesel-like economy.

Well, we got the economy, seeing highs of over 45mpg and an average of just under 42mpg over 5250miles. What we never got was frisky, or even spirited, performance. Hopes that the engine would free up as the miles racked up gradually evaporated. Had the gearing been much shorter, then maybe it would have been more willing, but then it wouldn't have done the mpg. On the other hand, simple maths was always against it, with 178bhp taking on almost 1500kg of hatchback.

At around 5000 miles, one concerted run down a great road in perfect conditions proved once and for all that the engine was neither willing nor smooth when wrung out and that the gearing was far too long – third is good for almost 90mph. It was a challenge without reward.

It also proved that the handling lacked flair and engagement and thus was no compensation for the lack of urge. The hybridisation prompted the need for independent rear suspension and we'd hoped this might lead to improved dynamics. Sadly not: the grip was modest, the handling balance inert and the steering bland. Well, at least the ride was decent, then? Er, no. It wasn't settled, finding imperfections even on apparently smooth roads, and it felt short-travelled over big bumps. Late on, in the mid-winter, I discovered that it was more balanced and capable when the roads were cold and slick, perhaps because the engine's modest torque could challenge the grip and the rear became more mobile.

Standard equipment includes a heated steering wheel and seats, which were a boon. The stylish cabin's leather interior was given a lift by contrasting burgundy trim for the seats, door rolls and dash top, which was a bargain at just £200. There were also clear instruments, a decent stereo and a user-friendly HMI, so it was a good place to be.

I liked the exterior too, though where some – me included – saw clean and confident, others saw bland. In my town there was another Mazda 3 in Machine Grey with gloss black 18-inch alloys and I mistook it for ours one day and stood there wondering why the remote wouldn't unlock it, only to spot ours a couple of spaces down. I don't think it does the £30k, top-of-the-range model any favours that it is all but indistinguishable from the base model optioned with the 18-inch gloss black alloys.

For the record, nothing went wrong while the Mazda was with us and it wore its miles very lightly. It's a shame that in terms of driving it did nothing to excite us. Yes, it was economical, but I've driven more charismatic and exciting diesels that were more frugal. The technical idea was interesting but the execution and the reality was quite a let-down, and to then not compensate with a sweet ride and handling was unforgivable. I won't miss it.

John Barker *(@evoJB)*

Date acquired March 2020 **Duration of test** 10 months **Total test Mileage** 5251 **Overall mpg** 41.9 **Costs** £0 **Purchase price** £31,410 **Value today** £22,000

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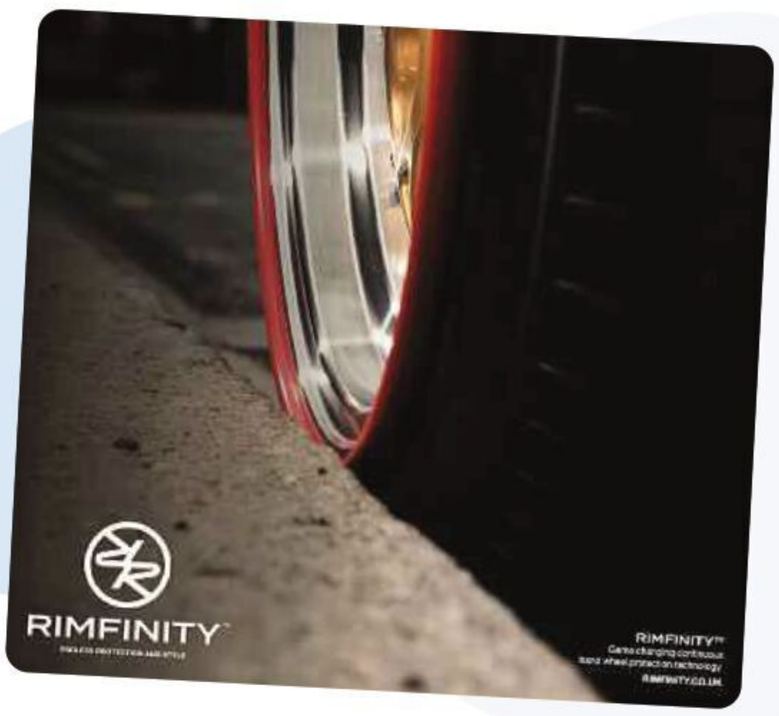
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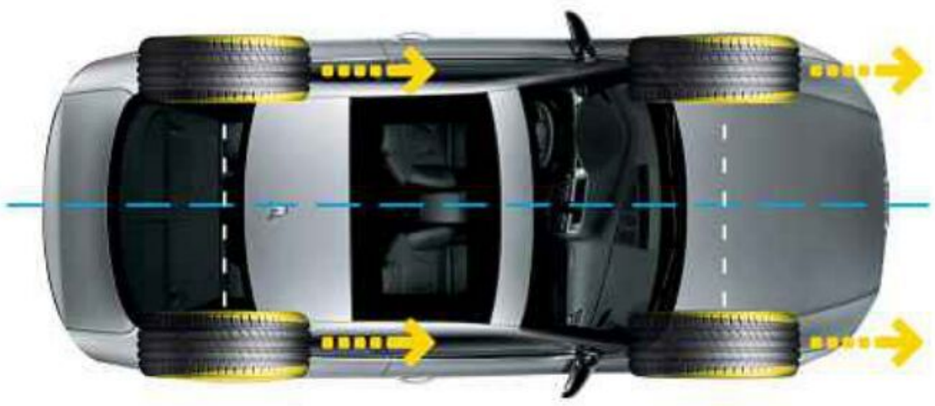
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The Knowledge

RATINGS

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

⊕ = new entry this month. Cars in italics are no longer on sale. **Issue no.** is for our most recent major test of the car (D = Driven, T = Driven Too, I = Ignition, F = feature). Call 0330 333 9491 for back issues. **Engine** is the car's combustion engine only – electric motors aren't shown. **Weight** is as quoted by the manufacturer for the car in basic spec, e.g. with a manual gearbox. In most cases this is to DIN standards (i.e. with fluids but without a driver), but where the manufacturer only quotes a 'dry' weight (i.e. without fluids) this is indicated by *. Note that a dry weight will make the car's power-to-weight ratio (bhp/ton) appear more favourable. **0-62mph (claimed)** is the manufacturer's 0-62 figure, with a manual gearbox where offered. Our **0-60mph** and **0-100mph (tested)** figures could be with either a manual or automatic gearbox/DCT.

SUPERMINIS / HOT HATCHES



OUR CHOICE

Honda Civic Type R. Building on the promise shown by the short-lived FK2 version, the FK8 Type R is a more rounded proposition – and is all the better for it. It's outrageously fast on every kind of road, edges ahead of its rivals on track, offers oodles of interaction and is practical to boot.



BEST OF THE REST

The **Toyota GR Yaris** (left) is just the kind of performance car we've been praying would get made. The **Renault Mégane RS** has a strong B-road game, especially with the non-Cup chassis, the **Hyundai i30 N** is an intriguing and impressive alternative to the usual suspects, and the **Ford Fiesta ST** remains a characterful, affordable and fun supermini.

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE (OR YEARS ON SALE)	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (CLAIMED)	0-60MPH (TESTED)	0-100MPH (TESTED)	MAX MPH	evo RATING	
Abarth 595 Competizione	256 T	£21,985	4/1368	178/5500	184/3000	1035kg	175	6.7	-	-	140	+ Spirited engine; still looks great - Favours fun over finesse	★★★☆☆
Abarth 595 Esseesse	264 D	£25,295	4/1368	178/5500	184/3000	1044kg	173	6.7	-	-	140	+ A bundle of fun if you're in the mood for it - Dynamically dated; expensive	★★★½☆
Abarth 695 Biposto	*205 F*	*'14-'18*	*4/1369*	*187/5500*	*184/3000*	*997kg**	*191*	*5.9*	-	-	*143*	*+ Engineered like a true Abarth product - Expensive for a city car*	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo 147 GTA	*187 F*	*'03-'06*	*6/3179*	*247/6200*	*221/4800*	*1360kg*	*185*	*6.3*	*6.0*	*15.5*	*153*	*+ Mk1 Focus RS pace without the histrionics - Slightly nose-heavy*	★★★★☆
Audi A1 40 TFSI	256 D	£24,470	4/1984	197/6000	236/1500	1260kg	159	6.5	-	-	155	+ Capable - It's no S1 replacement	★★★☆☆
Audi S1	*246 F*	*'14-'18*	*4/1984*	*228/6000*	*273/1600*	*1315kg*	*176*	*5.8*	-	-	*155*	*+ Compliant and engaging chassis; quick, too - Looks dull without options*	★★★★½
Audi A1 quattro	*264 F*	*'13*	*4/1984*	*253/6000*	*258/2500*	*1420kg*	*181*	*5.7*	-	-	*152*	*+ Polished 253bhp all-wheel-drive A1 - Just 19 came to the UK, with a Porsche Cayman price*	★★★★½
Audi S3 Sportback	279 D	£38,475	4/1984	306/5450	295/2000	1500kg	207	4.8	-	-	155	+ Less one-dimensional than its predecessor - Breaks little new ground	★★★★☆
Audi RS3 Sportback	256 F	£46,285	5/2480	394/5850	354/1700	1510kg	265	4.1	-	-	155	+ Hugely quick point-to-point - Sometimes speed isn't the be-all and end-all	★★★½☆
Audi S3	*188 F*	*'13-'20*	*4/1984*	*296/5500*	*280/1800*	*1395kg*	*216*	*5.2*	*5.4*	*12.5*	*155*	*+ Lots of grip and one of the best-sounding four-pot turbos - Still a little too clinical*	★★★☆☆
Audi RS3 Sportback	*221 F*	*'15-'16*	*5/2480*	*362/5500*	*343/1625*	*1520kg*	*242*	*4.3*	*3.6*	-	*155*	*+ Addictive five-cylinder noise; monster pace - Chassis not exactly playful*	★★★☆☆
⊕ BMW 128ti	283 F	£31,875	4/1998	261/4750	295/1750	1445kg	184	6.1	-	-	155	+ More exciting and rewarding than a Mk8 Golf GTI - A manual gearbox would be welcome	★★★★½
BMW M135i xDrive	271 F	£36,430	4/1998	302/5000	332/1750	1525kg	201	4.8	-	-	155	+ Strong performance, monster 4WD traction - Engine lacks character	★★★☆☆
BMW M235i xDrive Gran Coupé	274 D	£37,595	4/1998	302/5000	332/1750	1570kg	195	4.8	-	-	155	+ Quick, with an able chassis and quality cabin - Just not that exciting	★★★☆☆
BMW M135i	*212 F*	*'12-'15*	*6/2979*	*321/5800*	*332/1300*	*1430kg*	*228*	*5.1*	*5.2*	-	*155*	*+ Powertrain, noise, chassis - M235i looks nicer, and has an LSD option*	★★★★½
Citroën DS3 1.6 THP	*142 F*	*'10-'15*	*4/1598*	*154/6000*	*177/1400*	*1240kg*	*126*	*7.3*	-	-	*133*	*+ A proper French hot hatch - Petrolheads might find it too 'designed'*	★★★½☆
Citroën DS3 Racing	*153 D*	*'11-'12*	*4/1598*	*204/6000*	*203/2000*	*1240kg*	*167*	*6.5*	-	-	*146*	*+ A faster, feistier DS3 - Not as hardcore as its 'Racing' tag suggests*	★★★½☆
Citroën AX GT	*195 F*	*'87-'92*	*4/1360*	*85/6400*	*86/4000*	*722kg*	*120*	*9.2*	-	-	*110*	*+ Makes terrific use of 85bhp - Feels like it's made from paper*	★★★★½
Cupra Leon e-Hybrid	280 D	£34,495	4/1395	242	295	1596kg	154	6.7	-	-	140	+ Steers and handles neatly; tax-friendly - Can't decide if it's a hot hatch or a Prius rival	★★★☆☆
DS 3 Performance	*222 D*	*'16-'18*	*4/1598*	*205/6000*	*221/3000*	*1175kg*	*177*	*6.5*	-	-	*143*	*+ All the right ingredients - Undercooked*	★★★½☆
Fiat Panda 100HP	*273 F*	*'06-'11*	*4/1368*	*99/6000*	*97/4250*	*975kg*	*103*	*9.5*	-	-	*115*	*+ About as fun as small cars get - Optional ESP can't be turned off*	★★★★½
Ford Fiesta ST-Line 140	251 F	£18,440	3/998	138/6000	133/1500	1144kg	123	9.0	9.2	26.4	125	+ Quality chassis makes for a born entertainer - Tall gearing and dull engine can spoil the fun	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST	259 F	£20,700	3/1497	197/6000	214/1600	1187kg	169	6.5	-	-	144	+ Highly talented, with real depth to its character - Can get wrong-footed on bad tarmac	★★★★½
Ford Fiesta ST Performance Edition	269 F	£26,495	3/1497	197/6000	214/1600	1187kg	169	6.5	-	-	144	+ All the good things about the regular Fiesta ST, but with added composure - How much?!	★★★★½
Ford Fiesta ST	*207 F*	*'13-'17*	*4/1596*	*197/5700*	*214/2500*	*1088kg*	*184*	*6.9*	*7.4*	*18.4*	*137*	*+ Chassis, price, punchy performance - Have you heard of Mountune?*	★★★★½
Ford Fiesta ST200	*253 F*	*'16*	*4/1596*	*212/6000*	*236/2500*	*1088kg*	*198*	*6.7*	-	-	*143*	*+ Massive fun - They only made 400*	★★★★½
Ford Fiesta Zetec S	*123 D*	*'08-'13*	*4/1596*	*118/6000*	*112/4050*	*1045kg*	*115*	*9.9*	-	-	*120*	*+ Genuinely entertaining supermini - Renault Sport Twingo and Suzuki Swift are even more fun*	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST	*075 D*	*'05-'08*	*4/1999*	*148/6000*	*140/4500*	*1137kg*	*132*	*7.9*	-	-	*129*	*+ Great looks, decent brakes - Disappointing chassis, gutless engine*	★★★☆☆
Ford Focus ST (Mk4)	267 F	£31,995	4/2261	276/5500	310/3000	1433kg	196	5.7	-	-	155	+ A return to form - Lacks the poise and precision of the very best	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST (Mk3)	*207 F*	*'15-'18*	*4/1999*	*247/5500*	*265/2000*	*1362kg*	*184*	*6.5*	-	-	*154*	*+ Excellent engine - Scrappy when pushed*	★★★☆☆
Ford Focus ST (Mk2)	*119 F*	*'05-'10*	*5/2522*	*222/6000*	*236/1600*	*1392kg*	*162*	*6.8*	*6.7*	*16.8*	*150*	*+ Value, performance, integrity - Big engine compromises handling*	★★★★☆
Ford Focus RS (Mk3)	*246 F*	*'15-'18*	*4/2261*	*345/6000*	*347/2000*	*1547kg*	*227*	*4.7*	*4.9*	*12.6*	*166*	*+ Torque-vectoring 4WD brings new sensations to hot hatch sector - Needs to be driven hard*	★★★★☆
Ford Focus RS Edition (Mk3)	*246 D*	*'18*	*4/2261*	*345/6000*	*347/2000*	*1547kg*	*227*	*4.7*	-	-	*166*	*+ Front limited-slip differential brings more precise handling - Pricey and still heavy*	★★★★½
Ford Focus RS (Mk2)	*195 F*	*'09-'11*	*5/2522*	*300/6500*	*324/2300*	*1467kg*	*208*	*5.9*	*5.9*	*14.2*	*163*	*+ Huge performance, highly capable FWD chassis - Body control is occasionally clumsy*	★★★★★
Ford Focus RS500 (Mk2)	*256 F*	*'10-'11*	*5/2522*	*345/6000*	*339/2500*	*1467kg*	*239*	*5.6*	*5.6*	*12.7*	*165*	*+ More power and presence than regular Mk2 RS - Pricey*	★★★★★
Ford Focus RS (Mk1)	*207 F*	*'02-'03*	*4/1998*	*212/5500*	*229/3500*	*1278kg*	*169*	*6.7*	*5.9*	*14.9*	*143*	*+ Some are great - Some are awful (so make sure you drive plenty)*	★★★★☆
Ford Escort RS Cosworth	*271 F*	*'92-'96*	*4/1993*	*224/6250*	*224/3500*	*1275kg*	*179*	*6.2*	-	-	*137*	*+ The ultimate Essex hot hatch - Unmodified ones are rare , and pricey*	★★★★☆
Ford Puma 1.7	*095 F*	*'97-'02*	*4/1679*	*123/6300*	*116/4500*	*1041kg*	*120*	*9.2*	*8.6*	*27.6*	*122*	*+ Revvy engine, sparkling chassis, bargain used prices - Rusty rear arches*	★★★★☆
Ford Racing Puma	*262 F*	*'00-'01*	*4/1679*	*153/7000*	*119/4500*	*1174kg*	*132*	*7.9*	*7.8*	*23.2*	*137*	*+ An affordable exotic - Corroding rear arches*	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type R (FK8)	281 F	£32,820	4/1996	316/6500	295/2500	1380kg	233	5.8	5.9	12.6	168	+ Wildly exciting, with improved refinement - Looks remain challenging for some	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R Limited Edition (FK8)	281 D	£39,995	4/1996	316/6500	295/2500	1333kg	241	5.8	-	-	168	+ Terrifically capable, blisteringly quick, still practical - Only 20 are coming to the UK	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (FK2)	*227 F*	*'15-'17*	*4/1996*	*306/6500*	*295/2500*	*1378kg*	*226*	*5.7*	*5.4*	*12.4*	*167*	*+ Great on smooth roads - Can be punishing on less-than-smooth roads*	★★★★½
Honda Civic Type R (FN2)	*102 F*	*'07-'11*	*4/1998*	*198/7800*	*142/5600*	*1267kg*	*158*	*6.6*	*6.8*	*17.5*	*146*	*+ Looks great, VTEC more accessible - Steering lacks feel, inert balance*	★★★½☆
Honda Civic Type R Mugen (FN2)	*248 F*	*'09-'11*	*4/1998*	*237/8300*	*157/6250*	*1233kg*	*195*	*5.9*	-	-	*155*	*+ Fantastic on road and track - Only 20 were made, and they're a tad pricey...*	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (EP3)	*258 F*	*'01-'05*	*4/1998*	*197/7400*	*145/5900*	*1204kg*	*166*	*6.8*	*6.8*	*16.9*	*146*	*+ Potent and great value - Duff steering*	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type R (EK9)	*210 F*	*'97-'00*	*4/1595*	*182/8200*	*118/7500*	*1040kg*	*178*	*6.8*	-	-	*135*	*+ Sublime early incarnation of the Type R recipe - Good ones are thin on the ground*	★★★★★
Hyundai i30 N	*'19-'20*	*£25,995*	*4/1998*	*247/6000*	*279/1750*	*1400kg*	*179*	*6.4*	-	-	*155*	*+ Very close to the Performance version on ability... - ...but not that far away on price*	★★★★½
Hyundai i30 N Performance	267 F	£29,495	4/1998	271/6000	279/1750	1429kg	193	6.1	6.6	14.9	155	+ A brilliant, thoroughly developed hot hatch - Imagine if it was lighter too...	★★★★½
Hyundai i30 Fastback N Performance	269 F	£29,995	4/1998	271/6000	279/1750	1441kg	191	6.1	-	-	155	+ As above, but with a fractionally more mature ride and soundtrack - As above	★★★★½
Kia Ceed GT	267 F	£25,850	4/1591	201/6000	195/1500	1386kg	147	7.2	-	-	143	+ Feels like a detuned i30 N - Lacks personality	★★★½☆
Kia ProCeed GT	259 D	£28,135	4/1591	201/6000	195/1500	1438kg	142	7.2	-	-	140	+ Flexible engine, handsome shooting brake body - It's warm rather than hot	★★★½☆
Kia Proceed GT	*217 D*	*'13-'18*	*4/1591*	*201/6000*	*195/1500*	*1359kg*	*143*	*7.3*	-	-	*150*	*+ Fun and appealing package - Soft-edged compared to rivals*	★★★★☆
Lancia Delta HF Integrale Evoluzione II	*271 F*	*'93-'94*	*4/1995*	*212/5750*	*232/2500*	*1340kg*	*161*	*5.7*	-	-	*137*	*+ One of the finest cars ever built - Demands love, LHD only*	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG A35	267 F	£35,970	4/1991	302/5800	295/3000	1480kg	207	4.7	-	-	155	+ A formidable A-to-B device - Some front-drive rivals are more fun	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG A45 S	272 F	£50,570	4/1991	415/6750	369/5000	1550kg	272	3.9	-	-	167	+ A 21st-century reincarnation of late-'90s imprezas and Evos - It costs £50k	★★★★½

