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IT WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT

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Ed speak



WHAT'S HAPPENING AT AMG?

A manufacturer that could generally be found either at the top of its game or nudging the diffusers of those ahead is currently in limp-home mode. We've driven another under-cooked AMG this month, the third new model from Affalterbach that's left us ice-cold.

You can read Henry Catchpole's take on why the new C63 (above) misses its mark on p12. Hopefully you will have read why we felt the new AMG-designed and developed SL came

up so spectacularly short on eCoty. At the end of 2022 we also drove the GT63 S E Performance, another AMG that felt several hundred thousand miles short of completing its development programme.

Meanwhile, the AMG One still isn't ready; the TV personalities and social media influencers that AMG insisted should drive it before the rest of us have found it to be underwhelming and unreliable. And the most disappointing car I drove in 2022? The AMG EQS 53.

What's gone wrong? It's probably no coincidence that many of the aforementioned AMG products were signed off post Tobias Moers' time as CEO. While there are many who have struggled to get on with Moers' abrupt approach to man management, there's no hiding from the fact that, under his stewardship, AMG created some of the most exciting and rewarding cars of their type.

Yes, times are very different today, so too objectives and legislative targets, but other manufacturers are managing the transition. AMG appears to be building cars to an algorithm rather than to excite and entertain. Here's to a return to form sooner rather than later.

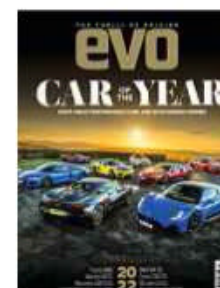
Finally, it is my sad duty to report that **evo** deputy editor Adam Towler has left us to take up a new challenge outside the motoring media. Adam joined **evo** in 2017, quickly earning his place on the small but perfectly formed list of great **evo** writers with his insightful analysis of the latest driver's cars and enthusiastic storytelling from behind the wheel of a range of **evo** icons. He'll be much missed.

Stuart Gallagher, Editor @stuartg917

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PARTNERS

by HENRY CATCHPOLE

Mercedes-AMG C63 S E Performance

An AMG C63 with a four-cylinder engine and an electric motor rather than a thundering V8? 671bhp should help sweeten the pill

IT STARTS FROM THE MOMENT THAT IT starts. Or rather it doesn't. Start, that is. Because when you press the button on the dash that would normally instigate a lumpen rumble, nothing happens. By default the new C63 S E Performance comes to life in Comfort mode, and as such it wakes silently and moves stealthily, solely under electric power.

There have been moments – early morning moments – when my polite, neighbourly sensibility would have given quite a lot to be able to pull this party trick in a C63. With this one, there need be no more awkward apologies for startling slumbering villagers. Mrs Saydees and her cat, Bence, at number 55 can sleep in peace.

Admittedly it's less of a concern at Malaga airport in the middle of the day with an Airbus A321 taking off every other minute, but nonetheless it rams home the point nice and early that this is a very different sort of C63. And, just as we've noted with the 296 GTB and Artura, the ability to travel under electric power and slip by

quietly is rather appealing at times. Even when you're miles from sleeping neighbours, it spares you scowls in town, and there is an undoubted smoothness and swiftness of response from a standstill as you work your way through heavy traffic. However, as with the supercars from Ferrari and McLaren, the Mercedes needs to prove that the electric part of the drivetrain also enhances – or at least doesn't diminish – the performance side of the C63's character.

The first leg of my journey from Malaga takes in what you could describe as mixed driving and, as we mooch along, the Merc blends the internal combustion engine impressively seamlessly with the battery power. They're the sort of easy miles that let you get comfy and assess your surroundings. And there is a lot to assess on the MBUX infotainment, with an almost bewildering array of beautifully wrought graphics on the huge central touchscreen, the dash and even the head-up display. You can of course configure the dash (and HUD) to any one of multiple layouts, but the





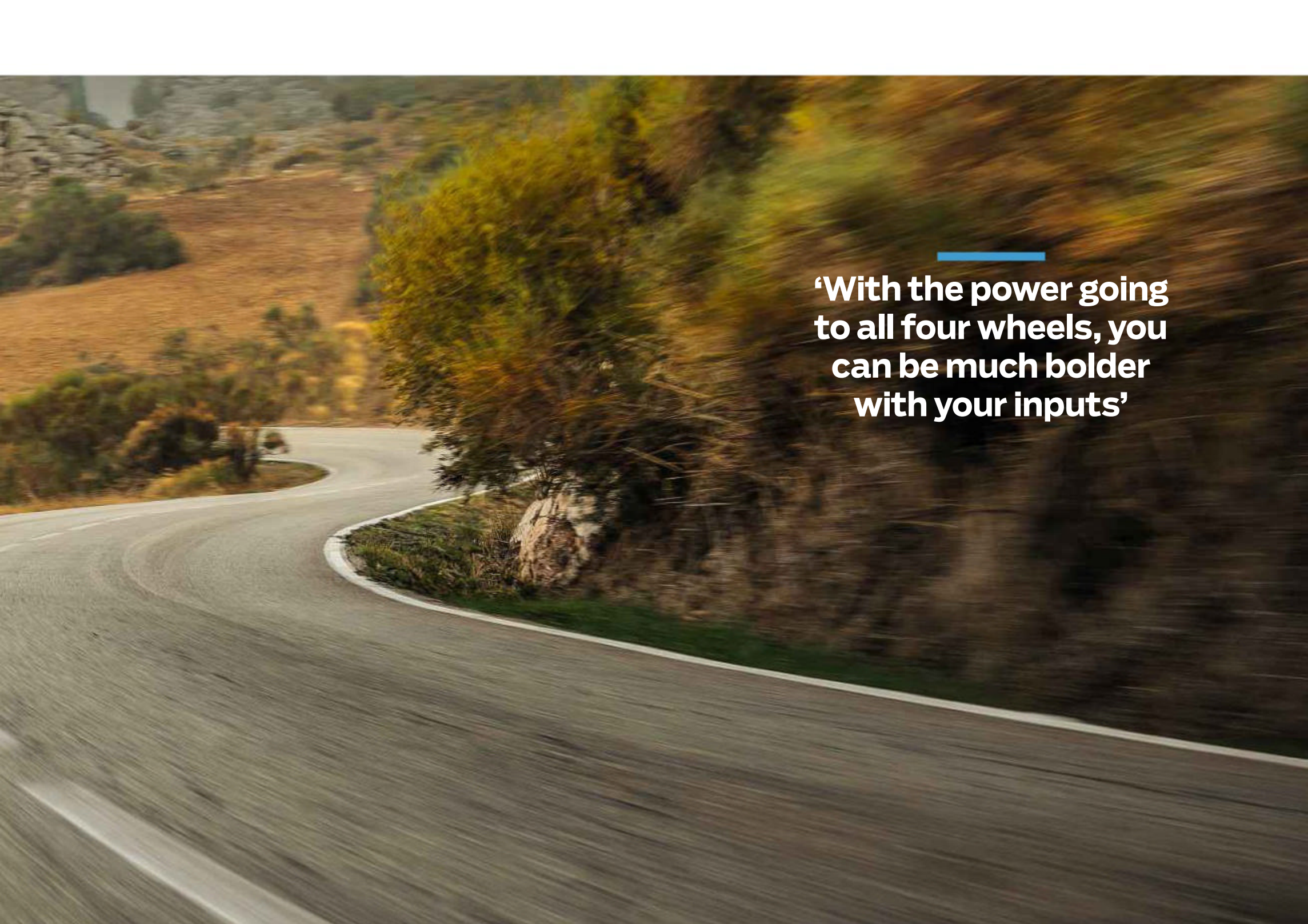
new Supersport design seems to be the default and I love the way little orange flames crackle across the screen every time you stoke its digital fire with the throttle pedal.

The Alcantara on the steering wheel is as pleasing as ever, but the rim itself is disconcertingly chunky to hold, which is a shame. Perhaps it would have looked odd if it were any thinner, given that there are two cross-spars on each side, each filled with switches, and two more driving-mode satellite switches slung below like baubles. Or maybe a designer has been poached from BMW. The bucket seats are new, too, and look tremendous. Initially I found them a little firm and flat in the back (like the old ones), but I seemed to settle into their perforated embrace fairly quickly.

There is certainly a lot going on in the interior; it could take weeks or even months of ownership to dial it all in to your liking and work out in which scenarios you wanted to use each of the eight different driving modes available. Even choosing your preferred colour of mood lighting, which seeps from vents and doors, could take hours.

At least, as we turn left off the road and wait for the imposing metal gates to slide back, the





‘With the power going to all four wheels, you can be much bolder with your inputs’

single-minded purity of lapping the Ascari Race Resort should bring some simplicity and clarity to proceedings. Except it's not even straightforward when you get to a circuit.

Before donning the flameproof balaclava, it's probably worth recapping (as briefly as possible) the full extent of the powertrain in the C63 S E Performance. The simple bit is the fantastic 2-litre four-cylinder M139 engine from the AMG A45 S, here positioned longitudinally rather than transversely. It also has a larger turbocharger with its own little 4cm-thick electric motor, mounted directly onto the turbo shaft between the compressor and turbine wheels to reduce lag. The result is 469bhp and 402lb ft, making it the most powerful series-production four-cylinder available.

The second half of the P3 hybrid layout is a permanently excited synchronous electric motor, which is capable of adding 201bhp (150kW) and 236lb ft into the equation. There are two gearboxes – a nine-speed dual-clutch for the internal combustion engine and a two-speed for the electric motor – and there is a 4Matic+ all-wheel-drive system, with a centre differential and an electronically controlled limited-slip diff at the rear.

Above: C63 S E Performance blends ICE and electric power seamlessly and to great effect. **Left:** tech-fest continues inside; infotainment screens (and the head-up display) can be configured multiple ways

But if you had to pick the most innovative part of the system, it would be the 400 volt HPB (high-performance battery) which has been designed to allow both very fast charging and discharging. It has 560 individual cells and a 'high-tech' coolant flows around them, keeping a consistent temperature that averages just 45 degrees Celsius, no matter how hard they're grafting. This thermal stability from the direct cooling has allowed AMG to fit higher performance cells and apparently helps the battery maintain its performance, with 94bhp (70kW) of continuous output and the 201bhp (150kW) of peak performance available in blasts of up to ten seconds. At just 6.1kWh, it is barely big enough for eight miles of pure electric running but it does weigh a relatively svelte 89kg.

Which brings us to Boost mode. Which in turn brings us to the sub-menu choice of Hot Lap or Endurance. You see, you only get the full 671bhp if you're in Race mode and you press the accelerator

pedal all the way until you click the kickdown switch, which then unleashes the final kilowatts from the electric motor. Easy. However, if you simply mash the throttle all the way to the detent and beyond at every opportunity then you will start losing ultimate performance from the battery. So, in consultation with its F1 and Formula E teams, AMG has come up with strategies to maximise your usage.

An algorithm has been applied to circuits around the world and if you let the car know where you are, then it will tell you when best to deploy the boost mode via flashing graphics on the dash. For example, we are shown a data trace of Ascari and the difference against the clock between a carefree application of Boost mode at every opportunity and the strategic deployment advocated by the numbers. Willy-nilly will actually be quicker over the first half of a quali lap, but after that the strategy starts to claw back time. As you cross the finish line, the algorithm will not only have a better lap time, but also a chunk more energy remaining in the battery. The Endurance version of Boost mode helps extend battery life even further, albeit at the expense of a few tenths.



It's all very clever and it genuinely gives you a window into the way that top-line drivers of hybrid race cars have to juggle the juice available to them. If you watch F1 then you'll have heard the radio messages between the drivers and their race engineers on the pit wall as they talk about 'strats' and 'energy' and this lets you play at being Lewis while the car takes on the role of Bono. However, I can't help feeling at times that perhaps I want to respond with more of a Kimi Räikkönen 'leave me alone, I know what I'm doing'. The idea that you have to drive in such a prescriptive way and obey a computer if you want to extract the most from the car is both interesting and a little demoralising.

I feel like my brain needs a software update in terms of the handling, too. The first time I brake a little deeper towards an apex and feel the rear start to rotate, my instinct is to tread carefully. An AMG with a loose rear end should require careful and considered application of the throttle unless

you want things to get unruly and smokey. But with the power going to all four wheels, you can be much bolder with your inputs because the car will simply pull itself straight.

There is a Drift mode, which turns the stability and traction controls off and sends all the power to the rear, but there isn't the opportunity to try it on the launch. Not that I think it would change my opinion of the car, because I think the chassis balance is fundamentally enjoyable even with the 4Matic+ engaged and the ESP in Sport mode. What's not so enjoyable is the feeling of weight inherent in the car. And there is no button to turn that on and off.

It's a feeling that makes itself even more apparent out on the roads around Ascari. eCoty was held in this area a few years ago and I remember having a tremendous drive, one of *those* drives, down this one stretch of tarmac that twists through a forest. It's a road that rises

Above: MBUX infotainment graphics beautifully wrought. **Right:** saloon and estate formats are available; both can rattle off 0-62mph in just 3.4sec

and falls like a long putt on a links green. It has a colourful look to it too, with the landscape either side of the road filled with the dense, dark green of pine needles and then a sort of rusty, baked orange earth below. That day in 2019 it was a bright yellow hatchback that was ducking and diving through this distinctive palette: an AMG A45 S with the same M139 engine. It was so chuckable, contained, confidence-inspiring and fast. It felt like a modern iteration of an Impreza or Evo. At 1550kg it certainly wasn't a light car for its class but the on-paper worries seemed to largely melt away on the road.

That drive came immediately to mind when I turned down the MA-5400 again in the C63 S E Performance. This time, sadly, the car can't



conceal its even heftier 2115kg (for the estate, 2090kg in saloon form). You feel it most obviously under braking, because there is a disconcerting reluctance when you hit the left-hand pedal. I'm not one for particularly late braking on the road, but all too often I feel like I might have left it a bit late in the C63.

In the corners, the balance remains reassuring and it feels remarkably easy to push beyond the limit on the exits, with a fun bit of oversteer easy to come by thanks to the instant hit of torque, yet also easy to control because, even with the ESC off, the 4Matic+ never lets angles get too dramatic. However, even here you can always feel the bulk in the slides and the way the car enters and leaves them, along with a slight blunting of all-round agility.

Ultimately, from behind the wheel the E Performance gives the impression of being a bigger car than a C-class. To that extent

it arguably feels at its best and most flowing when driven like a bigger supersaloon, with the suspension left in its softest setting and the pace reduced to compensate so that there isn't a loss of body control. If you push harder, then increasing the damping to Sport is a necessity to keep composure, but the suspension no longer feels like it is soaking things up, instead thumping and feeling too firm.

Of course, the real disconnect then comes with the fact that it sounds like a hot hatch. A decent hot hatch, but a hot hatch nonetheless. So it feels larger, but sounds smaller. At least half of this equation is ameliorated somewhat if you opt for the estate; I drove both the saloon and the wagon and the slightly reduced expectations of ultimate performance that come with a load-lugger just seem to fit the demeanour of the car better.

I'm aware that some of this could be read as me being needlessly grumpy and regressive about the fact there is no longer a V8 under the bonnet. But

that's really not the case. I was genuinely excited about the performance potential of the hybrid systems in this car and I love the engine. Talking to the engineers, it's clear that they are very proud of the way they have risen to the challenges of the hand they have been dealt. Managing to get the myriad technologies to talk to each other and work together is a monumental achievement. There is no doubt that they have given the car a massive breadth of ability, too, and there are some fascinating aspects to the way it drives. I suspect it may be quite similar to the AMG One in that regard.

But there is no escaping the weight that all the technology brings. Things like rear-wheel steering can help disguise it, but they can't mask it entirely. And unlike inadequate brakes or an underpowered engine, weight affects all areas of performance. Yes, it's well-balanced weight, but the responses to pedals and steering are all dulled by its evenly distributed presence. It subtly softens the edges so

that just when you want everything to come into sharper focus there is a slight blurring instead.

That wouldn't really matter day-to-day when the C63 S E Performance would undoubtedly be an interesting car to live with. There is so much to investigate that I imagine you could spend months enjoyably making its acquaintance. But when you find yourself on a good piece of road where an AMG should shine, the price of all that technology will weigh heavily on the experience. If I had to describe it after my initial drives on the launch, it would boil down to one phrase: tech-heavy. ☒

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1991cc, twin-turbo, plus 150kW electric motor

Power 671bhp @ 6750rpm **Torque** 638lb ft @ 5250-5500rpm

Weight 2115kg (322bhp/ton) **0-62mph** 3.4sec

Top speed 168mph (limited) **Basic price** c£90,000 (TBC)

➕ Tech works brilliantly...

➖ ...but brings excess weight

evo rating ★★★★★






by RICHARD MEADEN

Audi RS3 Performance Edition

With increased boost, a revised chassis, semi-slick tyres and a 186mph top speed, this is the most hardcore RS3 to date. But it's not coming to the UK, so what are we going to miss?





WHEN WE PAUSE TO CONSIDER HOW FAR high-performance cars have come in the last decade or so, we tend to point to the latest generation of 800bhp entry-level supercars. However, sometimes if you lower your sights you find a car that – relatively speaking – boasts equally extraordinary stats. A car such as the RS3 Performance Edition.

Browse the specification and you really could be describing a supercar from not so long ago. Carbon brakes, adaptive magnetic dampers, multiple dynamic modes including a driver-controlled rear torque split, ultra-sticky tyres, a 186mph top speed and build numbers in the low hundreds. And yet what we're actually talking about is a special edition

built by a mainstream manufacturer in a choice of compact saloon or hatchback body styles.

Compared with the regular RS3, the Performance Edition gets boosted performance, a tweaked chassis and a wealth of standard-fit goodies from the RS options list. Just 300 are being built, but sadly none of them are coming to the UK. That's



a shame and a surprise, as the UK is traditionally a big market for hot Audis. According to Audi UK it's a problem of supply rather than demand. With Audi AG already grappling with a two-year backlog of RS3 orders, Audi UK reluctantly decided a very small allocation of Performance Editions was a complication it could do without.

So, what are we missing? A mild but comprehensive tweaking of an already potent recipe, the Performance Edition is faster and more powerful than any previous RS3. This means a tickle more boost (up 0.1 bar to 1.6) for the fabulous 2.5-litre turbocharged five-cylinder motor, together with a slight reshuffle of the power and torque curves. Peak power increases by 7bhp to 401bhp, arriving 100rpm higher up the rev range at 5700 to 7000rpm. Torque remains at 369lb ft, but the band within which that peak is achieved has been stretched by a further 100rpm, with maximum shove arriving at 2250rpm as before, but now sticking around until 5700rpm.

Top speed has also increased from the previous optional high of 180mph to 186mph, the significance of which is more symbolic when you appreciate that it equates to 300kph, making the RS3 Performance Edition the first car in its segment to hit the triple ton. This landmark speed – which informs the number of Performance Editions to be built – is celebrated by the DRLs, which scroll through chequered flag and '3-0-0' motifs as part of their start-up display.

Chassis-wise the Performance Edition features

Above: dark grey wheels and black badges are standard. **Right:** inside are bucket seats with blue honeycomb stitching and an Alcantara-trimmed steering wheel with a blue 12 o'clock marker

RS Sport suspension with adaptive damping as standard, the magnetic dampers' bump and rebound settings having been increased compared with the regular RS3's. Pirelli's most extreme road tyre – the semi-slick P Zero Trofeo R – is fitted as standard, wrapping 19-inch cast-alloy wheels of a cross-spoke design and dark grey matt colour unique to the Performance Edition. Within these wheels are standard-fit carbon-ceramic discs at the front (measuring 380mm; the 310mm rears are cast-iron) gripped by blue painted calipers.

Parked in the pitlane of Spain's Montebelco circuit, the Performance Edition looks extremely impressive. With the front axle wearing wider tyres than the rear (265/30 compared with 245/35) the RS3 has a barrel-chested stance. It hints at an all-wheel-drive system that favours the front end, which in most situations is the case as it won't direct more than 50 per cent of available torque to the rear axle. However, using Audi Sport's RS Torque Rear mode you can momentarily send all of that 50 per cent to the outside rear wheel, with the effect of initiating a drift. Having played around on a dedicated drift area it clearly works, though the sensation is somewhat strange. How it translates when driving fast on track is something we're about to find out.





Launching away from the pitlane it's easy to believe the claimed 0-62mph time of 3.8sec (unchanged from the standard RS3). It fairly honks away from a standstill, Trofeo Rs clawing into the tarmac to deploy all 401bhp and 369lb ft with barely a scrabble of wheelspin. The DSG gearbox is typically effective but rather soulless in operation, the small paddles offering little in the way of connection or tactility. The brakes have plenty of power – more than enough to trigger the hazard lights into every braking area, which is a bit annoying – and ample stamina, which is important as the RS3 can gain serious speed between the corners.

Traction is strong, even in the more relaxed dynamic modes, with grip tending to bleed away to understeer. Like most front- and all-wheel-drive cars, if you overdrive, things get increasingly scrappy, but if you explore the RS Torque Rear and RS Performance drive modes you can get the car working nicely, especially through some of the faster corners where you make one positive direction change at high speed. With practice you can have it move really sweetly, front end initiating the turn but exiting with the rear axle just sliding under full power. It's a satisfying and exhilarating feeling, but one which requires a particular type of corner. For the most part – that's to say in tight and very long corners – you sense the RS3 fighting front-wheel-drive urges, which isn't so much fun.

Clearly the Trofeo R tyres make a big difference to the way the RS3 tackles track driving. The grip

brings it alive, allowing you to lean on it harder and longer. Having driven a regular RS3 on less aggressive rubber I can attest to how much more satisfying the Performance Edition is on semi-slicks (as it should be!), but I'm not convinced it would be my first choice of car to take on a trackday. I doubt a BMW M2 would be as effective in less than expert hands, but it would undoubtedly be more entertaining.

Unfortunately we can't comment on the Performance Edition's road manners as our test was restricted to the Montebianco circuit. This said, aside from the firmer dampers – which will doubtless be just fine on smooth European tarmac – there's nothing to suggest the Performance Edition would be anything less than blisteringly quick and crushingly capable. It's quicker than you'd ever need to go on the public road, but that five-cylinder engine is far more characterful than AMG's formidable four-cylinder and a match for the M2's straight-six.

There is no UK pricing, but at €75,000 for the Sportback and €77,000 for the saloon, the Performance Edition is a lot of money. Then again, there's no denying it's also an awful lot of car. ✕

Engine In-line 5-cyl, 2480cc, turbocharged
Power 401bhp @ 5700-7000rpm **Torque** 369lb ft @ 2250-5700rpm **Weight** 1570kg (260bhp/ton) **0-62mph** 3.8sec
Top speed 186mph (limited) **Basic price** From €75,000

➕ Detail improvements; sticky tyres bring best out of the RS3

➖ Not coming to the UK; not as much fun as an M2

evo rating ★★★★★

by ADAM TOWLER PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

Volkswagen Golf R '20 Years'

The R-branded Golf line marks a milestone with a special edition. Should we break out the party-poppers?

CAN IT REALLY BE 20 YEARS SINCE THAT first, V6-powered Golf R32? Well yes, it can, and it is, and to celebrate the occasion we have this, the slightly awkwardly christened Golf R '20 Years'.

It's fair to say that *evo* hasn't been the biggest fan of the Mk8 Golf R. Its predecessor, love it or loathe it, was such an important milestone in the development arc of the hot hatch, but the 8R is simply not the step forward we might legitimately have expected. On the contrary, in fact: in quite a few ways it's an inferior and less desirable car to the enthusiast driver. But all of this we've documented at length in this magazine previously. The question here is: can the 20 Years add a new page to the narrative?

As the name implies, it's a special-edition model, and as is common with such specials it offers a blend of bespoke touches and optional equipment bundled in for the asking price. In this case there

are some small mechanical changes too, so let's start with those.

The headline figures suggest they're very minor indeed, because peak power has risen only from 316bhp to 328bhp, while torque is unaltered at 310lb ft, so in a car the weight and size of the 20 Years the difference is unlikely to feel stellar. Indeed, the 0-62mph time drops by a scant tenth of a second to 4.6sec. However, there's more going on here, because the changes are aimed at improving the response of the usual EA888 engine.

To this end, the throttle flap can now remain open when the driver initially comes off the accelerator, while the wastegate keeps the turbine wheel spinning at a constant speed on the overrun – or is pre-loaded, in VW speak – meaning throttle response is significantly enhanced, claims Volkswagen. This is driver mode dependent, with a 50 per cent improvement in Race mode and above, and Special mode giving the full effect.





Moreover, the DSG gearbox has been recalibrated for more aggressive shifts and a more definitive 'jolt'; alas the paddles are the same little insignificant items. There's also more sound in the cabin above 4000rpm and more pops and bangs on the outside from lower revs, allowing 20 Years owners to hold their own amongst all those modified 7Rs that love to serenade the UK's high streets.

Otherwise, we're into more familiar special-edition territory. The 20 Years is fitted with the R Performance Package as standard, with its larger rear wing, raised top speed limiter (168mph) and additional driver modes (Drift and the Nürburgring Nordschleife-developed Special, which stops the DSG 'box automatically upshifting at the limiter in manual mode and combines Race settings for most systems with a softer tune for the adaptive suspension, if fitted). Colour choices remain white, black or Lapiz Blue, but 19-inch Estoril rims are





standard and rather than being diamond turned are finished in gloss black, with the option of blue accents if you choose white or black bodywork. The standard R's silver door mirrors are swapped for blue (with white or black bodywork) or black (with Lapiz Blue), there are the blue R logos and a '20' badge on the B-pillars. Inside you get the fully electric nappa leather sports seats and some genuine carbonfibre trim on the dash and doors.

What you don't get for your £48,095 is either the DCC variable damping (£850) or the Akrapovic exhaust (£3500), so while the 20 Years is a financially sensible way to buy a higher spec R (the regular car starts at £42,695), it's easy to end up with a £55,000-odd Golf, like our test car, with options still left unticked.

The overall effect is certainly a subtle one – our blue 20 Years looks and feels very similar to the standard R, which may suit some but feels a little underwhelming for such an important

Above and opposite: interior gets carbonfibre dash and door inserts, plus nappa leather premium sports seats; exterior changes will take a keen eye to spot

anniversary. It drives the same as well, which is to say competently and with huge reserves of performance, but not delivered in such a way that immediately sets your pulse racing. Of course, it needs a thorough working through of the modes and settings to make it really come alive, and the result is a terrifically rapid way of getting from A to B, on almost any road.

This particular example feels considerably more 'together' than the R that trailed home last in our triple test with the Civic Type R and AMG A45 S last year (*evo* 288), and the response and top-end energy of the EA888 is not in question, but after the laser focus and polish of the Civic, and compared with the amiable interaction available from a Hyundai i30 N, there's still something a

little remote and bland about the 8R, and once again the operating system threw up a load of error messages. Yes, you can toggle Drift mode and on wet mountain hairpins it'll oversteer like a rear-drive Sierra Cosworth rally car, but it's a frantic, snatchy sort of experience, not a balletic one.

So while it's reassuring that VW went to more trouble than just a set of stripes to mark the passing of the years, I think it's fair to say this is still a Golf R to the Mk8 recipe, and not a rekindling of past glories; a good car, but unfortunately not an exceptional one. ✕

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1984cc, turbocharged
Power 328bhp @ 5200rpm **Torque** 310lb ft @ 2100-5500rpm
Weight 1555kg (214bhp/ton) **0-62mph** 4.6sec
Top speed 168mph **Basic price** £48,095

➕ Package may appeal if you're already considering an R
 ➖ Driving experience is largely unchanged

evo rating ★★★★★

by STUART GALLAGHER

Polestar 2 BST Edition 270

The high-performance Polestar 2 concept known as The Beast is now a production reality, complete with a set of very trick Öhlins dampers. We drive it on road and track

DAMPERS. THE UNSEEN HEROES OF A car's chassis. While the general public gets excited by the size of your rims, those in the know look through the spokes and up into the wheel-well to sneak a peek at the nondescript tube connecting the suspension heavy metal to the car. Without them we'd be lost, wobbling along like a stiletto-heeled party-goer on ice.

We spend a lot of time talking about dampers and who does it best. McLaren, Lotus and Ferrari have an unprecedented level of talent in their chassis departments when it comes to damper tuning, matching compression and rebound rates to spring rates and creating a balance of other-worldly

brilliance. And then there's Jaguar, which manages to deliver levels of ride comfort, body control and chassis feedback that its rivals Audi, BMW and Mercedes have never managed to better.

Porsche generally gets it right, too, both its fixed-rate and active dampers delivering a blend of control and finesse that brings its cars to life. Then there are the specialists such as Caterham and Ariel, who take advantage of their lightweight philosophies to create near damping brilliance. Alpine, meanwhile, manages to blend the two – the precision of the pure lightweights with the polish and sophistication of the premium players. Power is, after all, nothing without control.





What does all this damper chat have to do with a 2.2-ton electric car based on a Volvo crossover? Well, it would seem Polestar, the China-based, UK-developed EV brand, is equally fascinated by the capability of those four tubes that hide in the wheelarches of its cars. It's why the Polestar 2 has always been available with an optional Performance Pack, which includes the fitment of a set of adjustable Öhlins dampers.

Unfortunately the execution there isn't quite right. Adjustment requires removing parts of the wheelarch liner and scrabbling around under the car. And from our experience the range of adjustment goes from hard to 'oh my God did no one drive this on a road before signing it off?' undriveable. The big USP of EVs is the calming serenity they offer, something a Performance Pack-equipped Polestar 2 succeeds at shattering.

Now there's the £68,990 Polestar 2 BST Edition 270 (270 made, 40 coming to the UK). It's fitted with the firm's long-range dual-motor powertrain, which means 469bhp and 501lb ft from a 78kWh

battery. The upgraded Brembo brakes are 20 per cent lighter and 70 per cent more efficient, and it has bespoke Pirelli P Zero tyres. It sits 25mm lower and has a brace between the front suspension struts. All very *Max Power* and not terribly EV – and that's before we get to the £5000 grey wrap and the £1000 stripe.

Then there are the dampers. Again Öhlins has supplied them, but rather than an off-the-shelf unit, Polestar asked for something that didn't exist: a damper with the adjustability and quality of movement of a unit designed exclusively for track work, blended with the useability required for a car that will spend 99 per cent of its life (if not more) on the road.

On the Spanish launch's road route it's hard to judge the impact the more sophisticated Öhlins make: the route is just 30km and covered by a 60kph limit policed by choppers and drones. However, it takes us to the brilliant Circuit Ascari, home to eCoty 2019 and ideal for experimenting with the BST 270's fancy new dampers.

'Circuit Ascari is ideal for experimenting with the BST 270's fancy new dampers'

Some initial laps are run with the dampers left in the same setting Polestar had selected for the road and the result is as you'd expect: a great deal of front-end roll, little precision from the steering and that sense of being suspended mid-corner as you wait for the right moment to dial in the next steering or throttle input.

In the pitlane waits Joakim Rydholm, Polestar's chief test engineer, ready for feedback and to make suitable changes via the handy remote reservoirs in the front boot for the front dampers (though still via the wheelarches for the rears). Back out on track, these changes kill the understeer and add much needed directness to the front, but the 'middle' of the car and the rear feel quite leaden, as if they're being dragged through the corner. Back to the pits and further adjustments are made, further improvements achieved. The front remains as was, the rest of the car now more mobile and direct, with more flow. Which means you want even more, so you ask for a final adjustment and head out once again. Fun? Not quite. Impressive? I'd say so.

There's no denying that the range of adjustment allows you to tailor the balance to your liking, this final set-up allowing the car to be driven out of the corner in a single, satisfying motion. But impressive as it is, given that the BST 270 will be driven almost wholly on the road, it still feels like the answer to a question no one other than the CEO asked. ☒

Motors Two, 350kW total **Power** 469bhp
Torque 501lb ft **Weight** 2146kg (222bhp/ton)
0-62mph 4.4sec **Top speed** 127mph **Basic price** £68,990

+ Quality damping makes a car...

- Although we're not sure who this one has been made for

evo rating ★★★★★

IGNITION

NEWS, INTERVIEWS, TECH AND EVERY NEW CAR THAT MATTERS



Maserati plugs in

The forthcoming GranTurismo Folgore will see the debut of Maserati's all-new electric powertrain with the potential for almost 1200bhp. We sample a pre-production prototype

AN ELECTRIC MASERATI DOES SEEM ONE of the stranger anomalies of the current era (no pun intended), given that qualities such as style and charisma have long tended to take precedence over cutting-edge technology at Italy's second most famous car company. However, from 2025 onwards *all* new Maseratis will be offered with a choice of either fully electric or 'Nettuno' V6-based petrol powertrains, the EVs inevitably occupying more of the centre stage beyond that date. So given that the new GranTurismo Folgore is the first Maser that will use the company's all-new electric powertrain, it matters. A lot.

This particular example is a pre-production prototype, hence the absence of any interior pictures: Maserati won't be unveiling the full majesty of the Folgore's cabin until late spring. But for most

of the rest of the car, what you see is what you'll get, which is almost all good news, considering how well it drives, and how quick it is around a mostly wet test track in northern Italy.

There are some caveats, inevitably, all of which we'll come to in a bit, but in the meantime let's focus on the good bits, such as the way it looks. In the flesh, the all-new GranTurismo is a seriously handsome thing in any of its various guises, no matter what kind of powertrain lurks beneath its new aluminium bodyshell. But while it retains the fundamentally graceful shape and proportions of the previous GranTurismo, this latest example appears fresh and contemporary in its detailing. It looks elegant and luxurious but also undeniably sporting, which is precisely the brief it needs to fulfil.

All new GranTurismos – V6 and EV – are based



on the same part-aluminium, part-steel, part-magnesium platform, and they all feature the same extravagant one-piece clamshell aluminium bonnet. Maserati has developed the ICE and EV versions entirely in line with one another so that – apart from their powertrains – only small details differentiate the models. All use the same basic suspension design with double wishbones up front and a multi-link set-up at the back. All have the same 2929mm wheelbase and use the same adaptive air dampers. They even get the same brakes – 380mm discs with six-pot Brembo calipers at the front, 350mm with four-pots at the rear – despite the Folgore weighing considerably more than the V6.

As a result, you get the exact same amount of space in the rear seats in all versions, although the Folgore's boot is a touch smaller at 270 litres versus 310 because there are a few extra bits of EV hardware to accommodate beneath the boot floor.

Despite this, the Folgore still adheres to the traditional GranTurismo brief of being able to carry four people and their luggage in luxurious comfort. But can it carry those passengers as far as the V6 across continents, and does it have the same level of majestic, effortless performance when doing so, or is it just a completely different kind of car? Until we drive the Nettuno V6 version it's kind of hard to tell definitively, but what I can tell you here and now is that the Folgore goes like a rocket in a straight line, with performance that even Maserati itself admits is well beyond that of the less powerful, less torquey but lighter V6. Think 0-62mph in just 2.7sec and a top speed just 1mph shy of 200mph.

It will also do around 270 miles on one charge, according to its engineers, which is good but nowhere near as far as the V6 will go on a 70-litre tank of unleaded. And that's before you even mention the continuing lack of fast charging points across much of Europe's road network. Fact is, you

Right and above: new GranTurismo retains the same attractive proportions of its forebears but adds an extra dimension of sportiness in its detailing. In Folgore electric form, it also goes like absolute stink

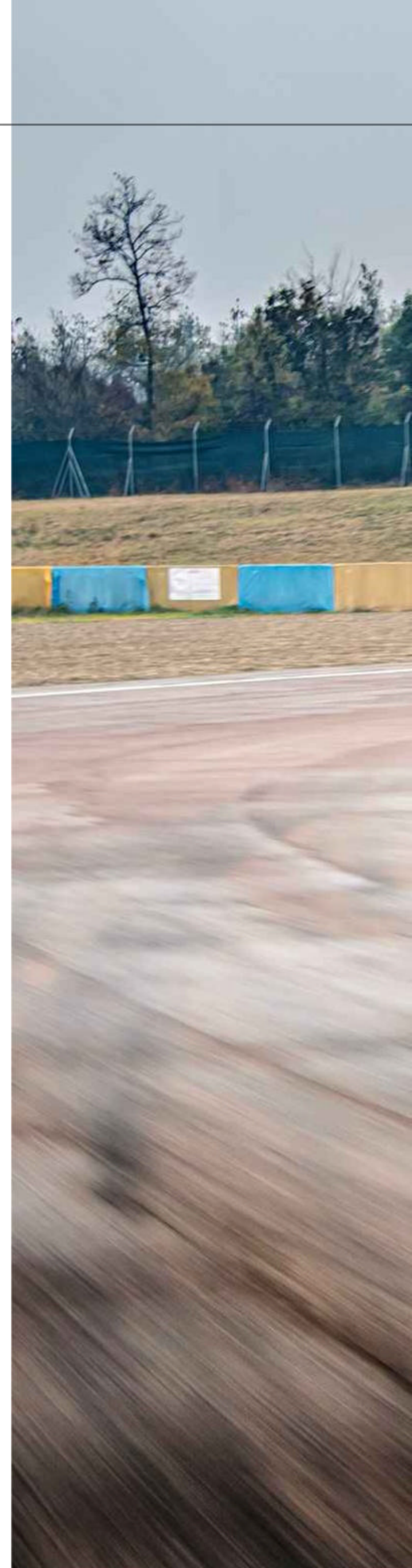
can't just waft across continents in an EV without planning your route with military precision, which means that for some years yet a petrol-propelled grand tourer will be far more relevant – and useable – than an EV with a theoretical 270-mile range.

