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Ed speak



THIS MONTH HAS SEEN THE REVEAL OF two renewed automotive icons, models that over the decades have put in the hard miles to earn their place in the history books. Yet while one of these appears to have nailed the brief, the other hasn't. Well, not to me at least.

For five decades, the Range Rover has been unmistakeably a Range Rover. Admittedly the P38 left a little to be desired in the looks department, but it retained the key attributes that made it the car that rival manufacturers wanted to make but didn't have the confidence to. Today's fifth generation is a masterstroke of evolution, appealing to existing customers while having enough about it to attract new ones.

And then there is the new Mercedes SL. Except it's not a Mercedes SL, it's a Mercedes-AMG SL, because for the first time the performance arm of Mercedes-Benz has been left to design the next generation of the iconic roadster and, well, I think it's a bit of a let-down.

Now, in the Mercedes world where after decades of niche-filling it's hastily rowing back to simplify its line-up, the SL has more than one role to play and I get that. It will, eventually, replace the SL, the GT Roadster, and the S-class cabriolet, which on a balance sheet undoubtedly makes sense. But to my mind the SL elegance has been replaced by AMG brutishness inside and out and I can't help but think the GT Roadster aesthetic should have been sacrificed in order to retain the SL's classic appeal. After all, one has a near 70-year legacy, the other has barely been in production for a tenth of that time.

There are, hopefully, people within Daimler who understand this stuff better than me, but I fear that chasing fickle new customers at the cost of ignoring reliable existing ones is a decision they might come to regret.

Stuart Gallagher, Editor *@stuartg917*

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Driven

by STEVE SUTCLIFFE

Chevrolet Corvette Stingray Convertible

The C8 Vette has arrived in Europe at last, with strong spec and pricing, right-hand drive available and – best of all – a chassis that has the measure of our roads

DT'S HARD NOT TO FEEL A BIT SORRY FOR the folks at Chevrolet, specifically for their representatives in Europe. At the beginning of 2020 they were all revved up about selling us the new eighth-generation, mid-engined C8 Corvette on this side of the pond. And in the UK the excitement must have been especially intense given that the car was going to be factory built in right-hand drive for the very first time.

To whet our appetites we drove the new Vette out in the US and, bar some mild reservations about its styling, we reckoned it was ready to take on the best European sports cars that less than £100k could buy. It bore all the hallmarks of being a 911 rival but for Cayman money, plus, of course, it had a big old 6.2-litre V8 in its belly with not a turbocharger in sight. Nice.

And then the you-know-what happened, which meant the whole 'Corvette comes to Europe' campaign was put on ice for the thick end of two years, and the excitement surrounding the car inevitably faded. Yet here we are, all that time later, and the all-new Corvette Stingray is finally with us, and despite the financial difficulties that recent events must have presented Chevrolet with, it's still going to be made in right-hand drive.

The engine is essentially the exact same dry-sumped 6.2-litre V8 that we sampled in the States, except it's been mildly detuned to meet Europe's stricter emissions regulations. Power is down from 490bhp to 475bhp and torque has dropped a touch too, from 465lb ft to 452lb ft. The revs at which that peak torque figure is generated has also lowered a fraction, although thankfully the fundamental character of the engine hasn't been affected.

What has altered in the meantime is the price, but in a good way. The fully loaded Convertible 3LT tested here costs £85,150, which is a bit less than we thought it might be 18 months ago. But it's the entry-level coupe in slightly less well equipped 2LT specification that's the real bargain of the European range. It comes with the same engine and eight-speed dual-clutch gearbox, and the same chassis and suspension as the 3LT Convertible, yet costs just £77,200. On paper that seems like astonishing value, even beside the cheapest Porsche 911, which costs over seven grand more, isn't as well equipped and produces 95bhp less from its turbocharged, 3-litre, six-cylinder engine.

As we know, however, the world has gone a



little bit bonkers ecologically since the very first C8 sketches were being drawn up back in 2011, and electric vehicles have become the go-to solution. This means the resolutely naturally aspirated new V8-engined Corvette can be viewed in one of two ways: either as an instant relic or, maybe, a much-needed blast of fresh air, delivered unashamedly up both nostrils via a quartet of brass-coloured exhaust pipes.

Fortunately, there is still a market for cars that do things the old-fashioned way, and although it’s a cutting-edge design in much of its thinking, at its core the new Stingray is, shall we say, a fairly traditional kind of sports car. It’s a pretty damn exciting one to drive, too, with a fundamentally well set-up chassis, good steering, excellent brakes and that thundering V8 at the centre of its personality.

In time there will be a hybrid version, and the nutcase Z06 with a flat-plane-crank V8 has just been announced too. But as a starting point, the car you see here is oozing with raw appeal. This is aided in European specification by the standard fitment of the Z51 Performance Package, which adds uprated brakes and suspension, a performance exhaust, a shorter final drive ratio, an electronic limited-slip differential, a heavy-





Above left and right: hard-top retracts to a space over the engine compartment in 17 seconds and at road speeds up to 31mph. **Left:** V8 down by 15bhp in Europe

duty cooling system, a front splitter and rear spoiler, and Michelin Pilot Sport 4 S tyres – but not, of course, the 5bhp uplift to 495bhp that Z51 brings in the States.

While power is down for the C8 in Europe, its weight, at first glance, appears to have gone up. This is because in its homeland Chevrolet quotes 'dry' figures, which see the coupe register at 1530kg. However, include all the fluids that you need to actually drive the car, such as oil and coolant and petrol, and that becomes 1655kg. And for the convertible you can make that 1692kg. So it's no lightweight, being well over 100kg heavier than any 911 you might reasonably want to compare it with. Then again, it's in the same ballpark as, say, an Aston Martin Vantage or an Audi R8, although the latter does have two extra cylinders and four-wheel drive.

Does all this spoil the new Corvette's overall appeal? No. Do the reduced outputs remove the edge from its ultimate ability to entertain? Yes, maybe just a little bit, but in overall terms it hasn't impacted too much on the enjoyment factor it delivers on the move. And it still has the same great driving position, the same driver-focused cabin design, the same ability to paint a very big smile across your chops.

For starters, it's a lot more delicate in its dynamic approach than any previous Corvette, with a precision to its controls and a deftness to its responses that drivers of traditional front-engined Corvettes would struggle, and fail, to recognise. From its steering to its brake feel (which can be adjusted via six different drive modes) to its ride – controlled on our test car by £1940 of Magnetic Ride adaptive dampers – it just works. Even over the notoriously tough roads around the Nürburgring, where we drove it for a couple of days.

The gearbox is particularly good, with a PDK-like snap to its response that will go a long way towards compensating for the fact that there is no manual version available this time. As for the V8, it's a very good engine, a charismatic one to listen to for sure, but not quite one of the all-time greats. It percolates with energy and sounds peachy between 4000 and 6000rpm, but it never quite sends shivers up your spine somehow.

The raw performance is similar in a way, in that it's strong but never quite heroically so. Coupe or convertible, zero to 62mph takes 3.5sec, claims Corvette, and is aided by a full launch control system. The top speed is 184mph, which is just two mph more than that quoted for a Cayman/Boxster GTS 4.0. Just guessing, I'd say the 0-100mph time might be in the mid to high eight-second bracket. That's nowhere near what the bigger-hitting mid-engined cars from Europe can achieve, most of which are in the mid or even sub sixes to 100mph, and almost all of which will nudge or top 200mph.

What's not in much doubt is the way the Corvette goes about dismantling a really decent, ideally twisty and bumpy piece of road, the lumpier the better if Magnetic Ride is fitted, it seems. This bodes well for the way the car should behave over a typical UK B-road. The suspension control is excellent, even over some quite naughty road surfaces we found near the Ring. There's not much roll, or to be more precise what roll there is is kept in check extremely well, and the traction generated is deeply impressive. Even in the drying damp it could take near-enough full beans in second gear without the TC light flickering for the briefest of moments, with



almost no perceptible killing of the throttle to interrupt the flow of forward motion.

Turn it all off – which you can do with a long press of a single button, which is refreshing – and even then it'll take big throttle openings in low gears and still not break traction easily. The rear suspension clearly works a treat in this respect, as does the diff, otherwise there wouldn't be anywhere near as much purchase from the 20-inch rear Michelins. Then again, the level of pure thrust available isn't actually all that crackers: there's enough torque but never too much, which again is quite refreshing in an era of faster/bigger/crazier everything. But as we say, those versions will come later.

The front end isn't half bad, either, to a point where the mid-engined Corvette always feels nicely balanced on turn-in, especially so once it's settled into its stance mid-corner. Trouble is, while there is precision aplenty plus a decent level of accuracy to the steering, feel at the square-jawed rim itself is a wee bit lacking. The steering seems a touch digital in its weighting and response, so although you can usually put the nose to within an inch or so of where you want it to be in most corners, there's still a whiff of e-sports to the experience. Maybe that's being a bit cruel, maybe not. Either way, a Cayman or a 911 or an R8 each has sweeter steering overall in the opinion of this particular tester.

Those upgraded brakes, on the other hand, are mighty, with borderline 911-like power and stability under big applications. They also have great feel and touch under lighter loads, and suffered from zero fade during our time with the car, despite plenty of to-ing and fro-ing on steep-ish winding roads while the filming a video for our YouTube channel.

The cockpit of the new Vette is a pretty nice environment from which to conduct proceedings, too, even if the decently supportive electric driver's seat doesn't go quite as low as some folks might want, me included. The main instruments are all digital and alter in design as you scroll up through the six different drive modes: Weather, Tour, Sport, Track, Individual and Z. The first five of these are accessed via a stiffly sprung rotational control down on the centre console. But the Z mode is activated via a separate wheel-mounted button and allows you to set the car up just-so, meaning you can switch into your own personal 'max attack' mode at the mere prod of just one button, much like you can in a BMW M-car.

The cabin works well ergonomically in other areas too, the whole cockpit – including the 10-inch central touchscreen – being angled towards, and therefore focused on, whoever is behind the wheel. Visibility is extremely good for a mid-engined car, and so is the boot space. The amount of luggage capacity doesn't change one iota in the convertible, either, no matter if the hard-top is up or down. The coupe, incidentally, has a removable roof panel that can be stowed in the rear boot, but this means you loose luggage space when it's in there. So the convertible is actually the more practical of the two.

Better still, on the move you can't really tell much difference dynamically between coupe and convertible because, says Corvette, they are both equally as stiff as one another and ride on exactly the same suspension settings.

Whichever version floats your boat, the all-new Vette is clearly an awful lot of sports car for the money. True, its clipped outputs and chunky-ish weight mean it doesn't go quite as hard as we hoped it would, but in the overall scheme these are not vital flaws. It's still more than quick enough for the money.



Above left: cockpit is distinctly driver-focused; rotary drive mode selector sits beneath the leather palm rest on the central console; flowing 'buttress' element has buttons for climate control and seat heating/vents

‘The all-new Vette is clearly an awful lot of sports car for the money’

What could be an issue is the way it looks, because not everyone likes what they see when they encounter this car in the flesh for the first time. But this is inevitable, I guess, given the C8’s design team has been asked to apply traditional styling touches to a shape they’ve never been applied to before.

Then again, if you *do* like what you see, the rest of the package is difficult to ignore for the money. And even if you’re not all that sold on the looks, the way this car drives is hard to argue against. Very hard indeed.

Engine V8, 6162cc **Power** 475bhp @ 6450rpm
Torque 452lb ft @ 4500rpm **Weight** 1692kg (285bhp/ton)
0-62mph 3.5sec **Top speed** 184mph **Basic price** £82,200

\+ Strong V8 engine, good brakes, excellent gearbox, fine value
− Not as quick as we were hoping

evo rating ★★★★½

by STUART GALLAGHER

Audi RS3

Think you know what to expect from the new RS3? Think again, because this latest version is a car transformed

AUDI'S RS3 HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE automotive kid who has everything handed to them on a plate but still managed to flunk it all and achieve very little. It's failed to capitalise on the unique characteristics of its five-cylinder engine, make the most of its four-wheel drive, or take advantage of having the might of Audi Sport in its corner. It has, instead, had more of a 'that will do' approach to life, which is why it leaves many disappointed and signing up for Ford RS, Honda Type R and VW R models instead. And in more recent times, AMG's hot and hyper-hatches.

All this could be about to change, because the new RS3 feels more the honed hyper-hatch – or, as pictured here, compact saloon – than a sales box-ticking exercise. It retains the key ingredients of its predecessor, many of which have been tickled rather than overhauled, such as the 2.5-litre five-pot. Peak power remains at 394bhp, although it arrives earlier in the rev range and hangs around for longer, much like the 369lb ft of torque (up 15lb ft).

That distinctive and charismatic five-cylinder engine still sounds superb despite particulate filters and WLTP's best efforts, and it transforms the humdrum A3 into something truly desirable. Its capacity and cylinder count provide a naturally strong shove of low-down torque, the turbocharger then adding the top-end fizz to remind you that nearly 400bhp in a car with a relatively small footprint is always going to be exciting.

What doesn't help the RS3's powertrain is its ageing and slow seven-speed S-tronic (dual-clutch) gearbox. Its ratios are quite short, to help with the 3.8sec 0-62mph time, which means the next ratio is never far from being called upon. And this is where the problem lies, as the slow shift speeds can result in you headbutting the hard rev-limiter, which stalls everything for what feels like an eternity. The 'box is also slow to downshift, regardless of whether it's left

in auto or you have resorted to using the paddles (woefully small and cheap feeling, as per many VW Group products), so you find yourself planning every up and downshift with far more detail than you should have to in a car with an automatic gearbox.

An explanation as to why the powertrain now feels out of its depth is because of the work that has gone into the RS3's chassis. Previously this drivetrain shone when mixed with a rather dimly lit dynamic package, but now the RS3 has found its mojo the tables have turned.

There is nothing revolutionary going on at each corner when it comes to the chassis, but

'It feels more than a highly polished S3, it feels more bespoke, more individual'

the small changes have yielded some pretty big results. Springs and anti-roll bars are stiffer and the dampers feature a new valve system to improve sensitivity, rebound and compression characteristics. There's up to one degree of additional front negative camber (half a degree on the rear) above a regular A3, requiring stronger bearings and a stiffer subframe. The four-point multi-link rear suspension also includes stiffer wheel carriers. Opt for the optional RS Dynamic pack and the suspension can be tweaked further still in terms of more specific damper settings.

On the road, it makes for an RS3 that no longer gets caught out by every imperfection or thrown offline if the lines on the road are painted too thick. It deals with the majority of compressions







Right: 19-inch wheels with either Bridgestone Potenza Sport or Pirelli P Zero tyres (265/30 front, 245/35 rear) are standard; Trofeo Rs are an option – but not in the UK



as if they simply aren't there, and those too big to ignore no longer have the car crashing and thumping through and out of them, so your spine isn't shattered and the RS3 continues to travel in the direction of your choice.

There's also more poise and precision, turn-in is neater and quicker, and your backside and palms of your hands have a better feeling and understanding of what's going on beneath and ahead of you. This feels more than a highly polished S3, it feels more bespoke, more individual, and all the better for it.

Also key to these attributes is the new RS Torque Splitter that sits on the rear axle. Replacing the traditional single clutch pack, the Torque Splitter has an electronically controlled clutch on each driveshaft designed to increase torque to the outer rear wheel during cornering and to therefore nip understeer in the bud. As a by-product, if you switch the traction aids off it will also allow you to drift until the tyres shred.

But while the smoky four-wheel drifts are fun, the way the Torque Splitter brings the RS3 to life on the road is where it gets interesting. Even on the standard Bridgestone Potenza Sport tyre fitted to the test cars (the UK has elected not to offer the optional Pirelli P Zero Trofeo R because it didn't think the demand would be there) the RS3's nose is keener than that of any Audi we've driven to clip the apex of a corner as cleanly as possible, the centre of the car pivoting around your hips and the rear being more mobile than expected but not wayward.

Keep the throttle and steering inputs clean and you can carry some serious corner speed; widen the throttle opening before you wind the lock off and you'll need a quarter-turn of corrective lock as you head along the next straight. It's no BMW M-car, but it does make for an unexpectedly rewarding experience, turning the RS3 from a point-and-squirt machine into an engaging and entertaining one. In quicker turns the Torque Splitter continues to work for you, the car settling on its haunches, curtailing any desire for the nose to push and allowing it to maintain its line. The blunt instrument has been well and truly sharpened.

However, the improvements to the chassis, and especially those resulting from the Torque Splitter, bring us back to the engine and its less than lightning fast reaction times. Be too aggressive with your throttle adjustment either way and the systems think you have gone too far or no longer want to play and so stop the fun, the RS3 pulling itself straight as soon as possible. And it's a similar situation with the variable-rate steering if you wind off the lock too quickly. The latter could be solved with more attention to detail applied to the steering calibration, but the former would require a drivetrain rethink, which requires more than some dev time with a laptop and a test driver's super-sensitive hands. A deal-breaker? Only if you want to enter your RS3 into drift competitions.

It was previously the case that you found yourself making excuses for the RS3. It wasn't as sharp as its rivals, but it was better built. It didn't ride as well, but it had more traction than you could possibly need. And down a straight, it was serious sports car quick. Those excuses are pretty much gone and the RS3 is now a genuine contender.

Engine In-line 5-cyl, 2480cc, turbo **Power** 394bhp @ 5600-7000rpm **Torque** 369lb ft @ 2250-5600rpm
Weight Saloon: 1575kg (254bhp/ton); Sportback: 1570kg (255bhp/ton) **0-62mph** 3.8sec **Top speed** 155mph (limited)
Basic price Saloon: £51,900; Sportback £50,900

+ Chassis tech makes the RS3 a contender
− Engine and gearbox hold it back

evo rating ★★★★☆















WITH TORQUE VECTORING CONTROL. THE SUV THAT READS CORNERS.

Ford | BRING ON TOMORROW

Model shown is a Ford Puma ST 5-Door. 1.5 EcoBoost 200PS (147W) 6 speed manual with optional 19″ Magnetite Machined Finish Alloy Wheels and Metallic Paint. Fuel economy mpg (l/100km), (Combined) 41.5 (6.8). CO_2 emissions 155g/km.

Figures shown are for comparability purposes; only compare fuel consumption and CO_2 figures with other cars tested to the same technical procedures. These figures may not reflect real life driving results, which will depend upon a number of factors including the accessories fitted, variations in weather, driving style and vehicle load.

ford.co.uk

by ADAM TOWLER PHOTOGRAPHY *by* ASTON PARROTT

BMW M3 Competition xDrive

A four-wheel-drive M3 sounds like heresy, but the reality is quite brilliant



I THINK I CAN GUESS WHAT SOME OF you are thinking. Is it not bad enough that the latest BMW M3 – and the M4 for that matter – weighs significantly more than the last one? That it's switched to a torque converter automatic gearbox? Not exactly the stuff of Steve Soper and Roberto Ravaglia yumping their E30 M3 touring cars at The Ring, is it? And I haven't even mentioned the divisive styling yet... And now there's this, an M3 with four-wheel drive. *Humph*. It's enough to make an M-car purist cry into their pint of Warsteiner.

However, don't be taking to sniffing the Wintershall rocket fuel just yet, because given the glittering run of form that BMW M has been on lately, and just what a frankly superb and broadly talented car they've created in the rear-wheel-drive M3 (and M4), only a fool would dismiss this four-wheel-drive version without further investigation. So, the real question is not so much whether the BMW's all-weather ability and general traction is improved – that's a given – but whether the 4WD car is as enjoyable, and as fast, as its more traditionally driven twin.

The xDrive set-up is similar to the one used on the M5 in that it uses an electronically controlled multi-plate clutch in the transfer case, and in normal driving is rear-wheel drive. Only when there's a loss of grip at the rear axle do the front wheels come into play, their keenness to intervene depending on whether the car is in its standard 4WD setting or in 4WD Sport, the latter biased more to rear-wheel drive.

As with the M5, you can also choose to disable the ESP system completely and then force the car into a purely rear-wheel-drive setting, too. Much of the 4WD hardware is bespoke for the M3/M4, and it also has its own front suspension tuning and geometry over the rear-drive car, while the engine's oil system has been upgraded too.

Visually, you can't distinguish an xDrive-equipped M3 from a rear-wheel-drive one. There's no subtle badge, no difference in body trim or wheel design. And the first big surprise is that it's almost impossible to tell from behind the wheel that you're driving the four-wheel-drive version.

With, say, a Porsche 911, the difference between a Carrera 2 and a Carrera 4 is immediately obvious, due to changes in the weight and general feel of the steering. But driving **evo**'s RWD Fast Fleet M3 and this one over the same piece of road, one after the other, I really couldn't tell the difference when driving normally, which is a hugely impressive act of hardware integration on M's part in itself.

Moreover, while there's a 50kg weight penalty for the extra driveshafts and associated gubbins, as a percentage of the standard car's already-portly 1730kg kerb weight it's a small one: such a gain would make a noticeable difference to a lightweight sports car, but here much less so, and







‘Force it into purely rear drive and it’ll drift for Munich’

the xDrive car feels no less obscenely rapid or responsive to the throttle than our RWD M3.

As you up the pace, the xDrive possesses a tremendous sense of surefootedness under power. It’s not that it won’t begin to rotate with plenty of throttle, but just when you sense an application of lock might be needed the car blasts out of the corner as if the rear tyres have just doubled in grip, but without the obvious tugging from the front wheels to signify they’ve suddenly been called to the coalface. It’s almost spooky in how well it masks what’s going on, but the upshot is that the M3’s ultimate cross-country pace has gone up another notch from an already devastating level.

This can be further heightened by the fitment of the optional Michelin Cup 2 tyre, which we’ve also now tried on both cars. A Cup 2-shod xDrive has to be one of the quickest, if not *the* quickest way of getting from point A to B, melding grip, traction, any-time torque and brutal power into a device that occasionally feels like some kind of insanity.

At Bedford Autodrome, running Cup 2s, the xDrive is stunningly effective. 4WD Sport feels like rear-wheel drive, and it’ll even allow you to power oversteer, but when the corner exit arrives it pulls the car forward and you’re no longer a prisoner to traction at the rear. The special bit is how smooth and organic it makes this transition, with no snatch from the front and no well-timed steering correction required as the front end bites. It also warms up its Cup 2s faster than the rear-drive M3, and ends up easily a second faster with a time

Above: xDrive is easily a second faster around Bedford’s West Circuit than our rear-drive M3 – and, crucially, every bit as much fun if you switch to 4WD Sport mode

virtually as quick as a PDK Cayman GT4’s (we’ll post a video on our YouTube channel shortly). And of course, you can force it into purely rear-drive anyway, in which case it’ll drift for Munich and smoke its rears to oblivion every bit as well as the rear-drive car. So all in all, while it may be difficult for the purists to overlook the rear-drive car, it’s hard not to see the xDrive as the optimum M3.

Engine In-line 6-cyl, 2993cc, twin-turbo
Power 503bhp @ 6250rpm **Torque** 479lb ft @ 2750-5500rpm
Weight 1780kg (287bhp/ton) **0-62mph** 3.5sec
Top speed 155mph (limited) **Basic price** £78,425

\+ Still huge fun, still rabidly quick
\- The slight weight penalty?

evo rating ★★★★★

IGNITION

NEWS, INTERVIEWS, TECH AND EVERY NEW CAR THAT MATTERS

All change for new SL

New V8 engines, four-wheel drive, 2+2 seating, a fabric roof and trick suspension for AMG-engineered convertible

by JORDAN KATSIANIS



MERCEDES-AMG HAS REVEALED THE all-new SL, the next instalment of the iconic '*Sport Leicht*' series that has been in production for almost 70 years. The new model sees a number of changes over its predecessor, returning to a fabric soft-top and a 2+2 layout. Unlike previous SLs, this one has been designed and engineered by AMG from the ground up, and, according to Mercedes, it shares nothing with the previous model, or AMG's GT Roadster, despite looking near identical to the latter.

It will be launched initially with two V8 engine options, both connected to a nine-speed automatic transmission and all-wheel drive. A plug-in hybrid E Performance model will also eventually join the range. The engines are lightly modified versions of the M177 hot-V V8 found elsewhere in the AMG line-up, sharing its 3982cc swept capacity and two twin-scroll turbochargers mounted between the cylinder banks. For its application in the SL, the V8 features a wet sump (unlike AMG GT models, which have a dry-sump system and therefore a different M178 engine code), as well as repositioned intercoolers and an active cooling system for the crankcase.

The SL63 version has a peak power figure of 577bhp from 5500-6500rpm, with 560lb ft of torque peaking at just 2500rpm. The SL55 produces 469bhp and 517lb ft of torque – identical figures to the original R230 SL55 launched back in 2002.

The new 2+2 packaging has led to the SL growing in physical size, stretching to 4705mm in length, with a wheelbase that's 114mm longer. It is also 38mm wider and 43mm taller than the previous SL.







Above: GT Roadster-style body clothes an all-new aluminium spaceframe and four-wheel-drive chassis; dashboard is dominated by 11.9-inch touchscreen

Perhaps unsurprisingly, it's not just its physical dimensions that have grown but so too its weight, which at 1970kg for the SL63 is around 100kg up on the previous-generation R231 and a huge 260kg up on a Porsche 911 Turbo Cabriolet. The new fabric roof (which saves 21kg) is able to be operated at up to 40mph, and neatly Z-folds into its stowed position in just 15 seconds.

All SL models will feature coil springs and adaptive dampers, but SL63s (and SL55s with the AMG Dynamic handling package) will debut AMG's application of hydraulically cross-linked dampers with an integrated active anti-roll system. This system works like the one pioneered by McLaren, allowing the SL to do without traditional anti-roll bars entirely.

As for its design, well, the SL's sleek new look pairs traditional cab-rear open-top proportions with Merc's current design language, which has been developed under the jurisdiction of design boss Gordon Wagner. An emphasis has been placed on keeping the bonnet line as low as possible over the front arches, while the soft rear has grown to accommodate those plus-two seats.

With AMG taking responsibility for the SL the result is a more exuberant exterior and interior design, and a chassis and powertrain focused on performance – two things the SL has often shied away from and been a better car for it. Here's hoping that iconic SL appeal isn't lost in the transition.



Rearranged Rover

Fifth-generation Range Rover is a story of evolutionary looks, a BMW-sourced twin-turbo V8, and new heights of luxury

IT'S NOT THE CAR YOU TAKE FOR THAT life-affirming dawn drive on a summer's morning. But it is likely to be a guilty pleasure amongst many of us. The Range Rover is an **evo** car but not in the traditional sense.

And here's the fifth generation, with an evolutionary new look, an interior that puts many first-class airline cabins to shame, and new or updated powertrains to accompany the tech that it's hoped will keep the world's original SUV relevant for the decade ahead.

The Range Rover has no direct rival, the competition avoiding going head-to-head to sidestep an unsightly mauling. It means the team behind it enjoy the freedom to focus on what their customers want rather than chasing rivals. And if they've nailed the reliability, there's no reason why the new version can't continue to be the go-to choice for those with the £94,400 that ownership starts at.

1. Powertrains

Out with the supercharged 5-litre V8, in with BMW's 4.4-litre 523bhp twin-turbocharged V8. The bulk of the sales will come from the wider choice of Land Rover's six-cylinder 48-volt 503bhp and 434bhp petrol plug-ins, 394bhp mild-hybrid and two diesel engines with the same electric offering. A full BEV arrives in 2024. An eight-speed transmission is coupled to Land Rover's latest All-Terrain Response technology, while air suspension and four-wheel steering are both standard.

2. Design

If it ain't broke, etc. The biggest change is at the rear with a swept-in tail to reduce the appearance of bulk and some neat detailing that 'disguises' the rear lights and turn indicators until required.

There's still a split tailgate, although not the 50/50 of old; two wheelbase lengths will be offered from launch, and the window frames are seamless with no exposed rubbers or frames in a bid to improve drag and reduce wind noise. And while the front looks familiar, Land Rover says every area has been redesigned and improved, with a focus on improving the quality of the materials used.

3. Interior

We live in a world where luxury rules and the new Range Rover's interior takes the marque to a whole new level. Three seating configurations are offered – 4, 5 and 7 – and the choice of materials has been widened. Leather is still an option, but so too are more sustainable materials. Open-pore wood veneers replace the over-polished plastic trim of old, but you can also select anything from cool metals to polished ceramics. Some motorised trim elements are replaced with carefully engineered mechanical parts to provide a more tactile feel.







by JOHN BARKER

New Conti shines on track

SportContact 7 impresses in first test; bespoke versions available for everything from hot hatches to SUVs





WE DON'T ATTEND MANY TYRE LAUNCHES, chiefly because driving a new tyre is rather pointless unless you have something to compare it with, some way of verifying or refuting claims made for it. Generally we prefer to conduct our annual tyre test, which gives direct comparisons in controlled conditions (see page 113). However, the launch of the SportContact 7, Continental's new UHP (Ultra High Performance) tyre, was a bit different.

Its predecessor, the SportContact 6, has been a solid performer but it's been around for six years, so you'd expect the new tyre to be better. Wet and dry braking distances are claimed to be improved by 8 and 6 per cent respectively but on top of this the new tyre comes with a service life extended by 17 per cent, and gives 10 per cent more track mileage. All with a rolling resistance rating of C (mid) when many of the best UHP tyres are D or E (the worst). Continental says it's a more bespoke tyre, too, with carcass construction optimised for different applications – hot hatches, saloons, SUVs and EVs.

It quickly became clear that Continental wanted us to drive the new tyre hard. The first exercise at its proving ground near Hannover, Germany, was fast laps of the dry handling circuit in the front-drive Hyundai i30 N and rear-drive Toyota Supra 3.0. I know the place well and was in the first group out, so got the best of the tyres. The 'warm-up' lap behind the pace car was brisk, the second lap flat-out, the Hyundai proving poised, accurate and grippy. The gutsy Supra is an edgier, more demanding car yet the new tyre tamed it and made it more balanced and predictable than I've known it.

So far so good. The greater test, though, is in the wet. For this exercise Continental had boldly laid on a squadron of 415bhp, four-wheel-drive Mercedes-AMG A45 Ss. Half were shod with the SportContact 6, half with the new SportContact 7 and we were able to do batches of laps on each.

My first run was on the new tyre and I could feel the strong bite turning into the corners... which led to some snappy oversteer moments. Swapping onto the SportContact 6, the softer front-end bite meant you didn't load the A45's rear as much or as quickly, which made it feel more flowing.

Thanks to many hours spent slithering round here on tyre tests, I had by now been reminded of all the nuances of nailing a good lap. Switching back to the SportContact 7 was a revelation, the improvement now abundantly clear. With stronger turn-in bite and mid-corner grip, the A45 felt much more positive, with clearer feedback that allowed traction to be more fully exploited. In a couple of turns, picking up the throttle sooner would blend turn-in oversteer into easy power oversteer at the exit, keeping things fast and flowing. It felt a chunk quicker than the SportContact 6. Continental says it's 5sec a lap faster around the wet handling circuit – 78 versus 83sec - which is massive. We're very impressed and look forward to seeing how it performs in our next tyre test.

The SportContact 7 is on sale now, initially in 30 sizes from 19 to 23in in diameter, with more sizes scheduled to arrive throughout 2022.

evo trackdays 2022 are go!

Oulton Park joins the circuit line-up for our extended trackday calendar

AS THE SUN SET ON THE 2021 **evo** track season finale, we were already planning our 2022 schedule. And now we can share our plans and you can book your space.

Thank you to all who joined us at Bedford Autodrome, Brands Hatch and Goodwood throughout 2021. Your approach to each event and how you drove was commented on by all three venues as some of the best they have witnessed on a trackday regardless of the event, so thank you. And a huge thank you to Audi UK, who supported our evening events by bringing along the two ends of its performance car spectrum in the guise of the rear-wheel-drive R8 and the RS e-tron GT for attendees to drive.

Now it's time to look ahead to 2022. We currently have nine events scheduled at our three mainstay circuits: evenings at Bedford and Brands Hatch and full days at Goodwood, and for 2022 we are really excited to also be adding a full day at Oulton Park, a circuit that needs no introduction. It's set to be a cracking day.

So pick your dates, book your space and we'll see you in the pitlane!

NEED TO KNOW

Bedford Autodrome, Brands Hatch & Oulton Park

- Price include main driver plus one additional driver
- Event photography
- Tuition (bookable at sign-on, limited availability)
- Helmet hire
- Third additional driver only £50 (£100 at Oulton Park)
- Discounts available

Goodwood Motor Circuit

- 30-car capacity
- Unlimited tea, coffee & water throughout the day
- Breakfast, lunch and afternoon tea for all drivers
- Preferential room rates at the Goodwood Hotel
- Additional driver £210 (includes catering)
- Helmet hire

2022 EVO TRACKDAY SCHEDULE

Date	Circuit	Format	Price
20 May	Bedford Autodrome south west	Evening	**£199** (3rd driver only £50)
30 May	Goodwood	Full day	**£429** (2nd driver £210)
31 May	Goodwood	Full day	**£429** (2nd driver £210)
17 June	Bedford Autodrome south west	Evening	**£199** (3rd driver £50)
29 June	Oulton Park International	Full day	**£349** (3rd driver £100)
12 July	Goodwood	Full day	**£429** (2nd driver £210)
16 August	Brands Hatch Indy	Evening	**£199** (3rd driver £50)
1 September	Goodwood	Full day	**£429** (2nd driver £210)
9 September	Bedford Autodrome south west	Evening	**£199** (3rd driver £50)

SAVE WITH EVO!

Book four spaces at any of our evening events* and save 15% off the total price – a £119.40 saving!
Receive a 10% discount if you book both Goodwood days in May.
* Book four spaces at one event, or one space at all four evening events, or pick n' mix to suit you.

EVENT TIMETABLE

- Evening events run from 5pm through to 8pm (MSV reserve the right to end the session earlier if bad light)
- Full-day events run from 9am through to 5pm with a one-hour break for lunch
- Noise restrictions apply at all circuits. Please visit evotrackdays.co.uk for all circuit-specific restrictions, along with booking terms and conditions.



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MY LIFE & CARS

Dickie Stanford

F1 race mechanic and team manager

Team manager at Williams during the team's 1990s glory days, Dickie Stanford has had a lifelong love affair with motorsport

by BRETT FRASER

FOR A BLOKE WHO CONFESSES TO having no formal training in mechanical engineering, Richard 'Dickie' Stanford seems to have done all right for himself. Williams Grand Prix Engineering Formula 1 race mechanic for Nigel Mansell and then a key member of the test team. Later, chief mechanic for Williams. Then Williams team manager during the team's golden years: he has the distinction of being the last Williams team manager to lift a Constructors' trophy, back in 1997. He was with the team for five Drivers' Championship titles and seven Constructors' titles, and worked with some of the greatest names in motorsport: Frank Williams, Patrick Head and Adrian Newey; Nigel Mansell, Riccardo Patrese, Alain Prost, Ayrton Senna, Damon Hill, David Coulthard, Jacques Villeneuve, Juan Pablo Montoya, Jenson Button and Ralf Schumacher, amongst others.

After a second stint as team manager, Stanford finally stepped down from the role in 2014, having reached the conclusion that spending only 55 days in the UK during a year was probably his 'enough's enough' moment. He stuck with Williams, though, taking on the position of general manager of the then newly resurrected Williams Heritage operation for superseded Grand Prix cars. And despite retiring from that job, he was persuaded to put the pipe and slippers on hold by Zak Brown, American businessman, CEO of McLaren Racing and co-owner of United Autosports, to become the latter outfit's Historic Motorsport project manager.

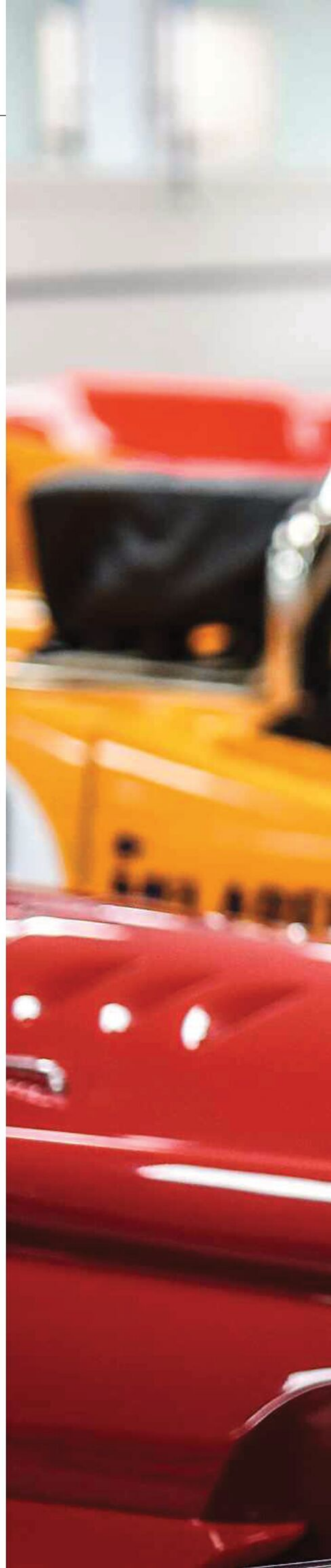
Born in Wiltshire in 1956, Stanford may not have entered motorsport with the traditional bunch of qualifications to his name, but his interest in motor racing started early. 'A neighbour took me to a club race meeting at a little local circuit called Castle Combe when I was about 12,' he recalls. 'And then we went to Brands Hatch to see the 1968 Race of Champions, which Bruce McLaren won. That was my first exposure to Formula 1 and after that it was all I ever wanted to do.