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE (OR YEARS ON SALE)	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (CLAIMED)	0-60MPH (TESTED)	0-100MPH (TESTED)	MAX MPH	evo RATING	
Mercedes-AMG A45	*221 F*	*'15-'18*	*4/1991*	*376/6000*	*350/2250*	*1480kg*	*258*	*4.2*	*3.9*	*-*	*155*	*+ Tremendously fast - But not a true great*	★★★☆☆
Mercedes-Benz A45 AMG	*194 F*	*'12-'15*	*4/1991*	*355/6000*	*332/2250*	*1480kg*	*244*	*4.6*	*4.3*	*10.6*	*155*	*+ Blisteringly quick everywhere - Not as rewarding as some slower rivals*	★★★☆☆
Mini Cooper (F56)	254 T	£17,635	3/1499	134/4500	162/1250	1085kg	125	7.9	-	-	130	+ Driving a slow car fast - Driving a car with Union Jack tail lights	★★★½☆
Mini Cooper S (F56)	268 F	£20,925	4/1998	189/4700	221/1250	1195kg	161	6.8	-	-	146	+ Feels darty and alive at moderate speeds - Loses its composure when you push harder	★★★½☆
Mini John Cooper Works (F56)	211 F	£25,950	4/1998	228/5200	236/1250	1200kg	193	6.3	-	-	153	+ Fast, agile, nimble - Chassis lacks sparkle found in previous JCWs	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works GP (F56)	280 F	£33,895	4/1998	302/1750	332/1750	1255kg	244	5.2	-	-	164	+ Street-fighter looks, illustrious predecessors - Better at style than it is substance	★★★☆☆
Mini John Cooper Works Challenge (F56)	*237 F*	*'16-'17*	*4/1998*	*228/5200*	*236/1250*	*1215kg*	*191*	*6.3*	*-*	*-*	*152*	*+ A more hardcore JCW - The ride could be considered a little too hardcore*	★★★★★
Mini Cooper (R56)	*185 F*	*'09-'14*	*4/1598*	*120/6000*	*118/4250*	*1075kg*	*113*	*9.1*	*-*	*-*	*126*	*+ Brilliant ride and composure; could be all the Mini you need - You'll still buy the 'S'*	★★★★½
Mini Cooper S (R56)	*149 F*	*'06-'14*	*4/1598*	*181/5500*	*177/1600*	*1140kg*	*161*	*7.0*	*7.0*	*-*	*142*	*+ Like the Cooper, but with added shove - Google 'Mini death rattle'*	★★★★½
Mini John Cooper Works (R56)	*184 F*	*'08-'14*	*4/1598*	*208/6000*	*206/2000*	*1160kg*	*182*	*6.9*	*7.2*	*16.7*	*148*	*+ A seriously rapid Mini - Occasionally just a little unruly*	★★★★½
Mini John Cooper Works GP (R56)	*231 F*	*'13-'14*	*4/1598*	*215/6000*	*206/2000*	*1160kg*	*188*	*6.3*	*-*	*-*	*150*	*+ Brazenly hyperactive - Too much for some roads and some tastes*	★★★★★
Mini John Cooper Works Coupé (R58)	*164 F*	*'11-'15*	*4/1598*	*208/6000*	*206/2000*	*1175kg*	*180*	*6.3*	*-*	*-*	*149*	*+ The usual raucous Mini JCW experience - But wearing a backwards baseball cap*	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S (R53)	*077 F*	*'02-'06*	*4/1598*	*168/6000*	*155/4000*	*1140kg*	*143*	*7.2*	*7.8*	*19.9*	*135*	*+ Strong performance, quality feel - Over-long gearing*	★★★★½
Mini Cooper S Works GP (R53)	*262 F*	*'06*	*4/1598*	*215/7100*	*184/4600*	*1090kg*	*200*	*6.5*	*-*	*-*	*149*	*+ Storming engine, agility - Almost too mannered for a road racer*	★★★★★
Nissan Juke Nismo RS	*208 D*	*'15-'17*	*4/1618*	*215/6000*	*206/3600*	*1315kg*	*166*	*7.0*	*-*	*-*	*137*	*+ Quirky character and bold styling - Not a match for a pukka hot hatch*	★★★½☆
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 2)	*273 F*	*'97-'98*	*4/1587*	*103/6200*	*97/3500*	*865kg*	*121*	*8.8*	*-*	*-*	*121*	*+ Bargain no-frills thrills - Not as much fizz as original 1.3*	★★★★½
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 1)	*095 F*	*'94-'96*	*4/1294*	*100/7200*	*80/5400*	*826kg*	*123*	*10.6*	*-*	*-*	*118*	*+ Frantic, thrashy fun - Needs caning to extract full potential*	★★★★★
Peugeot 106 GTi 16v	*034 F*	*'97-'04*	*4/1587*	*120/6600*	*107/5200*	*950kg*	*128*	*7.4*	*-*	*-*	*127*	*+ Fine handling supermini - Looks its age*	★★★★½
Peugeot 208 GTi by Peugeot Sport	*254 F*	*'15-'18*	*4/1598*	*205/6000*	*221/3000*	*1160kg*	*180*	*6.5*	*-*	*-*	*143*	*+ A brilliantly focused small hatch - Obscured dials*	★★★★½
Peugeot 208 GTi	*184 F*	*'12-'16*	*4/1598*	*197/5800*	*203/1700*	*1160kg*	*173*	*6.8*	*6.8*	*17.9*	*143*	*+ Agile chassis works well on tough roads - Could be more involving*	★★★★☆
Peugeot 205 GTI 1.9	*195 F*	*'88-'91*	*4/1905*	*130/6000*	*119/4750*	*910kg*	*145*	*7.6*	*-*	*-*	*124*	*+ Still scintillating after all these years - Brittle build quality*	★★★★★
Peugeot 308 GTi by Peugeot Sport	245 F	£30,745	4/1598	256/6000	251/2100	1205kg	224	6.0	6.0	13.8	155	+ A great entertainer with a cracker of an engine - Tiny steering wheel obsures the dials	★★★★½
Peugeot 306 GTi 6	*020 F*	*'93-'01*	*4/1998*	*167/6500*	*142/5500*	*1214kg*	*140*	*7.9*	*7.2*	*20.1*	*140*	*+ One of the great GTIs - They don't make them like this any more*	★★★★★
Peugeot 306 Rallye	*095 F*	*'98-'99*	*4/1998*	*167/6500*	*142/5500*	*1163kg*	*146*	*7.8*	*6.9*	*19.2*	*137*	*+ Essentially a GTi 6 for less dosh - Limited choice of colours*	★★★★★
Renault Sport Twingo 133	*175 F*	*'08-'13*	*4/1598*	*131/6750*	*118/4400*	*1050kg*	*127*	*8.7*	*-*	*-*	*125*	*+ Renault Sport experience for pocket money - Optional Cup chassis gives bouncy ride*	★★★★½
Renault Sport Clio 200 Auto	*184 F*	*'13-'18*	*4/1618*	*197/6000*	*177/1750*	*1204kg*	*166*	*6.7*	*6.9*	*17.9*	*143*	*+ Faster, more refined, easier to drive - We miss the revvy NA engine and manual 'box*	★★★½☆
Renault Sport Clio 220 Trophy	*229 D*	*'16-'18*	*4/1618*	*217/6050*	*206/2000*	*1204kg*	*183*	*6.6*	*-*	*-*	*146*	*+ Willing chassis - Awful paddleshift gearbox*	★★★½☆
Renault Sport Clio 200 Cup	*247 F*	*'09-'13*	*4/1998*	*197/7100*	*159/5400*	*1204kg*	*166*	*6.9*	*6.6*	*16.7*	*141*	*+ The hot Clio at its best - They don't make 'em like this anymore*	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 197 Cup	*115 F*	*'07-'09*	*4/1998*	*194/7250*	*158/5550*	*1240kg*	*161*	*6.9*	*-*	*-*	*134*	*+ Quick, polished and capable - Not as much sheer fun as 182 Cup*	★★★★☆
Renault Sport Clio 182	*066 F*	*'04-'05*	*4/1998*	*180/6500*	*148/5250*	*1110kg*	*165*	*7.1*	*6.6*	*17.5*	*139*	*+ Took hot hatches to a new level - Flawed driving position*	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 182 Cup	*187 F*	*'04-'05*	*4/1998*	*180/6500*	*148/5250*	*1090kg*	*168*	*6.9*	*-*	*-*	*139*	*+ Full of beans, fantastic value - Sunday-market upholstery*	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio Trophy	*262 F*	*'05-'06*	*4/1998*	*180/6500*	*148/5250*	*1090kg*	*168*	*6.9*	*6.6*	*17.3*	*140*	*+ The most fun you can have on three (sometimes two) wheels - Only 500 were built*	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 172 (Phase 2)	*034 F*	*'01-'03*	*4/1998*	*170/6250*	*147/5400*	*1110kg*	*156*	*7.2*	*7.1*	*20.0*	*138*	*+ Poised, predictable, fast - Lacks aggressive edge*	★★★★½
Renault Sport Clio 172 Cup	*048 F*	*'02-'03*	*4/1998*	*170/6250*	*147/5400*	*1011kg*	*171*	*6.9*	*6.5*	*17.7*	*138*	*+ Bargain old-school hot hatch - Nervous in the wet, no ABS*	★★★★☆
Renault Sport Clio 172 (Phase 1)	*146 F*	*'00-'01*	*4/1998*	*170/6250*	*147/5400*	*1035kg*	*167*	*7.2*	*6.6*	*18.2*	*138*	*+ Brilliantly accomplished - Imperfect driving position*	★★★★½
Renault Clio Williams	*233 F*	*'93-'96*	*4/1988*	*148/6100*	*126/4500*	*981kg*	*153*	*7.8*	*7.6*	*20.8*	*134*	*+ One of the best hot hatches ever - Can be fragile*	★★★★★
Renault 5 GT Turbo	*255 F*	*'87-'91*	*4/1397*	*118/5750*	*122/3000*	*855kg*	*140*	*7.3*	*-*	*-*	*120*	*+ Clio Williams' grand-daddy - Few unmodified ones left*	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio V6 255	*277 F*	*'03-'05*	*6/2946*	*251/7150*	*221/4650*	*1400kg*	*182*	*5.8*	*-*	*-*	*153*	*+ Supercar drama without the original's edgy handling - Uninspired interior*	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio V6	*029 F*	*'99-'02*	*6/2946*	*227/6000*	*221/3750*	*1410kg*	*164*	*6.6*	*5.8*	*17.0*	*145*	*+ Pocket supercar - Mid-engined handling can be tricky*	★★★★☆
Renault Mégane RS (280)	*267 F*	*'18-'20*	*4/1798*	*276/6000*	*288/2400*	*1407kg*	*199*	*5.8*	*6.3*	*14.6*	*158*	*+ Outrageous grip and agility - Cup chassis option doesn't do its composure any favours*	★★★★½
⊕ Renault Mégane RS 300	283 F	£32,995	4/1798	296/6000	295/2400	1443kg	209	5.7	-	-	158	+ Combines the more potent engine with the softer chassis at last - But now it's auto only	★★★★½
Renault Mégane RS Trophy	267 F	£36,995	4/1798	296/6000	295/2400	1419kg	212	5.7	-	-	162	+ An RS with knobs on - Unforgiving ride can make it feel ill at ease on trickier roads	★★★★½
Renault Mégane RS Trophy-R	280 F	£51,455	4/1798	296/6000	295/2400	1306kg	230	5.4	-	-	163	+ An absolute beast on track - Too much of a beast on the road	★★★★☆
Renault Sport Mégane 275 Cup-S/Nav 275	*223 D*	*'16*	*4/1998*	*271/5500*	*265/3000*	*1394kg*	*198*	*5.8*	*-*	*-*	*158*	*+ The same engine as the Trophy-R - They don't make it anymore*	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane 265 Cup	*195 F*	*'12-'15*	*4/1998*	*261/5500*	*265/3000*	*1387kg*	*191*	*6.0*	*6.4*	*14.8*	*158*	*+ A hot hatch benchmark - Cupholder could be better positioned*	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane 275 Trophy	*212 F*	*'14-'15*	*4/1998*	*271/5500*	*265/3000*	*1376kg*	*200*	*5.8*	*-*	*-*	*159*	*+ Another cracking Trophy model - Stripped-out Trophy-R is even more thrilling*	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane 275 Trophy-R	*231 F*	*'14-'15*	*4/1998*	*271/5500*	*265/3000*	*1297kg*	*212*	*5.8*	*-*	*-*	*158*	*+ As absorbing as a 911 GT3 RS on the right road - Too uncompromising for some; pricey*	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane 250 Cup	*139 F*	*'09-'12*	*4/1998*	*247/5500*	*251/3000*	*1387kg*	*181*	*6.1*	*6.1*	*14.6*	*156*	*+ Fantastic chassis... - ...partially obscured by new-found maturity*	★★★★½
Renault Sport Mégane dCi 175 Cup	*119 F*	*'07-'09*	*4/1995*	*173/3750*	*265/2000*	*1470kg*	*119*	*8.3*	*8.3*	*23.5*	*137*	*+ A diesel with a genuinely sporty chassis - Could take more power*	★★★★☆
Renault Sport Mégane 230 F1 Team R26	*195 F*	*'07-'09*	*4/1998*	*227/5500*	*229/3000*	*1345kg*	*171*	*6.5*	*6.2*	*16.0*	*147*	*+ The car the R26.R is based on - F1 Team stickers in dubious taste*	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane R26.R	*276 F*	*'08-'09*	*4/1998*	*227/5500*	*229/3000*	*1220kg*	*189*	*6.0*	*5.8*	*15.1*	*147*	*+ A true hot hatch great - Two seats, plastic rear windows*	★★★★★
SEAT Ibiza Cupra	*225 F*	*'16-'18*	*4/1798*	*189/4300*	*236/1450*	*1185kg*	*162*	*6.7*	*-*	*-*	*146*	*+ Quick, competent, refined, and manual only - Not exciting enough*	★★★½☆
SEAT Ibiza Cupra	*183 D*	*'10-'15*	*4/1390*	*178/6200*	*184/2000*	*1259kg*	*144*	*6.9*	*-*	*-*	*142*	*+ Punchy engine, unflappable DSG - Lacks engagement, DSG only*	★★★☆☆
SEAT Leon Cupra 290	267 F	£31,150	4/1984	286/5400	280/1950	1356kg	214	6.0	-	-	155	+ Agile, transparent and easily exploited - Can feel rather plain	★★★★☆
SEAT Leon Cupra R	*244 D*	*'18*	*4/1984*	*306/5800*	*280/1800*	*1378kg*	*226*	*5.8*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ Sharper handling and better body control - High price and limited availability*	★★★★☆
SEAT Leon Cupra	*105 F*	*'07-'11*	*4/1984*	*237/5700*	*221/2200*	*1375kg*	*175*	*6.4*	*-*	*-*	*153*	*+ Great engine, composure - Doesn't have the adjustability of the old Cupra R*	★★★★☆
SEAT Leon Cupra R	*139 F*	*'10-'12*	*4/1984*	*261/6000*	*258/2500*	*1375kg*	*193*	*6.2*	*6.1*	*14.0*	*155*	*+ Bold car, blinding engine - Lacks the character of its rivals; only 24 came to the UK*	★★★½☆
Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk2)	*146 D*	*'10-'14*	*4/1390*	*178/6200*	*184/2000*	*1218kg*	*148*	*7.3*	*-*	*-*	*139*	*+ Clever twincharged engine and DSG 'box - Do you homework on the reliability of the engine*	★★★½☆
Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk1)	*077 F*	*'03-'07*	*4/1896*	*130/4000*	*229/1900*	*1315kg*	*100*	*9.6*	*-*	*-*	*127*	*+ Fun and frugal hot hatch - A little short on steering feel*	★★★½☆
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk4)	281 D	£29,815	4/1984	242/5000	273/1600	1445kg	170	6.7	-	-	155	+ A capable Q-car for the masses - Engine lacks character	★★★★☆
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk3)	*187 D*	*'13-'17*	*4/1984*	*217/4500*	*258/1500*	*1345kg*	*164*	*6.8*	*-*	*-*	*154*	*+ Quick, agile, roomier than a Golf - Ride is harsh for what could be a family car*	★★★★☆
Skoda Octavia vRS 245 (Mk3)	*250 F*	*'17-'20*	*4/1984*	*242/5000*	*258/1600*	*1370kg*	*179*	*6.6*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ A credible, entertaining performer - You won't get out of bed at 4am to drive it*	★★★★☆
Suzuki Swift Sport (Mk3)	267 F	£17,249	4/1373	138/5500	170/2500	975kg	144	8.1	7.6	20.1	130	+ Composed and brisk - Adjustability and character have been diluted	★★★½☆
Suzuki Swift Sport (Mk2)	*175 F*	*'12-'17*	*4/1586*	*134/6900*	*118/4400*	*1045kg*	*130*	*8.7*	*-*	*-*	*121*	*+ Still a great pocket rocket - Not quite as adjustabie as the original*	★★★★½
Suzuki Swift Sport (Mk1)	*132 F*	*'05-'11*	*4/1586*	*123/6800*	*109/4800*	*1030kg*	*121*	*8.9*	*-*	*-*	*124*	*+ Entertaining handling, well built - Lacking in steering feedback*	★★★★½
Toyota GR Yaris	282 F	£29,995	3/1618	257/6500	265/3000	1280kg	204	5.5	-	-	142	+ A proper homologation special - More Subaru Impreza than Mitsubishi Evo	★★★★★
Toyota Yaris GRMN	*254 F*	*'18*	*4/1798*	*209/6800*	*184/5000*	*1135kg*	*187*	*6.3*	*-*	*-*	*143*	*+ Appealingly feisty supercharged supermini - Artificial steering; they only made 400*	★★★★☆
Vauxhall Corsa VXR	*211 F*	*'14-'18*	*4/1598*	*202/5800*	*206/1900*	*1278kg*	*161*	*6.8*	*-*	*-*	*143*	*+ Begs to be wrung out - You'll need the £2400 Performance Pack*	★★★★☆
Vauxhall Corsa VXR	*154 F*	*'07-'14*	*4/1598*	*189/5850*	*192/1980*	*1166kg*	*165*	*7.2*	*-*	*-*	*140*	*+ Looks snazzy, punchy engine - Lacks feel, uncouth compared with rivals*	★★★½☆
Vauxhall Corsa VXR Nürburgring/Clubsport	*164 F*	*'11-'13/'14*	*4/1598*	*202/5750*	*206/2250*	*1166kg*	*176*	*6.8*	*-*	*-*	*143*	*+ VXR gets more power and a limited-slip diff - But they come at a price*	★★★★☆
Vauxhall Astra/GTC VXR (Mk2)	*207 F*	*'12-'18*	*4/1998*	*276/5500*	*295/2500*	*1475kg*	*190*	*6.0*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ Loony turbo pace - Lacks the Renault Sport Mégane's precision*	★★★★☆
Vauxhall Astra VXR (Mk1)	*102 F*	*'05-'11*	*4/1998*	*237/5600*	*236/2400*	*1393kg*	*173*	*6.4*	*6.7*	*16.7*	*152*	*+ Fast and furious - Lacks a little composure and precision*	★★★★☆
Volkswagen Up GTI	273 F	£16,320	3/999	113/5000	147/2000	995kg	115	8.8	-	-	122	+ Infectious appetite for fun - City car roots are still there	★★★★☆
Volkswagen Lupo GTI	*034 F*	*'01-'04*	*4/1598*	*123/6500*	*112/3000*	*1038kg*	*120*	*8.2*	*8.9*	*30.1*	*127*	*+ Looks, performance, chassis - Lacks the fizz of the 106 GTI*	★★★★☆
Volkswagen Polo GTI	244 D	£22,005	4/1984	197/4400	236/1500	1272kg	157	6.7	-	-	147	+ Decent performance; mature ride and handling - Lacks driver involvement	★★★½☆
Volkswagen Polo GTI	*211 F*	*'15-'17*	*4/1798*	*189/4200*	*236/1450*	*1197kg*	*160*	*6.7*	*-*	*-*	*146*	*+ Smooth and brawny - Fiesta ST is more engaging*	★★★½☆
Volkswagen Polo GTI	*154 F*	*'10-'14*	*4/1390*	*178/6200*	*184/2000*	*1184kg*	*153*	*7.4*	*-*	*-*	*142*	*+ Modern-day Mk1 Golf GTI gets twin-clutch DSG - It's a little bit bland*	★★★½☆
Volkswagen Golf GTI (Mk8)	279 D	£33,460	4/1984	242/5000	273/1600	1354kg	182	6.4	-	-	155	+ An alluring blend of the best GTI ingredients - The competition is stiffer than ever	★★★★½
⊕ Volkswagen Golf GTI Clubsport (Mk8)	283 F	£37,315	4/1984	296/5000	295/2000	1461kg	206	5.6	-	-	155	+ Super-effective - But not as exciting as you might hope	★★★★½
Volkswagen Golf GTI (Mk7.5)	*233 D*	*'17-'18*	*4/1984*	*227/4700*	*258/1500*	*1289kg*	*179*	*6.4*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ Still the most capable all-round hot hatch - Should be more thrilling*	★★★★½
Volkswagen Golf GTI Performance (Mk7.5)	245 F	£32,985	4/1984	242/5000	273/1600	1312kg	187	6.2	6.5	14.6	155	+ A GTI with an extra 15bhp and an LSD - Could still be more thrilling	★★★★½
Volkswagen Golf GTI TCR (Mk7.5)	267 F	£37,665	4/1984	286/5400	280/1950	1410kg	206	5.6	-	-	155	+ Quicker than a regular GTI - It's no Clubsport S	★★★★½
Volkswagen Golf R (Mk7.5)	267 F	£36,180	4/1984	296/5500	295/2000	1450kg	207	4.7	4.5	11.6	155	+ Outrageous yet accessible performance - Proper excitement is sometimes elusive	★★★★☆
Volkswagen Golf GTD (Mk7)	*200 D*	*'13-'17*	*4/1968*	*181/3500*	*280/1750*	*1302kg*	*141*	*7.5*	*-*	*-*	*143*	*+ Pace, fuel economy, sounds good for a diesel - Lacks the extra edge of the GTI*	★★★★☆
Volkswagen Golf GTE (Mk7)	*236 F*	*'15-'17*	*4/1395*	*201*	*258*	*1524kg*	*134*	*7.6*	*-*	*-*	*138*	*+ The most enjoyable plug-in hybrid in its price range - Golf GTI still quicker and more fun*	★★★½☆
Volkswagen Golf GTI (Mk7)	*236 F*	*'13-'17*	*4/1984*	*217/4500*	*258/1500*	*1276kg*	*173*	*6.5*	*-*	*-*	*153*	*+ Brilliantly resolved - Lacks the punch of newer rivals*	★★★★½
Volkswagen Golf GTI Clubsport Edition 40 (Mk7)	*230 D*	*'16-'17*	*4/1984*	*286/5350*	*280/1700*	*1300kg*	*224*	*6.3*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ A faster, sharper, more entertaning GTI - Some rivals are more exciting on track*	★★★★½
Volkswagen Golf GTI Clubsport S (Mk7)	*280 F*	*'16*	*4/1984*	*306/5800*	*280/1850*	*1285kg*	*242*	*5.8*	*5.8*	*12.8*	*165*	*+ Runner-up at evo Car of the Year 2016 - Only 400 were built*	★★★★★
Volkswagen Golf R (Mk7)	*220 F*	*'14-'17*	*4/1984*	*296/5500*	*280/1800*	*1401kg*	*215*	*5.1*	*5.2*	*12.4*	*155*	*+ A VW 'R' model you can take seriously - Mégane 275 just edges it as a pure driver's car*	★★★★★
Volkswagen Golf GTI (Mk6)	*172 F*	*'09-'13*	*4/1984*	*207/5300*	*207/1700*	*1318kg*	*160*	*6.9*	*6.4*	*16.5*	*148*	*+ Still a very accomplished hot hatch - 207bhp isn't a lot any more*	★★★★☆
Volkswagen Golf R (Mk6)	*140 D*	*'10-'13*	*4/1984*	*266/6000*	*258/2500*	*1446kg*	*187*	*5.7*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ Great engine, tremendous pace and poise - High price, adaptive dampers optional*	★★★★½

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE (OR YEARS ON SALE)	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (CLAIMED)	0-60MPH (TESTED)	0-100MPH (TESTED)	MAX MPH	evo RATING	
Volkswagen Golf GTI (Mk5)	*259 F*	*'04-'09*	*4/1984*	*197/5100*	*207/1800*	*1336kg*	*150*	*7.3*	*6.7*	*17.9*	*146*	*+ Character and ability; the GTI's return to form - Lacking firepower?*	★★★★★
Volkswagen Golf R32 (Mk5)	*087 F*	*'06-'09*	*6/3189*	*246/6300*	*236/2500*	*1466kg*	*170*	*6.5*	*5.8*	*15.2*	*155*	*+ The traction's great and you'll love the soundtrack - We'd still have a GTI*	★★★★☆
Volkswagen Golf R32 (Mk4)	*053 F*	*'02-'04*	*6/3189*	*237/6250*	*236/2800*	*1477kg*	*163*	*6.6*	*6.4*	*16.3*	*154*	*+ Charismatic - Boomy engine can be tiresome*	★★★★☆
Volkswagen Golf GTI 16v (Mk2)	*195 F*	*'88-'92*	*4/1781*	*139/6100*	*123/4600*	*960kg*	*147*	*7.9*	*-*	*-*	*129*	*+ Still feels everyday useable - Too many have been modified*	★★★★★
Volkswagen Golf GTI (Mk1, 1.8)	*224 F*	*'82-'84*	*4/1781*	*112/5800*	*109/3500*	*860kg*	*132*	*8.2*	*-*	*-*	*114*	*+ The car that started it all - Tricky to find an unmolested 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 XE SV Project 8** (left) 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**.