Anyway, we're getting well ahead of ourselves here. Before we go any further on what the Folgore is like to drive, you may (or may not) want to know a bit more about what makes it go. And if you don't, you probably should, because this is the powertrain that will end up propelling all Maseratis in years to come.

As with just about all other EVs, the Folgore's power is provided by a liquid-cooled lithium-ion battery, in this case one that's rated at 92.5kWh, which is pretty pokey. So pokey, in fact, that for the time being its potential will not be fully unleashed via the three 300kW electric motors that sit within the nose and tail of the Folgore. Hence Maserati's claim that the car has 1183bhp (1200PS) of 'installed power' but is only capable of deploying 750bhp of this for the moment.


Why? Because some of the components within the powertrain are a little bit behind the eight ball when it comes to being able to unlock the full 1183bhp, so until they catch up, the car's full potential remains just that: potential.

Even so, 750bhp and 995lb ft are still tasty numbers beside the 490bhp and 550bhp that the Modena and Trofeo versions of the V6 will produce. So despite the Folgore weighing a whopping 465kg more than the 1795kg V6 versions (although that's a dry weight for the petrol cars, so add 100kg or more to it for a fair comparison) it will be the fastest new GranTurismo by some margin.









Maserati GranTurismo Folgore

Motors 3 x 300kW

Power 750bhp **Torque** 995lb ft

Weight 2260kg **Power-to-weight** 337bhp/ton

0-62mph 2.7sec **Top speed** 199mph

Basic price £195,000 (estimated)

It's also intriguingly packaged, not just in the space it affords its passengers and their luggage but also in its battery and three electric motors. The battery is T-shaped and is designed to replicate the format – and therefore weight distribution – of a conventional powertrain in that the top of the 'T' sits above the front axle then makes its way back along the car – in roughly the same place where the engine, gearbox and propshaft would sit in a conventional front-engined, rear-wheel-drive car. Such as the V6 GranTurismo.

Open the enormous and rather beautiful one-piece bonnet and it even looks like there's an engine of sorts in there. Instead of the usual clumps of unidentifiable plastic, what you see front and centre is one of the three 300kW motors and its ancillaries, the other two being at the back, each one capable of producing 394.6bhp to give that 'installed' figure of 1184bhp. As you'd expect, the one at the front powers the front wheels simultaneously while the two at the back take care of the rear wheels individually, with a complex torque-vectoring system allowing power to be deployed to either end or across the back wheels when needed.

The other element that separates the Folgore from most other EVs is the noise it makes. Maserati has developed a range of sounds that are emitted via the interior speakers and by some additional speakers mounted in the rear bodywork that provide 'a unique acoustic experience, closely linked to the car yet innovative at the same time'. Hmm.

In reality it means you're greeted by a weirdly digitised V8 rumble on start-up which then alters in volume depending on which of the drive modes you select. There are four of these – Range, GT, Sport and Corsa – with the noise simply becoming louder as you work your way up to Corsa. In other words, there's no change in timbre or tone as you scroll through the modes, which is a shame because if you're going to bother designing a 'sound personality' for the car in the first place, why not go further and make it sound different in each mode?

It certainly *drives* differently as you scroll up through the modes. To begin with, once you've opened the vast driver's door and climbed in behind the all-new, leather-wrapped steering wheel, the first things you notice are the excellent seats, the near-perfect GT-type driving position (arms out, bum nice and low down) and the fact that all-round visibility is terrific. I can't tell you much about the rest of the design inside because we're not allowed to, but what I can tell you is that the basic sense of quality is strong, up there and possibly a bit beyond what you'll find inside a contemporary Aston Martin. Which is good.

What's less great is what happens when you move away, because there's a curious sense of

Left: early taste of Folgore was limited to the track, where it accelerated, braked and steered as well as you'd hope, though Sutcliffe didn't find enough character or 'edge' to distinguish it from other high-powered EVs



'A SLIGHTLY SURREAL LEVEL OF REFINEMENT ACCOMPANIES ITS RABID PERFORMANCE'

anti-climax when the noise that was promised at idle disappears and is replaced on the move by, well, nothing much at all. Yes, there's the inevitably violent surge of acceleration if you put your foot down in any of the drive modes beyond Range, but for whatever reason, the Folgore's performance lacks both drama and charisma. So although it's quick, it has almost no emotional engagement compared with, say, the V6-propelled MC20.

Maybe that's not fair. Maybe it's entirely inappropriate to be comparing a mid-engined V6 supercar with an electric GT car, and I should focus instead on the positives, of which there are many. Such as the slightly surreal level of refinement that accompanies its rabid straight-line performance.

Trouble is, when you know how good the V6 engine is, know how lovely it sounds and how much torque it also has in the mid-range, all of it metered out and very obviously enhanced by a brilliant seven-speed dual-clutch gearbox, you can't help but wonder how much more appealing the new GranTurismo will be with *this* engine and gearbox installed, rather than an EV powertrain. Because although the Folgore has no problem whatsoever producing great gobs of acceleration, the way it performs is curiously bland. It has no real edge – in any of its drive modes. It is, ultimately, quite hard to distinguish from the next high-powered EV in the way it delivers its thrust. Whereas the V6, you suspect, will be anything but.

The Folgore tries hard in all sorts of ways to be a great GT car, and in most ways it's also very good at being a Maserati. It steers well, it stops properly, it seems to ride pretty decently as far as we can tell from lapping a track, and it certainly looks good and goes like stink when you open up the not-very-loud pedal. But at no point does it ignite the senses, not mine at any rate, which is weird because the week before I drove the Folgore I drove the Rimac Nevera (see Driven, **evo** 305) and that completely blew my mind in the way it felt. The way it performed. The way it set my heart on fire.

Not so the Folgore. Not yet, anyway. But this is still a pre-production prototype, so we should reserve judgement and hope that, between now and the summer, they make its performance feel more engaging somehow. A bit less digitised. Maybe just a bit wilder. And if they can't, at least there's still that V6 version to look forward to. ❌

IGNITION



by COLIN GOODWIN

PHOTOGRAPHY by ANDY MORGAN

Fuel for thought



Could sustainable synthetic fuels be the green way to keep millions of ICE-powered vehicles on our roads? We run a back-to-back test between an advanced biofuel and regular unleaded and look at the science involved



IT DOES NOT PAY A PROPHET TO BE too specific.' So said science fiction author L Sprague de Camp, and following his advice, I will give a loose prediction that the adoption of EVs will hit the buffers within the next couple of years and certainly before the end of the decade.

The simple facts are these: EVs are getting more and more expensive, the public charging network is laughable and 40 per cent of UK households do not have off-street parking (the author included). What all this means is that

there is certain to be a huge number of ICE cars around for decades to come. Indeed, the average age of vehicles in the UK car park is already increasing.

The government's blinkered approach to reducing the car's impact on the environment has got to be thrown aside so that other technologies – such as hydrogen and, most importantly, sustainable fuel – are properly considered. The latter in particular because petrol- and diesel-powered vehicles will be on our roads for several decades after sales of new ones

are banned. And with them will be the cars that we cherish. I'm into internal combustion engines, which is why I have a car, a motorcycle and an aeroplane. I've driven every EV on the market today and not one fulfils my emotional needs.

I have already driven a car powered by sustainable petrol. The fuel is called Sustain, and it's made by a company called Coryton. Last summer, Coryton together with the Historic and Classic Vehicles Alliance (HCVA) and Jaguar specialist SNG Barratt arranged for me to drive an E-type running on Sustain fuel. The car ran

faultlessly, but in truth it wasn't the ideal test because, firstly, I hadn't driven an E-type for quite a while and, secondly, the test car was substantially modified with electronic fuel injection and engine management so it ran a lot better than an original anyway. A more scientific approach was required.

This time we have two identical Mazda MX-5s. One is **evo's** long-term test car and the other is from Mazda's press fleet (actually, our example has lowered suspension but that won't make a difference here). Mazda's own car has been run down to fumes and its tank filled with sustainable fuel. Our long-termer is full of regular E10 unleaded to EN228 98 RON specification, as is Coryton's Sustain petrol.

John Barker, who actually paid attention at school and has certificates to prove it, is going to run you through all the deep tech, formulas and equations. But before Prof Barker takes over and we fire up the Mazdas, a quick explanation of where sustainable fuel comes from and the processes used to manufacture it.

The journey starts with ethanol that has been produced from biomass such as agricultural waste. The husks from sugar beet are one example, although you can make ethanol from any material that can be fermented. The first step is to degas the ethanol, which removes the oxygen and water, leaving only hydrogen and carbon. Next, these go through a series of catalysts that turn them into a hydrocarbon liquid.

The fuel that we're using today contains ten per cent ethanol, which is simply achieved by putting the original raw ethanol back into the fuel. The ethanol is added for cost reasons and to get the performance required from the fuel.

Sustain looks like regular petrol and smells similar, even though it doesn't have the same additives as the pump fuel. When it comes to driving the two cars there is absolutely no



discernable difference between the MX-5s' performance on their respective fuels. We start both from cold, and both start immediately. A quick sniff around the exhaust pipes and there's no difference there, either. Out on the road, using exactly the same stretch of tarmac and driving each car at the same speed and throttle opening, the performance of the two cars is identical.

There is one difference between the performance of the two fuels, however, although

Top: Coryton's business development director, David Richardson (left), explains the benefits of the firm's Sustain fuel to ICE diehard Goodwin.

Below: **evo's** long-term MX-5 tracks identical, Sustain-fuelled car



it only comes to light later, after the sustainably fuelled MX-5 has racked up over 100 miles. This car is notably more economical, averaging 44mpg instead of 40mpg for exactly the same journey (back to Mazda HQ). This, says Coryton, is because the sustainable fuel is more energy-dense; you will hear more about this from Barker. After this initial experience we are planning more exhaustive tests on a wider variety of engines.

The doubters will wonder if sustainable fuel will ever take off and whether we'll be able to buy it from regular service stations. I'm confident on both counts because eventually the government is going to have to wake up to the reality of there being many millions of internal combustion engine cars still on the road. Meanwhile, don't rush to replace the Metzger engine in your 911 with an electric motor and heavy batteries because a solution could well be on its way.



Fuel if you think it's over

Efuel and advanced biofuels
are an exciting alternative
to fossil-derived petroleum.
Just how viable are they?

by JOHN BARKER

THE ROLL-OUT OF EVs CONTINUES apace but, as Mr Goodwin argues in his story on the previous pages, sustainable synthetic fuels have their part to play in reducing CO₂ emissions because ICE cars, planes, ships and long-haul trucks aren't going to immediately stop running when the ban on the sale of new ICE vehicles comes into force. In fact, some think that synthetic hydrocarbons could play a key part in the global energy supply of the future.

There are two types of sustainable synthetic fuels, both effectively recycling CO₂ already in the atmosphere. The first is made by extracting hydrogen from water by electrolysis and then synthesising it with carbon taken from the atmosphere. This is done via a mechanical process and the output is called efuels. Then there are those created using organic material or biomass, and these are called advanced biofuels. This is the type created by Coryton and used in our MX-5 test.

Mention biofuels and some will immediately think of fuel displacing food, or the space to grow food crops being used for fuel. In fact, the biomass used by Coryton is rarely 'first generation feedstocks'. Anything that can be fermented can be used to make biofuel, including agricultural waste – wheat roots or sugar beet husks – or waste from bakeries or from wine or coffee production, according to David Richardson, Coryton's business development director.

'The ethanol created by fermentation goes through another process that breaks the molecular structure, gets rid of the oxygen, and then we use the leftover carbon and hydrogen. We can reform that through a specialist process and affect what comes out the end through a distillation column no different to what you'd find in any refinery. What we get is a liquid hydrocarbon structure that is effectively very close to a normal gasoline.'

Our back-to-back test suggested an improvement in economy of about 10 per cent, a result mirrored in another test with an MX-5 of 1000 miles using the same biofuel. Richardson reckons this is because Coryton's fuel is heavier than regular fuel. 'It still meets the specification of E10 unleaded but sits at the upper end of the density range, so you're getting more energy per litre of fuel. The Mazda has a sophisticated engine management system and makes use of that; the fuel injector spray patterns are adjusted based on the density of the fuel. Effectively it uses less fuel at its atomisation point.'

Coryton is the leading supplier of bespoke fuels, creating 4000 unique blends and 14 million litres of fuel a year. Motorsport is its biggest market. 'It's seen as the most frivolous sort of activity but also they're the easiest people to make an impact on because effectively it's a controlled fleet, so you can do all the testing with them and get to the market quite quickly.' Then come truck delivery fleets, sales reps fleets, and the forestry industry, which uses a lot of small, handheld machinery. Another market is classic cars, where owners tend to use their cars

for only 500 or 1000 miles a year. 'In the overall cost of owning a classic, fuel is probably not your biggest concern. Classics are also seen as being a bit frivolous, you know, "dirty old car, why haven't you got rid of it?" Well, actually, I'm using sustainable fuel, and keeping an old car going sustainably is greener than producing a brand new one...'

How much does it cost? 'At the moment, realistically, you're looking at about £4-£5 a litre, plus tax,' says Richardson. 'It all depends on the complexity of the blend. No two applications are the same. Companies like ours exist because we make fuels that behave very differently. Ultimately, you could get to the fabled €2 mark, maybe even cheaper once demand ramps up. It depends on the value of the renewable energy that you're creating first off, and the market will dictate what you end up selling it for.'

The energy used at every stage to create Coryton's biofuel is recorded. There's energy involved in harvesting and transporting that waste, fermenting it and then processing the ethanol produced. Coryton is signed up to an international sustainability certification company called ISCC that has access to the whole process, from feedstock to fuel, looking at where the energy used came from, determining if it was renewable, and was the CO₂ produced captured and reused, perhaps in the fizzy drinks industry. 'It then issues a certificate that might say "out of that 94 grams of CO₂ that would normally been produced by fossil, you have saved 80 per cent of that through this process"', says Richardson.

'You've got to collect things like wheat roots, but farmers generally tend to do that because it's now valuable to someone – the fermenters. Besides, any waste left to rot will create methane, a considerably worse greenhouse gas than CO₂. Fermenting is great because it's a very low energy usage process. Most fermenting companies use reclaimed heat from other processes, and when it goes through the dual-stage catalytic process it creates an

exothermic reaction, so you use a little bit of energy to get it going, then it self-powers.'

Richardson admits Coryton's 14 million litres is a tiny fraction of the fuel used each year. 'There are half a dozen other plants in the process of being built, some due to come online in the next couple of years, and by year four their output is expected to be between 40 and 500 million litres per annum. Clearly, that's still not enough to defossilise – we go through billions of litres of fossil every year – but it's a very good step in the right direction.'

'The truth is that oil is actually quite cheap and we've had 150 years of refining it and optimising it. We're effectively trying to change that overnight, which can't happen. Everything needs just a little bit more time to mature. I often have these uncomfortable conversations with groups pointing out that we're not going to stop pulling oil out of the ground this century. We will still be flying planes on fossil fuel for another 50 years, we will probably still be driving trucks and cars on fossil fuels for another 30 to 50 years. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't switch to sustainable fuels where we easily can.'

'People don't really grasp how much oil is ingrained in our daily lives. When you stop utilising fossil for fuel, you also reduce your ability to make other chemicals. The glasses you're wearing, probably the clothes that you're wearing, have all got fossil in some point. So what you're really looking at doing is replacing the crude elements in their entirety. So there is going to be competition from different industries over who gets what. Both the fuels and the chemicals industries are trying to do their bit. There's a much more holistic picture here.'

ZERO PETROLEUM

'To say we're going to solve global warming by stopping doing stuff is, in my view, completely misplaced. We've got to change how we do it, we have to find the ways to use even more energy but do it properly, and that's part of the philosophy we have in the company,' says Paddy Lowe. In early

Right and below:

Porsche's pioneering efuel plant in Chile opened in December.

Below: Porsche board members Barbara Frenkel and Michael Steiner fuel a 911 at the opening ceremony

2020, the celebrated Formula 1 engineer set up Zero Petroleum with Professor Nilay Shah OBE, FREng, a professor of chemical engineering at Imperial College, with the intention of creating commercial volumes of synthetic efuels from water, air and renewable energy, which Lowe reckons will be inexhaustible in the future.

In November 2021, Zero Petroleum entered the Guinness Book of Records for the 'first aircraft powered by synthetic fuel'. The fuel, just 15 litres of it, had been created by a rig harnessing wave power in the Orkneys to create the energy to extract hydrogen from water by electrolysis and then synthesise it with carbon captured from CO₂ in the atmosphere. This year is about scaling up, opening a centre at Bicester Heritage and deciding where its plants will be located. Helping it on its way, it has a contract to develop sustainable fuel to help the RAF in its journey to carbon neutrality.

'The quality of the aviation gasoline we made was so high that we met the necessary octane level and were able to put it straight in the aircraft without any blending or refinement,' says Lowe. 'We know we can make much higher grade octane fuel. You're putting carbon and hydrogen together and the possibilities are nearly infinite so it's a matter of what molecules you create.'

A criticism levelled at synthetic fuels is that their creation is very energy-intensive and that the renewable energy consumed in their production would be better used if it was simply put into the grid to power electric cars. 'We fully support





electrification of cars. We're not here to displace that. But when it comes to extreme performance, and in an automotive context that's high-end sports cars, racing cars; a Formula 1 car could never deliver the spectacle of a 90-minute or two-hour race, at those energy levels running on batteries. The car would weigh four tons. Aircraft is another very clear example where the performance of high-density energy stores is really critical to delivering the service that's needed, which is to carry payload.

'Making synthetic fuels is a very energy-intensive process and the biggest reason for that is that liquid fossil fuels contain an incredible amount of energy, and this is often undervalued. We're electrolysing water to make hydrogen. All the energy is in the hydrogen at the outset. The carbon, which we take from the atmosphere, is bringing in the utility in effect, because you're taking that energy molecule, hydrogen, and turning it into a dense store as a liquid. Today it's about 45 per cent efficient, end to end, so about 55 per cent lost, roughly half to make the hydrogen and half in the synthesis. I can see that reaching 60 or 65 per cent in ten years or so.'

Another reason for creating synthetic fuels cited by both Lowe and Richardson is that most plants generating electricity are most likely to be remote plants, making it very hard to get a power cable from those locations to where the energy is actually needed. Converting it into a liquid allows it to be more easily transported and can use a distribution infrastructure that's already in place.

'I think we'll see, in time, vast swathes of desert covered in solar for making liquid fuels, and wind power going even further offshore,' says Lowe. 'I see a future where floating wind turbines are making liquid fuels on-platform. In the long term, I've always been a fan of nuclear fusion and when that's delivered it will be highly centralised and then you need a means to distribute, store and use the energy, and that I believe will be quite significantly serviced by synthetic petroleum.'

Synthetic fuels will be better fuels too, he says. 'All the pressure has been on car companies to reach greater and greater emission standards. I don't think I'm wrong that oil companies make the worst fuel they can within prescribed standards because that's the way to make the most money. In the world of synthetics, every molecule costs the same amount because the money is in the feedstocks, so you may as well make terrific molecules. I see a whole new future for combustion and fuels, with terrifically high octane levels and better efficiency. Far from petroleum fuels being dead in the water, I think they're ready for a new lease of life.'

PORSCHE'S EFUEL PLANT

'Haru Oni', Porsche's pilot efuel plant in Chile, was officially opened in December, and saw Diego Pardow, Chile's energy minister, fuelling a 911 at the opening ceremony. The wind blows for 270 days a year at the southern tip of Chile, powering wind turbines that provide the energy to create the efuel,

either ethanol or gasoline, which can then be transported like traditional fuels all over the world using the existing infrastructure. Total production at this pilot plant is expected to be around 130,000 litres next year, all of which will be used in the Porsche Mobil 1 Supercup and at Porsche Experience Centres.

Porsche is working towards a CO₂-neutral balance sheet across its entire business by 2030 and while it remains committed to EVs, efuels are a part of that plan. 'Using efuels reduces CO₂ emissions,' says Porsche executive board member Barbara Frenkel. It's estimated that in 20 years there will still be 1 billion ICE vehicles on the roads. There is still a chance that efuels could earn ICE a stay of execution too, but Porsche isn't betting on it. Even so, it says that the industrial production of synthetic fuels should be pushed forward.

Porsche started researching efuels four years ago and has invested over \$100m in development and production, \$75m of that with Highly Innovative Fuels (HIF Global LLC), a major partner in the Haru Oni plant. Others include Siemens and Exxon-Mobil. HIF will scale up production using lessons learned from Haru Oni and is expected to deliver 55 million litres of efuel per year by the middle of the decade and 550 million litres a couple of years later, much of which it will sell to third parties. At current rates the price would be around \$2 a litre. ✕

by SAM JENKINS

BELIEVE THE HYPE?

Hype Motorsport claims to offer a new type of trackday experience with an arrive-and-drive approach and strong green credentials. We put it to the test

TIGHTER RESTRICTIONS AND EVER-INCREASING POWER OUTPUTS make exploiting a modern performance car more difficult than ever. Of course, one solution is simply to book an **evo** trackday and enjoy the freedom of driving your own car on a circuit, but a company called Hype Motorsport is now offering a new option to put fewer obstacles between the driving enthusiast and a thrilling drive.

Owning a performance car is a key accomplishment for many and can be a rewarding experience in its own right, but for those looking to drive frequently on track, it can be a costly exercise. Hype Motorsport offers an alternative by handling the upfront costs, storage and maintenance associated with a track-tuned car, allowing enthusiasts to simply arrive and drive for a fixed sum.

Co-founded by Ben Hyland, previously founder of motorsport firm want2race (recently acquired by Ginetta), his new venture aims to provide a fully fledged, carbon-neutral trackday experience in some of the finest driver's cars on the market.

The current fleet is one we can certainly get behind, featuring the excellent BMW M2 Competition, Alpine A110S and four-cylinder Porsche 718 Cayman GTS. In order to be as inclusive as possible (and keep maintenance costs down) all the cars have paddleshift transmissions, and unlike the majority of driving experience operators, Hype Motorsport not only encourages you to explore the cars' full performance but has applied a suite of track-orientated modifications to all three. Though they remain road-legal, they've all received suspension tweaks including a Suspension Secrets track geometry set-up, along with power and brake upgrades. Through feedback from customers and instructors, the cars will continue to receive further upgrades, with harnesses next in the pipeline.

The M2 Competition is the most potent of the trio, tuned by Litchfield for a 520bhp output. Though we have always found its factory set-up perfectly suited for the road, Hype Motorsport has opted for Nitron coilovers to optimise the performance for the track, along with a Milltek exhaust. BMW's M Performance brakes and the standard Michelin Pilot Sport 4 S tyres are retained.

At the other end of the scale is the A110S, one of our all-time favourite performance cars and one only improved with Life110 upgrades, in this case including suspension, brakes and shift paddles, along with Pilot Sport 4 S rubber. Last but not least is the 2.5-litre Cayman GTS, equipped with Öhlins coilovers, upgraded brakes and track geometry. Though the 4-litre is undoubtedly the purist's first choice, the four-pot offers an impressive level of performance given its cylinder count. A set of sticky Yokohama tyres also lifted it a notch during our time with the car at Brands Hatch.

For those new to trackdays or simply looking for an all-inclusive thrill, 'Hype Drive' is the most attractive package, with all three cars available to drive on track for a day. Unlike with most experiences, an expert instructor is included in the cost, along with intercom-equipped helmets and on-board video. With only 12 spaces available at each event, each driver





gets multiple sessions, with a comfortable place provided to cool down between stints; you can even hone your skills in the pit garage with a top-flight race simulator...

For those who have a few more trackdays under their belt and want to tailor the experience to their own needs, each car is also available for individual hire at any UK or European trackday, meaning you only need to get yourself to the circuit, where Hype will meet you with the prepared car of your choice. To streamline the process, the cost of the trackday, delivery and insurance are all included in the price, with a member of the team on hand to provide assistance with refuelling and any maintenance required.

Frictionless driving thrills aside, something else of note is Hype's commitment to carbon neutrality. Through its partnership with ClimatePositive it has created a driving experience that not only produces zero net carbon, but also gives back to various causes around the globe – ClimatePositive is currently tackling Brazilian deforestation through the Pacajai REDD+ project, while improving living standards for those in need through investment in health, education and infrastructure.

Calculated via a dedicated 'carbon accountant' and audited annually by PwC, Hype Motorsport currently offsets around 1.6 metric tonnes of CO₂ per event, with an additional 25 per cent added to this figure to account for variance between events. This figure includes not only the emissions from the cars on track, but travel to and from the circuit, energy consumed while at the circuit, the emissions cost of anything purchased by Hype Motorsport and even the modifications added to each of the cars – similar schemes often only cover one aspect of a company's emissions. The scheme even covers the emissions for each customer's personal vehicle for an entire year. Yes, even the Fast Fleet C63 would be included.

As for pricing, Hype Motorsport sits in the middle of the pack as far as trackday experiences go, offering its full Hype Drive trackdays with the chance to drive all three cars starting from around £1000 (depending on the circuit and add-ons). Bespoke days with individual car rental are a little more pricey, from around £2000 for a UK circuit, but when you consider the cost of buying, maintaining, storing and modifying a car of your own, it begins to make more sense.

Hype Motorsport offers a driving experience tailored to the enthusiast in an inclusive package that takes a lot of the hassle out of organising your own track time. Granted, buying a car outright might prove more cost-effective for those who attend a trackday every other week, but for the driver without the spare time and cash to pile into a dedicated track car, this appears to be an exciting new option. ✕



Andy Wallace

Racer and Bugatti test driver

From rolling his first race car to breaking the 300mph barrier with Bugatti, Andy Wallace shares his high-speed highlights

by BRETT FRASER

L AMBORGHINI TEST DRIVER VALENTINO Balboni famously owned a Fiat 500 (the 'bambino' version), reasoning that if you drove a Countach or Diablo for work, nothing you could afford to park on your own driveway could ever measure up. Andy Wallace is of a similar mindset. The man who has competed at the Le Mans and Daytona 24-hour races 21 times apiece, has set production-car speed records in the Jaguar XJ220 and McLaren F1, has broken the 300mph barrier in a Bugatti Chiron Super Sport and is currently Bugatti's most illustrious test driver owns a Volkswagen ID.3. His wife drives a Golf E.

Like Balboni, Wallace's view is that after driving race cars and hypercars for a living, no road car is going to come close to the speed or thrill. Although he does confess that a Porsche 911 GT3 is a temptation. 'It's one of the most track-focused supercars, and it is very, very good on the track and really good fun on the road, too. But it's not even close to feeling like a racing car because it's not a race car. It's designed for a different job, at which it excels.'

Wallace bought the all-electric ID.3 because of his long-term fascination with automotive technology and innovation, and was also inspired by an encounter with a Tesla Roadster back in 2009 while helping out with some **evo** road tests. 'The idea was we would drag race the Tesla against a supercharged Lotus Elise. I mean, it was an electric car, how fast could it possibly be? I was driving the Lotus, but by the time I'd grabbed second gear, Roger Green in the Tesla had just disappeared. So that kind of sowed the seed in my head that electric cars could actually be something in the future.'

'It was way too early to buy electric back then, but you've got to start somewhere and in 2017

I bit the bullet and ordered a Golf E. I drove it everywhere. Every year we try to go skiing in Italy, 1300 kilometres each way in the middle of winter. Back then there were no charging stations to talk about anywhere, but we did it for the hell of it and because everybody said you couldn't possibly in an electric car.

'From then on I was hooked on electric cars. As this is **evo** you're probably thinking, "This guy's gone completely barking mad. He's driven too fast in the past and his brain's addled." But I drive the ID.3 to the Bugatti factory in Molsheim on a regular basis, 840km each way. I do it with two stops of about half an hour. Piece of cake.'

Wallace says that other racing drivers also have electric cars and that travelling long distances in them demands a strategic approach that endurance racers will be familiar with. He also believes that the electric technology currently being developed by Rimac (which has a 55 per cent stake in Bugatti) is game-changing and will have a profound effect on how we view electric cars in the future.

But let's rewind the clock, right back to Wallace's formative years. Regular visits to the British Grand Prix, starting in the early 1970s when he was seven or eight, were the catalyst for his passion for racing. 'My parents knew how crazy I was about racing, so for my 15th birthday they bought me a trial session at the Jim Russell race school at Silverstone. It was only up and down the straight and through some cones in a Formula Ford, but I immediately knew it was for me.'

'I told my dad that I wanted to do the full Jim Russell course, and he told me I'd have to pay for it myself. So for the next two years and two months I saved up, bought lessons when I could, and got my competition licence when I was 17 – good timing, as I couldn't have raced before that age anyway.'







'In 1979, when I was 18, I figured out I couldn't be a racing driver without a race car. I settled on the Formula Ford Pre-1974 series as the most affordable route into competition, then went to all the events to see which cars seemed the best, what lines people were taking through the corners, and who the good drivers were. Having worked out that I needed a Hawke DL11, I went to the bank manager to arrange a loan, telling him repayments wouldn't be a problem as I was going to be world champion. It was a short conversation.

'But I could get a loan for a road car, which I bought then sold the following day to finance the purchase of the Hawke from a chap in Scotland for £1250. I booked my first practice session at Silverstone, 31 August 1979, and eventually triple barrel rolled it, parking it beautifully upside down on the pole position mark on the grid. To put the damage right was just over £1000...

'The following year, though, I did the whole championship. I won the fourth race at Cadwell Park, then a further five, and won the championship. The trouble with that, though, is that there's no benefit to doing it again, so I had to move up the ladder, first to contemporary Formula Ford and then to Formula 3, and that brought with it a big price tag. Luckily the owner of the printing company my dad worked at was

a motorsport fan, and while he couldn't afford much in the way of sponsorship, he had lots of contacts who could also contribute little bits.'

Wallace rewarded their faith in him by winning the 1986 British Formula 3 Championship and also being named Autosport National Racing Driver of the Year. The latter achievement brought with it the chance to test the Benetton B186 Formula 1 car – 'the turbocharged four-cylinder, one-and-a-half-litre, crazy, unbelievable engine to drive' – but the F3 title was to have a longer lasting impact.

'Winners of F3 championships from around the world are invited to compete in the Macau Grand Prix, a fantastic event held in November. I had actually competed there in 1985 but it didn't go so well, but in 1986 I returned and won it. It was a really big thing. Back then F3 was a recognised stepping stone to F1, so I went and saw all the teams and said this is who I am, this is what I've done. They said, "Yeah, we know who you are," and two of them offered me a drive. The stumbling block was they wanted \$600,000 to put me in a car.'

Facing the irony of possessing a world-class talent but only a Third World budget, Wallace

contemplated the premature demise of his racing career. But then a connection he made at the Macau Grand Prix not only remedied the immediate situation, but also laid the foundation for Wallace's stellar career in endurance sportscar racing. In one of his two heats at Macau, Wallace tussled at very close quarters with Jan Lammers, who by that stage had swapped F1 for the World Sportscar Championship.

'After the races Jan and I had a chat and got quite friendly. He mentioned that Jaguar was looking for one more driver for Le Mans, so he put in a good word for me. I got a call from Tom Walkinshaw [TWR ran the Silk Cut Jaguar team with its XJR-9LM racers] inviting me down to Paul Ricard for a trial. I'd never driven anything with a roof and certainly never been more than 200mph, but with Jan's help I managed to get the drive. It saved my career.'

After warm-up races at Jerez, where his car came second, and then Road Atlanta where it was third, Wallace arrived at Le Mans in 1988, aged 27, having had no practice at the circuit – resurfacing had prevented any test days that year. Again, Lammers came to the rescue of not just Wallace,

Top row: Wallace in his first race car, a Hawke DL11; on the grid and in action at Silverstone in a Van Diemen in '82; Formula Ford victory at Brands Hatch in '83. **Bottom row:** on the way to becoming the 1986 F3 champion; Le Mans celebrations with Dumfries and Lammers in '88; winning at Watkins Glen in '01 in a Riley & Scott MkIII; beside a Chiron Super Sport 300+



but also the third driver, Johnny Dumfries. 'Jan taught me things I used for my entire racing career,' reveals Wallace. 'Having come from single-seaters where the other drivers are your enemy, it was quite odd at first being told all these things that you would normally never find out from another driver.'

The lessons of Lammers paid dividends as, despite an ailing gearbox, their Silk Cut Jaguar narrowly held off a late charge from Porsche to win the race. 'And you know,' chuckles Wallace, 'winning Le Mans doesn't do your career any harm at all. As it had been 37 years since Jaguar last won Le Mans it was a really big deal – the reception we got was amazing and we ended up meeting different members of the royal family, including the Queen.'

Although this was to be Wallace's only outright win at Le Mans, during 21 outings there he picked up a further four class wins and drove for Toyota, McLaren, Panoz, Audi, Cadillac, Bentley, Dome, Zytek, DBA, MG-Lola and Lola. A long stint in the US, also driving in sportscar championships, saw him race in the 24 Hours of Daytona 21 times, collecting three outright victories in the process; he twice won the 12 Hours of Sebring too. During his career Wallace has been on the podium more than 70 times in top-ranking races, while his new passion for historic races means the silverware keeps coming: he won the Le Mans Classic (in Plateau Deux – Grid Two) in a Jaguar D-type in 2016 and the Daytona

Classic 24 Hour in an Audi R8 LMP1 three times.

Wallace attributes his hectic race schedule for the fact he's not owned any interesting cars. 'At one stage I was flying back and forth across the Atlantic doing 25 to 26 races a year, plus all the testing. At its craziest I worked out that I'd sat in a race car for 121 days in one year. I didn't have time to worry about cars of my own.'

That said, Wallace does concede that during his F3 days the fact that his race car was Volkswagen-engined entitled him to a Golf GTI Mk2 loaner – 'It was the best thing I'd ever driven up until then.' Similar agreements with other manufacturers that he raced for saw a couple of Jaguar XJ40s cross his driveway, a Toyota Celica that he had remapped, a selection of Audis, and when he was competing in the States, a Cadillac.

While doing pre-production testing of the Jaguar XJ220 for TWR-Jaguar in 1991, Wallace got the gig to do a top speed run with the car at Fort Stockton in Texas – the XJ220's two-way average of 212.3mph set a new production car record. That record was broken by the McLaren F1 in 1993 (230mph) and when in 1998 it was decided that the car had more to give, it was Wallace who pushed up the maximum to 240.1mph. Since then, of course, there has been a never-ending stream of road car rocketships vying for the honour of world's fastest. And chief protagonist in the battle

for ultimate hypercar bragging rights is Wallace's employer for the past 12 years, Bugatti.

Under attack from Hennessey, SSC and Koenigsegg, on 2 August 2019 Bugatti sent Wallace out onto the Ehra-Lessien test track in Germany in a Chiron Super Sport, where he clocked 304.773mph. It was only in one direction, so doesn't qualify as a record, but breaking the 300mph barrier for the first time cements the names of Bugatti and Wallace in the history books.

'It's a massively amazing feeling when you suddenly get that number,' enthuses Wallace. 'You're covering a kilometre every 7 seconds, a mile in 11 and change, and that's on an 8.8 kilometre-long track with banked turns at either end. For somebody who has been interested in cars from a very early age, I could almost pinch myself – here I am, in the daddy of all cars, and I'm just about to exceed 300mph. Hats off to everyone involved in the project.'

'The Chiron Super Sport is an incredible car. It has 1600bhp and yet is so capable, so driveable. It's faster and more powerful than any of my racing cars, yet is dead easy to drive. The motor industry is brilliant at making progress. I think it's the best industry for that: it's had to solve so many problems over the years. Now there are yet more problems, but they'll be solved too. We don't need to worry, I think it's all under control.' ❌

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SELL





LETTER OF THE MONTH

Hitting reset

ISSUE 305'S ED SPEAK RAISES INTERESTING THOUGHTS

about the characteristics of 2022's evo Car of the Year contenders and those of the first eCoty in 1998. I'm sure I'm not alone in realising how favourably the 2022 runner-up compares with the 1998 averages cited, the Toyota GR86's 1275kg/231bhp/£30k versus 1209kg/247bhp/£42k.

I for one am not particularly enthused by the growth in power, weight, complexity and cost associated with much of the performance car market over the last decade. This is why, after building up to owning cars with 300bhp-plus, I stepped back and sought my own 'reset point' – a new (in 2012) Toyota GT86.

The GT86 isn't perfect, but that didn't stop me completely loving it and relishing the purity and simplicity of every drive. Now, as eCoty indicates, Toyota has produced a successor that comprehensively addresses the GT86's flaws and builds on its many positives. The only negative is the very limited supply, which means many enthusiasts will be denied the opportunity to experience a wonderful and comparatively attainable performance car hero.

I'm one of the lucky ones: I managed to secure an order for a manual GR86, which (at the time of writing) may be only a few days away from being delivered. I plan to thoroughly enjoy this wonderful car for many years to come.

Adrian Cavendish, Warwickshire

The Letter of the Month wins a Straton watch

The writer of this month's star letter receives a Straton Yacht Racer Quartz watch worth £265. Designed to be a fun everyday chronograph that doesn't break the bank, it offers 10ATM water resistance and is available in six different colour schemes.

Straton Watch Co.