'My father was more interested in sending me into the Army or Air Force, and had no interest in motor racing whatsoever,' Stanford continues. 'For me, when I eventually left school I still only wanted to be involved in some sort of motor racing – I really wanted to be a racing driver. I had a chat with a chap I knew, who basically told me how expensive it was, and I came to the realisation very quickly that I wouldn't be able to afford to be a racing driver. So the next best thing would be to work with a team.'

That wasn't to happen immediately, however. For a couple of years after school, Stanford worked for the government – stockpiling emergency supplies of food in case of war – but then came a stroke of good fortune. 'I met a chap called Steve Coen who ran a Formula Ford. I asked if I could help him, get involved. So I spent my weekends pushing his Formula Ford around the paddocks and then worked on it with him during the evenings.

'Steve was a really good teacher and if you did something wrong you knew about it and didn't do it again! Over the course of about four years he taught me about gearboxes, chassis set-up, absolutely every aspect of the car. Everything I know about mechanics is thanks to him.'

Despite learning to drive on a tractor and an old Land Rover on the family farm when he was only ten, Stanford's brief outings in Coen's Formula Ford during test sessions re-affirmed his belief that he wasn't destined to be a racing driver. But he retained a long-term goal of working in F1 and knew he needed to move on to working with a team to progress down that path. Thruxton-based Scorpion Racing, owned by Mike Eastick, ran up to seven Formula Fords – and at the time prepared cars for Mike Thackwell, Jonathan Palmer and James Weaver – and provided Stanford's first full-time job in motorsport.




UNITED
AIRPORTS

After Scorpion came Tiga, which provided experience in Formula Sports 2000 sports cars and then Formula 3. When Tiga wound up its F3 activities, Stanford briefly took a 'normal' job, but then came a fortuitous phone call. 'One of the guys I'd worked with at Tiga rang telling me to get my arse down to Thruxton – he was working for Ron Tauranac and the Ralt Formula 2 team and they urgently needed a hand. At the end of the race weekend Ron offered me a job.

'So I did the last two years of Formula 2 with the Ralt Honda team and it was really the most enjoyable time I've spent in motor racing. It was professional but we had a lot of fun, plus we won the championship both years [1983 and 1984].'

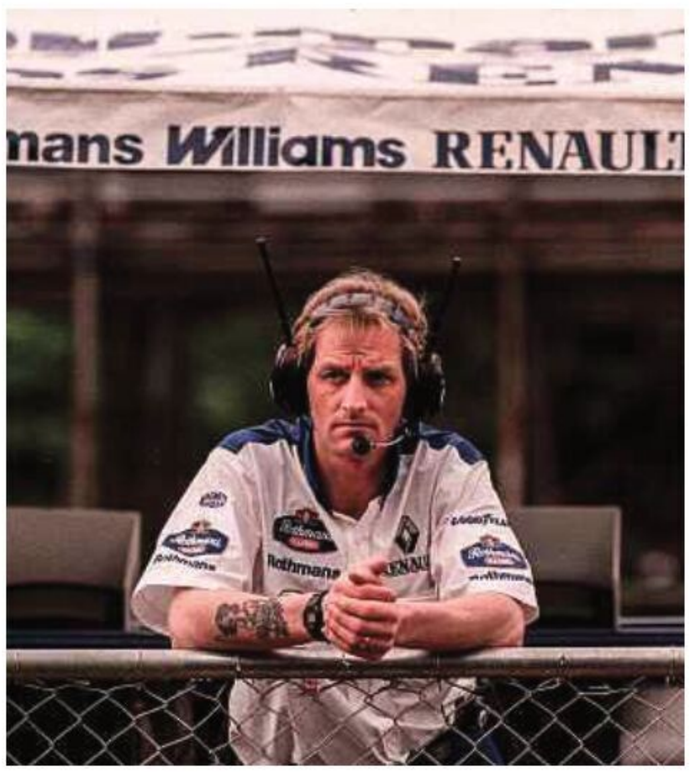
In the lead-up to his job at Ralt, Stanford had sewn the seeds of his future employment prospects. 'I was driving past the original Williams factory on my way home and thought I'd just stop and ask if they had any vacancies. Out of the blue I knocked on the door and Peter Collins [Williams' team manager] gave me a two-hour interview on the spot. But they weren't hiring anybody at the time. It was Collins who advised me to go away and get some F2 experience, which, of course, I then got with Ralt.'

And it was courtesy of Ralt that Stanford once more found himself inside Williams' front door two years later. 'In the winter of 1984 we started the shakedown tests of the Ralt Formula 3000 flat-bottomed car and, because it was on my way home, I was given the task of dropping off the wind tunnel model to be tested in the Williams wind tunnel. One night in December I arranged with Williams to have an interview when I dropped off the model – Peter Collins and Alan Chalice [chief mechanic] interviewed me and gave me a job there and then. I started work in January 1985 and was one of three mechanics on Nigel Mansell's car.'

Let's take a break at this juncture to quickly trawl through Stanford's road car history. He confesses to not being especially excited about fast road cars these days – 'Lamborghinis and Ferraris don't really interest me because you can't drive them at speed anywhere' – and his daily driver is a Nissan X-Trail, although he does also own a SEAT Leon FR estate. Of more interest are the cars he can't currently drive because they're in the throes of restoration.

One is a 'pagoda roof' Mercedes-Benz 250 SL that's been in his garage for about twelve and half years. 'I really wanted a Porsche but my first wife persuaded me to buy the Mercedes. Once I'd driven it, I fell in love with it. It's so relaxing, such a nice car to drive.' Stanford's other resto project is a Ford Sierra RS Cosworth, the whale-tail three-door version. 'I bought it slightly modified with about 300bhp. I've had some welding done on it and it's being painted at the moment. Once that's done I'll start working on the suspension and then pull out the engine.'

His very first car was a Mini that soon made way for a Ford Anglia. In turn this was replaced by a 'family car', a four-door Escort 1200. 'I did then progress to a 2-litre Capri GT,' he recalls, 'and later on an Audi



Coupe GT. A non-turbo Coupe GT quattro followed that, and then a proper Quattro, although I didn't keep it for long.' By 1992, Stanford was locked into company cars, Renaults and BMWs, depending on which was supplying Williams' engines at the time.

Stanford has so many great anecdotes from his time at Williams and we have so little space here... Of the Honda engine Williams used in 1985: 'It was still pretty unreliable and very thirsty with fuel. We'd start the race with maximum boost and then turn it down straight away, trying to get to the finish without running out of fuel.'

Computers in F1 were in their infancy in the mid-'80s, as Stanford explains. 'It was all done with slide rules,' he laughs. 'We had clipboards and sat down and discussed what the car was doing: engineers would talk to the drivers and then a job sheet would be drawn up outlining changes we needed to make.'

He worked as Mansell's mechanic until 1989, when he was persuaded to join the test team. 'During 1990 Adrian Newey joined the team and I did a few races as well as the testing. At the end of '90 Patrick Head asked me to become chief mechanic: I had been considering leaving to do Indy Cars and had a resignation letter in my bag when he spoke to me, so that letter never saw the light of day.

'At the time we had the best drivers and the best cars, the money and the equipment, it was great. We had Nigel and Riccardo in '91, in '92 Prost and Hill, and then Senna and Hill, and then Hill and David Coulthard, and then Hill and Jacques Villeneuve. You have to say that was probably Williams' best era, 1991 through to 1997.'

In 1994 Williams Renault won its third consecutive Constructors' Championship and at the end of the season Stanford was promoted to team manager: 'It was akin to being mum to 100 children. I thoroughly enjoyed the job but it was a lot of hard work. You were responsible for getting the entire team from A to B, whether it be trucks, personnel, whatever. You had to work out budgets. Attend countless meetings with the team and the FIA. And if anything went wrong regards the cars or regulations, it was down to the team manager – you're responsible for everything.'

Family issues prompted Stanford to ask for a factory-based role in 2006, but when his kids went off to university a couple of years later, he headed back out into the field as Williams' testing manager. Then in 2010 he was asked to reprise his role as team manager for the last six races of the season: he stayed on another four years. But at the end of the 2014 season, Stanford jumped down from the pit wall for the final time, moving on to Williams Heritage.

After all his many years at Williams, does Stanford have a favourite F1 car? 'I have two. The FWIIB, the Honda Turbo: it was such a beast of a car with over 1000bhp and no traction control. And the FW14A, which surprises a lot of people as they imagine I'd pick the 14B, the active ride car. The 14A was my hardest year as chief mechanic because for the first half of the season it was so unreliable. But in the second half it was the fastest car on the track and we just lost out to McLaren for the World Championship.'

And what of the drivers he worked with? 'Well, Riccardo [Patrese] was just as quick as Nigel in the 14A. And when Ralph [Schumacher] brought his A-game, he was as fast as Michael, as quick as anybody. Montoya wasn't worried about the ruffle-puffle of F1, he just wanted to race. Nigel sometimes wasn't the favourite driver of the garage but he could pull the whole place together – he'd come in every day and say good morning to every single person.'

Stanford's current job, along with Paul Haigh, at United Autosports exposes him to a greater variety of cars: boss Zak Brown has a large collection of ex-competition machinery and United's Historic Motorsports operation rebuilds and runs clients' historic race cars, and even restores road cars. 'It's great that Zak wants to drive his cars: at the moment we're running his Porsche 935, Lancia LC2 Group C, Cologne Ford Capri RS3100 and Jaguar XJR-10 IMSA car, as well as the ex-Lewis Hamilton MP4-27 McLaren and a Williams FW07B/7.'

Although now at retirement age, Stanford isn't disposed towards giving up work, despite the inconvenience of Wakefield-based United being 200 miles from home. 'I come up here on a Monday, go back home on a Friday. We're looking for a house up here to see if the family like it; we'll keep the house down south in case they don't. Then I'd need to decide whether to keep doing the drive, or call it a day. But I have no intention of calling it a day!'

Above and right: Stanford in his Williams F1 days, and (right) some of the key cars in his life. The Williams Honda FW11B is one of two favourite F1 cars – with its turbocharged Honda engine it had 'over 1000bhp and no traction control'. Mercedes SL 'Pagoda' and whale-tail Sierra RS Cosworth are two personal cars currently in the throes of restoration; Porsche 935 is part of the United Autosports stable, where Stanford currently works as project manager for the Historic Motorsport division



‘ONCE I’D DRIVEN THE SL, I FELL IN LOVE WITH IT’







AND FINALLY...

The news you might have missed this month

WHO DOESN'T LIKE THE IDEA OF A 21ST century Group A Sierra Cosworth RS500 with input from Mr Touring Cars himself, Andy Rouse? Exactly. Thankfully CNC Motorsport (**1**) is on the same page, sourcing three original bodyshells on which it will work with Rouse to build a trio of race cars eligible for the likes of the Silverstone Classic and Motor Racing Legends.

Each car will be powered by a 575bhp, 2-litre YB Ford engine, as per the originals, mated to a five-speed Getrag gearbox. Prices start at £185,000.

Tempted by the new C8 Corvette but want a little more go? Step forward the Z06 (**2**). With a handbuilt, dry-sumped 670bhp LT5 V8 engine that features a flat-plane crank, forged pistons and titanium con rods, the Z06 is set to be Chevrolet's answer to Lamborghini's Huracán STO and will be available as a coupe or roadster.

Corvette has yet to release a price or confirm if it will also be available in right-hand drive as per regular C8s (we doubt it, due to the cost of getting the engine through European emission regs), but there's always the personal import route.

One of the worst-kept automotive secrets is finally out with Porsche confirming it will build a Cayman GT4 RS (**3**) for the first time. To mark the announcement, the GT department headed for the Nürburgring Nordschleife to post a 7:04.05 lap time. The official reveal takes place at the Los Angeles motor show later this month.

As we closed for press, McLaren confirmed that its CEO, Mike Flewitt (**4**), is to stand down from the company after eight years in the role.

Flewitt has overseen the growth of McLaren Automotive from a single-model car company to one offering everything from the 540C to the LT family, plus Senna and Speedtail specials. The much-delayed Artura has also been on his watch, however. Michael Macht, a non-executive director of McLaren and former Porsche CEO, will share Flewitt's responsibilities with McLaren Group CEO Paul Walsh while a replacement is recruited.

1



2



4



3



WATCHES



Seiko Speedtimer Solar Chronograph

£590 seikowatches.com

Seiko has resurrected its Speedtimer model name for this new chronograph, which pays homage to the 1969 original but gains a modern solar-powered movement.



Nomos Autobahn Director's Cut A7

£3800 nomos-glashuette.com

Nomos has expanded its motoring-themed Autobahn range with three new limited editions with even more striking dial designs. Each is named after a major German motorway.



Omega Speedmaster Chronoscope

From £7140 omega.com

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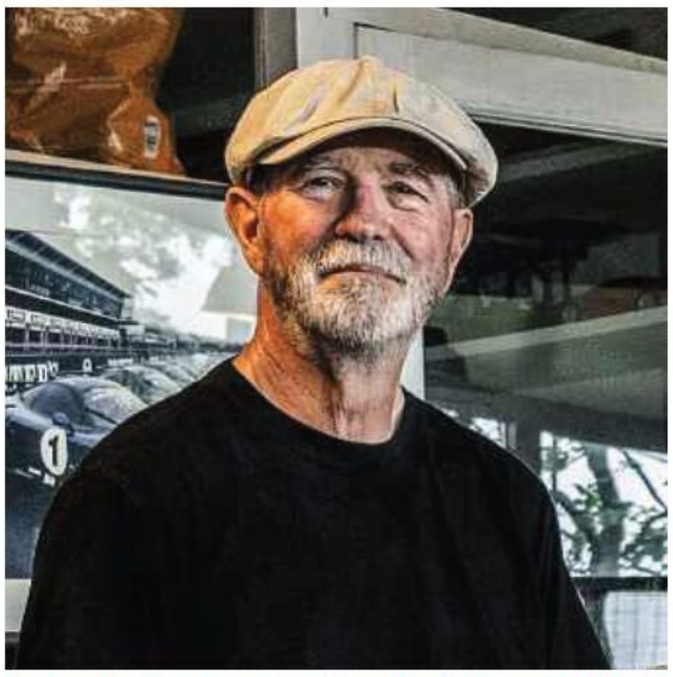
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PETER STEVENS DESIGN BRIEFING

Part 3 The evolution of the C-pillar

A distinctive C-pillar design can help give the side of a car a unique character, but, as Stevens explains, those designs don't always hit the mark

I AM SURE THAT EVERY EVO READER WILL know what a C-pillar is, but where did the terms A, B, C and D-pillar come from? The names were first used in the late 1950s and originated in America. During the coach-built-body era there was no formally accepted way of naming the pillars. The windscreen was supported by the 'screen posts'; the next pillar back was usually called the 'door post'. This was the strongest pillar since it supported the weight of both the front and rear doors, it being the time when rear-hinged 'suicide doors' were the norm. There doesn't seem to have been a common name in that era for the next pillar back, apart from 'lock post' maybe, on a four-door.

There are suggestions that it was insurance companies that wanted formal naming of the pillars to clarify insurance claims, or crash rescue services who wanted an easy description of which pillars to cut to extract a car's occupants. So, A-pillar at the front, B comes next, C is the rearmost one on a saloon or hatchback, and D is the last one on an estate car, MPV or SUV.

The C-pillar has always offered designers the opportunity to introduce a little 'design flair' to what would otherwise be a fairly nondescript side view. BMW's director of design from 1955 to 1970, Wilhelm Hofmeister, introduced a little kick-up to the rear of the window sill line on both the 3200 CS and 1500 (pictured left) that were introduced at the Frankfurt motor show in September 1961. This feature became known as the 'Hofmeister Kink' by both the press and then BMW. Apparently, there is uproar over its recent disappearance.

Back when Tom Walkinshaw was in charge of Holden's racing programme, I looked after the touring car aero development and body design of the VL Commodore. In the wind tunnel we found that by altering the angle of the rear screen glass we could achieve lower drag and greater rear downforce. Reading the regulations with Walkinshaw we saw that the rear screen and decklid were 'free'. What this actually meant was that there were no restrictions on the material from which they could be made, but to us is meant that we could do what we liked with them! Flatten the rear screen angle, make new C-pillars and raise and angle of the bootlid; it all worked rather well!

Alongside the conventional rearward sloping C-pillar, there have been reverse-angled C-pillars like those on the Ford Anglia, the wacky Citroen Ami 6 and, one of my favourites, Patrick le Quement's outrageous Renault Avantime. Every aspect of this brilliant, if flawed, mould-breaking car challenged contemporary thinking, and in many ways it still looks more appropriate than most present-day cars for the new typologies that hybrid, hydrogen and electric power sources suggest. Whilst the Anglia's C-pillar was unconventional it still looked like a strongly engineered piece, but in the mid-1960s Chrysler produced a number of models with C-pillars that were wide at the top narrowing down to











almost a point where they met the body of the car at their base. The greenhouse looked lighter but structurally they looked weak – they probably were too.

Apart from bizarre body side sculpture there is not much to differentiate one modern car from another in side view, and so once again design of the C-pillar has become an area for stylistic whimsy. Particularly when it comes to either hybrid or electric cars, an opportunity for 'The New' is never turned down. Renault invented an inexpensive production painting technique that allowed the colour of the C-pillar to change halfway down the panel on the early Captur. There has been a mad scramble to copy this two-colour effect but most manufacturers have followed the old-fashioned method of covering the joint line between one paint colour and another by adding a bit of chrome trim. Vauxhall has chosen to add to that piece of chrome on the little Adam city car by taking the trim across the C-pillar and up and over the side glass, which produces a strangely 'vintage' appearance.

Vauxhall has developed this style language on its more recent Mokka-e, while Renault has added its own chrome to the new Captur. To quote another magazine's road tester: 'The C-pillar is much more substantial and stylised on the Mk2 Captur than on the original model. The chrome strip makes for a smart-looking dividing line between the body and contrasting-coloured roof.' Interesting use of the words 'stylised' and 'smart-looking' – we are talking about decorative trim here.

Clockwise from top left: Ford Anglia's C-pillar stood out for being narrower at the bottom than the top; flourish on the Infiniti Q60's C-pillar is a timid take on an idea from an earlier concept; first-gen Renault Captur's much-aped mid-pillar colour change; 'floating' C-pillar on the Citroën Cactus concept; Stevens' reworked C-pillar (and more) on the Holden VL Commodore

In 2009 Infiniti, not usually known for styling excesses, introduced the Essence Coupe Concept, the C-pillar on which took a journey of exploration across the surface of the car that was all swoops and curves. The production Q50 and Q60 both had very watered-down versions of this strange detail, after which it seems to have almost vanished, until reappearing at the top of the C-pillar on the latest QX50, yet relating to nothing else on the car.

'THE DESIGN OF THE C-PILLAR HAS BECOME AN AREA FOR STYLISTIC WHIMSY'

There have always been concept cars that, rather than exciting potential customers with creative new ideas for body design, have simply disappointed when the production version appeared. The Tata Nexon EV concept, shown at the end of 2019, had a dramatic roof form that was also in effect the C-pillar and which floated just above the body side. This was an original and bold look but it had vanished when the car was launched, replaced by a white roof, black C-pillar and body-coloured side. A wasted opportunity. Similarly, the Citroën Cactus production car never had the originality of the design sketches or the 2013 concept, which had C-pillars that appeared to float between the roof and body.

A final thought: almost every current or anticipated supercar, whether coming from Ferrari, Lamborghini, Aston Martin, Koenigsegg or GMA, or even some very obscure optimistic manufacturers, has followed a very similar current trend with the C-pillar design. It's a sort of turned-up collar look, maybe as a protection against the chill wind of doubtful sales.

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SCD PARTNERS

Trustpilot

by RICHARD PORTER

DOA: BMW M8

A 613bhp V12 and a 340kg diet could have enhanced the original 8-series' reputation – but for the price

WHEN THE ORIGINAL BMW 8-SERIES was announced in 1989 it was quite the technology flagship, what with its active dampers, traction control and world-first multiplex wiring system. What it wasn't, however, was very sporty. And despite 300bhp from its 5-litre V12, it wasn't very fast either, failing to outpace its sober 750i sister. Contemporary reviews were lukewarm at best, noting that it was quite far from the ultimate driving machine. Behind the scenes BMW's Motorsport division had already been tasked with doing something about that.

To start with, they put the 8-series on an extreme diet, replacing metal with composites for the doors, bootlid and bonnet, removing the back seats, replacing the front seats with racing buckets, switching glass for plastic in the windows, and deleting the regular car's pop-up headlights in favour of fixed lamps within the front bumper. These measures slashed weight from a portly 1790kg to somewhere below 1450 kilos, but Motorsport's efforts weren't all about carving off the lard; they also widened the track, uprated the front brakes, and installed scoops ahead of the rear wheels to feed an oil cooler apiece, one for the diff, the other for the engine.

Ah yes, the engine. Since the ordinary 8-series had a V12, the M8 needed one too, but the Motorsport people weren't content simply to modify the M70 unit from the 850i. Instead, they designed a brand new 6.1-litre V12 that featured a dry sump, throttle barrels rather than valves for cleaner breathing at full chat, and a glorious carbonfibre intake system created to be as long as possible for optimum torque and barely able to fit under the M8's remodelled bonnet as a result. In the M8 prototype the new V12 made over 630bhp in an age when a Lamborghini Diablo could boast only 485 horsepower and, with such a highly strung spec, it won't surprise you to learn that the engine and car were created with one eye on GT racing.

As a showroom model, though, there were a few problems that needed to be addressed. Those throttle barrels were lousy for low-speed behaviour, and aware they could never sell a road car that wouldn't idle at anything less than 2000rpm, additional throttle valves were fitted upstream in the intakes. Then there was the dry sump, which was ideal for getting the V12 to sit as low as possible but required a reservoir for which there was no space in the engine bay. Instead a tank was mounted in the boot and connected to the motor by pipes that ran inside the roof, a curious arrangement that apparently allowed the driver to hear the oil moving back and forth.

The final problem with the M8 was the cost of all this new and bespoke engineering, which would have led to a showroom price more than twice that of a contemporary Porsche 911. For this reason, when BMW bosses were presented with the M8 in 1990 they declined to sign it off for production and the lone running prototype was stashed in BMW's bunker of broken dreams along with the three working examples of its amazing V12. This engine is often confused with the one in the McLaren F1, though in truth they share little beyond bore and stroke dimensions. But not all of the work on the M8 was wasted because some of it translated into the 850CSi of 1993, which put some pep into the 8-series' languid step. Meanwhile, the bright red M8 prototype stayed hidden for almost 20 years until in 2010 it was put on display in BMW's museum.



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INBOX



Perfect 10 perfection

Just wanted to say how much I enjoyed the 'Perfect 10' feature (**evo** 290). Reading about the team's experiences with their all-time favourite cars, spanning from the exotic to the attainable, from new to classic, I found myself vehemently disagreeing with some and firmly supporting others. It even caused arguments in my workplace as we pitched our own top tens at brew time.

Above all, it had me recalling the myriad cars I have been lucky enough to experience, allowing me to revisit those memories, which was wonderful. Thank you for such an engrossing read.

Chris Armstead

The cult of Porsche

Thank god for Harry Metcalfe, the only **evo** writer not to pick a Porsche as the number one car in his Perfect 10. I imagine you'll be sacking him now for failing to toe the company line, like a naughty MP ignoring the party whip!

I do worry that **evo** is actually a Porsche cult that I've inadvertently stumbled into and become part of, without actually understanding the final aim. One day I expect a call asking me to attend an isolated ranch where all **evo**ers can ascend to Porsche heaven in an apocalyptic event.

While I'm on – I don't care how good the new 911 incarnation is: it's just too big and fat!

Peter Garforth

You forgot that Steve Sutcliffe chose the Ferrari 458 Speciale as his favourite, meaning we have two non-believers among us. We've had stern words with both of them – Letters Ed



What's the score?

Loved the 'Perfect 10' article, but how on earth did the 458 Speciale come top and the GT3 RS only third when GT3 RSs appeared in almost everyone's list? Was this a sop to keep the anti-911 brigade quiet? I think we need a recount!

Matthew Gooch

The Speciale appeared in three judges' top tens, scoring a 1st place (earning 10 points), a 2nd (9 points) and a 4th (7 points). The GT3 RS votes were split over various versions of the model, with the most popular being the 3.8-litre 997.2-generation car, which had a pair of firsts (20 points total). So the Ferrari won overall, fair and square – Maths Ed

Never say never again

Way back in 1990 I read a review of the Lancia Thema 16v Turbo in *Motor Sport* magazine, and bought one.

The turbo lag was obscene. The first time it rained there was a lake in the passenger footwell, and when I pressed the electric window switch the window fell out. I vowed never to be persuaded again by a magazine review.

But recently it happened again – with a different result, thankfully! Having read your reviews of the Honda Civic Type R, I have bought one. The car is absolutely amazing and is all you said it would be. I drove home today in torrential rain with absolutely zero anxiety.

Thanks!

Alan Joyner

Just saying never

I have tried to follow the journey of the Cupra Formentor 310 on your Fast Fleet, having to forcibly override my own inhibitions to do



LETTER OF THE MONTH

Reality check

ARE EVO'S ROAD TESTERS FALLING OUT OF TOUCH WITH reality? Experienced journalists moaning about the excessive power, weight and lack of feel in modern cars, then devoting print to £300k restomod 911s and a £100k 'modern' original Mini.

They are right about weight and feel, but they are forgetting one important thing: for most people cars need to be the transport equivalent of a Swiss army knife. They need to be a daily, they need to sit in traffic on our congested roads, they need to be able to go on a school run, a shopping trip, a holiday, all whilst being comfortable, having the toys we expect, being safe and not harming the environment excessively. And on top of all that, on the odd occasion, when time, weather and traffic permits, they should also be fun.

So please, take a reality check and consider those poor unfortunate souls who have to actually buy a car or stretch their finance or PCP payments to get something modern from a large manufacturer, with a warranty and finance options. Either that or change **evo**'s tagline to 'The thrill of driving (bespoke and classic cars)', up the subscription to £50,000 per issue, limit it to 100 copies and aim it at the fortunate few. After all, this approach seems to be working well for so many of the brands whose cars you test…

Nick Wright, Hants

The Letter of the Month wins a Straton watch

The writer of this month's star letter receives a Straton Classic Driver MkII watch worth £215. Designed to be an everyday watch that doesn't break the bank, this MkII version introduces a new dial design and is available in three colour variations.

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INBOX





so. My only conclusion is that I would rather drink a cup of my own bile than be pressed into buying one.

I've always been a petrolhead at heart, equally happy on either two or four wheels, and I love nothing more than driving or riding something that is dancing around freed of electronic restraint, clipping apexes, sliding close to the kerbs and genuinely bringing a smile with every mile. Be that with 50 or 500bhp.

I completely struggle to see where this Cupra can fit into that. I'm sure many will be driven with a feeling of lordship over owners of lesser SEAT models while enjoying the benefit of how it stays so perfectly between the lines with its lane keeping assist on.

It's just not me. If I were to buy a crossover I'd get a Dacia Duster – at least it's honest with its own identity.

Alastair Smith

Out for the Countach

I've just read Richard Meaden's column discussing the new Lamborghini Countach LPI 800-4 (**evo** 290). I am completely aligned with his comments. This new Countach is just a shame.

But maybe we can have a little faith in the future of Lamborghini if we consider that Stephan Winkelmann has said that this car was developed before he rejoined the company and that, in some interviews, he seems disappointed about it.

He clearly says that Lamborghini has to be focused on the future and not on its past. So let us see what will come next.

François Derycke, France

Rocket science

Having owned a Light Car Company Rocket, as well several Caterhams and a couple of Atoms, I consider myself a follower of the 'less is more' philosophy of car design.

After reading your impressions of the new, 440kg Caterham Seven 170R (**evo** 291) and the subsequent exploration of increasing weight in performance cars ('Don't weight up'), I am left with a renewed appreciation of the work of Gordon Murray and Chris Craft in producing the Rocket. Yes. it was fearsomely expensive when new, and certainly only transport for the truly committed. However, as a driving experience on public roads, it was unique. Others have come close in the intervening years, most notably Atom, yet their approach to power delivery is different, and to my mind, slightly less exhilarating.

Gordon Murray is rightly renowned for many other contributions to automotive design, but I would suggest his work on the Rocket produced more fun per pound than any of his other designs. Perhaps it is time **evo** revisited such a unique and pioneering car as it nears its 30th birthday?

Gareth Vickers, Oxford, England

Not GT enough

I must disagree with your choice of winner in your recent sporting GT group test (**evo** 290). If I was in the market for such a car, then power, handling and driving enjoyment would of course be imperative for me. But the prime factor for a sporting GT – GT by definition meaning a car for long-distance driving – is very good comfort!

Any uncomfortable sporting GT is not a GT, it's just sporting! And the Roma, by Peter Tomalin's admission, is 'the most tiring to drive for long distances' and thus should have been at the bottom of the finishing order,





with arguably just three stars. Five stars for its sporting abilities, perhaps, but no way as a GT!

Jeff Horrell, Gower, South Wales

Stuck in the past?

Lads, I've been getting **evo** on and off for over 15 years. I love it, but it stopped being a regular buy for me a year or so ago due to the prehistoric stance on electrification. I just got October's issue and I am amazed at the negative view you still have on electric. Get with it, boys! I drive a Taycan and can't help laughing and cringing when a V8 hillbilly drives by thinking he's cool.

Surely you need to embrace the future? I don't understand.

Scott Holland

GTS correction

I have to take issue with David Vivian's implication that the new Porsche 911 Carrera GTS (Driven, **evo** 291) is the first GTS that isn't simply a Carrera S with some well chosen options bundled in with an extra badge.

This may have been true of the 991-generation GTS, but it wasn't the case with the 997. It was impossible to replicate its wide-body, rear-wheel-drive configuration at that time; it also had as standard lightweight, forged, centre-lock alloys that couldn't be optioned for the Carrera S. Also, unlike the new 992, the 997 GTS was a real bargain. To attempt to replicate it with an optioned Carrera S (including Power Kit etc) would have cost circa £10k more and it would still have missed the above unique features.

All of which probably contributes to why I have owned my manual 997 GTS [above right] for seven years now and have no intention of replacing it!

Gilbert Strachan

eCoty drinking game

In anticipation of 2021's eCoty issue, here's a little game that all of the **evo** fans out there can play to make reading the best issue of the year just that little bit more memorable.

Take a sip of your favourite drink when...

- a photographer is called a 'snapper'
- you see a picture featuring 'road tester face'
- a 'flat-plane crank' or 'double wishbones' are mentioned
- a Ferrari technology is impossible to explain clearly
- our all-electric future is lamented
- someone is frustrated by a touchscreen or a lack of buttons
- someone gets excited about the configurability of chassis and engine modes
- someone wishes there was just one ideal mode and not all of these options.

Take two sips of your favourite drink when...

- a breakfast consists of something that, even though you're not sure what it is, sounds disgusting
- someone has an 'epic' drive that changes his mind about a car
- someone is either unable to catch John Barker in the car in front or unable to pull away from John Barker in the car behind.

Take a shot when...

- a car turns out to be mysteriously much better or mysteriously not as good as a previous example that **evo** has tested
- a great result is hinted at for a British car, only for it to finish near the bottom in the end
- a Porsche wins.

Enjoy!

Ben Berentson, Connecticut, USA

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RICHARD MEADEN

Why is it only US car makers who offer crate engines, asks Meaden

THE CRATE ENGINE MIGHT BE A LARGELY American phenomenon, but it's one that has fascinated me for years. The notion of being able to buy a ready-to-rock high-output motor from an OE manufacturer, with all the associated peace of mind and support that goes with it, is weirdly tantalising.

America's 'Big Three' crate engine suppliers – that's to say Ford Racing, GM Performance and Mopar (Chrysler) – have been supplying plug 'n' play powertrains for decades. A trio of more partisan tribes you couldn't wish to meet, but they – together with an army of independent builders – are united in supplying the world with fully built, stupidly powerful engines, the majority of which are V8s displacing 5 litres and over.

It's big business. According to a recent market study, global crate engine sales are set for a compound annual growth rate of 6 per cent over the next decade, with projected 2031 sales valued at an astonishing £25 billion. Spread across engine supply deals with low volume manufacturers, motorsport activities and, naturally, the world of hot rods and restomods, it's an extraordinary and largely overlooked part of the automotive industry.

I'll doubtless find some climate activists gluing themselves to my driveway for saying so, but there's something rather wonderful about a ready supply of high-performance V8s. Especially when you live in the UK, where the availability of manufacturer-supplied engines is tightly controlled.

It's a great shame most car makers seem so blinkered. After all, wherever you find petrolheads you'll find people who love to build one-off projects or dream up amazing engine swaps. So, while the US manufacturers seem geared to facilitate everyone's beer-fuelled 'what if' fantasies, the rest of the automotive world is depressingly sniffy, preferring to restrict the supply of new engines only to those needing direct replacements – and charging like wounded rhinoceri for the privilege.

I'm sure plenty of people would love to drop one of AMG's 4.0 biturbo V8s, or maybe a Nissan VR38DETT V6 into their project, but unless you're prepared to buy and eviscerate a written-off C63 or R35 GT-R you're out of luck. And grafting well-used powertrains with murky provenance into your labour of love just adds more effort and jeopardy to an already formidable challenge.

As you'd expect, US crate engines come in all shapes and sizes. Ford offers everything from a four-cylinder EcoBoost to pushrod Big Block competition motors, while GM's 'Connect and Cruise' packages offer motor and transmission pairings complete with control systems and installation kits. Fancy a latest generation 455bhp LT1 6.2-litre V8 from the new C8 Corvette, complete with eight-speed transmission? Just order online. Likewise a 570bhp LS4 motor mated to a six-speed Tremec manual gearbox. Cost? At current exchange rates the former is listed at the equivalent of £12k, the latter a little over £14k.

In a world where everything feels weighed down by doom and gloom, there's also something joyful and juvenile about crate-engine culture. At this end of the scene, bigger really is better. Take Chevrolet's new ZZ632 Big Block V8. Its nickname game might be weak, at least in the face of Mopar's magnificent supercharged 'Hellephant' or Ford's upcoming twin-turbo 'Megazilla', but there's no arguing with 10.35 naturally aspirated litres that churn out 1004bhp and 876lb ft of torque.

'There's something joyful and juvenile about crate-engine culture'

However this is small beer compared with the undisputed King of the Crate offered by Nelson Racing Engines. Blessed with the stupendous soubriquet 'Maximus Hemi' and 572cu of displacement (that's the best part of 9.4 litres to spare you the maths), this twin-turbo monster makes 2253bhp and 1927lb ft of torque on 1.7 bar of boost. Apparently if you wind that up to just over 3 bar, Nelson claims power increases to a 'reliable' 3000bhp. If I win the EuroMillions, I hereby promise to embark on shoehorning a Maximus Hemi into the back of a Bugatti Chiron.

It's sad but fitting that these off-the-peg engines will probably be the last bastion of internal combustion. All is not lost, though, for with the electromod scene gaining in popularity, the incumbent cadre of crate engine suppliers are poised to neatly segue into the electric motor market. GM's 'e-crate' concept uses a pair of Chevy Volt motors. Ford has also made the jump, with the 281bhp/318lb ft 'Eluminator' electric crate motor.

As a dinosaur of the ICE age, I struggle to summon an emotional connection to EV powertrains, but given the Eluminator is about the size of a carry-on case, it's easy to appreciate the potential. Both for the limitless applications and abundant performance. However, until such time as there's no petrol-powered alternative, I will continue to indulge my crate V8 fantasies. I might not have need for a Hellephant, but that doesn't stop me wanting one.