Alfa Romeo Giulia 2.0 Turbo Super	234 D	£33,595	4/1995	197/5000	243/1750	1429kg	140	6.6	-	-	146	+ Keen engine, enjoyable handling - Firm low-speed ride	★★★★½
Alfa Romeo Giulia Veloce	244 F	£39,875	4/1995	276/5250	295/2250	1429kg	196	5.7	-	-	149	+ Supple and satisfying - Engine reluctant to rev	★★★★½
Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio	278 F	£67,195	6/2891	503/6500	442/2500	1620kg	315	3.9	-	-	191	+ If Ferrari built a saloon (really) - Lacks the final polish of German rivals	★★★★★
Alfa Romeo Stelvio Speciale AWD	234 D	£43,705	4/1995	276/5250	295/1750	1660kg	169	5.7	-	-	143	+ Agile feel, quick steering, attractive cabin - Engine not truly inspiring	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo Stelvio Quadrifoglio	244 D	£71,880	6/2891	503/6500	442/2500	1830kg	279	3.8	-	-	176	+ Rivals the Macan GTS - Needs optional P Zero Corsa tyres to give its very best	★★★★☆
Alpina B3 Touring	281 D	£67,950	6/2993	456/5500	516/2500	1865kg	248	3.9	-	-	186	+ A richer, smoother drive than an M-car - Little different to an M340i at low speeds	★★★★½
Aston Martin Rapide	*141 F*	*'10-'13*	*12/5935*	*470/6000*	*443/5000*	*1990kg*	*240*	*5.3*	*-*	*-*	*188*	*+ Better than its DB9 sibling - More of a 2+2 than a proper four-seater*	★★★★☆
Aston Martin Rapide S	*201 D*	*'13-'19*	*12/5935*	*552/6650*	*465/5500*	*1990kg*	*282*	*4.4*	*-*	*-*	*203*	*+ Oozes star quality; gearbox on 2015MY cars a big improvement - It's cosy in the back*	★★★★☆
Aston Martin Rapide AMR	261 D	£194,950	12/5935	595/6650	465/5500	1990kg	304	4.4	-	-	205	+ Powertrain, performance, personality - When it goes off sale, so does Aston's 5.9 V12	★★★★½
Aston Martin DBX	277 D	£161,500	8/3982	542/6500	516/2200	2245kg	245	4.5	-	-	181	+ Drives nothing like an SUV - Still heavy and thirsty like an SUV	★★★★½
Audi S3 Saloon	*192 D*	*'13-'20*	*4/1984*	*306/5500*	*280/1800*	*1430kg*	*210*	*5.3*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ On paper a match for the original S4 - In reality much less interesting*	★★★☆☆
Audi RS3 Saloon	243 F	£47,310	5/2480	394/5850	354/1700	1515kg	264	4.1	3.6	8.8	155	+ Mini RS4 looks; stonking pace - Not the most involving driving experience	★★★½☆
Audi S4 Avant (B9, diesel)	266 D	£49,425	6/2967	342/3850	516/2500	1825kg	190	4.9	-	-	155	+ Effortless performance, well-judged chassis - Diesel power won't be to everyone's taste	★★★★☆
Audi S4 (B9, petrol)	*225 D*	*'17-'19*	*6/2995*	*349/5400*	*369/1370*	*1630kg*	*218*	*4.7*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ Strong response and delivery - Chassis feels softer than before*	★★★★☆
Audi RS4 Avant (B9)	282 F	£65,700	6/2894	444/5700	442/1900	1745kg	259	4.1	-	-	155	+ Very 'real world' fast - Some may feel it lacks character and drama	★★★★☆
Audi RS4 Avant (B8)	*216 F*	*'12-'15*	*8/4163*	*444/8250*	*317/4000*	*1795kg*	*251*	*4.7*	*4.5*	*10.5*	*174*	*+ Looks and sounds the part, thunderously fast - Unnatural steering, dull dynamics*	★★★½☆
Audi RS4 (B7)	*250 F*	*'05-'08*	*8/4163*	*414/7800*	*317/5500*	*1650kg*	*255*	*4.7*	*4.5*	*10.5*	*155*	*+ 414bhp at 7800rpm! And there's an estate version too - Busy under braking*	★★★★★
Audi RS4 (B5)	*192 F*	*'00-'02*	*6/2671*	*375/6100*	*325/2500*	*1620kg*	*236*	*4.9*	*4.8*	*12.1*	*170*	*+ Effortless pace - Not the last word in agility; bends wheel rims*	★★★★☆
Audi RS2	*214 F*	*'94-'95*	*5/2226*	*315/6500*	*302/3000*	*1595kg*	*201*	*4.8*	*4.8*	*13.1*	*162*	*+ Storming performance (thanks to Porsche) - Try finding one*	★★★★☆
Audi S5 Sportback	*233 D*	*'17-'19*	*6/2995*	*349/5400*	*369/1370*	*1660kg*	*214*	*4.7*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ More capable than you think; strong V6 engine - Gearbox frustrating in auto mode*	★★★½☆
Audi RS5 Sportback	264 D	£69,525	6/2894	444/5700	442/1900	1720kg	262	3.9	-	-	155	+ High-speed composure - Flat-footed on more technical roads	★★★★☆
Audi S6 Avant (C8)	263 D	£63,315	6/2967	344/3850	516/2500	2020kg	173	5.1	-	-	155	+ Diesel suits the S6 ethos - Poor low-end engine response	★★★★☆
Audi RS6 Avant (C8)	272 F	£92,790	8/3996	592/6000	590/2050	2075kg	290	3.6	-	-	155	+ Power, poise, build - Needs Dynamic Ride Control suspension to be at its best	★★★★½
Audi RS6 Avant (C7)	*203 F*	*'13-'18*	*8/3993*	*552/5700*	*516/1750*	*1935kg*	*290*	*3.9*	*3.6*	*8.2*	*155*	*+ Performance, foolproof powertrain, beefy looks - Feels a bit one-dimensional*	★★★★☆
Audi RS6 Avant Performance (C7)	*224 D*	*'15-'19*	*8/3993*	*597/6100*	*553/2500*	*1950kg*	*311*	*3.7*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ The extra power is no hassle for the chassis - But it is a stern test of your self-control*	★★★★☆
Audi RS6 Avant (C6)	*116 F*	*'08-'10*	*10/4991*	*572/6250*	*479/1500*	*1985kg*	*293*	*4.5*	*4.3*	*9.7*	*155*	*+ Was the world's most powerful estate - Power isn't everything*	★★★★☆
Audi RS6 Avant (C5)	*258 F*	*'02-'04*	*8/4172*	*444/5700*	*413/1950*	*1865kg*	*242*	*4.6*	*4.8*	*11.6*	*155*	*+ The ultimate estate car? - Numb steering*	★★★★☆
Audi RS7 Sportback	268 D	£98,590	8/3996	592/6000	590/2050	2065kg	291	3.6	-	-	155	+ Surprisingly agile and involving - Sometimes feels its weight	★★★★☆
Audi S8 Plus	*217 D*	*'16-'19*	*8/3993*	*597/6100*	*553/2500*	*1990kg*	*305*	*3.8*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ Fantastic drivetrain, quality and refinement - Dynamic Steering feels artificial*	★★★★☆
Audi SQ2	261 D	£37,395	4/1984	296/5300	295/2000	1510kg	199	4.7	-	-	155	+ Nothing - Everything	★★☆☆☆
Bentley Flying Spur V8	283 D	£153,900	8/3996	542/6000	568/2000	2330kg	236	4.1	-	-	198	+ The best limo for those who enjoy driving - 2330kg and 5.3 metres	★★★★½
Bentley Flying Spur	272 D	£168,300	12/5950	626/6000	664/1350	2437kg	261	3.8	-	-	207	+ A limo for those who enjoy driving - Needs to lose a few hundred kilos	★★★★☆
Bentley Flying Spur V8 S	*230 D*	*'16-'19*	*8/3993*	*521/6000*	*502/1700*	*2417kg*	*219*	*4.9*	*-*		*190*	*+ Old-school approach to comfort and luxury - Old-school tech*	★★★½☆
Bentley Flying Spur	*185 D*	*'13-'18*	*12/5998*	*616/6000*	*590/1600*	*2475kg*	*253*	*4.6*	*-*	*-*	*199*	*+ For those who still want their Flying Spur with a W12 - Car feels its weight; engine sounds dull*	★★★½☆
Bentley Bentayga V8	247 D	£136,900	8/3996	542/6000	568/1960	2388kg	231	4.5	-	-	180	+ The pick of the Bentayga range - A top-end Range Rover is still more polished	★★★½☆
Bentley Bentayga	217 D	£162,700	12/5950	600/5000	664/1350	2440kg	250	4.1	-	-	187	+ Sublime quality, ridiculous pace - Inert driving experience, SUV stigma	★★★½☆
Bentley Mulsanne Speed	*279 F*	*'14-'20*	*8/6752*	*530/4000*	*811/1750*	*2685kg*	*201*	*4.9*	*-*	*-*	*190*	*+ The last Bentley with the 'six-and-three-quarter' - We won't see its kind again*	★★★½☆
BMW 320d xDrive M Sport (G20)	262 D	£40,585	4/1995	187/4000	295/1750	1540kg	123	6.9	-	-	145	+ Brilliant mix of performance and economy - Lacks a degree of dynamic finesse	★★★★☆
BMW 330i M Sport (G20)	257 D	£40,385	4/1998	254/5000	295/1550	1470kg	176	5.8	-	-	155	+ Feels like a 3-series once more - Harsh and unsettled ride	★★★½☆
BMW M340i xDrive	270 D	£49,845	6/2998	369/5500	369/1850	1670kg	225	4.4	-	-	155	+ Very fast and refined - Limited driver appeal	★★★★☆
BMW M3 (F80)	*266 F*	*'14-'20*	*6/2979*	*425/5500*	*406/1850*	*1560kg*	*277*	*4.3*	*4.1*	*8.6*	*155*	*+ Looks, performance, practicality - Body control on rough roads; engine lacks character*	★★★★½
BMW M3 Competition Package (F80)	*237 F*	*'16-'19*	*6/2979*	*444/7000*	*406/1850*	*1560kg*	*289*	*4.2*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ The car the F80 M3 should have been from the start - Less refined at low speeds*	★★★★½
BMW M3 CS (F80)	*250 D*	*'18-'19*	*6/2979*	*454/6250*	*442/4000*	*1585kg*	*291*	*3.9*	*-*	*-*	*174*	*+ Improved chassis and mid-range urge - Cost over £20k more than an M3 Comp Pack*	★★★★½
BMW M3 (E90)	*123 F*	*'08-'11*	*8/3999*	*414/8300*	*295/3900*	*1605kg*	*262*	*4.9*	*4.9*	*10.7*	*165*	*+ Every bit as good as the E92 M3 coupe - No carbon roof*	★★★★★
BMW M3 CRT (E90)	*179 F*	*'11-'12*	*8/4361*	*444/8300*	*324/3750*	*1580kg*	*285*	*4.4*	*-*	*-*	*180*	*+ Saloon chassis + weight savings + GTS engine = best E90 M3 - Just 67 were made*	★★★★★
BMW M5 (F90)	*244 F*	*'17-'20*	*8/4395*	*592/5600*	*553/1800*	*1855kg*	*324*	*3.4*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ Fun in two- or four-wheel drive - Insufficient steering connection and engine character*	★★★★½
BMW M5 Competition (F90)	282 F	£102,325	8/4395	616/6000	553/1800	1865kg	336	3.3	-	-	155	+ Incredible performance, sharper handling - It's still a big old bus	★★★★½
BMW M5 (F10)	*208 F*	*'11-'16*	*8/4395*	*552/6000*	*501/1500*	*1870kg*	*300*	*4.4*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ Twin-turbocharging suits M5 well - Can feel heavy at times*	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E60)	*129 F*	*'04-'10*	*10/4999*	*500/7750*	*384/6100*	*1755kg*	*289*	*4.7*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ Close to being the ultimate supersaloon - SMG gearbox feels old-tech*	★★★★½
BMW M5 (E39)	*268 F*	*'98-'03*	*8/4941*	*394/6600*	*369/3800*	*1795kg*	*223*	*5.3*	*4.9*	*11.5*	*155*	*+ Magnificent V8-engined supersaloon - We'd be nitpicking*	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E34)	*110 F*	*'88-'95*	*6/3795*	*335/6900*	*295/4750*	*1725kg*	*197*	*5.8*	*4.9*	*13.6*	*155*	*+ The Godfather of supersaloons - The family can come too*	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E28)	*258 F*	*'84-'88*	*6/3453*	*282/6500*	*251/4500*	*1431kg*	*200*	*6.1*	*-*	*-*	*156*	*+ The original storming saloon - Understated looks*	★★★★★
BMW M6 Gran Coupé	*190 D*	*'13-'18*	*8/4395*	*552/6000*	*501/1500*	*1875kg*	*299*	*4.2*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ Enormous performance, stylish looks - Looks overpriced next to rivals, M5 included*	★★★★☆
BMW M760Li xDrive	233 D	£141,750	12/6592	602/5500	590/1550	2180kg	281	3.7	-	-	155	+ More capable than you'd think; strong engine - Too much of a limo to be genuinely exciting	★★★☆☆
BMW X5 M50d	191 D	£74,395	6/2993	376/4000	546/2000	2190kg	174	5.3	-	-	155	+ Straight-line pace - Driving experience identical to standard X5, despite the M badge	★★½☆☆
BMW X7 xDrive30d M Sport	262 D	£76,765	6/2993	261/4000	457/2000	2370kg	112	7.0	-	-	141	+ Spacious; quick enough - Its 'face' will make your kids cry	★★★☆☆
Ford Ranger Raptor	263 D	£49,449	4/1996	210/3750	369/1750	2510kg	85	10.5	-	-	106	+ A hoot off-road - More appropriate in Baja than Bristol	★★★★☆
Honda Accord Type R	*012 F*	*'98-'03*	*4/2157*	*209/7200*	*158/6700*	*1306kg*	*163*	*7.2*	*6.1*	*17.4*	*142*	*+ One of the finest front-drivers of all time - Convincing your friends of that*	★★★★½
Jaguar XE D180 AWD	227 D	£36,755	4/1999	178/4000	317/1750	1685kg	107	8.4	-	-	132	+ Talented chassis gets more traction - Shame the engine isn't as polished	★★★½☆
Jaguar XE P300 AWD	262 D	£41,005	4/1997	296/5500	295/1500	1690kg	178	5.7	-	-	155	+ Fluent handling; 4WD grip and security - Auto 'box saps sportiness	★★★★☆
Jaguar XE SV Project 8	269 F	£149,995	8/5000	592/6500	516/3500	1745kg	345	3.7	3.5	7.8	200	+ Beautifully controlled and amazingly agile - They're only making 15 in Touring spec	★★★★½
Jaguar XF Sportbrake R-Sport 300PS AWD	260 D	£49,090	4/1997	296/5500	295/1500	1763kg	171	6.0	-	-	155	+ Precise, involving dynamics, unexpected performance - It's only got four cylinders	★★★★☆
Jaguar XF S Diesel 300PS RWD	219 D	£53,485	6/2993	296/4000	516/2000	1796kg	167	6.4	-	-	155	+ Great chassis, good looks, and it's got six cylinders - It's a diesel	★★★★☆
Jaguar XFR	*181 D*	*'09-'15*	*8/5000*	*503/6000*	*461/2500*	*1800kg*	*284*	*4.7*	*4.8*	*10.2*	*155*	*+ Brilliant blend of pace and refinement - Doesn't sound as special as it is*	★★★★☆
Jaguar XFR-S	*208 F*	*'13-'15*	*8/5000*	*542/6500*	*501/2500*	*1800kg*	*306*	*4.6*	*-*	*-*	*186*	*+ XF turned up to 12 - Tyres aren't cheap*	★★★★☆
Jaguar XJR	*191 D*	*'14-'17*	*8/5000*	*542/6500*	*502/2500*	*1875kg*	*294*	*4.6*	*-*	*-*	*174*	*+ Hot-rod vibe, fine cabin - Opinion-dividing looks*	★★★★☆
Jaguar XJR575	*251 T*	*'17-'18*	*8/5000*	*567/6250*	*516/3500*	*1875kg*	*307*	*4.4*	*-*	*-*	*186*	*+ Big performance, genuine sporting spirit - Unfashionable package; depreciation*	★★★★☆
Jaguar E-Pace P300	243 D	£45,575	4/1998	296/5500	295/1200	1894kg	159	6.4	-	-	155	+ Decent grip and balance - Dreary engine; heavier than a V6 F-Pace	★★½☆☆
Jaguar F-Pace S	*222 D*	*'16-'18*	*6/2995*	*375/6500*	*332/4500*	*1884kg*	*202*	*5.5*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ A match for Porsche's SUVs - Supercharged V6 needs to be worked hard*	★★★★☆
Jaguar F-Pace SVR	262 D	£75,375	8/5000	542/6000	501/2500	1995kg	276	4.3	-	-	176	+ A great candidate for SVO's attentions - It's still an SUV	★★★★☆
Jaguar I-Pace HSE	251 D	£74,395	294kW	394	513	2208kg	181	4.8	-	-	124	+ Impressive chassis and point-to-point pace - Range anxiety and hefty kerb weight	★★★★½