Tale of the unexpected

As always, eCoty was a fantastic read: Peter Tomalin's accomplished prose married to some superb photography from Aston Parrott and Andy Morgan, with insightful and experienced opinions from the other **evo** writers as they strive to find the greatest driver's car of the last 12 months. As an annual feature, it rarely disappoints. For once though, it also induced a new and wholly unexpected reaction: genuine surprise.

A GT division Porsche (and an RS one at that) and a CSL BMW finishing behind a £30k Toyota? McLaren and Ferrari's tech-laden, hybrid exotics being delivered a knockout blow from Maserati, with its first independently built supercar in over 40 years? A twin-turbo, V8 AMG Mercedes coming across as a little bland?

Although the GR86 was pipped to the top spot by the Maserati, it still feels like the Toyota won an emotional victory. It doesn't chase insane power figures or lap records; it doesn't use a thousand CPUs to enhance the driving experience; it's extremely affordable and it unequivocally delivers more smiles per mile than its price tag would suggest. Porsche, BMW and all the other manufacturers trapped in the never-ending strife of spiralling power figures and competing Nordschleife lap times would do well to take a look at Toyota's pared-back approach to see how less can actually deliver more.

Gary Reilly

Caught in the act

When weighing the Maserati MC20 at eCoty and finding it to be 225kg overweight, you stated: 'There is an

explanation...' But then you listed an excuse – that the MC20's structure has been engineered to work with the upcoming EV version – and let Maserati off the hook.

How on earth is it legal to mis-sell something so hugely? In my view it's as bad as some of the similar lies that have cost car companies billions in fines/compensation.

Shame on Maserati, and all who are up to similar cheats.

John Tighe

A Maserati engineer has told us that the company's 1475kg claim is in fact a 'lightest dry weight'. Our test car was full of fluids and was fitted with a number of options such as nose lift (which also requires a different, heavier bumper) and heated seats. Although this still doesn't justify the discrepancy – SG

Rain on the parade

While, personally, I still have reservations about the looks of the MC20 (yes, I know, 'Boooo...!'), it really is quite special to see a car carrying the trident on its nose walk away with the eCoty crown. There's something uplifting about seeing Maserati best the best. And I'm sure Ferrari will take joint third place well and will graciously congratulate its Italian rival for taking the win...

What's not so uplifting about eCoty 2022 was that there was not an electric car in the field. Stay with me here. Sure, electricity has sneaked in, and certain notable contenders are all the better for it. But not one purely electric vehicle was deemed worthy of inclusion.

We're drowning in a sea of videos that show the Tesla Model S Plaid and the like embarrassing the best of petrol at the strip, so giant-killing



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INBOX



EVs must be the future, right? Why would anyone cling to the propulsion of the past when you're likely to get your rear end handed to you by a silent assassin, and often at a fraction of the cost?

Might it be because rarely does anyone drive only in a straight line? Go look at the production-car lap times for the Nürburgring – you know, that place where actual driving happens and not just *sitting down at speed* – and you'll have to scroll all the way down to number 79 before you find your first EV, the Porsche Taycan Turbo S, and further still to number 93 before you find the much-lauded Model S Plaid. And those two numbers, those lows when the rubber hits something resembling a road, are a measure of how much we, as driving enthusiasts, will lose once the powers that be finally hammer that last nail into the coffin of the internal combustion engine.

Don't get me wrong, I know it's well past time we stopped burning dead dinosaurs to make the world go around. But to quote someone, somewhere in the ether, 'Elon Musk seems to build cars for people who make YouTube videos.' And, just like most YouTube videos, staggering 0-60 times at the drag strip are, at best, fleetingly amusing; the sterile drone of an electric motor no tonic for the soul. And it seems, by the continuing omission of EVs at eCoty, that **evo** concurs.

So well done, Maserati. You brought it, and with some style. And well done **evo** for another compelling round-up of the year's best. But I'm not sure how much longer I can enjoy this sort of thing when all it does is remind me that today's performance cars are chasing each other towards a not-too-distant future where I'll have to explain to a generation that driving

used to be for fun and not just for getting to the next set of traffic lights a fraction of a second sooner.

Karl Lloyd, Wiltshire

Fantasy Ferrari

Richard Meaden's column about assembling the perfect car (**evo** 305) had me dreaming up all sorts of interesting concoctions instead of participating in less interesting small talk over Christmas dinner.

Later, while reading eCoty, I found the answer was right under my nose: the Ferrari 296, without the hybrid b*****, 200kg lighter and shrunk by about 5 per cent in every dimension, would surely be the perfect car.

Then upon reaching Peter Tomalin's Judge's Notes I discovered he had had exactly the same thought. We must be on to something, then.

Although come to think of it, it might still need my Type R's manual gearshift and seats...

Philippe Beinaerts, Antwerp, Belgium

Braking point

In response to Stephen McCarthy (Inbox, **evo** 305), who writes about driverless cars becoming the norm, there's just one factor you may not have considered – humans.

Imagine driving through any city centre in the UK. Everyone will know that your car is designed to stop if it senses it may endanger a pedestrian. Do you think humans – particularly young, male ones – will respectfully wait and cross in the correct manner? Or do you think they will jump out and play chicken with the robot? Personally I can't think of anything worse than being held hostage by some drunk yovvs – or worse, the dreaded Just Stop Lithium protestors!

Thomas Pontin

Watches

Three themed timepieces for your consideration



Arpiem Tribute TJL 'Jacques Laffite'

€299 arpiem.fr

Founded in 2018, French brand Arpiem (geddit?) specialises in watches inspired by motor racing of the 1960s and '70s. Among recent additions to the range is this piece paying tribute to French F1 driver Jacques Laffite. Co-designed by Laffite himself, its features include the use of the green hue from his crash helmet and a highlighted '26' – his race number with the Ligier team.



REC SPX DeLorean

£1745 recwatches.com

A time machine made out of a DeLorean? Sounds familiar... This one uses material taken from John Z DeLorean's DMC-12 company car for the outer area of its dial, the design of which is based on the multi-spoke wheels from the car it honours. Other borrowed cues include faux vents in the strap that mimic the car's slatted engine cover, and black 'rubbing strips' along the sides of the case. Just 456 will be made.



Porsche Design Chronograph 1 - 911 Dakar

£13,450 porsche-design.com

This new version of Porsche Design's classic timepiece is the first ever chronograph to employ a case made from titanium-carbide – a highly scratch-resistant ceramic material. All the better for withstanding the rigours of driving in the desert, then, which its wearer may well be doing, as only 911 Dakar customers can buy the watch...

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RICHARD MEADEN

Ken Block was a genuine hero to millions. Meaden pays tribute



AS THIS ISSUE OF EVO WENT TO PRESS, THE worldwide car community was reeling from the tragic death of Ken Block. In the hours and days following his snowmobile accident on his ranch in Utah, social media was flooded with heartfelt tributes as time zone after time zone awoke to the shocking news.

Print lead times are not conducive to timely tributes, but given this magazine's devotion to gratuitous cornering shots I felt compelled to acknowledge the man's life. Besides, for anyone who enjoyed his work and marvelled at his car control, Block's death will remain a sickening gut punch. One akin to the day Ayrton Senna died, or Michael Schumacher's skiing accident.

Some of you might feel that's overstating his contribution and achievements, but Block was a hero to millions and a kindred spirit to anyone who has felt the giddy joy of goofing around in cars. He was one of us. Or the version of us we would like to be.

I never had the pleasure of meeting him, but plenty of people I know did, and they absolutely loved the guy. Of course, the brilliance of Block was that you didn't need to meet him to know that you'd like him. Where top-level race and rally drivers are rendered remote by megastardom and the distancing their sport requires, Block's enthusiasm, vision and mastery of modern media ensured he forged a direct and unprecedented connection with his fans.

I still remember watching *Gymkhana Practice* for the first time. Like many, I viewed it again in the wake of his death. It seems hard to believe that this simple-yet-seminal four-minute film was released nearly 15 years ago. Back in 2008, myself, Jethro Bovingdon, Chris Harris and Neil Carey had just embarked on the glorious misadventure that was *Drivers Republic*. These were the days before the GoPros we know today, so we knew all too well the challenges of filming cars at high speed with equipment that simply wasn't designed for the job. Block didn't just prove it could be done, but established a format and a style that would inspire a generation of car fans and content creators. He was the master of his craft.

As *Gymkhana* and the Hoonigan Industries brand built by Block and collaborator Brian Scotto became a YouTube juggernaut, so the fantastical one-off creations built for each instalment evolved to perform in ever-wilder ways. But you always sensed it was important to him that his celebrity shouldn't outshine what he

was driving. Whether it was the Crawford-tuned Impreza WRX STI in *Gymkhana Practice* or the frankly terrifying Hoonicorn he ripped through the streets of LA in, the car was always the star.

The later *Gymkhanas* were blockbusters in every sense, but the way he bullied that original Impreza WRX STI around the dusty, derelict Marine Corps Air Station El Toro left the biggest impression. Yes, it had over 500bhp, but road-based Imprezas were not born for that kind of driving. Consider Block was having to work the wheel, handbrake and stick shift to keep all four tyres fully lit, and his performance is all the more impressive. In *Gymkhana* the jeopardy was always real.

Block could quite easily have remained in his YouTube bubble, but he was clearly a man who thrived outside his comfort zone.

There aren't many from a non-motorsport background who would have the balls to enter the WRC, but just a handful of years after first driving a rally car, and well into his 40s, Block put himself out there in this toughest of categories. He had a few big crashes, none more spectacular than his barrel roll at Rally Portugal in 2011, but he also showed genuine pace, scoring a career-best 7th overall in the 2013 Rally Mexico. Other top ten finishes in Spain, France, Great Britain and New Zealand underlined his promise.

A five-time X Games medallist and front-runner in both Global Rallycross and World Rallycross, on his day Block gave Colin McRae and Sébastien Loeb runs for their money. He must have wanted to pinch himself, but when the pros – his heroes – spoke about Block it was clear they had just as much respect for his driving and achievements as he did for them.

When someone is such a force, their loss leaves a void that's impossible to fill. For his family, friends and colleagues these must be unimaginably tough days, but he leaves a formidable legacy, one that will continue to entertain and inspire for many years to come.

There was so much to enjoy in what he did, but there was also so much to learn about how to present something so familiar – fast cars being driven beyond their limits – in fresh and dynamic ways. Just as Red Bull revolutionised extreme sports and continues to support the athletes and film makers who provide us with a vicarious adrenaline rush, as car people we should all hope that Block's family and Hoonigan Industries colleagues find a way to continue the original Tire Slayer's righteous work.

'The brilliance of Block was that you didn't need to meet him to know that you'd like him'

@DickieMeaden

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



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RICHARD PORTER

It's time to reassess a perennially underrated hatchback, says Porter



ASTRA. IT'S HARD TO THINK OF A CAR name with such a gap between the intended connotations (celestial, magical, the twinkling glories of the universe around us) and the harsh realities (hire cars, people called Kev, medium-speed police chases). Except, perhaps, Mitsubishi Carisma.

It's equally hard to imagine that anyone has aspired to own an Astra since the aero-shape GTE of the 1980s. In fact, it's quite difficult to remember what came after, so forgettable were the many generations of Astra that followed. There was that rounded one that seemed okay at the time, mainly because its rivals were the portly Golf 3 and the dreadful Escort 4. Then there was a more angular one that, thanks to Lotus, wasn't horrible to drive but seemed perennially destined to come in non-metallic gangrene with no wheel-trims and spend its life as a plain clothes police car. And after that... there was one with a rather racy three-door where the wheels looked too big, and another one that was, erm, sort of rounded, and maybe one that looked almost the same but where the back windows were leaking into the C-pillar and... oh, I don't know. Frankly, Astras after the 1984 GTE are like Brosnan Bond films after *Goldeneye*; they merge into one unappetising lump. It was ever thus. You say Focus and your mind turns to crisp controls and driving thrills even in low-spec, low-power trim. Hear someone say Golf and you'll think of stout, unfussy useability and all the everyday friendliness you get from the Labrador of cars. But if someone tells you they've got an Astra your reply is likely to be 'Why?' or 'Can I help you with something, officer?'

If your enthusiasm for Astras is, like mine, barely visible, you might not have noticed that there's a new one. It was on sale for most of last year, in fact, yet I couldn't recall seeing any on the road so I decided to do something about this by borrowing one.

The first thing you should know about the new Astra is that it's based on the Peugeot 308 because, of course, Vauxhall is now part of the sprawling Stellantis group, as indeed are most car companies apart from the ones that aren't. If you look at the Astra next to a 308 you can see they share proportions, but the Peugeot has a weird, heavy-handed front end and looks like its headlights are crying, whereas the Astra is quite a handsome

thing with a high, flat bonnet line and that 'visor' nose, which works rather well. The back's pretty good too, what with its slim, elegant tail lamps, a tidy little thumbnail of a central brake light, and a neat, bespoke typeface for the Astra badge. The design on the inside is solid too, with hard buttons for important functions, a large, glossy touchscreen for everything else, and an overall sense of being put together with care.

Then we get to how the Astra drives, and this too is unexpectedly pleasant. I was in the plug-in hybrid one which, it's claimed, can trundle about in electric-only mode for 43 miles. What's more impressive is that when the 1.6-litre turbocharged petrol engine kicks in, it happens so quietly the only giveaway is the digital speedo in the head-up display changing from blue to

white to tell you petrol is being burnt. This is a very refined car. Economical, too, since I had it doing 47mpg even when I couldn't plug it in. It's also not a horror show if you decide to drive it in a lively manner. I mean, I'm not sure you'd book a week on the NC500 the day after you got it, but it's got a bit of vim to the way it can be chucked into corners. It's not perfect, of course. The ride is too firm, the boot is rather shallow, and turning off the tiresomely tugging lane assist requires a trip into the touchscreen every time you start the car.

Otherwise it wouldn't be damning the new Astra with faint praise to say it's really quite good. The most impressive thing about it is the refinement which, along with the smart design detailing, impressive interior quality and truly excellent seats, makes it feel expensive. Mind you, perhaps it feels expensive because it is. The car I tested was in Ultimate trim, a hyperbolic name about to be undermined by the arrival of a model above it, and with the PHEV powertrain it lists at – brace yourself – £38,850. But you can have lesser Astras from 25 grand and I'm sure they're perfectly pleasant too. Previously this would have seemed irrelevant information, like knowing you can get a salad from McDonald's. I mean, why would you want an Astra? But with the Focus feeling like a dead man walking and the Golf 8 rendered un-buyable by its dreadful touchscreen tech, there's a lot to be said for this surprisingly swish and largely un-annoying Vauxhall. Not that this will win over anyone. After all, it's an Astra. As such, many will never realise how nice it is. Perhaps they should have called it something else.

'It wouldn't be damning the new Astra with faint praise to say it's really quite good'

@sniffpetrol

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

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JETHRO BOVINGDON

Jethro confesses an addiction, but one that you almost certainly share

FOR SO LONG THEY'VE BEEN OUR FRIEND. In the busy times when there's a house full of people and you long to escape for a few minutes. In the quiet times when loneliness descends or there's a looming sense of dread about an uncertain future. When your partner is watching that TV show you hate, or scrolling through wallpaper patterns or potential furniture purchases and waving for your attention every ten seconds. They're there for us. Offering hope, firing the imagination. They are – let's be honest – a part of the family. It's just that the rest of the family don't know it.

It's gone on for so long, too. Seasons change, years roll by, vast changes in our everyday lives are wrought by new technologies, and our trusted friend not only survives but thrives. Allows us a glimpse into a new existence, a more exciting life full of adventure. Goes with us to Costa. To the supermarket. To the kids' football, rugby or tennis matches. The silent family member who loves to spend time with you and dares you to dream.

I'm talking, of course, about classified ads. *Autotrader*, *PistonHeads*, *Car and Classic*, maybe one of the new auction sites like *Collecting Cars* or *Bring A Trailer* for the US oddities. Our quiet place. Our refuge. Our addiction.

You may part from time to time. After buying a new car, you might not look at the classifieds for up to a week. Ten days at a push. Inevitably they draw you back, though. 'Better just check I got a bargain...' or 'Maybe I should have bought one of those instead...' A classified ad is a very simple thing. Pictures and a few words. Yet they offer endless fascination and feel like home.

Except over the past months, maybe longer, they suddenly don't feel the same. The hope, the sense that you could reach out and touch the cars listed, the flutter of butterflies when you uncovered a bargain, the way they could transport you to a new chapter in your life... it's all gone. Instead they are a wasteland of regret. Of what might have been.

As prices climb (and climb, and climb) the classified ads are no longer family. They're a Dickensian, ghost-like figure showing you the folly of procrastination. Of believing that your own personal attainable dream cars would always be so. And the worst bit of all? No, not that 996s are *still* so cheap. It's that this trend doesn't seem like a blip soon to be corrected. That car

you always knew you'd buy one day is slipping ever further out of reach. As crossovers, SUVs and EVs march inevitably onwards in the new car market, it's no wonder that the old heroes – the cars only 'the few' knew about – have been adopted by so many.

Everybody has their own personal tales of grief. Of lost loves. Me? Too many to list, but the most painful are probably Mitsubishi Evos and R33-generation Nissan Skyline GT-Rs. I never envisaged the Japanese car market would suddenly explode to the extent that it has. No, Evos aren't crazy money (aside from the Mäkinens), but paying £30,000 for a car that was more like £13,000 when a plan was originally formulated is mentally challenging. It shouldn't matter. In today's market an Evo VIII MR, for example, still appears a bargain. However, dragging my brain away from a time when I loved those old classified ads seems insurmountable.

So what now? Well, all is not lost. There are a few remaining bargains at all price levels. I almost dare not speak their names. A few are mainstream, highly prized cars that are inexplicably good value. The Audi R8, for example. A Porsche 997 Carrera or Carrera S (and the 996, of course). Aston Martin V8 Vantages also look pretty tempting. However, most of the remaining 'bargains' require more imagination, more bravery or – the horror – a

single-clutch automated manual. My favourite of these options is the Maserati GranSport. I loved these when new, they look fantastic and they seem to hover around £22,000. Put another way, that's roughly £10,000 less than a Vauxhall Corsa Electric.

The real lesson is to shift our mindsets when it comes to scrolling classified ads. They are not family nor friend and they're certainly not constant. They're a warning that life moves quickly and opportunities should be grabbed with both hands. My advice? Forget that classifieds can be accessed anywhere at any time. Don't scroll in supermarket queues or when you should be cheering your kids' sporting adventures. Set time aside for your searches and sit quietly next to an old-fashioned and very loud clock with a foreboding tick-tick-tick. There's probably an app that will do it. That's the sound of your favourite car appreciating and your dreams escaping. Life is short. Classifieds are fickle. Buy now and drive happily into the sunset before it's too late.

This column does not adhere to FCA guidelines and in no way constitutes financial advice. But just pull your finger out, okay?

**'There are still
a few bargains.
I almost dare
not speak
their names'**

@JethroBovingdon

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

M3

by RICHARD MEADEN PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH

2023 looks set to be a vintage year for BMW M enthusiasts. We get a first taste of the mouthwatering M3 Touring and the hotly anticipated new M2 – and meet the team behind them





HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT, BMW'S M TEST CENTRE at the Nürburgring sits proudly in the heart of the most famous village in Germany. Almost in the shadow of the iconic castle and a steak-on-a-stone's throw from the famous Pistenklause restaurant, this former BMW dealership is itself one of Nürburg's most recognisable landmarks.

It's not the official home of the M division – that's Garching, on the outskirts of Munich. Still, it's fair to say this smart, 1200m² building, where all M cars are looked after when being subjected to hundreds of laps of the Nordschleife and thousands of road miles on local test loops, is a vital asset and an intrinsic element of M's DNA.

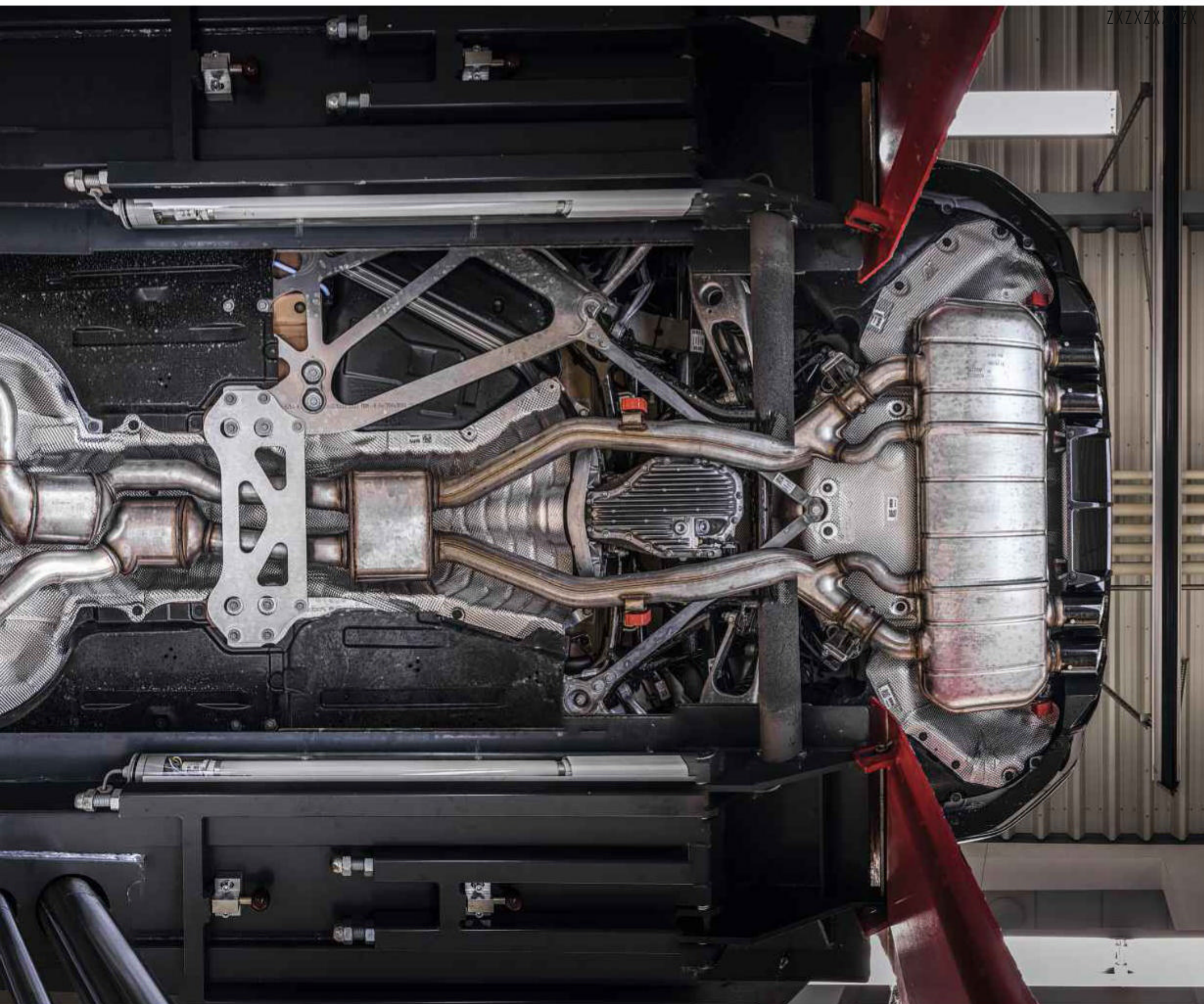
For the test and development team, Nürburg is home-from-home. It's here, as the Nordschleife's famous Industry Pool completes its last week of testing for 2022, that we meet up with four of M's most influential people: Dirk Häcker, M head of engineering; Sven Esch, head of driving dynamics; Klaus Huber, head of functional integration

driving dynamics and driver assistance, and Peter Schmid, team lead, functional integration driving dynamics.

This isn't your usual in-and-out press trip. Instead, we'll be hanging out with the M guys for a few days, chatting all things M and getting a sense of what makes them tick. Oh, and while we're here we'll be driving the long-awaited M3 Touring and brand new M2 coupe, the former in undisguised production-ready form, the latter in final phase development and cloaked in the psychedelic swirls worn by all yet-to-be-launched prototypes.

We could have flown out to Germany, but we elect to drive. Not the best decision when there are two blokes clambering atop the UK's busiest bridge, but if you're going to thumb your nose at a Just Stop Oil protest you might as well do it by driving an X5 M Competition to the Nürburgring.

In many ways the X5 M is a perfect illustration of how the M division has had to morph to reflect the changing fast car landscape. It doesn't feel like that long ago (OK, it's quite



a long time ago) when we were bemoaning the E36 M3 and how it had deserted the purity and motorsport pedigree of the E30 in pursuit of mainstream success. Subsequent E46 and E90 M3s proved our resistance to change was somewhat misguided. Now, with M's model portfolio extending to all four corners of the BMW range, including the aforementioned super-SUV and familiar M2/M3/M4/M5, but also EVs such as the i4 M50, iX M60 and i7 M70, M is a far more diverse and complex proposition.

Such rapid and radical change is unsettling for traditionalists, but even I can accept that the Darwinian adaptability is a challenge the entire automotive industry must grapple with. Much as we might want M-cars to be immune, the days of homologation specials and naturally aspirated petrol-powered screamers is long gone.

The trip to Nürburg is an ideal test of the X5 M. Loaded to the gunwales with photographer Dean Smith's camera kit, plus his,

Above and left: M3 Touring features extra underfloor bracing to maintain stiffness of saloon. M-people (from left to right) Sven Esch, Klaus Huber, Peter Schmid and Dirk Häcker

mine and editor Gallagher's overnight bags, it nibbles on a small portion of France before chomping through Belgium and Germany with imperious ease. We might not all feel comfortable with the brutish swagger of these immense and immensely powerful super-SUVs, but when you've got big miles to cover on fast roads they're undeniably effective and impressive. A fact underlined on our return journey, when we storm the autobahn on the X5's 186mph speed limiter.

We arrive in the evening and head straight to the Agnesen Hof, a rustic hotel situated in Barweiler, just ten minutes from Nürburg. It's a discreet and homely place, and regular quarters for the Garching-based M guys when they're working at the Test Centre. It's good to see them all sitting around one big table, sharing a few beers and a bit of banter over a hearty dinner. It's reminiscent of a big *evo* group test, only without the lewd jokes about Dean's mum.

All too often we join events where everything is managed, but this is refreshingly real, the conversation free from script or agenda, the spirit welcoming and open. You always hope a brand such as M is staffed by true enthusiasts, but this is the proof.

It's easy to spot Häcker. He's the senior figure in both age and rank, but he also shines with the energy of someone who truly loves his job. Spend time in his company and you know he revels in the responsibility of leading such a legendary outfit. His professional glow is reflected in his team, who have a comfort and ease between them that's rooted in respect and founded on the friendships forged between motivated, like-minded colleagues.

Häcker is very much the paternal figure of the team. It was he who brought Esch and Huber on board. Many years before, he also signed them off as qualified Nürburging test drivers. He used to race motorbikes and was for many years a taxi driver – specifically BMW's legendary M5 'Ring Taxi'. They all go back a long way. For Häcker this is vital to the M division's operational agility and key to the consistency of the cars it produces.

'I have over 500 people working for me at M,' he says, 'but the core management team is no more than ten. All of them arrived at M after I was appointed. I knew Sven and Klaus from earlier times at BMW and brought them into M within six months of me starting. To make the right cars you need the right team. We work well together and there's no discussion outside of the group. For the most part we are united in what we want to achieve and finding the best way to achieve it. We'll argue over some things, but only because we are all passionate.



**'THE NEW M2
PUSHES INTO
ITS LIMITER
AT JUST SHY OF
180MPH. THIS
THING IS A
ROCKETSHIP'**

In the end we all know what we need to do.'

History is important to Häcker. The fact that he is part of something of such significance is obviously a motivation, and the Test Centre, which opened as a dedicated facility in 1991, is clearly emblematic of M's connection to its past and the Nordschleife.

'Before the Industry Pool was created, BMW used to test cars during tourist sessions and base itself at this place when it was still a dealership. This was a long time ago, but even then it was clear the Nordschleife was a unique place to develop cars. That M has enjoyed so much racing success here over the decades only makes the connection stronger.'

The M3 Touring is a prime example of the M division's autonomy, Häcker assembling a cadre of key players to covertly work on a full-size, fully functional mule, which was then presented to the BMW board. It's the kind of project people like us love, not least because it demonstrates an instinctive enthusiasm for ideas that don't slavishly follow prescribed product strategy.

For Häcker it's an essential part of how M operates, and what leads to the creation of special cars like the Touring. 'We call them submarine projects; working below the surface, out of sight. We have the ability to show what our dream looks like without involving anyone outside of M, but we can't do everything, so there are limits. We also have



to consider the whole offering, so it has to make sense and be deliverable, but I think with a good idea you have some chance to get a positive decision from the board. This is what we did with the Touring, taking bits from here and there, working with colleagues in Garching and building our vision to show the board.'

The big Bavarian cheeses clearly know a great car when they see one. I mean, just how badly do you want an M3 Touring? If you're anything like me, you want one *baaaaadly*. Which bodes well for BMW, because it's fair

to say Audi has enjoyed majority ownership of the fast estate car niche for many years. With AMG subsequently claiming squatters' rights, this new Touring needs a buzz about it to really upset the apple cart.

It certainly has all the ingredients of a great fast estate. Coupled with the intrigue and novelty of being the latest in a select and sporadic line of M-badged estate cars, the M3 Touring is poised to be one of 2023's hottest new cars.

One of the very few undisguised cars in the Test Centre, the Touring looks absolutely sensational. I know we all

‘YOU HOPE A BRAND SUCH AS M IS STAFFED



got our lederhosen in a twist about the G80's grotesquely oversized 'kidneys', but with some time to get used to it, this current generation of M3 and M4 is a very striking thing. If anything, the Touring body suits it best, its longer roofline and glasshouse, plus those fabulous blistered rear arches nicely balancing the blocky frontal treatment.

The nuts and bolts of the Touring are straightforward, at least if you're familiar with the M3 xDrive. There's some additional bracing under the floorpan – adapted from the M4 Convertible's because it too does without a rear

bulkhead – to add rigidity and a dedicated suspension tune to ensure the Touring carries its payload and manages its altered weight distribution and centre-of-gravity as convincingly as its saloon brethren.

'It was always our goal to make the Touring drive at least as well as the M3 saloon,' explains Sven Esch. 'When you're driving you don't feel the "backpack" so you'll easily forget it's an estate. At least until you look in your rear-view mirror!'

Practicality is clearly the Touring's trump card. With 500 litres of boot space rising to 1500 litres when the rear

BY TRUE ENTHUSIASTS. THIS IS THE PROOF'



seats are folded down, and a rear window that can be opened independently of the tailgate, the real-world appeal of this car is off the scale. That is if your real-world budget stretches to the starting price of £80k.

It's probably down to the BMWs I cut my teeth on, but I don't associate the brand with four-wheel drive, especially when it comes to M-cars. This suggests xDrive has a way to go before it permeates our subconscious like quattro, but there's no question it's the perfect partner for the M3 Touring. Partly because it challenges Audi's notional monopoly of all-weather performance, but also because the subtle shift in the way an xDrive M3 makes progress compared with the rear-drive model feels so, so right in this application.

Yes, we're testing on home turf, so the Touring feels perfectly at one with these smooth and gently sinuous Eifel roads. It goes like stink, as you'd expect with a smidge over 500bhp under your right foot, but there's an ease and rightness to the way this car rides, scribes a cornering line and puts its power down that bodes very well. It certainly feels no heavier than the M3 saloon, reacting with clarity and precision.

If you've spent enough time around earlier generations of M3, you'll know they have form when it comes to certain derivatives being palpably but inexplicably better to drive. Speak to Jethro Bovingdon and he'll wax lyrical about the E92 M3 saloon and how it trumped the coupe for rightness. In the same vein, the G80 M3 Touring could well prove to be the sweet spot of the M3/M4 range.

THE NEW M2 DOESN'T ENJOY THE M3 Touring's novelty factor. Instead, it faces the challenge of following one of M's most celebrated models of recent years. The car we're driving is a late-phase test car, so it's close enough to the finished article to draw some meaningful driving impressions.

Since our visit the car has been shown undisguised, but even wearing its camouflage it's clear that while blockier than the model it replaces the new M2 has a pleasingly muscular physique and plenty of road presence. The interior of this car is also partially shrouded, but the large landscape infotainment screen is a dominant feature.

We head out of the Test Centre towards the now familiar road loop, but this time we continue onto a nearby stretch of lightly trafficked autobahn. The way the M2 builds speed is hugely impressive, running through the gears with undiminished vigour until it pushes into its soft speed-limiter at just shy of 180mph. This thing is a rocketship.

The rest of our drive is rather tame by



**‘THERE’S NO
QUESTION
xDRIVE IS
PERFECT FOR
THE TOURING.
IT FEELS SO
RIGHT’**

comparison, but the M2 – this example is fitted with the standard H-pattern manual gearbox – remains engaging and brilliantly satisfying. The engine has such a lusty delivery you can just flex the torque in a high gear and surge effortlessly past slower traffic, but the 3-litre straight-six also has a richness of character and appetite for revs that's unusual in modern turbo engines.

You definitely sense the new M2's M3/M4 underpinnings. It feels more substantial and mature than the old M2, but the shorter wheelbase, 19in front and 20in rear wheels, stiffer front springs and softer rears (which work with dampers developed for the M3 Touring) give the new M2 its own dynamic fingerprint. It feels energised and agile, but also four-square and planted. There's plenty of grip to lean on and traction to squeeze into, but with an underlying sense that there's fun to be had when you push beyond those lofty limits.

Not that hooning is part of the development programme. At least not around here, as Esch explains: 'When we do our road testing we don't go over the limits. For me you should be able to feel all the things that are important at road speeds. When we have found a set-up we like we move to the bumpier roads. Then we go on the Nordschleife. If we make changes to improve track handling we then go back on the road to cross-check and make sure we haven't lost anything. This is the advantage of having



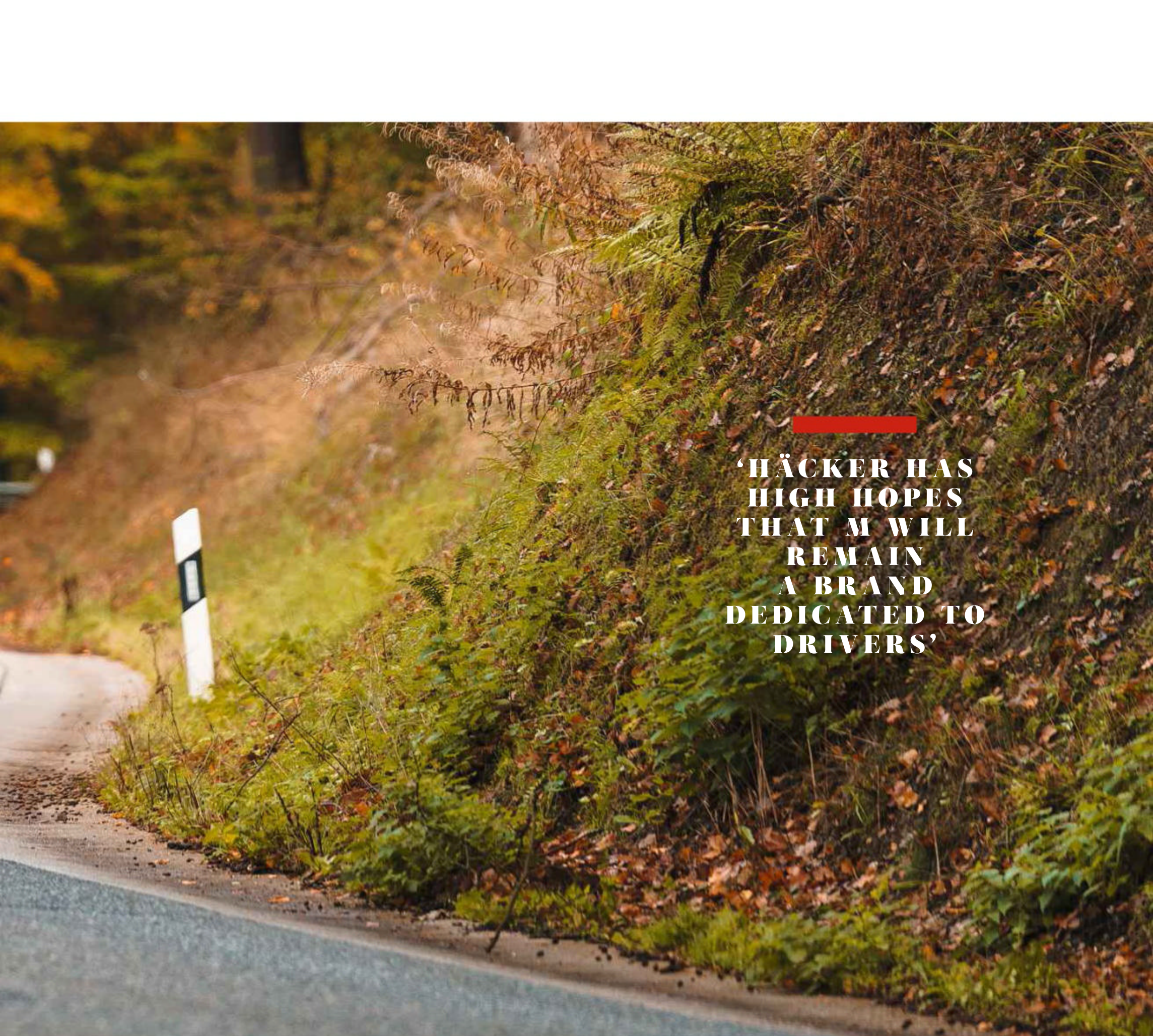


a test centre in this area. You can do so much in a short time. People tend to think if you come to Nürburg then you're mostly driving on the race track, but we do more miles on the road.'