@DickieMeaden

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

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CLASSIC & SPORTS FINANCE



RICHARD PORTER

A drive in a Taycan leaves Porter reflecting on The Meaning of Liff

MANY YEARS AGO I DISCOVERED A BOOK called *The Meaning of Liff,* which purports to be a dictionary of things for which there aren't any words yet. First published in 1983, *The Meaning of Liff* was written by *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* author Douglas Adams and John Lloyd, who would go on to produce *Blackadder*, *Spitting Image* and *QI*.

As you'd expect with two such mighty brains behind it, *The Meaning of Liff* is as well observed as it is well written, with the added twist that all the entries within it are place names, since, according to the original book's intro, these are words that had hitherto spent their time doing nothing but 'loafing about on signposts pointing at places'. These are just some of my favourite *Liff* entries:

Articlave (n.) A clever architectural construction designed to give the illusion from the top deck of a bus that it is far too big for the road.

Clathy (adj.) Nervously indecisive about how safely to dispose of a dud lightbulb.

Frolesworth (n.) The minimum amount of time it is necessary to spend frowning in concentration at each picture in an art gallery in order that everyone else doesn't think you're a complete moron.

Naugatuck (n.) A plastic sachet containing shampoo, Pollyfilla, etc, which is impossible to open except by biting off the corners.

Shoeburyness (abs. n.) The vague uncomfortable feeling you get when sitting on a seat which is still warm from somebody else's bottom.

I was thinking about *The Meaning of Liff* last month when I was having my first go in a Porsche Taycan. And, for reasons I'll come to in a sec, the word that came to mind was 'Yesnaby'. I found there's a lot to like about the Taycan, in this case in 483bhp 4S trim, and it starts with the way it looks.

Most EVs are tall and chubby, desperately trying to hide the height they need to accommodate a large battery pack in the floor and then plonk people on top of it. Without recourse to any of those neat car design tricks used to break up slabby body sides and fool the eye into ignoring the fat floorpan at the bottom, the Taycan looks genuinely low and sleek. But then it is genuinely low and sleek; you drop down into it as you would a 911.

The relative lack of frontal area pays dividends when you get on the motorway and it cruises at normal motorway speeds without chewing through its last charge at a terrifying clip. I left London with a full battery, made a sandwich-and-a-slash-length stop hooked to a fast charger near Preston, and was in the heart of the Lake District with masses of range left.

Truth be told, if I'd nursed it up that last stretch of the M6 before turning off to Keswick I think we could have made it without plugging in at all. The stop was a security blanket that could be seized because the car's occupants needed a breather by then. So the range on the (optional) 93.4kWh battery is good. The interior is nice too, all the tech works well, and the ride on air suspension is terrific. A class act all round and probably the finest electric car I've driven to date.

'It's a terrifically comfortable and able bit of kit in the real world. But as a sports car, I'm not so sure'

Then I went for a drive on some delightful Lakeland roads and the Taycan showed that it's not just skilled at purring smoothly in a straight line. You can chuck it around to a remarkable degree and, though you're aware that it's carrying a bit of timber, it hides its weight well, those 2220 kilos making themselves felt only when you need to brake hard. Otherwise, you just point and shoot, scudding effortlessly at a brisk clip across the twisting and undulating tarmac. It's very impressive.

And yet… it's almost too easy. With no gears, there's not much for you to do except work the pedals and maybe sometimes toggle the regen braking using the thoughtfully provided button on the steering wheel. With instant and immense torque you can emerge from any corner and immediately start scampering up to whatever speed you feel would suit. It's good, but it's a bit one-note. The grip and the grunt are there in spades but there's little texture to them.

Don't get me wrong, I like electric cars a lot. I've owned two of them. And if I had the chunky sums of cash needed to make a Taycan my everyday car, I'd be on it like a shot. It's a terrifically comfortable and able bit of kit in the real world. But as a sports car, I'm not so sure. And that's where 'Yesnaby' from *The Meaning of Liff* comes in. If you're asking whether Porsche has come up with a sports saloon that's as wonderfully detailed and interactive as its excellent sports cars, then my reply would be: yesnaby.

Yesnaby (n.) A 'yes, maybe' which means 'no'.

@sniffpetrol

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

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JETHRO BOVINGDON

Bovingdon responds to the accusations of bias at **evo** Car of the Year

IT'S ALMOST THAT TIME OF THE YEAR AGAIN: eCoty is coming. Are you excited? I hope so. For all of us connected to this magazine, the annual gathering of our absolute favourite cars remains the test to which we all look forward the most. Aside from the dread of one of your personal nominations turning out to be a bit rubbish, the pain of a solid week of petrol station sandwiches, and the frayed tempers when a group of people are thrown into a kind of motorised *Big Brother* experiment, it is about as perfect a week as you can imagine.

As a reader I always loved eCoty, too. It sounded like such a riot and I loved how new facets of a car's character were unearthed as unlikely comparisons, changeable weather conditions and exposure over long days on varied roads played out. Heroes were made and it just seemed rather dreamy. Always wondered why they loved parking all the cars on beaches, though.

I was an innocent soul, it seems. Other readers didn't appear to enjoy the in-depth analysis. Instead all they could see was bias. Prejudice. Corruption. Lies! It is an accusation that hangs around to this day, and forums, social media and other echo chambers only reinforce this view. **evo** is biased. Everyone is biased. Trust no-one – except the people who agree with you.

So let's address the issue of bias at eCoty. Evidence is presented in various forms but the most consistent accusation is that 'Porsche always wins'. Not quite true but there's no doubt that Porsche has performed outrageously well over the years. The first three eCotys, starting in 1998, were won by the Porsche 996 Carrera, Porsche 996 GT3 and Porsche 996 Turbo respectively. More victories followed in 2003, 2004, 2007, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2016 and finally 2019. That's 12 outright victories from a total of 23 competitions. Surely something fishy is going on here?

I guess my counter-question would be, what possible reason is there for us to be biased? Maybe Porsche is taking us all on lavish holidays? Secreting money in offshore accounts for the judges? Throwing millions at advertising in the magazine? Well, the company has advertised in **evo** over the years. But then again, SEAT and latterly Cupra has occupied the back cover (one of the most expensive ad positions) for over a decade and so far they haven't won eCoty. Audi has supported the mag with an unbroken run of advertising, too. Not exactly a stellar eCoty performer.

The other thing about the 'bias' theories is that those who shout the loudest tend to find their trusted sources in people who own the cars that haven't performed quite so well. These people are, of course, truly independent in that they don't work for magazines that require advertising to survive. However, they have just sunk a load of cash into Car X and so have a vested interest in Car X being better than whatever Porsche (or BMW, or Ferrari or McLaren, or Renault, etc) we might have declared our favourite. Seems a bit like a parent judging a primary school talent contest to me.

Maybe it's just prejudice, then? We expect Porsche to do well and so that narrative naturally forms? This one almost irks me more than 'you're all corrupt'. Everyone has prejudices to a certain extent… but the beauty of all those miles and all those voices on eCoty is that they pretty quickly get weeded out. Prejudice collapses if you're following another car on a tricky piece of road and being thrown off line, battling inconsistent dynamics or simply struggling to make the car flow.

'The truth is we take eCoty very, very seriously and agonise over the decision'

There are many examples of the magazine directly contradicting its prejudices, too. How about the Golf R? Previous generations of VW's fastest, four-wheel-drive Golf left us cold to the point of disinterest. Then along came the Mk7 and blew us away, finishing 4th overall and beating the Mégane 275 Trophy-R and McLaren 650S Spider along the way. In the same test the BMW M3 – so long a star performer at eCoty – finished 9th out of 10. In 2005 the new Porsche Cayman S was roundly thumped by the Renault Clio Trophy. As recently as last year the BMW M2 CS outperformed all expectations to take the win. Me? I'd thought it was way too expensive for what seemed to be tiny changes over the M2 Competition. I loved it. Prejudices popped in one short drive. The Porsche 991 Turbo S finished 8th and dead last.

So whilst the truly, vehemently angry mob who claim we are all biased will never be satisfied, the truth is that we take eCoty very, very seriously and agonise over the decision. We are acutely aware that we're not curing cancer here and that we're very lucky to have such absurd 'jobs'. But while we're here we want eCoty to reflect the real story of the car we collectively enjoy the most on our favourite roads, at sunrise or sunset, come rain or shine and even with a week's worth of empty sandwich wrappers in the footwell. I hope you enjoy eCoty 2021. And that your favourite does well. If it doesn't? Well, maybe it's just a bit rubbish.

@JethroBovingdon

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

TEST HATC

We've had the preliminary rounds, now we've whittled it down to just five cars in our search for the greatest hot hatch of 2021: Toyota GR Yaris, Honda Civic Type R, Fiesta ST Edition and Hyundai's i20 N and big brother i30 N

by ADAM TOWLER PHOTOGRAPHY *by* ASTON PARROTT

H SPECIAL



FROM THE BLEAK HILLTOP PASSES OF THE NORTH Pennines, via the pockmarked, nip-and-tuck tarmac 'stages' of mid Wales, to the familiar – but no less revealing – Bedfordshire lanes near **evo** HQ, in 2021 we have done everything we can to sift through the current crop of hot hatchbacks in pursuit of a winner. We've driven them collectively thousands of miles, we've argued at length about them, and we've enjoyed driving them and debating their relative merits more than with almost any other class of performance car this year. There have been disappointments; there have been revelations; troublingly a few have left us cold, but there is one, overarching thing we can all agree on: the cars you see here are the ones we genuinely believe to be the finest on sale at this moment in time.

So, how do you approach the current hot hatch market? I think we all have our own idea of what a hot hatch should be, informed by our age and the cars we grew up with, our thoughts on what constitutes value for money, how highly we rate outright performance compared with driver feedback, and so on. For some the paragon will always be a 205 GTI, for others a Mégane RS, or perhaps a Golf GTI of some description. Big, small, fast, slow, raw, refined – it's a broad church, certainly.

So we decided to break things down into three separate tests, loosely termed 'the small ones' (**evo** 289), 'the everyday ones' (**evo** 290), and the 'expensive, high-powered ones' (**evo** 288). No, not necessarily the most catchy of working titles, but we had to draw the lines somewhere, and in the absence of obvious demarcation zones we decided to mark out our own.

The small ones meant the ubiquitous Ford Fiesta ST and its new rival, the Hyundai i20 N, but we also put the Toyota GR Yaris in there simply because it's... small. Or smaller. The high-end group comprised the Honda Civic Type R, the Mercedes-AMG A45 S and the VW Golf R Performance Pack: three very different cars, but whether on price, power or singleness of purpose, these felt like the extreme end of the market. Lightweight, two-seat 'specials' were kept on the sidelines, note. And finally there was the middle ground, the most densely populated area of the market, with VW Group clones and cars like the BMW 128ti: fast, everyday-useable, practical… hot hatches in a traditional mould. Would there be a surprise from that camp?

There certainly were surprises. One test brought forward just one finalist, in another every car went through. So there would be little point in pounding the B-roads of the UK all over again. Instead, the following is an explanation of why, in their own ways, they're all great hot hatchbacks of the modern era.

TOYOTA GR YARIS

DOES THE GR YARIS WIN? YOU COULD ARGUE THAT it does. Certainly if you like your hot hatchbacks on the small side but with truly giant-killing performance it remains *the* essential purchase, a car bristling with energy and purpose.

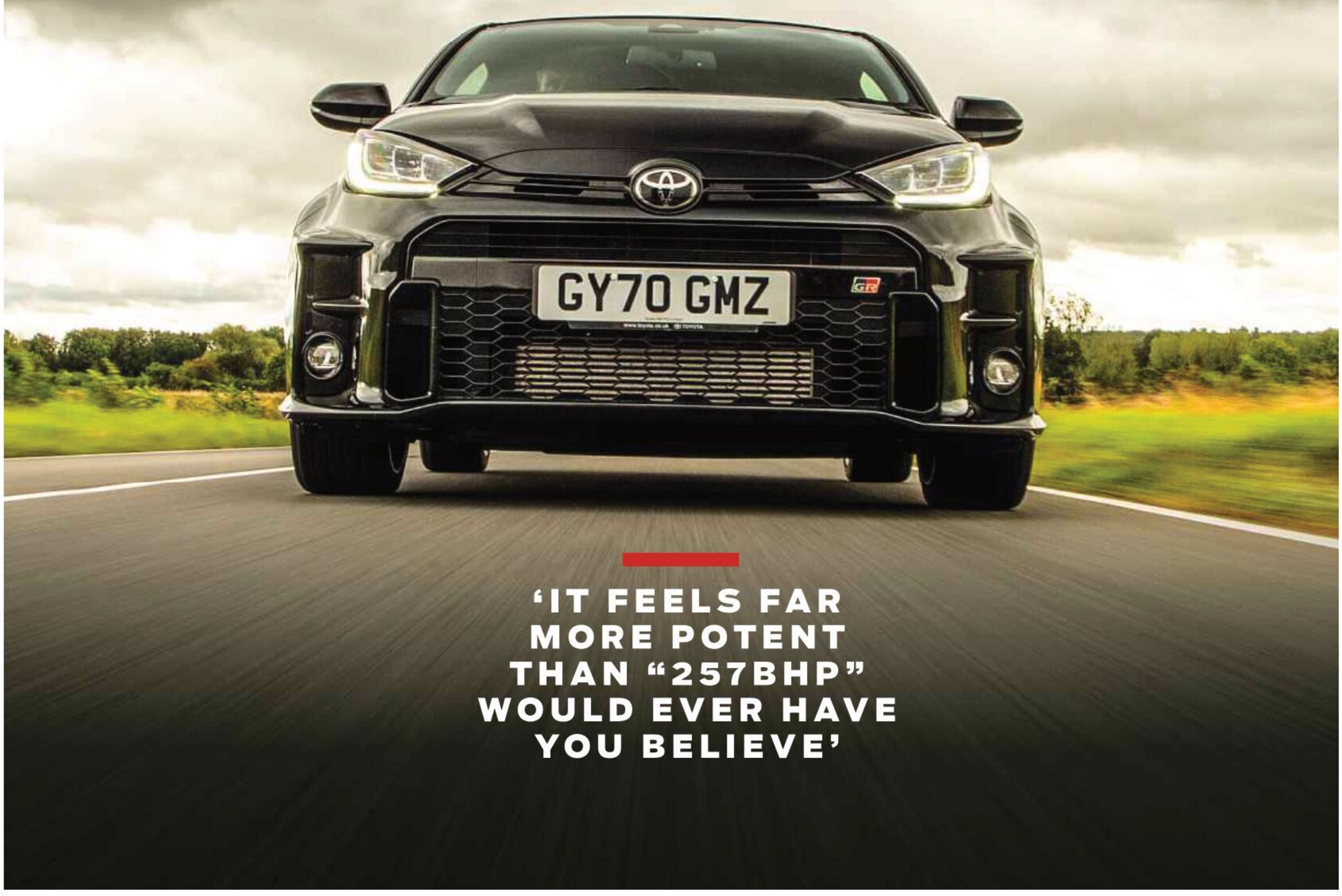
When we pitted the Toyota against the Fiesta ST and the i20 N, we exploited the chance to put the non-Circuit Pack-equipped car under the microscope for the first time, but Messrs Barker and Meaden returned saying the higher spec car would have been preferable, if for no other reason than for its more aggressive Dunlops. So it's the 'CP' model you see here – **evo**'s old Fast Fleet car no less, for now retained by Toyota UK – and driving it again is affirmation that this is a truly special and unique car, full stop. Visually a belligerent and unapologetic kind of ugly-beautiful, it rests easy in the knowledge that as a homologation special – even if Covid snatched its competition remit largely away – it has an inherent kudos that every other car in this story can only dream of emulating.

It is astonishingly rapid point-to-point, feeling far more potent than '257bhp' would ever have you believe, and much of that is down to the way it wastes so little of that motive force thanks to a four-wheel-drive system that remains determined at all times to squish every last horsepower into the asphalt.

The reason you might not want to award it the win here, or perhaps more accurately, the reason you might want to park it on its own little island in these finishing results, is that it's both something more and something a bit less in terms of being an actual hot hatch. Its overall proposition is unlike any other; it also remains something of a bargain and so has the habit of spoiling our best attempts at finding rivals. Did it feel like a fair fight against the Ford and the Hyundai? No, not really.

But the fact that it did turn into a genuine contest betrays where the Yaris isn't quite so strong. If you like your hot hatches to feel 'all on the nose', to have a tail that's mobile and keen to adopt an angle of attack via a lift of the throttle and/or steering input, the Yaris may not be the car for you. Its approach is deadly serious, where the Fiesta is out for a good time. That the Ford can hold on to the Toyota's rear bumper, in the dry at least, shows just how well it uses what power it does have.

Sometimes I just wish the Yaris felt a little more on its toes, that the steering had more clarity and a certain sharpness, hard to define but missing currently. I wish that giving it everything in the middle of a wet, 90-degree curve produced a more tail-happy result, and that its damping really was oblivious to any road's challenge, which it feels like it might be but actually doesn't quite pull off. So much is absolutely excellent about this little car, but it is a unique, slightly alternative character, and that opens the door to the rest of the contenders in this test to have their own shining moment.



'IT FEELS FAR MORE POTENT THAN "257BHP" WOULD EVER HAVE YOU BELIEVE'

HYUNDAI i20 N

COULD WE REALLY NOT SEPARATE THE HYUNDAI AND the Ford? Dynamically, the Edition version (such a charismatic name… not) of the Fiesta ST just had the edge, but the i20 N's package of willing four-cylinder motor, superbly effective LSD, high equipment count and polished dynamics – all for £25,000 – make it a great all-rounder in the finest hot hatch tradition. There is nothing the i20 N isn't good at, whether acting as a daily commuter, as a trackday companion, a B-road weapon or a practical five-door five-seater. This is a little car that can do it all, marrying the traditional aspects of a punchy engine, a manual gearbox and an entertaining chassis to great effect.

And so the arguments raged back and forth. Was the Ford worth the extra money? Did its talents in one area outweigh the Korean car's overall strengths? Maybe the Ford just edged it in the end, but if nothing else you might baulk at paying £28,770 for a Fiesta and we could completely see why you might join the lengthy waiting list for an i20 N. It seems good news travels fast and that demand is strong.

Driving the i20 N on the same piece of Bedfordshire road straight after the Ford is endlessly fascinating. You can sense the Hyundai's chassis having to work very hard when the surface is at its most challenging, the rear getting light under hard braking. It's not got the same composure as the Ford, the same unflappable damping, but you can trust it, push it hard, revel in the grip it has and its willingness to bring the rear axle into the cornering process, usually with the inside wheel hanging in the air. I also love the positivity of the diff, the way it just sucks the nose of the car around the corner at a speed that had appeared impossible moments earlier, and how the engine just loves to be thrashed – even though it's a turbo – the way that engines in small hot hatches always used to.

There is no one aspect that stands out, but the steering is accurate and nicely weighted, the gearshift light and positive, the brake pedal feel fair, the seats supportive, the exhaust tone nicely rorty. Much like the Ford, the i20 N is indisputable proof that a good hot hatch isn't about power or lap times, and that sometimes small and simple is best, even today.

New performance cars don't really get much more affordable than this, and as a first rung on the ladder there's so much to love here. Most of all, we're simply glad that there's a manufacturer out there willing to develop and deliver a new hot hatch to this template, arguably the purest one of them all.



'THE i20 N AND FIESTA PROVE THE OLDER, SMALLER

FORD FIESTA ST EDITION

FORD HAS KEPT THE FAITH WITH THE SMALL, conventional hot hatch where others – Renault Sport, Peugeot, Citroën and VW among them – have not, and the result has been years of domination for a little car with appeal far beyond numbers on a page. Ford seems to have an inherent understanding of how to make a small, affordable car that appeals to both the mass market and the hardcore enthusiast in the same package. Starting from relatively humble components, that's a lot harder to do in practice than it sounds.

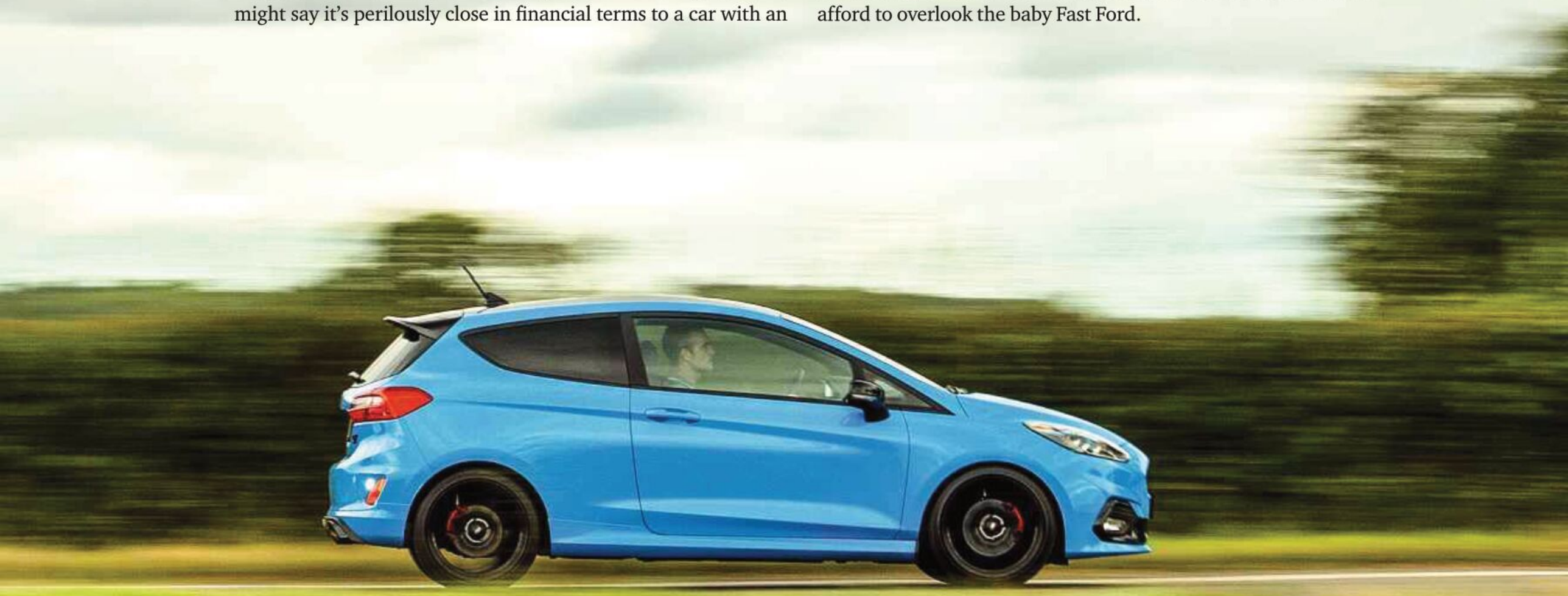
You can still buy a Fiesta ST from £21,995, and had we put a 'basic' ST-2 into battle in our triple test it would still have fared extremely well. Well enough to beat the Hyundai? Of that I'm not so sure, but it would have been defeat by the very smallest of margins. The standard ST doesn't have quite the broad spread of talents that the i20 N has, and its interior is less easy on the eye. That said, Ford has revealed the Fiesta's 2022 refresh, which addresses many of the cosmetic shortfalls of the outgoing car, and a 'new' ST is also due. Maybe it will turn the tables again.

It was the unlikely form of the little Ford that showed up the potential weakness of the Yaris, too. In Edition guise some might say it's perilously close in financial terms to a car with an extra driven axle and 60bhp more, but to drive the Fiesta is to experience a concentrated hit of hot hatchdom in the old style, and it's none the worse for that.

With its Ford Performance coilovers, the Edition is stronger dynamically than the i20 N – just. It can parry and shimmer over bumps that leave the Hyundai flat-footed; in fact, there's almost no surface or combination of bumps that can catch the Ford out, and in this regard, as mentioned earlier, it even has the measure of the Yaris.

The three-cylinder turbo is a classic triple – hugely gutsy in the mid range, but a little breathless at higher revs. It sounds fruity though, and in a much more convincing way than the Toyota, even if it has more off-boost torpidity and nothing like the ultimate punch available.

Overall, the Fiesta – and the i20 N – prove that the older, smaller style of hot hatch is more relevant today than ever. These cars are so different to the larger VW Group offerings that they almost deserve a different classification. But whatever your budget, and however ubiquitous the Fiesta may seem, anyone considering a potential hot hatch purchase in 2021 cannot afford to overlook the baby Fast Ford.



STYLE OF HOT HATCH IS MORE RELEVANT THAN EVER'

HYUNDAI i30 N

OUR 'MIDDLEWEIGHTS' SHOOTOUT PRODUCED THE biggest turnout – five cars, with the newly facelifted i30 N joined by the VW Golf GTI Clubsport, the Cupra Leon 300, the BMW 128ti and the also newly refreshed Renault Mégane RS 300.

So there's no greater compliment than to say that in the end there was always going to be only one winner and four also-rans. The Golf was quick and competent, the Renault amusingly lively at times, but there were significant holes in their armouries, and the Cupra and BMW barely scored any hits at all.

What an unexpected state of affairs that is: the ultimate front-drive hatches from VW, Renault and what was SEAT, along with genre outsider BMW, and yet it's a Hyundai that not only out-drives them but makes you believe it's been developed by a group of people who really care about the same stuff we do.

The changes to the i30 N are small. There's the option of some proper seats at last, and they're lighter too; a tiny bit more top-end horsepower adds a dash of keenness to how the 2-litre turbocharged motor revs out; the infotainment has been modernised and there are more ways to trigger the car's multiple modes, the highlight being Individual, where the engineers have appreciated that if you're going to provide options they need to be the right ones, and delivered in a form that's easy to tailor and then access. The ride quality is a little better, too, although it's still on the overt side of sporting. The i30 N is nothing like as impressive from an engineering sense as the Civic Type R, but then most would agree that it's an awful lot easier on the eye, and as an ownership proposition too, even if the recent price rise has placed it uncomfortably close to the Honda.

It's still not perfect. It's relatively heavy, and that does blunt its performance very slightly, meaning the engine has to be properly stoked if you're to make the kind of progress that the image of an N-car suggests. And if you want a completely undemanding companion, in the mould of a Golf GTI with a DSG 'box slipping through the ratios and gliding along on its optional DCC variable dampers, then the i30 N probably isn't the car for you. Yet that doesn't sound to us like a set of requirements for a great hot hatch, and the fact that the i30 N can confidently straddle both camps makes it currently unassailable in this class. And if a twin-clutch gearbox really is a must, you can now order an i30 N with one of those, too.



'YOU MAY NOT LOVE HOW IT LOOKS, BUT THE CIVIC TRULY IS THE 911 GT3 OF HOT HATCHES'



HONDA CIVIC TYPE R

IN TERMS OF A CONVENTIONAL HOT HATCH TEST, the Civic basically wins. You are probably not that surprised. If you want the ultimate front-wheel-drive hatch, nothing else comes close; indeed, you may just be looking at one of the greatest hot hatches of all time. Nothing has managed to topple this car's supremacy since its arrival in 2017.

Don't be fooled by the fact that it's a Type R Limited in these photos: it was the only Type R we could get for this shoot, for reasons that will become apparent shortly. The Limited is even better on a track, but sometimes not quite as convincing on a B-road, and it's so limited – just 20 units in the UK – as to be virtually unobtainable.

It was the Civic in regular GT trim that faced up to the AMG A45 S and new Golf R on some of our favourite roads in the North Pennines. These can be tortuous, unforgiving roads, fast in places, tight and twisty with almost no warning, and often with a surface akin to a kicked-about hearth rug. They completely destroyed the new Mk8 Golf R, which turned up touting a drift mode and a formidable price tag, but had no answer for what the road had in store. We went as far as to wonder if this particular Golf was defective in some way, so off the pace did it seem, but we've subsequently been assured by VW that it was match fit. We can only think that Volkswagen has stripped the R model of investment as the firm makes the hideously expensive switch to EVs. Beyond the divisive nature of its interior, the Mk8 Golf R feels like a car where the attention to detail and the quality of the bits that really matter has been systematically stripped back to keep the costs in check.

Then there was the formidable presence of the Mercedes-AMG A45 S, but even with 415bhp and four-wheel drive it was left gasping trying to keep up with the 316bhp Civic – a lesson if ever there was that a great hot hatch is about a lot more than just horsepower. That the AMG put up a good fight says a lot about what a decent, capable car it is, but it was no match for the Honda, particularly in terms of driver appeal.

Beautiful steering, damping so deftly tuned, an engine that loves to chase the red line and, of course, a gearchange that's the envy of every other manual-equipped car. You may not love how the Civic looks, but it truly is the 911 GT3 of hot hatches. Just a shame that right now you can't buy a new one…

THE CONCLUSION

GIVEN THE DOOM AND GLOOM OFTEN ASSOCIATED with these dying days of ICE-powered vehicles, it was a pleasant surprise to find the hot hatch market in 2021 so vibrant and well supported. What also emerged within our final group was that, here at **evo**, we like our hot hatches with manual gearboxes and, GR Yaris excepted, front-wheel drive.

Outright power, tellingly, doesn't seem to be a factor. Sure, the Type R has an abundance of it, but it's hard to imagine it with any more, or to desire any more. No one needs a hatchback that can exceed the best part of 170mph; some sort of invisible barrier has been reached.

Similarly, with the twin-clutch four-wheel-drive crowd, the 0-60mph (or 0-62mph) time has become largely irrelevant, just as it has done with performance cars higher up the food chain. Boiled down to its essence, we like hot hatches that have that terrier spirit; that don't take themselves too seriously; that require the driver's input at all times, and reward in equal measure.

We left out certain cars but never missed them. The Ford Focus ST, Mercedes-AMG A35 and regular Golf GTI, to name three, all have their merits but were either roundly beaten in the past by cars featured this year or simply weren't competitive or desirable enough to register on our radars. We didn't bother with the Suzuki Swift Sport simply because it's not very good, ditto the expensive and rather bland Audi S3, and there was no Mini present for much the same reasons – quite a fall from grace for a brand that was once at the very centre of this market. Audi's new RS3 has arrived since our shoot-outs and is much improved over its predecessors (see page 18). It's still hard to imagine it challenging the very best we've seen here, but we can't wait to find out if it can.

Still, the fact remains that the mighty Honda is no longer on sale. The Swindon factory has closed, which is about as final as you can get, and while there may be the odd example left in the dealer network, there won't be for long. Low-mileage cars are changing hands for a significant premium, and some

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Hyundai i30 N
Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc, turbo
Power 276bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque 289lb ft @ 1950-4600rpm
Weight 1419kg
Power-to-weight 198bhp/ton
0-62mph 5.9sec
Top speed 155mph
Basic price £33,745
evo rating ★★★★★

Toyota GR Yaris
Engine In-line 3-cyl, 1618cc, turbo
Power 257bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 265lb ft @ 3000-4600rpm
Weight 1280kg
Power-to-weight 204bhp/ton
0-62mph 5.5sec
Top speed 142mph (limited)
Basic price £30,020
evo rating ★★★★★

Ford Fiesta ST Edition
Engine In-line 3-cyl, 1497cc, turbo
Power 197bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque 214lb ft @ 1600-4000rpm
Weight 1187kg
Power-to-weight 169bhp/ton
0-62mph 6.5sec
Top speed 144mph
Basic price £28,770
evo rating ★★★★½

Hyundai i20 N
Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1591cc, turbo
Power 201bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque 203lb ft @ 1750-4500rpm
Weight 1190kg
Power-to-weight 172bhp/ton
0-62mph 6.2sec
Top speed 142mph
Basic price £24,995
evo rating ★★★★★



dealers even deny all knowledge of the dewinged Sportline version's existence, which must surely make it one very rare Type R indeed. The R is coming back of course, with a lightly disguised car already teased in official images from Honda. Ominously for its rivals, it appears to retain the mechanical package but clothed it in a more conventional body, removing at a stroke one of the biggest hurdles to Type R ownership (yes, those looks).

Right now, this puts Hyundai's i30 N in an unlikely position. We'd take it over any of the cars in its own group, of that there's no doubt. And having driven them all extensively, I'd easily have it over a new Golf R and pocket the change. The VW is sterile; the Hyundai is a warm character, engaged, unapologetic in being a hot hatch, yet able to do the day-to-day as well. Over an A45? Yes, I'd take it over that too. Driver involvement always trumps outright pace in my book, and while many might laugh, I'd rather the N's wholesome motorsport-bred image than the AMG's bad boy slickness. So if I needed a decently sized hot hatch, not a minnow, right now, and whether this victory is by default or otherwise, the winner appears to be the Hyundai i30 N.

You may still be a Ford person and rightly so, or you may only have eyes for the Toyota GR Yaris and love everything it encapsulates about a manufacturer that refused to adopt the tired excuses of other car companies, made a car through passion, and has been reaping the benefit of sales and brand kudos ever since. But what can't be denied is the presence of that peculiar shade of pale blue at the top of our 2021 hot hatch contest, because this is the year that Hyundai's N brand truly has come of age.

'THERE MAY BE THE ODD CIVIC IN THE DEALER NETWORK, BUT NOT FOR LONG'

Honda Civic Type R
Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1996cc, turbo
Power 316bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 295lb ft @ 2500-4500rpm
Weight 1380kg **Power-to-weight** 233bhp/ton
0-62mph 5.8sec **Top speed** 168mph
Basic price £34,415
evo rating ★★★★★




1.6
GTI


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Tolman
Engineering








1 3 5
2 4 R

by ADAM TOWLER PHOTOGRAPHY *by* ASTON PARROTT

FRENCH POLISH

Today's best hot hatches originate from the Far East, but 30 years ago Europe was the epicentre. So how does one of the icons from that era perform with some 21st century upgrades?

‘IT ESCALATED INTO SOMETHING MUCH GREATER THAN A SIMPLE RESTORATION’

NOW WE’RE REALLY FLYING. THE LITTLE, SINGLE-cam, eight-valve motor is well into the red zone on the Jaeger rev-counter, surging past 7000rpm, the note hardening into a tight, percussive sound, like a drill. Perhaps a small, cordless, low voltage sort of drill rather than something you’d use to cut through a rock face. But what it can’t offer in raw power, it makes up for in spirit. It is rev-tastic, tuneful, and as I glance down at the speedometer I realise we’re really covering the ground, as just over 800kg skims and shimmies down this fast, sweeping B-road, exhibiting an economy of movement and a loose-limbed ease perfectly in tune with the stylish insouciance so associated with this car’s mother country. My face almost hurts from smiling so much, an emotion out of all proportion to the power output and price of this car. Which says everything really.

Like many car enthusiasts, particularly of a certain age, Chris Tolman’s back catalogue of car ownership includes a Peugeot 205 GTI. Quite a few, in fact, including a number built for competition. No great surprise there, given that the 205 remains one of the greatest hot hatchbacks of all time and the car that more than any other, bar perhaps the Mk1 Golf GTI, can lay claim to defining the genre. And like many, myself included, more recently Chris had bought a rather tired 205 GTI with the idea of restoring it. This was when tired examples were still available for pocket change and the memories of a very special car still burned brightly. However, that’s where this story diverges from the usual trajectory. My GTI remains in an embarrassing state of semi-slumber; Chris’s, emphatically, does not.

If the Tolman name is familiar, there’s a good reason for that. In **evo** 285 we featured the extraordinary Tolman Motorsport Sunbeam Lotus, a track-focused restomod that turned everyone’s favourite rear-wheel-drive hatchback into a beast of machine with serious lap-time potential. It was a riot, but also clearly a product finished to the sort of very high standard you’d associate with a professional motorsport team – which Tolman also is. With Chris’s passion for 205s, and his family history with the Chrysler and Peugeot marques, it was inevitable that any 205 project would escalate into something much greater than a simple restoration.

Essentially, Chris has followed a central tenet of the restomod scene: to create a car that drives how you think you remember the original drove, that looks how your mind tells you the original looked, but that uses modern solutions to deal with the inevitable vices that the original definitely had.

The initial restoration of this 205 was relatively straightforward. The bodyshell was sand-blasted inside and out and new metal was added where it was needed. Original 205s are suprisingly resistant to major rot, but after 30 years in the British climate it’s not unusual for rust to eat away at the sills and inner arches. It was then painted and rebuilt to a fine standard, with every last nut and bolt plated or replaced, and with a nod to what would have been a very high specification for a lowly 1.6 GTI at the time, it has power steering, central locking, a sunroof, and those inimitable seats – at least half a size too small, I always think – trimmed in full leather with green stitching. The aim has been to make it feel, smell and sound like a new 205 GTI, and there’s new plastic trim and badges on the outside (hideously expensive to procure) and even recreated under-bonnet stickers for the authentic ‘fresh-from-Sochaux’ look.