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE (OR YEARS ON SALE)	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (CLAIMED)	0-60MPH (TESTED)	0-100MPH (TESTED)	MAX MPH	evo RATING	
Kia Stinger GT-Line 2.0	*247 D*	*'18-'20*	*4/1998*	*244/6200*	*260/1400*	*1642kg*	*151*	*5.8*	*-*	*-*	*149*	*+ Out-Jaguars Jaguar's XE and XF - Except in the looks department*	★★★★☆
Kia Stinger GT-Line 2.2 CRDi	*251 T*	*'18-'20*	*4/1999*	*197/3800*	*324/1750*	*1735kg*	*115*	*7.3*	*-*	*-*	*143*	*+ Smooth daily driver with a decent interior - Frustrating auto 'box, heavy kerb weight*	★★★½☆
Kia Stinger GT S	242 D	£40,495	6/3342	365/6000	376/1300	1780kg	168	4.7	-	-	168	+ Playful handling, deep-chested performance - Engine lacks soul, steering lacks feel	★★★½☆
Land Rover Defender 110 (P400)	273 F	£79,655	6/2996	394/5500	406/2000	2388kg	168	6.4	-	-	129	+ A great off-roader - If off-roading is your thing	★★★★☆
Lamborghini Urus	249 F	£159,925	8/3996	641/6000	627/2250	2200kg	296	3.6	-	-	190	+ A freakish manipulator of physics - But also rather one-dimensional	★★★★☆
Lexus IS F	*151 F*	*'07-'12*	*8/4969*	*417/6600*	*372/5200*	*1714kg*	*247*	*5.2*	*4.7*	*10.9*	*173*	*+ Shockingly good Lexus - The M3's available as a four-door too*	★★★★½
Lotus Carlton	*258 F*	*'90-'93*	*6/3615*	*377/5200*	*419/4200*	*1658kg*	*231*	*5.4*	*4.8*	*10.6*	*177*	*+ The Millennium Falcon of saloon cars - Every drive is a work-out*	★★★★★
Maserati Ghibli	186 D	£57,015	6/2979	345/5000	406/1750	1810kg	194	5.5	-	-	166	+ Bursting with character; good value compared to Quattroporte - It's still a big car	★★★★☆
Maserati Quattroporte S	*184 D*	*'13-'18*	*6/2979*	*404/5500*	*406/1750*	*1860kg*	*221*	*5.1*	*-*	*-*	*177*	*+ Tempting alternative to V8 - Feel-free steering, ride lacks decorum*	★★★★☆
Maserati Quattroporte GTS	*226 D*	*'16-'18*	*8/3798*	*523/6800*	*479/2250*	*1900kg*	*280*	*4.7*	*-*	*-*	*193*	*+ Still pretty - Off the pace dynamically*	★★★½☆
Maserati Quattroporte S	*137 F*	*'08-'12*	*8/4691*	*425/7000*	*361/4750*	*1990kg*	*216*	*5.4*	*5.1*	*12.1*	*174*	*+ A QP with the bhp it deserves - Grille is a bit Hannibal Lecter*	★★★★½
Maserati Quattroporte Sport GTS	*141 F*	*'08-'12*	*8/4691*	*433/7000*	*361/4750*	*1990kg*	*221*	*5.1*	*-*	*-*	*177*	*+ The most stylish of supersaloons - Slightly wooden brakes, unforgiving ride*	★★★★☆
Maserati Levante Diesel	*221 D*	*'16-'20*	*6/2897*	*271/4000*	*442/2000*	*2205kg*	*125*	*6.9*	*-*	*-*	*143*	*+ Impressive blend of ride and handling - Performance is mild for a Maserati*	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG A35 Saloon	271 F	£37,755	4/1991	302/5800	295/3000	1495kg	205	4.8	-	-	155	+ Fun when you want it to be, secure when the heavens open - Others are even more fun	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG CLA45 S Coupé	273 D	£51,010	4/1991	415/6750	369/5000	1600kg	264	4.0	-	-	167	+ Speed, ability and involvement - CLA35 offers a similar experience for less outlay	★★★★½
Mercedes-AMG CLA45 S Shooting Brake	278 D	£52,010	4/1991	415/6750	369/5000	1630kg	259	4.0	-	-	155	+ Same stellar performance and involvement as the A45 - See above	★★★★½
Mercedes-AMG C43 Estate	228 D	£49,995	6/2996	362/5500	383/2000	1660kg	222	4.7	-	-	155	+ Incredibly fast and composed - Difficult to engage with	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG C63 Saloon (W205)	*209 D*	*'15-'20*	*8/3982*	*469/5500*	*479/1750*	*1640kg*	*291*	*4.1*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ Fast and feelsome - Lacks the ultimate finesse and response of the C63 S*	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG C63 Estate (S205)	*216 F*	*'15-20*	*8/3982*	*469/5500*	*479/1750*	*1710kg*	*279*	*4.2*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ Much more fun than it looks - Gearbox dim-witted at low speeds*	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG C63 S Saloon (W205)	258 T	£74,258	8/3982	503/5500	516/1750	1655kg	309	4.0	-	-	155	+ Tremendous twin-turbo V8 power - Not quite as focused as an M division car	★★★★½
Mercedes-AMG C63 S Estate (S205)	282 F	£75,458	8/3982	503/5500	516/2000	1670kg	306	4.1	-	-	180	+ One of the finest all-round compact performance cars - Baffling array of driver settings	★★★★½
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG (W204)	*151 F*	*'08-'14*	*8/6208*	*451/6800*	*442/5000*	*1655kg*	*277*	*4.5*	*4.4*	*9.7*	*155*	*+ Monstrous pace and extremely engaging - Same-era M3 is just a little better...*	★★★★½
Mercedes-Benz C55 AMG (W203)	*088 F*	*'04-'08*	*8/5439*	*367/5250*	*376/4000*	*1635kg*	*228*	*5.2*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ Furiously fast, commendably discreet - Overshadowed by M3 and RS4*	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz 190E 2.5-16	*185 F*	*'89-'92*	*4/2498*	*204/6750*	*177/5500*	*1300kg*	*159*	*7.5*	*-*	*-*	*146*	*+ M-B's M3 alternative - Not as nimble as the Beemer*	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz E400d 4Matic Estate (S213)	260 D	£55,140	6/2925	335/3600	516/1200	1920kg	177	5.1	-	-	155	+ A properly quick diesel estate - Steady image, size	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG E63 (W213)	*242 D*	*'18-'20*	*8/3982*	*563/5750*	*553/2250*	*1875kg*	*305*	*3.5*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ More rounded than the E63 S - Could be a little too discreet for some tastes*	★★★★½
Mercedes-AMG E63 S (W213)	258 F	£96,525	8/3982	604/5750	627/2500	1880kg	326	3.4	3.4	7.4	155	+ Fast, refined, effective and fun - At nearly two tons, it's not 911 nimble	★★★★½
Mercedes-AMG E63 S Estate (S213)	272 F	£98,525	8/3982	604/5750	627/2500	1995kg	308	3.5	-	-	155	+ As above - It's even heavier than the saloon, and five metres long	★★★★½
Mercedes-AMG GT63 4-Door Coupé	*274 F*	*'19-'20*	*8/3982*	*577/5500*	*590/2500*	*2025kg*	*290*	*3.4*	*-*	*-*	*193*	*+ Does the same as the S for less - Takes up plenty of road*	★★★★½
Mercedes-AMG GT63 S 4-Door Coupé	269 F	£138,815	8/3982	630/5500	664/2500	2045kg	313	3.2	-	-	196	+ Agile and immensely quick - Lacks the coupe GT's drama	★★★★½
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W212)	*187 D*	*'13-'16*	*8/5461*	*549/5500*	*531/1750*	*1770kg*	*315*	*4.2*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ Power, response and accuracy in spades - A little lacking in originality*	★★★★½
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG S (W212)	*208 F*	*'13-'16*	*8/5461*	*577/5500*	*590/1750*	*1795kg*	*327*	*4.1*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ Effortless power; intuitive and approachable - Sluggish auto 'box*	★★★★½
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W212)	*165 F*	*'11-'13*	*8/5461*	*518/5250*	*516/1750*	*1765kg*	*298*	*4.4*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ Turbo engine didn't dilute the E63 experience - Sometimes struggles for traction...*	★★★★½
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W212)	*134 D*	*'09-'11*	*8/6208*	*518/6800*	*465/5200*	*1765kg*	*298*	*4.5*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ Indulgent chassis, brilliant engine - Steering still vague*	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W211)	*096 D*	*'06-'09*	*8/6208*	*507/6800*	*465/5200*	*1765kg*	*292*	*4.5*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ Brilliant engine, indulgent chassis - Vague steering, speed limits*	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG	*052 F*	*'03-'06*	*8/5439*	*469/6100*	*516/2650*	*1760kg*	*271*	*4.7*	*4.8*	*10.2*	*155*	*+ M5-humbling grunt, cosseting ride - Speed limits*	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG S63 L	246 D	£129,495	8/3982	604/5500	664/2750	1940kg	316	4.3	-	-	155	+ Performance doesn't come at the expense of luxury - But pure driving thrills do	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG CLS53	247 D	£76,600	6/2999	451/6100	567/1800	1905kg	302	4.5	-	-	155	+ Impressive chassis and hybrid powertrain - Four-wheel drive only, and heavy, too	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG S	*199 D*	*'14-'17*	*8/5461*	*577/5500*	*590/1750*	*1795kg*	*327*	*4.1*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ Quick and characterful - Dated gearbox, no four-wheel-drive option in the UK*	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG GLC63 S Coupé	253 D	£85,495	8/3982	503/5500	516/1750	1945kg	263	3.8	-	-	174	+ Unquestionable performance - Lacks adjustability and engagement	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG GLE63 S	218 D	£108,638	8/5461	577/5500	560/1750	2270kg	258	4.2	-	-	155	+ Stonking pace, extreme refinement - Feels remote	★★★½☆
Mercedes-AMG GLE63 S Coupé	213 D	£118,105	8/5461	577/5500	560/1750	2275kg	258	4.2	-	-	155	+ Subtler than an X6 M - More force than finesse	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG G63	250 D	£146,490	8/3982	577/6000	627/2500	2485kg	236	4.5	-	-	137	+ Vastly improved chassis, fabulous engine - Dynamic ability still limited	★★★½☆
Mercedes-Benz G63 AMG	*172 D*	*'12-'18*	*8/5461*	*537/5500*	*560/2000*	*2475kg*	*220*	*5.4*	*-*	*-*	*130*	*+ Epic soundtrack - Ancient chassis*	★★★☆☆
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-300 SST	*118 F*	*'08-'14*	*4/1998*	*290/6500*	*300/3500*	*1590kg*	*185*	*4.5*	*5.2*	*13.9*	*155*	*+ First Evo with a twin-clutch transmission - Not as exciting as its predecessors*	★★★½☆
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-330 SST	*134 F*	*'08-'14*	*4/1998*	*324/6500*	*322/3500*	*1590kg*	*207*	*4.4*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ Great engine and gearbox combo - It still lives in the shadow of the Evo IX*	★★★★☆
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-360	*122 D*	*'08-'14*	*4/1998*	*354/6500*	*363/3500*	*1560kg*	*231*	*4.0*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ Ridiculously rapid Evo - A five-speed gearbox?!*	★★★★☆
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-400	*181 F*	*'09-'10*	*4/1998*	*403/6500*	*387/3500*	*1560kg*	*262*	*3.8*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ Most powerful factory Evo ever... - ...about X grand too much when new*	★★★½☆
Mitsubishi Evo IX FQ-340	*088 F*	*'05-'08*	*4/1997*	*345/6800*	*321/4600*	*1400kg*	*250*	*4.2*	*4.3*	*10.9*	*157*	*+ Gives Porsche drivers nightmares - Points. Lots of*	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo IX MR FQ-360	*181 F*	*'05-'08*	*4/1997*	*366/6887*	*363/3200*	*1400kg*	*266*	*4.0*	*-*	*-*	*157*	*+ Well-executed engine upgrades - Prison food*	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VIII	*055 F*	*'03-'05*	*4/1997*	*276/6500*	*289/3500*	*1410kg*	*199*	*5.1*	*-*	*-*	*157*	*+ The Evo grows up - Brakes need beefing up*	★★★★½
Mitsubishi Evo VIII MR FQ-300	*057 F*	*'03-'05*	*4/1997*	*305/6800*	*289/3500*	*1400kg*	*221*	*4.9*	*-*	*-*	*157*	*+ Extra pace, extra attitude - Extra money*	★★★★½
Mitsubishi Evo VII	*031 F*	*'02-'03*	*4/1997*	*276/6500*	*282/3500*	*1360kg*	*206*	*5.1*	*5.0*	*13.0*	*140*	*+ Terrific all-rounder - You tell us*	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VI Tommi Mäkinen Edition	*271 F*	*'00-'01*	*4/1997*	*276/6500*	*275/2750*	*1365kg*	*205*	*4.6*	*-*	*-*	*150*	*+ Our favourite Evo - Subtle it is not*	★★★★★
Polestar 2	280 D	£46,900	300kW	402	487	2048kg	199	4.7	-	-	127	+ A credible Tesla alternative - Avoid the super-hard-riding Performance upgrade	★★★☆☆
Porsche Taycan (Performance Battery Plus)	283 D	£74,739	350kW	375	-	2130kg	179	5.4	-	-	143	+ Half the price of a Taycan Turbo S - Less is less	★★★½☆
Porsche Taycan Turbo S	267 D	£138,830	460kW	616	-	2295kg	332	2.8	-	-	161	+ Straight-line oomph will leave you in awe - Inadequate EV infrastructure	★★★★☆
Porsche Panamera 4S Diesel	*232 D*	*'17-'20*	*8/3956*	*416/3500*	*627/1000*	*2050kg*	*206*	*4.3*	*-*	*-*	*177*	*+ Sharp chassis, impressive tech - Performance doesn't meet expectations*	★★★½☆
Porsche Panamera GTS	279 D	£107,180	8/3996	473/6500	457/1800	2040kg	236	3.9	-	-	181	+ The most engaging Panamera - Still a heavy old thing	★★★★☆
Porsche Panamera Turbo	237 F	£115,100	8/3996	542/5750	568/1960	1995kg	276	3.6	3.4	8.3	190	+ Searing pace, with body control that's a real step up - Still very heavy	★★★★☆
Porsche Panamera Turbo Sport Turismo	239 D	£118,828	8/3996	542/5750	568/1960	2035kg	271	3.8	-	-	188	+ Looks great; drives better than its weight would suggest - Not exactly a load-lugger	★★★★☆
Porsche Panamera Turbo S E-Hybrid Sport T.	272 D	£142,280	8/3996	671	627	2325kg	293	3.4	-	-	192	+ Shows some Stuttgart magic in the corners - It weighs 2.3 tons!	★★★★☆
Porsche Panamera GTS	*208 F*	*'11-'16*	*8/4806*	*434/6700*	*383/3500*	*1925kg*	*229*	*4.4*	*-*	*-*	*178*	*+ Vivacious V8, entertaining balance - Can feel light on performance next to turbocharged rivals*	★★★★½
Porsche Panamera Turbo	*137 F*	*'10-'16*	*8/4806*	*493/6000*	*516/2250*	*1970kg*	*254*	*4.2*	*3.6*	*8.9*	*188*	*+ Fast, refined and dynamically sound - It still leaves us cold*	★★★½☆
Porsche Panamera Turbo S	*159 D*	*'11-'13*	*8/4806*	*542/6000*	*590/2250*	*1995kg*	*276*	*3.8*	*-*	*-*	*190*	*+ Pace, excellent ergonomics - Steering feel, ride*	★★★½☆
Porsche Macan	259 D	£47,060	4/1984	242/5000	273/1600	1795kg	137	6.7	-	-	139	+ Lighter engine makes for sharper handling - The Golf R Estate	★★★★☆
Porsche Macan S	257 T	£49,420	6/2997	349/5400	354/1360	1865kg	190	5.3	-	-	157	+ Great for an SUV - Every positive still needs to be suffixed with 'for an SUV'	★★★★☆
Porsche Macan GTS	*244 F*	*'16-'18*	*6/2997*	*355/6000*	*369/1650*	*1895kg*	*190*	*5.2*	*-*	*-*	*159*	*+ Handles like an SUV shouldn't - Still looks like an SUV*	★★★★½
Porsche Cayenne S (Mk3)	253 T	£72,080	6/2894	434/5700	406/1800	2020kg	218	5.2	-	-	164	+ Impressive surface-coated brake tech - We'd rather have it on a sports car	★★★½☆
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (Mk3)	243 D	£104,490	8/3996	542/5750	568/1960	2175kg	254	4.1	-	-	177	+ Huge performance, surprising agility - It's still a two-ton-plus SUV	★★★★☆
Porsche Cayenne Turbo Coupé	263 D	£108,070	8/3996	542/5750	568/2000	2200kg	250	3.9	-	-	177	+ As good to drive as the non-coupe Cayenne - Swoopier roof adds thousands to the price	★★★★☆
Porsche Cayenne GTS (Mk2, V6)	*211 D*	*'15-'17*	*6/3604*	*434/6000*	*442/1600*	*2110kg*	*209*	*5.2*	*-*	*-*	*163*	*+ The driver's Cayenne... - ...but why would a driver want an SUV?*	★★★★½
Porsche Cayenne GTS (Mk2, V8)	*173 D*	*'12-'15*	*8/4806*	*414/6500*	*380/3500*	*2085kg*	*202*	*5.7*	*-*	*-*	*162*	*+ Dynamically the best SUV of its era - At two tons, it's still no sports car*	★★★★½
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (Mk2)	*212 D*	*'10-'17*	*8/4806*	*513/6000*	*533/2250*	*2185kg*	*239*	*4.5*	*-*	*-*	*173*	*+ Remarkable performance, handling, completeness - Vague steering, dated engine*	★★★★☆
Porsche Cayenne Turbo S (Mk2)	*184 D*	*'10-'17*	*8/4806*	*562/6000*	*590/2500*	*2235kg*	*255*	*4.1*	*-*	*-*	*176*	*+ More power and torque than a Zonda S 7.3 - In an SUV*	★★★★☆
Range Rover Evoque P250	261 D	£38,050	6/2995	246/5500	269/1300	1818kg	137	7.0	-	-	143	+ As good on road as it is off - Engines still a long way short of being competitive	★★★★☆
Range Rover Velar P380	*239 D*	*'17-'20*	*6/2995*	*375/6500*	*332/3500*	*1884kg*	*202*	*5.7*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ A more advanced, opulent alternative to an F-Pace - Its weight ultimately limits its agility*	★★★★☆
Range Rover Velar SVAutobiography Dynamic	*264 D*	*'19-'20*	*8/4999*	*542/6000*	*501/2500*	*2085kg*	*264*	*4.5*	*-*	*-*	*170*	*+ Quick, luxurious - An F-Pace SVR is cheaper*	★★★½☆
Range Rover Sport SVR	260 D	£101,850	8/5000	567/6000	516/3500	2302kg	250	4.5	-	-	176	+ Loud and proud - More blunderbuss than Exocet	★★★½☆
Range Rover SVAutobiography Dynamic	250 T	£144,265	8/4367	557/5000	516/3500	2497kg	227	5.4	-	-	155	+ Monsters big journeys - Is a monster on the weighing scales	★★★★☆
Rolls-Royce Ghost	280 D	£249,600	12/6749	563/5000	627/1600	2490kg	230	4.8	-	-	155	+ Unrivalled luxury and refinement - Still better to be driven in than to drive	★★★★☆
Rolls-Royce Phantom	*054 F*	*'03-'17*	*12/6749*	*453/5350*	*531/3500*	*2560kg*	*180*	*5.7*	*-*	*-*	*149*	*+ Rolls reinvented for the 21st century - The roads are barely big enough*	★★★★☆
SEAT Leon Cupra R ST Abt	*271 F*	*'19-'20*	*4/1984*	*345/5300*	*324/2000*	*c1482kg*	*c237*	*4.7*	*-*	*-*	*163*	*+ Raw nature and rocketship pace - Not at the cutting edge of its class*	★★★★☆
Skoda Kodiaq vRS	258 T	£45,740	4/1968	236/4000	369/1750	1838kg	130	7.0	-	-	137	+ Looks good, performs well, practical - Doesn't quite justify the vRS badge	★★★☆☆
Subaru WRX STI S209	*272 F*	*'20*	*4/2457*	*341/6400*	*330/3600*	*1580kg*	*219*	*4.9*	*-*	*-*	*162*	*+ That old Impreza magic is alive and well - Only 209 were built, and only for America*	★★★★½
Subaru WRX STI	*253 F*	*'14-'18*	*4/2457*	*296/6000*	*300/4000*	*1534kg*	*196*	*5.2*	*-*	*-*	*158*	*+ Still has its moments - Something of an anachronism*	★★★★☆
Subaru Impreza STI ('Hawkeye')	*090 F*	*'05-'07*	*4/2457*	*276/6000*	*289/4000*	*1495kg*	*188*	*5.3*	*-*	*-*	*158*	*+ Stunning to drive - Not so stunning to look at*	★★★★☆
Subaru Impreza WRX STI PPP ('Blobeye')	*073 F*	*'03-'05*	*4/1994*	*300/6000*	*299/4000*	*1470kg*	*207*	*5.4*	*5.2*	*12.9*	*148*	*+ A Subaru with real edge - Bit too edgy in the wet*	★★★★½
Subaru Impreza Turbo ('Classic')	*011 F*	*'93-'00*	*4/1994*	*215/5600*	*214/4000*	*1235kg*	*177*	*5.8*	*5.4*	*14.6*	*144*	*+ Destined for classic status - Thirsty*	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza RB5	*187 F*	*'99*	*4/1994*	*237/6000*	*258/3500*	*1235kg*	*195*	*6.1*	*5.0*	*14.1*	*144*	*+ Perfect blend of poise and power - Limited numbers*	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza P1	*259 F*	*'00-'01*	*4/1994*	*276/6500*	*260/4000*	*1283kg*	*219*	*4.7*	*4.9*	*13.3*	*150*	*+ One of our favourite Imprezas - Doesn't come cheap*	★★★★★

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Subaru Impreza 22B STI	*282 F*	*'98-'99*	*4/2212*	*276/6000*	*268/3200*	*1270kg*	*220*	*5.3*	*5.0*	*13.1*	*150*	*+ The ultimate Impreza - Prices reflect this*	★★★★★
Tesla Model 3 Performance	263 F	£56,490	330kW	444	471	1847kg	244	3.5	-	-	145	+ Quicker round a track than an M3 - Lap times aren't everything	★★★★☆
Tesla Model S P100D	*235 F*	*'17-'19*	*444kW*	*595*	*713*	*2108kg*	*287*	*2.4*	*2.9*	*7.7*	*155*	*+ Killer RWYB performance - Elon Musk*	★★★★☆
Vauxhall Insignia Grand Sport GSi BiTurbo D	*246 D*	*'18-'20*	*4/1956*	*207/4000*	*354/1500*	*1772kg*	*145*	*7.3*	-	-	*145*	*+ Fine ride, strong real-world pace - Doesn't feel different enough from non-GSi Insignias*	★★½☆☆
Vauxhall Insignia VXR SuperSport	*189 D*	*'13-'17*	*6/2792*	*321/5250*	*321/5250*	*1825kg*	*179*	*5.6*	-	-	*170*	*+ A 170mph Vauxhall - Should be a more engaging steer*	★★★½☆
Vauxhall VXR8 GTS	*215 D*	*'15-'17*	*8/6162*	*576/6150*	*546/3850*	*1834kg*	*319*	*4.2*	-	-	*155*	*+ Monster engine; engaging driving experience - Woeful interior*	★★★★☆
Vauxhall VXR8 GTS-R	*272 F*	*'17*	*8/6162*	*587/6150*	*546/3850*	*1880kg*	*317*	*4.2*	-	-	*155*	*+ Blistering performance; bursting with character - The end of an era*	★★★★☆

ROADSTERS / CONVERTIBLES



OUR CHOICE

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



BEST OF THE REST

The **Porsche 718 Spyder** (left) is essentially a drop-top Cayman GT4, while the **718 Boxster GTS 4.0** is essentially a cut-price 718 Spyder. The **Aston Martin Vantage Roadster** bests the 911 Cabriolet for character, while the **Caterham Seven** remains an exemplar of sports car purity whatever the model.

Abarth 124 Spider	*256 F*	*'16-'19*	*4/1368*	*168/5500*	*184/2500*	*1060kg*	*161*	*6.8*	-	-	*143*	*+ A little car with a big soul - Vague and lifeless front end*	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo 4C Spider	*223 F*	*'15-'19*	*4/1742*	*237/6000*	*258/2200*	*940kg**	*256*	*4.5*	-	-	*160*	*+ Stunningly beautiful; better steering than coupe version - Still has the coupe's other foibles*	★★★½☆
Alfa Romeo 8C Spider	*161 F*	*'09-'11*	*8/4691*	*450/7000*	*354/4750*	*1675kg*	*273*	*4.4*	-	-	*181*	*+ Beauty meets beast. They hit it off - Boot is useless for touring*	★★★★½
Ariel Atom 4	273 F	£39,975	4/1996	320/6500	310/3000	595kg	546	2.8	-	-	162	+ Sensory overload - Turbo engine lacks the old supercharged unit's frantic soundtrack	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3 245	*248 F*	*'18-'12*	*4/1998*	*245/8600*	*177/7200*	*520kg*	*479*	*3.1*	-	-	*145*	*+ Even better than its predecessors - Can still be a bit draughty*	★★★★½
Ariel Atom 3.5 Supercharged	*180 D*	*'13-'18*	*4/1998*	*310/8400*	*169/7200*	*550kg*	*573*	*2.7*	-	-	*155*	*+ As mad as ever - Rain*	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3.5R	*255 F*	*'14-'18*	*4/1998*	*350/8400*	*243/6100*	*550kg*	*647*	*2.6*	-	-	*155*	*+ Remarkable balance, poise and pace - Pricey*	★★★★★
Ariel Nomad	248 F	£33,000	4/2354	235/7200	221/4300	670kg*	365	3.4	-	-	134	+ Off-road capabilities make for a super plaything - No Bluetooth	★★★★★
Ariel Nomad R	*278 F*	*£77,400*	*4/1998*	*335/7200*	*243/4300*	*c700kg*	*c486*	*2.9*	-	-	*134*	*+ Intriguing and effective mash-up of track car and off-roader - They're only making five*	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vantage Roadster	279 D	£126,950	8/3982	503/6000	505/2000	1628kg*	314	3.8	-	-	190	+ Builds on the already excellent coupe's attributes - Interior design lags behind exterior	★★★★½
Aston Martin V8 Vantage Roadster (4.7)	*130 F*	*'09-'16*	*8/4735*	*420/7000*	*346/5750*	*1710kg*	*250*	*4.8*	-	-	*180*	*+ Sportiest, coolest drop-top Aston in years - Feels dated compared to contemporaries*	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V8 Vantage S Roadster	*161 F*	*'11-'17*	*8/4735*	*430/7300*	*361/5000*	*1690kg*	*258*	*4.8*	-	-	*189*	*+ Sounds amazing, looks even better - Still not the best drop-top in its class*	★★★★½
Aston Martin V12 Vantage Roadster	*175 F*	*'12-'14*	*12/5935*	*510/6500*	*420/5750*	*1760kg*	*294*	*4.5*	-	-	*190*	*+ As good as the coupe, with amplified V12 rumble - Just a smidgen shakier*	★★★★½
Aston Martin V12 Vantage S Roadster	*212 F*	*'14-'17*	*12/5935*	*565/6750*	*457/5750*	*1745kg*	*329*	*4.1*	-	-	*201*	*+ A brilliant two-seat roadster... - ...let down by a frustrating automated manual gearbox*	★★★★½
Aston Martin DB11 Volante	258 T	£159,900	8/3982	503/6000	498/2000	1795kg	285	4.1	-	-	187	+ Impressively wide range of dynamic personalities - Cabin could be better at this price	★★★★☆
Audi TT Roadster 45 TFSI quattro (Mk3)	259 D	£37,005	4/1984	242/5000	273/1600	1455kg	169	5.5	-	-	155	+ Competent and stylish - Chunky weight dulls the performance	★★★☆☆
Audi TTS Roadster (Mk3)	207 D	£46,360	4/1984	302/5400	295/2000	1495kg	205	4.8	-	-	155	+ Highly capable - Most will want more than 'capable'	★★★½☆
Audi TT RS Roadster (Mk3)	250 T	£55,655	5/2480	394/5850	354/1700	1530kg	262	3.9	-	-	155	+ Terrific engine... - ...is the best thing about it	★★★½☆
Audi R8 V8 Spyder	*186 D*	*'11-'15*	*8/4163*	*424/7900*	*317/6000*	*1660kg*	*259*	*4.8*	-	-	*187*	*+ More delicate and subtle than the V10 - The V10 sounds even better*	★★★★☆
BAC Mono	189 F	£165,125	4/2261	305/7700	206/6000	580kg*	534	2.8	-	-	170	+ The most single-minded track car available - That means no passengers...	★★★★½
BMW Z4 sDrive20i	261 D	£36,990	4/1988	194/4500	236/1450	1405kg	140	6.6	-	-	149	+ Keen engine, communicative chassis - Could handle more power	★★★½☆
BMW Z4 M40i	256 D	£49,050	6/2998	335/5000	369/1600	1535kg	222	4.6	-	-	155	+ Inherent agility and ability - Undemanding and unengaging	★★★½☆
BMW Z4 sDrive 35i M Sport (Mk2)	*186 D*	*'13-'17*	*6/2979*	*302/5800*	*295/1300*	*1505kg*	*204*	*5.2*	-	-	*155*	*+ Looks, hard-top versatility, drivetrain - Clumsy chassis is upset by ragged surfaces*	★★★½☆
BMW Z4 M Roadster	*091 F*	*'06-'09*	*6/3246*	*338/7900*	*269/4900*	*1410kg*	*244*	*5.0*	-	-	*155*	*+ Exhilarating and characterful; that engine - Stiff suspension*	★★★★½
BMW M Roadster	*002 F*	*'98-'02*	*6/3246*	*325/7400*	*258/4900*	*1375kg*	*240*	*5.1*	-	-	*155*	*+ M3 motor; hunky looks - M Coupé drives better*	★★★½☆
BMW i8 Roadster	258 F	£124,735	3/1499	369/5800	420/3700	1595kg	235	4.6	-	-	155	+ Unique and engaging - Still more GT than sports car	★★★★½
BMW Z8	*026 F*	*'00-'03*	*8/4941*	*400/6600*	*369/3800*	*1585kg*	*256*	*4.7*	*4.8*	*11.1*	*155*	*+ M5-powered super-sportster - M5's more fun to drive*	★★★☆☆
Caterham Seven 270	219 F	£29,885	4/1596	135/6800	122/4100	540kg*	254	5.0	-	-	122	+ Feisty engine, sweetly balanced, manic and exciting - The temptation of more power	★★★★★
Caterham Super Seven 1600	273 D	£33,495	4/1596	135/6800	122/4100	565kg*	243	5.0	-	-	122	+ As enjoyable as other Sevens, but more accessible - Vintage looks come at a price	★★★★½
Caterham Seven 310	273 F	£31,385	4/1596	152/7000	124/5600	540kg*	286	4.8	-	-	127	+ Intense and exciting - Sticky tyres limit the amount of throttle adjustability	★★★★½
Caterham Seven 360	209 F	£33,385	4/1999	180/7300	143/6100	560kg*	327	4.8	-	-	130	+ Extra power is welcome - You'll need the six-speed gearbox to make the most of it	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 420	223 F	£36,385	4/1999	210/7600	150/6300	560kg*	381	3.8	4.0	10.3	136	+ It's the one we built for ourselves - Trickier on the limit than lesser-powered Sevens	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 620S	220 D	£48,890	4/1999	310/7700	219/7350	610kg*	516	3.4	-	-	155	+ Ludicrous, near-620R pace, with added habitability - Well, 'habitable' for a Seven...	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 620R	255 F	£53,885	4/1999	310/7700	219/7350	572kg*	551	2.8	-	-	155	+ Banzai on track, yet still relevant on the road - £50k for a Seven?	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 160	*239 F*	*'13-'17*	*3/660*	*80/7000*	*79/3400*	*490kg**	*166*	*6.9*	-	-	*100*	*+ The fabulous Seven formula at its most basic - Gets pricey with options*	★★★★½
Caterham Seven SuperSprint	*247 D*	*'17-'18*	*3/660*	*95/7000*	*82/5600*	*490kg**	*197*	*6.9*	-	-	*100*	*+ Accessible limits with proper pace - You need to enjoy being exposed to the elements*	★★★★½
Caterham Seven Roadsport 125	*105 F*	*'07-'14*	*4/1596*	*125/6100*	*120/5350*	*539kg**	*235*	*5.9*	-	-	*112*	*+ Great debut for Ford-engined model - Bigger drivers need SV model*	★★★★½
Caterham Seven Supersport	*165 F*	*'11-'14*	*4/1596*	*140/6900*	*120/5790*	*520kg**	*273*	*4.9*	-	-	*120*	*+ One of the best Caterhams is also one of the cheapest of its era - It's quite minimalist*	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Supersport R	*180 D*	*'13-'14*	*4/1999*	*180/7300*	*143/6100*	*535kg**	*342*	*4.8*	-	-	*130*	*+ One of the best road-and-track Sevens - Impractical, noisy, uncomfortable*	★★★★½
Caterham Seven Superlight R300	*150 F*	*'09-'12*	*4/1999*	*175/7000*	*139/6000*	*515kg**	*345*	*4.5*	-	-	*140*	*+ Possibly all the Caterham you need - They're not cheap*	★★★★★
Caterham Seven CSR 260	*094 F*	*'06-'17*	*4/2261*	*256/7500*	*200/6200*	*565kg**	*460*	*3.1*	*3.8*	-	*155*	*+ Brilliant for high days, holidays and trackdays - Wet Wednesdays*	★★★★½
Caterham Seven Superlight R500	*123 F*	*'08-'14*	*4/1999*	*263/8500*	*177/7200*	*506kg**	*528*	*2.9*	-	-	*150*	*+ Better power-to-weight ratio than a Veyron - Until you add the driver*	★★★★★
Caterham Seven R500	*200 F*	*'99-'06*	*4/1796*	*230/8600*	*155/7200*	*460kg**	*510*	*3.4*	*3.6*	*8.8*	*146*	*+ The K-series Seven at its very best - No cup holders*	★★★★★
Dallara Stradale	267 F	c£162,000	4/2300	394/6200	369/3000	855kg*	468	3.3	-	-	174	+ Startling on-road performance - Can leave you feeling detached on track	★★★★½
Elemental Rp1 (2.3)	255 F	£139,800	4/2261	320	354	620kg*	557	2.6	-	-	165	+ Sensational, explosive, captivating, exploitable - Price will test your level of commitment	★★★★½
Ferrari Portofino	247 F	£166,180	8/3855	592/7500	560/3000	1664kg	366	3.5	-	-	199+	+ Better than the California - Not better than a DB11 Volante	★★★★☆
Honda S2000	*243 F*	*'99-'09*	*4/1997*	*237/8300*	*153/7500*	*1260kg*	*191*	*6.2*	-	-	*150*	*+ An alternative and rev-happy roadster - A Boxster's better*	★★★★☆
Jaguar F-type Convertible P450	271 D	£75,470	8/5000	444/6000	428/2500	1660kg	272	4.6	-	-	177	+ Strong and flexible supercharged V8 - Steering and chassis feel mismatched	★★★½☆
Jaguar F-type Project 7	*212 F*	*'15*	*8/5000*	*567/6500*	*501/2500*	*1585kg*	*363*	*3.9*	-	-	*186*	*+ Noise, performance, adjustability - Expensive, and not the GT3 rival we would have liked*	★★★★½
KTM X-Bow GT	183 D	£95,880	4/1984	281/6400	310/3200	875kg	326	4.1	-	-	144	+ Extraordinary ability, now in a more road-friendly package - Price	★★★★½
KTM X-Bow R	165 F	£87,480	4/1984	296/6300	295/3300	816kg	369	3.9	-	-	144	+ Sharper handling, more power - Pity it's not even lighter, and cheaper	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise Club Racer (S3)	*183 F*	*'11-'15*	*4/1598*	*134/6800*	*118/4400*	*852kg*	*160*	*6.5*	-	-	*127*	*+ Even lighter, even more focused than a standard 1.6 Elise - Are you prepared to go this basic?*	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Sport 220 (S3)	244 F	£41,695	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	904kg	244	4.6	-	-	145	+ Perfect power-to-weight ratio - A bit short on creature comforts	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Sprint 220 (S3)	*254 F*	*'18-'19*	*4/1798*	*217/6800*	*184/4600*	*878kg*	*251*	*4.5*	-	-	*145*	*+ Makes the most of its lightness - Heavyweight price*	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S Club Racer (S3)	*189 D*	*'13-'15*	*4/1798*	*217/6800*	*184/4600*	*905kg*	*244*	*4.6*	-	-	*145*	*+ Purist approach intensifies ability - Lightest, option-free spec requires commitment*	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Cup 250 (S3)	279 F	£49,595	4/1798	245/7200	184/3500	931kg	267	3.9	-	-	154	+ As effective, enjoyable and essential as ever - Prioritises grip over adjustability	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Cup 260 (S3)	*243 F*	*'18-'19*	*4/1798*	*250/7200*	*195/5500*	*902kg*	*282*	*4.2*	-	-	*151*	*+ Quickest Elise yet - Just 30 were built*	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Sport 135 (S2)	*040 D*	*'03*	*4/1796*	*135/6200*	*129/4850*	*726kg*	*189*	*5.4*	-	-	*129*	*+ One of our fave S2 Elises - Brakes need more bite and pedal feel*	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S (S2)	*104 F*	*'06-'10*	*4/1794*	*134/6200*	*127/4200*	*860kg*	*158*	*6.1*	*6.3*	*18.7*	*127*	*+ Brilliant entry-level Elise - Precious little*	★★★★★
Lotus Elise 111S (S2)	*049 F*	*'02-'04*	*4/1796*	*156/7000*	*129/4650*	*860kg*	*197*	*5.1*	-	-	*131*	*+ A genuinely useable Elise - Air-con? In an Elise?*	★★★★★
Lotus Elise SC (S2)	*131 F*	*'08-'11*	*4/1794*	*218/8000*	*156/5000*	*870kg*	*254*	*4.6*	*4.5*	*11.4*	*145*	*+ All the usual Elise magic - Supercharged engine lacks sparkle*	★★★★½
Lotus Elise (S1)	*235 F*	*'96-'01*	*4/1796*	*118/5500*	*122/3000*	*731kg*	*164*	*5.9*	*6.1*	*18.5*	*126*	*+ A modern classic - A tad impractical?*	★★★★★
Lotus 3-Eleven	*220 F*	*'16-'17*	*6/3456*	*410/7000*	*302/3000*	*925kg**	*450*	*3.4*	-	-	*174*	*+ A fantastically exciting Lotus - If not exactly a groundbreaking one*	★★★★★
Lotus 3-Eleven 430	*248 F*	*'17-'19*	*6/3456*	*430/7000*	*325/4500*	*920kg**	*475*	*3.2*	-	-	*180*	*+ A fitting send-off for a brilliant Lotus - Just 20 were made*	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven	*126 F*	*'07-'11*	*4/1796*	*189/7800*	*133/6800*	*720kg*	*267*	*4.5*	-	-	*140*	*+ Not far off the supercharged 2-Eleven's pace - You want the supercharged one, don't you?*	★★★★½
Lotus 2-Eleven Supercharged	*123 F*	*'07-'11*	*4/1796*	*252/8000*	*179/7000*	*745kg*	*344*	*4.0*	-	-	*150*	*+ Impressive on road and track - Not hardcore enough for some*	★★★★★
Lotus 340R	*126 F*	*'00*	*4/1796*	*190/7800*	*146/5000*	*701kg*	*275*	*4.5*	*4.5*	*12.5*	*126*	*+ Hardcore road-racer... - ...that looks like a dune buggy from Mars*	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio MC	185 D	£112,400	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1973kg	234	4.9	-	-	179	+ Most powerful GranCabrio yet - The GranCabrio is starting to show its age	★★★½☆
Mazda MX-5 1.5 (Mk4)	230 F	£23,795	4/1496	129/7000	111/4800	975kg	134	8.3	-	-	127	+ Lightest MX-5 since the Mk1 - Lacks intensity	★★★½☆