It's no secret that rather than looking around for rival cars to benchmark, the new M2 used the old M2 CS as its point of reference. That's a luxury you can afford when you have the confidence of knowing your old car was pretty much as good as it gets. And it shows in everything the new M2 does. The power delivery feels more solid and with less of a spike in boost, but that's to be expected given the headroom left for a new M2 CS further down the line. For much the same reason there's no carbon brake

option, but the cast iron stoppers have plenty of power and progression so you can smoothly and intuitively blip-shift your way down the gears. It's a quality piece and no mistake.

As for the future? Häcker has high hopes and plenty of optimism that M will remain a brand dedicated to drivers: 'Politics and regulation can dictate what is forbidden, but the customer will decide what is the right product,' he says. 'I believe we will continue to have customers for sports cars and M-cars, just as I believe there will be room in the future for these kinds of cars. Personal transportation and general mobility is a challenge all car makers have to face, but for me cars should not be rolling



**‘HÄCKER HAS
HIGH HOPES
THAT M WILL
REMAIN
A BRAND
DEDICATED TO
DRIVERS’**

Google systems. We are in the business of delivering the emotion of driving.

‘It’s no secret we are working on complete electric cars, but we aren’t making an EV and then sticking an M badge on it. We consider what will make it an M-car from the first design and prototype phase.’

Häcker believes there is huge potential in electric motors that goes way beyond enormous power. For example, the team are exploring the use of a quad-motor powertrain (one for each wheel) that will also use the motors for braking instead of standard discs. ‘The speed and precision of the modulation, not to mention the increased regen offers huge potential,’ he says, ‘and with next-gen software

control and integration of steering, braking, traction and torque vectoring we have all the tools to achieve the right dynamic feeling in the car. A true M car.’

Does the internal combustion engine feature in Häcker’s vision of the future? For now, yes. ‘I like the combustion engine, and we are working on new generation engines,’ he reveals. ‘The weight of today’s EVs is much too high, and there’s work needed before battery storage can cope with the kind of charge and discharge rates our four-motor concept requires. And, of course, it all comes down to what the customer wants. Electric M-cars should meet the expectations of demanding M customers. As both an engineer and an enthusiast, I find the future fascinating.’ ✕

A stocky SUV
sourcing its power
from a plug isn't
prime **evo** territory.
But an ascent of
Mont Ventoux in
Kia's EV6 GT proves
the future has at
least glimmers of
brightness

P O W E R

by STEPHEN DOBIE PHOTOGRAPHY by MATT HOWELL



ING UP

H

HAVE YOU HEARD THE ONE ABOUT the Frenchman walking his cat? Not the beginning of a crude joke that plays clumsily with national stereotypes, rather one way to fill the boredom of waiting for your electric car to charge. It's a thoroughly 2020s problem and one our new Gallic mate (well, we're on nodding terms) has solved in curious fashion. 'Is that really the group of people we want to be a part of?' asks photographer Matt Howell.

We've not brought a cat, but our car outpunches his Mégane. The Kia EV6 GT combines twin motors for all-wheel drive and a 577bhp peak, enough for a 3.5sec sprint to 62mph and 162mph top speed. Not just quick for an EV, but quick for a family-sized car full stop. A large 77.4kWh battery ekes out as much range as possible; a quoted 263 miles means around 200 in everyday use – or a mite less if you want a safety margin. Luckily the Kia can accept up to 350kW of charge, so finding the juiciest (if priciest) chargers will see the battery hit 80 per cent in under 20 minutes.

What's more interesting is the way the GT differs from a regular EV6 beyond its bigger motors and matt paint. An electronically controlled limited-slip differential is fitted to the rear axle, there's new suspension, a quicker steering rack, Michelin Pilot Sport 4 S tyres and a drift mode. Whatever you think of such gimmicks, a drift mode is a clear message that this is no ordinary Kia, nor an ordinary EV.

Which is blooming handy, because our assignment from the editor is a tough one. We're to drive 800 miles to Mont Ventoux for an assault on the hill (free of its usual train of cyclists out of season, I might add). A task to prove the Kia's mettle as a GT car, but also a potential bear-trap for the kind of bulky electric crossover this magazine is rightly suspicious of. I've thrown the old-fashioned maps of France out of the window, deploying a suite of apps to help us get to the edge of the Alps in as little time as possible – while also

retaining as much charge as we can muster. Two slightly conflicting aims, but I'm hoping A Better Route Planner (ABRP), among others, can help us achieve them.

The car gets itself off to a promising start. Those swept rear arches and the outer edges of its spoiler occupy the side-mirror glass, immediately promoting a more exciting vibe than you get with most other crossovers. Same goes for the sculptured sports seats and the glint of green caliper poking through the GT's humongous wheels.

Our first few hours on French autoroute are a breeze. Initial complaints about the hardness of the seats – and their curious lack of lumbar support – suggest Kia has misunderstood the 'GT' brief, but we settle into them after a while. Stopping every two hours for a quick charge tends to alleviate aches, too. Even the frequent *péage* booths are fun; there can be few cars this side of a top-fuel dragster that would feel sprightlier once the barrier lifts. The sensation of near-silent instant torque never gets any less jaw-dropping. Nor uncomfortable for passengers...

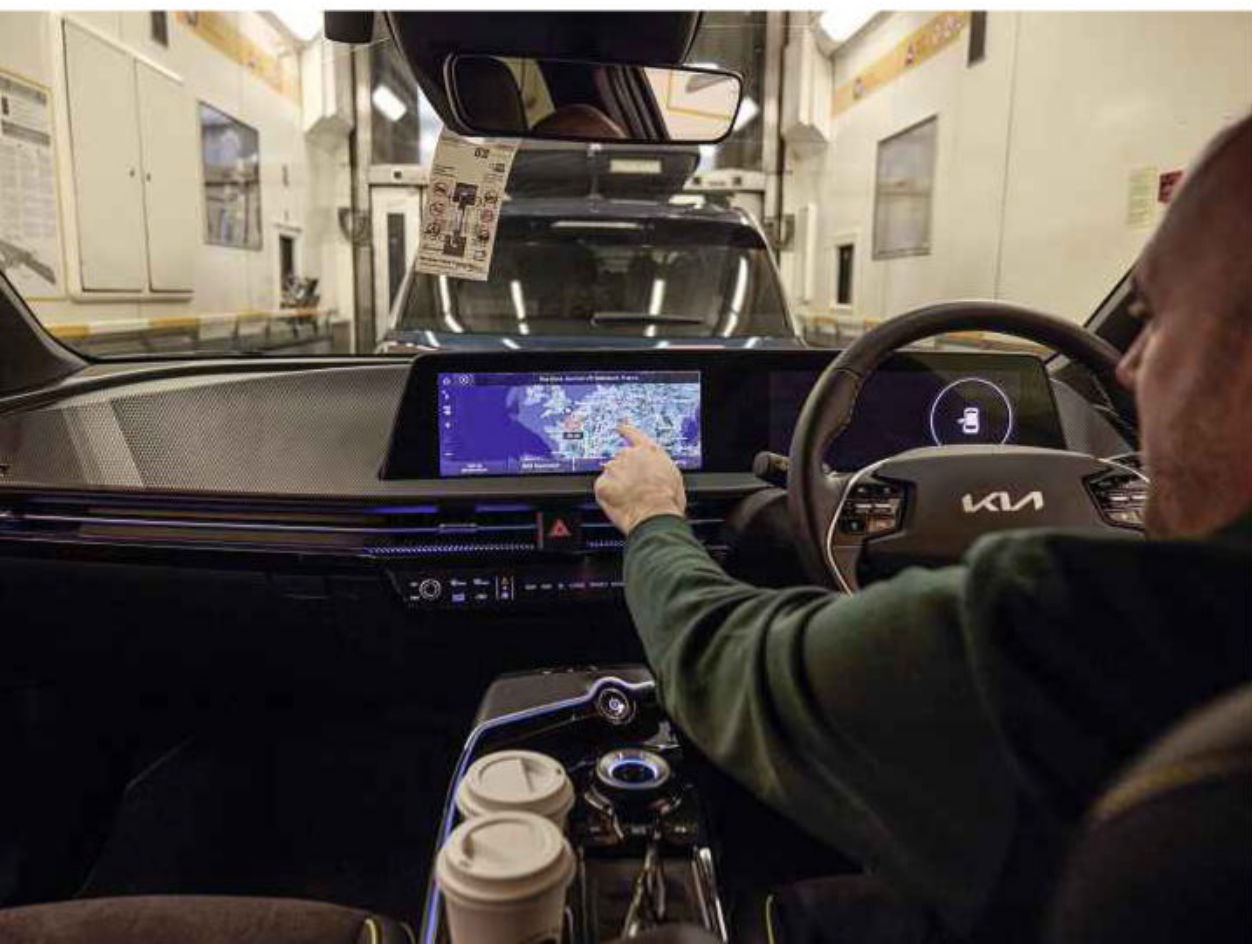
We arrive in Reims for teatime, having used ABRP to locate a punchy Ionity charger mercilessly close to a Burger King, and thus the chance to explore the delights of a Bacon Lover. You can no longer stop at the town's famed pitlane buildings without prior permission, an unfortunate but understandable measure to halt the loud and boisterous use of the straight by less polite petrolheads. If you'd like to visit them and look around, check out amis-du-circuit-de-gueux.fr (and feel free to become a member). We pause nearby for just a moment and find ourselves looking up at a beautifully unpolluted night sky. I say 'saucepan', Matt says 'Orion'. Clearly I've still got food on the brain.

We end the night negotiating a perilously tight underground car park in Troyes, one that demonstrates both the EV6's size and its clear need for abundant cameras to avoid biffing its 21-inch alloys. I *just about* sleep through the worry of having to shuffle out again the next day. At least the EV6 makes use of its girth, and the cornucopia of cubby holes offered by its floating centre console – which sits beneath a lush and intuitive touchscreen – contributes to the feeling that it's a keen and willing road-trip partner. The bouts of wind noise that typically plague EVs are one downside of turning down the volume on your usual aural sensory points.

But you don't come to **evo** for the cubby-hole chat, so it's probably time to explore the 'GT' tag stuck on the EV6's oddly shaped rump. Now, a GT typically has vast reserves of power, reserves that you skim constantly and occasionally dive deeply into. Power is certainly ample here, the problem being you're only ever skimming, hyper-aware that the more of it you mine, the more time you'll need to spend recharging. Over a long, sensibly driven distance, Kia's cheaper AWD EV6 – with 321bhp and a 314-mile range – might do a more convincing job.

But we quickly get into the mindset of short, frequent stops. In all honesty, they time neatly with our need for a wee and coffee (two things that quickly develop their own rhythm on a trip like this). ABRP is doing a sterling job of keeping us at chargers for as little time as possible,

Below: touchscreens, satnav and a suite of apps to plot a route to the edge of the Alps.
Right: torque vectoring and brake regen help disguise the EV6 GT's 2200kg kerb weight





too, and it's soon clear that someone else has tapped into the same strategy. At three consecutive chargers we nudge the big Kia into the parking bay just as François is latching the lead onto Madame Mittens' collar for a walk around the unkempt verges of a French service station.

Perhaps I envy him. Dipping my head into the charging apps at every stop isn't the most relaxing of endeavours, and ABRP's laggy, CarPlay-unfriendly map means I'm juggling it with Waze or Google the whole time anyway. It's a helper, but it's not the solution. Still, every Ionity station we come across has vacant chargers, even if 69 cents per kW equates roughly to the financial burden a V8 would impose on a trip like this. As we pull in for one last big charge before we leave the autoroute network, packing in as much juice as we can for the mountain, our new friends are nowhere to be seen. I'd not really expected Mme Mittens to be joining us up Mont Ventoux, yet I'm sad our routes have eventually diverged.

'The Beast of Provence' sits proud on the horizon for what feels like an age, gradually reeling us in. Arriving at its base with a half empty (or half full...) battery isn't ideal, not least because there's a 20km run against gravity ahead, a run for which I'm no longer interested in merely skimming the figures on the GT's spec sheet...

While I've Matt's gear (and his constitution) to consider, the sun is dipping all too quickly, so I must squeeze out a reasonable portion of the GT's peak output if his cameras are to capture sunset. The EV6 really likes this rhythm, its torque vectoring and brake regen helping contribute to a brisk, flowing style of driving that dims the effects of its 2.2 tonnes at least a little. The regen is strong enough to illuminate the brake lights in tighter corners, and I barely use the left pedal the whole climb up. After a lengthy day driving south, it's a welcoming and coddling car in which to increase my pace, its enormous electronic brain picking up any slack in my own. I really enjoy it, little hints of its rear bias here and there (the motors are 215bhp front, 362bhp rear) amping me up for a proper go tomorrow.

We arrive at Ventoux's 1909m peak with time to spare, though neither of us has foreseen the biting temperatures and bracing winds. We battle through and the GT undeniably looks the part parked beside the otherworldly radar dome, their shapes complementing each other perfectly. Matt and I agree that the GT isn't a conventionally attractive car, but we enjoy its styling nonetheless, pondering its merits as we might a bamboozling piece of art in the Tate Modern. If you're going to leap forward into the future, shouldn't the styling echo that?

**'THERE'S A MORE
EXCITING VIBE
THAN YOU GET WITH
MOST CROSSOVERS'**



TOO FEW HOURS LATER, A VAST CARPET OF stars dimly illuminates our run back up the mountain to catch sunrise, though neither of us is yet sociable enough to pick up our astronomy chat. The EV6 feels nicely fallible with a freezing cold start, its diff clunking away just enough for it to feel like there's personality buried beneath all the tech. A trick the Nissan GT-R has pulled off adeptly for years.

Now, to make the most of the EV6's single committed shot up the hill, we've also brought along a recce car. One familiar from the pages of *Fast Fleet* and a car that truly burrowed itself under the skin of John Barker. With a muscular engine up front sending drive purely to the rear, it was always going to appeal to a man who shoehorned a V8 into a Ford Capri, but still, the Stinger GT was the first Kia to win over the *evo* crowd. 'Was' because it's no longer on sale, the EV6 GT elbowing it from showrooms as Kia's halo car.

The initial descent to our imaginary start-line feels like a step back in time, not least because the screen inside has shrunk markedly and the dials are suddenly analogue. I'm working the brakes harder and manually down-changing to keep the Stinger's eight-speed automatic as alert as I need it to be. There's still an electronic brain here, but it's smaller and slower. There's more to do, more to think about – and inevitably more satisfaction as a result. Everything

Below and right: a quick pit-stop at Reims; mooching around the foothills; cameras fill in any blind spots; radar dome at Ventoux peak





***‘I RECKON THE GT
COULD ACHIEVE A
STARTLING ASCENT
TIME FOR ITS HEFT’***





**'ITS ABILITY
TO MAINTAIN
MONSTROUS PACE
IS AWE-INSPIRING'**

about the Stinger's spec sheet is comparatively modest; the result, as I turn around and quickly ascend the hill, being a car that's more fluid and more talkative beside its newer relation. It's not an expressive handler, despite being RWD, but it nails the subtle sports saloon character better than some of its traditional German foes have managed of late.

There's surely never been a larger leap between brand halos. The EV6 doesn't just pick up the Stinger's baton, it sprints mercilessly into the distance with it, both in its performance and its tech, and I suspect a similar jump will soon take place at Hyundai's N division. The Stinger GT and i30 N are both Albert Biermann products, tuning our minds into Korean cars being something to cherish before a huge revolution arrives with significantly swifter EV successors, Tyrone Johnson heading up their development. Name sound familiar? He's of Mk3 Focus RS fame, which might just explain the EV6 GT's drift mode...

Not that I have the time or inclination to activate it. Back down at our start line in the EV, with precious few miles of range left, I simply prod the neon-green GT button on the steering wheel – putting steering, suspension, throttle response and ESC systems into their sharpest settings – and point myself up the hill. Execute a launch control start and you feel a squirm from the back axle as the rear motor – whose output alone matches the Stinger's V6 – excites its tyres before the front hauls you ruthlessly forwards.

If we could cone off our own hill climb, I reckon the GT would achieve a startling time for its heft. But it smacks my gob rather than slapping a grin on it. With fuller commitment the EV6 somehow satisfies less, its focus on

outright traction edging it closer to the one-dimensional handling traits of other EVs. Its ability to maintain monstrous pace is at once awe-inspiring and catastrophic for range (and a long way from adequate charging, at that). Ultimately just as much fun – in fact more – comes with the smoother, calmer flow of the journey back to the autoroute with Matt and his Peli cases back on board.

An addendum is that once I'm back in the UK, a healthy dose of wet weather livens the chassis up; activating 'My Mode' with a double press of the GT button allows the ESC to be further unshackled and pockets of oversteer are longer and more dramatic. The fact I didn't have time to delve deeply into the sub-menus on Mont Ventoux betrays how limited EVs remain for having fun at a true destination driving road. Repeated runs of a great piece of tarmac will come back to bite you when it's time to recharge.

In summary, then, the Kia has proved neither an astonishing GT nor a sports car, while its modest range keeps it from being a game-changing EV. And yet its unique place in the middle of an improbable Venn diagram makes it oddly appealing. It demonstrates similar drawbacks to its rival EV crossovers yet possesses the crucial glimmers of character they lack. It's a more spectacular halo car than the Stinger, of that I'm sure, and it offers enough snatched moments of entertainment in everyday scenarios to make it as appealing as cars of this ilk get for people like us. A Taycan is better, but similarly endowed it'll be nearly twice the price. If you're ready and willing to plunge yourself into the electric car community, this is a genuinely arresting way to do it. Just don't forget the cat. ☒

Kia EV6 GT

Motors 160kW front, 270kW rear

Power 577bhp

Torque 546lb ft **Weight** 2200kg

Power-to-weight 266bhp/ton

0-62mph 3.5sec **Top speed** 162mph

Basic price £62,645

evo rating ★★★★★



THE ANAT

PORSCHE

by ADAM TOWLER PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT



A high-angle, close-up shot of the front-left corner of a white and red Ferrari 956 endurance racing car. The car is parked in a dark, industrial-looking space, possibly a garage or pit lane, with a blueish light source from the right creating a strong highlight on the floor and the car's body. The car's front fender, headlight, and side mirror are visible. The number '4' is partially visible on the side. The background shows a dark, metallic structure, likely part of the garage or pit wall.

OMY OF A

9 5 6

The 956 (along with its 962 successor) represents a pinnacle of endurance racing. We look under the skin of this iconic racer to discover what made it such a legend



THE GROUP C PORSCHE 956/962 OF THE 1980s has a stronger claim than most to be the greatest sports-racing car of all time. Consider that it turned a wheel for the first time in March of 1982, but that a derivative (the Dauer 962LM) won Le Mans outright as late as 1994. In between, it won the 24-hour race at La Sarthe six times in a row, the period equivalent of the WEC five times in a row, the American IMSA series three times, and scored so many individual race wins and regional championships that there simply isn't the space to mention them all here.

New for 1982, the Group C regulations were centred on the use of production-based engine blocks, providing a lower cost base for potential teams and a wide variety of engines for the fans, while fuel consumption limits restricted the ultimate performance of the cars and equalised the field. The initial allocation decided upon was 600 litres for 1000km races and 2600 litres for Le Mans, although these would drop to 510/2210 litres later. Group C cars could be no longer than 4.8 metres, no wider than 2m and no higher than 1.1m. Ironically, the rulebook's cockpit dimensions were based on those of the Porsche 917, measured in the Porsche museum. A flat reference plane, measuring a metre by 800mm, was positioned behind the front wheels, and the venturi tunnels were only allowed to begin after it. Group C cars would be 'ground effect' cars, but there were no sliding skirts (as found in contemporary F1) at the time of inception and their subsequent use was tightly regulated. The minimum permitted weight was initially just 800kg.

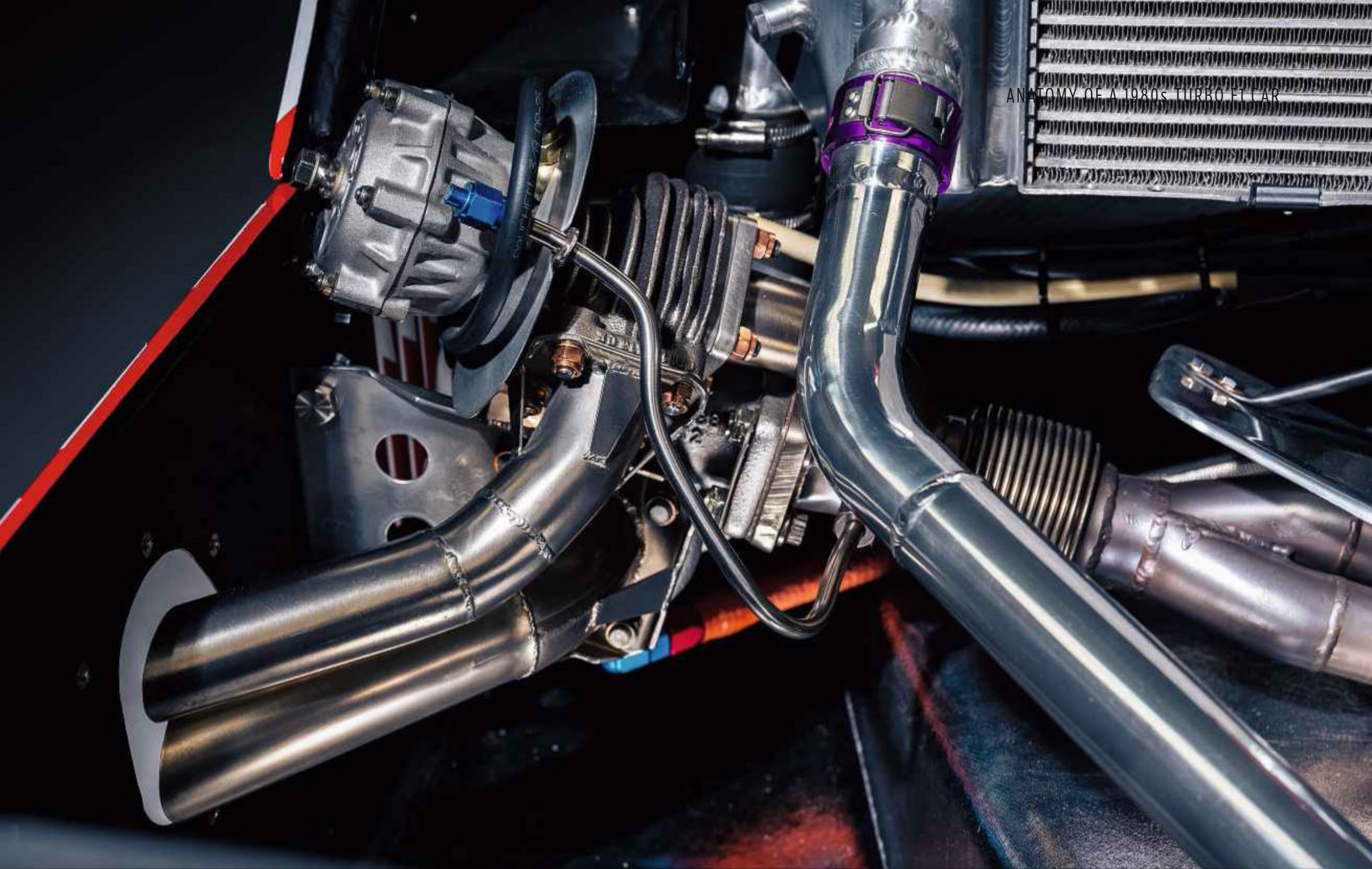
Porsche built ten 'works' 956 chassis for the 1982 season

(according to *Ultimate Works Porsche 956, the Definitive History*, by Serge Vanbockryck), with an initial run of eight customer chassis, eventually running to 19 cars (including independently constructed tubs). Built in far greater numbers were the 962 and 962c. The former was initially built to satisfy the American IMSA series, the FIA and IMSA having failed to agree on uniformity of regulations. IMSA was concerned its championship would turn into another Porsche benefit and placed obstacles in the path of the 956. Firstly it outlawed the type on account of the driver's feet being in front of the front axle line, and secondly banned its twin-turbo, partly water-cooled flat-six. When the 962 debuted at the 1984 Daytona 24 Hours its front suspension had been moved further forward (a shorter front overhang meant it retained the same overall length) and it had a single-turbo air-cooled flat-six that owed more to the one in the old 935s of the 1970s. Almost inevitably, once teething issues were overcome it would dominate the championship for years, much to the chagrin of IMSA.

The FIA and IMSA never did agree on a unified rule-set, though the FIA later introduced the same safety legislation over the front axle line, applicable for Group C from 1986 onwards. In response, Porsche took a 962, fitted a 2.8-litre development of the 956's engine, and christened it the 962c for the world championship. The works team ran the car first in 1985, with customer cars appearing the year after, at the end of which 956s were banned from racing. From then on until the early '90s it was all about the 962c, but that, as they say, is another story...

Above right: 2.7-litre flat-six has twin KKK turbos and water-cooled heads. **Right:** cockpit is basic by modern standards; aluminium tub clearly visible







CHASSIS NO. 106

Richard Lloyd was one of Porsche's original 956 customers for the 1983 season alongside the Joest, Kremer and Obermaier teams and others, purchasing chassis no. 106 in early 1983. He went to the factory to collect it with, amongst others, his friend the renowned car designer Peter Stevens, who would act as team graphics designer, aerodynamicist and timekeeper. 'Richard and I went with a briefcase of money,' recalls Peter. 'They gave him a handbook and an ignition key, which also locked the doors, and said: "Your car is downstairs in the lower floor of the garage." It was like going to buy a 911, but less grand.'

The car cost DM640,000 (around £550,000 in today's money) and Lloyd had arranged a budget for the season of £850,000 (£2.8m today) with sponsorship mainly from Canon cameras. A spare engine was £33,750 (£109,688), the exotic titanium road springs a grand each (£3210) and a replacement nose body section £3000 (£11,375).

As a British privateer, Lloyd's RLR team felt it wasn't supported in the same way that German teams such as Joest Racing were. 'Richard was up for fiddling with the car all the time,' recalls Peter of how Lloyd searched for an edge to keep them competitive. That meant employing designer Nigel Stroud to work on chassis improvements and Peter on the aero, spending time in the wind tunnels at MIRA and Imperial College. The results led to the little RLR team punching considerably above its weight, enjoying a string of podium finishes with the driver pairing of Jonathan Palmer and Jan Lammers throughout 1983 and into 1984, with 106 winning the 1000km of Brands Hatch outright in that second year. By then, Lloyd's modifications had become more radical, with Stroud developing a revised monocoque that included aluminium honeycomb sections for improved rigidity. 'If you stomped on the brake pedal the front bulkhead would bend,' Stevens notes of the original single-skin tub. This car was known as 106b, while Lloyd sold the original 106 tub to Brun Motorsport, who continued to use it up until the end of the 1986 season when it helped them to the overall teams' championship.

106b, with its aero tweaks such as the two-plane rear wing, front splitter (and sometimes an additional front nose wing), was a quick car, famously coming second overall at Le Mans in 1985. However, it suffered a huge accident in practice at Spa that same year that seriously injured Jonathan Palmer, and the car was eventually rebuilt with another new Stroud tub as 106b2 – that's the car you see here. After appearing again at the end of 1985 for one last race in Canon colours, it ran with Lloyd's new Liqui Moly sponsorship for the 1986 season, and in another competitive year claimed victory at the Brands Hatch 1000km with Bob Wollek and Mauro Baldi at the wheel before being rendered obsolete at the end of the season, like all other 956s, by the safety rule changes.

Patrick Morgan of Dawn Treader Engineering saw the car come up for auction in 2008 (after Richard Lloyd's death in an air accident). It failed to sell, but Patrick bought the car directly from Lloyd's widow. He then embarked on a complete restoration which for various reasons has taken 12 years but has brought the car to the superlative condition you see here.

Left and above: carbonfibre was in its infancy, so Porsche stuck to what it knew best with the 956's aluminium underpinnings; Richard Lloyd Racing modified both the tub and aerodynamics – the aero work was supervised by none other than McLaren F1 designer (and *evo* contributor) Peter Stevens

‘Anything that’s anodised we chemically strip, polish by hand and then re-anodise to try to keep the original machining marks, which sounds pedantic but I think adds to the authenticity of the car,’ says Patrick. ‘We tried to keep as many original parts as possible, and that can involve more work than replacing. Obviously, every bearing, O-ring and seal is new. The front anti-roll bar mounts we had to remake because they were cracked. We use an aviation company to crack-test all the wishbones and uprights, which get X-rayed too as they can rust on the inside. We do the steering column and brake pedal too – anything that’s safety-critical. If you do it right the first time, although expensive, it’s cheaper than ending up in a barrier.’

‘We’ve done everything in-house. The gearbox is exquisite, a synchromesh five-speed and the first racing synchro ‘box I’ve been involved with: it’s like jewellery inside. The engine is typically Porsche, so anyone who’s rebuilt a 911 would recognise it.’ The car has already moved under its own steam at the airfield where Dawn Treader is based, but this year Patrick hopes to run the car in anger.

BODY, CHASSIS & AERODYNAMICS

The 956 was Porsche’s first monocoque racing car, having always built its prototype racing cars using spaceframe construction up to this point. But it was also its first ground effect car, and the aerodynamic loads placed on the car’s structure meant a big improvement in rigidity was required over the 956’s predecessors, such as the open-cockpit 936. Nevertheless, by the time the very first 956 was nearing completion, the marque had already won Le Mans outright six times, and many of the engineers at Weissach were veterans at the very top of their game. The brilliant Norbert Singer was project leader, with Valentin Schäffer responsible for the engine, Eugen Kolb the body and Horst Reitter the chassis.

Remove all the panels and ancillaries from a 956 and you’ll see that the core of the car is a beautifully crafted aluminium

teardrop-like pod. Reitter’s tub design – weighing 56kg – was made from riveted and bonded single-skin aluminium sheet: stronger and safer than anything Porsche had made before. The decision was taken to dismiss then-embryonic carbonfibre construction as it would be necessary to farm out its design and construction to a third party. Time was short, and anyway, virtually every aspect of the 956 was made at Porsche; like a Ferrari, a Porsche racing car was a true Porsche, not the case with many big brands that contracted to specialist racing car constructors.

An aluminium rollover structure was on top of the tub, with spaceframes front and rear to hold the major components. The engine was tilted up by 2 degrees at the rear so that the boxer layout didn’t interfere too much with the venturi tunnels underneath the car, but this was always a compromise of the design inherent in choosing that type of engine.

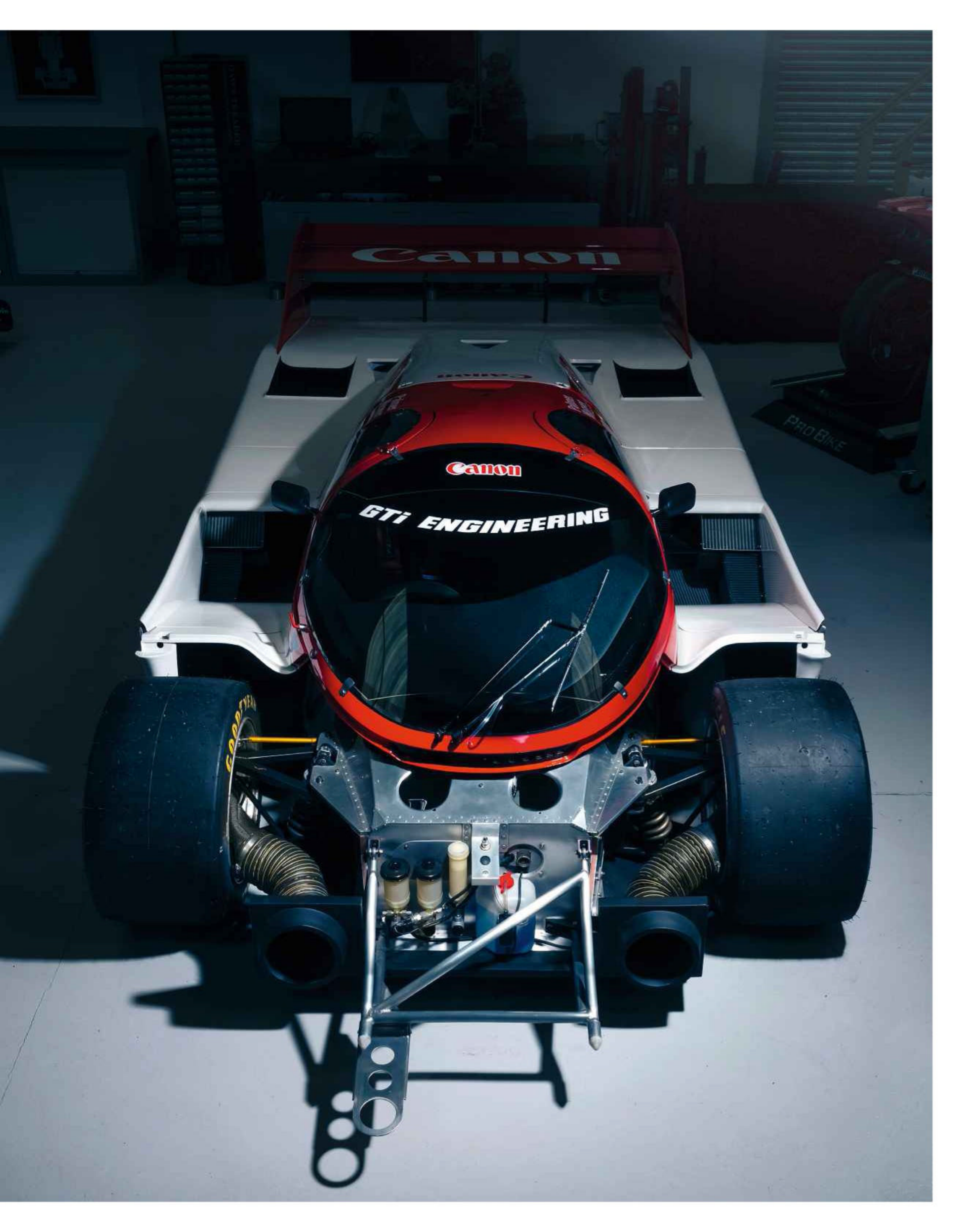
The body was designed with downforce in mind, but there was still a legacy of ‘low drag thinking’ at Porsche, and the slippery 956/962 was always fast at Le Mans, where a different nose and tail were used to prioritise top speed. Although Singer continued to spend time in the wind tunnel, the 956 and then 962 changed remarkably little in factory guise, and it was later that the 962c began to lose its integral rear wing and gain a shorter rear overhang for sprint races.

ENGINE, GEARBOX & ELECTRONICS

One of Porsche’s advantages was the use of a tried and tested engine. Given Group C’s demand for production-based engine blocks, the 956 naturally used a flat-six, the 2650cc version that had won Le Mans in 1981 in the back of the 936/81 with Jacky Ickx and Derek Bell.

Porsche had adopted water-cooling in part back in 1978, and the 956’s installation continued to use that combination, with a large fan cooling the block and water doing the same job for the heads. Boost was provided by twin KKK K26 turbochargers, mounted low on the sides behind the







doors, with water and oil radiators located in the same area. With a magnesium block featuring a bore and stroke of 92.3 and 66.0mm respectively, the original figures released for this engine were 620bhp at 8000rpm and 442lb ft of torque at 5400rpm with 1.2 bar of boost, mechanical fuel injection and a 7:1 compression ratio. Porsche was notoriously conservative with its quoted outputs, the accepted wisdom being that when running 1.4 bar for qualifying, the peak power would be at least 100bhp more than that quoted figure.

Developments included periodic rises in compression and, for 1983, the adoption by the works cars of Bosch Motronic injection, which was made available to customers for '84. Perfecting the system took a lot of work, and the factory even lost races to its privateer customers while it did so, but in time it was a huge step forward in terms of maintaining power and improving the all-important economy. Porsche eventually switched to a 2.8-litre version of the flat-six for the early 962c, and this also found its way into customer 956s. In later years a fully water-cooled 3-litre engine would arrive, eventually teamed with Bosch's more sophisticated MP1.7 injection, and late cars ran with 3.2-litre engines. Up to 900bhp was attainable during qualifying.

One of the 956's endearing quirks (along with its use of an actual ignition key, in true Porsche racing tradition) was its synchromesh gearbox, a rarity in a pure racer. However, the factory did use a straight-cut 'box for sprints, and at the end of 1983 ran publicly for the first time a new twin-clutch gearbox known as... PDK.


PDK had its race debut in late 1984 (where it lasted just two laps), but Porsche persisted in developing the system because, as Derek Bell attests, Porsche Motorsport's budget to go racing was based around developing technology that would be useful for the production cars. This noble viewpoint didn't always please the driver looking for race wins, but that was what signed the cheques.