Less ‘Sochaux’ is the in-line four, which has been treated not only to a complete rebuild, but also a good deal of tuning and modernisation too. The blueprinted engine features a polished and balanced crankshaft, a skimmed head with a little work to the ports, and a lightweight flywheel. Most tellingly of all, the original Bosch KE-Jetronic fuel injection set-up, the bane of many a GTI mechanic, has been replaced with a full Motec M130 ECU with throttle, crank position, lambda and MAP sensors all fitted, the whole lot then hidden within the gutted remnants of the original system.

Not only has this allowed vastly more sophistication to the way the engine runs, enabling a significant boost to the mid-range pull as well as raising power from 115bhp to around 134bhp – in excess of the 1.9-litre model – but it has also significantly improved the car’s manners. GTIs are notorious for cantankerous cold start behaviour and stalling when brought to a sudden stop, but these flaws should, I’m told, now be a thing of the past. A ‘sport’ button has been nicely integrated as well, offering a sharper throttle response and a barrage of overrun pops and bangs when pressed.

The attention to detail and the sensitive approach to modification is impressive, redolent of people who have a real love for the original. Take the exhaust, for example, which has been made bespoke for the car – not necessarily for performance (few if any systems are more efficient than the original GTI one), but because finding a new one that recreates the split downpipe and original tailpipe design is virtually impossible. The Tolman stainless steel version features a few tweaks to improve the flow, but the note is pure 205 GTI – instantly recognisable to the ear.

The headlamps, too, retain the same appearance but have been upgraded from the hopeless originals to LED items, albeit below the lumens rating where a wash and self-levelling function is required.

Finally, there’s been the delicate task of refreshing the 205’s dynamics without spoiling the magic of the original car. The Tolman car runs Bilstein dampers with Eibach springs, partly because the famed original Peugeot ‘red’ dampers are no longer available. The new set-up drops the ride height slightly from the lofty original, reducing body roll too, but aims to

Opposite: Tolman’s 205 GTI restomod looks factory-fresh and sounds just like the original, despite serious reworking of the 1.6-litre engine, now good for an enthusiastic 134bhp


PEUGEOT
205 GTI
J297 MLH









Tolman 205 GTI

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1580cc
Power 134bhp @ 7250rpm **Torque** 101lb ft @ 6200rpm
Weight 850kg **Power-to-weight** 160bhp/ton
0-60mph 7.5sec (est) **Top speed** 125mph (est)
Price £45,000 (see text)

evo rating ★★★★★



‘THE TOLMAN 205 FEELS ALIVE AND VIBRANT. IT’S IMPOSSIBLE TO SUPPRESS A GRIN’

recapture the blend of ride control and nimble handling that made the GTI so special. The front brakes have been updated to those from a 306 GTi 6 (hence the move to a 1.9-litre car’s 15-inch Speedline wheels, so that they fit), with a 1.6-litre’s drum brakes retained on the rear.

The engine fires cleanly and immediately idles rock-steady, with no assistance from the throttle pedal required. It’s that same old gorgeous induction and exhaust note, all hollow and metallic and instantly keen to rev. As you’d hope, everything feels tight and together, and we’re soon up to speed, waiting – as GTI drivers will recall – an eternity for the oil temperature gauge to move.

These early miles provide a reminder of how beautifully the 205 steers. The GTI’s power rack is up there with the very best of them, including such luminaries as the Lotus Esprit. It’s so much more direct than the unassisted GTI rack, obviously far easier at low-speed manoeuvring, but retaining the most incredible sense of connection between driver and the front wheels. As you up the pace and start placing more lateral loads on the chassis, you can sense the tread-blocks shifting, the sidewalls taking up the slack, the amount of outright grip available and the way it changes with the road’s surface. After much fine-tuning, the Tolman car retains the fluidity that marked out this generation of French cars: it flows down the road, untroubled by nasty-looking bumps and awkward cambers, yet there’s so much control in the corners, with no suggestion of the snap oversteer of 205 folklore.

Of course, like a lot of folklore, stories about the GTI’s handling have been exaggerated over the years, and fresh suspension components and modern tyres help keep it faithful. Another gamechanger is that Michelin now offers the correct 185/55 R15 tyre in its Youngtimer Sport range, so quality performance tyres are a reality for the 205, and the result is that it feels really planted. Adjustable on the throttle, yes, but far from frightening. Zipping through the ultra-short gear ratios, letting the engine rev and rev and tucking it tightly into turns where there’s so much more road width to play with compared to in a wide, modern car, the Tolman 205 feels alive and vibrant. It’s impossible to suppress a grin.

This particular car has been something of a proof of concept for Chris Tolman, and is now up for sale at £45,000. For those of us who remember when 1.6 GTIs could barely reach a grand, that sounds spectacular, but it’s a price comparable with the very best ultra-low-mileage examples at auction, and of course this car has been rebuilt and upgraded with expensive components. Given the price of rear-wheel-drive Ford Escorts, back in the day and now, there’s a certain logic – and inevitability – to it.

Tolman hopes to build a limited run of ten full restomod GTIs, based on the 1.9 and with further modernisation. Those cars will cost a bit more, but given that most restomods seem to start at £350,000 – and that the 205 can stand shoulder-to-shoulder with any of them for the grin factor – it almost seems like good value.



THE LAST DANCE?

If the days are numbered for Ferrari's V12 engine, all the more reason to celebrate the most extraordinary version yet – the 819bhp, 9500rpm monster found in the nose of the completely thrilling 812 Competizione

by ADAM TOWLER

‘HER MAJESTY, THE V12…’

These are the exact words Ferrari uses to introduce the 812 Competizione’s V12 engine in the media briefing the night before we’re due to drive the new car around the Fiorano circuit. It’s theatrical reverence for a type of engine that goes back to the very first car Enzo made under his own name, as Ferrari as the old courtyard at Fiorano and the Ristorante Cavallino across from the main gates of the factory.

I had wondered – feared even – that I might be about to drive the final naturally aspirated V12 engine from Maranello, a truly sobering thought for any car enthusiast, but the Ferrari people confirm that while there’s demand from customers, and the will is there inside the company – and currently both seem present in copious quantities – then the V12s will keep coming for as long as legislation permits.

But even if this isn’t the last, it still feels like a special moment in the development of the high performance car. The F140 series engine with its 65-degree vee angle, first seen in the Enzo, retains its 6.5-litre capacity from the 812 Superfast. However, to create this ‘HB’ variant there’s much that has been changed: the block now features rods made from titanium (40 per cent lighter) and pistons coated in a low-friction ‘DLC’ (diamond-like coating) compound. There is a heavily revised cylinder head, with sliding-finger cam followers to permit a 600rpm higher rev limit (now 9500rpm!), and a completely new intake system with a compact plenum but variable-length inlet tracts to maintain low-end torque.

The result is a 30bhp increase in peak power compared with the Superfast’s ‘F140 GA’ unit – to a staggering 819bhp, which for a fully homologated road car seems a surreal amount of power to extract from such an engine; this is a non-hybrid Ferrari road car that exceeds the magic 800bhp figure. The sacrifice has been a small reduction in torque from the 812 Superfast’s 529lb ft down to 510lb ft. Interestingly, that’s virtually identical to the peak torque of the F12, released in 2012, which proves you can chase power and revs, but finding substantially more torque from an already highly tuned naturally aspirated engine is altogether a different matter.

Below and right: Towler prepares for some (extremely rapid) laps of Fiorano; latest iteration of F140 V12 is Ferrari’s most powerful naturally aspirated engine ever; dramatic new aero clearly evident



Bear in mind, too, that these numbers have been achieved despite the recent addition of an exhaust particulate filter, which makes its presence felt audibly – well, by the reduction in noise, that is – and it seems all the more unlikely. The exhaust itself is something very special, fanning out wide to enable an enormous venturi tunnel (more on which in a bit) and ending in some very unusual (and probably iconic in due course) rectangular exits. Notice I didn’t say trims; this is the first Ferrari in decades that doesn’t have exhaust finishers in the accepted modern sense of virtually all high performance cars. What you see at the rear of the car is the actual pipes direct from the engine.

While it’s tempting to view the Competizione as an incredible engine with some attractive bits of car arranged around it, it is of course so much more than that. This is Ferrari’s ultimate front-engined track car, the successor to the F12tdf and before it the 599 GTO. It is a technological showcase, with features that will surely drip-feed into the bread-and-butter models in due course.

The two key areas of development are aerodynamics and chassis. The aero elements could fill an entire dissertation but they represent a substantial reworking of the 812’s set-up. In fact, these changes, along with the combined stylistic efforts of Centro Stile, mean that the Comp (as we shall call it henceforth) has a rather different look to the ‘regular’ 812. In essence, the tail of the car appears longer and the bonnet shorter, which makes it seem wider and more squat on the ground. One large central air intake in the mouth now feeds the engine, with two enormous scoops either side for cooling the brakes and managing underbody aero. Front wheelarch pressure is vented down the body sides, but also around the unusual ‘blade’ that spans the bonnet and from where hot engine-bay air also escapes. It’s a novel way of dispensing with large holes cut into the bonnet for the same purpose.

Aft of the cabin, the major talking point is the carbonfibre panel that replaces the rear windscreen. It means the rear lip spoiler can be on the large side without any worries about interfering with rearward vision (this is supplied via a centrally mounted camera) while the surface has aero properties of its own thanks to the vortex generators that pepper its slope. An additional benefit is the weight saved by having no glass. It reminds me of the Evo FQ-400, although I’m not sure Ferrari would want to hear that…

It’s the massive diffuser and wide-set exhaust pipes that really define the Comp, though. Get down on the floor and peer underneath and you’ll see the underside is almost completely flat, while the central tunnel is large enough to suck small animals through.

From a chassis perspective there’s Ferrari’s now expected arsenal of unrivalled driver-assisting electronics, including Side Slip Control 7.0. But what really stands out is Virtual Short Wheelbase 3.0, which debuts the use of individual actuators for each rear wheel. Not only does the Comp have rear-wheel steering, but it can now steer each rear wheel independently of the other. That sounds like a recipe for disaster, but of course it represents just one input into a terrifyingly complex matrix of data constantly being collected and evaluated in real time by a superbrain. What 3.0 has allowed Ferrari’s engineers to effectively do is tailor







‘THE SENSATIONS COME THICK AND FAST. THERE’S A KEEN SENSE OF CONNECTION’

the Comp’s rear axle depending on what the car is doing. Accelerating hard on a straight? The rear will toe out to reduce tyre drag. Braking hard? The rears will toe in to aid stability. Taking a low-speed right-hand corner? The outer wheel will toe in more than the inner, not only improving the turn in, but also boosting lateral grip by preloading the outer tyre with just a little side slip so that it isn’t starting from zero grip. Switch course in an S-bend, and the inner wheel is better aligned to make the switch to toeing in than in a conventional rear-wheel-steer car. Take a faster corner at high speed and the effect is reduced, boosting stability. It’s fiendishly clever stuff, but the upshot of it all is that Ferrari has felt confident moving to a 275-width front tyre in the knowledge that the rear axle has the support and responses to keep things under control.

Enough of the tech; we could go on forever. I’m standing off the front corner of the Comp beneath the awning that’s attached to the back of the pit garage at Fiorano, the one you see in all the famous photos. Knee-high at the front wheelarch but almost comically huge when you’re standing close to it, the 812 Competizione is about as larger-than-life and intimidating as cars get. Part of that is knowing what lies beneath the bonnet of course, but it’s the sheer physicality of the thing that has butterflies zipping around in my stomach and my palms moistening rapidly. It genuinely looks as though it should wear a race number on the door and an ACO stamp on the roof, while a fresh set of bespoke compound-Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 Rs gleam at me from under the arches (there’s a Pirelli Corsa too, but it’s not the track choice and we’re solely on track today for this first taster of the Comp).

There’s one car already out on the circuit, and each time it passes the garage at high speed there’s an audible thump from the shock wave as the displaced air and V12 exhalations explode behind the brick wall. Blimey. It looks absolutely sensational from the rear when moving at speed with that massive expanse of diffuser, while the exhaust note is ferocious – not quite as loud as you might think (surely the GPF’s fault) but to my ears far more business-like and textural than a regular 812’s, and with less of a guttural sound to the note.

It’s time to clamber into ‘my’ Comp. This one has the usual Ferrari reclining bucket seats, which are okay but always seem to be set too high for me. Already, therefore, I’m on edge as I take in the surroundings: the familiar screens, switchgear, swathes of carbonfibre and Alcantara, the bonnet blade bisecting my lower vision. Push and hold the red button to wake the V12, which veritably explodes into life. In my mind Victorian bath taps are cranked open and vast quantities of superunleaded begin





Above: lip spoiler is now more prominent; carbon boomerangs on the rear panel are vortex generators; camera provides rearward vision

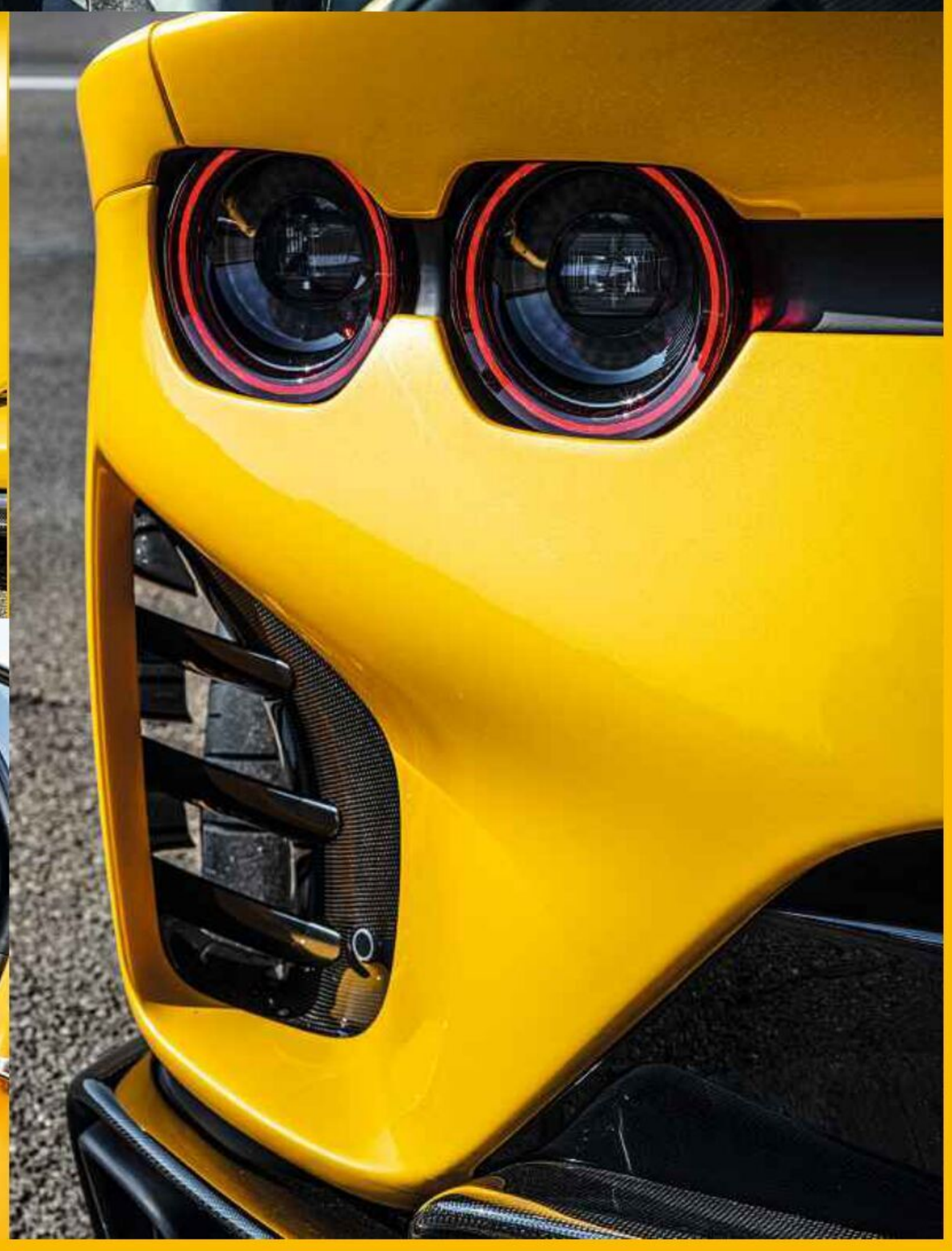
to flow into the V12's cylinder heads. I glance up and to my right and note that the rear-view screen fitted inside a conventional mirror housing is sharp and surprisingly easy to refocus on.

Time in the car is in preciously limited supply, so I work the manettino up to its penultimate setting of CT Off: we know it'll be docile in Sport, angry but surefooted in Race. Might as well go for it from the off. The new V12 is coupled to a revised seven-speed twin-clutch gearbox with even quicker shift times, and those shifts snap through with a '*brrrt*' noise like an A10's tank-busting gun. As I roll into the first corner they're even more snappy on the downchange, the engine whooping in a way that gives me goosebumps. I love the V12's voice in the cockpit already – it sounds demonic. With 80 per cent of peak torque available from just 2500rpm, it also picks up with pleasing enthusiasm before really punching hard in the mid-range.

The sensations flood in thick and fast. Light steering, as expected, and fast, but not nervous; there's a keen sense of connection, of the car hunkered down to the road's surface and moving all-a-piece. The way the nose is heading for the apex, even at this stage, is really impressive:









Left and below: Competizione shouts road-racer from every slash and vent; tyres are Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 Rs with a bespoke compound

only small inputs at the wheel are required, and you need to be measured, calm. I try not to feel overawed by what's going on around me. Immediately we're into the S curves, taken in either third or fourth gear, and the direction change is dismissed easily: there's no sense of float or hesitation, it's all very confidence-inspiring. I imagine a Superfast would be much more of a challenge here, an 812 GTS even more so again.

I'm onto the throttle on the exit, a little too keenly as it transpires, and the rear starts to light up, gets on the move, but there's surprising grace to the way it shifts laterally – you really couldn't call it a snatch. It's over before it's begun, and now I keep my foot buried and my fingers away from the upshift paddle, as the V12's note climbs and climbs. And still it keeps going – before lights start flashing on the steering wheel in my peripheral vision, which is just as well as I don't have the capacity to actually watch the dials themselves.

As corners and then whole laps pass, a few things become abundantly clear. One is that I could spend this whole feature attempting to describe what it feels like to operate this extraordinary engine and I still wouldn't do it justice. Put it this way: it makes a Honda S2000 feel a bit asthmatic, a Lamborghini V12 rather lethargic. I know it's connected to a flywheel, but it's not one you really notice. And while I know I should just keep the throttle pinned until the lights suggest the limiter is about to intervene, actually using every last rev is not something you can say you'll do lightly. It takes genuine determination to keep your foot in, and sometimes the circuit or situation just won't allow it.

The brakes aren't doing so well, though, in spite of their trick 'ducted' calipers taken from the SF90. Maybe they needed more cooling down after the previous session but they're rumbling and the pedal feel is patchy.

None of this is what preoccupies my mind once the cooling-down lap has begun. No, it's how remarkably faithful the Comp feels. There's clearly much more to be extracted from it, but when it turns it feels really hooked up, and when it begins to slide it does so in a manner that's communicated to you, and deliciously progressively. That said, rather like keeping a grizzly bear as a pet, there's also an underlying frisson of excitement/fear born from the knowledge that it could rip you to pieces at any moment. I've no doubt a substantial indiscretion would not end well in the 812 Competizione. It's a big, heavy car (its 38kg lighter than a Superfast, but that still equates to 1487kg 'dry', so call it just shy of 1600kg with fluids) with an unfeasibly large amount of power, and that's a recipe that requires plenty of respect at all times, but my learned colleagues tell me the old F12tdf was very 'edgy' and this doesn't feel like that to me.

Some 999 Competiziones will be made (with a further 599 Aperta versions), starting at £446,970, although you'll be over half a million easily once you've started ticking option boxes – and that's if you're a Ferrari customer granted a build slot in the first place, no doubt. Yet while those figures are just more big numbers for a car that could be defined by such things, it's actually a warm, sensuous and deeply charismatic kind of road racer that's nothing if not phenomenally exciting.



Ferrari 812 Competizione

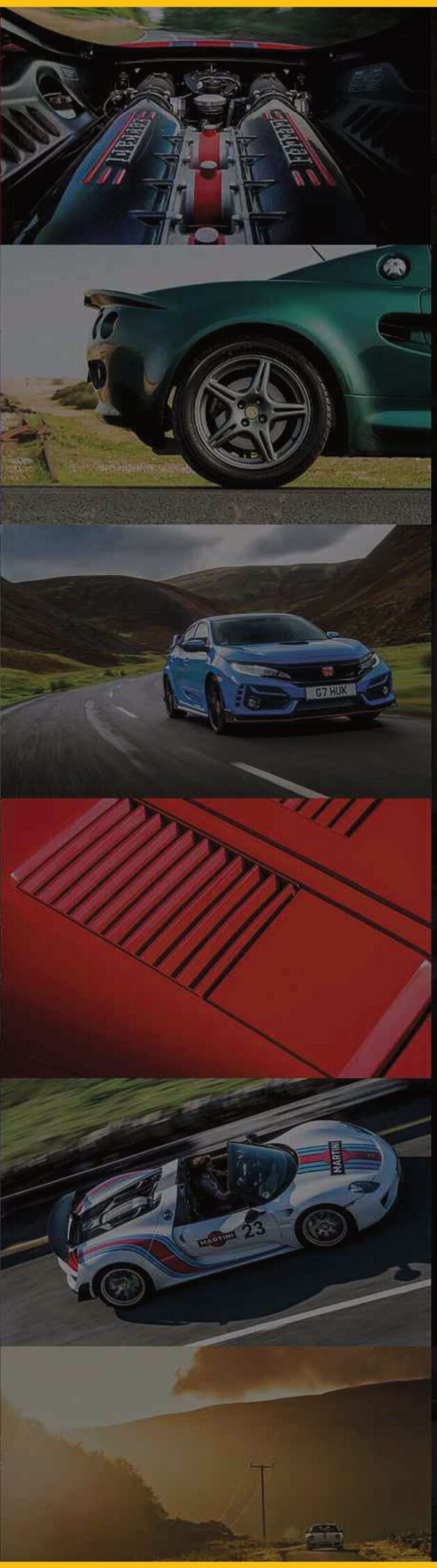
Engine V12, 6496cc **Power** 819bhp @ 9250rpm
Torque 510lb ft @ 7000rpm **Weight** 1487kg (dry)
Power-to-weight 560bhp/ton **0-62mph** 2.9sec
Top speed 211mph **Basic price** £446,970

evo rating ★★★★★

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LIFE THROUGH A LENS

CAMDEN THRASHER

With his individual eye for motorsport, Camden Thrasher's photographs often turn racing scenes into art. Here he tells the story of his career to date and talks us through some of his favourite images

by BRETT FRASER



ATLANTA-BASED AMERICAN motorsport photographer Camden Thrasher has shot a Formula 1 Grand Prix race just once to date. He relished the opportunity to witness car racing's juggernaut in action, but doesn't feel inclined to swap over from his regular diet of sportscars and off-road, Baja-style buggies. 'I did the Canadian Grand Prix in 2019,' he explains, 'and it was an awesome experience. I was interested in shooting it because, for me, it was new and different.

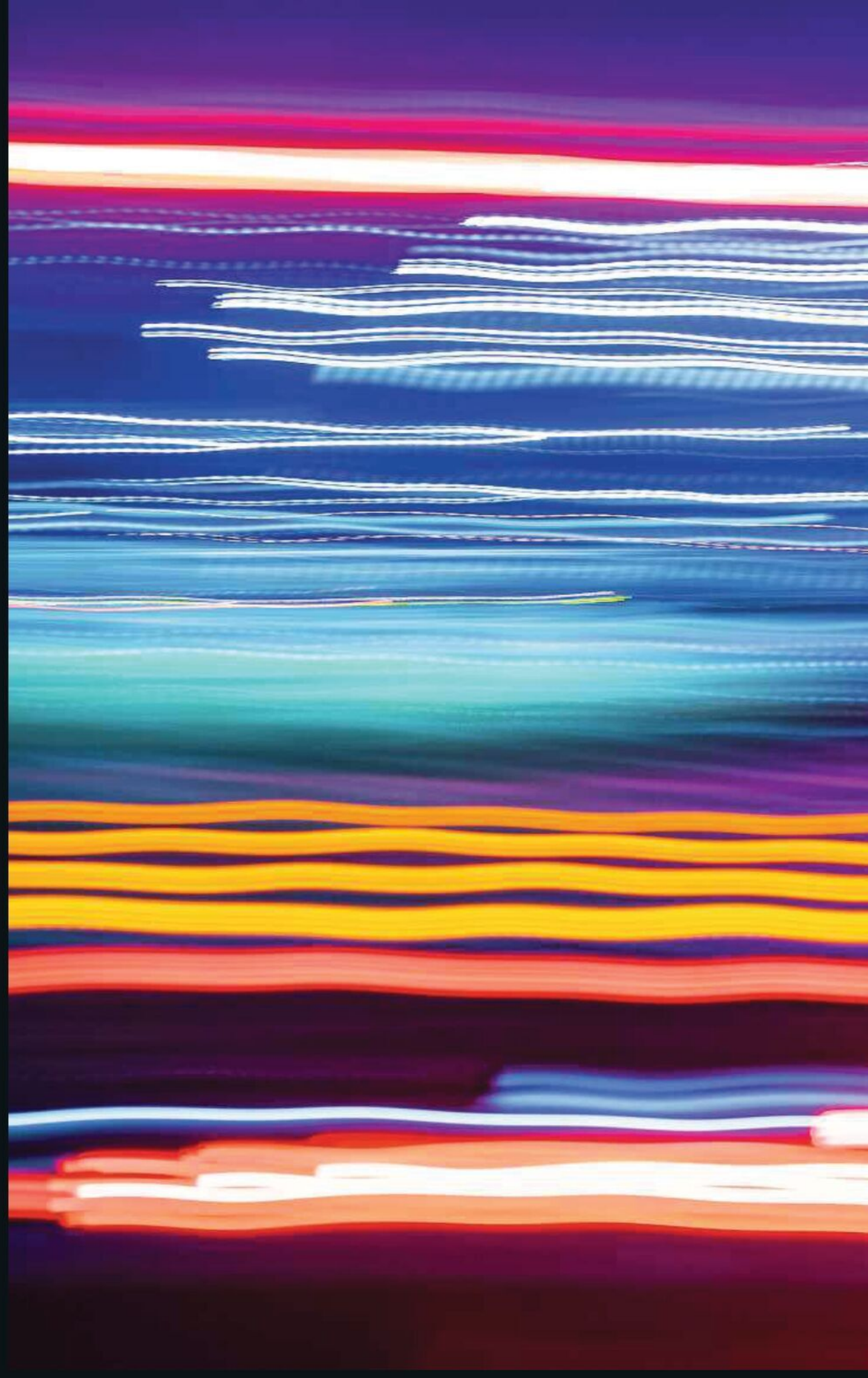
'One of the biggest things was that there were actually spectators, and as far as a backdrop with all the colour and visual interest goes, that was a whole lot different to most sportscar racing. But in my opinion I don't think that just because it's F1 and the top level of racing that it's also the top level of photography.

'I enjoyed shooting there,' Thrasher continues, 'but then again I enjoy anything that's new to me, whether it's a new track or a new style of racing. With long-distance sportscar racing you get the most time, the most different lighting and weather conditions, and that's really cool for me to play around in.'

Thrasher's passion for motorsport can be definitely parked at the doors of his uncle's workshop. 'My uncle has been a fabricator for a long time and was a crew chief in the Trans Am series in the mid- to late-'90s and early 2000s. Whenever I went to visit him I would go to his shop and help out – during high-school vacations I'd get to work on race cars.

'I also grew up pretty close to a racetrack, the Portland International Raceway. It still hosts the IndyCar series, although not too many other big-name things any more, but it was a place that my parents took me to from an early age to visit car shows.'

Not that motor racing fuelled the young



Le Mans in the rain (previous pages)
'Stuck in the pitlane during a sudden downpour in 2016, I realised the deluge would require everyone to change to wet tyres. The mess of pit equipment in the top of the frame and the extra bright lights around the Porsche pits frame the 911 RSR as it gets pushed into the garage.'

Daytona lights (above)
'One of the most intriguing aspects of the Daytona 24 Hours to me is the chance to play with the various track lighting during the long night. Slow shutter speeds, paired with the lights from the safety vehicles in the foreground and scoring tower in the background, paint a vivid scene, with the 911 RSR hiding in the gap.'

Race grime (right)
'A somewhat simple photo from Le Mans, but the details of the dirt and grime, or damage, on an endurance car can really tell the story of what it's been subjected to during the race. Here the dust from the brake rotors covers most of the side of the Aston Martin V8 Vantage.'

Goggles (far right)
'Le Mans, 2017. The Porsche team wore reflective goggles and I wanted to utilise them. Splitting the dark unlit portion of the pitlane and the brightly lit pit box down the middle of the goggles allows us to see the reflection of the car on one side and straight through to the crew member's eye on the other.'


HASSELBLAD
AM
ACTION
MICHELIN
24 LE MANS
98


PORSCHE
uvex


ROLEX
MOTUL
300
24 HOURS OF LE MANS
FREE PRACTICE 1 - OVERALL CLASSIFICATION
INTERVAL
RACING TEAM INDIA EURASIA
+1.364
TEAM PROJECT 1
3:50.193
AF CORSE
3:50.614
THERTECH RACING
+0.107
Perpetual Movement







Le Mans reflection (left)
'The reflections off the glass pitlane divider at Le Mans have been a source of intrigue every year I've been, allowing me to line up angles not otherwise possible. The Toyota stood out the most, as if it was appearing from nowhere under the massive, foreboding pit building.'

Acura aero (top)
'Modern race cars are quite complicated and their details are usually guarded by the teams. Therefore, being able to see aerodynamics at work on track is quite special. Here I used a long lens and high shutter speed to focus on the water droplets being pushed around each piece of the rear wing, bodywork and diffuser.'

McDonnell Douglas F-15E (above middle)
'I've always had an interest in aviation. I use it now to keep my photographic mind working in my time away from racing in the off-season. There's a lot of work and nothing is ever guaranteed, but not much else compares to standing on top of a mountain with an F-15E headed straight for you!'

Nürburgring forest (above)
'The second time I shot at the Nürburgring 24 Hours I made a point to explore more on my own. Whilst driving along the forest trails inside this massive circuit I saw this section of track. I made a note of the area and came back just before sunset when the trees were lit vibrantly.'

Thrasher's interest in photography, despite the ready access. 'My interest in photography stems from playing around with my dad's film SLR camera: it seemed pretty cool to me as an eight-year old. It was a Minolta X700 and I still have it – in fact, I have two of them. At first I wasn't too interested in shooting motorsport or planes [Thrasher's Instagram is peppered with awesome aviation images, which we'll come to shortly], I was fascinated by those super-high-speed pictures of a bullet going through an apple, science-y stuff like that. Obviously when you're 10 or 12 there's really no way to accomplish that, but I certainly tried taking pictures of balloons popping and things like that.'

Thrasher took a black and white photography course at high school and then at college studied vehicle engineering: 'I wanted to be a racing mechanic or build race cars, but then I realised that photography was fun. I got to travel a little bit, and people were telling me I was pretty good at it.'

In a roundabout way Thrasher's uncle was again fundamental in steering his future career choice during those educational years. 'When I got my licence and started to drive I found myself at the racetrack every free moment I had,' reveals Thrasher. 'My first car was a 1976 BMW 2002, which I still have. My uncle bought it in about 2008 with the intention of giving it to me. It was a super-junky one and he did a bunch of work on it. Then I visited him and we did a bunch more work on it together, before driving it back from California to where I lived in Washington. It was my high school car and I used it a little bit at college, too.'

Despite in more recent times treating himself to an E46 BMW M3, Thrasher has used the elderly Toyota Corolla estate that he learnt to drive in as his preferred mode of transport to any race within an eight- to ten-hour trip from his home, although a 2004 Toyota Land Cruiser is about to usurp it.

Initially without a master plan for getting into professional motorsport photography, Thrasher was shrewd enough to realise the importance of making contacts – he did, after all, spend all his free time at the track. 'Some of the drivers and teams I met on the local motorsport scene went on to do more professional racing and I followed them through that. Then I met more people and was put in touch with some of the racing magazines.

'The first mag I was published in was *Modified* magazine: a friend of mine had a Subaru STI race car that they were featuring, so I shot it out on the track and then did the engine, interior and whatever. In about 2012 I got put in touch with *Racer* magazine and

I've done work on an occasional basis with them ever since.

'The majority of the stuff that I shoot is motorsport-related. Occasionally I'll do some shoots with road cars if there's a trip to somewhere neat, but road tests aren't things that I'm super-interested in.'

As you can see on the pages of this feature, Thrasher's images are more biased towards art than reportage – has this ever been a hurdle to commissions? 'I've pretty much always shot stuff that I like myself,' he says, 'and never really had any guidance as to what my photography should be. I guess I'm lucky that the photo editors of the magazines that I work with are wanting something different. That's my hope, anyway. After all, they have plenty of access to standard shots via the agencies.'

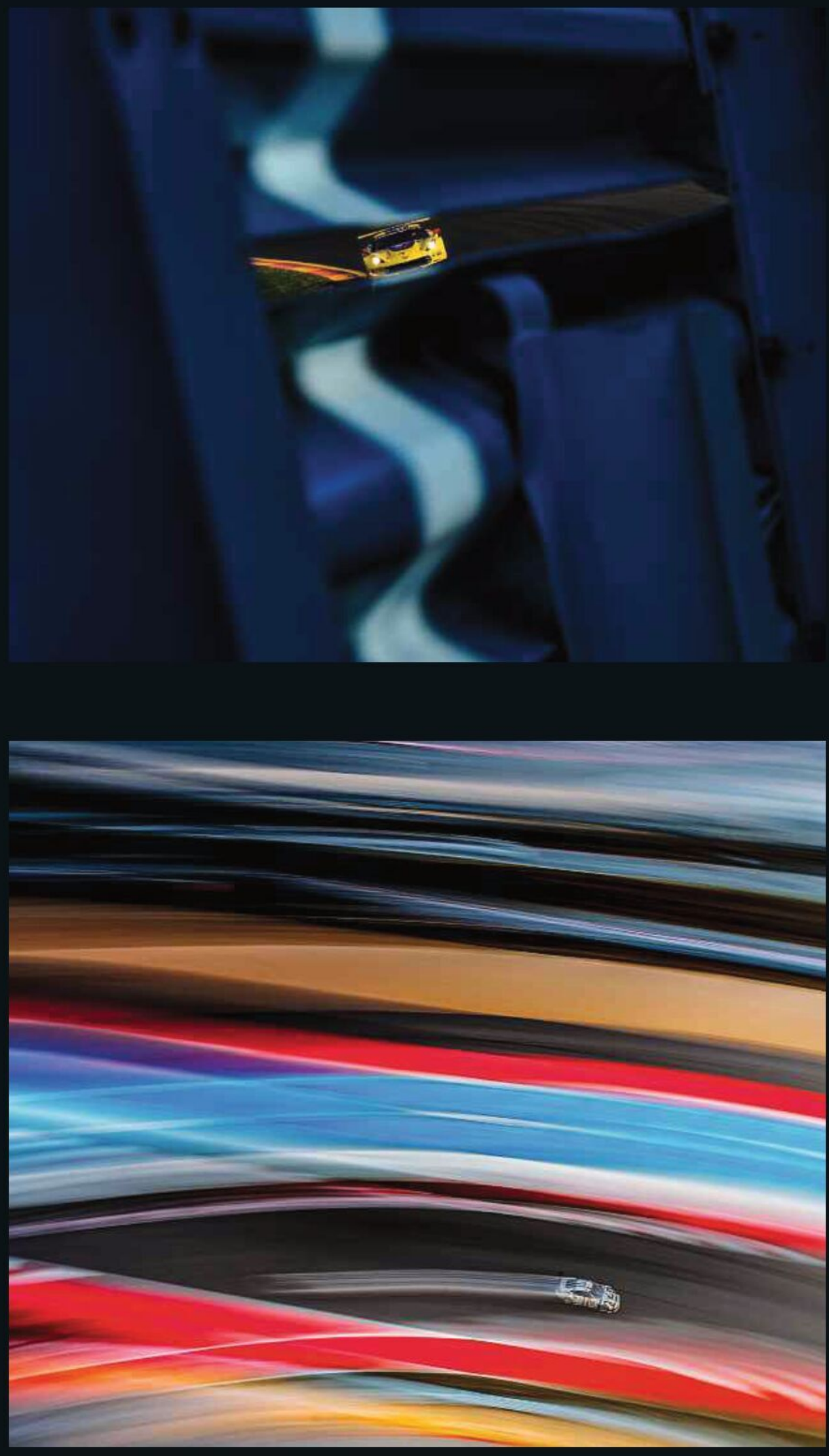
The majority of Thrasher's work is in the US. 'I do mostly the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship and work primarily with a couple of the teams. I do a little random magazine work here and there, while the off-road stuff is probably two or three events a year for Honda. I've also covered Le Mans for WeatherTech, and *Racer* magazine, and the ACO [Automobile Club de l'Ouest, the Le Mans organiser] a couple of times.'