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Mazda MX-5 2.0 (Mk4, 184PS)	268 F	£28,395	4/1998	181/7000	151/4000	1030kg	178	6.5	-	-	136	+ At last, a more powerful factory MX-5 - It's still no fireball	★★★★☆
Mazda MX-5 RF 2.0 (Mk4, 184PS)	256 F	£30,295	4/1998	181/7000	151/4000	1073kg	171	6.8	-	-	137	+ As above, but with a retracting hard-top - Which adds weight	★★★★☆
Mazda MX-5 2.0 (Mk4)	*228 F*	*'15-'18*	*4/1998*	*158/6000*	*147/4600*	*1000kg*	*161*	*7.3*	-	-	*133*	*+ Brilliant basic recipe - The desire for stiffer suspension and more power*	★★★½☆
Mazda MX-5 2.0i Sport Tech (Mk3.5)	*212 F*	*'09-'15*	*4/1999*	*158/7000*	*139/5000*	*1098kg*	*146*	*7.6*	-	-	*138*	*+ Handles brilliantly again; folding hard-top also available - Less-than-macho image*	★★★★½
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk3)	*091 F*	*'05-'09*	*4/1798*	*124/6500*	*123/4500*	*1080kg*	*108*	*9.3*	-	-	*122*	*+ Gearchange, interior - Lost some of the charm of old MX-5s; dubious handling*	★★★½☆
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk2)	*017 F*	*'98-'05*	*4/1839*	*146/7000*	*124/5000*	*1065kg*	*140*	*8.5*	-	-	*123*	*+ Affordable ragtops don't get much better - Cheap cabin*	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.6 (Mk1)	*268 F*	*'89-'97*	*4/1597*	*115/6500*	*100/5500*	*971kg*	*120*	*8.8*	-	-	*114*	*+ The original and still (pretty much) the best - Less than rigid*	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG SLC43	222 D	£47,600	6/2996	362/5500	383/2000	1520kg	242	4.7	-	-	155	+ Twin-turbo V6 well-suited to baby roadster - But also highlights the chassis' age	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG SL63	228 D	£116,430	8/5461	577/5500	664/2250	1770kg	331	4.1	-	-	155	+ Effortless performance - Needs more involvement to go with the pace	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG GT Roadster	239 F	£111,360	8/3982	469/6000	465/1700	1595kg	299	4.0	-	-	188	+ An AMG GT with added fresh air - Ride and handling go slightly to pieces on UK roads	★★★½☆
Mercedes-AMG GT C Roadster	235 D	£140,660	8/3982	549/5750	501/1900	1660kg	336	3.7	-	-	196	+ As above but with more shove - Road noise can get wearing on long journeys	★★★½☆
Mercedes-AMG GT R Roadster	271 D	£178,675	8/3982	577/6250	516/2100	1635kg	359	3.6	-	-	197	+ Spectacular engine, engaging dynamics - Structural compromise of Roadster body	★★★★½
Morgan 3 Wheeler	198 F	£31,140	2/1976	82/5250	103/3250	525kg*	159	6.0	-	-	115	+ Quirky, characterful, brilliant - Can become a two-wheeler if you push too hard	★★★★☆
Morgan Plus Four	279 F	£62,995	4/1998	255/5500	258/1000	1013kg*	256	5.2	-	-	149	+ Compelling blend of old and new - Busy, almost old-fashioned ride on bumpier roads	★★★★☆
Morgan Plus Six	269 F	£77,995	6/2998	335/6500	369	1075kg*	317	4.2	-	-	166	+ Rapid, exciting, and a bit of a hooligan - Interior could feel more special	★★★★☆
Morgan Plus 8 50th Anniversary Edition	*253 D*	*'18-'19*	*8/4799*	*367/6300*	*370/3600*	*1100kg**	*339*	*4.5*	-	-	*155*	*+ V8 performance and sound, driver involvement - Getting flies in your teeth*	★★★★☆
Morgan Aero 8	*105 F*	*'01-'10*	*8/4799*	*362/6300*	*361/3400*	*1180kg**	*312*	*4.5*	-	-	*170*	*+ Glorious sound, view over bonnet, dynamics - Awkward-looking rear*	★★★★☆
Morgan Aero GT	*255 F*	*'18*	*8/4799*	*367/6300*	*370/3400*	*1180kg**	*316*	*4.5*	-	-	*170*	*+ The ultimate Aero - The last with the naturally aspirated BMW V8*	★★★★☆
Porsche 718 Boxster	224 D	£45,935	4/1988	296/6500	280/1950	1335kg	225	5.1	-	-	170	+ Chassis as good as ever - Four-cylinder's tuneless din would be hard to live with	★★★½☆
Porsche 718 Boxster S	222 F	£54,891	4/2497	345/6500	310/1900	1355kg	259	4.6	4.4	9.8	177	+ Still sensationally capable - Turbo four-cylinder engine lacks appeal of the old flat-six	★★★★½
Porsche 718 Boxster GTS	*249 T*	*'18-'19*	*4/2497*	*360/6500*	*310/1900*	*1375kg*	*266*	*4.6*	-	-	*180*	*+ The best four-pot Boxster spec - Doesn't come cheap*	★★★★½
Porsche 718 Boxster GTS 4.0	271 D	£66,340	6/3995	394/7000	310/5000	1405kg	285	4.5	-	-	182	+ It's got the Cayman GT4 six-cylinder, minus 200rpm - Gearshift not as crisp as the GT4's	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Spyder	272 F	£73,405	6/3995	414/7600	310/5000	1420kg	296	4.4	-	-	187	+ Essentially a drop-top Cayman GT4 - Including its long gearing	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster (981)	*238 F*	*'12-'16*	*6/2706*	*261/6700*	*206/4500*	*1310kg*	*202*	*5.8*	-	-	*164*	*+ Goes and looks better than the 987 Boxster - Shame about the electric steering*	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster S (981)	*186 F*	*'12-'16*	*6/3436*	*311/6700*	*265/4500*	*1320kg*	*239*	*5.1*	-	-	*173*	*+ Boxster steps out of 911's shadow - But gets 911's less appealing electric steering*	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster GTS (981)	*203 D*	*'14-'16*	*6/3436*	*325/6700*	*273/4500*	*1345kg*	*246*	*5.0*	-	-	*174*	*+ Superb dynamics, fantastic engine, great looks - Sport suspension is very firm*	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster Spyder (981)	*223 F*	*'15-'16*	*6/3800*	*370/6700*	*310/4750*	*1315kg*	*286*	*4.5*	-	-	*180*	*+ An even faster, even more rewarding Boxster - Feedback trails the Cayman GT4's*	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster S (987)	*161 F*	*'05-'12*	*6/3436*	*306/6400*	*266/5500*	*1355kg*	*229*	*5.3*	-	-	*170*	*+ Second-gen Boxster's as brilliant as ever - It's a typically Porsche redesign*	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster Spyder (987)	*277 F*	*'10-'12*	*6/3436*	*316/7200*	*273/4750*	*1275kg*	*252*	*4.9*	-	-	*166*	*+ Lighter, more driver-centric Boxster - Collapsed-brolly roof not the most practical*	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster S (986)	*070 F*	*'99-'04*	*6/3179*	*256/6200*	*229/4600*	*1320kg*	*200*	*5.7*	-	-	*164*	*+ Added power over the non-S Boxster is seductive - Very little*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera 4S Cabriolet (992)	262 D	£109,725	6/2981	444/6500	391/2300	1600kg	282	4.4	-	-	188	+ Performance, handling, useability - It's no lightweight; body not as stiff as the coupe's	★★★★☆
Porsche 911 Targa 4S (992)	277 D	£109,725	6/2981	444/6500	391/2300	1640kg	275	4.4	-	-	189	+ Distinctive; driving experience is barely touched - You can't get a rear-drive Targa	★★★★½
Radical Rapture	274 F	£108,000	4/2261	360/6000	360/3500	765kg*	478	3.0	-	-	165	+ Unfiltered and utterly addictive - It's more at home on the track than the road	★★★★½
Renault Sport Spider	*231 F*	*'96-'99*	*4/1998*	*148/6000*	*136/4500*	*930kg*	*157*	*6.5*	-	-	*131*	*+ Rarity; unassisted steering - Heavier than you'd hope; disappointing engine*	★★★☆☆
Rolls-Royce Dawn	222 D	£264,000	12/6592	563/5250	575/1500	2560kg	223	4.9	-	-	155	+ Effortless driving experience - Driver involvement not a priority	★★★★½
Toyota MR2 (Mk3)	*258 F*	*'00-'06*	*4/1794*	*138/6400*	*125/4400*	*975kg*	*141*	*8.0*	*7.2*	*21.2*	*131*	*+ Tight lines, taut dynamics - Minimal luggage space*	★★★★½
TVR Tamora	*070 F*	*'01-'07*	*6/3605*	*350/7200*	*290/5500*	*1060kg*	*335*	*4.2*	-	-	*175*	*+ Well-sorted soft-top TVR - Awkward styling*	★★★★☆
TVR Chimaera 5.0	*258 F*	*'93-'03*	*8/4997*	*320/5500*	*320/3750*	*1060kg*	*307*	*4.4*	-	-	*167*	*+ Gorgeous noise, tarmac-rippling grunt - Details*	★★★★☆
TVR Griffith 4.3	*068 F*	*'92-'93*	*8/4280*	*280/5500*	*305/4000*	*1040kg*	*274*	*4.4*	*4.8*	*11.2*	*155*	*+ The car that made TVR. Cult status - Mere details*	★★★★½
TVR Griffith 500	*009 F*	*'93-'01*	*8/4997*	*320/5500*	*320/4000*	*1060kg*	*307*	*4.1*	-	-	*167*	*+ Gruff diamond - A few rough edges*	★★★★½
Vauxhall VX220	*023 F*	*'00-'04*	*4/2198*	*145/5800*	*150/4000*	*875kg*	*168*	*5.9*	-	-	*136*	*+ Absurdly good Vauxhall - The badge?*	★★★★½
Vauxhall VX220 Turbo	*066 F*	*'03-'05*	*4/1998*	*197/5500*	*184/1950*	*930kg*	*215*	*4.9*	-	-	*151*	*+ Nothing comes close for the money - Marginal everyday usability*	★★★★★
Vuhl 05	220 F	£59,995	4/2000	285/5600	310/3000	725kg	405	3.7	-	-	152	+ Impressive pace and quality - You can get a more thrills from a Caterham at half the price	★★★★☆

COUPES / GTs



OUR CHOICE

Porsche 718 Cayman GT4. With a naturally aspirated flat-six, a manual gearbox, extraordinary damping and fulsome feedback, the second GT4 is even better than the original and laughs in the face of turbocharged engines, automatic transmissions and monster power outputs.



BEST OF THE REST

The **BMW M2 CS** (left) was our 2020 Car of the Year winner and runs the 2019 champ – the Cayman GT4 – incredibly close. The **Alpine A110** gives the regular **Porsche 718 Cayman** a true rival to worry about, the **Aston Martin Vantage** is a genuine 911 beater, and the **Lotus Exige** continues to go from strength to strength in every form.

Alfa Romeo 4C	*209 F*	*'13-'19*	*4/1742*	*237/6000*	*258/2200*	*895kg**	*269*	*4.5*	-	-	*160*	*+ Carbonfibre tub, mini-supercar looks - Hot hatch engine, clunky gearbox*	★★★½☆
Alfa Romeo 8C Competizione	*120 F*	*'07-'09*	*8/4691*	*450/7000*	*354/4750*	*1585kg*	*288*	*4.2*	-	-	*181*	*+ Looks, exclusivity, noise, balance - Cost more now than they did new*	★★★★½
Alpine A110	270 F	£48,140	4/1798	249/6000	236/2000	1103kg	229	4.5	4.6	10.8	155	+ Fast, fun and genuinely different - If only it had a manual gearbox	★★★★½
Alpine A110S	268 D	£57,140	4/1798	288/6400	236/2000	1114kg	263	4.4	-	-	161	+ Firmer and faster - But not necessarily better	★★★★½
Alpine A610 Turbo	*273 F*	*'91-'95*	*6/2975*	*247/5750*	*258/2900*	*1420kg*	*177*	*5.7*	-	-	*166*	*+ Better than the comtemporary 911 Carrera - Rare then, rarer now*	★★★★½
Aston Martin Vantage	280 F	£124,400	8/3982	503/6000	505/2000	1530kg*	334	3.6	4.5	9.1	195	+ Performance that's a huge leap forward - Chassis struggles when really pushed	★★★★½
Aston Martin Vantage AMR	268 F	£149,995	8/3982	503/6000	461/2000	1499kg*	341	4.0	-	-	195	+ Manual gearbox, more-focused chassis - For a hefty premium	★★★★½
Aston Martin V8 Vantage (4.3)	*251 F*	*'05-'07*	*8/4280*	*380/7000*	*302/5000*	*1630kg*	*237*	*5.0*	*5.2*	*12.0*	*175*	*+ Gorgeous; awesome soundtrack - Can't quite match a 911 dynamically*	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V8 Vantage (4.7)	*169 D*	*'08-'16*	*8/4735*	*420/7000*	*346/5750*	*1630kg*	*262*	*4.8*	-	-	*180*	*+ Still feels special - But also a little dated*	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V8 Vantage S	*168 F*	*'11-'17*	*8/4735*	*430/7300*	*361/5000*	*1610kg*	*271*	*4.8*	-	-	*190*	*+ Keener engine, V12 Vantage looks - Slightly sluggish auto only*	★★★★½
Aston Martin V8 Vantage N430	*218 F*	*'14-'16*	*8/4735*	*430/7300*	*361/5000*	*1610kg*	*271*	*4.8*	-	-	*189*	*+ Malleable, involving - Never feels rampantly quick*	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vantage GT8	*274 F*	*'16-'17*	*8/4735*	*440/7300*	*361/5000*	*1530kg*	*292*	*4.4*	-	-	*190*	*+ Enough drama to fill a Netflix mini-series - Just 150 made*	★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage	*264 F*	*'09-'13*	*12/5935*	*510/6500*	*420/5750*	*1680kg*	*308*	*4.2*	*4.4*	*9.7*	*190*	*+ The car we hoped the V8 Vantage would be - Erm, a tad thirsty?*	★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage S	*238 F*	*'13-'17*	*12/5935*	*563/6650*	*457/5500*	*1665kg*	*344*	*3.9*	-	-	*205*	*+ Amongst the best Astons ever made - Old-school automated 'box (so get the manual)*	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vantage GT12	*214 F*	*'15-'16*	*12/5935*	*592/7000*	*461/5500*	*1565kg*	*384*	*3.5*	-	-	*185*	*+ The GT3-style Vantage we waited so long for - Only 100 made*	★★★★★
Aston Martin DB11 V8	253 T	£144,900	8/3982	503/6000	498/2000	1685kg	303	4.0	-	-	187	+ Potent and characterful engine; sharper chassis than V12 - Do we still need the V12?	★★★★☆
Aston Martin DB11	*235 F*	*'17-'18*	*12/5204*	*600/6500*	*516/1500*	*1800kg*	*339*	*3.9*	*4.0*	*8.1*	*200*	*+ A great GT - Suffers in outright handling terms as a result*	★★★½☆
Aston Martin DB11 AMR	269 F	£174,995	12/5204	630/6500	516/1500	1795kg	357	3.7	-	-	208	+ A more potent, better controlled V12 DB11 - Still at its best when it isn't trying too hard	★★★★☆
Aston Martin DB9 GT	*214 D*	*'15-'17*	*12/5935*	*540/6750*	*457/5500*	*1785kg*	*307*	*4.5*	-	-	*183*	*+ More power; still has bags of character - Needs an eight-speed auto 'box*	★★★★½
Aston Martin DB9	*178 F*	*'04-'16*	*12/5935*	*510/6500*	*457/5500*	*1785kg*	*290*	*4.6*	-	-	*183*	*+ A great start to Gaydon-era Astons - Automatic gearbox could be quicker*	★★★★½
Aston Martin DBS	*142 F*	*'07-'12*	*12/5935*	*510/6500*	*420/5750*	*1695kg*	*306*	*4.3*	-	-	*191*	*+ Stupendous engine, gearbox, brakes - Pricey; can bite the unwary*	★★★★½
Audi TTS (Mk3)	261 D	£44,610	4/1984	302/5400	295/2000	1405kg	218	4.5	-	-	155	+ Exceptional grip and traction - Excitement fades after the first few corners	★★★½☆
Audi TT RS (Mk3)	249 F	£53,905	5/2480	394/5850	354/1700	1450kg	276	3.7	3.5	8.7	155	+ Soundtrack; tremendous point-to-point pace - A bit one-dimensional in the long run	★★★★☆
Audi TTS (Mk2)	*193 F*	*'08-'14*	*4/1984*	*268/6000*	*258/2500*	*1395kg*	*195*	*5.4*	-	-	*155*	*+ A usefully quicker TT, with a great drivetrain - Still steers like a computer game*	★★★★☆
Audi TT RS (Mk2)	*158 F*	*'09-'14*	*5/2480*	*335/5400*	*332/1600*	*1450kg*	*235*	*4.7*	*4.4*	*11.1*	*155*	*+ Sublime five-cylinder turbo engine - Rest of package can't quite match it*	★★★★☆
Audi TT RS Plus (Mk2)	*185 D*	*'12-'14*	*5/2480*	*355/5500*	*343/1650*	*1450kg*	*249*	*4.3*	-	-	*174*	*+ Stonkingly fast cross-country - Shockingly expensive for a TT*	★★★★☆
Audi S5	*252 F*	*'17-'19*	*6/2995*	*349/5400*	*369/1370*	*1615kg*	*220*	*4.7*	-	-	*155*	*+ Chassis rewards commitment... - ...but doesn't offer a challenge. Plain engine, too*	★★★½☆
Audi RS5	240 F	£68,985	6/2894	444/5700	442/1900	1655kg	273	3.9	3.6	9.0	155	+ Lighter, quicker; makes green paint look good - Lacks the character of the old V8	★★★★☆
Audi RS5	*206 F*	*'10-'16*	*8/4163*	*444/8250*	*317/4000*	*1715kg*	*263*	*4.5*	*4.3*	-	*155*	*+ Brilliant engine and improved chassis - Lack of suspension travel; inconsistent steering*	★★★★☆
Audi R8 V8	*201 F*	*'07-'15*	*8/4163*	*424/7900*	*317/4500*	*1560kg*	*276*	*4.6*	*4.1*	*9.9*	*188*	*+ A true 911 alternative - Exclusivity comes at a price*	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT V8	280 F	£151,800	8/3993	542/6000	568/2000	2165kg	254	4.0	-	-	198	+ Pace, quality, polish - Some rivals offer greater outright dynamic prowess	★★★★½
Bentley Continental GT	255 F	£156,700	12/5950	626/5000	664/1350	2244kg	283	3.7	-	-	207	+ Astonishing agility for such a big, heavy car - Thirst	★★★★½