SUSPENSION, TYRES & BRAKES

The big Porsche was relatively conventional here, with classic double wishbones at the front end, Bilstein dampers all-round and a pushrod arrangement at the rear to keep the damper units out of the way of the venturi tunnels. Those ferociously expensive (for the time) titanium springs featured progressive characteristics.

106b2 employs Nigel Stroud's rethink of the front suspension: instead of having the springs and dampers attached to the lower front wishbone, there is a bell-crank with a pullrod attached to the upper front wishbone, which gives the front suspension rising rate – that is, it increases the resistance the more the car dives during heavy braking.

The Porsche factory team worked with Dunlop to shod its 956s (and later 962c), although 956s ran on a variety of different tyre brands in privateer hands. Brakes were made by ATE and featured two four-pot calipers per 330mm disc, with purpose-made Speedline wheels that had built-in tyre pressure sensors, relaying information

A photograph of a white and red Porsche 956 race car, number 14, displayed in a museum. The car features Goodyear Eagle tires and a Canon sponsor logo. In the background, another race car with GE Capital branding is partially visible. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

**‘PORSCHE QUOTED
620BHP, THOUGH
IN QUALIFYING IT
WOULD BE AT LEAST
100BHP MORE’**

to the driver (vital for Le Mans). RLR equipped its cars with a single Brembo caliper per disc, though – another of the myriad detail changes incorporated by the team.

DRIVING IT

Derek Bell MBE needs no introduction. Although he never drove Richard Lloyd’s 956, he did race for the team in the 962c era. However, he’s best known for his years as a Porsche factory driver, and his relationship with the 956 goes back to the first test at Paul Ricard in early 1982. ‘All I could do was compare it to the 936,’ he explains. ‘We had no experience with ground effect cars. So all I could say was: “That’s better than anything I’ve ever driven!”’

Bell chuckles, the warmth obvious in his voice: ‘It was perfect to drive. Fantastic. The power in qualifying, at 1.4 bar and an extra 500 revs, was super. The handling was immaculate. Because the car was so neutral I wanted to get the car pointing up the road as soon as possible, so as I came off the brakes I’d flick the wheel enough to break the tail away and make the corner more of a straight line. When you first start driving them they’re stable, and then as you go faster they’re nervous on cold tyres, but as the tyres come in the ground effect starts...’ Confidence was key in getting the best out of a 956. ‘It’d just lose grip naturally,’ Derek says of its breakaway characteristics. ‘I knew “the feel” – your body had to know “the feel”. The steering would load up and be heavy in tight corners.’

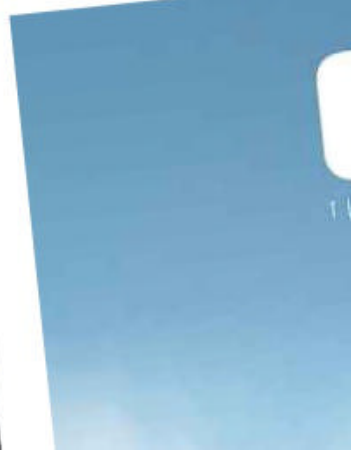
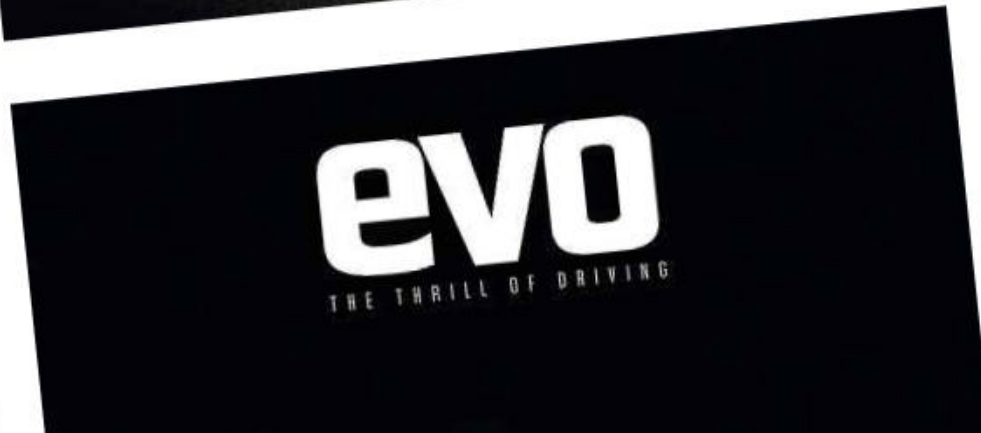
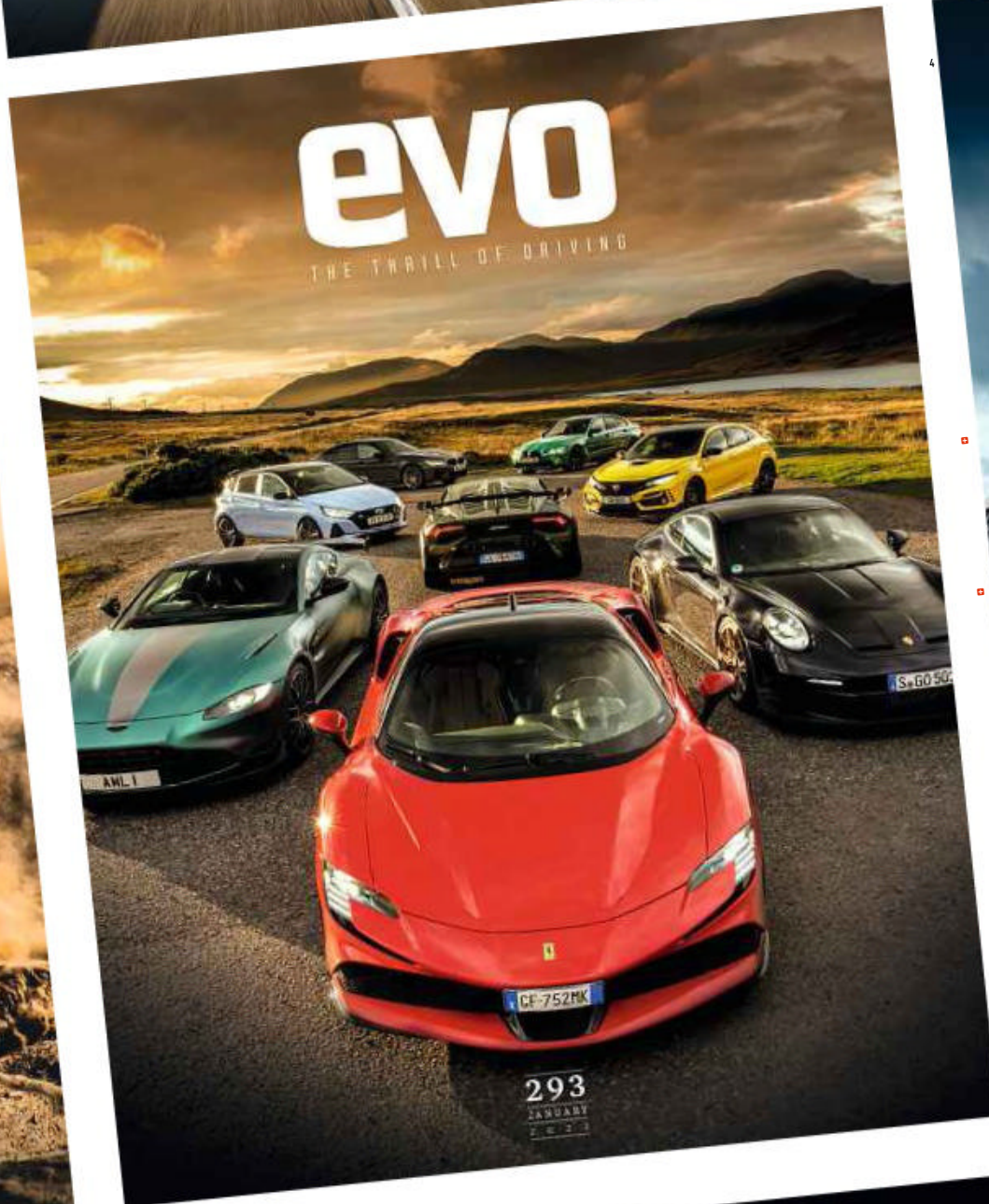
RUNNING IT TODAY & THE MARKETPLACE

Twenty years ago a typical customer 956 or 962c could be picked up for under £200,000, and, as Patrick Morgan recalls, back then even a Rothmans factory car was £300,000. These days it’s very different, with upwards of a million required to join the club, while a car with famous race history might be ten times that.

Naturally, these aren’t cheap cars to run. ‘The expectation is to get a minimum of 24 hours out of an engine between rebuilds,’ says Patrick, ‘but talking to others it’s close to 36 hours in reality. Reduce the boost and revs and you’re going to help yourself. To take the underwing off, you have to remove the rear lower wishbones, but everything else is very accessible. We run it on 260 GTX fuel, which is 104 octane; so as long as you’re not getting into knock, and it’s not oxygenated, you’re fine.

‘Parts are relatively straightforward. Certain parts you can get from Porsche – there are a lot of road car parts on it. Master cylinders, slave cylinders, down to nuts and bolts, are very much Porsche inventory parts, which for an endurance racer is a good, solid way to do it – very different to the single-seaters we normally work on, where every part is bespoke.’

Group C racers are now regular show-stoppers on the classic motor racing calendar. In 2023 five races will be held across Europe. Visit peterauto.fr for more details.





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by RICHARD MEADEN
PHOTOGRAPHY *by* ASTON PARROTT

The Civic Type R has always been an **evo** favourite; now with grown-up new looks, more power and even sharper responses, the latest FL5-gen car could just be the best yet



SOMETIMES, SILENCE CAN SPEAK MORE eloquently than any words. We're sitting in a press briefing at the Honda Civic Type R launch in Estoril, Portugal. Taking us on this deep dive of the new CTR's technical highlights is Honda Europe's highly impressive Kotaro Yamamoto. Joining him from Japan via Zoom is CTR programme chief Hideki Kakinuma.

It's all brilliantly Japanese, with lots of colourful and highly detailed slides with evocative/slightly bizarre headings, such as 'Objective of "Ultimate Sport"' and 'Human-Vehicle Unity Handling'. They feature a bewildering array of graphs and traces, illustrating everything from throttle blipping performance to gearshift load. After half an hour I feel like I've entered a parallel metaverse created by the makers of *Gran Turismo*.

Having exited the matrix we're invited to ask questions, with Yamamoto translating for Kakinuma. The silence comes when a media colleague asks if any other hot hatches were benchmarked by Honda during the development of the new CTR. Having listened to the question, Kakinuma glances upwards as if scanning his memory to compile a list. Then, after a prolonged pause and with a deliciously deadpan delivery, Yamamoto

faithfully relays his answer: 'Mmmm... No... We only referenced previous Civic Type R.'

It's not intended as a killer mic drop moment, but it tells you all you need to know. Honda does things its own way. It knows when it has a great car. And it knows how to make that car better. More to the point, it doesn't waste time looking at inferior hot hatches for inspiration.

There's something deeply cool about Japanese high-performance cars that sets them apart from all others. They're not for everyone, but if you've got a molecule of petrol in your blood it's hard not to appreciate the joyful fanaticism, meticulous approach and dedication to driving thrills that defines them. It's a culture that's unmistakable yet impossible to pigeonhole, evidenced by proud performance flagships such as the Honda NSX, Nissan GT-R and Lexus LFA, through to pure and simple driver's cars such as the MX-5, GT/GR86 and Nissan Z. The CTR sits happily and deservedly amongst them.

The hot hatch is very much a European invention, but this didn't prevent Honda from carving its own niche with the Type R. Rewind to 1997 and the EK9-generation Civic Type R was a wild, VTEC-powered banshee, officially limited to the Japanese domestic market but an









underground icon for those fortunate enough to have driven one in the West.

Since then, successive CTR generations have cemented Honda's reputation as a brand committed to building fierce and focused hot hatches of unique character and quality. Not all have outshone the best Europe has to offer, but thanks to a passionate following and admirable perseverance Honda has continued to evolve and hone the Civic into the yardstick it is today.

If the outgoing FK8 had a weakness, it was its image. As a collective, *evo* always managed to look beyond the *Fast & Furious* styling, consistently singing its praises and including it in eCoty on three occasions: original, facelift and Limited Edition. Personally, even though it was a truly sensational machine to drive, both on road and track, I just couldn't get beyond the looks; a situation that annoyed me immensely but simply couldn't be reconciled.

That was then, the new FL5 is now. And I'm pleased to say it's terrific. In fact, it's hard to think of a better hot hatch that money can buy. You will, however, need *a lot* of money. £46,995 to be precise. Add the optional exposed carbon wing package and you're looking at a £50k Civic. This takes some processing, but sadly the punchy pricing is a sign of dark times for the hot hatch market in general, which has seen a slump as manufacturers phase out hatchback model lines without direct replacements as the transition to EV gathers pace.

In the case of the Civic, where Honda once sold CTRs by the boatload it's now predicting UK import numbers in the hundreds, not thousands. That's a hard business case to make sense of. Impossible if you stick at the pricing levels of earlier generations. We should probably just be grateful that Honda still has the belief to build a new generation of CTR



***‘THE STEERING
IS PERFECTLY
WEIGHTED AND
LASER-ACCURATE’***

when so many other storied hot hatch makers have turned their back on us.

Could I see myself owning one? Yes, absolutely. The new styling is much more grown-up, which might be disappointing if you liked the overt aesthetic of the previous-gen car, but great news if not. The muscular swell of the wheelarches has a BMW M2 vibe about it, which can only be a good thing, and there are some nicely considered details, such as all the functional aerodynamic parts being painted black.

The interior is unmistakably Type R. Vivid red seats are the dominant feature, but tactility, comfort and great driver ergonomics are the standout qualities. The driving position is sublime, with brilliant support from the seats and perfectly placed pedals, while everything you touch has a high-quality feel.

The handsome new bodyshell is an optimised version of the previous Civic's. It's stiffer by 15 per cent overall, but thanks to extensive use of adhesives in its construction (almost four times that of the previous Civic) it's effectively seam-welded, bringing significant localised stiffness benefits that aren't reflected in the overall percentage figure. The wheelbase is longer by 35mm and the track widened by 15mm, giving a broader stance with increased stability. Weight is up by nearly 50kg to 1429kg, though much of that increase is due to the need for the dreaded gasoline particulate filter.

A lesser company would have dropped all the previous-generation hardware into the new body, tweaked the motor ever so slightly to find a pinch more power and torque and left the rest alone. Not Honda. The basic nuts and bolts may be almost entirely carry-over, but the CTR development team has fastidiously, meticulously and relentlessly explored ways of making every single element just that little bit better.

The 2-litre turbocharged four is more impressive than ever, with new peaks of 324bhp at 6500rpm and 310lb ft from a lowly 2500rpm right through to 4000rpm, up from the previous model's 316bhp and 295lb ft. However, it's the enormous efforts to further improve the way in which the motor responds that ensure the improvements are far greater than those bald figures suggest.

The flywheel is 18 per cent lighter, which equates to a 25 per cent reduction in inertia weight. The turbocharger's internals have been redesigned so that it spools up 14 per cent faster. The motor can breathe more deeply thanks to a 10 per cent increase in intake airflow, and it exhales more freely through an exhaust system that's 13 per cent less restrictive.

All these changes emphasise the lack of inertia that has always been so typical of Honda's high-performance VTEC motors. Where pretty much every turbocharged four-cylinder hot hatch feels like it's powered by an unexceptional engine that does the numbers thanks to forced induction, the Civic's engine feels like a sharply tuned naturally aspirated motor that's been further boosted by a turbo. It's a small but crucial distinction.

Mated to the snappy, beautifully precise and – yes – painstakingly honed six-speed manual transmission, it's a powertrain to bring a smile to your face. There's a throttle-blip function that can be adjusted via the dynamic options and makes perfect rev-matched downshifts. It's clever enough to allow you to

Right, from top: VTEC engine has been further honed to improve response; seats are just brilliant; even the exhaust has been reworked to make it 13 per cent less restrictive



do your own without having to disable the system, but you can switch it off if you dig deep enough into the menus.

There's track and road driving on this launch event, but unfortunately for the most part the weather is miserable. Still, it speaks well of the Type R that its character and capabilities shine through the gloom. From the moment you settle behind the wheel you feel completely connected to the car. The wheel itself and gearknob are wonderfully tactile, the combination of yielding suede and cold metal feeling great in your hands. There's a freeness and energy about the CTR that's immediately inspiring, and consistent across all the major controls. Clutch and brake pedals are firm and silky, while the steering is perfectly weighted, laser-accurate and so nicely judged in terms of response that you nail your first apex without having to think about it.

The drivetrain has an expensive feel, at once sharp and smooth. There's plenty of low-down response, which builds quickly but progressively so that even in slippery conditions you can play the throttle to get the front

wheels *j-u-s-t* breaking traction but not running away with wheelspin.

On the track there's plenty of opportunity to feel for and ultimately breach the limits of grip, revealing a progressive stability and consistency that gives lots of confidence. It'll slide its tail beautifully, too, if you give it the right nudge of lock and lift off as you turn in. The brakes have great feel, strong stopping power and rarely fall into ABS, which is very impressive given the wet conditions at Estoril.

There's less scope for such extremes on the road, but the Type R remains playful at less than lunatic speeds. That measured steering response is welcome, as is the progressive throttle response. It's also great to have such adjustability for the car's dynamics, the new Individual mode allowing you to mix and match all the chassis and powertrain settings.

Honda's mission for the Type R to be the fastest front-wheel-drive car around the Nürburgring Nordschleife has been a dominant driver in the development programme, but it hasn't resulted in a car that's riven with compromises



in order to deliver a lap time. On the contrary, it feels like a car you could quite happily drive every day. As with all first drives held beyond UK shores, we will reserve ultimate judgement until we've driven the new CTR on our favourite and most testing A- and B-roads. Still, there's every indication the new car is genuinely supple at low speeds while possessing the pace, feel and livewire handling to be inspirational at speed.

Criticisms? Well, it's a large car by usual hatchback standards. That extra track width and wheelbase might improve roadholding and straight-line stability, but they also mean the CTR is a family-sized five-door. It doesn't feel cumbersome (quite the opposite, in fact), but on tight and twisty roads you notice there's less room to play with.

The pricing is emotive but reflects the fact that cars such as the CTR are bought by true enthusiasts: people who understand that specialised hot hatches of this calibre are a rare treat, built to serve a niche, not a sector with meaningful volumes. If you're serious about driving and appreciate the notion of a car that's effectively been

blueprinted from nose to tail by Honda's most pernickety engineers, you'll fall for the Type R in a big way.

It's also worth mentioning that the CTR has always punched above its weight. This new FL5 is almost 100bhp down on top-tier machines such as AMG's A45 S or Audi's RS3 (both significantly more expensive), but the CTR's brilliantly honed dynamics mean you should think twice about what you're getting from the Euro superhatches beyond brand image and on-paper bragging rights.

We need to drive it in the UK, but something tells us that when it comes to on-road ability and behind-the-wheel enjoyment, the new Type R is better than ever. ✕

Honda Civic Type R (FL5)

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1996cc, turbo **Power** 324bhp @ 6500rpm

Torque 310lb ft @ 2500-4000rpm **Weight** 1429kg

Power-to-weight 230bhp/ton **0-62mph** 5.4sec

Top speed 171mph **Basic price** £46,995

evo rating ★★★★★

INTO THE VAL





by JETHRO BOVINGDON PHOTOGRAPHY by JADE NELSON

LEY OF DEATH

With all McLarens soon to be hybridised, the days are numbered for the company's unassisted V8 models. So where better to let one of the best, the 765LT Spider, off the leash than Death Valley




W

E ALL GET IT. THE FEAR OF MISSING OUT.

Especially in a world where images of sunshine, cool cars and happy people are delivered to our phones in a constant stream. Even though I have a pretty low tolerance for car shows – a parked car is a wasted car, isn't it? – that fear of missing out creeps in from time to time when I see pictures from another Cars and Coffee event packed with unbelievable exotica, wickedly potent-sounding muscle cars and curios that seem to exist only in the surreal world of California. I want to go to a car show. For fleeting moments, I really want to be a part of that scene.

Today it's happening. And I'm excited. It's early on a Sunday morning and I'm floating up the Pacific Coast Highway towards Malibu. There's a Porsche 356 some way ahead, tiny amongst the local traffic, sun glinting from its chrome brightwork; I pass a twin-turbocharged Supra, its hooped rear wing reaching into a pure blue sky. And then, heading in the opposite direction... wait, it can't be. Just breezing in and out of pickups and Teslas? It is. A Lancia Delta S4 Stradale in light grey flashes past. The McLaren 765LT Spider I'm driving suddenly seems so ordinary. It really is another world here.

Thirty minutes later I'm two coffees deep, a few people have asked all about the LT, a young guy wants to know the name of the blue to see if it matches the spec of the Spider he's awaiting (it's Ludus Blue, by the way), I've perused the incredible array of machinery bursting out of this quiet shopping village car park and, um, I'm bored. Turns out parked cars in Malibu are just as dreary as parked cars in Slough or Grimsby or Milton Keynes. I'm cured. I'm not missing very much at all. Except an opportunity...

It's early. I have a McLaren 765LT Spider. And California is big. Really big. There must be somewhere around here where there are no other cars or coffee shops. No other people. So the idea to explore this colourful car culture and soak up the glamour of Malibu and its complex network of canyon roads is quickly scrapped. A new plan is scrambled. Like all the best plans, it's loose and heroically under-researched. I want to go to Death Valley.

I've been once before and marvelled at the humbling scale, the desolate beauty and – the biggest surprise to me – the stunning roads that twist through the mountains that frame the vast valley. On the last visit my mode of transport was perhaps the exact opposite of the McLaren 765LT. It had very little power, brakes made from tinfoil and sawdust, the body control of an elephant seal at a trampoline park and – its biggest crime of all – extremely ineffectual air-conditioning. I vowed to return in a suitable car. The 765LT Spider is suitable. Extremely suitable.

In fact, Death Valley and McLaren's bananas Longtail are probably perfect for each other. Where else can you hope to exploit its outrageous performance for more than a few seconds? Desensitised as we might be when it comes to reading raw power figures, the LT Spider's performance is so vivid in reality that it seems to shatter space and time into chaotic fragments of energy with a life and rules all of

their own. Even with the knowledge that its 4-litre twin-turbocharged V8 produces 754bhp and 590lb ft and pushes just 1388kg, it's still a shocking experience the first time you wring it out through a couple of gears.

The performance isn't immediately and overwhelmingly uncomfortable in the manner of an over-endowed EV, but the way it builds so quickly into a frenzy creates a heady mix of awe, incredulity and fear. So the 765LT Spider needs space should you want to drive it as fast as it'll go. It's preferable to do it where no other humans lurk, too. Nobody wants to be anti-social, and prison has never really appealed. Death Valley is just shy of 300 miles inland. It's a tourist destination, of course, but our plan is to arrive in the late afternoon and enjoy the roads as the temperature drops and the sightseers head back to cosy civilisation.

Ambling away from Malibu is a reminder that the 765LT balances raw connection and useability with real skill. There's so much gritty feedback through the steering but something about the way the car moves and responds manages to convey extreme agility combined with absolute confidence. It's one of those cars you operate without thinking. The LT looks about as wild as a road car can look but on the move there's no intimidation factor. It feels hardcore, of course, especially as it'll occasionally follow the road surface's grooves and require a firm hand, but because it draws you so completely into its world, the 765LT never springs a surprise. It's entirely natural.

The Spider adds layers to the experience. The warm air gently circling around you is enlivened by the V8's mood. Deep and overlaid with induction slurps and the building rush of turbos trying to spin up at low revs, the sound grows and changes, getting higher in pitch and more singular should the opportunity arise to hold a gear into its upper reaches. Suspension changes are minimal compared with the coupe version, but the Spider also seems a little more supple, though the engine still feels almost like it's a stressed member. Like the steering, the whole car is bubbling and humming with sensation. For all the LT's sophistication, there's a deep sense of mechanical connection. You feel it at 5mph, 50mph or 150mph. Here's a supercar capable of outrageous things that manages to feel special even when it's doing the merely ordinary. That Delta S4 I saw earlier might be cooler and more evocative, but I'd be amazed if it felt half as exciting as a driving experience.

The landscape changes quickly in California, from tracing the coastline's meandering path to spearing straight towards the plains of the Mojave desert in the time it would take to rattle across London on any given Sunday. Traffic is light and the cool breeze turns hot and thick. The Spider is built to turn and stop and accelerate rather than cruise at a steady 80mph. McLaren threw everything at the 765LT, from Senna brakes to a full titanium exhaust system, via a wider front track, considerably shorter gearing and radical weight saving that includes lightweight glazing, titanium wheel bolts and extensive use of carbonfibre inside and out. And yet aside from an increase in road noise and a little more heft to the steering it's no more wearing than a 720S to cover distances in. The driving position is glorious, too. So low, with fantastic vision and pedals positioned





perfectly. I'm no fan of the Senna seats but even they seem a little more supportive today.

The sense of desolation and isolation ramp up quickly as we head into Searles Valley, through dilapidated, half-abandoned towns like Trona, which lies on the edge of the evaporated, parched Searles Lake. It's bleak and run-down and whilst there's industry here, extracting the plentiful minerals to be found, it also feels a bit like the edge of the world. The 765LT shares the bleached, collapsing streets with old pickups wearing peeling dashboards and faded paint. Malibu suddenly feels 10,000 miles away. But we keep going. This is just the start.

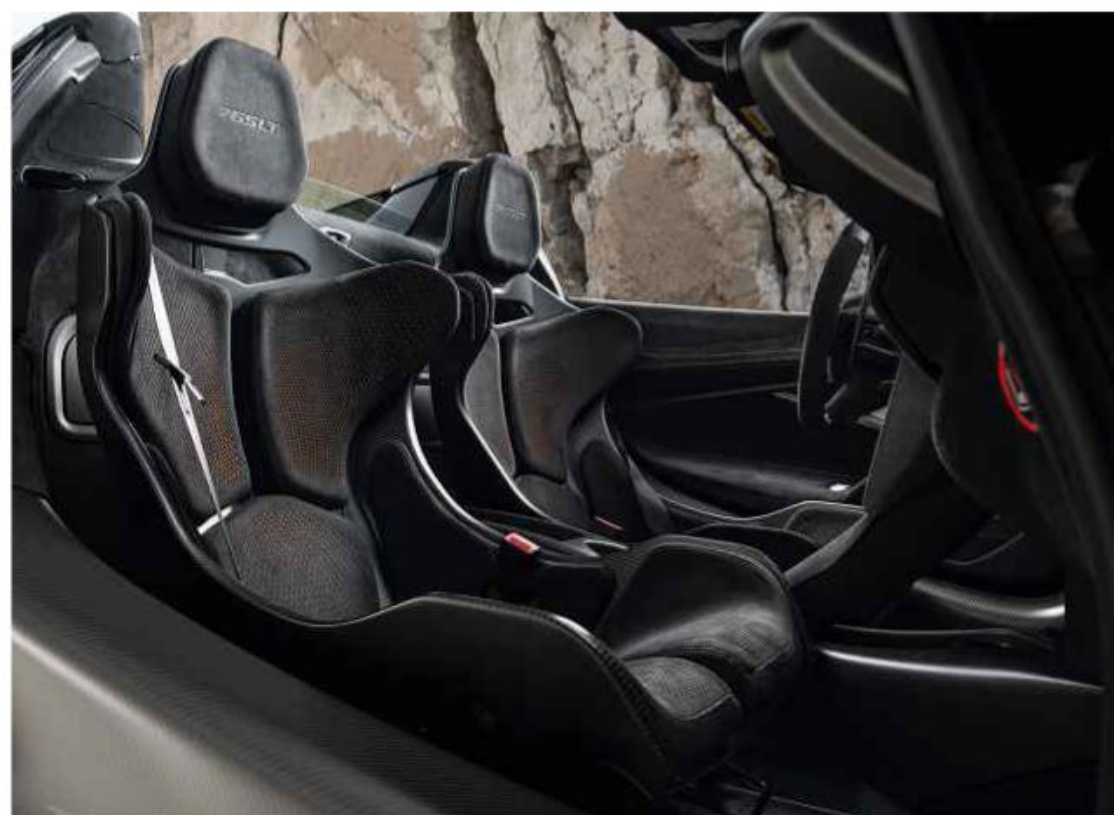
Heading north on Trona Wildrose Road, things start to look promising. The surface is new with pristine double yellow lines down the centre, and the road climbs and meanders before bunching up to negotiate what are probably hills around here but we might call mountains. I've been running along with the handling dialled to Comfort and powertrain set to Sport, but unlocking ESC Dynamic requires a step up to Sport for the dampers, too. In fact, I decide to forego the excellent middle ground, turn off the ESC but then activate the Variable Drift Control function. A simple graphic on the touchscreen allows you to choose the level of side-slip tolerated. It's bone dry, of course, and so I swipe the graphic of the LT as far sideways as it'll allow, rub the palms of my hands on my jeans and get set.

It's the first time I've really uncorked the Spider and felt just how wild it is when you fully extend the engine, work the brakes and load the chassis through a series of turns. And it reveals itself all at once, the incredible agility, savage power and the sheer grip on offer providing a genuinely jaw-dropping moment. There's something more going on, too. Whilst the 765LT feels so clean in its reactions, so clinical at carving into an apex and displays incredible body control and poise, there's a palpable edge, a sense that this car requires your full attention and unwavering respect.


Combining such intuitive dynamics with the hot breath of peril on your neck is a hell of a trick and, for me, defines the 765LT Spider. You could drive this thing for many years with a pretty good level of commitment and revel in its accuracy and security. But push towards its extremes and there's a whole new world of thrills and, potentially, spills. Should a car with a power-to-weight ratio to match a McLaren F1 be any other way?

It rips through corners that cut into the rocky hillside, the slightly long brake pedal travel perfect for experimenting with the left foot, front end locked on line (perhaps the most fundamental improvement over the already dazzling 720S) and the engine firing the LT out of turns with that demented, demonic, stomach-churning acceleration. The LT does without a mechanical limited-slip differential but the Brake Steer system is superb. I know some people prefer the feel of a conventional diff, and I usually agree, but you'd be really hard-pushed to tell that the LT is manipulating traction with the brakes. It's hooked-up and consistent.

Of course, that super-heated torque can dissolve the rear tyres into wheelspin almost at will and the ferocity of the power delivery at the top end means slides need to be dealt with very decisively. Yet the LT feels predictable in its madness. If it was to spit you off the road it would be after ample warning. The VDC is a great aid, too. It allows full-







blooded oversteer but finesses corrections. Not an everyday concern but we came all the way out here for a reason...

The brilliant sequence of corners is a brief but heart-stopping bit of entertainment before the road runs straight once again for mile upon mile alongside Panamint Valley. The surface has deteriorated and the LT, now that it's shown just how focused it can be, seems unwilling to settle back down. The front end nibbles at the zig-zagging black strips of road repair, while noise and vibration thrum through the car like a constantly crashing wave. It's so, so tempting to just hold the throttle to its stop, though. The holidaymakers are scarce now and even the 'Death Valley National Park' sign stands alone, untroubled by tourists grabbing a memento. Pretty soon it'll just be us and Highway 190 as it climbs the Darwin Hill mountain range and towers above the spectacular Rainbow Canyon.

They call it Star Wars Canyon, which sounds more fitting for the 765LT Spider, doesn't it? The formations of granite, marble and other pyroclastic rocks create vivid greys, pinks and reds reminiscent of the planet Tatooine in the universe of Jedis and Stormtroopers. Jet fighters used to cut through

the alien, forbidding valley and at various look-out points visitors could watch the pilots flying beneath them. A little slice of Hollywood in the Mojave. Sadly, after a crash in 2019, the low-level passes ended. We're the fastest thing up here today.

Right now, the thought of stopping even if there were F-18s buzzing around doesn't even cross my mind. Whilst the Rainbow Canyon colours and other-worldly rock formations might be unique and unforgettable, all I care about is the road climbing and coiling its way up Darwin Hills. In parts, you can see the inky tarmac clinging to the side of the mountains for what seems like miles, then it plunges between rock walls that almost envelop the car as completely as a tunnel. Moments later you might feel exposed, fresh air on either side of the car just beyond the Armco. With the sun being pulled rapidly down towards the valley floor and eerie shadows forming, it really does feel like we've been dropped into a different solar system. Alone. We truly are the only souls up here now.

It's tempting to reference warp drive and X-wing fighters and all that stuff. But I won't. The 765LT Spider is too

connected with the real and the tangible. Its performance might feel the stuff of fantasy at times but there's a deep-rooted, unbreakable bond with all the things we hold dear in our little world. Feedback, adjustability, excitement, accuracy and a powerful, unique character. And whether soaring in mountains above Death Valley or scratching along next to a fast-flowing river in Scotland, this wild, rampant and frighteningly potent supercar is a total riot.

Everything starts with the steering. In a world of EPAS, the effort required for this hydraulic set-up and the volume of the texture flooding back to your hands and fingertips is almost disconcerting. Information overload. At times it really can be that too, the front tyres hunting wherever the surface wants to take them. However, although you might need a firm grip on the wheel, the picture painted of the contact patch, of the grip available, is brilliantly rendered. You really feel the wider track and the lower ride height compared with the 720S. The LT is hunkered down, always in the attack position and it feels like its tyres are ploughing furrows into the road.

Despite the relative heft of the steering compared with,



say, a Ferrari 296, the Spider doesn't feel reluctant. You lean against that weight on turn-in but it never conveys a sense of mass. If anything, the excellent roll stiffness and the quick but calm rate of response convince you immediately of the McLaren's lack of inertia. That and the intensity with which it scrubs speed or accelerates. In every phase of a corner the LT's sheer energy and laser accuracy shine a light on the benefits of its relatively light build. The aforementioned Ferrari overcomes its mass with instant and overwhelming power but sooner or later it catches back up. In braking zones in particular you're suddenly aware of the forces at work. With the LT – even the 49kg heavier Spider version – the illusion is never shattered because it's no illusion. This is a light, stiff, fantastically controlled car and it rarely feels stretched.

Push really, really hard and the front will just creep into a little understeer in slower second or third-gear turns. If you're caught off-boost this is a good time to hold a steady throttle and wait it out. Light up the turbos now and you'll go from a shade too much steering lock one way to requiring a whole lot more the other in very short order. If you're right in the powerband you can be more positive, hustling the car from gentle push

with more throttle and allowing the rear – which feels so flat, so controlled – to settle into a flash of oversteer as the corner opens out. It's a dance that happens so quickly, but when you're on top of the car it feels natural though still wickedly provocative. The 765LT Spider has a kind of elemental feel that's a perfect match for the untamed surroundings.

The curves disappear as quickly as they arrived. We've skirted the western edge of Death Valley and left so much unexplored. Furnace Creek, the Funeral Mountains, Dante's View overlooking the shimmering salt pan of Devil's Golf Course... Reason enough to come back. But as the sun sets, the sense of isolation is overwhelming. Part of me wants to stay and enjoy having this vista all to myself, but at the same time there's low-level panic. Something about the incomprehensible scale of Death Valley makes you want to see other headlights, to be near other humans, to run back towards your comfort zone.

The 765LT Spider can run. Highway 190 tracks straight and true to the horizon. I push and hold the throttle wide open for as long as I dare. Seconds? Minutes? It's hard to say. Suddenly, though, Malibu doesn't seem that far away at all. ✕

McLaren 765LT Spider

Engine V6, 3994cc, twin-turbo **Power** 754bhp @ 7500rpm
Torque 590lb ft @ 5500rpm **Weight** 1388kg **Power-to-weight** 553bhp/ton
0-62mph 2.8sec **Top speed** 205mph **Basic price** £310,500

evo rating ★★★★★





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FAST FLEET



NEW ARRIVAL

Fiat Panda 100HP

It ranked among *evo*'s favourite superminis of the noughties, but is a 15-year-old, £2000, 100,000-mile example worth a punt? Richard Porter is about to find out

THE OTHER MONTH I SAID TO a mate that I had developed a sudden craving for a Panda 100HP. Unfortunately, the mate was Jonny Smith with whom I make the *Smith and Sniff* podcast and we were recording our show at the time. As a result, my idle remark went quite a lot further than if I'd muttered it quietly in a pub.

Soon after that episode went live, the messages started to arrive, mostly from Panda 100HP owners uniformly raving about their cars. Not that I needed telling. I loved the 100HP when it was new and seriously considered buying

one. I can't remember why I didn't. I do remember being quite jealous of Richard Meaden who ran one as his long-term car back in 2007. So that was it. With a bit of podcast peer pressure on my back and a healthy, perhaps rose-tinted memory of this car in my mind, I went looking online and discovered that Panda prices cover a pretty broad span.

At the top end, one garage offered a pair of immaculate low-mileage 100HPs for over seven grand apiece, clearly hoping to get in early on the car's modern classic vibe. At the other end of the spectrum, MOT-failure cars can go for well under a grand. In terms of



p117 Cupra Born 230



p118 Maserati Ghibli Trofeo



p126 Volkswagen Arteon R



p127 Ford Puma ST



condition, I wanted somewhere in between and, mindful that this was a car I wanted rather than needed, I aimed to go as low as practical while not buying a total basket case.