One of the things that Thrasher finds so satisfying about the long-distance races is the freedom it gives him to experiment with light, weather and very slow shutter speeds, the latter now a hallmark of his. 'The results can be really interesting and they're different every time, depending on where I am.

'With my photographs I have a clear idea in my head what the final product should look like and how to achieve that. I'm interested in stark shapes and geometry and colour, so in the edit I'm trying to emphasise those parts of an image. But I'm not creating something that wasn't there. Post-production I work hard on the colours and trying to balance the exposure, because it's often pretty weird lighting situations. I feel like it's a process from the time that you've taken the image to the time it's presented as a final print or on a website or whatever. I don't see it as you click the shutter and you're done.'

Thrasher also takes fabulous photographs of aircraft, for therapy not profit. 'Lately the aviation has been a different way to keep my brain working when I'm not shooting cars. It's another exercise to keep pushing myself to consider different compositions outside of what I do for work.'

Motorsport photography retains its magic for Thrasher, though. 'I like going to tracks where I've never been or that I don't really know, where I don't have set ideas about what will work best at a particular corner. I may have been doing this for a few years now, but I never stop looking for a fresh approach.'



Watkins Glen guard rail (top)
'The "through the guard rail" shot has been done countless times, but I was looking to add more spice. During warm-up for the 2016 Watkins Glen 6 Hours, the advertising boards behind me kept everything in shadow, except for this tiny squiggly sliver of light aligned with the apex of the corner.'

COTA colours (above)
'This was taken at the Circuit of the Americas in 2014. The 251-foot-tall tower there offers fun views, full of possibilities, particularly downward at the painted run-off area. I used a fairly wide lens and very low shutter speed to blur and smear all the colours.'

Baja racer (top right)
'The desert off-road Baja races in Mexico are a blast to shoot as they are a logistical nightmare. Photography here favours intuition and proper planning, but it can all go sideways quickly. The insanity of the trucks and scenery far outweighs the struggles, though. Here a racer takes a deep silt bath.'

Ring fence (right)
'The Nürburgring is a very special place, and the atmosphere at the 24-hour race is like nowhere else. This scene of a young boy on the fence focused on the race really spoke to me, as it's exactly what I was doing at that age.'






EXTREME

SHORT



Audi's ballistic short-wheelbase Sport Quattro S1 blasted from 0 to 62mph in just 3.1sec on gravel and was one of the stars of the fearsome Group B era. Just 20 were built and this is the most decorated survivor. Strap yourself in for one wild ride

by HENRY CATCHPOLE PHOTOGRAPHY *by* DOMINIC FRASER



IMAGINE IF YOU SPENT THE NIGHT BEFORE A flight watching videos of planes landing in high winds. As I close my laptop and switch off the bedside light, not feeling in the least bit like sleeping, I realise I've probably just done something equally daft. As I put my head on the pillow, all I can see are images of Hannu and Stig leaping over the rollercoaster crests of Ouninpohja. Flames spit from from the yellow and white beasts as they slew sideways at jaw-dropping speeds, the soundtrack beautiful but angry.

As I close my eyes I'm picturing Walter waltzing, his blue Adidas pumping the pedals as he splits a sea of spectators like a motorsport Moses. It's terrifying to see the commitment as he drives blind, save for the unheard instructions from Christian. A tight left and the car looks wild, almost untameable, the revs coming in stabs as the driver wrestles to contain it. To people like me who were too young to have witnessed it in period, Group B is almost fantastical, the equivalent of knights slaying dragons.

And then the darkness ebbs, the morning arrives and before I know it I'm walking across the tarmac towards a set of those enormous box arches. Perhaps the most famous dragon of them all.

Just 20 Audi Sport Quattros were built in S1 (or Evolution 2) spec and this is arguably the most important of those that remain. It is chassis no. 2, which finished 2nd at Rally Finland in 1985 with Stig Blomqvist at the wheel. It is also the car that was converted to use a PDK 'box and which Walter Röhrl drove in the Network Q with Phil Short later that year. If it still existed, then chassis no. 11 would undoubtedly be the most valuable, as that was the the car that took the S1's only victory in the World Rally Championship: Sanremo in '85. However, incredibly, that car was scrapped.

IN-NY18 has been owned by Audi UK since the '90s but little used. However, after it had an engine and gearbox refresh last year, I'm about to get more seat-time than anyone in the last quarter of a century. Privileges don't come much greater.

The livery is iconic. The blocky, bulldozer shape unmistakable. It was the first rally car that created downforce but its approach to aerodynamics is blunt. If the modern way of working with airflow is like intricate origami, this is about as delicate as reloading the printer with a wad of A4. There's no doubt that the wings worked, though. Watch footage of the cars through the Finnish yumps and you can see how beautifully they land, slightly tail-down. Then find footage of Hannu Mikkola going through the same yumps after going off the road in '85 and losing his rear wing – the car is permanently trying to tip forward in frightening fashion.

The idea of it flying at all seems a little unlikely when you see it static because it looks heavy thanks to its big, boxy shape. But when you waft open the almost flimsy driver's door you're reminded that it weighs only about 1170kg. The old Recaros look like they have been covered in a sort of grey tweed, while the backs of the seats have that honeyed weave that you only get with old Kevlar. You sit quite upright, but it's comfortable and the cockpit feels spacious, partly because it is and partly because the white paint lends an airiness. The multiple tubes of the roll-cage ought to be a comfort too, but once you know they're aluminium you can't help but imagine someone scrunching an empty crisp packet.

There's other pipework running through the cabin, down by the sills: conduits for fluids between the unusually crowded boot and the engine bay. As I pull on the red Sabelt harness, I scan the eight dials in an attempt to rank them in some vague order of importance. The boost adjuster can stay where it is today – somewhere between 450bhp and 500bhp should be plenty.

There are normal plastic stalks sprouting from the column and a Momo steering wheel that is simplicity itself, the leather smoothed by years of being tightly gripped, the curiously blue Audi badge slightly skew-whiff. If there was a family tree of exposed gear linkages, with a Pagani Huayra's being the young, bling lottery winner in a sharp suit, this would be the plain-speaking grandfather that grafted down the mines to put food on the table and never you mind the rough edges if it gets the job done. Also on top of the patched and bulging transmission tunnel are a brake bias adjuster and a line-lock. The pedals don't match and the overall ambience is one of a well engineered but slightly Heath Robinson competition car. It's all at once simple but cluttered.

Deep breath. Reach down in front of the gearlever and press the innocuous looking little black button between the two red plastic engine-cutout keys. There are a few lazy, high-pitched whines from the starter motor and then the straight-five clears its throat into a deep, fast idle that fills the car. Surfaces that were still a moment before are now alive with vibrations large and small.

Unsurprisingly the clutch is heavy, the quadriceps in my left leg getting a workout as I push the pedal a couple of times to get a feel for the weighting. In contrast, the gearshift feels quite light and, although the throw isn't that long, there isn't the sense of a tightly defined gate to give clarity to the movements. Revs, clutch, try to find the biting point but then not slip it… and with a heavy-duty stutter we're away.

An exploratory waggle of the wheel at low speed reveals all sorts of conflicting forces as the diffs fight for control, but the lack of weight in the car is again apparent. A couple of short shifts reveal more reassurance in the gearbox than I first thought. And then, turning onto the back straight, the time for prevarication is over.

Third gear, squeeze the throttle, listen to the evocative five-cylinder warble as the revs build and then at 6000rpm… *BOOM!* The S1 explodes forwards like a sprinter startled out of the blocks, rearing up at the front and then weaving left and right like a dog sniffing the air. Everything seems to happen at once. I want to keep a firm grasp of the wheel but I also need to change up. I want to keep looking where the car's taking me, but I also want to look at the rev-counter. As I go for fourth there is the wonderful *tcheeew* from the whistling wastegate and the nose dips then rises again briefly before I brake early. Wow.

This is the sort of turbocharged delivery your mother warned you

Right and above: previous pilots of this Sport Quattro S1 include Stig Blomqvist and Walter Röhrl; now its our man Catchpole's turn to get behind the Momo wheel


IN-NY 18
MICHELIN
MICHELIN
SKF
BOGE


km/h
VDO


momo

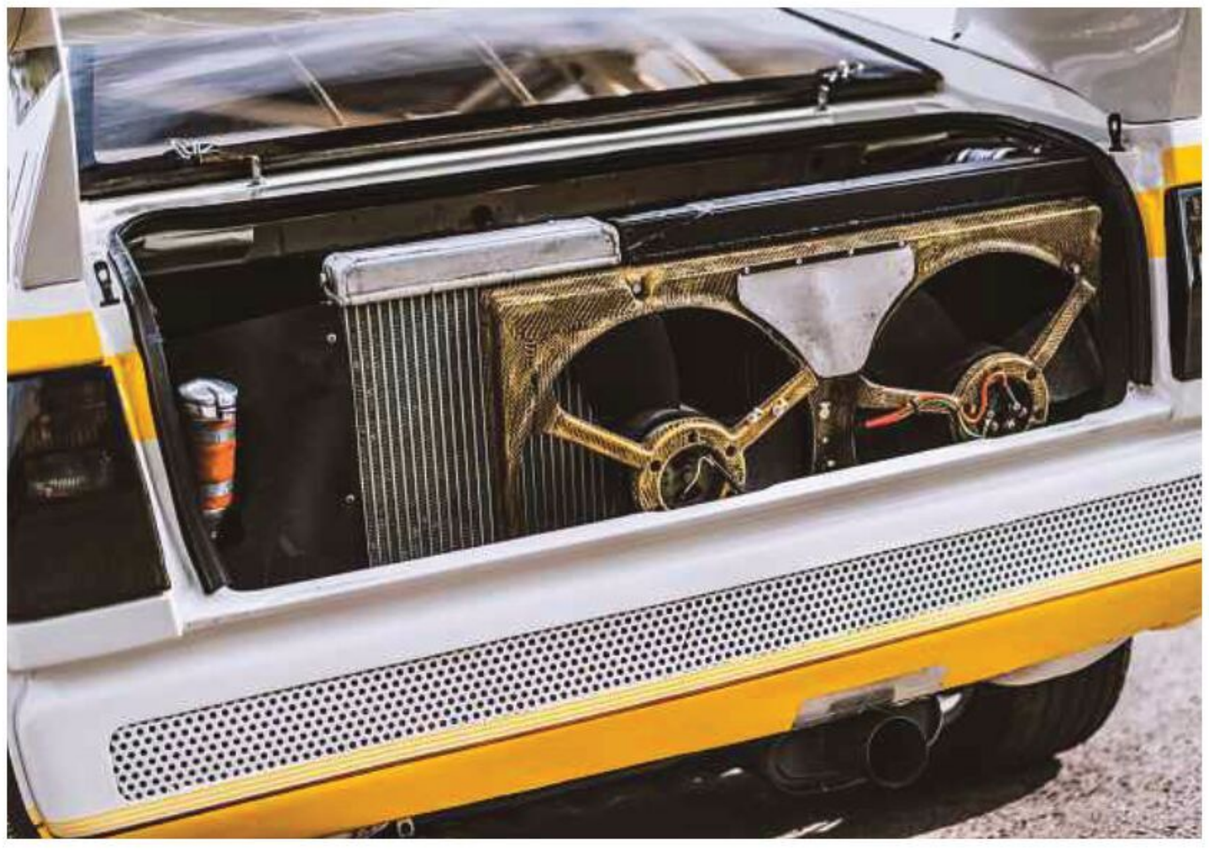

Audi quattro
IN-NY 18
MICHELIN


momo


MICHELIN
Castrol
HB
international









about. The blast of boost is all-consuming. It's not a clean shove of linear g-force, it's a dirty detonation that infects the whole car. Short of Doc's DeLorean reaching 88mph, there can't be many cars that undergo such an alarming transformation. It reminds me of a Ferrari F40, which is a similar weight and has a similar power output, but this is even more violent. Even rawer. The gearing feels shorter and the single big turbo delivers its delayed wallop with even more ferocity. It's genuinely unsettling, but also primordially exciting.

Next time around the track I enter the tight right-hander onto the straight with more commitment and get on the throttle earlier in second gear. I've just about got the car straight as the needle accelerates past 6000rpm. The ancient and now unobtainable Michelins momentarily lose their grip and this time I'm adding corrective lock as the engine note hardens. The slide itself is relatively contained but having to take one hand off the wheel to change gear makes it all feel more frantic.

Even the space of a small airfield feels quite restrictive in an S1, so what it must have been like on narrow mountain passes or through tight streets is almost unfathomable. Walter Röhrl said that it was a car in which you needed to think two corners ahead and I can see why. When the boost kicks in there is a relentless, runaway feeling to the car. You're riding a wave in a storm.

One of the big changes with the S1 compared with the standard Shorty was that as much weight was moved rearwards as possible. Open the boot and you'll find the battery, alternator, oil cooler and radiator with two fans all huddled in there. It helped, but the five-cylinder slung out over the front means that the weight distribution is still an imperfect 55:45, front:rear. As such, it isn't a car that likes tighter corners, the front wanting to push on. It needs a bit of cajoling. And as careful as I want to be with this precious piece of history, you have to drive it very positively. You can't let it drive you.

Of course I've got the advantage of doing laps, redoing the same turns and finding the best combination of inputs. Yet getting into a flow or achieving any sort of repeatability seems difficult verging on impossible. But the satisfaction is so sweet when all your efforts combine in a corner to get the car rotating early enough and the boost arriving right on time so that the diffs lock, resulting in the car being hurled forward without hesitation. Then it's a car that leaves you smiling and sweating.

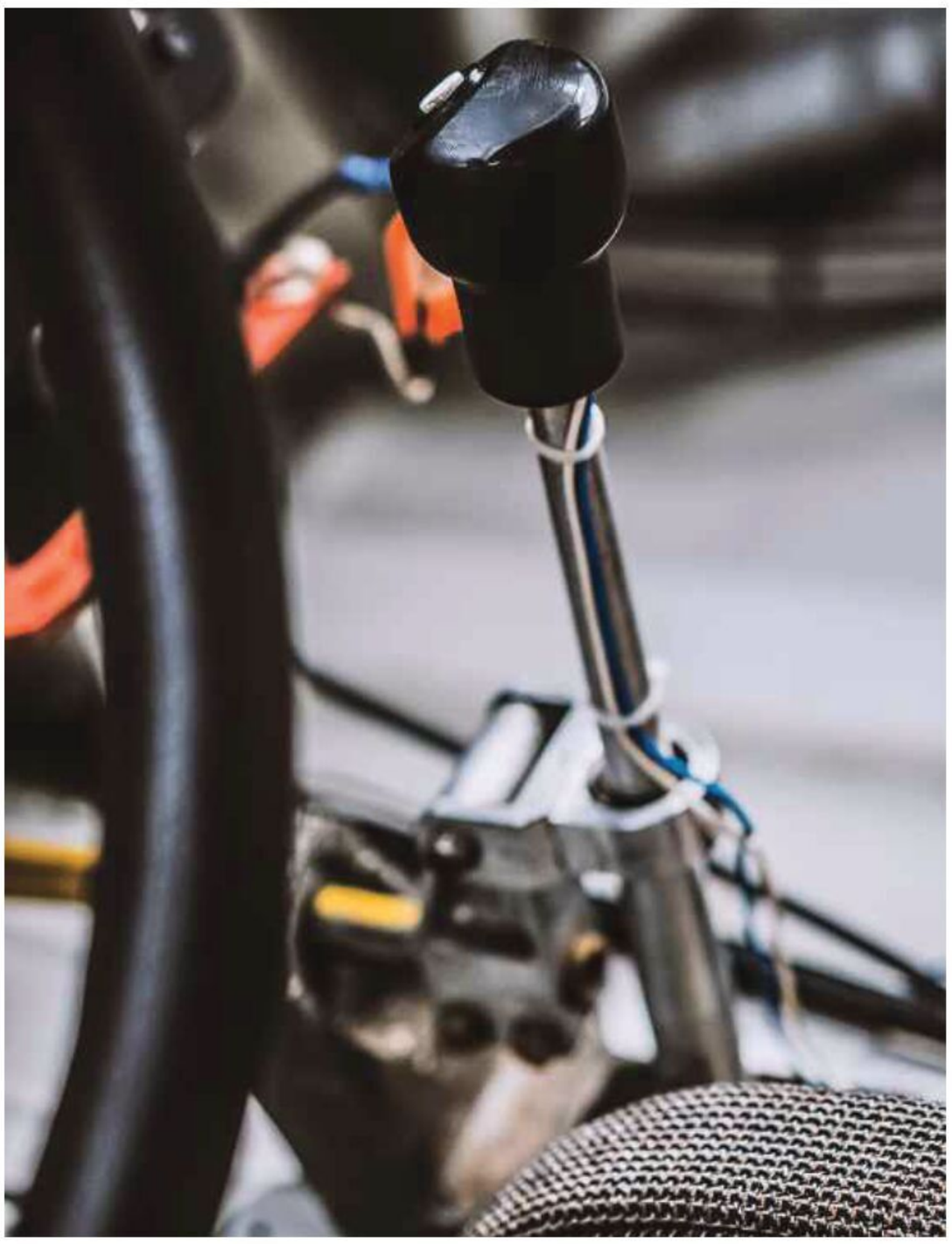
The terrifying thing is that an S1 would have been even more unruly back in the day thanks to an early form of anti-lag. Called *Umluft*, which translates as 'circulating air', it was all but essential because of the size of the turbocharger on the S1. The big turbo gave big boost but also the big lag that I'm experiencing. You can tell if *Umluft* is fitted because there will be a second wastegate next to the main one under the bonnet in order to regulate the intake-side flow to the turbocharger. Although it was effective, the problem was that it also burned exhaust valves and manifolds. As a result it's simply not worth running the system these days.

Something else that isn't used these days (but could be) is the small red sphere under the bonnet that's affectionately known as The Bomb. This is the heart of a hydraulic system that was triggered by the small white button on the forward

Clockwise from top left: cockpit is busy but airy; Sport Quattro was first rally car with downforce; radiator and oil cooler were relocated to the boot for the S1, but hefty in-line five still gave a nose-heavy balance








Gab | Ese
BP 2

part of the top of the gearlever. When the system was activated, this button would instantly dip the clutch pedal with the piston that you can see mounted above it. Except dip is far too meek a word. It would smash the pedal to the bulkhead with unmitigated ferocity.

It was crude, but on a special stage it worked brilliantly as it allowed the drivers much more freedom to left-foot brake. However, in the service park the system was responsible for left- foot breaking, crushing the metatarsals of more than one poor, unsuspecting or wearily inattentive mechanic.

The final thing that was used in period but now lies dormant is the PDK gearbox. Audi UK actually owns the dual-clutch 'box but as it's a different size and shape to the H-pattern, it's not the work of a moment to fit. The aforementioned bulges and patch-plates on the transmission tunnel show where it was squeezed in in the past.

It certainly improved performance, dropping the 0-60mph time on gravel from 3.1sec to 2.5sec. Röhrl first used the 'box in competition on the Semperit Rally in Austria in 1985 and won by a staggering 18 minutes. It was fitted again for the RAC in November that year, but with less success. The first problem was that Röhrl snapped the small lever that was used to change gear, so his co-driver, Phil Short, had to jam a screwdriver in the slot instead. The other problem was that it was very difficult to know which gear you were in and this was almost certainly a factor when the car left the road and rolled down a hillside in SS15 (Rheola).

Given how ferocious the S1 feels today, the mind boggles at the thought of it with another 100bhp, *Umluft* and the PDK 'box. Even after a couple of hours behind the wheel, once I'm used to the weight (im)balance and familiar with the responses of all the controls and, as far as possible, comfortable with the car, I still don't feel as though I'm totally in control when the needle hits 6000rpm and the torque curve goes vertical. It has a rawness that is impossible to subdue.

But that's exactly how I hoped it would be. I wanted the experience of driving this car to elevate my admiration for the likes of Mikkola and Mouton even higher. I wanted to know that my belief in their bravery and skill was entirely justified. Suffice to say that watching some of the clips again after wrestling with the S1, I was even more slack-jawed at what I was seeing on the screen.

Juha Kankkunen once said 'WRC is for boys, Group B was for men.' I always thought that was a bit disrespectful (and not just to the runner-up in the 1982 drivers' championship). After all, Group A cars were going faster only a few years later. And I defy anyone to be dismissive about the sheer speed and constant commitment that the current WRC cars demand from their drivers. But, having driven the S1, I now know what Juha was getting at. There is a powerful physicality and bare-knuckle brutality that I haven't experienced in any other rally car. I think it boils down to the fact that in 1985/86 engines were writing monstrous cheques that the chassis were struggling to cash, and that imbalance hasn't been present in rallying since. Group B has a reputation and it is entirely deserved.

Below and left: chassis no. 2 finished 2nd at Rally Finland in 1985 and won the Semperit Rally in the same year, the latter with a PDK gearbox, though today it has its original H-pattern manual



Audi Sport Quattro S1

Engine In-line 5-cyl, 2142cc, turbo
Power 476bhp @ 7500rpm **Torque** 354lb ft @ 5500rpm **Weight** 1170kg **Power-to-weight** 413bhp/ton
0-62mph 3.1sec **Top speed** n/a
evo rating ★★★★★

MEAN & LIME

With 760bhp, the latest Shelby GT500 is Ford's fruitiest Mustang ever, and it's got chassis chops to match. But can it get the measure of BMW's new M4 Competition?

by JOHN BARKER PHOTOGRAPHY *by* ASTON PARROTT


MI FMC

IT'S KIND OF NEAT WHEN YOU PUT the BMW M4 Competition into its sportiest mode and its exhaust note deepens and on the overrun – there! – you can spot the occasional, distant boom. Then you fire up the Shelby Mustang GT500 and the roar from its tailpipes almost knocks the BMW over. In the film version, the M4 is the punk in a soon-to-be-shredded jacket and the Mustang is Crocodile Dundee grinning and saying 'That's not a knife…'

I love a thunderous V8 as much as any enthusiast and the Mustang's supercharged V8 is a doozy. There's a savage horsepower bite to back up that bark, too – a stupendous 760bhp, making it Ford's most powerful production car ever. Add 'Grabber Lime' paint and a full set of stripes and if this was your first encounter with the GT500, you'd wonder if was all mouth and no trousers.

Regular readers will know that it isn't. It has a lot of features designed to deliver dynamic performance, including magnetorheological adaptive dampers, Brembo brakes (the biggest ever fitted to a production Ford), Michelin Pilot Sport 4 S tyres and structural carbonfibre too. It's already impressed us (Driven, **evo** 290) but does it have the depth of ability to challenge the new M4 Competition, one of the best performance coupes currently on sale?

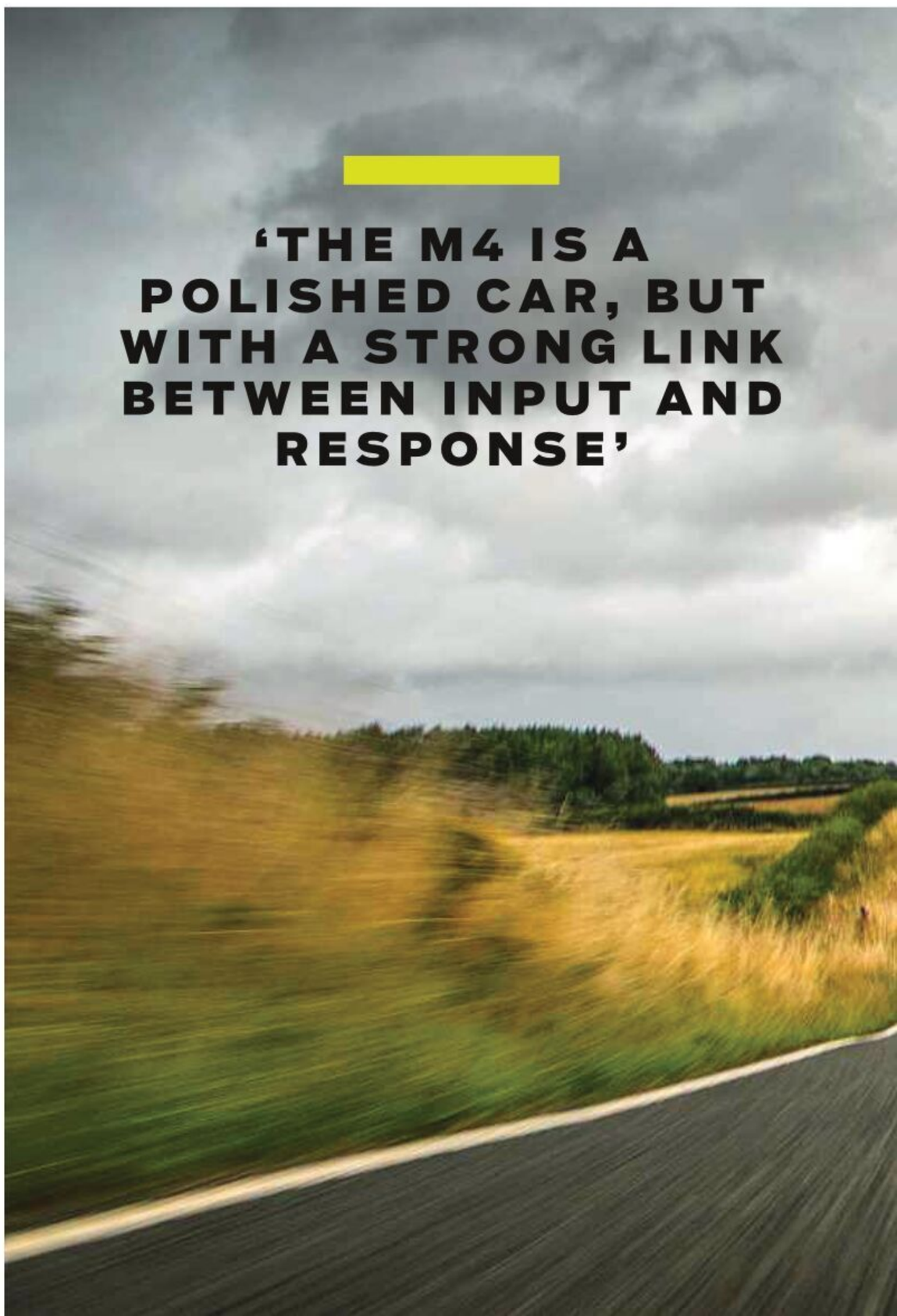
Aesthetics are always a personal thing, of course. Alongside the beefy, chiselled Ford, the BMW looks a bit unconvincing. Its side profile suggests the designer lost interest when their pencil got past the door, while the lurid green paint – more electric lemon to the Mustang's luminous lime – is striking, but and a cynic might suggest that it's simply a ploy to distract from the buck-tooth radiator grilles.

Sure, the BMW is cleaner, but the Ford's more extreme addenda – the splitter extensions climbing up the front wheelarches and the Gurney flap on the rear wing – are options, as are the stripes. Painted a subtle shade, with its big wheels and tyres cramming the arches to perfection, the Shelby could look every bit as menacing as it sounds.

Ford has no plans to import the GT500 to Europe. One UK importer is offering the top Mustang 'from £120k' – the price of a new Aston Martin Vantage! – which seems an awful lot for a left-hand driver, even one this powerful. Meanwhile, in the US the M4 Competition and GT500 are pretty well price-matched, both costing about $75k.

The BMW has nothing like the firepower of the Ford but, quite honestly, the 503bhp and almost 480lb ft of torque from its twin-turbo, 3-litre straight-six feels plenty for a mid-sized coupe. We could fret over the weight of the new M4 – a not insubstantial 1730kg – but it never feels quite that hefty. Even so, I can't help feeling that a car carrying the 'Competition'





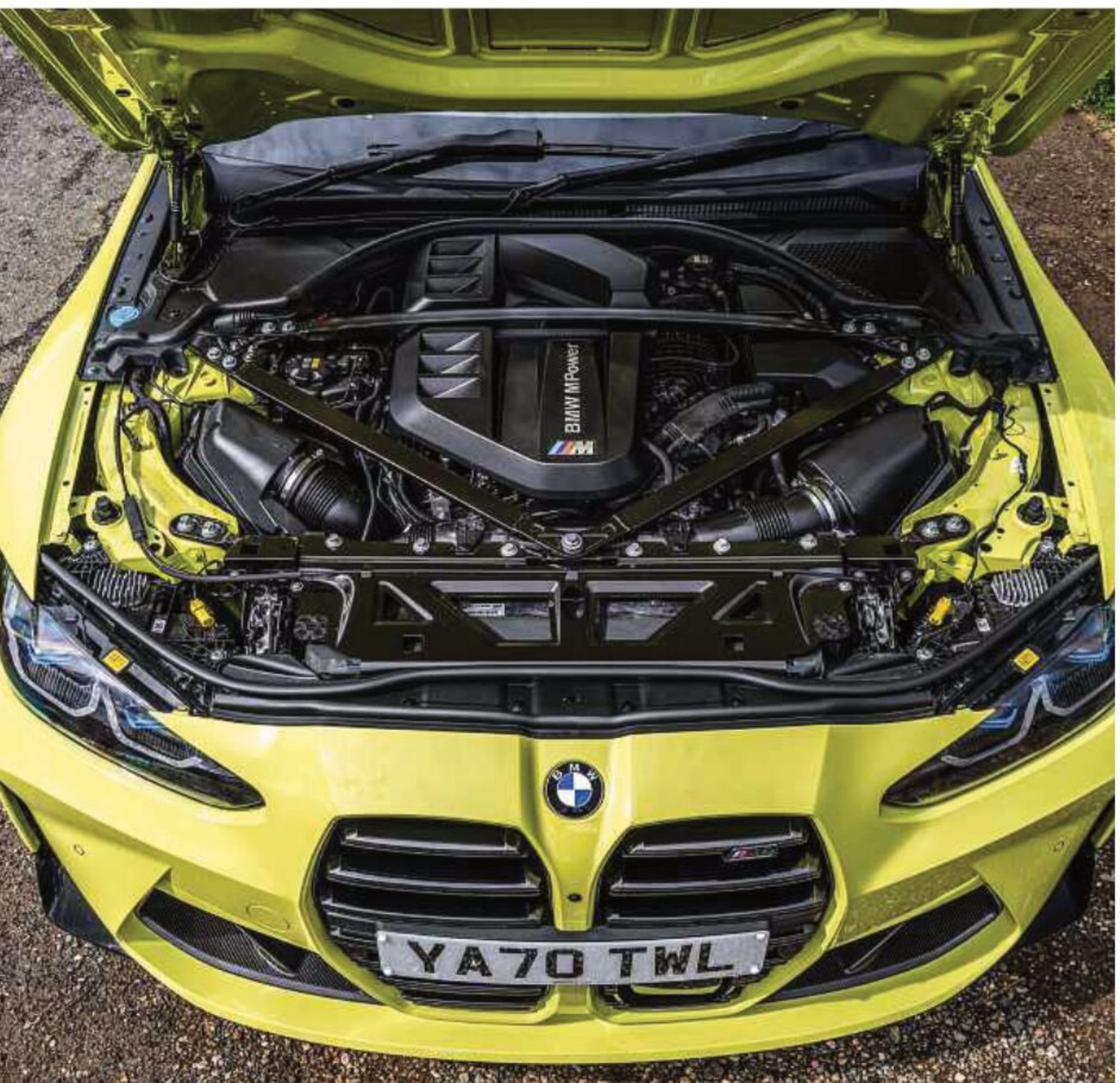



YA70 TWL


MI FMC






BMW M Power
YA70 TWL


MI FMC
SHELBY







‘THE WAY THE GT500 LAUNCHES, V8 HOLLERING LIKE A NASCAR, IS STUNNING AND A BIT SCARY’

badge and sporting a carbonfibre roof shouldn’t have full electric seats and a powered bootlid. Heck, I was even annoyed that the carbonfibre shift paddles had an unnecessary rubber backing! OK, so the powered bootlid is optional, so can be dodged, but the electric seat adjustment can’t, even if you upgrade to the £3400 M Carbon buckets, as fitted here. They save 9.6kg, but without all those motors it could be more.

Then you discover that the chunkier look of the Mustang isn’t just a look: it weighs almost 1900kg. For $10k you can get a Carbon Fiber Track Pack that includes carbonfibre road wheels and saves 50kg, but maybe you could just wear a thinner jumper and pop to the loo before you drive. Despite weighing as much as a fully loaded luxury saloon, the GT500 still bests the M4’s power-to-weight ratio by a substantial margin, boasting over 400bhp per ton to just under 300 for the BMW.

One of the reasons the GT500 weighs so much more than previous Stangs is that it’s only available with a Tremec seven-speed, dual-clutch gearbox. The previous top model, the GT350, was a manual, but Ford figured that a DCT was necessary to maximise the GT500’s performance. Also, there probably aren’t many manual ’boxes strong enough to handle the humungous 625lb ft of torque the supercharged V8 churns out. But the lighter M4 has a paddleshift ’box too – a torque-converter auto – and those electric seats and powered bootlid, neither of which the Mustang has.

Claimed performance shows that power and torque win out, the GT500 hitting 60mph in just 3.3sec… on ‘a prepared surface’, so 3.5sec is a more realistic figure, which is still impressive. BMW claims 3.9sec to 62mph, so you can knock off a tenth for 60mph and another for the conservative nature of German car makers’ claims, and by then these coupes are not that far apart.

The way the Mustang launches, V8 hollering like a NASCAR, and then eats up gears with seamless upshifts is stunning and a bit scary. The supercharged 5.2-litre V8 might not be as technically pure as the flat-plane-crank V8 of the GT350 but it’s a seriously engineered bit of kit: all aluminium alloy, 32 valves, forged pistons and it revs to 7500rpm. Keep the throttle pinned and it’ll nail the quarter mile in 11 seconds flat and hit an electronic limiter at 180mph.

Yet… despite its torque deficit, the kick when the BMW’s twin-turbo straight-six hits its stride is remarkably similar in weight and wakes up the traction control in the lower gears. The spread and reach of the BMW’s performance is equally impressive and although the limiter is set at 155mph, the M4’s super-slick automatic lends the performance a similar, thrilling relentlessness. Sure, it comes with a soundtrack that’s more chamber music to the Mustang’s Motorhead concert, but the 3-litre six has a classy drawl with a metallic edge that evokes the character of the normally aspirated sixes of early of M3s.

From behind the wheel the Mustang feels like a bigger car, partly because you’re sitting higher in a Recaro that is a bit more generously cut than the M4’s seat, although it still offers great support and comfort. The steering wheel is a good shape and the efforts it requires are well judged too, though there’s not quite as much feel and feedback as you get from the BMW’s wheel.

The ride of both of these coupes is well cushioned, absorbing catseye thumps and smoothing out coarse patches well, though in part this appears to be because they’re both a bit hefty. They seem to roller some bumps flat at moderate speeds, but despite adaptive damping you get a less comfortable sense of their mass at higher speeds over crests.

Perhaps because you sit on the left in the Mustang you’re more acutely aware of the precision of its steering and the value of feedback. It has 11-inch wide, 20-inch diameter alloys all round, those at the front shod with enormous 305-section Michelins – wider than the rears on the M4! Not surprisingly, on sun-warmed asphalt they give keen turn-in bite, so along a challenging road the GT500 feels poised and responsive and you feel comfortable deploying generous slugs of that monster V8’s performance. It sounds fabulously thunderous all-out but richer and just as entertaining if you short-shift and stroke it along on the abundant torque.