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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE (OR YEARS ON SALE)	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (CLAIMED)	0-60MPH (TESTED)	0-100MPH (TESTED)	MAX MPH	evo RATING	
Bentley Continental GT V8	*178 F*	*'12-'17*	*8/3993*	*500/6000*	*487/1700*	*2220kg*	*229*	*4.8*	*-*	*-*	*188*	*+ A proper driver's Bentley with decent economy - Makes the W12 seem pointless*	★★★★½
Bentley Continental GT V8 S	*204 F*	*'13-'17*	*8/3993*	*521/6000*	*502/1700*	*2220kg*	*238*	*4.5*	*-*	*-*	*192*	*+ An even better driver's Bentley - Vast weight makes its presence felt in harder driving*	★★★★½
Bentley Continental GT	*152 D*	*'03-'17*	*12/5998*	*567/6000*	*516/1700*	*2245kg*	*257*	*4.5*	*-*	*-*	*198*	*+ Near 200mph in utter comfort - Weight; W12's thirst*	★★★★☆
Bentley Continental Supersports	*234 D*	*'17*	*12/5998*	*700/6000*	*750/2050*	*2205kg*	*323*	*3.5*	*-*	*-*	*209*	*+ Massive performance, surprisingly agile - Styling and soundtrack far from descreet*	★★★★½
Bentley Continental GT3-R	*203 D*	*'14-'17*	*8/3993*	*572/6000*	*518/1700*	*2120kg*	*274*	*3.8*	*-*	*-*	*170*	*+ The best-handling Continental of its generation - Expensive; it still weighs 2120kg*	★★★★½
BMW 1-series M Coupé	*277 F*	*'11-'12*	*6/2979*	*335/5900*	*369/1500*	*1495kg*	*228*	*4.9*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ Character, turbo pace and great looks - Came and went too quick*	★★★★★
BMW M240i Coupé	229 D	£35,865	6/2998	335/6800	369/1520	1470kg	232	4.8	-	-	155	+ Adjustable and plenty of fun - Lacks finesse and precision	★★★★☆
BMW M235i Coupé	*225 F*	*'14-'16*	*6/2979*	*321/5800*	*332/1300*	*1455kg*	*224*	*5.0*	*5.2*	*12.7*	*155*	*+ Powertrain, chassis, looks, size - Limited-slip diff is an option, not standard*	★★★★☆
BMW M2	*243 F*	*'16-'18*	*6/2979*	*365/6500*	*369/1450*	*1495kg*	*248*	*4.5*	*4.9*	*10.8*	*155*	*+ More progressive chassis balance than the M4 - Feels unsettled on rough tarmac*	★★★★☆
BMW M2 Competition	265 F	£49,805	6/2979	404/5250	406/2350	1550kg	265	4.4	-	-	155	+ A more capable and involving M2 - More expensive and heavier, too	★★★★½
BMW M2 CS	281 F	£75,355	6/2979	444/6250	406/2350	1550kg	291	4.2	-	-	155	+ evo Car of the Year 2020 - Such quality comes at a price	★★★★★
BMW M440i xDrive	282 D	£54,645	6/2998	369/5500	369/1900	1740kg	215	4.5	-	-	155	+ Punchy drivetrain with a chassis to match - That grille	★★★★½
BMW M4 (F82)	*218 F*	*'14-'19*	*6/2979*	*425/5500*	*406/1850*	*1570kg*	*275*	*4.3*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ Ferociously fast - A handful on less-than-perfect or less-than-bone-dry roads*	★★★★½
BMW M4 Competition (F82)	*262 F*	*'16-'20*	*6/2979*	*444/7000*	*406/1850*	*1570kg*	*287*	*4.3*	*4.4*	*9.2*	*155*	*+ The car the M4 always should have been - Shame everyone specs DCT*	★★★★½
BMW M4 CS (F82)	*254 F*	*'17-'19*	*6/2979*	*454/6250*	*442/4000*	*1580kg*	*292*	*3.9*	*-*	*-*	*174*	*+ A further-honed M4 - It ain't cheap*	★★★★½
BMW M4 GTS (F82)	*237 F*	*'16*	*6/2979*	*493/6250*	*442/4000*	*1510kg*	*332*	*3.8*	*3.7*	*8.0*	*190*	*+ Vast improvement on lesser M4s - So it should be, given its price*	★★★★★
BMW M3 (E92)	*266 F*	*'07-'13*	*8/3999*	*414/8300*	*295/3900*	*1580kg*	*266*	*4.8*	*4.3*	*10.3*	*155*	*+ Fends off all of its rivals... - ...except the cheaper 1-series M Coupé*	★★★★★
BMW M3 GTS (E92)	*262 F*	*'10-'11*	*8/4361*	*444/8300*	*324/3750*	*1530kg*	*295*	*4.4*	*-*	*-*	*190*	*+ One of the most focused M-cars ever - Good luck trying to find one*	★★★★★
BMW M3 (E46)	*266 F*	*'00-'07*	*6/3246*	*338/7900*	*269/5000*	*1495kg*	*230*	*5.2*	*5.1*	*12.3*	*155*	*+ One of the best BMWs ever. Runner-up in eCoty 2001 - Slightly artificial steering feel*	★★★★★
BMW M3 CS (E46)	*219 F*	*'05-'07*	*6/3246*	*338/7900*	*269/5000*	*1495kg*	*230*	*5.2*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ CSL dynamics without CSL price - Looks like the standard car*	★★★★★
BMW M3 CSL (E46)	*279 F*	*'03-'04*	*6/3246*	*355/7900*	*273/4900*	*1385kg*	*260*	*4.9*	*5.3*	*12.0*	*155*	*+ Still superb - Changes from the automated single-clutch 'box are... a... bit... sluggish*	★★★★★
BMW M3 Evolution (E36)	*148 F*	*'96-'98*	*6/3201*	*317/7400*	*258/3250*	*1515kg*	*215*	*5.5*	*5.4*	*12.8*	*158*	*+ Performance, image - Never quite as good as the E30*	★★★★☆
BMW M3 (E30)	*279 F*	*'89-'90*	*4/2302*	*212/6750*	*170/4600*	*1165kg*	*185*	*6.7*	*6.7*	*17.8*	*147*	*+ The best M-car ever - Prices have got out of hand*	★★★★★
BMW Z4 M Coupé	*097 F*	*'06-'09*	*6/3246*	*338/7900*	*269/4900*	*1420kg*	*242*	*5.0*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ A real driver's car - You've got to be prepared to get stuck in*	★★★★½
BMW M Coupé	*263 F*	*'98-'03*	*6/3246*	*321/7400*	*261/4900*	*1375kg*	*237*	*5.3*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ Quick and characterful - Lacks finesse*	★★★★½
BMW M840d xDrive	260 D	£76,270	6/2993	316/4400	501/1750	1830kg	175	4.9	-	-	155	+ Refinement, old-school GT credentials - Too big to enjoy its performance often	★★★★☆
BMW M850i xDrive	256 F	£99,525	8/4395	523/5500	553/1500	1890kg	281	3.7	-	-	155	+ An impressive multi-role GT - But not a great entertainer	★★★★☆
BMW M8 Competition	272 D	£123,435	8/4395	616/6000	553/1800	1885kg	332	3.2	-	-	155	+ A fast and fine grand tourer - Lacks that true M-car fizz	★★★★☆
BMW M6 (F13)	*218 F*	*'12-'18*	*8/4395*	*552/6000*	*501/1500*	*1850kg*	*303*	*4.2*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ Mighty ability, pace, technology - You'll want the Competition Package upgrade, too*	★★★★½
BMW M6 (E63)	*106 F*	*'05-'10*	*10/4999*	*500/7750*	*384/6100*	*1635kg*	*311*	*4.2*	*4.8*	*10.0*	*155*	*+ Awesome GT, awesome sports car - SMG gearbox now off the pace*	★★★★½
BMW i8	210 F	£112,735	3/1499	369/5800	420/3700	1535kg	244	4.4	-	-	155	+ Brilliantly executed concept; sci-fi looks - Safe dynamic set-up	★★★★½
Chevrolet Camaro Z/28	*220 F*	*'14-'16*	*8/7008*	*505/6100*	*481/4800*	*1732kg*	*296*	*4.2*	*-*	*-*	*175*	*+ Scalpel-sharp engine, great chassis (really) - Feels very stiff on UK roads*	★★★★½
Chevrolet Corvette Stingray (C7)	*197 F*	*'13-'19*	*8/6162*	*460/6000*	*465/4600*	*1496kg*	*312*	*4.2*	*4.4*	*9.4*	*180*	*+ Performance, chassis balance, supple ride - Body control could be better*	★★★★☆
Chevrolet Corvette Z06 (C7)	*227 F*	*'15-'19*	*8/6162*	*650/6000*	*650/3600*	*1598kg*	*413*	*3.7*	*-*	*-*	*196*	*+ Mind-boggling raw speed; surprisingly sophisticated - Edgy when really pushed*	★★★★½
Chevrolet Corvette Stingray Z51 (C8)	270 F	$64,995	8/6162	495/6450	470/5150	1530kg*	329	3.2	-	-	194	+ Stunning achievement for the first mid-engined Vette - There's untapped potential	★★★★☆
Ford Mustang 2.3 EcoBoost	222 D	£38,035	4/2261	287/5600	332/3000	1655kg	176	6.4	-	-	145	+ Ninety per cent as good as the V8 - Missing ten per cent is what makes the Mustang	★★★½☆
Ford Mustang 5.0 V8 GT	266 F	£41,430	8/4951	444/7000	393/4600	1743kg	259	4.9	-	-	155	+ 2018MY version gets improved dynamics - Still some way off Europe's finest	★★★★☆
Ford Mustang Bullitt	255 D	£46,830	8/5038	453/7000	390/4600	1776kg	259	4.9	-	-	163	+ Proper V8 sound and performance - Still feels big and heavy near the limit	★★★★☆
Ford Mustang Shelby GT500	271 D	$72,900	8/5163	760/7300	625/5000	c1916kg	c403	3.3	-	-	180	+ A 760bhp Stang with a chassis to (almost) match its engine - Only on sale in the States	★★★★☆
Honda Integra Type R (DC2)	*259 F*	*'96-'00*	*4/1797*	*187/8000*	*131/7300*	*1101kg*	*173*	*6.7*	*6.2*	*17.9*	*145*	*+ Arguably the greatest front-drive car ever - Too raw for some*	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type P300	271 D	£54,060	4/1997	296/5500	295/1500	1520kg	198	5.7	-	-	155	+ Genuinely exploitable performance - Turbocharged four-cylinder lacks top-end verve	★★★★☆
Jaguar F-type P450	-	£69,990	8/5000	444/6000	428/2500	1660kg	272	4.6	-	-	177	+ Strong and flexible supercharged V8 - Steering and chassis feel mismatched	★★★½☆
Jaguar F-type R (RWD)	*218 F*	*'14-'17*	*8/5000*	*542/6500*	*501/3500*	*1650kg*	*334*	*4.2*	*-*	*-*	*186*	*+ eCoty runner-up in 2014 - Bumpy and boistrous*	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type R (P575 AWD)	271 D	£97,280	8/5000	567/6500	516/3500	1743kg	331	3.5	-	-	186	+ More composed than before; now with SVR power - Eye-watering price	★★★★☆
Jaguar F-type SVR	*224 D*	*'16-'19*	*8/5000*	*567/6500*	*516/3500*	*1705kg*	*338*	*3.7*	*-*	*-*	*200*	*+ A marginally better drive than the AWD R - Not by enough to justify the extra outlay*	★★★★½
Jaguar XKR-S	*168 F*	*'11-'14*	*8/5000*	*542/6000*	*502/2500*	*1753kg*	*314*	*4.4*	*-*	*-*	*186*	*+ Faster and wilder than regular XKR - The F-type R*	★★★★½
Jannarelly Design-1	279 F	£85,969	6/3498	321	274	950kg	343	3.9	-	-	135	+ Genuinely good sports car that stands out from the crowd - May be too quirky for some	★★★★½
Lexus RC F	226 F	£61,310	8/4969	470/6400	391/4800	1765kg	271	4.3	-	-	168	+ Great looks, noise, sense of occasion - Too heavy to be truly exciting	★★★★☆
Lexus LC 500h	241 D	£76,595	6/3456	354	-	1985kg	181	5.0	-	-	168	+ Excellent comfort and refinement; fine chassis - Hybrid system hurts the fun factor	★★★½☆
Lexus LC 500	231 D	£76,595	8/4969	470/7100	398/4800	1935kg	247	4.7	-	-	168	+ Glorious engine, rewarding chassis for a GT car - Numb steering, messy ergonomics	★★★★☆
Lister Thunder	247 D	£139,950	8/5000	666/6000	720/5940	1650kg	410	3.2	-	-	208	+ Deceptively fast reworked F-type - Never feels as ferocious as the figures suggest	★★★★☆
Lotus Exige S (V6)	*209 F*	*'12-'15*	*6/3456*	*345/7000*	*295/4500*	*1176kg*	*298*	*3.8*	*-*	*-*	*170*	*+ Breathtaking road-racer; our joint evo Car of the Year 2012 - Gearshift not the sweetest*	★★★★★
Lotus Exige Sport 350	221 F	£62,375	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1125kg	312	3.9	-	-	170	+ Further honed Exige, with vastly improved gearshift - Still not easy to get into and out of	★★★★½
Lotus Exige Sport 380	*231 F*	*'16-'18*	*6/3456*	*375/6700*	*302/5000*	*1110kg*	*343*	*3.7*	*-*	*-*	*178*	*+ Intense, absorbing and brilliantly capable - Perhaps not an everyday car*	★★★★½
Lotus Exige Cup 380	*240 D*	*'17*	*6/3456*	*375/6700*	*302/5000*	*1105kg*	*345*	*3.6*	*-*	*-*	*175*	*+ An absolute riot; feels worth the £83k (new) price tag - Limited build numbers*	★★★★½
Lotus Exige Sport 410	283 F	£79,900	6/3456	410/7000	310/3500	1110kg	375	3.4	-	-	180	+ A first-rate swansong for the V6 Exige - Some may baulk at the price	★★★★★
Lotus Exige Cup 430	253 F	£103,375	6/3456	430/7000	325/2600	1093kg	400	3.3	-	-	180	+ The ultimate Exige - Isn't cheap	★★★★★
Lotus Exige S (S2)	*253 F*	*'06-'11*	*4/1796*	*218/7800*	*158/5500*	*930kg*	*238*	*4.3*	*-*	*-*	*148*	*+ Lightweight with a hefty punch - Uninspiring soundtrack*	★★★★★
Lotus Exige (S1)	*200 F*	*'00-'01*	*4/1796*	*192/7800*	*146/5000*	*780kg*	*247*	*4.6*	*-*	*-*	*136*	*+ Looks and goes like an Elise racer - A tad lacking in refinement*	★★★★★
Lotus Evora	*257 F*	*'09-'15*	*6/3456*	*276/6400*	*258/4700*	*1382kg*	*203*	*5.1*	*5.6*	*13.6*	*162*	*+ Sublime ride and handling. evo Car of the Year 2009 - The Evora S*	★★★★★
Lotus Evora S	*168 F*	*'10-'15*	*6/3456*	*345/7000*	*295/4500*	*1430kg*	*245*	*4.8*	*-*	*-*	*172*	*+ A faster and better Evora - But one which spars with the Porsche 911*	★★★★★
Lotus Evora 400	*216 F*	*'15-'18*	*6/3456*	*400/7000*	*302/3500*	*1395kg*	*291*	*4.2*	*-*	*-*	*186*	*+ Evora excitement levels take a leap - Gearbox still not perfect*	★★★★½
Lotus Evora Sport 410	*230 F*	*'17*	*6/3456*	*410/7000*	*310/3500*	*1325kg*	*314*	*4.2*	*-*	*-*	*190*	*+ Even lighter and sharper Evora - Engine and gearbox behind the best at this price*	★★★★½
Lotus Evora GT410	278 F	£85,675	6/3456	410/7000	295/3500	1361kg	306	4.2	-	-	186	+ Fully immersive driving experience - V6 has its limitations	★★★★½
Lotus Evora GT410 Sport	261 F	£88,675	6/3456	410/7000	295/3500	1361kg	306	4.2	-	-	186	+ As above, without the creature comforts - Too pared back for most tastes	★★★★½
Lotus Evora GT430	*246 F*	*'18*	*6/3456*	*430/7000*	*325/4500*	*1299kg*	*336*	*3.8*	*-*	*-*	*190*	*+ Genuine race-car feel on the road - It wasn't cheap, and just 60 were made*	★★★★½
Maserati GranTurismo Sport	188 F	£93,145	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1880kg	245	4.8	-	-	186	+ A real sense of occasion to drive; wonderful engine - Rather long in the tooth	★★★★☆
Maserati GranTurismo MC	239 D	£109,740	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1873kg	246	4.7	-	-	187	+ As above but with knobs on - Those knobs don't make it feel any younger	★★★★☆
Maserati GranTurismo	*114 F*	*'07-'17*	*8/4244*	*399/7100*	*339/4750*	*1880kg*	*216*	*5.2*	*5.5*	*12.7*	*177*	*+ Striking, accomplished GT - Doesn't spike the pulse like an Aston or 911*	★★★★☆
Maserati GranTurismo MC Stradale	*193 F*	*'11-'17*	*8/4691*	*454/7000*	*383/4750*	*1800kg*	*256*	*4.5*	*-*	*-*	*188*	*+ Brilliant blend of road racer and GT - Gearbox takes a little getting used to*	★★★★☆
Mazda RX-8	*122 F*	*'03-'11*	*2R/1308*	*228/8200*	*156/5500*	*1429kg*	*162*	*6.4*	*6.5*	*16.4*	*146*	*+ Never mind the quirkiness, it's a great drive - Wafer-thin torque output; thirsty*	★★★★½
Mercedes-AMG C43 Coupé	251 T	£50,010	6/2996	385/6100	383/2500	1675kg	234	4.7	-	-	155	+ Fast and instilled with a real sense of quality - Not enough emphasis on fun	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG C63 S Coupé (W205)	262 F	£78,078	8/3982	503/5500	516/2000	1745kg	293	3.9	-	-	180	+ Mouth-watering mechanical package - Light steering; hefty kerb weight	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupé (W204)	*162 F*	*'11-'14*	*8/6208*	*451/6800*	*442/5000*	*1655kg*	*277*	*4.5*	*4.4*	*10.3*	*155*	*+ A proper two-door M3 rival - C63 saloon looks better to most*	★★★★½
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Black Series (W204)	*171 F*	*'12-'13*	*8/6208*	*510/6800*	*457/5200*	*1635kg*	*317*	*4.2*	*-*	*-*	*186*	*+ The C63 turned up to 11 - Too heavy; not as fiery as Black Series cars of old*	★★★★½
Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG Black Series	*277 F*	*'07-'09*	*8/6208*	*500/6800*	*464/5250*	*1760kg*	*289*	*4.2*	*-*	*-*	*186*	*+ AMG goes Porsche-hunting - Dull-witted gearshift spoils the party*	★★★★½
Mercedes-AMG S63 Coupé	251 D	£127,555	8/3982	604/5500	664/2750	1990kg	308	4.2	-	-	155	+ Near-silent progress meets full-blown riot - Don't go thinking it's a GT R	★★★★½
Mercedes-AMG S65 Coupé	209 D	£188,550	12/5980	621/4800	737/2300	2110kg	299	4.1	-	-	186	+ Almighty power, fabulous luxury - Nearly £60k more than the S63!	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG GT	227 D	£99,960	8/3982	469/6000	465/1700	1540kg	309	4.0	-	-	189	+ A true sports coupe that also does luxury - Takes time to reveal its talents	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG GT S	216 F	£113,260	8/3982	515/6250	494/1800	1570kg	333	3.8	-	-	193	+ Fantastic chassis, huge grip - Artificial steering feel; downshifts could be quicker	★★★★½
Mercedes-AMG GT C	241 D	£129,260	8/3982	549/5750	501/1900	1625kg	343	3.7	-	-	196	+ As good at being a GT as it is a sports coupe - Difficult to drive fast and smoothly	★★★★½
Mitsubishi 3000GT	*-*	*'90-'99*	*6/2972*	*282/6000*	*300/3000*	*1719kg*	*167*	*5.8*	*-*	*-*	*159*	*+ Looks the business, loaded with gizmos - Doesn't do the business*	★☆☆☆☆
Nissan 370Z	*204 F*	*'09-'20*	*6/3696*	*323/7000*	*268/5200*	*1496kg*	*219*	*5.3*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ Quicker, leaner, keener than 350Z - Not quite a Cayman-killer*	★★★★☆
Nissan 370Z Nismo	*209 F*	*'14-'20*	*6/3696*	*339/7400*	*274/5200*	*1496kg*	*230*	*5.2*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ Sharper looks, improved ride, extra thrills - Engine lacks sparkle*	★★★★½
Nissan 350Z	*107 F*	*'03-'09*	*6/3498*	*309/6800*	*264/4800*	*1532kg*	*205*	*5.6*	*5.5*	*13.0*	*155*	*+ Huge fun, and great value too - Muscle-car vibe not for everyone*	★★★★☆
Nissan GT-R (2017MY)	242 F	£82,525	6/3799	562/6800	470/3600	1752kg	326	2.7	-	-	196	+ More refinement, much improved interior, still fast - Feels a touch less alert	★★★★½
Nissan GT-R Track Edition (2017MY)	229 D	£94,525	6/3799	562/6800	470/3600	1745kg	327	2.7	-	-	196	+ GT-R regains its sharpness - Getting pricey these days	★★★★½
Nissan GT-R Nismo (2020MY)	282 F	£180,095	6/3799	592/6800	481/3600	1703kg	353	2.8	-	-	196	+ Addictive performance - Track Edition gets 90 per cent there for £80k less	★★★★½
Nissan GT-R (2012MY-2016MY)	*238 F*	*'12-'16*	*6/3799*	*542/6400*	*466/3200*	*1740kg*	*316*	*2.7*	*3.2*	*7.5*	*196*	*+ Quicker and better than before - Stopping your Porsche-owning friends calling it a Datsun*	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R (2010MY)	*252 F*	*'10-'12*	*6/3799*	*523/6400*	*451/3200*	*1740kg*	*305*	*3.0*	*-*	*-*	*194*	*+ More powerful version of the original - But they're not worlds apart to drive*	★★★★★