And then I was introduced to a man called Jai. You see, when you mention a car craving in a public arena, people don't just encourage you to act on it; sometimes they offer up the very thing that will satisfy it. There were a number of things that attracted me to Jai's 100HP, one of them being Jai himself, who is such a Fiathead he owns a Tipo Sedicivale. He also sees himself as some sort of Panda rescuer, so when he spotted this car for sale, artlessly covered in stickers, sitting on cackhanded aftermarket suspension, and limping because of a crunchy gearbox and a duff coolant pipe, he decided to save it, mending the pipework, replacing the

'box, and returning it as much as possible to factory spec. The other thing that attracted me to this car in particular was the price, which went from reasonable to very reasonable after a short bit of negotiating.

Personally, I feel a Panda 100HP is two grand well spent. But we've recently moved house and my wife would probably prefer that money go towards some curtains or a new kitchen, so

'I aimed to go as low on price as practical while not buying a total basket case'

I dodged this issue by buying and collecting the car when she was out of the country on business. Better to ask for forgiveness than permission and all that. Her mood on discovering the car, a few days after her return, was best described as 'unamused'. Still, at least one of us was pleased with our new car.

In fact, I was delighted, because the Panda proved to be just as fun as I remembered. Better yet, my recollection of the punishing ride quality was actually wide of the mark. Sometimes it actually feels quite sophisticated, padding over minor ruts and blips with the firm but well-damped bearing of a BMW M car. Conversely, in some circumstances it's comically bouncy, but there are things you can do about that, which I'll investigate in due course.

The real star of the show, however, is the



naturally aspirated 1.4-litre four-cylinder engine, which comes on strong with an almost turbo-like surge at 2000rpm and then keeps on pulling, encouraging you to thrash it just because. Also in the plus column, the brakes feel strong, and the gearchange is pretty good too.

Of course, you can't expect everything to be peachy with a two-grand Panda. Jai warned me one of the wheel bearings wasn't in great health and a rumble from the front confirms it. Possibly related to this, the car pulls to the right under acceleration and darts to the left if you then lift off. So that needs looking at. Also, the radio doesn't work.

Cosmetically, it's a good 10-foot car but closer inspection reveals dings, scratches and swirls plus evidence of kerbing that stands

out because a previous owner painted the wheels grey. I don't mind the look, but the scuffing is annoying and hard to fix while matching to the unknown colour of the alloys. I'll look into a solution, while remembering not to get giddy and blow half the car's value on making it look perfect. The aim here, initially at least, is to prioritise mechanical heartiness and the pursuit of cheap thrills. On the basis of how it drives, I think the Panda has got that second part well covered.

Richard Porter (@sniffpetrol)

Date acquired September 2022 **Total mileage** 104,907 **Mileage this month** 146 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 42.8

Cupra Born 230

The rear-drive Born meets a front-drive rival electric hatch

THE PLACEMENT OF A CAR'S ENGINE IS one of the most significant elements of its dynamic make-up – just think about the differences between a 1980s Porsche 911 Turbo and an Audi Quattro. As the custodian of *evo*'s electric Cupra, I've been giving plenty of thought to how this defining characteristic will translate in the era of EVs.

Cue Renault's new electric Mégane E-tech. On paper the Mégane and Born are very similar in terms of their power, weight and overall dimensions, but diversity comes with their technical layouts. The Renault's is closer to a conventional ICE set-up, with its electric motor on the front axle and powering the front wheels. The Born, as we know, switches this around, being rear-engined and rear-wheel drive.

Is there as big a variation in their dynamics as there would be if they were combustion-engined? Well, yes. The Renault feels very front-wheel drive (in a good way), with a nice balance thanks to the low-mounted battery pack. It's easy to appreciate this balance, too, as you can turn off the traction and stability programs. It makes for a buoyant and enthusiastic hatchback that bodes well for when Renault (or perhaps Alpine) finally makes something more interesting out of it.

The Born feels very different. Its rear-drive nature is certainly evident, but the combination of a rear weight bias and a driving position that's close to the front axle makes it an odd and not particularly pleasant experience. Driving the Renault just reiterates that work still needs to be done on the Born's underlying dynamics, which might just be the reason its traction and stability control have such an iron-clad grip.

Jordan Katsianis (@JordanKatsianis)

Date acquired August 2022 **Total mileage** 4888 **Mileage this month** 919 **Costs this month** £0 **mi/kWh this month** 3.6





NEW ARRIVAL

Maserati Ghibli Trofeo

Always a pleasure to welcome a Maserati to the fleet, and this one should be a blast

IT'S APPROPRIATE THAT IN THIS, EVO'S 25th year, we should have a Maserati Ghibli on the Fast Fleet. The histories of Ghibli and **evo** are tightly intertwined thanks to co-founder Harry Metcalfe's love of Maserati's boxy 1990s Biturbo-based Ghibli II. His blood-red Ghibli Cup – which wore the plate 'M4SER' – was a bit of a legend around these parts, as much a member of the team as any of us, and a uniquely quick and characterful car.

Much has changed since those heady days. Not least at Maserati, which was owned by Ferrari in 1999, then switched to Fiat Group ownership in 2005, under which the marque pursued volume sales with a new range of Ghibli and Quattroporte saloons and the Levante SUV. Now part of the vast Stellantis group, Maserati is redefining itself once more, with the MC20 and bold plans for hybrid and electric powertrains in upcoming models, including its Macan-rivalling Grecale.

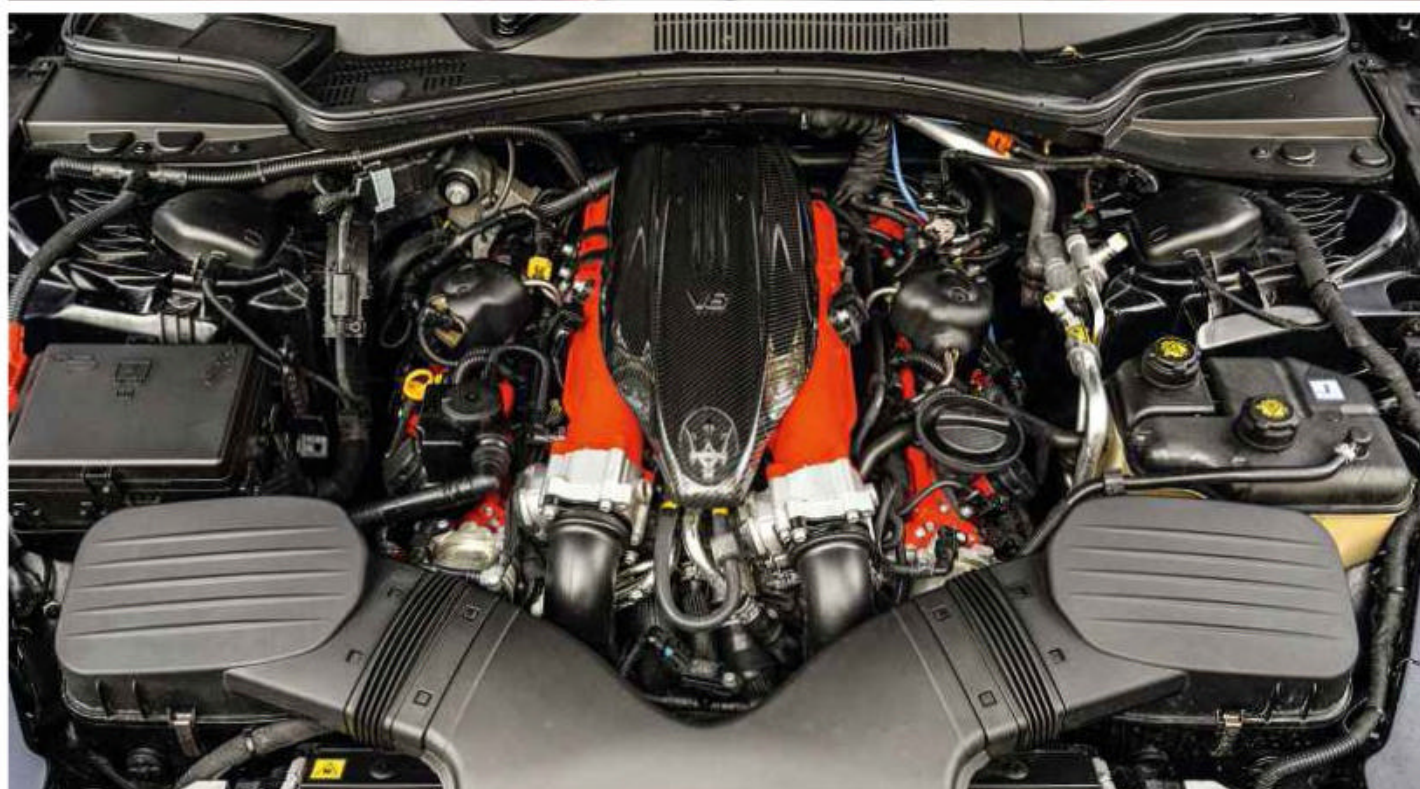
In the context of this latest reinvention, the Ghibli Trofeo is a legacy car. One that straddles several periods of parent ownership and comes from a time not so long ago when the world was a simpler and more straightforward place to sell high-performance cars. The Trofeo is a throwback, but a rather glorious one.

Prior to its arrival at **evo**, M600 GHB served a stint on Maserati GB's press fleet. Indeed, editor Gallagher tested it back in July 2022, when he fell for its uncomplicated delivery, old-school character and immense performance. With Maserati's star in the ascendency, living with the Ghibli Trofeo seems like a good way to get to know the marque as it is (and was) before Maserati's evolution takes another step.

Being the flagship of the Ghibli range means there's little in the way of hardware options, but as with all premium/luxury brands there's plenty of scope to add to the basic list price

of £118,020. So far as M600 GHB is concerned, foremost amongst its cost options is the Blu Maserati paint, which cost £7020. There's a further £9000-worth of interior options (including the Carbon package, Cold Weather package and Driver Assistance package, plus extended Alcantara for the pillars and headlining, and a Harman Kardon sound system). Including taxes, it all adds up to £136,575, or just a few grand shy of a basic M5 CS. Not that you can get one of those anywhere near list price these days, but it does

'It certainly feels more exotic than the rather surgical M5 or the hot-rod E63'



illustrate the level at which the Ghibli is punching.

Given few of you will have seen a Trofeo – supersaloons are rare beasts at the best of times, let alone one built by Maserati – it's probably worth taking you through its vital statistics. And they really are vital, the headline number being a whopping 572bhp from the Ferrari-derived 3.8-litre twin-turbocharged V8. In fact the Trofeo is the only Ghibli to have an eight-cylinder motor, the rest relying on six-cylinder petrol and diesel engines. The V8 may originate from Maranello, but Maserati has thoroughly reworked it for its own applications, so where the Ferrari version displaces 3.9 litres the Maserati version loses a little swept volume, along with the dry sump and cross-plane crank. Peak revs drop from 8000 to 6750, but that more than fits the brief for this two-ton saloon.

It's a hugely impressive engine. One that doesn't have the screaming appetite for high revs

or truly explosive power of the Ferrari version, but retains the same smooth, free-spinning response and has a full-blooded yet quietly understated delivery that's authentic and characterful without being shouty or contrived.

It certainly feels more exotic than the rather surgical M5 or the hot-rod E63, and there are echoes of the old loony-tune V6 and V8 biturbo engines that powered the 1990s Ghibli and Quattroporte. If you're going to fall for the Trofeo over a BMW or an AMG Benz, it'll be this engine that seduces you.

And rightly so, for it feels prodigiously potent. Arguably a bit too potent for the rear-wheel-drive chassis when the roads are cold and wet and the boost begins to build. Fortunately the ESC catches the tail smoothly enough, and if you want to play around the mechanical limited-slip diff is a willing partner. This said, you need to pick your moment, as the Ghibli is a big car to hustle.

The eight-speed ZF auto gearbox isn't as incisive as a DCT, but it shifts quickly and cleanly and suits the Trofeo's demeanour, happy to shuffle through the gears unaided or let you pull the paddles. Conditions haven't allowed a meaningful exploration of the dynamic modes, but Sport feels like it'll be the sweet spot.

Having previously run a 5-litre supercharged F-type, I was hopeful the Maser would at least match the 450bhp Jag's fuel economy, but where that would return 30mpg on a motorway journey and drop to 24 in more general use, thus far the Ghibli has refused to be coaxed above 24mpg, even on a gentle return trip to Heathrow. Fortunately, the 80-litre tank means it still has a decent range, but the Trofeo is going to test editor Gallagher's sense of humour when it comes to fuel expenses.

What are my first impressions? Well, I'm enjoying the Ghibli's rarity and its enormous



reserves of performance. I like that in being a supersaloon and not a super-SUV it makes a satisfyingly anachronistic statement about your preferred means of rapid propulsion. Also, it's stimulating to be in a car that takes some getting to know. Audis, Beemers and Benzes are great cars, but each has a familiar stamp that's shared across the vast majority of models in their respective ranges. The Ghibli is more conventional than its forebears, but it's still a little quirky in the context of 2023.

I suspect this means there will be things about it that will annoy, but equally I know there are aspects of the Ghibli that are unique to Maserati, and therefore refreshingly likeable. Whenever I see someone driving an RS6, M5 or E63, I always feel a

sense of admiration for their choice of vehicle. The Ghibli Trofeo is a step beyond, because it's not an SUV and because it strays from the default supersaloon choices. The leftfield option might not be the 'best', but it will always be more interesting.

I have no doubt an all-wheel-drive M5 or E63 would better it in a point-to-point dash across country, but I don't think the Trofeo is that kind of car. It does its thing in a different way. One that resists the pursuit of supercar poise, traction and raw pace in favour of a more classical supersaloon blend of immense waftability and colossal straight-line stonk. I think there's something rather cool about that.

We won't be keeping the Ghibli for as long as

some of our Fast Fleet cars, but we're hoping to pack in some big trips before it goes back to Maserati. For starters, the spec sheet tells me the Trofeo is a 203mph machine. While that figure may not have the impact it once had, I still think the double-ton is a more evocative benchmark and bragging right than any Tesla-rivalling 0-60mph time. With a bit of luck we'll be heading to Germany to put that top speed to the test...

Richard Meaden (@DickieMeaden)

Date acquired December 2022 **Total mileage** 11,324 **Mileage this month** 2227
Costs this month £0 **mpg this month** 23.6



Aston Martin V8 Vantage

Time to reflect on a great year with the Vantage – and to start planning the next one

AS FROST LIES THICK ON THE GROUND outside and I'm tempted to reach for another jumper (or possibly a duvet), it's good to look back on a thoroughly enjoyable summer and autumn with the Vantage. Memorable days out included joining a throng of other Astons for the Silverstone Classic, a packed Bicester Scramble and the Midsummer Classic run by Aston specialist Nicholas Mee. Best of all was a three-day tour of the North York Moors and beyond. And then there were the innumerable blasts around the local lanes, just for the fun of it.

Not once did the Aston feel less than special, and not once did it misbehave (at least not after the rodent-inflicted damage to some sensor wiring had been repaired back in March), and for a 16-year-old car that's something I would never take for granted.

Come the start of winter, and I was faced once again with the dilemma of whether to keep it on the road or put it into storage. A glance at the photo above might provide a subtle clue as to which way I jumped. The facility I'd used the previous year was no longer accepting cars for storage, but a chap in the village recommended AutoStore, about 15 miles away just to the

south of Cambridge, so I dropped them a line. Turned out the boss, Jonathan Sturgess, is an **evo** subscriber since issue 1, and although they were pretty much full, he managed to find space for the Vantage. And very good company it has found itself in too, with various RS Porsches, Black Series AMGs, Ferraris and McLarens sharing the floorspace. AutoStore offers a range of other services, too, from car sales to servicing to PPF application (visit autostore.co.uk for more).

It wasn't a straightforward decision. I'm well aware that cars like to be used, but as winter approached I really didn't enjoy seeing the Vantage sitting out in all weathers. For one thing, both front and rear light units are famously prone to problematic moisture ingress, and I would never use it when there was even the remote possibility of road salt being sprayed into its various nooks.

The most vulnerable part of the underbody is the rear subframe, which is made of tubular steel and wasn't particularly well protected when it left the factory. R100 AMV's was showing only light surface corrosion when it was examined last spring, and since it's not a cheap job to remove and refurbish it, I'd like to keep it that way as long as possible.

I've recently discovered that because the subframe has to be dropped out of the car to change the clutch, many owners get both jobs done at the same time. It makes for a hefty bill running into several thousands, but it deals with two of the biggest issues affecting the early Gaydon Vantage at a stroke, especially if you upgrade to a lightweight flywheel and twin-plate clutch at the same time. A recent drive in a 2017 Vantage GT8 manual with essentially the same six-speed 'box showed up just how heavy my clutch is, and how an upgrade could improve the shift from first to second too. If I decide the car's a keeper, it'll be a worthwhile investment.

Top of the 'to do' list come the spring, though, is to replace the brake discs and pads, which are in an advanced state of wear, particularly at the rear (I'm assuming the fronts would have been replaced more recently). Aston specialists tend to quote around a grand per axle; I've already started saving up...

Peter Tomalin

Date acquired March 2021 **Total mileage** 45,285 **Mileage this month** 0 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** n/a

Mazda MX-5 2.0 GT Sport Tech

Its compact and lightweight build hasn't stopped our MX-5 taking longer journeys in its stride

THE FINAL FEW EVO TRACKDAYS OF THE 2022 season and various other events around the country have called for a number of lengthy journeys in the MX-5 since my last report. Despite its small dimensions and low weight, the little Mazda has proven to be a surprisingly capable long-distance machine, even with its optional lowering springs and Bilstein dampers.

Granted, there is a fair level of scuttle shake at motorway speeds and cabin noise has room for improvement, but the MX-5 has far exceeded my expectations in terms of refinement. In GT Sport Tech trim it comes as standard with the uprated Bose sound system, so music and podcast consumption is a breeze. Engine speed is a little higher than feels comfortable on motorways, but activate cruise control and you'll see in excess of 40mpg without a problem. Said cruise control is the non-radar kind, and although the controls are simple enough, the ability to alter the target speed only in increments of 1mph is mildly frustrating, especially when the system fails to recognise inputs should you dial them in too quickly.

Apple CarPlay and Android Auto are fitted as

standard, as we've come to expect, but there's a refreshing lack of a large infotainment display. In fact, the cabin is entirely free of unnecessary technology, with a tastefully backlit analogue instrument cluster (save for a discreet, Porsche-esque display to the left of the speedometer and tachometer) a refreshing sight to see.

Though it may seem small, the simplicity of the cabin makes the MX-5 a much more appealing prospect as a driver's car. Step inside, thumb the starter, and you're immediately guaranteed the same, excellent driving experience as the last time you drove it, without the need to flick through endless menus to configure your desired set-up. Better still, all of the controls vital to the functionality of the car, such as traction control, are physical buttons. The only minor niggle is that the driver attention alert system appears to be oddly calibrated, activating seemingly at completely random times.

At our Anglesey track test with a BBR-modified MX-5 (see issue 299), VX22 KHE weighed in at a featherweight 1073kg with a full tank of fuel. This, combined with its thin steering wheel rim, make it

feel lithe and keen to change direction. Though light, the steering has a satisfying, oily resistance, and while there is still a noticeable level of body roll, even with the optional suspension upgrades, there's a surprising amount of grip too.

Having spent time in a number of Mazdas over the past few years, the impressive build quality comes as no surprise to me, but it has received numerous comments from passengers. From the feel of the doors to the fit and finish inside, there's no sign of that low weight figure resulting in a cheapened feel. Though it might be more of a problem with me than the car, after long stints in the driver's seat I do find my elbows become a little sore due to a lack of padding on those particular touch points. This aside, though, it's a surprisingly comfortable car, and one that's proving to be more practical than I had ever imagined.

Sam Jenkins (@evosamj)

Date acquired July 2022 **Total mileage** 4393 **Mileage this month** 713 **Cost this month** £0 **mpg this month** 44.8





END OF TERM

Skoda Kodiaq vRS

It ticked the practicality boxes, but was our seven-seater Skoda vRS enough?

A STON PARROTT RAN OUR FAST FLEET Skoda Kodiaq vRS, so you may be wondering why it's not he writing this goodbye report. He said I should write it because I borrowed the vRS quite a bit, but I suspect the real reason he's left me holding the baby is that after six months he's simply run out of things to say about Skoda's cod-sporting seven-seater.

Such apathy is perhaps indicative of the esteem in which the Kodiaq vRS has been held at **evo**. Personally, I had hoped it would be like some latter-day Subaru Forester Turbo: an engagingly practical car that also blended in some not inconsiderable performance and character. The best of both worlds – and, perhaps, an ideal car for a photographer on **evo** to run.

However, I think it's fair to say that the reality was more like a rather ordinary vehicle with a little bit more power and a hefty price tag. Of course, we've been educated to think that list prices don't matter in the modern world; no one pays in cash, and all that. It's just a number, it doesn't mean anything. And maybe that was true in an era of cheap finance and lease deals, but with those seemingly a thing of the past for the foreseeable, the Kodiaq's current £48,705 list price before extras does seem rather punchy.

'It seemed like a big car at first, but was more like an elongated Golf on stilts'

Admittedly, that price has risen a little since the arrival of our car, which came in at £46,810 with a couple of options, but you can still get a new BMW 5-series Touring for that money today, albeit not an especially fast one.

It's a moot point, though: exactly what kind of car is the vRS? I could never quite pigeonhole its size in my mind. It seemed like a big car on initial acquaintance, but its MQB-platform roots meant that it was more like an elongated Golf on stilts when you really examined it, and the third row of seating was very much for children rather than adults on long journeys. Plus, of course, using the third row meant a greatly reduced luggage space. It had a useful turn of speed courtesy of the 242bhp EA888 engine, but the performance often felt flat and tiresomely linear (you can blame the 1776kg kerb weight for that) and it was also

surprisingly thirsty, often settling around 27mpg on average however it was driven.

Our tenure was enlivened by the drama of a coolant leak, which began with a slightly suspicious smell and became readily apparent when the coolant warning light flickered on. The car was returned to Skoda's press garage for further investigation as they wanted it back anyway to remove the engine cover – turns out there have been reports of it becoming dislodged on other cars and interfering with parts it shouldn't be coming to contact with. Our vRS returned with a new coolant hose.

In summary, I like Skoda as a brand and I like what the Kodiaq as a package offers. But I'd have been just as happy with the £33,485 1.4 SE model, if not more so. Where the vRS fell down was because it simply didn't offer enough over and above a regular Kodiaq, and most of all, it just never really felt like a proper vRS.

Adam Towler (@Adam Towler)

Date acquired March 2022 **Duration of test** 6 months **Total test mileage** 7701 **Total costs** £0 **Overall mpg** 28.5 **Price new** £46,810 **Value today** £42,210

05

06

07

08

END OF TERM

Porsche Panamera 4S E-Hybrid Sport Turismo

It arrived with plenty to prove, but departs having exceeded our expectations – and then some

OUR PANAMERA, THE SNAPPILY TITLED 4S E-Hybrid Sport Turismo, faced its toughest task during its last weeks with us when it was pressed into service as a photography car on 2022's **evo** Car of the Year test. It's a challenging week for the contenders, but the support vehicles are equally pushed to the limit of their capabilities, and when they're in the hands of our photographers that also includes in the region of 100kg of kit being hauled around too.

During that week AEE didn't flinch. It chomped through the 300 miles to our base two-up and loaded to the gunwales and still returned mid-30s mpg, even with the last 20 miles driven with a little more spirit as we homed in on an end-of-journey cold beer. But it was throughout the week that it shone, its exceptional ride quality providing the perfect platform for car-to-car photography. 'It's the best car I've ever photographed from,' enthused Andy Morgan. 'Are you sure Porsche wants it back?'

Its turbocharged V6 provided enough get-up-and-go to keep the finalists in sight (although when driven by a photographer it didn't matter which supercar you were in, the Porsche's tangerine rump was always disappearing over the horizon), its chassis was always predictable and surefooted, and the £1563 charged for the optional rear-axle steering was worth every penny. Had it been included in the test there's every possibility it would have finished ahead of the SL55.

After living with Mercedes-AMG's M177 V8-powered E63 S supersaloon, the expectations of running a plug-in hybrid as its replacement were mixed. In theory there would be fewer fuel stops, but the price saved at the pumps was going to be paid for on the road, wasn't it? Yes and no. A plug-in hybrid is not a Porsche GT model, unless we're talking 918 Spyder of course, but AEE had no pretensions of being an RS. Rather it's the result of what happens when Porsche builds a

do-everything car for those who don't want an SUV.

If you don't have cause to chase a bunch of 2022's very best performance cars around the country, it's equally adept at carrying everything you would need for a family beach holiday without complaint from those onboard, or spending hours on soulless motorways with only yourself for company. Sinking into the driver's seat guaranteed hours of calmness ahead. Interior space wasn't to Mercedes E-class levels, but the quality was a league above and when it returned to Porsche with nearly 14,000 miles

'I didn't think this flavour of Panamera would suit my needs. How wrong I was'



covered it still looked as fresh as when it arrived.

A question mark for many, possibly the only one, hangs over the car's powertrain and why you should bother having two power sources rather than just one. Which is a fair point when you consider the V8 GTS model only commands a £5000 premium over the £107,800 4S E-Hybrid. The former's 473bhp is nearly 80bhp down on the combined 552bhp of six-cylinder petrol and 100kW electric motor, but the latter carries a 200kg weight penalty so the pair are neck and neck against the clock. There's little in it in terms of how they drive, either. Which brings me back to the point that the Panamera isn't a GT model. It's not even on Carrera levels. Its remit isn't to set a lap time, but to carry you quickly and effortlessly.

Without a home charger it would be unwise to go down the plug-in route, but with one you have the benefit of starting every journey with at least one full power supply. A fully charged Panamera means around 30 miles of guaranteed electric range,

which when coupled to an energy recuperation system that's constantly adding some kilowatts meant easily covering over 700 miles on each 80-litre tank of petrol in 'normal' driving – 160-mile office runs, 25-mile school and station runs, the day-to-day fetching and carrying. The first tank of superunleaded lasted over 900 miles, highlighting just how many short journeys we all actually do.

Over the 8948 miles I covered in six months the E-Hybrid returned a combined 37.3mpg, with nearly 30 per cent of those miles covered on electric power. Charging the battery would take just over three hours – the optional 7.2kW on-board AC charger (£536) is a must – and on a 7kW charger cost between 84p and £3.50, depending on the tariff.

Hybrids had a bad start to life, returning single-digit mileage on electric power, taking a lifetime to charge by today's standards and having poorly integrated electric and ICE powertrains. The benefits were hard to seek out and those early

years damaged the hybrid's reputation. Today, however, to be able to drive through urban areas on electric power alone, while knowing you can still cover several hundred miles without the stress of relying on the joke that is the UK charging network, means a plug-in hybrid offers a perfect blend. I didn't think this flavour of Panamera would suit my needs, that the majority of journeys would result in a heavy battery being lugged around and providing no benefit whatsoever. How wrong I was. The 4S E-Hybrid is one of the most impressive models Porsche offers, an unexpected highlight of 2022, and is a car I miss more than I ever thought I would.

Stuart Gallagher (@stuartg917)

Date acquired May 2022 **Duration of test** 6 months **Total test mileage** 8948 **Total costs** £330 (tyre) **Overall mpg** 37.3 **Purchase price** £119,466 **Value today** £110,000

NEW ARRIVAL

Volkswagen Arteon R Shooting Brake

With Golf R underpinnings and a spacious and stylish Arteon body, is our new VW the best of both worlds?

VERY EARLY ON IN MY TIME AT EVO, A BLUE Mk7.5 Golf R arrived at the office. Although not a long-termer, it was around for a few weeks, the intention being that everyone on the team would have the opportunity to become fully acquainted with the car. What actually happened was that I spent quite a lot of time in it. I hogged it, basically, much to the annoyance of everyone else.

I just loved everything about that car: the way it looked, the way it drove and also the image it conveyed. However, at the time there were two competitive swimmers in my family, which meant lots of long journeys and weekends away at galas, for which the Golf wasn't the most practical of solutions. But boy, was it fun. In fact, for me it was perfect, so it was a sad day when it left. I can remember thinking: 'If only it was bigger...'

Fast forward four years to 2021 and I'm in the Fast Fleet's bright red Arteon Shooting Brake R-Line on one of many road trips that summer. Regular readers may remember my reports waxing lyrical about its space and luxury design trimmings. However, it lacked a bit of bite and excitement. 'If only we could have this but with the best bits of a Golf R,' I thought.

Skip ahead another 18 months and here it is, in the form of the Arteon R Shooting Brake. It's almost as if Volkswagen had read my cosmic order, delivering what should be the perfect mix of the fast, exciting Golf R and the refined, luxurious Arteon.

Essentially the Arteon R has all the same oily bits as a Mk8 Golf R, including its 316bhp Evo4 variant of the EA888 2-litre engine, which allows this Shooting Brake to be branded 'the most powerful estate model in Volkswagen history'. The Golf's 4Motion all-wheel-drive system is also present, complete with the Volkswagen Group's Torque Splitter rear diff that can direct torque to the outside rear wheel during cornering to reduce understeer and increase agility. Wonder if it'll help the Arteon drift like an RS3 too...?

As you'd expect with the 'R' branding, the styling is adjusted, with a more aggressive front end featuring larger air vents, no chrome on the lower grille, sills or rear bumper, and four separate tailpipes split into pairs by a diffuser-style panel. There are blue brake calipers with 'R' logos too, but it's that 'Golf R blue' paint (or Lapiz Blue Premium Metallic if you want specifics) that really tells you what this is.

Said paint is a £1165 option, which when combined

with other extras on our car, including LED matrix headlights (£1375), 'Pro' infotainment (£1525), Harman Kardon audio (£1325) and a swivelling towbar (£935), take its total price up to £64,870 from the basic £56,760. But I have to say, it looks fantastic, and a visiting Sky TV engineer recently backed that up, saying: 'Nice whip, mate. Looks amazing from the front. Bet it goes as well.'

On that subject, it's early days yet, but naturally the R feels much more rapid than our previous, 187bhp Arteon, while its brakes are more responsive too. There's also the small matter of the neon 'R' button on the left-hand steering-wheel spoke, which gives direct access to the new Race mode. I'll be putting that and much more to the test as I add plenty of miles to our new Arteon over the coming weeks, so I'll report back with more detailed driving impressions next time.

Richard Browne (@Washlander)

Date acquired November 2022 **Total mileage** 11,332 **Mileage this month** 1115 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 22.6





Ford Puma ST

It may have Fiesta genes, but its character is more Focus-like

CURIOS CAR, THE PUMA ST. IT SHARES so much componentry with the excellent Fiesta ST but has more in common with the so-so Focus ST in how it drives.

Its three-cylinder engine maintains the Fiesta's charismatic thrum and is similarly keen to rev, enthusiastic and peppy. Which is all well and good, unless you buy a small car to be economical, which our Puma certainly isn't, returning a monthly 36mpg average. That's pretty poor for a car of its size, although it's perhaps not to be unexpected of one that weighs 1283kg, which is equally poor for a car that's no bigger than a Fiesta ST (1187kg) once you're inside it.

One explanation for the poor economy is that the ST is only available as a manual, added to which our car is fitted with the optional Performance Pack, which includes a Quaife limited-slip diff and means you can't help but grab its scruff when the road suits. But this is where the Focus comparison comes in, because unlike a Fiesta the Puma feels one dimensional in comparison, with a blunt approach to dynamics and a heavy-handed feel to its steering and ride.

Talking of ride, the Puma's takes some miles to tune into. Quite a few. At low speeds it's particularly poor because it's overly stiff, yet at higher speeds it feels too soft when you expect more control.

After six weeks with our long-term I've discovered it's at its best at six- or seven-tenths. Which is when, exactly? When you're enjoying its creature comforts (heated everything in December? Yes please), nipping through traffic and looking for a tight spot to park in. The thrills will need to be sourced elsewhere this winter.

Stuart Gallagher (@stuartg917)

Date acquired April 2022 **Total mileage** 10,011 **Mileage this month** 1301 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 36.1



Jaguar F-Pace SVR

Absence makes the heart grow fonder for our V8 SUV

GIVEN ASTON PARROTT HAD ALREADY professed his love for the SVR in no uncertain terms, when a family holiday led me to borrow his Fast Fleet Skoda Kodiaq vRS he wasn't shy in accepting the swap. It turned out to be an extended stay, much to our photographer's delight, as our diaries failed to sync for the swap back for some time. When they eventually did, Aston sent an image of one of the Jaguar's doors with considerable damage present. A classic car-park scrape with the perpetrator leaving no note, but large enough to require bodyshop surgery. Damn it.

So while the SVR is having the creases ironed out, a Land Rover Discovery 5 D300 Metropolitan Edition (£75,475 plus options!) is temporarily in its place. It's a smooth and satisfying bit of kit, albeit a bit too bling for my tastes and not as spacious inside as I'd imagined. It reminds me more of a Range Rover than a Land Rover. I'm more of a fan of the Disco 3 and 4 in terms of concept and aesthetics, although the running costs on those now they're advancing in years seem almost as concerning as those for a Porsche 996...

The F-Pace SVR is definitely the sort of car you miss when it's not there. You can't write that about many SUVs, but there's something

about this Jaguar and its big personality that really embeds itself into your life, and most of all I pine for the deep rumble and effortless torque delivery of the supercharged V8.

I'm also really impressed with JLR's latest infotainment set-up, because after years of lagging behind the opposition (often literally), the SVR's system is both attractive to look at and really easy to use, even if it does have the odd freeze moment like every manufacturer system seems to do from time to time.

But back to that V8. I think I'm guilty of trying to kid myself that it's more fuel efficient than it really is, mainly because on a steady throttle over large distances it can be. I fear the reality on short journeys and/or using the horses is considerably south of the high-twenties mpg I like to boast about. But given the diesel Disco only really manages to just hit 30mpg, suddenly the Jag doesn't seem too bad once again. And that's what I'm telling myself. OK?

Adam Towler (@AdamTowler)

Date acquired July 2022 **Total mileage** 24,453 **Mileage this month** 501 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 25.1

Porsche 911 Carrera (993)

Our '90s 911 gains some discreet modern-day infotainment tech

AFTER ALL THE FOCUS ON PERFORMANCE improvements, I felt it was about time my 911's 28-year-old entertainment system had an upgrade too.

The majority of the new cars I get to drive at **evo** have Apple CarPlay connectivity, which I find particularly useful, so having this technology in the 993 was the goal. Luckily for me, Porsche has already thought about this and has developed

a system named PCCM (Porsche Classic Communication Management), which is essentially a factory-look, single-DIN head unit containing all the 21st-century functionality you could hope for.

While looking into the upgrade I spoke to Porsche Classic advisor Lou Richards at Porsche Hatfield, and he explained how the system's 3.5-inch touchscreen is particularly responsive, so works really well despite its modest size and '90s Porsche

ergonomics that mean the head unit is closer to the passenger than the driver. It gives you access to DAB+ radio, Apple CarPlay and a built-in navigation system, and there are also two SD-card slots for map updates and MP3 music.

This all sounded perfect but I had one issue: back in the '90s my car's interior had been modified to house a separate satnav unit in the centre console, just beneath the dash. It was skillfully done but sadly technology only lasts so long before becoming redundant and this kit was definitely showing its age. So to create my perfect minimalist interior with one unit running everything, I would also have to return the centre console and other parts that had been modified back to factory spec.

Thankfully the classic car boom means these parts – centre console, handbrake, gearlever sleeve and switch housing – are all available from Porsche. The original console in my car was Classic Grey, but this colour was on back order. Black was in stock, though, and as my car now has lots of black parts inside, including the seats, I decided this would work just fine.

To fit all the new parts meant removing what had been done before, including miles of electrical cables, which I left to Porsche's Classic techs. Then the DAB radio aerial was skilfully hidden behind the rear shelf, the hands-free microphone located on the steering column, and the twin USB box fitted inside the glovebox to keep the cabin looking as standard as possible. The next job was to remove the modified centre console and replace it with the new one, which came with the added bonus that I would now be able to use the drop-down storage tray in the lower dash for the first time, as this had previously been covered up.

With all the new parts installed it was time to see what the interior looked like and it did not disappoint. I'm really happy with the appearance of the new head unit and how the black console blends in. My first impressions of PCCM are that it's brilliant, being simple to use and with no glitches when scrolling through its various settings quickly. Being able to jump into the car and have the system automatically connect to my phone via Bluetooth is a real treat too, and the better sound quality means I can now actually have hands-free conversations on the go.

So my 993's infotainment is now on par with – or better than in some cases – what's available in many current cars on the market. I'm very pleased with the result and definitely feel the upgrade was worthwhile. I'll report back in a couple of months to let you know how the system is holding up.