With stability and traction control systems fully on the GT500 will manage the traction and optimise performance superbly in Normal mode, and you could leave it at that. But with the instant response of a supercharged engine under your right foot and a limited-slip differential and a pair of Michelin’s finest at the rear, curiosity needs to be satisfied.

Sport mode loosens the traction control and will allow a bit of slip before stability control steps in, so if you want to feel what it’s like to add a little opposite lock when the Mustang breaks away but with limited jeopardy, this is the mode. It would make a drive in the wet more engaging, trying to drive on the limit of rear grip, maybe getting the rears to slip but without triggering an intervention.

The urge to go ‘all in’ is irresistible, though. For everything off, ‘you’re on your own now’, Track mode is the one. Ford says it’s best if you’re on an actual track when you try this mode and it’s good advice, because although engine response is crisp and the throttle travel is long, allowing fine control, it’s surprisingly tricky getting just as much grunt at the rear as you want. There’s ample torque to overcome the rear grip but the breakaway isn’t as well telegraphed as it could be.

Hopping back into the BMW is a culture shock, and a bit of a pain: the high, hard side of the bucket seat means for easy ingress or egress you have to motor it backwards. Intrinsically, however, they’re very good seats, a snugger fit than the Ford’s and set lower in a coupe that feels lower built too, with its centre of gravity closer to the ground.

Right from the off, there’s a greater sense of connection through the steering and a more connected feel through the seat too. It’s a polished car but there’s a greater feeling of transparency, a stronger link between input and response.

Powering out of slower corners you can sense there's a battle between power and grip at the rear axle, and after the instant throttle response of the Mustang you're aware that, although outstanding for a turbocharged engine, the BMW's six takes a moment to pick up.

Flowing across country it's not an issue, though it feels like it might be if you want to play with the rear. It isn't. As in the Mustang, you can slacken the hold of stability and traction control in the M4 without the risk of things getting out of hand, here by using the MDM (M Dynamic mode) setting. It works well but there's an even more impressive and exploitable mode in the M4's electronic armoury: M Traction Control.

Turn off DSC and you get the option of initiating M Drift Mode (for track use only: powerslide responsibly, kids) and M Traction Control, and it's this bit of electronic wizardry you want to exploit. M Traction Control presents you with a (ahem) sliding scale to set the level of slip from 10 (fully on, no slip) to 0 (fully off) and it's impressively sophisticated, like the systems fitted to GT race cars.

It's the M4's ace card. Back it off one step at a time on a dry road and when you get down to 3 or 4 you discover that it doesn't simply allow more torque to get to the rear wheels. Instead, and rather brilliantly, it keeps a lid on torque right at the apex when the tail kicking out is hardest to deal with, and then releases the torque and over-speeds the rear wheels as you head onto the straight, when it's easier to apply lock and ride it out. The more comfortable you get with how the car behaves, the more you can wind back the slip control, until the car is just as agile, just as tail-happy as you want.

It's a subtle and effective system in the dry, but M Traction Control really shines in the wet. It's like putting up the rails at the sides of the lane when you go bowling, only the slider allows you to decide how far apart you want the rails. It even catches wheelspin over abrupt bumps, seemingly before it has a chance

BMW M4 Competition

Engine In-line 6-cyl, 2979cc, twin-turbo
Power 503bhp @ 6250rpm **Torque** 479lb ft @ 2750-5500rpm
Weight 1730kg **Power-to-weight** 295bhp/ton **0-62mph** 3.9sec
Top speed 155mph (limited) **Basic price** £76,115

evo rating ★★★★½



to develop. Once you've revelled in its sophistication and the freedom it gives you, all other systems seem a bit crude.

In the end, it's this sophistication that gives the M4 a decisive edge over the Mustang. The GT500 is unquestionably the bigger character. It wears luminous green paint better, carries off the stripes, and when it fires up it sounds exactly how you want a 760bhp V8 to sound. With home-market rivals like the Dodge Challenger Hellcat (717bhp) and Chevrolet Camaro ZL1 (650bhp), the dual-clutch gearbox helps the GT500 make good on its performance potential, and while a manual would improve the connection feel with it, it would probably be a bit agricultural. Still, what a thrill it would be to have total control over such an astonishingly muscular and characterful V8.

Given its mass and performance potential, the Mustang is more poised, fluid and comfortable at pace across country than you might expect, and far more nimble in the tighter turns than a near-two ton coupe has any right to be. In the end, though, you hanker after a bit more feel and a bit more feedback, to be able to place the Mustang with more confidence.

The BMW is no lightweight but you feels its mass less. Partly this is because despite giving away 250bhp to the Ford, its turbocharged straight-six delivers a full-boost hit that's almost as dizzying and sustained as the Mustang's peak torque push. We didn't expect that.

We did suspect that the M4 might be more dynamically engaging, and it is, offering a greater sense of the car's balance through more tactile steering. This allows its grip and balance to be more fully exploited and enjoyed, but it's M Traction Control that seals the deal. It's a game changer. It's still annoying that a car badged 'Competition' has electric seats and a powered bootlid, but that makes two easy wins for the much anticipated M4 CSL. BMW M is on a roll. ■

Ford Mustang Shelby GT500

Engine V8, 5163cc, supercharger
Power 760bhp @ 7300rpm **Torque** 625lb ft @ 5000rpm
Weight 1897kg **Power-to-weight** 407bhp/ton **0-60mph** 3.3sec
Top speed 180mph (limited) **Basic price** $74,000 (see text)

evo rating ★★★★½



by STUART GALLAGHER

SNAKE'S KIN

The Shelby GT500 may be the attention grabber, but it has two new relatives in the Mustang range that are also worthy of your attention

MUSTANG MACH-E GT

AS CONTRASTS GO, THE ONE BETWEEN A SHELBY GT500 and a Mach-E GT is quite considerable. In reality, the only commonality between the two is the word 'Mustang' in their names and that neither has a Ford badge anywhere to be seen (or rather anywhere visible). Instead this pair links today with tomorrow – tomorrow for Ford meaning every road car it sells being available with some level of electrified powertrain by 2030, the majority of those being fully electric vehicles. The Mach-E GT is the first of those to have gone through the workshops with a Ford Performance sign above the door.

As with every electric car there are plenty of numbers to get stuck into. There's a 98.7kWh battery (88 of which is useable) connected to dual motors producing a total of 480bhp with 684lb ft of torque – the latter the highest of any Ford road car, including the GT supercar. Naturally, there is a suitably brisk 0-62mph time (4.4sec) and finally the all-important range, which for the 2198kg Mach-E GT is rated at 310 miles.

The numbers tell only a small part of the story, though, as the GT itself does a rather good job of demonstrating how it could fit your daily, family motoring requirements. Should you have the credit line to support the £67,225 asking price. Like their kerb weight, EVs are still on the strong side when it comes to cost.

There's good interior space: room for four without feeling claustrophobic, five if those in the back are friendly. The boot is a bit shallow for a family week away so it's likely a roof box will be required for those lifestyle adventures that car companies think we all spend our free time doing. There are also design elements that assist in the transition from what we are comfortable with in terms of ICE vehicles to the new world of EVs: the front profile forward of the A-pillar is unmistakably Mustang and the use of black trim for the roof rails delivers the illusion of the car being lower than it actually is.

Despite the crossover appearance, you sit low in the cabin, which is dominated by a Tesla-style central screen to control your entire life, with a neat, small rectangle the size and shape of a Bose speaker placed on the top of the steering column displaying speed, guidance, range and battery life. It's a small part of the wheel reinvented.

What Ford hasn't tried to do is reinvent the driving experience. There is strong Ford DNA in the Mach-E's steering, chassis composure and balance. It steers cleanly, adding weight in a linear fashion that you can work against. But there is little feel until the front Pirellis (bespoke P Zeros, specific to the GT) begin to lose their battle with the surface and the nose smears wide. It's more of an issue in slower corners, and in medium to fast turns you very quickly settle into a rhythm similar to that you would in any well-sorted ICE car.

Of the two motors, the one driving the rear wheels does more of the work, and in quicker corners you can feel the torque working the rear axle, the car squatting on its haunches as it drives out of the bend. Out of slower turns, this measured balance becomes scrabbly oversteer, but the steering's quick enough to help you gather it up, not that the traction systems allow too much fun.

On a motorway it's quiet and refined like the best EVs, in town it makes enough fake noise that people don't step out in front of you, and crucially the quoted range is realistic to what you'll actually achieve with mixed driving.

As a driver's car it's certainly no GT500, but as a family car it's a step into the EV world that many could happily take and few would be disappointed by.



MUSTANG MACH 1

AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY different. Or should that be normal? Either way, a 5-litre V8-engined Mustang still sits on Ford's price list and will do so until the last V8 is lifted from its crate and lowered into the nose of a rear-drive muscle car.

The latest is the £55,255 Mach 1, which is less extreme than the US-market GT500 and its GT350 predecessor, but takes a few components and some inspiration from both to create a 'Mustang Plus' for Europe.

Ten bhp isn't much to write home about, or a review about come to think of it, but with a new air intake and intake manifold and a tweak to the exhaust valving, that's the horsepower advantage the Mach 1 has over the standard V8 GT. But there's more for your £11,000 extra, including an additional engine oil cooler, a rear axle and diff cooler, and a brake booster for the Brembos.

There's some aero tweaks, too, with the GT500's rear diffuser matched to a new front splitter and undertray. New front and rear subframes, stiffer springs, uprated bushes and a new front anti-roll bar are all part of the spec, too. There's even a new rear spoiler, and you sit on Recaro seats and swap ratios with a cue-ball gearknob.

As with every current V8 Mustang the Mach 1 is bursting with character. Its more stiffly sprung chassis and recalibrated MagneRide dampers absorb the worst a British road can throw at them, and while there's a touch more harshness, the trade-off is a Stang that's more responsive, with a sense that every centimetre of slack has been cut out of it. There's less pitch under braking, less roll when you turn in and less squat when you feed in the power. It's not Alfa Giulia Quadrifoglio sharp but it's more precise, which means you have more fun more of the time.

On the road you can't help but smile each time you let the V8 rev out before instigating the slow but so rewarding process of changing gear. It's all very measured and greatly rewarding. A few laps of a fast track demonstrates a better tied down Mustang is a better car on track, which shouldn't come as a surprise to many. And it shouldn't be a surprise to hear that the Mach 1 does plenty to increase our enthusiasm for the traditional Mustang, regardless of how impressed we are by its electric cousin. ◘


LOTUS

ICON

LOTUS CARLTON

The 176mph Lotus Carlton was a legend in its own lifetime, but how does it stack up 30 years later? Meeting your heroes can be a risky business, so which way will this go?

by STUART GALLAGHER PHOTOGRAPHY *by* ASTON PARROTT

AFTER THE NEXT FEW DAYS, K984 XGS WILL HEAD into retirement, its active life on Vauxhall's heritage press fleet reduced to an ambassadorial role, to be dusted off for special occasions and the odd anniversary. Yet it's hard to see when those special occasions will materialise. With Vauxhall now part of the vast Stellantis group – the fast-growing European-American conglomerate that will build everything from a £6000 electrified Citroën Ami to an 800bhp Dodge Hellcat – its future looks secure. But while the Hellcat might have a certain synergy with a 377bhp supersaloon that factions of the British press wanted banning 30 years ago, I'm not holding out much hope that Vauxhall is working on a 21st century remake of the Lotus Carlton. I doubt many are.

The supersaloon genre was nothing new by the time GM started transferring money from its Vauxhall bank account in Luton to Lotus's account in Norwich. BMW, Jaguar and Mercedes had all offered examples of fairly ordinary-looking executive saloons with larger-than-life motors installed behind their corporate faces. But generally speaking they didn't shout about their credentials, which was just the way most customers liked them. The Lotus Carlton was different.

It's an alluring beast when you first see it, parked alone in the shadow of what is now Vauxhall's defunct UK headquarters. There's a security hut with a camera aimed at XGS's green bodywork, and the gentlemen inside are aware this will be the last time they'll hand over its slim key and ask for a signature in return. I tell them I'll be back before 5pm on the day we're due to return it. 'Don't worry, sir, we'll be here all night. Make sure you enjoy it and get a good drive…' Just as Griffin House will soon be whatever white elephant its new owners think investors will want to lose money in, the security guards know their days of being custodians to cars such as XGS are numbered, too. Time moves on.

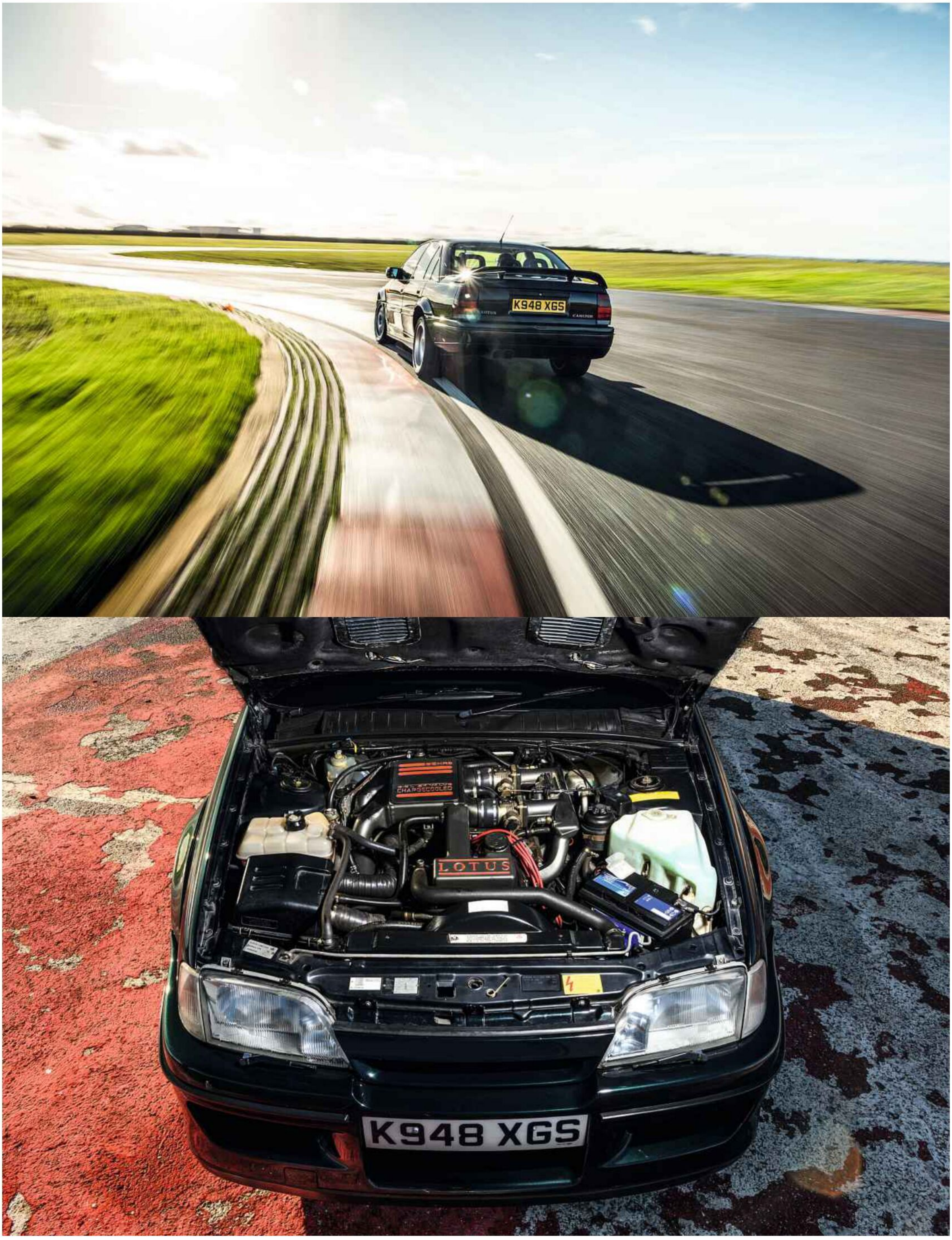
The clunk of the Carlton's central locking could only be from the '90s. Old-school mechanicals meeting seemingly day-old electrical tech. Your fingers slip under the handle; you're caught out by the lightness of the driver's door as it swings open, then stopped in your tracks by the sight of the large, ruched leather armchairs. I'd forgotten about these. I didn't expect M5 CS-style carbon-backed buckets, but having spent three decades devouring as much LC content as possible, the chairs had been pushed into the recesses of my grey matter. They look comfy though, if lacking in support for a car with the power-to-weight ratio of a Civic Type R.

At the time, producing such a bespoke high-performance car based on a volume model was both mind-scramblingly complex and fiercely expensive. So while BMW approached the task in the manner only BMW could, by establishing M GmbH, others were a little less detailed in their planning, whether it was Ford requiring the services of Tickford to build its Cosworth models or Vauxhall making the call to Hethel. Cars such as the Lotus Carlton would never make it beyond idle chat over a latte today. Some probably think they shouldn't have gone much further back then, either. But thankfully they did.

The process required to build 949 Lotus Carltons (or 950 if the last car genuinely did make it off the line without being damaged) still makes the teeth of project managers and accountants itch today. Opel's Russelsheim plant built the Carlton 3.0 GSi donors and when there were enough to fill a transporter they'd head across the North Sea to arrive at Hethel to be ripped to pieces. The body was cut to accommodate the blistered arches, the transmission tunnel modified to allow the six-speed gearbox to fit. Suspension, brakes, engine, gearbox, exhaust… all came off and were either put to one side or sent off to be rebuilt while the LC's bumpers, bonnet, bootlid and spoiler were attached for the car to be painted once again.

Even in the early '90s, cars were designed to be built by machines in a very orderly manner and rarely responded well to being stripped and put back together – unless done to a standard so high that the end result was nothing short of a hand-built car. Which is what the LC was – and still feels today, three decades on.




K948 XGS
CHARGECOOLED
LOTUS
K948 XGS


K948 XGS
LOTUS
CARLTON











I pause before turning the key in the ignition barrel. This is a defining moment for someone who grew up idolising a four-door saloon car that, on paper, made supercars look lethargic. It's possibly a little far-fetched to say that the Lotus Carlton, and cars of its ilk, made supercar manufacturers up their game, but if you could buy a saloon car that was as quick in a straight line, handled, and was built to a higher standard than anything low, wide and costing nearly double the price, why would you send another chunk of cash to Maranello for a 348?

Well, the soundtrack might be one reason. 'Industrial' would be the best way to describe the sound of the turbocharged straight-six, which is a little surprising when you know that the work carried out to transform the 3.0 GSi's naturally aspirated six into the LC's 3.6-litre twin-turbo was far more involved than squeezing some larger pistons into the cylinders. Lotus designed all the upgrades for the engine, reinforcing the webbing of the block and specifying a stronger crankshaft that was originally to be milled from solid billet by a specialist in Italy though production cars received machined items from Germany. While the four-valve cylinder head was left largely untouched, the combustion chambers were milled to reduce the compression ratio, while Mahle manufactured the pistons to Lotus's own design and specification, along with the connecting rods. Two Garrett T25 turbos were selected, along with an intercooler that halved the charge temperature from 120 degrees, and the ignition and injection systems were bespoke to the car.

At tickover it's not uncouth as such, but there's little in the soundtrack to hint at what's available under your right foot, which at 377bhp and 419lb ft completely overshadowed BMW's contemporary E34 M5 (335bhp and 295lb ft). The initial response might have you thinking the throttle cable has stretched since nothing much happens at the first press of the pedal, but once you're rolling and revs begin to build, the responses and appetite to gain momentum are just what you'd expect from a saloon conceived to be the world's fastest.

You're soon working the ZF six-speed manual, a donation from GM's Corvette ZR-1. It's unmistakably from an era when strength came much higher up the list of requirements than finesse, but in a short time the lever is flowing around the gate, not exactly snicking home but every ratio is where your instincts suggest you will find it. Third to fourth is a sweet spot, blending the engine's torque with its power delivery as the lever slides back and into place with a satisfyingly mechanical feel, your brain ready for what's coming as your left foot comes off the heavy clutch, the turbos spool and you add speed at a rate more in keeping with today's hyper-hatches than a 30-year-old saloon with plastic interior wood trim.

Experience this hit just once and you're hooked. The LC's performance is monumental, your self control sorely tested. What's more, despite the weight to the controls, you can be remarkably delicate with it, building a real flow and a rhythm, leaning on the AP brakes deep into a corner before setting a balance across the Carlton's Lotus-developed multi-link suspension. There's some body roll – an alarming amount by today's standards – but when it settles there are no spikes to watch for or traps to catch you out. The rear diff, sourced from the Holden Commodore, feels a little loose on this example,

Clockwise from far left: seats built for comfort rather than speed; body roll is substantial but Lotus Carlton develops a real flow at Bedford; bonnet vents hint at the power within; Gallagher meets one of his heroes


K948 XGS


1 3 5
2 4 6 R



but you can rely on it to find strong drive out of any given corner, hooking up quickly when you feed the power in once you have the nose locked on line.

A little more speed and quicker reactions from the Senator power steering system wouldn't go amiss, but it's a 30-year-old car and today it still feels alive, exciting and bursting with character. Yes, you sit too high, and for all its bulges, vents and spoilers on the outside, the inside feels like a model of restraint. Yet it remains a truly wonderful place to be as that straight-six awakens, another gear lands home and you ride a cresting wave of power and torque towards the horizon.

We couldn't let our last drive in XGS go by without a visit to Bedford Autodrome. The LC was born before a time when every new performance car had to prove its credentials on track with a lap time that could headline the marketing offensive. So there's no Vbox today, just a short window to sample the LC with fewer restrictions than we have on the road. An opportunity to stretch the straight-six one last time, get some serious heat into those APs and ask the Lotus-honed chassis to demonstrate what Vauxhall got for its money all those years ago.

This is where the illusion could go so horribly wrong. A 30-year-old car floundering around a track as an Octavia vRS looks for a way past. But it doesn't. Out of the hairpins the LC gallops to the next braking point as if someone has wound the clock back to 1991; second, third, and fourth pass in a blink, and speeds are reached that would put some very modern machinery in some very dark shade. Every time I look down it's doing 130mph. It's what I expected. No, it was what I *wanted* it to be. Fast beyond expectations. This was a hero car back in the day – and it proves it still is.

It doesn't fall over itself at the first sign of an apex, either. Sure, you need to recalibrate your inputs, start the process slowly, turning in sooner than you would in something ten years newer, let alone a car from the present day. But, once settled and locked, the LC demonstrates a finesse and a character that's hugely enjoyable and likeable, its DNA rushing to the surface, wanting you to experience it as best you can.

A healthy layer of dark dust on the deep-dished five-spoke alloy wheels is a very clear signal that perhaps it's time to call it a day and head back to Luton one more time. There are two routes from here to Vauxhall's old HQ, the dull route and the **evo** route. And for 45 minutes the LC shines once again, as happy to lope along in the high gears, surfing that wave of torque, as it is to race around its lower ratios and fire you out of a corner as quickly as it got you there. With every mile a bit more of the Lotus Carlton gets under your skin. If you're a fanboy (have you guessed that I am?) it does everything you wanted it to do from the moment you first saw it on the printed page and read about this four-door Vauxhall saloon car that was faster than just about anything else on the road.

And it still holds its own today, because while that 176mph top speed gave everyone a focus, the bigger picture is that what started life as a humble executive saloon was transformed into a great driver's car, one whose icon status is undimmed.

The same two security guards are on duty on our return. I hand them the keys but little is said between us; they seem to know that the last few days have been the right kind. Like me, they know that for K984 XGS there might not be many, if any, more like them. And that would be a travesty, because cars this good shouldn't be left in a museum.

Opposite page:
Lotus Carlton rolls back the years at Bedford; six-speed gearbox was shared with Corvette ZR-1, also part of the GM stable at the time



Lotus Carlton

Engine In-line 6-cyl, 3615cc, twin-turbo
Power 377bhp @ 5200rpm **Torque** 419lb ft @ 4200rpm
Weight 1658kg **Power-to-weight** 231bhp/ton
0-60mph 4.8sec **Top speed** 176mph
Price when new £48,000 **Value today** £45,000+
evo rating ★★★★★

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evo TYRE TEST 2021

Which performance tyres should you be shortlisting for your car? We put nine contenders through the toughest objective and subjective tests to find out

by JOHN BARKER

PHOTOGRAPHY *by* OTIS CLAY

ONCE AGAIN, IT'S THE TURN OF THE BEST-SELLING UHP (ULTRA HIGH Performance) tyre, the ZR-rated 225/40 R18. EU tyre labelling makes customers better informed when choosing tyres, but as **evo**'s tests have shown, even tyres with identical ratings for wet grip and rolling resistance can show quite different performance.

As well as multiple objective measurements, including wet and dry braking and aquaplaning resistance, our comprehensive test also rates the tyres subjectively, describing what they feel like – how responsive, how tactile, how comfortable and how noisy over different surfaces – so you can make the most informed choice.

Contenders this year include a new Bridgestone, the Potenza Sport, which finds itself up against the tyres that finished first, second and third respectively when we last tested this size in 2019: Pirelli's P Zero, Michelin's Pilot Sport 4 and Continental's PremiumContact 6 (on its last outing before the new PremiumContact 7 arrives). Goodyear is represented by the Eagle F1 SuperSport, and Dunlop and Hankook are here too. We also welcome a newcomer to **evo** testing, GT Radial, with its SportActive 2, and for added context we've included a budget tyre, the Triangle Sportex TH201.

THE CAR

This year our test car was an Audi S3, which has a Haldex-style four-wheel-drive system – a first for an **evo** tyre test. Exploratory laps revealed it has throttle adjustability akin to a front-drive Golf and in the wet it can settle into power oversteer. It also has decent steering feel and plenty of performance: its turbo'd in-line four delivers 306bhp and a muscular 295lb ft of torque from just 2000rpm. This is fed through a seven-speed DSG gearbox to the front wheels before being shared with the rears if they become overwhelmed.

THE TRACK

It's been a number of years since we've visited Bridgestone's European Proving Ground in Aprilia, south of Rome, Italy. Since then, a large, weir-style wet handling track has been added, which means we can carry out all our tests on one site. Objective tests were carried out by Bridgestone staff while **evo** set wet and dry handling lap times and rated the tyres subjectively. We also rated the tyres on a 'road route' that we put together using an appropriate selection of the special surfaces and proving ground link roads.

THE TYRES

Prices shown are an average from a number of suppliers.

EU tyre label ratings for each tyre are shown inside the brackets:

RR = rolling resistance, on a scale ranging from A (best) to E (worst). A tyre with a better rating should deliver better fuel economy.

Wet = wet grip, also on a scale ranging from A (best) to E (worst). This EU rating focuses solely on wet braking performance.

Noise = the exterior noise generated by a tyre, measured in decibels. Quieter tyres generate between 67 and 71 dB, louder tyres up to 77 dB.



1. Bridgestone
Potenza Sport
225/40 ZR18 92Y XL
(RR E, Wet A, Noise 72)
Weight: 9.75kg **£77**



2. Continental
PremiumContact 6
225/40 ZR18 92Y XL
(RR C, Wet A, Noise 72)
Weight: 9.2kg **£84**



3. Dunlop
Sport Maxx RT 2
225/40 ZR18 92Y XL
(RR C, Wet A, Noise 68)
Weight: 9.5kg **£74**



4. Goodyear
Eagle F1 SuperSport
225/40 ZR18 92Y XL
(RR E, Wet A, Noise 68)
Weight: 9.45kg **£84**



5. GT Radial
SportActive 2
225/40 ZR18 92Y XL
(RR E, Wet A, Noise 69)
Weight: 9.7kg **£84**



6 Hankook
Ventus S1 evo3 (K127)
225/40 ZR18 92Y XL
(RR C, Wet A, Noise 72)
Weight: 9.65kg **£70**



7. Michelin
Pilot Sport 4
225/40 ZR18 92Y XL
(RR C, Wet A, Noise 71)
Weight: 9.55kg **£88**



8. Pirelli
P Zero (PZ4)
225/40 ZR18 92Y XL
(RR D, Wet A, Noise 68)
Weight: 9.25kg **£84**



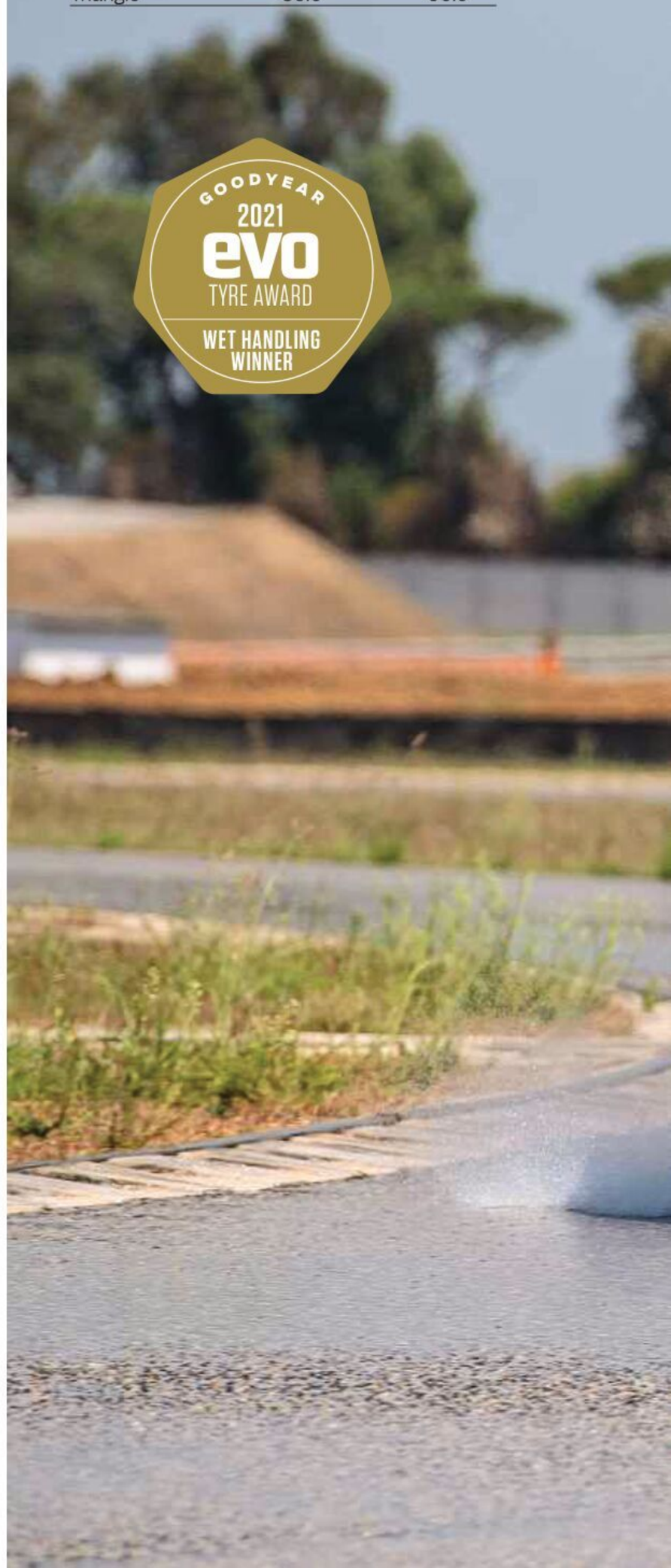
9. Triangle
Sportex TH201
225/40 ZR18 92Y XL
(RR C, Wet C, Noise 72)
Weight: 9.7kg **£52**

WET HANDLING – LAP TIME

Tyre	Seconds	%
Pirelli	66.3	100
Bridgestone	66.6	99.5
Goodyear	66.6	99.5
GT Radial	67.4	98.4
Dunlop	67.8	97.8
Michelin	68.1	97.4
Hankook	69.2	95.8
Continental	72.3	91.7
Triangle	73.4	90.3

WET HANDLING – SUBJECTIVE

Tyre	Points	%
Goodyear	60.0	100
Pirelli	57.5	95.8
Bridgestone	57.0	95.0
Dunlop	57.0	95.0
GT Radial	55.0	91.7
Michelin	54.5	90.8
Hankook	53.0	88.3
Continental	47.5	79.2
Triangle	36.0	60.0



WET HANDLING

THE WET DISCIPLINES CARRY A HEAVIER WEIGHTING IN the final results than the dry tests for the simple reason that you are much more likely to find the limit of grip in the wet, a fact that was starkly illustrated by the difference in performance between the best and worst tyres on the handling circuit. It's a wide circuit, so we chose to use only half its width in places, creating a lap that would reveal poise, adjustability and lateral grip as well as traction.

The fastest tyres aren't always the most impressive in terms of feel and confidence, but that wasn't the case here. Right from the off, the pace-setting Pirelli gave great feel and good feedback, so it's a tyre that you quickly trust and exploit, its decisive low-speed turn-in matched to useful adjustability and poise at speed. The Goodyear was just three tenths off the Pirelli in terms of lap time and was rated even higher, for its feeling of grip and precision and also its subtle, exploitable adjustability that allowed satisfying fluency. A great performance.

The Bridgestone and Dunlop tied for third subjectively, the quicker Bridgestone praised for its reassuring, granular steering feel and strong traction out of the slower corners. It felt fractionally less settled in the faster transitions than the best, but overall it was a solid performance. The Dunlop was over a second off the pace and didn't offer the same traction but delivered a useful agility that allowed the car to be placed with accuracy and confidence.

Ahead of the Dunlop on lap time but lower ranked subjectively was the GT Radial. It didn't really put a foot wrong, offering good grip and stability in the transitions, but it was noisy, which made it seem like you were forcing the grip out of it. Ranked sixth on lap time and in feel was the Michelin. It was a decent, consistent performance but one that lacked the sheer grip and positivity of the best here. Almost three seconds off the best was the Hankook, which gave great traction out of the tighter turns but felt rather vague in the faster curves and transitions.

The Continental was a huge six seconds of the pace and felt like it was on tip-toes, with limited lateral grip that could easily develop into a slide. Over a second slower still was the Triangle, which offered an astonishing lack of grip: it was as if it was on snow. Understeer was minimal because front grip was so easily overwhelmed, so in a number places it was power oversteering, requiring expert correction.



'THE FASTEST TYRES AREN'T ALWAYS THE MOST IMPRESSIVE IN TERMS OF FEEL'

WET CIRCLE

AROUND THE WETTED, 83-METRE-diameter circle – a simple test of wet cornering grip – the Pirelli topped the table on 14.9sec, just ahead of the Bridgestone (15.0), mirroring their wet circuit performance. The Goodyear was third, a couple of tenths off, with the Michelin just another tenth behind. Dunlop was ahead of GT Radial, and Continental and Hankook were close to the pace, while the Triangle was some way off the rest.

WET CIRCLE

Tyre	Seconds	%
Pirelli	14.9	100
Bridgestone	15.0	99.3
Goodyear	15.2	98.0
Michelin	15.3	97.4
Dunlop	15.4	96.7
GT Radial	15.6	95.5
Continental	15.8	94.3
Hankook	15.9	93.7
Triangle	17.7	84.2



BRAKING AND ROLLING RESISTANCE

ACCORDING TO THEIR SELF-CERTIFIED labelling, all of the tyres here are rated 'A' for wet grip – the best possible – except for the Triangle, which is rated 'C' (middling), yet among our A-rated tyres there was a big variance in stopping distance, which was measured from 80 to 20kph (50 to 12mph) on a surface wetted to 1.6mm.

The best, the Pirelli, took just 27.0m, while the worst A-rated tyre, the Dunlop, took 32.3m, a difference of 5.3m, or more than the length of a BMW 5-series. Bridgestone and Michelin were both under 30m, Hankook, Goodyear and Continental were closely matched at just over 30m, and the GT Radial was a couple of metres adrift of them. However, providing perspective, the C-rated Triangle took a massive 42.9m for the stop, almost 16m further than the Pirelli.

Backing up its strong performance in the wet, the Bridgestone topped the dry braking test, stopping from 100 to 0kph (62 to 0mph) in 33.9m, just ahead of the Pirelli and Michelin. The spread of results here was smaller, the Goodyear under a metre adrift of the best, the Hankook and Continental around 2m off, the Dunlop a little under 3m, and the GT Radial 4m. The Triangle, meanwhile, took 7.3m further than the best.

Rolling resistance impacts fuel economy, and the best in this test was the Hankook. Just a point behind was the Michelin, with the Continental a further point back. Despite being officially rated as E – the worst – the GT Radial was next, ahead of the Triangle and Dunlop (both C). The E-rated Bridgestone and Goodyear followed, while the Pirelli came last, despite being D-rated.