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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE (OR YEARS ON SALE)	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (CLAIMED)	0-60MPH (TESTED)	0-100MPH (TESTED)	MAX MPH	evo RATING	
Nissan GT-R (2008MY)	*257 F*	*'08-'10*	*6/3799*	*473/6400*	*434/3200*	*1740kg*	*276*	*3.8*	*-*	*-*	*193*	*+ evo Car of the Year 2008 - You won't see 20mpg often*	★★★★★
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R34)	*265 F*	*'99-'02*	*6/2568*	*276/7000*	*289/4400*	*1560kg*	*180*	*4.8*	*4.7*	*12.5*	*165*	*+ Big, brutal, and great fun - Needs more than the standard 276bhp*	★★★★★
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R33)	*196 F*	*'97-'99*	*6/2568*	*276/6800*	*271/4400*	*1540kg*	*182*	*4.9*	*5.4*	*14.3*	*155*	*+ Early proof that Japanese high-tech could work (superbly) - Limited supply*	★★★★★
Peugeot RCZ R	*209 F*	*'14-'15*	*4/1598*	*266/6000*	*243/1900*	*1280kg*	*211*	*5.9*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ Rewarding and highly effective when fully lit - Dated cabin, steering lacks feel*	★★★★½
Polestar 1	269 D	£139,000	4/1969	592/6000	737	2350kg	256	4.2	-	-	155	+ One of the most appealing hybrids yet - It's left-hand-drive only, and jolly expensive	★★★★☆
Porsche 718 Cayman	229 D	£44,074	4/1988	296/6500	280/2150	1335kg	225	5.1	-	-	170	+ Chassis remains a dream - Sounds like a Toyota GT86	★★★★☆
Porsche 718 Cayman T	270 F	£51,145	4/1988	296/6500	280/2150	1350kg	223	5.1	-	-	170	+ A further-honed 2-litre Cayman - Flat-four soundtrack still disappoints	★★★★½
Porsche 718 Cayman S	249 F	£53,030	4/2497	345/6500	310/2100	1355kg	259	4.6	3.9	9.3	177	+ Faster and better to drive than ever - Bring earplugs	★★★★½
Porsche 718 Cayman GTS	*260 F*	*'17-'19*	*4/2497*	*360/6500*	*310/2100*	*1375kg*	*266*	*4.6*	*-*	*-*	*180*	*+ Cracking package of upgrades - Have we mentioned the engine...?*	★★★★½
Porsche 718 Cayman GTS 4.0	283 F	£64,480	6/3995	394/7000	310/5000	1405kg	285	4.5	-	-	182	+ Ninety per cent of the GT4's magic - Can feel a little too capable and polished at times	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Cayman GT4	277 F	£75,780	6/3995	414/7600	310/5000	1420kg	296	4.4	-	-	188	+ evo Car of the Year 2019 - Long gearing isn't ideal for road driving	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman S (981)	*202 F*	*'13-'16*	*6/3436*	*321/7400*	*273/4500*	*1320kg*	*247*	*5.0*	*4.5*	*10.5*	*175*	*+ The Cayman comes of age - Erm...*	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman GTS (981)	*219 F*	*'14-'16*	*6/3436*	*335/7400*	*280/4750*	*1345kg*	*253*	*4.9*	*-*	*-*	*177*	*+ Tweaks improve an already sublime package - Slightly 'aftermarket' looks*	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman GT4 (981)	*265 F*	*'15-'16*	*6/3800*	*380/7400*	*310/4750*	*1340kg*	*288*	*4.4*	*-*	*-*	*183*	*+ evo Car of the Year 2015 (even though the 991 GT3 RS was there!) - Second-hand prices*	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman S (987)	*231 F*	*'06-'13*	*6/3436*	*316/7200*	*273/4750*	*1350kg*	*237*	*5.2*	*-*	*-*	*172*	*+ Still want that 911? - Yeah, us too*	★★★★½
Porsche Cayman R (987)	*158 F*	*'11-'13*	*6/3436*	*325/7400*	*273/4750*	*1295kg*	*255*	*5.0*	*-*	*-*	*175*	*+ Total handling excellence - Styling additions not to all tastes*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera (992)	278 F	£82,795	6/2981	380/6500	332/1950	1505kg	257	4.2	-	-	182	+ Fast, composed and comfortable - We're waiting for the manual version	★★★★½
Porsche 911 Carrera S (992)	282 D	£94,350	6/2981	444/6500	391/1700	1480kg	305	4.2	-	-	191	+ An immaculately polished machine - Lacks character unless wrung out	★★★★½
Porsche 911 Carrera 4S (992)	261 F	£99,925	6/2981	444/6500	391/1700	1530kg	295	4.2	-	-	190	+ Terrifically exciting when driven hard - You'll reach some big numbers when doing so	★★★★½
Porsche 911 Carrera (991.2)	*218 F*	*'16-'18*	*6/2981*	*365/6500*	*332/1700*	*1430kg*	*259*	*4.6*	*-*	*-*	*183*	*+ Forced induction didn't ruin the Carrera - Purists won't be happy*	★★★★½
Porsche 911 Carrera T (991.2)	*264 F*	*'17-'18*	*6/2981*	*365/6500*	*332/1700*	*1425kg*	*260*	*4.5*	*-*	*-*	*182*	*+ Lightweight windows, no rear seats, an LSD... - Only 5kg lighter than a basic Carrera*	★★★★½
Porsche 911 Carrera S (991.2)	*217 F*	*'16-'18*	*6/2981*	*414/6500*	*369/1700*	*1440kg*	*292*	*4.3*	*-*	*-*	*191*	*+ Blindingly fast - You'll want the sports exhaust*	★★★★½
Porsche 911 Carrera GTS (991.2)	*238 F*	*'17-'19*	*6/2981*	*444/6500*	*406/2150*	*1450kg*	*311*	*4.1*	*-*	*-*	*193*	*+ Everything a 911 Carrera should be - Costs nearly £20k more than a basic Carrera*	★★★★½
Porsche 911 Carrera S (991.1)	*201 F*	*'12-'15*	*6/3800*	*394/7400*	*324/5600*	*1415kg*	*283*	*4.5*	*4.3*	*9.5*	*188*	*+ A Carrera with supercar pace - Electric steering robs it of some tactility*	★★★★½
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.2)	*121 F*	*'08-'11*	*6/3800*	*380/6500*	*310/4400*	*1425kg*	*271*	*4.7*	*-*	*-*	*188*	*+ Poise, precision, blinding pace - Feels a bit clinical*	★★★★½
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.1)	*249 F*	*'04-'08*	*6/3824*	*350/6600*	*295/4600*	*1420kg*	*246*	*4.6*	*-*	*-*	*182*	*+ evo Car of the Year 2004 - Do your homework on potential engine issues*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera (996, 3.4)	*249 F*	*'98-'01*	*6/3387*	*300/6800*	*258/4600*	*1320kg*	*231*	*5.2*	*-*	*-*	*174*	*+ The first evo Car of the Year, and it still stacks up today - Might feel a smidge dated*	★★★★★
Rolls-Royce Wraith	205 D	£240,768	12/6592	624/5600	590/1500	2360kg	260	4.6	-	-	155	+ Refinement, chassis, drivetrain - Shared componentry lets cabin down	★★★★½
Subaru BRZ	248 F	£31,995	4/1998	197/7000	151/6400	1230kg	163	7.6	-	-	140	+ Fine chassis, great steering - Weak engine, not the slide-happy car they promised	★★★★☆
Toyota GT86	*266 F*	*'12-'20*	*4/1998*	*197/7000*	*151/6400*	*1240kg*	*161*	*7.6*	*6.9*	*16.5*	*140*	*+ More fun than its Subaru BRZ cousin - Same lack of torque, poor interior quality*	★★★★☆
Toyota GR Supra 2.0	283 D	£45,995	4/1998	254/5000	295/1550	1395kg	185	5.2	-	-	155	+ Avoids the edginess of the 3-litre Supra - Lacks feel, feedback and bite	★★★★☆
Toyota GR Supra	269 F	£54,340	6/2998	335/5000	369/1600	1495kg	228	4.3	-	-	155	+ Better than its BMW Z4 cousin - Not better than an M2 Competition	★★★★☆
Toyota MR2 (Mk1)	*237 F*	*'84-'89*	*4/1587*	*122/6600*	*105/5000*	*977kg*	*127*	*8.2*	*-*	*-*	*124*	*+ Mid-engined fun comes no more affordable - Finding a good one will take time*	★★★★½
TVR Sagaris	*265 F*	*'05-'07*	*6/3996*	*406/7000*	*349/5000*	*1078kg*	*383*	*3.7*	*-*	*-*	*185*	*+ Looks outrageous - 406bhp feels a touch optimistic*	★★★★½
TVR Tuscan S (Mk2)	*076 F*	*'05-'07*	*6/3996*	*400/7000*	*315/5250*	*1100kg*	*369*	*4.0*	*-*	*-*	*185*	*+ Possibly TVR's best ever car - Aerodynamic 'enhancements'*	★★★★½
TVR Cerbera Speed Six	*004 F*	*'98-'04*	*6/3996*	*350/6800*	*330/5000*	*1130kg*	*315*	*4.4*	*5.0*	*11.4*	*160+*	*+ Accomplished and desirable - When it's running*	★★★★½

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, the 765 melds mind-boggling pace with a remarkably talented chassis and sublime steering to deliver another unforgettable Longtail experience.



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. The **Audi R8 V10** remains a corking entry-level supercar, and the latest **Porsche 911 Turbo S** is the most accomplished of its kind for a very long time.

Aston Martin DBS Superleggera	264 F	£225,000	12/5204	715/6500	664/1800	1770kg	410	3.4	-	-	211	+ Broad spread of talents - It's not really 'Superlight'	★★★★½
Aston Martin DBS Superleggera Volante	273 F	£247,500	12/5204	715/6500	664/1800	1863kg*	390	3.6	-	-	211	+ Dazzling looks, immense performance - Width and weight bring compromises	★★★★½
Aston Martin Vanquish S (Mk2)	*260 F*	*'17-18*	*12/5935*	*595/7000*	*465/5500*	*1739kg*	*348*	*3.5*	*3.9*	*8.3*	*201*	*+ Noise, poise, drama and charm - Not as rounded as the DB11*	★★★★½
Aston Martin Vanquish S (Mk1)	*110 F*	*'05-'07*	*12/5935*	*520/7000*	*425/5800*	*1875kg*	*282*	*4.8*	*4.9*	*10.1*	*200*	*+ Vanquish joins the supercar greats - A tad intimidating at the limit*	★★★★½
Aston Martin One-77	*179 F*	*'10-'12*	*12/7312*	*750/6000*	*553/7600*	*1740kg*	*438*	*3.7*	*-*	*-*	*220+*	*+ The engine, the looks, the drama - Gearbox hates manoeuvring; only 77 were made*	★★★★★
Audi R8 V10 RWD	273 F	£117,325	10/5204	533/7900	398/6400	1595kg	340	3.7	-	-	199	+ More affordable than a 4WD R8 - But not more entertaining	★★★★½
Audi R8 V10	261 F	£131,130	10/5204	562/8100	413/6300	1660kg	344	3.4	-	-	201	+ Beats the 992 Carrera - Could be the last of its kind	★★★★★
Audi R8 V10 Performance	256 D	£144,130	10/5204	611/8250	428/6500	1595kg	389	3.1	-	-	205	+ Stunning V10; approachable performance - Optional Dynamic steering feels unnatural	★★★★½
Audi R8 V10 RWS(Mk2)	*254 F*	*'17-'19*	*10/5204*	*533/7800*	*398/6500*	*1590kg*	*341*	*3.7*	*-*	*-*	*199*	*+ The first rear-wheel-drive Audi for 40 years - Drives largely like its 4WD counterpart*	★★★★½
Audi R8 V10 (Mk2)	*234 F*	*'15-'19*	*10/5204*	*533/7800*	*398/6500*	*1640kg*	*330*	*3.5*	*-*	*-*	*198*	*+ All the R8 you really need - You can't get a manual gearbox*	★★★★½
Audi R8 V10 Plus (Mk2)	*250 F*	*'15-'19*	*10/5204*	*602/8250*	*413/6500*	*1580kg*	*387*	*3.2*	*2.9*	*6.3*	*205*	*+ Timeless drivetrain, huge performance - Sometimes seems ordinary at steady speeds*	★★★★★
Audi R8 V10 (Mk1)	*254 F*	*'09-'15*	*10/5204*	*518/8000*	*391/6500*	*1620kg*	*325*	*4.1*	*3.9*	*8.4*	*194*	*+ Real supercar feel - The V8 is cheaper, and still superb*	★★★★½
Audi R8 V10 Plus (Mk1)	*190 F*	*'13-'15*	*10/5204*	*542/8000*	*398/6500*	*1570kg*	*351*	*3.8*	*-*	*-*	*198*	*+ An R8 fit to take on the 458 and 12C - Firm ride may be too much for some*	★★★★★
Bugatti Chiron	244 F	c£2.5m	16/7993	1479/6700	1180/2000	1995kg	753	2.5	-	-	261	+ Backs up the numbers with feel and emotion - Limited top speed(!)	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron 16.4	*134 F*	*'05-'11*	*16/7993*	*987/6000*	*922/2200*	*1888kg*	*531*	*2.5*	*2.8*	*5.8*	*253*	*+ Superbly engineered four-wheel-drive quad-turbo rocket - Er, lacks luggage space?*	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron 16.4 Super Sport	*151 F*	*'10-'11*	*16/7993*	*1183/6400*	*1106/3000*	*1838kg*	*654*	*2.5*	*-*	*-*	*258*	*+ Was once the world's fastest supercar - Limited to 258mph for us mere mortals*	★★★★★
Bugatti EB110	*078 F*	*'91-'95*	*12/3500*	*552/8000*	*451/3750*	*1618kg*	*347*	*3.6*	*-*	*-*	*213*	*+ Superbly engineered four-wheel-drive quad-turbo rocket - It just fizzled out*	★★★★½
Ferrari Roma	278 D	£170,984	8/3855	611/5750	560/3000	1570kg	395	3.4	-	-	199+	+ Not far off being a front-engined F8 - Choosing between a Roma and an F8	★★★★½
Ferrari F8 Tributo	281 F	£203,476	8/3902	710/8000	568/3250	1435kg	503	2.9	-	-	211	+ Ferrari's best series-production V8 ever - The next one could be a hybrid	★★★★★
Ferrari F8 Spider	276 D	£225,897	8/3902	710/8000	568/3250	1400kg*	515	2.9	-	-	211	+ As above, with a folding hard-top - Some may prefer McLaren's 720S Spider	★★★★★
Ferrari 488 GTB	*228 F*	*'15-'19*	*8/3902*	*661/6500*	*561/3000*	*1475kg*	*455*	*3.0*	*-*	*-*	*205+*	*+ Staggeringly capable - Lacks a little of the 458's heart and excitement*	★★★★★
Ferrari 488 Pista	*262 F*	*'18-'20*	*8/3902*	*710/8000*	*568/3000*	*1385kg*	*521*	*2.9*	*-*	*-*	*211+*	*+ Searingly fast and effortlessly capable - Takes a while to fully appreciate it*	★★★★½
Ferrari 458 Italia	*221 F*	*'09-'15*	*8/4497*	*562/9000*	*398/6000*	*1485kg*	*384*	*3.4*	*3.2*	*6.8*	*202+*	*+ An astounding achievement - Paddleshift only*	★★★★★
Ferrari 458 Speciale	*274 F*	*'13-'15*	*8/4497*	*597/9000*	*398/6000*	*1395kg*	*435*	*3.0*	*-*	*-*	*202+*	*+ evo Car of the Year 2014 - If you don't own a regular 458, nothing*	★★★★★
Ferrari F430	*254 F*	*'04-'10*	*8/4308*	*483/8500*	*343/5250*	*1449kg*	*339*	*4.0*	*-*	*-*	*196+*	*+ Just brilliant - Didn't you read the plus point?*	★★★★★
Ferrari 430 Scuderia	*274 F*	*'07-'10*	*8/4308*	*503/8500*	*347/5250*	*1350kg*	*378*	*3.6*	*3.5*	*7.7*	*198*	*+ Successful F1 technology transplant - Likes to shout about it*	★★★★★
Ferrari 360 Modena	*163 F*	*'99-'04*	*8/3586*	*394/8500*	*275/4750*	*1390kg*	*288*	*4.5*	*-*	*-*	*183+*	*+ Worthy successor to 355 - Not quite as involving as it should be*	★★★★½
Ferrari 360 Challenge Stradale	*274 F*	*'03-'04*	*8/3586*	*420/8500*	*275/4750*	*1280kg*	*333*	*4.1*	*-*	*-*	*186*	*+ Totally exhilarating road-racer - Automated single-clutch 'box dates it*	★★★★★
Ferrari F355 Berlinetta	*231 F*	*'94-'99*	*8/3496*	*374/8250*	*268/6000*	*1350kg**	*281*	*4.7*	*-*	*-*	*183*	*+ Looks terrific, sounds even better - Are you kidding?*	★★★★★
Ferrari 348 GT Competizione	*274 F*	*'93*	*8/3404*	*316/7200*	*239/5000*	*1180kg**	*276*	*5.0*	*-*	*-*	*175*	*+ Utterly absorbing, with exceptional dynamics - Steering a little woolly*	★★★★★
Ferrari 812 Superfast	275 F	£262,963	12/6496	789/8500	529/7000	1630kg	492	2.9	3.1	6.2	211	+ Incredible engine - Finding opportunities to exploit it	★★★★★
Ferrari 812 GTS	280 F	c£300,000	12/6496	789/8500	529/7000	1645kg*	487	3.0	-	-	211+	+ A brilliant return for the front-engined V12 Ferrari Spider - There won't be many more	★★★★★
Ferrari F12 Berlinetta	*275 F*	*'12-'17*	*12/6262*	*730/8250*	*509/6000*	*1630kg*	*455*	*3.1*	*-*	*-*	*211+*	*+ 730bhp isn't too much power for the road - Super-quick steering is an acquired taste*	★★★★★
Ferrari F12tdf	*230 F*	*'17*	*12/6262*	*769/8500*	*520/6250*	*1520kg*	*514*	*2.9*	*-*	*-*	*211+*	*+ Alarmingly fast - Doesn't flow like a 458 Speciale*	★★★★½
Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano	*275 F*	*'06-'12*	*12/5999*	*611/7600*	*448/5600*	*1690kg*	*368*	*3.7*	*3.5*	*7.4*	*205*	*+ evo Car of the Year 2006 - Banks are getting harder to rob*	★★★★★
Ferrari 599 GTO	*161 F*	*'11-'12*	*12/5999*	*661/8250*	*457/6500*	*1605kg*	*418*	*3.4*	*-*	*-*	*208+*	*+ One of the truly great Ferraris - Erm, the air con isn't very good*	★★★★★
Ferrari 575M Fiorano Handling Pack	*200 F*	*'02-'06*	*12/5748*	*508/7250*	*434/5250*	*1688kg*	*298*	*3.7*	*4.2*	*9.6*	*205+*	*+ Fiorano pack makes 575 truly great - It should have been standard*	★★★★★
Ferrari 550 Maranello	*275 F*	*'96-'02*	*12/5474*	*478/7000*	*420/5000*	*1690kg*	*287*	*4.4*	*-*	*-*	*199*	*+ Everything - Nothing*	★★★★★
Ferrari GTC4 Lusso T	*246 D*	*'17-'20*	*8/3855*	*602/7500*	*560/3000*	*1865kg*	*328*	*3.5*	*-*	*-*	*199*	*+ Effortless, comfortable GT - Misses the richer soundtrack of the V12*	★★★★½
Ferrari GTC4 Lusso	*264 F*	*'16-'20*	*12/6262*	*680/8000*	*514/5750*	*1920kg*	*360*	*3.4*	*-*	*-*	*208*	*+ Rear-wheel steering increases agility - Not as engaging as other Ferraris*	★★★★½
Ferrari FF	*194 F*	*'11-'15*	*12/6262*	*651/8000*	*504/6000*	*1880kg*	*347*	*3.7*	*-*	*-*	*208*	*+ Four seats and 4WD, but a proper Ferrari - Looks divide opinion*	★★★★½