Aston Parrott (@AstonParrott)

Date acquired April 2016 **Total mileage** 90,229 **Mileage this month** 208 **Costs this month** £1999 (PCCM unit, fitted), £366 (centre console) **mpg this month** 28.1



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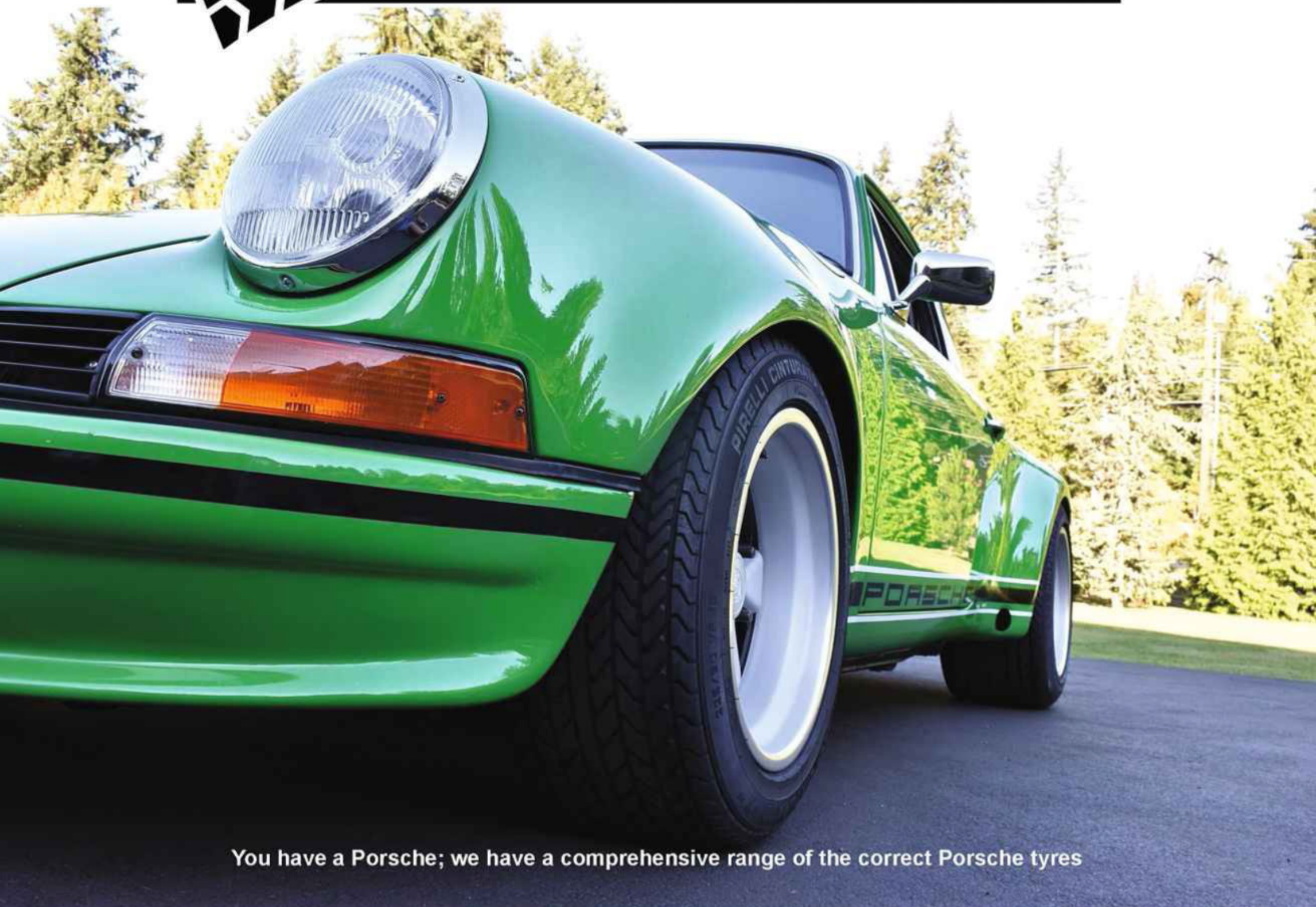



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The Knowledge

RATINGS

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

⊕ = new entry this month. Cars in italics are no longer on sale. **Issue no.** is for our most recent major test of the car (D = Driven, F = feature). **Engine** shows details of the car's combustion engine, or for BEVs the total output of the electric motors in kW. **Weight (claimed)** is as quoted by the manufacturer, with a manual gearbox if offered. In most cases this figure is to DIN standards, i.e. with fluids, including a 90 per cent full fuel tank, but without a driver. However, where only a 'dry' weight is quoted (i.e. without any fluids) this is indicated by *. Note that a dry weight makes a car's power-to-weight ratio (bhp/ton) appear more favourable. **Weight (tested)** is our measurement of a test car, with all fluids, including a full tank of fuel, but no driver. Note that test cars may be equipped with options that increase their weight. **bhp/ton (claimed)** is always calculated using the manufacturer's weight figure. **0-62mph (claimed)** is the manufacturer's figure, with a manual gearbox where offered. Our **0-60mph (tested)** figures could be with either a manual or automatic/dual-clutch transmission.

SUPERMINIS / HOT HATCHES



OUR CHOICE

Hyundai i30 N. Clearly developed by a team that knows what makes a great driver's car, the i30 N has edged ahead of the traditional middleweight hot hatch favourites thanks to a refreshing honesty and simplicity that makes it more engaging than the competition at any speed.



BEST OF THE REST

The **Mercedes-AMG A45 S** (left) maximises the potential of its ludicrously potent in-line four with an all-wheel-drive chassis that provides genuine involvement, while the latest **Audi RS3 Sportback** offers more than just impressive stats too. For affordable supermini fun, look no further than the **Hyundai i20 N** and **Ford Fiesta ST**.

| MAKE & MODEL | ISSUE NO. | PRICE OR YEARS ON SALE | ENGINE CYL/CC | BHP/RPM | LB FT/RPM | WEIGHT (CLAIMED) | WEIGHT (TESTED) | BHP/TON (CLAIMED) | 0-62MPH (CLAIMED) | 0-60MPH (TESTED) | MAX MPH | EVO RATING |
|--|-----------|---------------------------|------------------|----------|-----------|---------------------|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------|--|
| Abarth 595 Competizione | 256 D | £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 ★★★★★☆ |
| Abarth 695 Biposto | 205 F | 2014-18 | 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 | 2003-06 | 6/3179 | 247/6200 | 221/4800 | 1360kg | - | 185 | 6.3 | 6.0 | 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 | 2014-18 | 4/1984 | 228/6000 | 273/1600 | 1315kg | - | 176 | 5.8 | - | 155 | + Compliant and engaging chassis; quick, too - Looks dull without options ★★★★★☆ |
| Audi A1 quattro | 264 F | 2013 | 4/1984 | 253/6000 | 258/2500 | 1420kg | - | 181 | 5.7 | - | 152 | + Polished 253bhp 4WD A1 - Just 19 came to the UK, with a Porsche Cayman price ★★★★★☆ |
| 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 S3 | 188 F | 2013-20 | 4/1984 | 296/5500 | 280/1800 | 1395kg | - | 216 | 5.2 | 5.4 | 155 | + Lots of grip and one of the best-sounding four-pot turbos - Still a little too clinical ★★★★★☆ |
| Audi RS3 Sportback | 292 D | £55,230 | 5/2480 | 394/5600 | 369/2250 | 1570kg | - | 255 | 3.8 | - | 155 | + Improved chassis makes the RS3 a contender at last - Engine and gearbox hold it back ★★★★★☆ |
| Audi RS3 Sportback | 256 F | 2017-21 | 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 ★★★★★☆ |
| Audi RS3 Sportback | 221 F | 2015-16 | 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 ★★★★★☆ |
| BMW M135i xDrive | 271 F | £38,440 | 4/1998 | 302/5000 | 332/1800 | 1525kg | - | 201 | 4.8 | - | 155 | + Strong performance, monster 4WD traction - Engine lacks character ★★★★★☆ |
| BMW M235i xDrive Gran Coupé | 274 D | £39,315 | 4/1998 | 302/5000 | 332/1800 | 1570kg | - | 195 | 4.8 | - | 155 | + Quick, with an able chassis and quality cabin - Just not that exciting ★★★★★☆ |
| BMW M135i | 212 F | 2012-15 | 6/2979 | 321/5800 | 332/1300 | 1430kg | - | 228 | 5.1 | 5.2 | 155 | + Powertrain, noise, chassis - M235i looks nicer, and has an LSD option ★★★★★☆ |
| Citroën DS3 1.6 THP | 142 F | 2010-15 | 4/1598 | 154/6000 | 177/1400 | 1240kg | - | 126 | 7.3 | - | 133 | + A proper French hot hatch - Petrolheads might find it too 'designed' ★★★★★☆ |
| Citroën DS3 Racing | 153 D | 2011-12 | 4/1598 | 204/6000 | 203/2000 | 1240kg | - | 167 | 6.5 | - | 146 | + A faster, feistier DS3 - Not as hardcore as its 'Racing' tag suggests ★★★★★☆ |
| Citroën AX GT | 195 F | 1987-92 | 4/1360 | 85/6400 | 86/4000 | 722kg | - | 120 | 9.2 | - | 110 | + Makes terrific use of 85bhp - Feels like it's made from paper ★★★★★☆ |
| 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 ★★★★★☆ |
| DS 3 Performance | 222 D | 2016-18 | 4/1598 | 205/6000 | 221/3000 | 1175kg | - | 177 | 6.5 | - | 143 | + All the right ingredients - Undercooked ★★★★★☆ |
| Fiat Panda 100HP | 273 F | 2006-11 | 4/1368 | 99/6000 | 97/4250 | 975kg | 1028kg | 103 | 9.5 | - | 115 | + About as fun as small cars get - Optional ESP can't be turned off ★★★★★☆ |
| 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 ★★★★★☆ |
| Ford Fiesta ST Edition / Performance Edition | 292 F | £28,770 | 3/1497 | 197/6000 | 214/1600 | 1187kg | - | 169 | 6.5 | - | 144 | + Like the regular Fiesta ST, but with added composure - How much?! ★★★★★☆ |
| Ford Fiesta ST | 207 F | 2013-17 | 4/1596 | 197/5700 | 214/2500 | 1088kg | 1193kg | 184 | 6.9 | 7.4 | 137 | + Chassis, price, punchy performance - Have you heard of Mountune? ★★★★★☆ |
| Ford Fiesta ST200 | 253 F | 2016 | 4/1596 | 212/6000 | 236/2500 | 1088kg | - | 198 | 6.7 | - | 143 | + Massive fun - They only made 400 ★★★★★☆ |
| Ford Fiesta Zetec S | 123 D | 2008-13 | 4/1596 | 118/6000 | 112/4050 | 1045kg | - | 115 | 9.9 | - | 120 | + A very entertaining supermini - Renault Sport Twingo and Suzuki Swift are even more fun ★★★★★☆ |
| Ford Focus ST | 075 D | 2005-08 | 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 Edition (Mk4) | 294 D | £35,785 | 4/2261 | 276/5500 | 310/3000 | 1433kg | - | 196 | 5.7 | - | 155 | + Elevates the Focus ST from its underdog status - Needs a better engine and steering ★★★★★☆ |
| Ford Focus ST (Mk3) | 207 F | 2015-18 | 4/1999 | 247/5500 | 265/2000 | 1362kg | - | 184 | 6.5 | - | 154 | + Excellent engine - Scrappy when pushed ★★★★★☆ |
| Ford Focus ST (Mk2) | 119 F | 2005-10 | 5/2522 | 222/6000 | 236/1600 | 1392kg | - | 162 | 6.8 | 6.7 | 150 | + Value, performance, integrity - Big engine compromises handling ★★★★★☆ |
| Ford Focus RS (Mk3) | 246 F | 2015-18 | 4/2261 | 345/6000 | 347/2000 | 1547kg | 1569kg | 227 | 4.7 | 4.9 | 166 | + Torque-vectoring 4WD brought new sensations to a hot hatch - Needs to be driven hard ★★★★★☆ |
| Ford Focus RS Edition (Mk3) | 246 D | 2018 | 4/2261 | 345/6000 | 347/2000 | 1547kg | - | 227 | 4.7 | - | 166 | + Front limited-slip differential brings more precise handling - Pricey and still heavy ★★★★★☆ |
| Ford Focus RS (Mk2) | 195 F | 2009-11 | 5/2522 | 300/6500 | 324/2300 | 1467kg | - | 208 | 5.9 | 5.9 | 163 | + Huge performance, highly capable FWD chassis - Body control is occasionally clumsy ★★★★★☆ |
| Ford Focus RS500 (Mk2) | 256 F | 2010-11 | 5/2522 | 345/6000 | 339/2500 | 1467kg | - | 239 | 5.6 | 5.6 | 165 | + More power and presence than regular Mk2 RS - Pricey ★★★★★☆ |
| Ford Focus RS (Mk1) | 207 F | 2002-03 | 4/1998 | 212/5500 | 229/3500 | 1278kg | - | 169 | 6.7 | 5.9 | 143 | + Some are great - Some are awful (so make sure you drive plenty) ★★★★★☆ |
| Ford Escort RS Cosworth | 271 F | 1992-96 | 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 | 1997-2002 | 4/1679 | 123/6300 | 116/4500 | 1041kg | - | 120 | 9.2 | 8.6 | 122 | + Revvy engine, sparkling chassis, bargain used prices - Rusty rear arches ★★★★★☆ |
| Ford Racing Puma | 262 F | 2000-01 | 4/1679 | 153/7000 | 119/4500 | 1174kg | - | 132 | 7.9 | 7.8 | 137 | + An affordable exotic - Corroding rear arches ★★★★★☆ |
| Honda Civic Type R (FK8) | 288 F | 2017-21 | 4/1996 | 316/6500 | 295/2500 | 1380kg | 1409kg | 233 | 5.8 | 5.9 | 168 | + One of the greatest hot hatches ever - Its looks are challenging for some ★★★★★☆ |
| Honda Civic Type R Limited Edition (FK8) | 293 F | 2021 | 4/1996 | 316/6500 | 295/2500 | 1333kg | - | 241 | 5.8 | - | 168 | + Terrifically capable, blisteringly quick, still practical - Standard FK8 is a better road car ★★★★★☆ |
| Honda Civic Type R (FK2) | 227 F | 2015-17 | 4/1996 | 306/6500 | 295/2500 | 1378kg | - | 226 | 5.7 | 5.4 | 167 | + Great on smooth roads - Can be punishing on less-than-smooth roads ★★★★★☆ |
| Honda Civic Type R (FN2) | 102 F | 2007-11 | 4/1998 | 198/7800 | 142/5600 | 1267kg | - | 158 | 6.6 | 6.8 | 146 | + Looks great, VTEC more accessible - Steering lacks feel, inert balance ★★★★★☆ |
| Honda Civic Type R Mugen (FN2) | 248 F | 2009-11 | 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 | 2001-05 | 4/1998 | 197/7400 | 145/5900 | 1204kg | - | 166 | 6.8 | 6.8 | 146 | + Potent and great value - Duff steering ★★★★★☆ |
| Honda Civic Type R (EK9) | 210 F | 1997-2000 | 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 | 293 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 | 292 F | £33,745 | 4/1998 | 276/6000 | 289/1950 | 1419kg | 1477kg | 198 | 5.9 | - | 155 | + A brilliant, thoroughly developed hot hatch - Its engine isn't the most charismatic ★★★★★☆ |
| 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 ★★★★★☆ |
| 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 ★★★★★☆ |
| 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 ★★★★★☆ |

| MAKE & MODEL | ISSUE NO. | PRICE OR YEARS ON SALE | ENGINE CYL/CC | BHP/RPM | LB FT/RPM | WEIGHT (CLAIMED) | WEIGHT (TESTED) | BHP/TON (CLAIMED) | 0-62MPH (CLAIMED) | 0-60MPH (TESTED) | MAX MPH | EVO RATING | |
|--|-----------|---------------------------|------------------|----------|-----------|---------------------|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------|--|-------|
| Lancia Delta HF Integrale Evoluzione II | 271 F | 1993-94 | 4/1995 | 212/5750 | 232/2500 | 1340kg | - | 161 | 5.7 | - | 137 | + One of the finest cars ever built - Demands love, LHD only | ★★★★★ |
| Mercedes-AMG A35 | 267 F | £43,440 | 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 | £60,628 | 4/1991 | 415/6750 | 369/5000 | 1550kg | - | 272 | 3.9 | - | 167 | + A 21st-century reincarnation of late-'90s Imprezas and Evos - It costs £50k | ★★★★★ |
| Mercedes-AMG A45 | 221 F | 2015-18 | 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 | 2012-15 | 4/1991 | 355/6000 | 332/2250 | 1480kg | - | 244 | 4.6 | 4.3 | 155 | + Blisteringly quick everywhere - Not as rewarding as some slower rivals | ★★★★☆ |
| Mini Cooper (F56) | 254 D | £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 | ★★★★☆ |
| 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 | ★★★★☆ |
| 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 | 2016-17 | 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 | 2009-14 | 4/1598 | 120/6000 | 118/4250 | 1075kg | - | 113 | 9.1 | - | 126 | + Brilliant ride and composure; could be all the Mini you need - You'll still buy the 'S' | ★★★★★ |
| Mini Cooper S (R56) | 149 F | 2006-14 | 4/1598 | 181/5500 | 177/1600 | 1140kg | - | 161 | 7.0 | 7.0 | 142 | + Like the Cooper, but with added shove - Google 'Mini death rattle' | ★★★★★ |
| Mini John Cooper Works (R56) | 184 F | 2008-14 | 4/1598 | 208/6000 | 206/2000 | 1160kg | 1228kg | 182 | 6.9 | 7.2 | 148 | + A seriously rapid Mini - Occasionally just a little unruly | ★★★★★ |
| Mini John Cooper Works GP (R56) | 231 F | 2013-14 | 4/1598 | 215/6000 | 206/2000 | 1160kg | 1178kg | 188 | 6.3 | - | 150 | + Brazenly hyperactive - Too much for some roads and some tastes | ★★★★★ |
| Mini John Cooper Works Coupé (R58) | 164 F | 2011-15 | 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 | 2002-06 | 4/1598 | 168/6000 | 155/4000 | 1140kg | - | 143 | 7.2 | 7.8 | 135 | + Strong performance, quality feel - Over-long gearing | ★★★★★ |
| Mini Cooper S Works GP (R53) | 262 F | 2006 | 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 | 2015-17 | 4/1618 | 215/6000 | 206/3600 | 1315kg | - | 166 | 7.0 | - | 137 | + Quirky character and bold styling - Not a match for a pukka hot hatch | ★★★★☆ |
| Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 2) | 273 F | 1997-98 | 4/1587 | 103/6200 | 97/3500 | 865kg | 889kg | 121 | 8.8 | - | 121 | + Bargain no-frills thrills - Not as much fizz as original 1.3 | ★★★★★ |
| Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 1) | 095 F | 1994-96 | 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 | 1997-2004 | 4/1587 | 120/6600 | 107/5200 | 950kg | - | 128 | 7.4 | - | 127 | + Fine handling supermini - Looks its age | ★★★★★ |
| Peugeot 208 GTi by Peugeot Sport | 254 F | 2015-18 | 4/1598 | 205/6000 | 221/3000 | 1160kg | 1195kg | 180 | 6.5 | - | 143 | + A brilliantly focused small hatch - Obscured dials | ★★★★★ |
| Peugeot 208 GTi | 184 F | 2012-16 | 4/1598 | 197/5800 | 203/1700 | 1160kg | 1210kg | 173 | 6.8 | 6.8 | 143 | + Agile chassis works well on tough roads - Could be more involving | ★★★★☆ |
| Peugeot 205 GTi 1.9 | 195 F | 1988-91 | 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 | 2015-18 | 4/1598 | 256/6000 | 251/2100 | 1205kg | 1316kg | 224 | 6.0 | 6.0 | 155 | + A great entertainer with a cracker of an engine - Tiny steering wheel | ★★★★★ |
| Peugeot 306 GTi 6 | 020 F | 1993-2001 | 4/1998 | 167/6500 | 142/5500 | 1214kg | - | 140 | 7.9 | 7.2 | 140 | + One of the great GTIs - They don't make them like this any more | ★★★★★ |
| Peugeot 306 Rallye | 095 F | 1998-99 | 4/1998 | 167/6500 | 142/5500 | 1163kg | - | 146 | 7.8 | 6.9 | 137 | + Essentially a GTi 6 for less dosh - Limited choice of colours | ★★★★★ |
| Renault Sport Twingo 133 | 175 F | 2008-13 | 4/1598 | 131/6750 | 118/4400 | 1050kg | - | 127 | 8.7 | - | 125 | + Renault Sport experience for pocket money - Optional Cup chassis gives bouncy ride | ★★★★☆ |
| Renault Sport Clio 200 Auto | 184 F | 2013-18 | 4/1618 | 197/6000 | 177/1750 | 1204kg | 1294kg | 166 | 6.7 | 6.9 | 143 | + Faster, more refined, easier to drive - We miss the revvy NA engine and manual 'box | ★★★★☆ |
| Renault Sport Clio 220 Trophy | 229 D | 2016-18 | 4/1618 | 217/6050 | 206/2000 | 1204kg | - | 183 | 6.6 | - | 146 | + Willing chassis - Awful paddleshift gearbox | ★★★★☆ |
| Renault Sport Clio 200 Cup | 247 F | 2009-13 | 4/1998 | 197/7100 | 159/5400 | 1204kg | - | 166 | 6.9 | 6.6 | 141 | + The hot Clio at its best - They don't make 'em like this anymore | ★★★★★ |
| Renault Sport Clio 197 Cup | 115 F | 2007-09 | 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 | 2004-05 | 4/1998 | 180/6500 | 148/5250 | 1110kg | - | 165 | 7.1 | 6.6 | 139 | + Took hot hatches to a new level - Flawed driving position | ★★★★★ |
| Renault Sport Clio 182 Cup | 187 F | 2004-05 | 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 | 2005-06 | 4/1998 | 180/6500 | 148/5250 | 1090kg | - | 168 | 6.9 | 6.6 | 140 | + The most fun you can have on three (sometimes two) wheels - Only 500 were built | ★★★★★ |
| Renault Sport Clio 172 (Phase 2) | 034 F | 2001-03 | 4/1998 | 170/6250 | 147/5400 | 1110kg | - | 156 | 7.2 | 7.1 | 138 | + Poised, predictable, fast - Lacks aggressive edge | ★★★★☆ |
| Renault Sport Clio 172 Cup | 048 F | 2002-03 | 4/1998 | 170/6250 | 147/5400 | 1011kg | - | 171 | 6.9 | 6.5 | 138 | + Bargain old-school hot hatch - Nervous in the wet, no ABS | ★★★★☆ |
| Renault Sport Clio 172 (Phase 1) | 146 F | 2000-01 | 4/1998 | 170/6250 | 147/5400 | 1035kg | - | 167 | 7.2 | 6.6 | 138 | + Brilliantly accomplished - Imperfect driving position | ★★★★★ |
| Renault Clio Williams | 233 F | 1993-96 | 4/1988 | 148/6100 | 126/4500 | 981kg | - | 153 | 7.8 | 7.6 | 134 | + One of the best hot hatches ever - Can be fragile | ★★★★★ |
| Renault 5 GT Turbo | 255 F | 1987-91 | 4/1397 | 118/5750 | 122/3000 | 855kg | - | 140 | 7.3 | - | 120 | + Clio Williams' granddaddy - Few unmodified ones left | ★★★★★ |
| Renault Sport Clio V6 255 | 294 F | 2003-05 | 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 | 1999-2002 | 6/2946 | 227/6000 | 221/3750 | 1410kg | - | 164 | 6.6 | 5.8 | 145 | + Pocket supercar - Mid-engined handling can be tricky | ★★★★☆ |
| Renault Mégane RS (280) | 267 F | 2018-20 | 4/1798 | 276/6000 | 288/2400 | 1407kg | 1464kg | 199 | 5.8 | 6.3 | 158 | + Outrageous grip and agility - Cup chassis option doesn't do its composure any favours | ★★★★★ |
| Renault Mégane RS 300 | 298 F | 2020-21 | 4/1798 | 296/6000 | 310/4000 | 1443kg | - | 209 | 5.7 | - | 158 | + Finally combined the Trophy's more potent engine with the softer chassis - Auto only | ★★★★★ |
| Renault Mégane RS Trophy | 267 F | 2018-21 | 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 | ★★★★★ |
| Renault Mégane RS Trophy-R | 280 F | 2019-21 | 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 | 2016 | 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 | 2012-15 | 4/1998 | 261/5500 | 265/3000 | 1387kg | - | 191 | 6.0 | 6.4 | 158 | + A hot hatch benchmark - Cupholder could be better positioned | ★★★★★ |
| Renault Sport Mégane 275 Trophy | 212 F | 2014-15 | 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 | 2014-15 | 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 | 2009-12 | 4/1998 | 247/5500 | 251/3000 | 1387kg | - | 181 | 6.1 | 6.1 | 156 | + Fantastic chassis... - ...partially obscured by new-found maturity | ★★★★★ |
| Renault Sport Mégane dCi 175 Cup | 119 F | 2007-09 | 4/1995 | 173/3750 | 265/2000 | 1470kg | - | 119 | 8.3 | 8.3 | 137 | + A diesel with a genuinely sporty chassis - Could take more power | ★★★★★ |
| Renault Sport Mégane 230 FI Team R26 | 195 F | 2007-09 | 4/1998 | 227/5500 | 229/3000 | 1345kg | - | 171 | 6.5 | 6.2 | 147 | + The car the R26.R is based on - FI Team stickers in dubious taste | ★★★★★ |
| Renault Sport Mégane R26.R | 276 F | 2008-09 | 4/1998 | 227/5500 | 229/3000 | 1220kg | - | 189 | 6.0 | 5.8 | 147 | + A true hot hatch great - Two seats, plastic rear windows | ★★★★★ |
| SEAT Ibiza Cupra | 225 F | 2016-18 | 4/1798 | 189/4300 | 236/1450 | 1185kg | - | 162 | 6.7 | - | 146 | + Quick, competent, refined, and manual only - Not exciting enough | ★★★★☆ |
| SEAT Ibiza Cupra | 183 D | 2010-15 | 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 | 2016-20 | 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 | 2018 | 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 | 2007-11 | 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 | 2010-14 | 4/1390 | 178/6200 | 184/2000 | 1218kg | - | 148 | 7.3 | - | 139 | + Clever twincharged engine and DSG 'box - Do your homework on the reliability of the engine | ★★★★☆ |
| Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk1) | 077 F | 2003-07 | 4/1896 | 130/4000 | 129/1900 | 1315kg | - | 100 | 9.6 | - | 127 | + Fun and frugal hot hatch - A little short on steering feel | ★★★★☆ |
| 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 | 2013-17 | 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 | 2017-20 | 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 | 130 | + Composed and brisk - Adjustability and character have been diluted | ★★★★☆ |
| Suzuki Swift Sport (Mk2) | 175 F | 2012-17 | 4/1586 | 134/6900 | 118/4400 | 1045kg | - | 130 | 8.7 | - | 121 | + Still a great pocket rocket - Not quite as adjustable as the original | ★★★★★ |
| Suzuki Swift Sport (Mk1) | 132 F | 2005-11 | 4/1586 | 123/6800 | 109/4800 | 1030kg | - | 121 | 8.9 | - | 124 | + Entertaining handling, well built - Lacking in steering feedback | ★★★★★ |
| Toyota GR Yaris | 299 F | '20-'22 | 3/1618 | 257/6500 | 265/3000 | 1280kg | 1280kg | 204 | 5.5 | - | 142 | + A proper homologation special - More Subaru Impreza than Mitsubishi Evo | ★★★★★ |
| Toyota Yaris GRMN | 254 F | 2018 | 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 | 2014-18 | 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 | 2007-14 | 4/1598 | 189/5850 | 192/1980 | 1166kg | - | 165 | 7.2 | - | 140 | + Looks snazzy, punchy engine - Lacks feel, uncouth compared with rivals | ★★★★☆ |
| Vauxhall Corsa VXR Nürburgring/Clubsport | 164 F | 2011-14 | 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 | 2012-18 | 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 | 2005-11 | 4/1998 | 237/5600 | 236/2400 | 1393kg | - | 173 | 6.4 | 6.7 | 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 | 2001-04 | 4/1598 | 123/6500 | 112/3000 | 1038kg | - | 120 | 8.2 | 8.9 | 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 | ★★★★☆ |
| Volkswagen Polo GTI | 211 F | 2015-17 | 4/1798 | 189/4200 | 236/1450 | 1197kg | - | 160 | 6.7 | - | 146 | + Smooth and brawny - Fiesta ST is more engaging | ★★★★☆ |
| Volkswagen Polo GTI | 154 F | 2010-14 | 4/1390 | 178/6200 | 184/2000 | 1184kg | - | 153 | 7.4 | - | 142 | + Modern-day Mk1 Golf GTI gets twin-clutch DSG - It's a little bit bland | ★★★★☆ |
| Volkswagen Golf GTI (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 | ★★★★☆ |
| 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 | 2017-20 | | | | | | | | | | | |

| MAKE & MODEL | ISSUE NO. | PRICE OR YEARS ON SALE | ENGINE CYL/CC | BHP/RPM | LB FT/RPM | WEIGHT (CLAIMED) | WEIGHT (TESTED) | BHP/TON (CLAIMED) | 0-62MPH (CLAIMED) | 0-60MPH (TESTED) | MAX MPH | EVO RATING | |
|--------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|------------------|----------|-----------|---------------------|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------|---|-------|
| Volkswagen Golf GTI (Mk5) | 259 F | 2004-09 | 4/1984 | 197/5100 | 207/1800 | 1336kg | - | 150 | 7.3 | 6.7 | 146 | + Character and ability; the GTI's return to form - Lacking firepower? | ★★★★★ |
| Volkswagen Golf R32 (Mk5) | 087 F | 2006-09 | 6/3189 | 246/6300 | 236/2500 | 1466kg | - | 170 | 6.5 | 5.8 | 155 | + The traction's great and you'll love the soundtrack - We'd still have a GTI | ★★★★☆ |
| Volkswagen Golf R32 (Mk4) | 053 F | 2002-04 | 6/3189 | 237/6250 | 236/2800 | 1477kg | - | 163 | 6.6 | 6.4 | 154 | + Charismatic - Boomy engine can be tiresome | ★★★★☆ |
| Volkswagen Golf GTI 16v (Mk2) | 195 F | 1988-92 | 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 | 1982-84 | 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. It may be a four-door saloon, but the Giulia Quadrifoglio oozes with all the passion, verve and spirit you'd hope for from an Italian sports car, feeling truly exotic in a way its rivals can't match and bringing real joy to every journey. Bravo, Alfa!



BEST OF THE REST

If the Alfa is the car your heart would choose, the **BMW M3 Competition** (left) is the choice of your head. Need something a size larger, or just want to bag something with a V8 while you still can? The **Audi RS6 Avant**, **BMW M5 Competition** and **Mercedes-AMG E63 S** (saloon or estate) provide a trio of strong options.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------|-----------|---------|----------|----------|--------|--------|-----|-----|-----|-----|--|-------|
| 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 | ★★★★★ |
| 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 | 2021 | 6/2891 | 533/6500 | 442/2500 | 1580kg | - | 343 | 3.6 | - | 186 | + A sensational saloon car with a truly infectious character - It's a bit pricey | ★★★★★ |
| Alfa Romeo Stelvio Quadrifoglio | 244 D | £79,819 | 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 | ★★★★★ |
| Aston Martin Rapide | 141 F | 2010-13 | 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 | 2013-19 | 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 | 2019-20 | 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 | ★★★★☆ |
| 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 | ★★★★☆ |
| Aston Martin DBX707 | 297 F | £189,000 | 8/3982 | 697/6000 | 663/2600 | 2245kg | - | 315 | 3.3 | - | 193 | + Monster power, but a rounded performer too - It still weighs 2.2 tons | ★★★★★ |
| Audi RS3 Saloon | 299 F | £56,230 | 5/2480 | 394/5600 | 369/2250 | 1575kg | - | 254 | 3.8 | - | 155 | + Improved chassis makes the RS3 a contender at last - Engine and gearbox hold it back | ★★★★☆ |
| Audi RS3 Saloon | 243 F | 2017-21 | 5/2480 | 394/5850 | 354/1700 | 1515kg | - | 264 | 4.1 | 3.6 | 155 | + Mini RS4 looks; stonking pace - Not the most involving driving experience | ★★★★☆ |
| 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 isn't to everyone's taste | ★★★★☆ |
| Audi S4 (B9, petrol) | 225 D | 2017-19 | 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 | £67,465 | 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 Competition (B9) | 304 D | £84,600 | 6/2894 | 444/5700 | 442/1900 | 1745kg | - | 259 | 3.9 | - | 180 | + Corsa tyres and manually adjustable coilover suspension - Not as hardcore as it sounds | ★★★★☆ |
| Audi RS4 Avant (B8) | 216 F | 2012-15 | 8/4163 | 444/8250 | 317/4000 | 1795kg | - | 251 | 4.7 | 4.5 | 174 | + Looks and sounds the part, thunderously fast - Unnatural steering, dull dynamics | ★★★★☆ |
| Audi RS4 (B7) | 250 F | 2005-08 | 8/4163 | 414/7800 | 317/5500 | 1650kg | - | 255 | 4.7 | 4.5 | 155 | + 414bhp at 7800rpm! And there's an estate version too - Busy under braking | ★★★★★ |
| Audi RS4 (B5) | 192 F | 2000-02 | 6/2671 | 375/6100 | 325/2500 | 1620kg | - | 236 | 4.9 | 4.8 | 170 | + Effortless pace - Not the last word in agility; bends wheel rims | ★★★★☆ |
| Audi RS2 | 214 F | 1994-95 | 5/2226 | 315/6500 | 302/3000 | 1595kg | - | 201 | 4.8 | 4.8 | 162 | + Storming performance (thanks to Porsche) - Try finding one | ★★★★☆ |
| Audi S5 Sportback | 233 D | 2017-19 | 6/2995 | 349/5400 | 369/1370 | 1660kg | - | 214 | 4.7 | - | 155 | + More capable than you think; strong V6 engine - Gearbox frustrating in auto mode | ★★★★☆ |
| 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 | ★★★★☆ |
| Audi RS6 Avant (C7) | 203 F | 2013-18 | 8/3993 | 552/5700 | 516/1750 | 1935kg | - | 290 | 3.9 | 3.6 | 155 | + Performance, foolproof powertrain, beefy looks - Feels a bit one-dimensional | ★★★★☆ |
| Audi RS6 Avant Performance (C7) | 224 D | 2015-19 | 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 | 2008-10 | 10/4991 | 572/6250 | 479/1500 | 1985kg | - | 293 | 4.5 | 4.3 | 155 | + Was the world's most powerful estate - Power isn't everything | ★★★★☆ |
| Audi RS6 Avant (C5) | 258 F | 2002-04 | 8/4172 | 444/5700 | 413/1950 | 1865kg | - | 242 | 4.6 | 4.8 | 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 | ★★★★☆ |
| 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 | ★★★★☆ |
| Bentley Flying Spur Hybrid | 295 D | £168,000 | 6/2894 | 536 | 553 | 2505kg | - | 217 | 4.3 | - | 177 | + Silent refinement at its best - V6 not as refined as you'd expect | ★★★★☆ |
| 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 | 2016-19 | 8/3993 | 521/6000 | 502/1700 | 2417kg | - | 219 | 4.9 | - | 190 | + Old-school approach to comfort and luxury - Old-school tech | ★★★★☆ |
| Bentley Flying Spur | 185 D | 2013-18 | 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 | ★★★★☆ |
| Bentley Bentayga V8 | 247 D | £179,600 | 8/3996 | 542/6000 | 568/1960 | 2388kg | - | 231 | 4.5 | - | 180 | + More enjoyable than the W12 - A top-end Range Rover is still more polished | ★★★★☆ |
| Bentley Bentayga S | 301 D | £187,800 | 8/3996 | 542/6000 | 568/2000 | 2416kg | - | 228 | 4.5 | - | 180 | + The best Bentayga to drive - Far from the most elegant Bentley | ★★★★☆ |
| Bentley Mulsanne Speed | 279 F | 2014-20 | 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 | ★★★★☆ |
| 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 | ★★★★☆ |
| 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 i4 M50 | 296 D | £63,905 | 400kW | 536 | 586 | 2215kg | - | 249 | 3.9 | - | 139 | + A compelling daily EV - Heavy and expensive compared with an M340i | ★★★★☆ |
| BMW M3 Competition (G80) | 293 F | £76,115 | 6/2993 | 503/6250 | 479/2750 | 1730kg | - | 295 | 3.9 | - | 155 | + As quick and capable as you'd want - Bigger and heavier than you'd like | ★★★★☆ |
| BMW M3 Competition xDrive (G80) | 292 D | £78,425 | 6/2993 | 503/6250 | 479/2750 | 1780kg | - | 287 | 3.5 | - | 155 | + Four-wheel drive doesn't spoil the fun - There's a slight weight penalty | ★★★★☆ |
| BMW M3 (F80) | 266 F | 2014-20 | 6/2979 | 425/5500 | 406/1850 | 1560kg | - | 277 | 4.3 | 4.1 | 155 | + Looks, performance, practicality - Body control on rough roads; engine lacks character | ★★★★☆ |
| BMW M3 Competition Package (F80) | 237 F | 2016-19 | 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 | ★★★★☆ |
| BMW M3 CS (F80) | 250 D | 2018-19 | 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 | ★★★★☆ |
| BMW M3 (F90) | 123 F | 2008-11 | 8/3999 | 414/8300 | 295/3900 | 1605kg | - | 262 | 4.9 | 4.9 | 165 | + Every bit as good as the E92 M3 coupe - No carbon roof | ★★★★★ |
| BMW M3 (F90) | 244 F | 2017-20 | 8/4395 | 592/5600 | 553/1800 | 1855kg | - | 324 | 3.4 | - | 155 | + Fun in two- or four-wheel drive - Insufficient steering connection and engine character | ★★★★☆ |
| BMW M5 Competition (F90) | 282 F | £109,615 | 8/4395 | 616/6000 | 553/1800 | 1895kg | - | 330 | 3.3 | - | 155 | + Incredible performance, sharper handling - It's still a big old bus | ★★★★☆ |
| BMW M5 CS (F90) | 297 F | '21-'22 | 8/4395 | 626/6000 | 553/1800 | 1825kg | - | 349 | 3.0 | - | 189 | + evo Car of the Year 2021 - Erm, there's only two rear seats? | ★★★★★ |
| BMW M5 (F10) | 208 F | 2011-16 | 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 | 2004-10 | 10/4999 | 500/7750 | 384/6100 | 1755kg | - | 289 | 4.7 | - | 155 | + Close to being the ultimate supersaloon - SMG gearbox feels old-tech | ★★★★☆ |
| BMW M5 (E39) | 268 F | 1998-2003 | 8/4941 | 394/6600 | 369/3800 | 1795kg | - | 223 | 5.3 | 4.9 | 155 | + Magnificent V8-engined supersaloon - We'd be nitpicking | ★★★★★ |
| BMW M5 (E34) | 110 F | 1988-95 | 6/3795 | 335/6900 | 295/4750 | 1725kg | - | 197 | 5.8 | 4.9 | 155 | + The Godfather of supersaloons - The family can come too | ★★★★★ |
| BMW M5 (E28) | 258 F | 1984-88 | 6/3453 | 282/6500 | 251/4500 | 1431kg | - | 200 | 6.1 | - | 156 | + The original storming saloon - Understated looks | ★★★★★ |
| BMW M6 Gran Coupé | 190 D | 2013-18 | 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 | 2017-20 | 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 | ★★★☆☆ |
| Genesis G70 Shooting Brake 2.0T Plus | 265 D | £40,700 | 4/1998 | 241/6200 | 260/1450 | 1717kg | - | 143 | 6.4 | - | 146 | + Striking looks, quality interior - Lacklustre engine; dull and unresolved handling | ★★★☆☆ |
| Honda Accord Type R | 012 F | 1998-2003 | 4/2157 | 209/7200 | 158/6700 | 1306kg | - | 163 | 7.2 | 6.1 | 142 | + One of the finest front-drivers of all time - Convincing your friends of that | ★★★★☆ |
| 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 | 2018-20 | 8/5000 | 592/6500 | 516/3500 | 1745kg | 1793kg | 345 | 3.7 | 3.5 | 200 | + Beautifully controlled and amazingly agile - They only made 15 in Touring spec | ★★★★☆ |
| Jaguar XFR | 181 D | 2009-15 | 8/5000 | 503/6000 | 461/2500 | 1800kg | - | 284 | 4.7 | 4.8 | 155 | + Brilliant blend of pace and refinement - Doesn't sound as special as it is | ★★★★☆ |
| Jaguar XFR-S | 208 F | 2013-15 | 8/5000 | 542/6500 | 501/2500 | 1800kg | - | 306 | 4.6 | - | 186 | + XF turned up to 12 - Tyres aren't cheap | ★★★★☆ |
| Jaguar XJR | 191 D | 2014-17 | 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 | 2016-18 | 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 | ★★★★☆ |
| 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 | ★★★★☆ |
| Kia Stinger GTS | 242 D | £45,160 | 6/3342 | 365/6000 | 376/1300 | 1780kg | - | 168 | 4.7 | - | 168 | + Playful handling, deep-chested performance - Engine lacks soul, steering lacks feel | ★★★★☆ |
| Land Rover Defender 110 (P400) | 273 F | £90,195 | 6/2996 | 394/5500 | 406/2000 | 2388kg | - | 168 | 6.4 | - | 129 | + A great off-roader - If off-roading is your thing | ★★★★☆ |