WET BRAKING

Tyre	Metres	%
Pirelli	27.0	100
Bridgestone	28.3	95.4
Michelin	29.2	92.4
Hankook	30.3	89.1
Goodyear	30.4	88.9
Continental	30.6	88.4
GT Radial	32.1	84.1
Dunlop	32.3	83.4
Triangle	42.9	62.9

DRY BRAKING

Tyre	Metres	%
Bridgestone	33.9	100
Pirelli	34.3	98.8
Michelin	34.5	98.2
Goodyear	34.8	97.4
Hankook	35.8	94.8
Continental	35.9	94.5
Dunlop	36.7	92.4
GT Radial	37.9	89.3
Triangle	41.2	82.3

ROLLING RESISTANCE

Tyre (official rating)	EU test value	%
Hankook (C)	8.4	100
Michelin (C)	8.5	98.8
Continental (C)	8.6	97.7
GT Radial (E)	8.7	96.6
Triangle (C)	8.9	94.4
Dunlop (C)	9.1	92.3
Bridgestone (E)	9.5	88.4
Goodyear (E)	9.7	86.6
Pirelli (D)	9.9	84.8



AQUAPLANING

A LESS FREQUENT BUT MORE alarming experience than limit braking in the wet is aquaplaning in standing water, because you momentarily lose the ability to steer and brake.

We test a tyre's ability to resist aquaplaning both in a straight line and in a curve. In a straight line we measured the maximum speed each tyre attained in 7mm of water before it overspeeded by 15 per cent, and in a curve we measured the amount of residual acceleration at set speeds, again in 7mm of water.

In previous years, Dunlop has topped the tables in both disciplines, but this year the GT Radial pushed it down to second in the curved test and was joint leader in a straight line. Bridgestone was third in both tests, some way off the table-topping pair, with Goodyear fourth in a straight line but only joint sixth in cornering. Michelin was mid-field in both tables, just ahead of Pirelli in cornering and the Continental in a straight line. Last in both tests, and by a considerable margin in the curved test, was the Hankook, trailing the Triangle.

STRAIGHT-LINE AQUAPLANING

Tyre	Max kph	%
Dunlop	73.2	100
GT Radial	73.2	100
Bridgestone	69.7	95.2
Goodyear	69.1	94.4
Michelin	67.2	91.8
Continental	67.2	91.7
Pirelli	66.3	90.6
Triangle	66.1	90.2
Hankook	65.2	89.0

CURVED AQUAPLANING

Tyre	Residual accel	%
GT Radial	21.1	100
Dunlop	20.5	97.2
Bridgestone	18.7	88.4
Michelin	17.7	84.0
Pirelli	17.3	82.1
Continental	15.8	75.0
Goodyear	15.8	75.0
Triangle	15.8	75.0
Hankook	12.0	56.6

DRY HANDLING

THE HANDLING CIRCUIT WE PUT TOGETHER FROM THE options at the proving ground gave a good mix of low- and high-speed turns and tested traction and agility. The first corner was a long right with a late apex, approached in fourth gear, the second had another late apex, looping right and leading into a quick left-right, then straight into braking for a hairpin. A great test of agility and poise. Completing the lap was an off-throttle cresting right.

The fastest six tyres were covered by little more than a second, but the top performer, the Goodyear, was fastest by a notable 0.7sec from the Michelin and Dunlop, which tied for second. The Goodyear felt good too and was rated second subjectively by the smallest of margins, praised for its clean, positive steering feel and its willingness to rotate obediently under you when you lift off on turn-in to find the apex, giving confident, sweet precision.

Despite being 1.1sec slower, the Pirelli was top rated subjectively. It was the only tyre that felt like it could make every apex on pure grip – all you had to do was keep turning. That feeling of abundant grip and settled neutrality was matched to a smooth, feelsome steering that inspired confidence.

The time-tied Dunlop and Michelin were close subjectively too, but got the job done in different ways. Like the Goodyear, the Dunlop was calmly, exploitably agile and had good steering connection, while the Michelin was reassuringly neutral and strong on the brakes. Both were rather noisy under pressure.

Fourth on lap time and ranking, the Bridgestone took a fraction to settle but hit every apex. It inspired confidence through its steering feel and stability but was noisy and so felt like it was grinding out the lap time. Just a tenth behind, the Continental was the opposite: usefully agile and surprisingly quick given the lack of edge and bite to its steering, brake and throttle responses.

The GT Radial lapped a chunky 1.8sec off the best. It was neutral like the Pirelli and showed good traction out of the hairpins but needed to be hustled to extract the speed and got noisier the harder it was pushed. The Hankook, a tenth slower, was noisy too but looser in feel, adjustable on a trailing throttle but less accurate than the best. Slowest by almost three seconds was the Triangle. Squealing from the start and scrubby in feel, it lacked grip generally and although usefully mobile couldn't carry speed like the others.



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DRY HANDLING – LAP TIME

Tyre	Seconds	%
Goodyear	66.1	100
Michelin	66.8	99.0
Dunlop	66.8	99.0
Bridgestone	67.0	98.7
Continental	67.1	98.5
Pirelli	67.2	98.4
GT Radial	67.9	97.3
Hankook	68.0	97.2
Triangle	69.0	95.8

GOODYEAR 2021 evo TYRE AWARD DRY HANDLING WINNER

DRY HANDLING – SUBJECTIVE

Tyre	Points	%
Pirelli	57.0	100
Goodyear	56.5	99.1
Dunlop	50.0	87.7
Bridgestone	49.5	86.8
Michelin	49.5	86.8
GT Radial	49.0	86.0
Hankook	48.5	85.1
Continental	46.5	81.6
Triangle	46.0	80.7



ROAD ROUTE

ROAD DRIVING PUTS THE EMPHASIS on steering weight, feel and response, and ride comfort and noise, demands that are contradictory. All tyres are a compromise, and some strike it better than others.

The best was the Pirelli, delivering great steering feel and response combined with an impressive degree of ride comfort and good noise suppression. The second-placed Dunlop also balanced comfort and connection well, matching the Pirelli's refinement to decent directness and steering feel.

The Goodyear and Continental scored equal third but for different reasons. The former's crisp, feelsome steering was offset by a sharpness over ridges and broken asphalt and a noise sensitivity to coarse surfaces. In contrast, the Continental was by far the most impressive for comfort and noise, but gave steering that was soft and lacking in bite when you picked up the pace.

The GT Radial lacked the fine steering feel of the best, but its ride rounded off sharp inputs well, if a little noisily. The Bridgestone felt like it had sacrificed comfort for sharp steering, while the Michelin gave decent steering directness at speed but was soft at lower speeds and was noisy over transverse ridges too. The Hankook was similar, lacking the feel and sharpness of the best and crashing noisily over difficult surfaces.

Last was the Triangle, which offered good refinement and dealt well with most surfaces but gave soft, light, feel-free steering.

ROAD ROUTE

Tyre	Points	%
Pirelli	8.25	100
Dunlop	7.8	94.5
Goodyear	7.65	92.7
Continental	7.65	92.7
GT Radial	7.15	86.7
Bridgestone	7.15	86.7
Michelin	7.1	86.0
Hankook	6.75	81.8
Triangle	6.5	78.8

'THE FASTEST SIX TYRES WERE COVERED BY LITTLE MORE THAN A SECOND'

RESULTS

9TH TRIANGLE 79.8
The Sportex TH201 appears to be good value, but fit this after a quality tyre and your car will feel worse. It will also take much longer to stop, especially in the wet.
BLACKCIRCLES SAYS... *Not a high-selling model at Blackcircles.com, and with only a handful of customer reviews we are unable to provide any meaningful insight into its popularity at this time.*

8TH CONTINENTAL 88.3
The PremiumContact 6 felt like a comfort-biased tyre in this company. Impressively refined and absorbent, but at the expense of the dynamic sharpness. We look forward to seeing how the new PremiumContact 7 performs.
BLACKCIRCLES SAYS... *With over 680 customer reviews this tyre has achieved an overall score of 4.6/5. Customers remarked on its low noise levels, as well as reliable grip and handling performance.*

7TH HANKOOK 89.7
Good results in wet and dry braking were the high spots for the Ventus S1 evo3 (K127). It was last in the aquaplane tests and never shone on track but offered a fair compromise on the road.
BLACKCIRCLES SAYS... *This tyre is proving to be a popular choice with customers, with reviews frequently commending its braking, great grip and overall performance.*

6TH GT RADIAL 90.4
The SportActive 2 excelled in the aquaplaning tests and performed well on the wet circuit too. It was less dynamic on the dry track but was liked on the road route for its decent steering connection and ride. A good tyre.
BLACKCIRCLES SAYS... *Blackcircles does not currently hold stock of this tyre, so are unable to provide any insight into its popularity or performance with our customers.*

5TH MICHELIN 91.5
The Pilot Sport 4 gave direct steering and its balance was reassuring, but absent was the bright, rewarding steering feel and fluency we've come to expect. A solid performer but not inspiring.
BLACKCIRCLES SAYS... *The Pilot Sport 4 seems to be showing its age against newer competition, but we can't wait to try the brand-new model launching in January.*

4TH DUNLOP 92.6
The Sport Maxx RT 2 delivered excellent aquaplane results, was agile on the dry track and ranked second on the road route for its balance of feelsome steering and good ride comfort. Recommended.
BLACKCIRCLES SAYS... *More than 2200 reviews have resulted in an overall customer rating of 4.6/5 for the Dunlop, many commenting on its low noise and reliable grip.*

3RD BRIDGESTONE 92.8
The new Potenza Sport was in the top three in most objective tests and gave solid performances in wet and dry handling. The trade-off was a sometimes choppy ride and lots of road noise.
BLACKCIRCLES SAYS... *There are no customer reviews on this new model at the time of writing, but it is sure to build upon the favourable feedback of its predecessor.*

2ND GOODYEAR 94.9
The Eagle F1 SuperSport was strong in both wet and dry handling, subjectively and against the watch. It felt poised and grippy in the wet, and in the dry was agile, connected and tactile. A bit noisy on some surfaces but an outstanding performance tyre.
BLACKCIRCLES SAYS... *With an overall customer rating of 4.6/5, this tyre has impressed customers, reviews often commenting on its great grip, with its dry performance highly praised.*

1ST PIRELLI 96.0
Top ranked subjectively for dry handling and on the road route, the P Zero PZ4 is a tyre that proves you can have (almost) everything. Combines great steering and grippy, secure but rewarding handling with a supple ride and great refinement.
BLACKCIRCLES SAYS... *Since launch last year this tyre has gained a good reputation, with a score of 4.5/5 from over 300 customer reviews. Many have highlighted excellent grip and handling performance.*



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See some of our **top sellers** this year

MICHELIN

Pilot Sport 4 S

★★★★★ 4.7/5

Over 3,200 reviews



AVON TYRES

ZX7

★★★★½ 4.6/5

Over 4,900 reviews



GOODYEAR

Eagle F1 Asymmetric 5

★★★★½ 4.6/5

Over 1,700 reviews



BRIDGESTONE

Turanza T005

★★★★½ 4.5/5

Over 3,100 reviews



MICHELIN

Pilot Sport 4

★★★★★ 4.7/5

Over 6,600 reviews



New model launching in January 2022

KUMHO TYRE

Ecsta PS71

★★★★½ 4.5/5

Over 3,200 reviews



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FAST FLEET

Porsche 911 Carrera (993)

The classic 911 heads to Skye, as photographer Aston Parrott puts his car – and its modifications – to the test with the road-trip he's always promised himself

WITH THE 993 HAVING RECEIVED a clean bill of health (see last month's report), it was loaded with road-trip essentials: two large travel bags, two rucksacks, and various coats and shoes placed between the roll-cage bars in the back. Despite being a small car, a mid-'90s 911 can carry more than enough luggage for a week away for two, the majority of it fitting in the front boot.

We – me and the soon-to-be Mrs Parrott – were on our way to the Isle of Skye, which meant an eleven-hour drive on day one, a good portion of it motorway cruising. Despite the fixed bucket seats and relatively firm Öhlins suspension, the 993 proved surprisingly comfortable – I know this because my fiancée nodded off not long into the journey! Podcasts, driving playlists and copious amounts of snacks were on hand to alleviate boredom, but distractions weren't needed when the motorways ended and we headed deeper into Scotland and its spectacular scenery.

Not being on a tight work schedule meant there was time to engage full tourist mode, which happened before we even got to Skye with a detour down the road to Loch Etive, as used in the James Bond film *Skyfall*. Taking a snap of the 993 there among the mountains of Glen Coe was impossible to resist (see above).



p125 BMW M3 Competition



p126 Vauxhall Insignia GSi

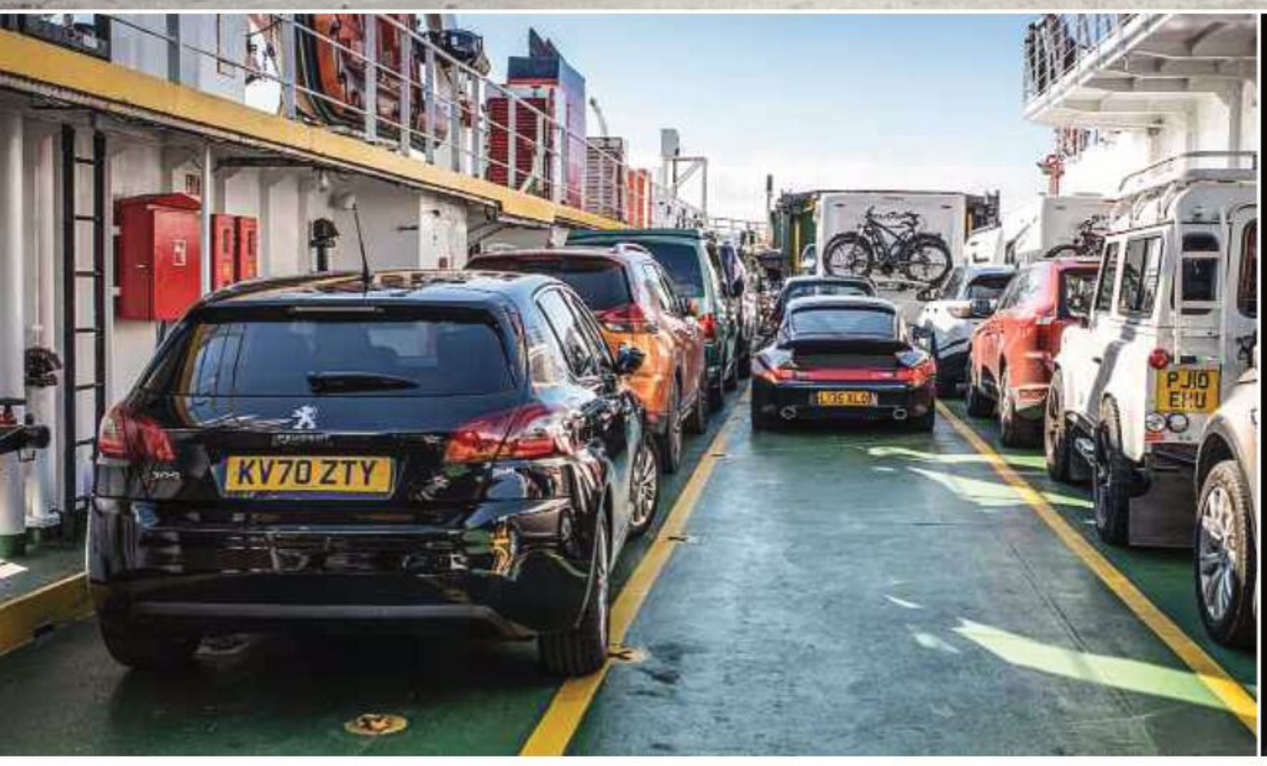


p127 Ford Focus ST Estate



p131 Skoda Octavia vRS







From there we had originally planned to cross over to Skye using the bridge. However, the satnav suggested we should turn west sooner and take the ferry from Mallaig. We decided to give it a try and couldn't have timed it better, arriving just before the ferry departed. I'd recommend it if you're making a similar trip, as it provides a welcome 40-minute break from driving while you're still making progress on your journey.

It's crazy to think how many times I've been to Scotland while shooting for **evo**, but I've never been to Skye, so I couldn't wait to explore its roads and enjoy its epic scenery. It was good enough to be the venue chosen for eCoty back in 2009 after all, so how could it possibly disappoint?

And it certainly didn't as we racked up the miles over the next three days visiting its various sights, including the jaw-dropping Quiraing (pictured top). What impressed throughout was the quality of the

'It was exactly the kind of journey I've been dreaming about doing in the 993'

road surfaces, which were incredible, with not a pothole in sight. They could have been tailor-made for the 993, ensuring a blissfully smooth ride and removing any worry about punctures or damaged wheels, while also allowing the car's performance to be easily tapped into when opportunities arose.

With Skye explored, we then pointed the 911's nose east and headed across country to Moray, and specifically Dufftown, home to several of Scotland's whisky distilleries. With the sun shining and windows down, the three-and-a-half-hour drive felt effortless against the backdrop of stunning views. It was exactly the kind of drive I've been dreaming about undertaking in the 993, flowing along open roads for mile upon mile, enjoying the enhanced flat-six sounds from the upgraded exhaust and airbox... No wonder I had a huge smile on my face.

Heading back home a couple of days later, the 993 now sporting a layer of dirt and an uncountable number of squashed bugs, but having not missed a beat throughout, I was so pleased that I'd chosen it and not one of our modern Fast Fleeters for this trip. I now can't wait to plan another adventure for it. The question is: where to next?

Aston Parrott *(@AstonParrott)*

Date acquired April 2016 **Total mileage** 89,024 **Mileage this month** 1308 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 29.0

BMW M3 Competition

Refreshed and updated, the admiration for our M3 grows

HAVING PLAYED A ROLE ON BMW's M3 launch fleet before arriving at **evo**, the Mighty Green returned to BMW this month for some fresh rubber, new brakes front and rear (after its dismal showing on the track as explained in last month's report) and a software update that's being applied to all G80 M3s.

That last piece of work hasn't made the car any quicker, but I do wonder if there's a little more crack and woofle to the engine during upshifts and off throttle, and the gearshifts seem slightly snappier – although that may be my imagination. The new discs and pads have improved brake pedal feel too, which further convinces me that all was not well with the old ones. I've also ordered a set of Michelin's Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres – they're a factory option and I want to try them on road and track before the weather turns.

When the M3 isn't on a track, I am always impressed at just what a comfortable, confidence-inspiring machine it is, so solid and dependable you feel like you could drive through a hurricane and emerge battered but undeterred on the other side. It drives just like the wide-arched, gunslinger visuals it projects – it's the Dirty Harry of sports saloons.

The performance, too, is so colossal that overtaking is largely effortless, and the poise... oh the poise of the thing when you get on a good road. Just how has M dialled in such a sweet chassis in a big, heavy car such as this one? And then you'll get a stab of power oversteer in the dry at respectable speed and it's as if the dazzling glint of fangs is suddenly visible behind those gaping nostrils, a swift reminder that anything with 500bhp and bombastic torque always needs maximum respect. The beauty of the G80 M3 is that while it has the minerals to really spoil your day, its modus operandi is to let you get the best from it, whether you want to drive with the MDM safety net on, or get lairy with the swipeable variable traction control in DSC Off mode.

Talking of driving modes, my routine with the M3 is largely set in stone now. Press engine start. Press M mode to get the head-up display I like, with revs, gear and speed displayed (partly because I find the digital instruments in the binnacle so hard to read), along with coolant and oil temps – imperative if you have some mechanical sympathy – and tyre pressures and their temps, too. I'll then just drive off with the car in its sleepiest mode, but as soon as there are some temps I'll flick into M1 on the steering wheel, which I've set with a snappier engine, soft suspension but the quickest manual shifts.

This will be how I drive the car for most of the time, unless we're on a motorway or in an urban environment, in which case I'll just switch back to sleepy mode and let the car do the work. If I want something more, I'll switch to M2, which I've set for 'maximum attack', with more aggressive damping, full beans engine and the traction slider.

As you can probably tell, I'm absolutely loving this car – and yes, I've even grown to love how it looks. But more on that next time.

Adam Towler *(@AdamTowler)*

Date acquired April 2021 **Total mileage** 7450 **Mileage this month** 2050 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 24.0



‘These two cars couldn’t be much more different under the skin, or to drive’



Vauxhall Insignia GSi

The hotted-up Vauxhall goes head-to-head with a close rival: the Kia Stinger GT S

THIS MONTH OUR INSIGNIA GSI CROSSED paths with an even less common family-sized five-door hatchback in the form of Kia’s Stinger GT S. The Korean car shook Europe’s assumptions about the (former) budget brand when it arrived in 2018, using hardware borrowed from existing models in overseas markets and bundling it into a high-performance saloon that we’ve long been fans of here at **evo**, especially after running one on the Fast Fleet a few years back (see issue 258 for John Barker’s summing up of his thoughts back then).

Yet while the Stinger’s form and function might seem to be shared with the GSi, the two couldn’t be much more different under the skin, or to drive. In fact, their characters match the angel and demon hues of this particular pair rather well. It’s almost like we planned it...

While our Vauxhall has been given praise by its usual keeper, Dickie Meaden, for its sophisticated chassis, powerful brakes and deftly calibrated damping, it’s also no secret that the compromise has been the lack of a sufficiently potent or engaging powertrain to make the most of them. Just to remind you, the GSi’s 2-litre four-cylinder engine produces 227bhp and 258lb ft of torque, delivered through a nine-speed auto to a four-wheel-drive system that seems barely necessary given the outputs on offer.

The Stinger, by contrast, has an almost entirely opposite set of attributes, spearheaded by a 365bhp 3.3-litre twin-turbo V6, which is chock full of torque – 376lb ft between 1300 and 4500rpm – and only too willing to give the rear-drive chassis a workout. The V6 is a complete contrast to the Vauxhall’s insipid turbo four, and almost totally dominates the driving experience. Except aurally, that is: you can’t really hear the engine do its thing, as the Kia’s exhaust note is considerably toned down in this 2021-update car, which is equipped with the inevitable character-muffling gas particulate filter.

Still, get on the power and there’s a definite, but not entirely unlikeable, shimmy from the rear axle as that torque hits the tarmac. Any overspill is mostly mopped up by the traction control system, but it’s somewhat ham-fisted, and when you get bored of its constant intervention – which you will – switching it off reveals a chassis that’s not completely happy with putting so much power to the rear wheels.

The soft edge to the ride is what puts a limit on the level of control on offer, and while firming up the dampers by selecting a sportier driving





mode improves things to a point, there's still a lot of roll to contend with, which can make the Stinger feel bigger and bulkier than it actually is. A limited-slip differential that doesn't lock consistently and a throttle that's a tad unresponsive both chip away further at your confidence when attempting to exploit the V6's full performance.

Meanwhile, the steering is quite light in all driver modes, too, and not particularly accurate on initial turn-in, meaning it's tricky to ascertain how much grip the front tyres have left when entering a corner, and how much lock you need to apply to get to the apex.

So exploring the Stinger's limits can feel a little perilous. Peg back your speed, however, and the GT S makes for a brilliant rapid cruiser, and its appeal increases further still when you factor in its sharp exterior design, slick interior and strong value – it comes fully loaded with kit as standard for just £42,955, and while the Insignia's starting price undercuts this by £2500, there's no ignoring its 138bhp deficit.

Ultimately, the Kia has a level of desirability that exceeds that of the Vauxhall, which despite its fancy wheels, contrasting Brembo brake calipers and what isn't actually an unattractive design, sadly struggles to channel the passion that was often elicited from hot family-sized Vauxhalls in the past.

Jordan Katsianis *(@JordanKatsianis)*

Date acquired April 2021 **Total mileage** 5117 **Mileage this month** 601 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 28.8



Ford Focus ST

Cool hidden features uncovered

I'VE LOOKED LONG AND HARD AND have found a similarity between my Focus ST and the Porsche Carrera GT. Oooohh, and an F1 car come to think of it! Anti-stall. The ST has anti-stall. I don't know why I think this is cool, but I do. It gives me a warm, Carrera GT memory every time I feel the revs pick up, and although I feel skilled enough not to lurch to an undignified stop every time the lights go green or I'm entering a roundabout, there's no question it makes the manual gearbox even easier to operate. Anything that broadens the appeal of a gearlever has to be a good thing.

Even better, it has 'flat-shift capability'. So no need to lift the throttle on upshifts. Just keep it pinned, wince, and shift as fast as you can. At least that's the theory. I haven't tried it yet as the ST has continued to be family wagon extraordinaire on a daily basis and I keep forgetting to go for my first flat shift when I'm alone in the car. I will report back ASAP.

I love these little gimmicks, though. For so long DCTs have sounded sexier and been given cool modes like Sport Plus or Race. Why aren't manufacturers pushing these new tricks for manual transmissions harder? Who wouldn't want a manual with Race Shift capability (this isn't the name, but it could and should be). How many owners even know this exists?

In other news, the ST continues to be a superbly utilitarian machine and a hot hatch (well, estate) that's just a tiny bit off the pace. The torque steer – something I don't mind as much as some people, generally – is also getting more noticeable as the Michelins wear. So the story remains the same: love having the ST in my life; wish it was 10 or 15 per cent sharper and more exciting.

Jethro Bovingdon *(@JethroBovingdon)*

Date acquired February 2021 **Total mileage** 9357 **Mileage this month** 2712 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 30.6

Renault Mégane RS 300

It's a cracker when you're on it, but there are some shortcomings when you're not

THE MÉGANE IS A FAST, EXCITING CAR if you use the drive mode button and select Sport or Race. There's a real zip to its engine response that energises the whole car, and when rear-steer pitches in too it feels properly on it. It's a blast but you need to be in the mood for it, and the contrast in key-on mode is rather greater than you'd hope. Simply fire up and drive off and the Mégane feels a bit flat, almost disinterested.

I think this is so that the official economy and CO2 figures – taken in key-on mode – look good, but I find it frustrating that a 296bhp fast hatch with RS badging needs to be put into Sport mode. I could probably live with that simple button push, but Sport and Race also engage a high-alert gearbox strategy that sees it holding low gears, and while there's a mode to tailor settings to your taste, oddly you can't have the Sport throttle response without the keen gearbox.

So the choice is leave it in key-on mode and feel a bit cheated or go the other way and have the response you want and use the paddles to make the gearbox bend to your will. If the Mégane was great at the basic stuff, this would be less of an issue, but while body control is good when you're pushing on, at an amble the ride is unsettled on busy back roads. Also, in light, everyday use, brake feel is soft, long-travelled and a bit inconsistent.

Getting to know the Renault HMI continues to surprise and delight. I'm sure it's all in the handbook but who reads them? Not me. The most recent revelation is that the satnav map has multiple views and modes. I'd been getting increasingly frustrated with the map on the home screen, which showed useful stuff when I zoomed in – traffic info, fuel station prices and the like – but after a short while it would revert back to its small scale of a few miles to the inch. And then I found that when the map is full screen there's a button with a squiggle symbol that allows you to cycle through a range of map scales and styles. I've now got it set to a large scale with some perspective that also shows buildings in 3D. It's excellent.

Less than lovely is the Mégane's alarm. In the first month it went off once for no apparent reason, but in the last few weeks it's been triggering more frequently, reacting to what I have

'There's a real zip to the engine response that energises the whole car'

no idea. The car has keyless entry and one time as I walked round the front, it unlocked itself and the alarm went off. Thing is, even if you use the fob to lock/unlock it and quiet the alarm, the hazard lights keep flashing for a couple of minutes. You can get in, fire it up and press the hazard lights button, but nothing stops them flashing, which is a bit annoying if you're in a hurry and want to get going. A dealer visit seems inevitable.

John Barker *(@evoJB)*

Date acquired July 2021 **Total mileage** 3950 **Mileage this month** 1298 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 29.2





Aston Martin DBX

Is Aston's first family car as practical as you'd hope?

HOW MUCH 'UTILITY' DOES THE DBX have? SUVs such as this are, after all, designed and created to perform multiple tasks as a luxury, sports (in the loosest sense) and do-anything-and-everything-required-by-a-family car. Those first two remits KY21 JYD has regularly demonstrated it is more than capable of fulfilling. From thousand-mile commuting weeks to 1000-mile weekends to Le Mans, with plenty of enjoyable, more interesting and quicker miles in between, it's been a perfect companion when you simply want to cover large distances in a short space of time in as much comfort as possible.

When designing the DBX's platform, the intention was to maximise the interior space as much as possible, for occupants and for storage, both of which it has nailed. The man who oversaw the DBX's design, 6ft 4in Marek Reichman, was insistent that he should be able to 'sit behind himself' in the rear of the car without his knees up around his ears and his head cocked at 45 degrees to avoid the roofline. Those who have joined me in the DBX have been as grateful to Marek for the interior space and ergonomics – the low floor makes for great rear-seat comfort – as I have for the attention to detail ex-head of vehicle engineering Matt Becker put into how the car drives.

The packaging isn't all perfect; the first 'family car' from a company that has only ever built sports cars is always going to have a few head-scratching bits. Such as the internal tailgate release that's hidden beneath the floating centre console (though the huge storage tray below the console is inspired) and the parcel shelf that doesn't retract and so needs to be removed if you want to carry anything tall in the boot. Rectifications to both are said to be on the to-do list for the facelift.

On a topical note, the 4-litre turbocharged V8 could really do with Mercedes' latest cylinder deactivation software. On current DBXs it only operates at very low, close-to-tickover rpm, therefore having minimal effect, but when people are piling into fuel stations to fill up bin liners with unleaded, being able to stretch the range a little more beyond 300 miles would be comforting.

More seriously, Aston Martin has been in touch to say that our time with JYD is pretty much up. I just hope that I can find enough fuel to be out when they call...

Stuart Gallagher *(@stuartg917)*

Date acquired April 2021 **Total mileage** 10,234 **Mileage this month** 1045 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 19.9

VW Arteon Shooting Brake

'Posh Passat' or actual Passat? Here's our answer

AS I WRITE, OUR ARTEON HAS JUST returned from eCoty support car duties with legendary snapper Andy Morgan. More on that next month, but while our long-termer was away, Volkswagen kindly lent us a Passat GTE Advance 1.4 Estate to fill its place.

Regular readers may remember a neighbour of mine referred to the Arteon as a posh Passat, and having now spent a bit of time in an actual Passat I've decided that his comment isn't too far off the mark. The design is far sleeker and more considered on the Arteon, more elegant, leaving the Passat looking a bit boxy by comparison. It's the same story inside too, with a noticeably different look and quality (unless you're my daughter, who didn't actually realise we were in a different car until I asked her opinion). Again, the Passat feels less luxurious and more basic.

What I wasn't expecting was the way the Passat drives. Being a hybrid, it's more economical than our 2-litre petrol Arteon, as you'd hope, but it delivers its power much more smoothly too. I must admit that when our Arteon first arrived, its sluggishness at low revs made me momentarily think it was a diesel (Andy made the same mistake when he collected it from **evo** Towers). However, once you get up and running, the Arteon feels like it edges ahead, despite its lower claimed power figure of 187bhp to the GTE's 215bhp.

Curiously, you can't get the Passat with the 2-litre petrol, but you can get the Arteon as a hybrid 1.4 R-Line for £42,930 – a mere £85 more than the Passat Estate GTE in top-end 'Advance' trim. My choice? I'd stick with the 2-litre Arteon, which undercuts said Passat by £3295. Posher *and* more affordable. What's not to like?

Richard Browne *(@washlander)*

Date acquired July 2021 **Total mileage** 8827**Mileage this month** 956 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 37.9





END OF TERM

BMW M550i xDrive

Its time on the fleet is up. Here's our verdict on the 523bhp 5-series

IT WAS A TANTALISING PROPOSITION, the M550i, promising the otherworldly performance of the hardcore M5 and the everyday usability of the regular 5-series. And, as advertised, it provided these attributes, wrapped in discreet yet slightly menacing packaging, in our car's case black paint (a no cost colour) with the standard 20-inch alloys finished in a cool gunmetal.

The M550i shares a lot of hardware with the M5, including its twin-turbo V8 and all-wheel-drive system, but at £68,590 it costs over £30k less. Sure, it has less power – 523 versus 616bhp – but more importantly for a near two-ton car and its role, it enjoys the same humungous torque rating of 553lb ft from 1800rpm. Unexpectedly, it also has more simmering V8 character.

An unbridled romp through the options list on our car wiped out two thirds of the cost advantage, but in the same way you don't have to splash out to have a handsome M550i, you don't need to spend £20k to make it feel luxurious or well equipped. However, among the options were a couple that I loved. First was the Bowers & Wilkins Diamond Surround Sound system (£2500), which gave incredible sound quality, and the second the 'Laserlights' (£1000), BMW's adaptive headlamp system that works full beam around oncoming traffic and cars you catch up with so that you don't dazzle them.

What took longer to get to grips with was the dynamics of the M550i. Another of the options ticked was the Adaptive M Suspension Professional (£3695), which adds roll control. Early on, I found that I couldn't place the car with absolute confidence, partly because there wasn't much feel through the steering. Also, the suspension's reaction to certain sharp bumps and small potholes was so abrupt and stinging I sometimes expected the handsome alloy on that corner to be dented. It never was and in the end I put this down to the Pirellis being run-flats and so lacking that bit of absorption.

I concluded that the 'Adaptive' setting for the suspension gave the best compromise, which sounds obvious, I guess, what with Comfort being a bit free and Sport a bit too unyielding. I must have got used to the steering too, because a few months in I had a very satisfying run across a variety of Leicestershire back roads visiting the Great British Car Journey museum in Derbyshire. I was happy that I could place the car and that it would deal with whatever the road threw at it, so I could stretch the V8, dig into its mighty reserves and unleash the M550's phenomenal performance instead of just paddling in the shallows of the V8's torque.

'Unexpectedly, the M550i had more simmering V8 character than the M5'









Initially, it seemed odd that the M550 had an eco mode, complete with an electronic mentor to encourage you to drive with greater anticipation, yet I ended up taking this challenge when I wasn't in a hurry. In Eco Pro it'd coast or free-wheel when you took your foot off the throttle, and sometimes the car would encourage you to do so more than a quarter of a mile from a roundabout you sometimes couldn't yet see. I frequently saw over 30mpg and honed my chauffeuring skills too.

A drive of the pukka M5 Competition showed everything that was missing from the M550i from a driver's perspective (apart from engine noise). It had properly connected steering and an instant agility and engagement that the M550 lacked. Yes, its ride was considerably tougher and more detailed, but it was honest and the payoff was a greater sense of what the car was doing, how hard you were working it. That meant you could engage rear-drive-only mode (an option denied the M550) with some confidence.

The M550 didn't encourage you to take it by the scruff. It seemed to prefer making brisk rather than banzai progress, but I enjoyed all of the miles I covered in it, though not always for the obvious reasons. The exceptional sound quality of the Bowers & Wilkins system was a constant joy, long-distance comfort and refinement was superb and I probably enjoyed the challenge of finessing efficiency in Eco Pro mode a bit too much. And when there was the opportunity to unleash all the performance, it was a shockingly quick car. So, yes, it delivered near-M5 levels of performance with excellent everyday usability, it was just a shame that these attributes weren't as expertly blended together as they might have been. The M550i was tantalising close to being the most satisfying 5-series.

John Barker *(@evoJB)*

Date acquired January 2021 **Duration of test** 6 months **Total test mileage** 7880 **Costs** £0 **Overall mpg** 24.8 **Purchase price** £89,445 **Value today** £74,950

Skoda Octavia vRS

Why the vRS is a winner when it comes to daily driving duties

EVO'S OCTAVIA CONTINUES TO demonstrate why it's one of our favourite hot hatches/saloons, never fazed by whatever challenge it faces, from keeping up with supercars on tests or appealing to **evo**'s harshest critic, Mr A Towler esq.

In broader terms, the vRS has chiefly been demonstrating just how well honed Skodas have become. It ticks so many boxes, and that makes it the perfect daily car, maybe even better than some of its Volkswagen-badged relatives.

I still think my perfect spec for a vRS would be an estate in the Race Blue Metallic, but the hatchback in white still looks great in my opinion. And the most important thing, as Adam Towler agreed when he drove our Octavia for a few days last month, is that it has a manual gearbox. The engine it's connected to may not be the most exciting, the 2-litre turbocharged four-cylinder producing only 242bhp here compared to almost 300bhp in the Golf GTI Clubsport and our Cupra Leon long-termer, but it still gets you covering ground quickly.