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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE (OR YEARS ON SALE)	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (CLAIMED)	0-60MPH (TESTED)	0-100MPH (TESTED)	MAX MPH	evo RATING	
Ferrari 612 Scaglietti	*090 F*	*'04-'11*	*12/5748*	*533/7250*	*434/5250*	*1875kg*	*289*	*4.0*	*4.3*	*9.8*	*199*	*+ Awesomely capable grand tourer - See above*	★★★★★
Ferrari SF90 Stradale	277 F	£376,048	8/3990	986/7500	-	1570kg*	638	2.5	-	-	211	+ Hugely impressive series-production hypercar - Hybrid turbo V8 no match for a V12	★★★★½
Ferrari LaFerrari	*203 F*	*'13-'15*	*12/6262*	*950/9000*	*664/6750*	*1574kg*	*613*	*3.0*	-	-	*217+*	*+ Perhaps the greatest Ferrari ever - Brakes lack a touch of precision on track*	★★★★★
Ferrari Enzo	*275 F*	*'02-'04*	*12/5999*	*651/7800*	*485/5500*	*1365kg*	*485*	*3.7*	*3.5*	*6.7*	*217+*	*+ Intoxicating, exploitable - Cabin detailing falls short of a Zonda or F1's*	★★★★★
Ferrari F50	*275 F*	*'95-'97*	*12/4699*	*513/8500*	*347/6500*	*1230kg**	*424*	*3.9*	-	-	*202*	*+ A better driver's Ferrari than the 288, F40 or Enzo - Not better looking, though*	★★★★★
Ferrari F40	*275 F*	*'87-'92*	*8/2936*	*471/7000*	*426/4000*	*1100kg**	*437*	*4.1*	-	-	*201*	*+ Brutally fast - It's in the dictionary under 'turbo lag'*	★★★★★
Ford GT	253 F	$450,000	6/3497	647/6250	550/5900	1385kg*	475	2.8	-	-	216	+ Everything it does on track - Too many of the things it does on the road	★★★★½
Ford GT	*200 F*	*'04-'06*	*8/5409*	*550/6500*	*500/3750*	*1583kg*	*353*	*3.9*	-	-	*205*	*+ evo Car of the Year 2005 - Don't scalp yourself getting in*	★★★★★
Honda NSX	270 F	£144,765	6/3493	573	476/2000	1776kg	328	2.9	3.0	6.9	191	+ Blisteringly quick and brilliantly engineered - Limited range on a full tank	★★★★★
Honda NSX (NA2)	*188 F*	*'97-'05*	*6/3179*	*276/7300*	*224/5300*	*1410kg*	*196*	*5.7*	-	-	*168*	*+ The original useable supercar - 276bhp sounds a bit weedy today*	★★★★½
Honda NSX-R (NA2)	*100 F*	*'02-'03*	*6/3179*	*276/7300*	*224/5300*	*1270kg*	*221*	*4.4*	-	-	*168*	*+ evo Car of the Year 2002 - Hard to find in the UK*	★★★★★
Jaguar XJ220	*157 F*	*'92-'94*	*6/3498*	*542/7200*	*475/4500*	*1470kg*	*375*	*3.7*	-	-	*213*	*+ Britain's greatest supercar... - ...until McLaren built the F1*	★★★★☆
Koenigsegg One:1	202 F	c£2.0m	8/5065	1341/7500	1011/6000	1360kg	1002	2.9	-	-	273	+ One of the most powerful cars we've tested - It's sold out. We couldn't afford one anyway	★★★★★
Koenigsegg Agera R	*180 F*	*'11-'14*	*8/5032*	*1124/7100*	*885/2700*	*1435kg*	*796*	*2.8*	-	-	*273*	*+ As fast and exciting as your body can handle - It's Veyron money*	★★★★★
Koenigsegg CCXR Edition	*118 F*	*'08-'10*	*8/4800*	*1004/7000*	*796/5600*	*1280kg**	*797*	*2.9*	-	-	*250+*	*+ One of the world's fastest cars - Spiky power delivery*	★★★★★
Lamborghini Huracán Evo RWD	281 F	£164,400	10/5204	602/8000	413/6500	1389kg*	440	3.3	-	-	202	+ The most complete Huracán yet - Prescriptive driver modes still frustrate	★★★★★
Lamborghini Huracán Evo	264 F	£198,307	10/5204	631/8000	442/6500	1422kg*	451	2.9	-	-	202+	+ Performante engine, trick chassis - Badly needs an 'Ego' mode for road driving	★★★★☆
Lamborghini Huracán Evo Spyder	269 F	£218,137	10/5204	631/8000	442/6500	1542kg*	416	3.1	-	-	202	+ Drop-top driving enhances that epic V10 - Being mistaken for a King's Road poser	★★★★☆
Lamborghini Huracán RWD	*229 F*	*'16-'19*	*10/5204*	*572/8000*	*397/6500*	*1389kg**	*385*	*3.4*	-	-	*199*	*+ More seductive than the 4WD Huracán - Feels like there's more to come*	★★★★½
Lamborghini Huracán	*209 D*	*'14-'19*	*10/5204*	*602/8250*	*413/6500*	*1422kg**	*430*	*3.2*	-	-	*201+*	*+ Defies the numbers; incredible point-to-point pace - Takes work to find its sweet-spot*	★★★★½
Lamborghini Huracán Performante	*242 F*	*'17-'19*	*10/5204*	*631/8000*	*442/6500*	*1382kg**	*464*	*2.9*	-	-	*201+*	*+ The realisation of the Huracán's ever elusive potential - Kitchen-worktop carbonfibre*	★★★★★
Lamborghini Huracán Performante Spyder	*253 D*	*'18-'19*	*10/5204*	*631/8000*	*442/6500*	*1507kg**	*425*	*3.1*	-	-	*201+*	*+ As above, but even louder for the driver - Not for the shy and retiring*	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo LP550-2 Balboni	*138 F*	*'09-'10*	*10/5204*	*542/8000*	*398/6500*	*1380kg**	*399*	*3.9*	-	-	*199*	*+ Mad, rear-wheel-drive Lambo - Limited numbers*	★★★★½
Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4	*180 D*	*'08-'13*	*10/5204*	*552/8000*	*398/6500*	*1410kg**	*398*	*3.7*	-	-	*202*	*+ Still a missile from A to B - Feels a little dated next to some rivals*	★★★★☆
Lamborghini Gallardo LP570-4 Superleggera	*152 F*	*'10-'13*	*10/5204*	*562/8000*	*398/6500*	*1340kg**	*426*	*3.4*	*3.5*	-	*202*	*+ Less weight and more power than original Superleggera - LP560-4 runs it very close*	★★★★½
Lamborghini Gallardo	*094 F*	*'03-'08*	*10/4961*	*513/8000*	*376/4250*	*1430kg**	*364*	*4.0*	*4.3*	*9.4*	*196*	*+ On a full-bore start it spins all four wheels. Cool - Slightly clunky e-gear*	★★★★½
Lamborghini Aventador	*194 F*	*'11-'17*	*12/6498*	*690/8250*	*509/5500*	*1575kg**	*445*	*2.9*	-	-	*217*	*+ Most important new Lambo since the Countach - Can feel a little clumsy*	★★★★½
Lamborghini Aventador S	246 F	£271,146	12/6498	730/8400	509/5500	1575kg*	471	2.9	-	-	217	+ A more agile, more connected Aventador - Synthetic steering	★★★★½
Lamborghini Aventador S Roadster	251 D	£301,754	12/6498	730/8400	509/5500	1625kg*	456	3.0	-	-	217	+ As dynamic as the coupe - Fiddly and (very) expensive roof	★★★★½
Lamborghini Aventador SV	*216 F*	*'15-'17*	*12/6498*	*740/8400*	*509/5500*	*1525kg**	*493*	*2.8*	-	-	*217+*	*+ More exciting than the standard Aventador - ISR gearbox inconsistent*	★★★★½
Lamborghini Aventador SVJ	282 F	£360,000	12/6498	759/8500	531/6750	1525kg*	506	2.8	-	-	218	+ A signficant step on from the SV - Have we mentioned the gearbox?	★★★★½
Lamborghini Aventador SVJ Roadster	268 D	£387,987	12/6498	759/8500	531/6750	1575kg*	490	2.9	-	-	218	+ Increased exposure to that V12 - Next time it'll have electric assistance	★★★★½
Lamborghini Murciélago LP640	*275 F*	*'06-'11*	*12/6496*	*631/8000*	*487/6000*	*1665kg**	*385*	*3.8*	-	-	*211*	*+ Compelling old-school supercar - You'd better be on your toes*	★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago LP670-4 SV	*200 F*	*'09-'11*	*12/6496*	*661/8000*	*487/6500*	*1565kg**	*429*	*3.3*	*3.2*	*7.3*	*212*	*+ A supercar in its truest, wildest sense - Be prepared for stares*	★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago	*089 D*	*'01-'06*	*12/6192*	*572/7500*	*479/5400*	*1650kg**	*351*	*4.0*	-	-	*206*	*+ Gorgeous, capable and incredibly friendly - V12 feels stressed*	★★★★★
Lamborghini Diablo VT 6.0	*275 F*	*'00-'02*	*12/5992*	*543/7100*	*457/5500*	*1625kg**	*343*	*3.9*	-	-	*208*	*+ Best-built, best-looking Diablo of all - People's perceptions*	★★★★½
Lexus LFA/LFA Nürburgring	*200 F*	*'10-'12*	*10/4805*	*552/8700*	*354/6800*	*1480kg*	*379*	*3.7*	-	-	*202*	*+ Absurd and compelling supercar - Badge and price don't quite match*	★★★★★
Lotus Esprit Sport 350	*171 F*	*'99-'01*	*8/3506*	*349/6500*	*295/4250*	*1299kg*	*274*	*4.3*	-	-	*175*	*+ Lotus's pukka V8-powered supercar - Weight of that V8 makes it more intimidating*	★★★★☆
McLaren 540C	250 F	£127,890	8/3799	533/7500	398/3500	1311kg*	413	3.5	3.2	6.4	199	+ An excellent junior supercar - The 570S is still better to drive	★★★★★
McLaren 570S	229 F	£149,000	8/3799	562/7500	443/5000	1452kg	393	3.2	-	-	204	+ A truly fun and engaging sports car - McLaren doesn't call it a supercar!	★★★★★
McLaren 570GT	261 F	£157,000	8/3799	562/7500	443/5000	1498kg	381	3.4	-	-	204	+ Blurs the line between grand tourer and supercar brilliantly - 570S is more involving	★★★★★
McLaren 600LT	257 F	£185,500	8/3799	592/7500	457/5500	1356kg	444	2.9	-	-	204	+ evo Car of the Year 2018 - There's no glovebox	★★★★★
McLaren 600LT Spider	273 F	£201,500	8/3799	592/7500	457/5500	1404kg	428	2.9	-	-	201	+ All the brilliance of the coupe - And all the acoustic sophistication	★★★★★
McLaren 620R	268 F	£250,000	8/3799	611/7500	457/5500	1386kg	448	2.9	-	-	200	+ A true 911 GT3 RS rival - The GT3 RS has a more scintillating engine	★★★★★
McLaren GT	271 F	£163,000	8/3994	612/7500	465/5500	1530kg	406	3.2	-	-	203	+ Fiery performance; refinement - Don't expect a 720S to emerge on a great road	★★★★☆
McLaren 720S	262 F	£208,600	8/3994	710/7250	568/5500	1419kg	508	2.9	2.9	5.6	212	+ evo Car of the Year 2017 - Favours precision over emotion	★★★★★
McLaren 720S Spider	261 F	£237,000	8/3994	710/7250	568/5500	1468kg	491	2.9	-	-	212	+ Every bit as ballastic as the coupe - But a fraction less precise	★★★★½
McLaren 765LT	281 F	£280,000	8/3994	754/7500	590/5500	1339kg	572	2.8	-	-	205	+ Intense, extreme, insane - How much do you value your driving licence?	★★★★★
McLaren 650S	*196 F*	*'14-'17*	*8/3799*	*641/7250*	*500/6000*	*1428kg*	*456*	*3.0*	-	-	*207*	*+ Better brakes, balance and looks than 12C; more power too - Which all comes at a price*	★★★★½
McLaren 675LT	*248 F*	*'15-'17*	*8/3799*	*666/7100*	*516/5500*	*1328kg*	*510*	*2.9*	-	-	*205*	*+ Runner-up at eCoty 2015; asks questions of the P1 - Aventador price tag*	★★★★★
McLaren 12C	*264 F*	*'11-'14*	*8/3799*	*616/7500*	*442/3000*	*1434kg*	*435*	*3.3*	-	-	*207*	*+ Staggering performance, refinement - Engine noise can be grating*	★★★★☆
McLaren Senna	252 F	£750,000	8/3999	789/7250	590/5500	1198kg*	669	2.8	-	-	211	+ Astounding performance, stellar presence - Only 500 being made	★★★★★
McLaren P1	*276 F*	*'13-'15*	*8/3799*	*903/7500*	*664/4000*	*1490kg*	*616*	*2.8*	-	-	*217*	*+ Freakish breadth of ability - At its mind-bending best on track*	★★★★★
McLaren F1	*228 F*	*'94-'98*	*12/6064*	*627/7500*	*479/4000*	*1138kg*	*560*	*3.2*	-	-	*240*	*+ Still the most single-minded supercar ever - The air con was a bit weak*	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG GT R	261 I	£148,595	8/3982	577/6250	516/2100	1575kg	372	3.6	3.3	7.1	198	+ Fun and blisteringly fast; a true rival for the 911 GT3 - A touch showy, perhaps	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG GT R Pro	269 F	£188,345	8/3982	577/6250	516/2100	1561kg	376	3.6	-	-	198	+ A GT R fine-tuned for the track - A 911 GT3 RS has the edge	★★★★½
Mercedes-AMG GT Black Series	283 F	£335,000	8/3982	720/6700	590/2000	1520kg	480	3.2	-	-	202	+ Terrifyingly fast and capable - Subtle it ain't	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG	*264 F*	*'10-'15*	*8/6208*	*563/6800*	*479/4750*	*1620kg*	*335*	*3.9*	*4.1*	*8.4*	*197*	*+ Great engine and chassis (gullwing doors too!) - Slightly tardy gearbox*	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG Black Series	*204 F*	*'13-'15*	*8/6208*	*622/7400*	*468/5500*	*1550kg*	*408*	*3.6*	-	-	*196*	*+ Stunning engine, superb body control - Be careful on less-than-smooth roads...*	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLR McLaren	*228 F*	*'03-'07*	*8/5439*	*617/6500*	*575/3250*	*1693kg*	*370*	*3.8*	-	-	*208*	*+ Zonda-pace, 575-style drivability - Dreadful brake feel*	★★★★☆
Noble M600	186 F	c£200,000	8/4439	650/6800	604/3800	1198kg*	551	3.5	3.8	7.7	225	+ Spiritual successor to the Ferrari F40 - It's a bit pricey	★★★★★
Pagani Huayra	185 F	c£1m	12/5980	720/5800	737/2250	1350kg*	542	3.3	-	-	224	+ Joint evo Car of the Year 2012 - Engine isn't as nape-prickling as the Zonda's	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda S 7.3	*096 F*	*'02-'05*	*12/7291*	*555/5900*	*553/4050*	*1280kg**	*441*	*3.7*	-	-	*220*	*+ evo Car of the Year 2001 (in earlier 7.0 form) - Values have gone up a fair bit since then*	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda F	*186 F*	*'05-'06*	*12/7291*	*602/6150*	*575/4000*	*1230kg**	*497*	*3.6*	-	-	*214+*	*+ Everything an Italian supercar ought to be - Looks a bit blingy next to a Carrera GT*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (991.2)	*256 F*	*'17-'19*	*6/3996*	*493/8250*	*339/6000*	*1413kg*	*355*	*3.9*	-	-	*198*	*+ Almost impossible to criticise - Wasn't the easiest car to place an order for*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Speedster (991.2)	*263 F*	*'19*	*6/3996*	*503/8400*	*347/6250*	*1465kg*	*349*	*4.0*	-	-	*192*	*+ Essentially a topless GT3 - Only 1948 were made*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (991.2)	*278 F*	*'18-'20*	*6/3996*	*513/8250*	*347/6000*	*1430kg*	*364*	*3.2*	-	-	*193*	*+ Even better than the 991.1 RS - Demand exceeded supply*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT2 RS (991.2)	*257 F*	*'18-'19*	*6/3800*	*690/7000*	*553/2500*	*1470kg*	*477*	*2.8*	-	-	*211*	*+ A proper, angry turbocharged Porsche - 'Limited availability'*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (991.1)	*206 F*	*'13-'16*	*6/3799*	*468/8250*	*324/6250*	*1430kg*	*333*	*3.5*	-	-	*196*	*+ evo Car of the Year 2013 - PDK only*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (991.1)	*223 F*	*'15-'16*	*6/3996*	*493/8250*	*339/6250*	*1420kg*	*353*	*3.3*	*3.0*	*7.1*	*193*	*+ Sensationally good to drive - The Cayman GT4 is even better*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 R (991.1)	*229 F*	*'16*	*6/3996*	*493/8250*	*339/6250*	*1370kg*	*366*	*3.8*	-	-	*200*	*+ evo Car of the Year 2016 - Limited availability*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.2)	*182 F*	*'09-'11*	*6/3797*	*429/7600*	*317/6250*	*1395kg*	*312*	*4.1*	*4.2*	*9.2*	*194*	*+ Even better than the car it replaced - Give us a minute...*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (3.8, 997.2)	*248 F*	*'10-'11*	*6/3797*	*444/7900*	*317/6750*	*1370kg*	*329*	*4.0*	-	-	*193*	*+ We named it our favourite car from the first 200 issues of evo - For people like us, nothing*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS 4.0 (997.2)	*274 F*	*'11-'12*	*6/3996*	*493/8250*	*339/5750*	*1360kg*	*368*	*3.8*	-	-	*193*	*+ evo Car of the Year 2011 - Unforgiving on-road ride; crazy used prices*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT2 RS (997.2)	*204 F*	*'10-'13*	*6/3600*	*611/6500*	*516/2250*	*1370kg*	*453*	*3.5*	-	-	*205*	*+ More powerful than a Carrera GT. Handles, too - Erm...*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.1)	*182 F*	*'07-'09*	*6/3600*	*409/7600*	*298/5500*	*1395kg*	*298*	*4.3*	*4.3*	*9.4*	*192*	*+ Runner-up at evo Car of the Year 2006 - Ferrari 599 GTBs*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.1)	*112 F*	*'07-'09*	*6/3600*	*409/7600*	*298/5500*	*1375kg*	*302*	*4.2*	-	-	*193*	*+ evo Car of the Year 2007 - A chunk more money than the already brilliant GT3*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.2)	*221 F*	*'03-'05*	*6/3600*	*375/7400*	*284/5000*	*1380kg*	*272*	*4.5*	*4.3*	*9.2*	*190*	*+ evo Car of the Year 2003 - Chassis a bit too track-focused for some roads*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (996.2)	*068 F*	*'04-'05*	*6/3600*	*375/7400*	*284/5000*	*1360kg*	*280*	*4.4*	-	-	*190*	*+ An even more focused version of the superb GT3 - Limited supply*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT2 (996.2)	*072 F*	*'04-'06*	*6/3600*	*475/5700*	*472/3500*	*1420kg*	*338*	*4.0*	-	-	*198*	*+ Revisions made it even more of a star than the 456bhp 996.1 GT2 - Care still required*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.1)	*266 F*	*'99-'01*	*6/3600*	*360/7200*	*273/5000*	*1350kg*	*271*	*4.8*	*4.5*	*10.3*	*187*	*+ evo Car of the Year 1999 - Porsche didn't build enough*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo S (992)	281 F	£155,970	6/3745	641/6750	590/2500	1640kg	397	2.7	-	-	205	+ More three-dimensional than recent Turbos - Requires self-restraint on the road	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo (991.2)	*234 F*	*'16-'19*	*6/3800*	*533/6400*	*524/1950*	*1595kg*	*340*	*3.0*	-	-	*198*	*+ Makes the Turbo S seem unnecessary - But you still would...*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo S (991.2)	*223 F*	*'16-'19*	*6/3800*	*572/6750*	*553/2250*	*1600kg*	*363*	*2.9*	*2.6*	*6.0*	*205*	*+ Enormous performance - Not as thrilling as some rivals*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo S (991.1)	*217 F*	*'13-'15*	*6/3800*	*552/6500*	*553/2200*	*1605kg*	*349*	*3.1*	-	-	*197*	*+ Superb everyday supercar - At times disguises the thrills it can offer*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo (997.2)	*218 F*	*'09-'13*	*6/3800*	*493/6000*	*479/1950*	*1570kg*	*319*	*3.7*	*3.2*	*7.3*	*194*	*+ The Turbo at the very top of its game - Favours outright grip over adjustability*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo (997.1)	*094 F*	*'06-'09*	*6/3600*	*472/6000*	*457/1950*	*1585kg*	*303*	*3.7*	*4.0*	*8.7*	*193*	*+ Monster cornering ability - A bit woolly on its standard settings*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo (996)	*249 F*	*'00-'06*	*6/3600*	*414/6000*	*413/2700*	*1540kg*	*273*	*4.2*	*4.1*	*10.0*	*190*	*+ evo Car of the year 2000; the 911 for all seasons - We can't find any reasons*	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo (993)	*066 F*	*'95-'98*	*6/3600*	*402/5750*	*398/4500*	*1500kg*	*272*	*4.3*	-	-	*180*	*+ Stupendous all-weather supercar - It doesn't rain enough*	★★★★★
Porsche 918 Spyder	*233 F*	*'13-'15*	*8/4593*	*875/8500*	*944/6600*	*1674kg*	*531*	*2.6*	-	-	*211*	*+ Blistering performance; cohesive hybrid tech - Added weight and complexity*	★★★★★
Porsche Carrera GT	*200 F*	*'04-'06*	*10/5733*	*604/8000*	*435/5750*	*1380kg*	*445*	*3.9*	-	-	*205*	*+ Felt ahead of its time - Needs modern tyres to tame its spikiness*	★★★★★

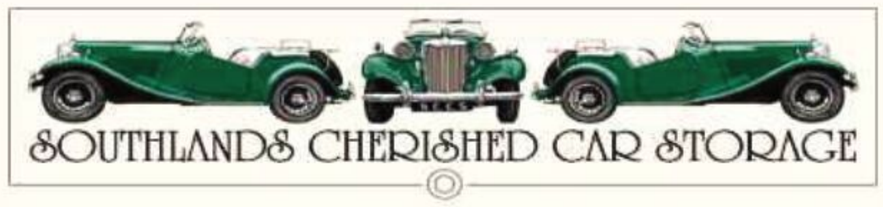


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BuyaCar Buying Guide: Renault Mégane RS Trophy

We'll not see its kind again, so all the more reason to grab one at a great price now

RENAULT SPORT PRODUCTS HAVE BEEN a regular fixture in **evo** Car of the year. Many of the earlier appearances were Clios, but more recently it's been the turn of the Mégane RS, and for good reason – it's consistently been one of the most capable and involving cars in its class.

That's despite the Mégane changing quite significantly over time. Back in 2008, when the R26.R finished among the top five in eCoty, it had just three doors and a relatively compact footprint. Today, though, the Mégane RS is a sizeable five-door with a different character to those early stars. In Trophy trim particularly it's a more aggressive car with a firmer ride, and it steers sharply too, thanks as much to four-wheel steering as sticky tyres or modest weight.

While neither the regular Trophy nor hardcore Trophy-R have troubled the top of the table like previous incarnations, the latest Mégane RS is still hugely capable, and thanks to a five-door layout it still plays the family hatchback card too (rear-seatless Trophy-R aside). Interior quality – never previously a Mégane strong point – has taken a step up too, so if the RS isn't as fluid as it once was, it's acquired other benefits along the way.

It can also be surprisingly affordable (Trophy-R once again excepted!). A cash price of £30,295 gets you a 2020 Trophy with under 1000 miles on the clock from BuyaCar, but a monthly price of £406 looks even more compelling. It's in the correct Liquid Yellow paint scheme too (is there a colour that better suits Renault Sport models?), with the usual touches like Recaro seats and 19-inch alloy wheels.

All Mégane RSs get Renault's 1.8-litre turbocharged four-cylinder as standard, making 296bhp in Trophy form in these 2020 cars and 295lb ft through a six-speed manual transmission and a limited-slip differential. And if there's a reason for now choosing used over a brand-new Trophy, it's that Renault has since dropped that six-speeder, now only offering a dual-clutch 'box. While the manual doesn't have the world's greatest shift, it's intrinsic to the car's character, and that engine remains a highlight too, as free-revving here as it is in the Alpine A110 sports car. That it could also be Renault's last Mégane RS makes the case for picking one up now even stronger...

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by HENRY CATCHPOLE



Pulling a blinder

The loss of his glasses should have been a disaster for severely myopic photographer Dean Smith, but somehow he still got the job done



'IF YOU WEAR MY GLASSES' SAYS DEAN Smith, handing me a pair of black-framed spectacles, 'that'll give you an idea of how blind I am without them.' I duly pop them on the bridge of my nose and instantly feel like I'm both drunk and developing a hangover at the same time. I whip them off again before the headache blossoms any further.

'See?' says Dean. I can't work out if he's being funny. 'I can't read any text without them. It's just colours.'

All of which brings us to an autoroute somewhere in northern France back in the summer of 2013. Jethro Bovingdon, Harry Metcalfe and Dean are all heading down to Milan for the start of Lamborghini's 50th birthday Grand Tour, which Harry is due to take part in. Jethro and Dean are in an Aventador Roadster while Harry is in his Countach. At this point in the trip there are other Lamborghini owners with them too.

Dean takes up the story again: 'Jethro says, "Everyone's in a convoy, why don't you take some pics?" So, wary that we're doing an unprintable speed, I put the camera to my face, pop up above the roofline of the roadster, turn around and take a load of terrible photos that never get used. Then, as I reverse-engineer the manoeuvre to get back into the passenger seat, I take the camera away from my face and… *vroooff!*'

'What?'

'*Vroooff!*'

'?'

'My glasses fly off.'

'Ah.'

'Gone. Whipped away by an unprintable slipstream. And now Jethro can barely see either because he thinks this is so funny that he's crying with laughter. We pull into a lay-by about 2 kilometres down the road just before a toll and then Jethro and I walk back up the hard shoulder to look for the glasses.'

'But you're blind?'

'Yes.'

'Are you hoping to hear the lost spectacles?'

'Look, it seemed like a good idea. Anyway, everyone driving past is apparently calling the gendarmes saying there are two madmen walking alongside the motorway. Jethro then gives up and goes back to the Aventador…'

'Hang on, so he abandons a blind man by the motorway?'

'Well, yes. Now you mention it, that does seem odd. But the police then came along and asked what on earth I thought I was doing, so I told them. They didn't believe me. And they believed me even less when I said there were two Lamborghinis just down the road waiting for me. But the joke was on them when they drove me down to the toll booths.

'Trouble was, I then had to take photos without my glasses for the next two days, and that involved a lot of instinct mixed with guesswork. Jethro still maintains that it's the best shoot I've ever done.' (You can judge for yourself in issue 184.)

'How did you even know what you were looking at?'

'Well, there was always a chance that I was taking photos of random white and red car shapes, but for the cornering shots I knew it must be Jethro approaching because nobody else would be stupid enough to drive that quickly at the corner making that much noise.

'The final ignominy was that when it was time to fly home, I had to be escorted through the airport by the staff because I couldn't read the signs or find the check-in desk. I tend to take two pairs of glasses with me on shoots these days.'

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997.2 GT3 RS » 480 BHP
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MCLAREN 675LT » 750BHP
MCLAREN 570/S » 680+BHP
MCLAREN 600LT » 680+BHP
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