The vRS also gives the impression that everything about it has been carefully considered, from the way it maximises storage space to how its sports seats hold you in place on twisting roads but are also properly comfortable when you reach the more boring sections of your journey. And talking of boring journeys, on the motorway the vRS can reach 45mpg, which is welcome in itself but also means you have the useful ability to travel 400 miles between fill-ups.

The infotainment system still gets on my nerves on occasion, somehow managing to be less intuitive than the unit in the previous-generation Octavia, but overall I have nothing but a growing admiration for this car.

Aston Parrott *(@AstonParrott)*

Date acquired July 2021 **Total mileage** 8468 **Mileage this month** 2400 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 45.4





'Have we reached peak VW Group hot hatch, and the Cupra got there first?'

Cupra Leon 300

How does the latest hot Leon improve upon its predecessors?

I CAN STILL VIVIDLY REMEMBER THE WAY the Cupra steadily reeled-in and then edged ahead of the Cayenne S as the two cars accelerated flat-out down Bruntingthorpe's runway. Aerodynamics and mass no doubt played their part in the Porsche's downfall, but it still had a 380bhp V8 and had got off the line quicker. Yet it was the Leon that broke the timing beams first – at exactly 150mph. While three-up.

That was back in 2007, when such performance from a family five-door seemed like a big deal. (The triumphant whooping inside the Cupra confirmed that.) That Mk2 SEAT Leon Cupra – my long-termer at the time – certainly hinted at the seriousness that was to come from the hot hatch class, with its particularly bucket-y front seats, whopping 345mm front brake discs, grippy Pirelli P Zero Rosso tyres, and a ride so uncommonly firm that every single passenger commented on it. Or complained about it. And then there was its 237bhp, which was 30bhp up on its in-group rival, the Mk5 Golf GTI, making it one of the most potent hatches of its day.

Ultimately, the consensus was that the Golf was the better, more polished car, but the Cupra's attitude gave it a real sense of purpose and a unique identity. I completely understood its appeal.

Seven years after that, I was the custodian of a Mk3 SEAT Leon Cupra 280. Power had leapt up to 276bhp, while the Mk7 GTI made do with 217-227bhp, and the quality of the interior had improved considerably too, the nasty fabrics, cheap-looking plastics and woeful stereo of the Mk2 all, thankfully, left behind. A DSG 'box was now an option, a quartet of Drive Profile modes made the uncomfortable ride optional too, and the arrival of the incredibly effective VAQ active locking differential made that class-leading power output entirely deployable. It all combined to make the 280 one of my favourite VW Group hatches up to that point.

Fast forward another seven years and we have today's Cupra Leon 300. Inevitably, there's more power again – 296bhp – and the cabin quality now rivals the Golf's. But thereafter the improvements are harder to spot, unless you like your cars with mandatory DSG and more safety and convenience tech than you can shake a USB stick at.

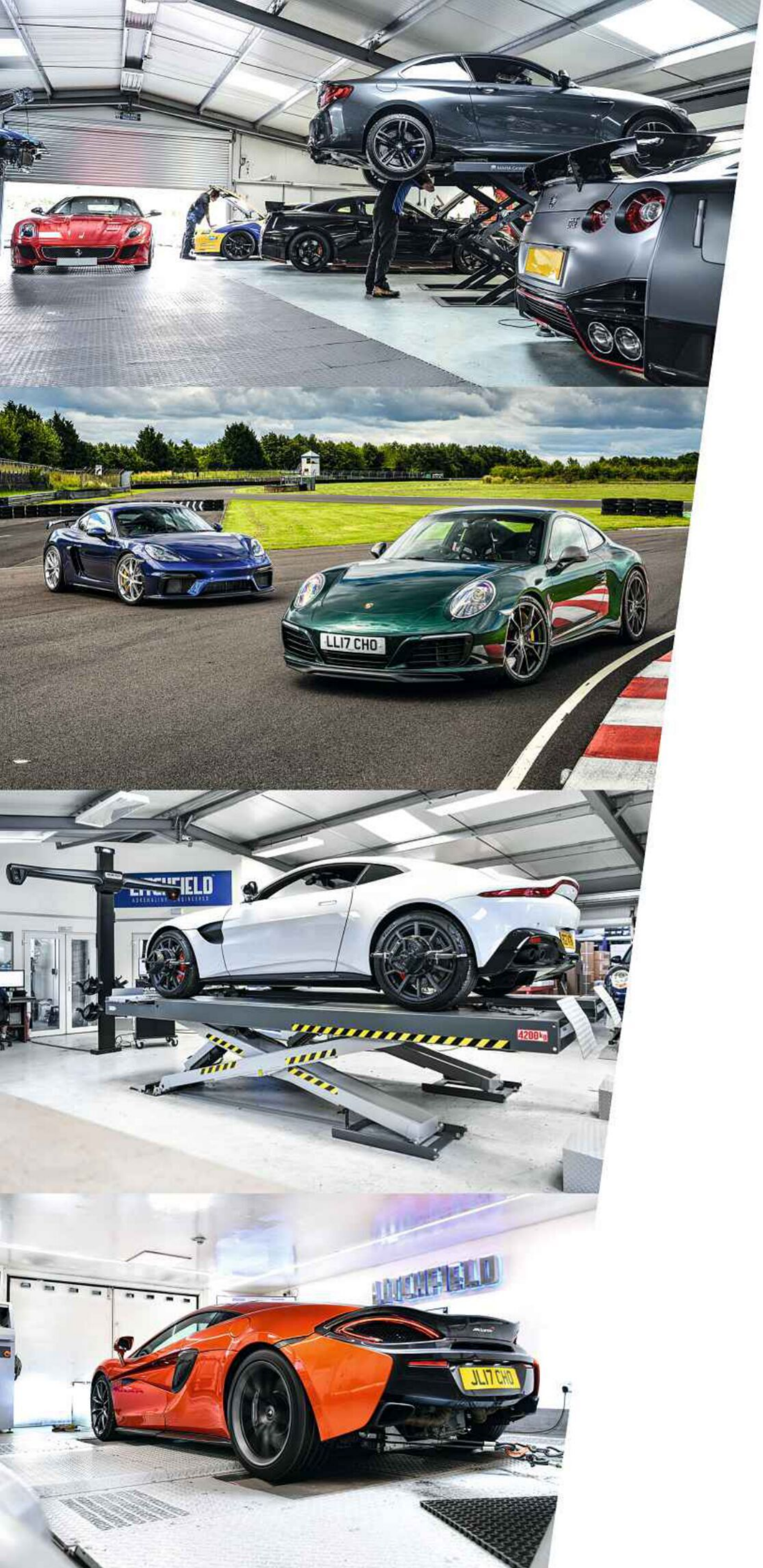
It's the same story behind the wheel, too, the 300 feeling broadly similar to how I remember the 280 being. It's a notch quicker across the ground, of course, but otherwise the experience is a bit 'more of the same'. You could argue that if it ain't broke, why fix it? But VW's Golf, in GTI Clubsport form, has now caught up with the Leon in the power stakes, while rivals from the likes of Hyundai, Honda and Renault have become stronger than ever.

Which leaves me wondering if we've reached peak VW Group hot hatch – at least in the ICE age – and the Cupra got closer to the finishing line first, leaving it with less distance to travel for this latest iteration. Or is there, perchance, more to come? A successor to the Ring-record-setting Sub8 special maybe? The name's not quite as snappy, but I've got my fingers crossed for a Sub7:40...

In the meantime, if you want to find out how quick the Leon 300 is around a circuit, head over to our YouTube channel, where you can watch Steve Sutcliffe set a hot lap at the Bedford Autodrome's West Circuit in our long-termer.

Ian Eveleigh

Date acquired July 2021 **Total mileage** 2945 **Mileage this month** 716 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 28.5



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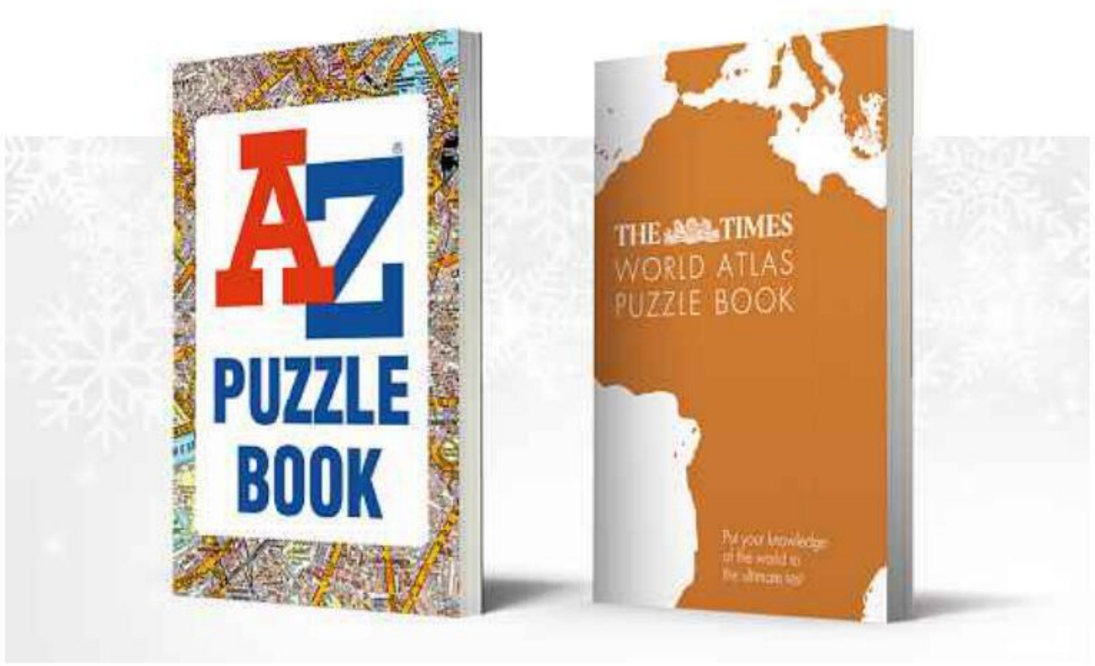
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REC 901 GW watches

REC's new 901 GW collection is made with carbon fibre recycled from the original Gunther Werks Porsche 993. These limited edition watches – the 901 GW Exoskeleton and 901 GW Chelsea – feature a fully in-house developed six-piece case structure including a revised dial layout and eye-catching blue and grey colour schemes. The two unique Swiss-made watches, the result of a year and a half of intensive development from REC, are limited to just 420 pieces. Only 188 Exoskeletons and 232 Chelseas are available, so move fast!

Price: £1,537
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Winner of four Auto Express Best Buy reviews, these Overland jump starters are ideal for petrol engines up to 2 litres and charging 5V USB and 12V devices. The Overland +, meanwhile, is suited for a diesel engine larger than 2 litres. Mobile Solar Chargers has specialised in portable power for expeditions and travel for the past eight years. Contact them on 01935 825914 or visit the website below.

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Theft Block luxury signal blockers

Professionals in vehicle theft protection, Theft Block provides modern and stylish boxes that not only prevent keyless car theft but also complement any decor or room setting. Boxes feature an embossed logo and name and measure in at 23.3cm x 19.5cm x 7cm. They can also give you protection on the go with double-layered RFID pouches. Find them on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram by searching for TheftBlock. Get 10 per cent off your order by using the code PROTECT at checkout.

Price: Boxes £60; Pouches £15
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Specialised Covers has been manufacturing tailored indoor and outdoor covers in the UK for 40 years, creating bespoke, functional and protective products that are the perfect fit for your car. The unique material formulations guarantee the highest quality in tailored luxury protection each and every time. Why not treat your car with one of these luxury covers this Christmas?

Price: From £199
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CTEK CS One battery charger

The new CS One from CTEK is a simple, buttonless unit that offers hassle-free charging technology. Its APTO (adaptive charging) system does all the thinking for you – there's no need to worry about battery type, size or even positive and negative clamps, so it's extremely safe and easy to use. The spark and polarity free clamps will automatically recognise positive and negative terminals so you'll never make a wrong connection again. It automatically delivers charging and conditioning programmes for any 12V lead-acid or lithium battery, without the need to select modes or press any buttons. Plus, a countdown display shows how long it'll be until you can use the battery, while a temperature sensor can alter the charging rate to suit cold or hot conditions.

Price: £219
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Birds

"M2 performance with newfound precision and control."
- EVO Magazine ★★★★½

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

"The result is a car damn near as quick and exciting as the M2 Competition and, whisper it, more balletic on the road."
- Autocar ★★★★½



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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** shows details of the car's combustion engine, or for BEVs the total output in kW of the car's elecric motors. **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 (tested)** 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, while the **Hyundai i20 N** and **Ford Fiesta ST** offer more affordable supermini fun. The **Renault Mégane RS** has a strong B-road game, especially with the non-Cup chassis, and the **Hyundai i30 N** is an intriguing and impressive alternative to the usual suspects.

	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	290 F	£33,885	4/1998	261/4750	295/1750	1445kg	184	6.1	-	-	155	+ Strong showroom appeal - Lacks precision	★★★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	★★★☆☆
	Cupra Leon 300	290 F	£35,575	4/1984	296/5300	295/2000	1415kg	213	5.7	-	-	155	+ More agile than a Mk8 Golf Clubsport - Not as confidence-inspiring; forgettable looks, too	★★★★☆
	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	£21,655	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 Edition / Performance Edition	289 F	£28,770	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)	288 F	£34,415	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)	*287 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 i20 N	289 F	£24,995	4/1591	201/5500	203/1750	1190kg	172	6.7	-	-	143	+ A serious threat to the Fiesta ST - Ride can be a bit thumpy	★★★★★
	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	289 D	£33,745	4/1998	276/6000	289/1950	1419kg	198	5.9	-	-	155	+ A brilliant, thoroughly developed hot hatch - That now costs Civic Type R money	★★★★★
	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
⊕	Hyundai Kona N	291 D	£35,395	4/1998	276/5500	289/2100	1510kg	186	5.5	-	-	149	+ Unexpectedly tight chassis - Worthy of a better engine	★★★★☆
	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☆
	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*	★★★★★

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 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	288 F	£51,235	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
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	290 F	£33,585	4/1798	296/6000	310/4000	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	£38,035	4/1798	296/6000	310/4000	1443kg	209	5.7	-	-	158	+ 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*	*'16-'20*	*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*	★★★★☆
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	289 F	£30,020	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	£34,175	4/1984	242/5000	273/1600	1429kg	172	6.4	-	-	155	+ An alluring blend of the best GTI ingredients - The competition is stiffer than ever	★★★½☆
Volkswagen Golf GTI Clubsport (Mk8)	290 F	£37,925	4/1984	296/5000	295/2000	1461kg	206	5.6	-	-	155	+ Super-effective - But not as exciting as you might hope	★★★★☆
Volkswagen Golf R (Mk8)	288 F	£40,025	4/1984	316/5200	310/2100	1551kg	207	4.7	-	-	155	+ 316bhp, four-wheel drive, understated flair - Chassis lacks the control you'd expect	★★★☆☆
Volkswagen Golf GTI (Mk7.5)	*233 D*	*'17-'20*	*4/1984*	*227/4700*	*258/1500*	*1289kg*	*179*	*6.4*	*-*	*-*	*155*	*+ A highly capable all-round hot hatch - Could be more thrilling*	★★★★½
Volkswagen Golf GTI TCR (Mk7.5)	*267 F*	*'17-'20*	*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*	*'17-'20*	*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 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 new **BMW M3 Competition** (left) drives like a larger M2 Competition, the current **Mercedes-AMG C63 S** will be your last chance to get one with a V8, or if it's something a size larger you're looking for, the **Audi RS6 Avant**, **BMW M5 Competition** and **Mercedes-AMG E63 S** (saloon or estate) provide a trio of strong options.

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	£40,595	4/1995	276/5250	295/2250	1429kg	196	5.7	-	-	149	+ Supple and satisfying - Engine reluctant to rev	★★★★½
Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio	287 F	£67,030	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 Giulia GTAm	286 F	£157,700	6/2891	533/6500	442/2500	1580kg	343	3.6	-	-	186	+ An utterly fabulous saloon car with a truly infectious character - It's a bit pricey	★★★★★
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	£74,949	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 D3 S Touring	286 D	£55,950	6/2993	350/5500	538/2500	1935kg	184	4.8	-	-	167	+ The best fast diesel you can buy - The B3	★★★★☆
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*	*'19-'20*	*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	£52,475	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	£50,910	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	£66,945	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	£72,095	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	£65,250	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	£98,280	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	£100,055	8/3996	592/6000	590/2050	2065kg	291	3.6	-	-	155	+ Surprisingly agile and involving - Sometimes feels its weight	★★★★☆
Audi RS e-tron GT	284 D	£113,915	495kW	637	612	2347kg	276	3.3	-	-	155	+ A fine GT - Range not up to touring	★★★★☆
Audi SQ2	261 D	£40,450	4/1984	296/5300	295/2000	1510kg	199	4.7	-	-	155	+ Nothing - Everything	★★☆☆☆
Bentley Flying Spur V8	283 D	£160,200	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	£177,800	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	£179,600	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*	*'15-'18*	*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	£41,255	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	£40,645	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	£40,900	6/2998	369/5500	369/1850	1670kg	225	4.4	-	-	155	+ Very fast and refined - Limited driver appeal	★★★★☆
BMW M3 Competition (G80)	287 F	£76,115	6/2979	503/6250	479/2750	1730kg	295	3.9	-	-	155	+ As quick and capable as you'd want - Bigger and heavier than you'd like	★★★★½
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	£102,385	8/4395	616/6000	553/1800	1895kg	330	3.3	-	-	155	+ Incredible performance, sharper handling - It's still a big old bus	★★★★½
BMW M5 CS (F90)	287 D	£140,780	8/4395	626/6000	553/1800	1825kg	349	3.0	-	-	189	+ Outrageous performance, sparkling chassis - A DCT would add even more sharpness	★★★★★
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*	*'17-'20*	*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*	*'14-'21*	*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*	*'19-'20*	*6/2993*	*261/4000*	*457/2000*	*2370kg*	*112*	*7.0*	-	-	*141*	*+ Spacious; quick enough - Its 'face' will make your kids cry*	★★★☆☆
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*	*'16-'20*	*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	£40,180	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*	*'18-'20*	*8/5000*	*592/6500*	*516/3500*	*1745kg*	*345*	*3.7*	*3.5*	*7.8*	*200*	*+ Beautifully controlled and amazingly agile - They only made 15 in Touring spec*	★★★★½
Jaguar XF Sportbrake P300 AWD	260 D	£46,650	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*	*'16-'20*	*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 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	£78,165	8/5000	542/6000	501/2500	1995kg	276	4.3	-	-	176	+ A great candidate for SVO's attentions - It's still an SUV	★★★★☆

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	
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
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 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	£71,320	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 Ghibli Trofeo	290 D	£104,960	8/3799	572/6750	538/2250	1969kg	295	4.3	-	-	202	+ Subtle performance elegantly delivered - It's quite expensive	★★★★☆
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 Trofeo	287 D	£127,310	8/3799	572/6750	538/2250	2000kg	291	4.5	-	-	203	+ An alluring alternative to the German defaults - How much?!	★★★★☆
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)	*288 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-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)	286 F	£96,565	8/3982	604/5750	627/2500	1935kg	317	3.4	3.4	7.4	186	+ Fast, refined, effective and fun - At nearly two tons, it's not 911 nimble	★★★★½
Mercedes-AMG E63 S Estate (S213)	272 F	£101,565	8/3982	604/5750	627/2500	1995kg	308	3.5	-	-	180	+ 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	£141,855	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*	★★★★★
Peugeot 508 SW PSE	286 D	£55,025	4/1598	355	383	1875kg	192	5.2	-	-	155	+ A hybrid worth considering - But only if someone else is paying	★★★★☆
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 Panamera GTS	279 D	£107,880	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 S E-Hybrid Sport T.	272 D	£144,930	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 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 Cross Turismo	287 D	£116,950	460kW	616	-	2320kg	270	3.3	-	-	155	+ A convincing and crushingly capable crossover - Needs big roads	★★★★☆
Porsche Taycan Turbo S	267 D	£138,830	460kW	616	-	2295kg	273	2.8	-	-	161	+ Straight-line oomph will leave you in awe - Inadequate EV infrastructure	★★★★☆
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 Turbo GT	290 D	£143,910	8/3996	631/6000	627/2300	2220kg	289	3.3	-	-	186	+ A car this big and heavy shouldn't drive this well - It's still big and heavy	★★★★½
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 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	★★★★☆
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*	★★★★☆
Volkswagen Arteon R Shooting Brake	289 D	£52,585	4/1984	316/5350	310/2000	1793kg	179	4.9	-	-	155	+ Sleek looks, spacious interior, decent handling - The BMW M340i Touring	★★★½☆

ROADSTERS / CONVERTIBLES



OUR CHOICE

Lotus Elise Sport 240 Final Edition. As the game-changing entry-level Lotus prepares to bow out after a quarter of a century, this special edition combines 237bhp with the usual low kerb weight and sublime handling to create yet another brilliantly accurate and enthusiastic Elise. We'll miss them.



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 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☆
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
Bentley Continental GT Speed Convertible	291 D	£230,900	12/5950	650/5000	664/1500	2436kg	271	3.7	-	-	208	+ Very nearly as calm and controlled as the coupe - Heavy W12 impossible to disguise	★★★★½
Bentley Mulliner Bacalar	286 F	£1.5m	12/5950	650/5000	664/1500	2384kg	277	<3.8	-	-	200+	+ A luxury cruiser that's a bit of a rebel roadster - They're only making 12, at £1.5m each	★★★★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 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 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 170R	291 F	£26,385	3/660	84/6500	86/4000	440kg*	194	6.9	-	-	105	+ The lightest production Caterham yet - Could do with another 10bhp	★★★★☆
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 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 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
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*	*'17-'20*	*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 Sport 240 Final Edition (S3)	285 F	£45,500	4/1798	237/7200	181/3000	922kg	261	4.1	-	-	147	+ The Elise's swansong - There will never be another Lotus like it	★★★★★
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☆
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☆



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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	
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*	*'17-'19*	*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*	*'17-'19*	*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*	*'20*	*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 Four CX-T	289 D	£204,000	4/1998	355/5500	258/1000	1213kg*	214	c6.0	-	-	c140	+ Absurd but fun way to outrun the zombies - Expensive	★★★★½
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	286 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	285 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 F1 Edition	288 D	£142,000	8/3982	527/6000	505/2000	1530kg*	350	3.6	-	-	195	+ Brilliantly hones the Vantage recipe - Looks won't be for everyone	★★★★½
Aston Martin V8 Vantage (4.3)	*288 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	*285 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	290 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	★★★★½
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	*284 F*	*'07-'15*	*8/4163*	*424/7900*	*317/4500*	*1560kg*	*276*	*4.6*	*4.1*	*9.9*	*188*	*+ A true 911 alternative - The V8 engine got dropped too soon*	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT V8	290 F	£166,200	8/3993	542/6000	568/2000	2165kg	254	4.0	-	-	198	+ Pace, quality, polish - A bit one-dimensional	★★★★☆
Bentley Continental GT	*255 F*	*'18-'21*	*12/5950*	*626/5000*	*664/1350*	*2244kg*	*283*	*3.7*	-	-	*207*	*+ Astonishing agility for such a big, heavy car - Thirst*	★★★★½
Bentley Continental GT Speed	291 D	£209,900	12/5950	650/5000	664/1500	2273kg	291	3.6	-	-	208	+ Dynamically Bentley's best - A V8 Speed would be better still	★★★★½
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

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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 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	285 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 Competition (G82)	284 F	£76,115	6/2979	503/6250	479/2750	1725kg	296	3.9	-	-	155	+ Accomplished and fun - Weight gain and auto gearbox look questionable	★★★★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 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	290 D	$74,000	8/5163	760/7300	625/5000	1897kg	407	3.3	-	-	180	+ The power and the fury - The last of its kind?	★★★★½
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	290 F	£81,750	8/4969	470/7100	398/4800	1935kg	247	4.7	-	-	168	+ Glorious engine, rewarding chassis - Lacks ultimate body control, numb steering	★★★★☆
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*	*'16-'19*	*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*	*'15-'19*	*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*	*'17-'19*	*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)	289 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*	★★★★★
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	★★★★☆

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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	
Porsche 718 Cayman	287 F	£47,230	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)	287 F	£84,870	6/2981	380/6500	332/1950	1505kg	257	4.2	-	-	182	+ Fast, composed and comfortable - Misses the power and tech of more expensive 911s	★★★★½
Porsche 911 Carrera S (992)	285 F	£97,450	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)	285 F	£103,030	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 4 GTS (992)	291 D	£114,500	6/2981	473/6500	420/2300	1560kg	308	4.1	-	-	192	+ Think Turbo-lite, with a touch of GT3 - Misses some of the subtler aspects of 911-ness	★★★★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*	*'12-'20*	*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	*286 F*	*'12-'20*	*4/1998*	*197/7000*	*151/6400*	*1240kg*	*161*	*7.6*	*6.9*	*16.5*	*140*	*+ Boldly put playfulness ahead of outright performance - See above*	★★★★☆
Toyota GR Supra 2.0	287 F	£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

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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 latest **Porsche 911 GT3** once again brings improvements to an already brilliant model line, and the **Audi R8 V10** remains a corking entry-level supercar.

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 V12 Speedster	287 F	£765,000	12/5204	690/6500	555/5000	c1700kg	c410	3.4	-	-	298	+ Amusing to drive; genuine depth to its development - It's not the last word in anything	★★★★☆
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	290 F	£170,720	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	★★★★★
Ferrari Portofino M	288 D	£175,345	8/3855	611/5750	560/3000	1664kg	373	3.5	-	-	199	+ Matches useability to supercar performance - Lacks the passion of the best Ferraris	★★★★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	*288 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	£293,150	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
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*	★★★★★

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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 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*	*'14-'15*	*8/5065*	*1341/7500*	*1011/6000*	*1360kg*	*1002*	*2.9*	-	-	*273*	*+ One of the most powerful cars we've tested - We couldn't afford one*	★★★★★
Koenigsegg Agera R	*180 F*	*'11-'14*	*8/5032*	*1124/7100*	*885/2700*	*1435kg*	*796*	*2.8*	-	-	*273*	*+ As fast and exciting as your body can handle - It's Veyron money*	★★★★★
Koenigsegg CCXR Edition	*118 F*	*'08-'10*	*8/4800*	*1004/7000*	*796/5600*	*1280kg**	*797*	*2.9*	-	-	*250+*	*+ One of the world's fastest cars - Spiky power delivery*	★★★★★
Lamborghini Huracán RWD	*229 F*	*'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 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 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 STO	290 F	£260,012	10/5204	631/8000	417/6500	1339kg*	479	3.0	-	-	193	+ The Huracán's full potential finally unleashed - A touch showy, perhaps?	★★★★★
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 significant 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	-	-	217+	+ Increased exposure to that V12 - Next time it'll have electric assistance	★★★★½
Lamborghini Sián FKP 37	284 F	£312,000	12/6498	808/8500	531/6750	1595kg*	515	<2.8	-	-	220	+ Our kind of hybrid - Feriociously expensive	★★★★★
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 570S	*229 F*	*'15-'19*	*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*	*'16-'18*	*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*	*'18-'21*	*8/3799*	*592/7500*	*457/5500*	*1356kg*	*444*	*2.9*	-	-	*204*	*+ evo Car of the Year 2018 - There's no glovebox*	★★★★★
McLaren 620R	*268 F*	*'20-'21*	*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	288 F	£242,000	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	£158,285	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*	*'19-'20*	*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 (992)	289 F	£127,820	6/3996	503/8400	347/6100	1418kg	360	3.9	-	-	199	+ Sparkling precision and poise - Deciding if you want standard or Touring spec	★★★★★
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)	284 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 S Cabriolet (992)	288 F	£170,410	6/3745	641/6750	590/2500	1710kg	381	2.8	-	-	205	+ A highly appealing indulgence - There are better driver's 911	★★★★½
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: Alpine A110

It's one of the great modern sports cars – and BuyaCar can make buying one easy

YOU HAVE TO ADMIRE THE SUITS HIGH UP within the Renault Group. Over the years they've given the go-ahead to so many projects that other mainstream car manufacturers wouldn't touch with a ten-foot baguette. What other company would green-light a supermini with a V6 engine sitting over the rear axle? Or a glassy coupe on the platform of an MPV? Or, as we've seen in the last few years, a £70k hatchback?

The Alpine A110 is undoubtedly from the same rather unusual mould. There's no easy way of making a mid-engined, two-seater sports car, unless like Porsche or Lotus you're already set up to do so and have a willing queue of buyers loyal to a storied name. Renault, though, had to resurrect the Alpine brand and hope enough people remembered 1960s rallying and 1970s Le Mans racing to splash out on a brand new Cayman rival with the engine from a Mégane.

Just as well they got it right then, isn't it? The A110 matches beautiful styling (inspired by classic A110s, but not a slave to retro design) with an engaging, free-revving drivetrain and the masterful use of light weight for a chassis that treads softly over rough roads yet digs in and goes once you reach a corner. That it finished second in eCoty 2018 – to none other than McLaren's incredible 600LT, and ahead of a 911 GT2 RS – shows how highly we rate it.

Some will baulk at the prospect of paying over £50,000 for an A110 when a Cayman is similar money. We'd tell those people that it's worth it purely for the way the car drives. Those people should consider how well A110s are holding their value, too: this is a relatively rare machine, meaning only a few are on the used market at any given time.

We found a 2021 example on BuyaCar in mid-range Légende trim and with just 2900 miles on the clock. With a handful of options, including Abyss Blue paint and heated seats, its £53,480 price represents a useful saving over the new price. Alternatively, it could be yours for just £695 per month, which includes a £300 BuyaCar contribution, a 6.9% APR and all the usual BuyaCar benefits such as an agreed delivery date, an HPI check and a 14-day money-back guarantee.

A quick, safe and painless purchase – and so much fun thereafter. What's not to like?

Visit BuyaCar.co.uk to find the latest offers on the Alpine A110.



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by HENRY CATCHPOLE



Shaken *and* stirred

How a Bond-car-themed twin test left Barker and Morgan fearing they might not 'bring it back in one piece'

IN THE MAGAZINE (ISSUE 018, APRIL 2000) the story begins in the morning at a set of traffic lights on Rodeo Drive, Los Angeles. 'Hood down, shades on, basking in 28 degrees, we watch the reactions of people on the sidewalk,' wrote John Barker. Picturesque. Cool. What he didn't write about was sitting at a set of traffic lights nine hours later, mildly terrified.

It was the launch of the BMW Z8 and **evo** had despatched Barker and Andy Morgan to California to cover the event. This was of course the car that James Bond was equipped with in the recently released *The World Is Not Enough*, so the logical thing to do was see if 007 would have been better off sticking to an Aston Martin. To this end, once they had got their hands on the Z8, John and Andy had swung by the Beverley Hills Aston Martin dealership and picked up a DB7 Vantage Volante demonstrator. Bond himself had clearly been pondering this very twin test conundrum as Pierce Brosnan was apparently due to borrow the DB7 the following day.

Anyway, Barker and Morgan then headed to Malibu Beach, where a man had approached them with a paper bag full of drugs.

'I'd got off the plane with a stinking cold,' recalls John. 'Jerry Lieberman, who was helping us with the photos, just turned up with this sackful of homeopathic remedies. I felt just as bad after taking them.'

Any sign of CJ or Mitch on Malibu Beach?

'Sadly not,' says Andy.

'It was totally off-piste from BMW's set launch route,' remembers John, 'but it was a great location for the statics. Then we went up into the Canyons.'

'Which was still totally off-piste.'

'And by the time we'd dropped the Aston back for Pierce and started heading back to the hotel we were late.'

'Really late.'

'The latest.'

'We plugged Pasadena into the satnav,' recalls Andy, 'and initially that took us down Sunset Boulevard, which was pretty cool. Then as we shot out of Sunset things started to looking a little bit rougher.'

'SHOES FOR A DOLLAR!' interjects John, before explaining: 'That's what it said on a billboard we passed.'

'We crawled up to a set of traffic lights.'

'Two white boys in a silver Z8, red leather interior, roof still down.'

'And there was this massive gang just hanging out on the corner, looking at us. I was like: "John, I think we're on Skid Row…"'

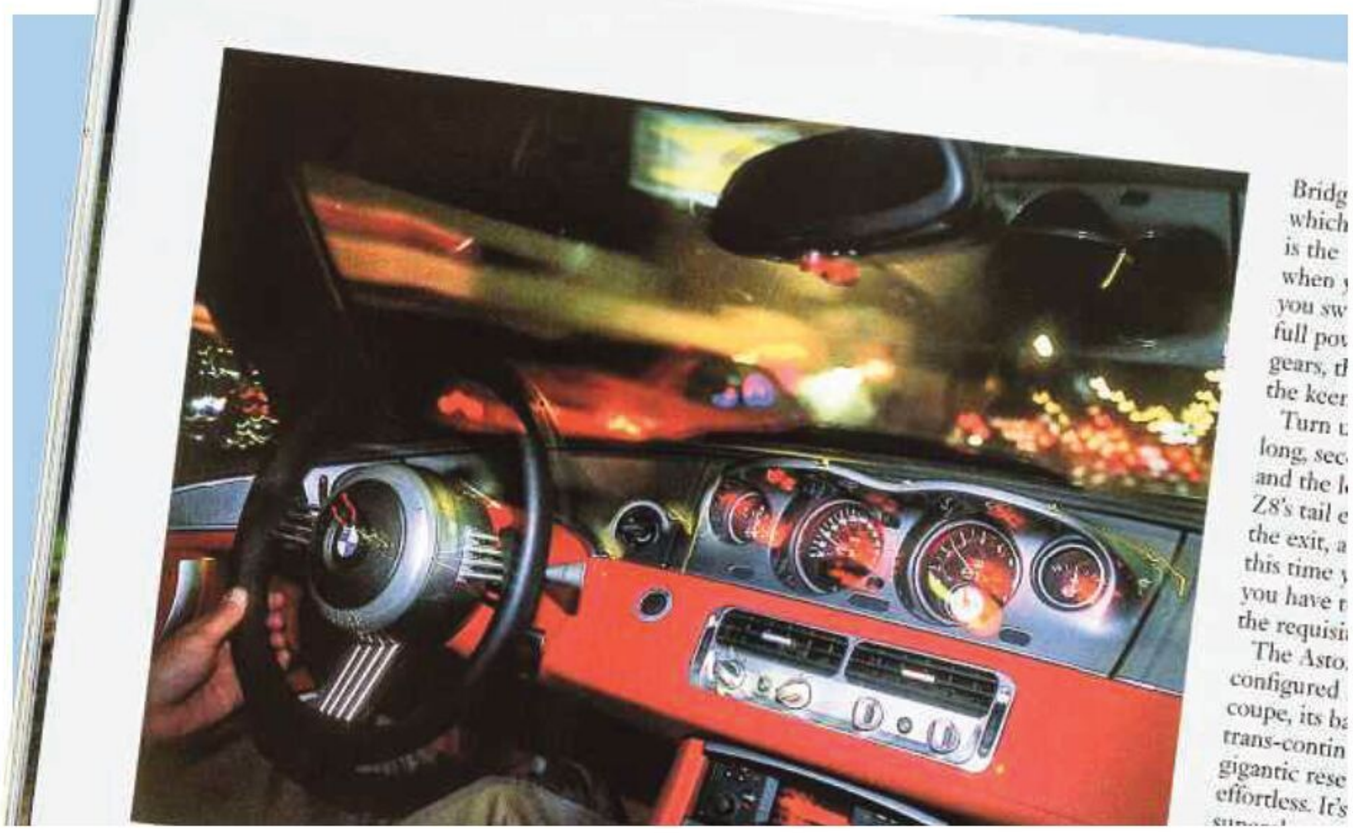
'I said, "You can change them later," and then just gunned it out of there. I'm not sure I even waited for the lights to go green.'

'BMW were really cross when we got back,' recollects Andy. 'Apparently they had trackers on all the cars, so they not only knew that we weren't on the route and had probably been twin-testing the Z8 with a rival, but had watched with mounting horror as these two Brits drove blithely into a distinctly dodgy neighbourhood at dusk.'

'With drugs in the boot, don't forget.'

All very Hunter S Thompson. And it adds a bit more context to the photograph on page 92 of the magazine, near the end of the feature. It seems a rather incongruous shot because it's taken from the passenger seat at night in traffic, while the rest of the shoot is in bright sunshine on deserted roads. John doesn't make any reference to driving in the dark in the text either. Clearly there should have been a postscript. Now, 274 issues later, here it is.





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