| MAKE & MODEL | ISSUE NO. | PRICE OR YEARS ON SALE | ENGINE CVT/ CC | BHP/RPM | LB FT/RPM | WEIGHT (CLAIMED) | WEIGHT (TESTED) | BHP/TON (CLAIMED) | 0-62MPH (CLAIMED) | 0-60MPH (TESTED) | MAX MPH | EVO RATING | |
|--|-----------|---------------------------|-------------------|----------|-----------|---------------------|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------|---|-------|
| Lamborghini Urus | 249 F | £177,417 | 8/3996 | 641/6000 | 627/2250 | 2200kg | - | 296 | 3.6 | - | 190 | + A freakish manipulator of physics - But also rather one-dimensional | ★★★★☆ |
| Lamborghini Urus Performante | 304 D | £209,000 | 8/3996 | 657/6000 | 627/2250 | 2150kg | - | 310 | 3.3 | - | 190 | + Gains a notable dose of athleticism - It's hard not to question the point of it all | ★★★★☆ |
| Lexus IS F | 151 F | 2007-12 | 8/4969 | 417/6600 | 372/5200 | 1714kg | - | 247 | 5.2 | 4.7 | 173 | + Shockingly good Lexus - The M3's available as a four-door too | ★★★★☆ |
| Lotus Carlton | 292 F | 1990-93 | 6/3615 | 377/5200 | 419/4200 | 1658kg | - | 231 | 5.4 | 4.8 | 177 | + The Millennium Falcon of saloon cars - Every drive is a work-out | ★★★★★ |
| Lucid Air Dream Edition P | 298 D | \$170,500 | 1000kW | 1111 | 1025 | 2360kg | - | 478 | 2.5 | - | 168 | + An EV that engages the driver - Sacrifices ultimate handling for a longer range | ★★★★☆ |
| Maserati Ghibli Trofeo | 290 D | £118,645 | 8/3799 | 572/6750 | 538/2250 | 1969kg | - | 295 | 4.3 | - | 202 | + Subtle performance elegantly delivered - It's quite expensive | ★★★★☆ |
| Maserati Grecale Trofeo | 305 D | £95,950 | 6/3000 | 523/6500 | 457/3000 | 2027kg | - | 262 | 3.8 | - | 177 | + Rapid and accomplished - Lacks character and ultimate flair | ★★★★☆ |
| Maserati Quattroporte S | 184 D | 2013-18 | 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 | 2016-18 | 8/3798 | 523/6800 | 479/2250 | 1900kg | - | 280 | 4.7 | - | 193 | + Still pretty - Off the pace dynamically | ★★★★☆ |
| Maserati Quattroporte Trofeo | 287 D | £134,285 | 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 | 2008-12 | 8/4691 | 425/7000 | 361/4750 | 1990kg | - | 216 | 5.4 | 5.1 | 174 | + A QP with the bhp it deserves - Grille is a bit Hannibal Lecter | ★★★★☆ |
| Maserati Quattroporte Sport GTS | 141 F | 2008-12 | 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 | 2016-20 | 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 | £41,660 | 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 CLA 45 S Coupé | 273 D | £60,965 | 4/1991 | 415/6750 | 369/5000 | 1600kg | - | 264 | 4.0 | - | 167 | + Speed, ability and involvement - CLA35 offers a similar experience for less outlay | ★★★★☆ |
| Mercedes-AMG CLA 45 S Shooting Brake | 278 D | £61,965 | 4/1991 | 415/6750 | 369/5000 | 1630kg | - | 259 | 4.0 | - | 155 | + Same stellar performance and involvement as the A45 - See above | ★★★★☆ |
| Mercedes-AMG C63 S Saloon (W206) | 301 D | £64,110 | 4/1991 | 402/6750 | 369/5000 | 1690kg | - | 242 | 4.6 | - | 155 | + Hugely accessible performance - Sterile steering, some transmission jerkiness | ★★★★☆ |
| Mercedes-AMG C43 Estate (W205) | 228 D | 2017-21 | 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 | 2015-20 | 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 | 2015-20 | 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 Estate (S205) | 282 F | 2015-21 | 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 | ★★★★☆ |
| Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG (W204) | 288 F | 2008-14 | 8/6208 | 451/6800 | 442/5000 | 1655kg | - | 277 | 4.5 | 4.4 | 155 | + Monstrous pace and extremely engaging - Same-era M3 is just a little better... | ★★★★☆ |
| Mercedes-Benz C55 AMG (W203) | 088 F | 2004-08 | 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 | 1989-92 | 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 | 2018-20 | 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 | ★★★★☆ |
| Mercedes-AMG E63 S (W213) | 286 F | £116,995 | 8/3982 | 604/5750 | 627/2500 | 1935kg | 2085kg | 317 | 3.4 | 3.4 | 186 | + Fast, refined, effective and fun - At nearly two tons, it's not 911 nimble | ★★★★☆ |
| Mercedes-AMG E63 S Estate (S213) | 272 F | £118,995 | 8/3982 | 604/5750 | 627/2500 | 1995kg | - | 308 | 3.5 | - | 180 | + As above - It's even heavier than the saloon, and five metres long | ★★★★☆ |
| Mercedes-AMG GT63 4-Door Coupé | 274 F | 2019-20 | 8/3982 | 577/5500 | 590/2500 | 2025kg | - | 290 | 3.4 | - | 193 | + Does the same as the S for less - Takes up plenty of road | ★★★★☆ |
| Mercedes-AMG GT63 S 4-Door Coupé | 269 F | £150,440 | 8/3982 | 630/5500 | 664/2500 | 2045kg | - | 313 | 3.2 | - | 196 | + Agile and immensely quick - Lacks the coupe GT's drama | ★★★★☆ |
| Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W212) | 187 D | 2013-16 | 8/5461 | 549/5500 | 531/1750 | 1770kg | - | 315 | 4.2 | - | 155 | + Power, response and accuracy in spades - A little lacking in originality | ★★★★☆ |
| Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG S (W212) | 208 F | 2013-16 | 8/5461 | 577/5500 | 590/1750 | 1795kg | 1971kg | 327 | 4.1 | - | 155 | + Effortless power; intuitive and approachable - Sluggish auto 'box | ★★★★☆ |
| Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W212) | 165 F | 2011-13 | 8/5461 | 518/5250 | 516/1750 | 1765kg | - | 298 | 4.4 | - | 155 | + Turbo engine didn't dilute the E63 experience - Sometimes struggles for traction... | ★★★★☆ |
| Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W212) | 134 D | 2009-11 | 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 | 2006-09 | 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 | 2003-06 | 8/5439 | 469/6100 | 516/2650 | 1760kg | - | 271 | 4.7 | 4.8 | 155 | + M5-humbling grunt, cossetting ride - Speed limits | ★★★★☆ |
| Mercedes-AMG S63 L (W222) | 246 D | 2013-20 | 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 EQS 53 | 299 D | £157,160 | - | 649 | 700 | 2605kg | - | 253 | 3.8 | - | 155 | + Refinement - The non-EV S-class | ★★★☆☆ |
| Mercedes-AMG GLC 63 S Coupé | 253 D | £94,270 | 8/3982 | 503/5500 | 516/1750 | 1945kg | - | 263 | 3.8 | - | 174 | + Unquestionable performance - Lacks adjustability and engagement | ★★★★☆ |
| Mercedes-AMG GLC 63 S | 218 D | £120,725 | 8/5461 | 577/5500 | 560/1750 | 2270kg | - | 258 | 4.2 | - | 155 | + Stonking pace, extreme refinement - Feels remote | ★★★★☆ |
| Mercedes-AMG GLE 63 S Coupé | 213 D | £130,000 | 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 | £164,550 | 8/3982 | 577/6000 | 627/2500 | 2485kg | - | 236 | 4.5 | - | 137 | + Vastly improved chassis, fabulous engine - Dynamic ability still limited | ★★★★☆ |
| Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-300 SST | 118 F | 2008-14 | 4/1998 | 290/6500 | 300/3500 | 1590kg | - | 185 | 4.5 | 5.2 | 155 | + First Evo with a twin-clutch transmission - Not as exciting as its predecessors | ★★★★☆ |
| Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-330 SST | 134 F | 2008-14 | 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 | 2008-14 | 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 | 2009-10 | 4/1998 | 403/6500 | 387/3500 | 1560kg | - | 262 | 3.8 | - | 155 | + Most powerful factory Evo ever... - ...about X grand too much when new | ★★★★☆ |
| Mitsubishi Evo IX FQ-340 | 088 F | 2005-08 | 4/1997 | 345/6800 | 321/4600 | 1400kg | - | 250 | 4.2 | 4.3 | 157 | + Gives Porsche drivers nightmares - Points. Lots of | ★★★★★ |
| Mitsubishi Evo IX MR FQ-360 | 181 F | 2005-08 | 4/1997 | 366/6887 | 363/3200 | 1400kg | - | 266 | 4.0 | - | 157 | + Well-executed engine upgrades - Prison food | ★★★★★ |
| Mitsubishi Evo VIII | 055 F | 2003-05 | 4/1997 | 276/6500 | 289/3500 | 1410kg | - | 199 | 5.1 | - | 157 | + The Evo grows up - Brakes need beefing up | ★★★★☆ |
| Mitsubishi Evo VIII MR FQ-300 | 057 F | 2003-05 | 4/1997 | 305/6800 | 289/3500 | 1400kg | - | 221 | 4.9 | - | 157 | + Extra pace, extra attitude - Extra money | ★★★★☆ |
| Mitsubishi Evo VII | 031 F | 2002-03 | 4/1997 | 276/6500 | 282/3500 | 1360kg | - | 206 | 5.1 | 5.0 | 140 | + Terrific all-rounder - You tell us | ★★★★★ |
| Mitsubishi Evo VI Tommi Mäkinen Edition | 271 F | 2000-01 | 4/1997 | 276/6500 | 275/2750 | 1365kg | - | 205 | 4.6 | - | 150 | + Our favourite Evo - Subtle it is not | ★★★★★ |
| Peugeot 508 SW PSE | 286 D | £56,465 | 4/1598 | 355 | 383 | 1875kg | - | 192 | 5.2 | - | 155 | + A hybrid worth considering - But only if someone else is paying | ★★★★☆ |
| Polestar 2 | 280 D | £43,150 | 300kW | 402 | 487 | 2048kg | - | 199 | 4.7 | - | 127 | + A credible Tesla alternative - Avoid the super-hard-riding Performance upgrade | ★★★☆☆ |
| Porsche Panamera GTS | 279 D | £110,700 | 8/3996 | 473/6500 | 457/1800 | 2040kg | - | 236 | 3.9 | - | 181 | + The most engaging Panamera - Still a heavy old thing | ★★★★☆ |
| Porsche Panamera 4S E-Hybrid Sport Turismo | 298 D | £105,830 | 6/2894 | 552 | 553 | 2240kg | - | 250 | 3.7 | - | 182 | + Retains Porsche's core DNA - The Panamera GTS and Taycan also exist | ★★★★☆ |
| Porsche Panamera Turbo S E-Hybrid Sport T. | 272 D | £149,100 | 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 | 2011-16 | 8/4806 | 434/6700 | 383/3500 | 1925kg | - | 229 | 4.4 | - | 178 | + Vivacious V8, entertaining balance - Feels light on performance next to turbocharged rivals | ★★★★☆ |
| Porsche Panamera Turbo | 137 F | 2010-16 | 8/4806 | 493/6000 | 516/2250 | 1970kg | - | 254 | 4.2 | 3.6 | 188 | + Fast, refined and dynamically sound - It still leaves us cold | ★★★★☆ |
| Porsche Panamera Turbo S | 159 D | 2011-13 | 8/4806 | 542/6000 | 590/2250 | 1995kg | 1996kg | 276 | 3.8 | - | 190 | + Pace, excellent ergonomics - Steering feel, ride | ★★★★☆ |
| Porsche Taycan (Performance Battery Plus) | 283 D | £78,049 | 350kW | 375 | - | 2130kg | - | 179 | 5.4 | - | 143 | + Half the price of a Taycan Turbo S - Less is less | ★★★★☆ |
| Porsche Taycan GTS Sport Turismo | 294 D | £105,500 | 380kW | 510 | - | 2310kg | - | 224 | 3.7 | - | 224 | + One of the best performance EVs yet - Charge anxiety | ★★★★☆ |
| Porsche Taycan Turbo Cross Turismo | 287 D | £118,500 | 460kW | 616 | - | 2320kg | - | 270 | 3.3 | - | 155 | + A convincing and crushingly capable crossover - Needs big roads | ★★★★☆ |
| Porsche Taycan Turbo S | 267 D | £140,000 | 460kW | 616 | - | 2295kg | - | 273 | 2.8 | - | 161 | + Straight-line oomph will leave you in awe - Inadequate EV infrastructure | ★★★★☆ |
| Porsche Macan | 259 D | £50,800 | 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 D | £56,800 | 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 | 2016-18 | 6/2997 | 355/6000 | 369/1650 | 1895kg | - | 190 | 5.2 | - | 159 | + Handles like an SUV shouldn't - Still looks like an SUV | ★★★★☆ |
| Porsche Cayenne S (Mk3) | 253 D | £75,800 | 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 | ★★★★☆ |
| Porsche Cayenne Turbo (Mk3) | 243 D | £110,240 | 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 | £112,970 | 8/3996 | 542/5750 | 568/2000 | 2200kg | - | 250 | 3.9 | - | 177 | + As good to drive as the regular Cayenne - Swoopier roof adds thousands to the price | ★★★★☆ |
| Porsche Cayenne Turbo GT | 290 D | £147,510 | 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 | ★★★★☆ |
| Porsche Cayenne GTS (Mk2, V6) | 211 D | 2015-17 | 6/3604 | 434/6000 | 442/1600 | 2110kg | - | 209 | 5.2 | - | 163 | + The driver's Cayenne... - ...but why would a driver want an SUV? | ★★★★☆ |
| Porsche Cayenne GTS (Mk2, V8) | 173 D | 2012-15 | 8/4806 | 414/6500 | 380/3500 | 2085kg | - | 202 | 5.7 | - | 162 | + Dynamically the best SUV of its era - At two tons, it's still no sports car | ★★★★☆ |
| Porsche Cayenne Turbo (Mk2) | 212 D | 2010-17 | 8/4806 | 513/6000 | 530/2250 | 2185kg | - | 239 | 4.5 | - | 173 | + Remarkable performance, handling, completeness - Vague steering, dated engine | ★★★★☆ |
| Porsche Cayenne Turbo S (Mk2) | 184 D | 2010-17 | 8/4806 | 562/6000 | 599/2500 | 2235kg | - | 255 | 4.1 | - | 176 | + More power and torque than a Zonda S 7.3 - In an SUV | ★★★★☆ |
| Range Rover Sport P530 First Edition | 303 D | £116,190 | 8/4395 | 523/5500 | 553/1800 | 2430kg | - | 219 | 4.5 | - | 155 | + Does effortless speed and luxury very well - Not quite so good at the 'sport' bit | ★★★★☆ |
| Range Rover P530 Autobiography | 298 D | £134,875 | 8/4395 | 523/5500 | 551/1800 | 2585kg | - | 206 | 4.6 | - | 155 | + Quieter and more capable - Heavier and more expensive | ★★★★☆ |
| Rolls-Royce Ghost | 280 D | £265,420 | 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 | 2003-17 | 12/6749 | 453/5350 | 531/3500 | 2560kg | - | 180 | 5.7 | - | 149 | + Rolls reinvented for the 21st century - The roads are barely big enough | ★★★★☆ |
| Subaru WRX STI S209 | 272 F | 2020 | 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 | ★★★★☆ |
| Subaru WRX STI | 253 F | 2014-18 | 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 | 2005-07 | 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 ('Blobeys') | 073 F | 2003-05 | 4/1994 | 300/6000 | 299/4000 | 1470kg | - | 207 | 5.4 | 5.2 | 148 | + A Subaru with real edge - Bit too edgy in the wet | ★★★★☆ |
| Subaru Impreza Turbo ('Classic') | 011 F | 1993-2000 | 4/1994 | 215/5600 | 214/4000 | 1235kg | - | 177 | 5.8 | 5.4 | 144 | + Destined for classic status - Thirsty | ★★★★★ |
| Subaru Impreza RB5 | 187 F | 1999 | 4/1994 | 237/6000 | 258/3500 | 1235kg | -</ | | | | | | |

ROADSTERS / CONVERTIBLES



OUR CHOICE

Porsche 718 Spyder. Effectively a drop-top version of the eCoty-winning 718 Cayman GT4, the Spyder shares its naturally aspirated flat-six, slick manual 'box (PDK is an option) and even its 1420kg kerb weight with its coupe counterpart, but adds the ability to enjoy it all with the wind in your hair. What's not to love?



BEST OF THE REST

The **Aston Martin Vantage Roadster** (left) bests the 911 Cabriolet for character, the **Porsche 718 Boxster GTS 4.0** is essentially a cut-price 718 Spyder, the **Caterham Seven** remains an exemplar of sports car purity across the range, while the **Ariel Atom** strips what you need for driving thrills to the bare minimum.

| MAKE & MODEL | ISSUE NO. | PRICE OR YEARS ON SALE | ENGINE CYL/CC | BHP/RPM | LB FT/RPM | WEIGHT (CLAIMED) | WEIGHT (TESTED) | BHP/TON (CLAIMED) | 0-62MPH (CLAIMED) | 0-60MPH (TESTED) | MAX MPH | EVO RATING | |
|--|-----------|---------------------------|------------------|----------|-----------|---------------------|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------|--|-------|
| Abarth 124 Spider | 256 F | 2016-19 | 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 | 2015-19 | 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 | ★★★★☆ |
| Alfa Romeo 8C Spider | 161 F | 2009-11 | 8/4691 | 450/7000 | 354/4750 | 1675kg | - | 273 | 4.4 | - | 181 | + Beauty meets beast. They hit it off - Boot is useless for touring | ★★★★☆ |
| Ariel Atom 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 | 2018-12 | 4/1998 | 245/8600 | 177/7200 | 520kg | - | 479 | 3.1 | - | 145 | + Even better than its predecessors - Can still be a bit draughty | ★★★★☆ |
| Ariel Atom 3.5 Supercharged | 180 D | 2013-18 | 4/1998 | 310/8400 | 169/7200 | 550kg | 608kg | 573 | 2.7 | - | 155 | + As mad as ever - Rain | ★★★★★ |
| Ariel Atom 3.5R | 255 F | 2014-18 | 4/1998 | 350/8400 | 243/6100 | 550kg | - | 647 | 2.6 | - | 155 | + Remarkable balance, poise and pace - Pricy | ★★★★★ |
| Ariel Nomad | 294 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 | 1745kg | - | 293 | 3.8 | - | 190 | + Builds on the already excellent coupe's attributes - Interior design lags behind exterior | ★★★★☆ |
| Aston Martin V8 Vantage Roadster (4.7) | 130 F | 2009-16 | 8/4735 | 420/7000 | 346/5750 | 1710kg | - | 250 | 4.8 | - | 180 | + Sportiest, coolest drop-top Aston in years - Feels dated compared with contemporaries | ★★★★☆ |
| Aston Martin V8 Vantage S Roadster | 161 F | 2011-17 | 8/4735 | 430/7300 | 361/5000 | 1690kg | - | 258 | 4.8 | - | 189 | + Sounds amazing, looks even better - Still not the best drop-top in its class | ★★★★☆ |
| Aston Martin V12 Vantage Roadster | 175 F | 2012-14 | 12/5935 | 510/6500 | 420/5750 | 1760kg | - | 294 | 4.5 | - | 190 | + As good as the coupe, with amplified V12 rumble - Just a smidgen shakier | ★★★★☆ |
| Aston Martin V12 Vantage S Roadster | 212 F | 2014-17 | 12/5935 | 565/6750 | 457/5750 | 1745kg | - | 329 | 4.1 | - | 201 | + A brilliant two-seat roadster... - ...let down by a frustrating automated manual gearbox | ★★★★☆ |
| Aston Martin DB11 Volante | 258 D | £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' | ★★★★☆ |
| Audi TT RS Roadster (Mk3) | 250 D | £55,655 | 5/2480 | 394/5850 | 354/1700 | 1530kg | - | 262 | 3.9 | - | 155 | + Terrific engine... - ...is the best thing about it | ★★★★☆ |
| BAC Mono 2.5 | 229 F | £167,940 | 4/2488 | 305/8000 | 227/5500 | 580kg* | 645kg | 534 | 2.8 | - | 170 | + 3.5sec faster around Anglesey Circuit than a McLaren P1 - A bit less practical than a P1 | ★★★★★ |
| BAC Mono R | 302 D | £167,940 | 4/2488 | 342/8800 | 243/- | 555kg* | - | 626 | 2.5 | - | 170 | + Astonishing pace and excellent drivability - Only 40 are being made | ★★★★★ |
| 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 | ★★★★☆ |
| 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 | ★★★★☆ |
| 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 | ★★★★☆ |
| BMW Z8 | 026 F | 2000-03 | 8/4941 | 400/6600 | 369/3800 | 1585kg | - | 256 | 4.7 | 4.8 | 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 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 | 136 | + It's the one we built for ourselves - Trickier on the limit than lesser-powered Sevens | ★★★★★ |
| Caterham Seven 420 Cup | 299 F | £54,990 | 4/1999 | 210/7600 | 150/6300 | 560kg* | 578kg | 369 | 3.6 | - | 136 | + Intense and rewarding - They'll soon be electric | ★★★★★ |
| 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* | 580kg | 551 | 2.8 | - | 155 | + Banzai on track, yet still relevant on the road - £50k for a Seven? | ★★★★★ |
| Caterham Seven 160 | 239 F | 2013-17 | 3/660 | 80/7000 | 79/3400 | 490kg* | - | 166 | 6.9 | - | 100 | + The fabulous Seven formula at its most basic - Gets pricey with options | ★★★★☆ |
| Caterham Seven Roadsport 125 | 105 F | 2007-14 | 4/1596 | 125/6100 | 120/5350 | 539kg* | - | 235 | 5.9 | - | 112 | + Great debut for Ford-engined model - Bigger drivers need SV model | ★★★★☆ |
| Caterham Seven Supersport | 165 F | 2011-14 | 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 | 2013-14 | 4/1999 | 180/7300 | 143/6100 | 535kg* | - | 342 | 4.8 | - | 130 | + One of the best road-and-track Sevens - Impractical, noisy, uncomfortable | ★★★★☆ |
| Caterham Seven Superlight R300 | 150 F | 2009-12 | 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 | 2006-17 | 4/2261 | 256/7500 | 200/6200 | 565kg* | 598kg | 460 | 3.1 | 3.8 | 155 | + Brilliant for high days, holidays and trackdays - Wet Wednesdays | ★★★★☆ |
| Caterham Seven Superlight R500 | 123 F | 2008-14 | 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 | 1999-2006 | 4/1796 | 230/8600 | 155/7200 | 460kg* | - | 510 | 3.4 | 3.6 | 146 | + The K-series Seven at its very best - No cup holders | ★★★★★ |
| Chevrolet Corvette Stingray Convertible (C8) | 292 D | £82,200 | 8/6162 | 475/6450 | 452/4500 | 1692kg | - | 285 | 3.5 | - | 184 | + Strong V8 engine, fine value - Not as quick as we were hoping | ★★★★☆ |
| 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 | ★★★★☆ |
| Elemental Rpl (2.3) | 255 F | £139,800 | 4/2261 | 320 | 354 | 620kg* | - | 557 | 2.6 | - | 165 | + Captivating, explosive, exploitable - Price will test your level of commitment | ★★★★☆ |
| Honda S2000 | 243 F | 1999-2009 | 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 RWD | 271 D | £77,460 | 8/5000 | 444/6000 | 428/2500 | 1660kg | - | 272 | 4.6 | - | 177 | + Strong and flexible supercharged V8 - Steering and chassis feel mismatched | ★★★★☆ |
| Jaguar F-type Project 7 | 212 F | 2015 | 8/5000 | 567/6500 | 501/2500 | 1585kg | - | 363 | 3.9 | - | 186 | + Noise, performance, adjustability - Expensive, and not the GT3 rival we would have liked | ★★★★☆ |
| KTM X-Bow GT | 183 D | £95,880 | 4/1984 | 281/6400 | 310/3200 | 875kg | - | 326 | 4.1 | - | 144 | + Extraordinary ability, now in a more road-friendly package - Price | ★★★★☆ |
| KTM X-Bow R | 165 F | £87,480 | 4/1984 | 296/6300 | 295/3300 | 816kg | - | 369 | 3.9 | - | 144 | + Sharper handling, more power - Pity it's not even lighter, and cheaper | ★★★★☆ |
| Lotus Elise Club Racer (S3) | 183 F | 2011-15 | 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 | 2017-20 | 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 | 2018-19 | 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 | 2021 | 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 | 2016-21 | 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 | 2018-19 | 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 | 2003 | 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 | 2006-10 | 4/1794 | 134/6200 | 127/4200 | 860kg | - | 158 | 6.1 | 6.3 | 127 | + Brilliant entry-level Elise - Precious little | ★★★★★ |
| Lotus Elise 111S (S2) | 049 F | 2002-04 | 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 | 2008-11 | 4/1794 | 218/8000 | 156/5000 | 870kg | - | 254 | 4.6 | 4.5 | 145 | + All the usual Elise magic - Supercharged engine lacks sparkle | ★★★★☆ |
| Lotus Elise (S1) | 235 F | 1996-2001 | 4/1796 | 118/5500 | 122/3000 | 731kg | - | 164 | 5.9 | 6.1 | 126 | + A modern classic - A tad impractical? | ★★★★★ |
| Lotus 3-Eleven | 220 F | 2016-17 | 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 | 2017-19 | 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 | 2007-11 | 4/1796 | 189/7800 | 133/6800 | 720kg | - | 267 | 4.5 | - | 140 | + Not far off the supercharged 2-Eleven's pace - You want the supercharged one, don't you? | ★★★★☆ |
| Lotus 2-Eleven Supercharged | 123 F | 2007-11 | 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 | 2000 | | | | | | | | | | | |

| MAKE & MODEL | ISSUE NO. | PRICE OR YEARS ON SALE | ENGINE CYL/CC | BHP/RPM | LB FT/RPM | WEIGHT (CLAIMED) | WEIGHT (TESTED) | BHP/TON (CLAIMED) | 0-62MPH (CLAIMED) | 0-60MPH (TESTED) | MAX MPH | EVO RATING | |
|--|-----------|---------------------------|------------------|----------|-----------|---------------------|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------|---|-------|
| Porsche 718 Boxster | 224 D | £48,400 | 4/1988 | 296/6500 | 280/1950 | 1335kg | - | 225 | 5.1 | - | 170 | + Chassis as good as ever - Four-cylinder's tuneless din would be hard to live with | ★★★★☆ |
| Porsche 718 Boxster S | 222 F | £58,160 | 4/2497 | 345/6500 | 310/1900 | 1355kg | - | 259 | 4.6 | 4.4 | 177 | + Still sensationally capable - Turbo four-cylinder engine lacks appeal of the old flat-six | ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 718 Boxster GTS | 249 D | 2018-19 | 4/2497 | 360/6500 | 310/1900 | 1375kg | - | 266 | 4.6 | - | 180 | + The best four-pot Boxster spec - Doesn't come cheap | ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 718 Boxster GTS 4.0 | 286 D | £68,560 | 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 | £77,110 | 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 | 2012-16 | 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 | 2012-16 | 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 | 2014-16 | 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 | 2015-16 | 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 | 2005-12 | 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 | 2010-12 | 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 | 1999-2004 | 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 | £118,800 | 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 | £118,800 | 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 | ★★★★★ |
| 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 | ★★★★★ |
| Renault Sport Spider | 231 F | 1996-99 | 4/1998 | 148/6000 | 136/4500 | 930kg | - | 157 | 6.5 | - | 131 | + Rarity; unassisted steering - Heavier than you'd hope; disappointing engine | ★★★☆☆ |
| Rolls-Royce Dawn | 222 D | £264,000 | 12/6592 | 563/5250 | 575/1500 | 2560kg | - | 223 | 4.9 | - | 155 | + Effortless driving experience - Driver involvement not a priority | ★★★★★ |
| Toyota MR2 (Mk3) | 258 F | 2000-06 | 4/1794 | 138/6400 | 125/4400 | 975kg | - | 141 | 8.0 | 7.2 | 131 | + Tight lines, taut dynamics - Minimal luggage space | ★★★★★ |
| TVR Tamora | 070 F | 2001-07 | 6/3605 | 350/7200 | 290/5500 | 1060kg | - | 335 | 4.2 | - | 175 | + Well-sorted soft-top TVR - Awkward styling | ★★★★☆ |
| TVR Chimaera 5.0 | 258 F | 1993-2003 | 8/4997 | 320/5500 | 320/3750 | 1060kg | - | 307 | 4.4 | - | 167 | + Gorgeous noise, tarmac-rippling grunt - Details | ★★★★★ |
| TVR Griffith 4.3 | 068 F | 1992-93 | 8/4280 | 280/5500 | 305/4000 | 1040kg | - | 274 | 4.4 | 4.8 | 155 | + The car that made TVR. Cult status - Mere details | ★★★★★ |
| TVR Griffith 500 | 009 F | 1993-2001 | 8/4997 | 320/5500 | 320/4000 | 1060kg | - | 307 | 4.1 | - | 167 | + Gruff diamond - A few rough edges | ★★★★★ |
| Vauxhall VX220 Turbo | 066 F | 2003-05 | 4/1998 | 197/5500 | 184/1950 | 930kg | - | 215 | 4.9 | - | 151 | + Nothing comes close for the money - Marginal everyday usability | ★★★★★ |

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 **Alpine A110** (left) gives the four-cylinder 718 Cayman a true rival to worry about, while the **Aston Martin Vantage** is a genuine 911 beater. The C8-generation **Chevrolet Corvette Stingray** is a lot of mid-engined V8 coupe for the money and the **Bentley Continental GT Speed** combines high-end GT refinement with highly polished handling.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-------|----------|---------|----------|----------|---------|--------|-----|-----|-----|-----|---|-------|
| Alfa Romeo 4C | 209 F | 2013-19 | 4/1742 | 237/6000 | 258/2200 | 895kg* | - | 269 | 4.5 | - | 160 | + Carbonfibre tub, mini-supercar looks - Hot hatch engine, clunky gearbox | ★★★★☆ |
| Alfa Romeo 8C Competizione | 120 F | 2007-09 | 8/4691 | 450/7000 | 354/4750 | 1585kg | - | 288 | 4.2 | - | 181 | + Looks, exclusivity, noise, balance - Cost more now than they did new | ★★★★★ |
| Alpine A110 | 285 F | £49,990 | 4/1798 | 249/6000 | 236/2000 | 1102kg | 1094kg | 230 | 4.5 | 4.6 | 155 | + Fast, fun and genuinely different - If only it had a manual gearbox | ★★★★★ |
| Alpine A110 GT | 304 F | £59,440 | 4/1798 | 296/6300 | 251/2400 | 1119kg | - | 269 | 4.2 | - | 155 | + The Goldilocks choice in the A110 range for road driving - Trackdays | ★★★★★ |
| Alpine A110 S | 268 D | £60,040 | 4/1798 | 296/6300 | 251/2400 | 1109kg | - | 271 | 4.2 | - | 171 | + Firmer and faster - But not necessarily better | ★★★★★ |
| Aston Martin Vantage | 280 F | £124,400 | 8/3982 | 503/6000 | 505/2000 | 1685kg | - | 303 | 3.6 | 4.5 | 195 | + Performance that's a huge leap forward - Chassis struggles when really pushed | ★★★★★ |
| Aston Martin Vantage F1 Edition | 293 F | £142,000 | 8/3982 | 527/6000 | 505/2000 | 1570kg* | - | 341 | 3.6 | - | 195 | + Hones the Vantage recipe - Not the trackday refugee the stickers and spoilers suggest | ★★★★★ |
| Aston Martin V12 Vantage | 298 F | £265,000 | 12/5204 | 690/6500 | 555/5000 | 1795kg | - | 391 | 3.5 | - | 200 | + The last of its kind - Hobbled by ham-fisted handling | ★★★★☆ |
| Aston Martin V8 Vantage (4.3) | 288 F | 2005-07 | 8/4280 | 380/7000 | 302/5000 | 1630kg | - | 237 | 5.0 | 5.2 | 175 | + Gorgeous; awesome soundtrack - Can't quite match a 911 dynamically | ★★★★★ |
| Aston Martin V8 Vantage (4.7) | 169 D | 2008-16 | 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 | 2011-17 | 8/4735 | 430/7300 | 361/5000 | 1610kg | - | 271 | 4.8 | - | 190 | + Keener engine, V12 Vantage looks - Slightly sluggish auto only | ★★★★★ |
| Aston Martin V8 Vantage N430 | 218 F | 2014-16 | 8/4735 | 430/7300 | 361/5000 | 1610kg | - | 271 | 4.8 | - | 189 | + Malleable, involving - Never feels rampantly quick | ★★★★★ |
| Aston Martin Vantage GT8 | 274 F | 2016-17 | 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 | 2009-13 | 12/5935 | 510/6500 | 420/5750 | 1680kg | - | 308 | 4.2 | 4.4 | 190 | + The car we hoped the V8 Vantage would be - Erm, a tad thirsty? | ★★★★★ |
| Aston Martin V12 Vantage S | 285 F | 2013-17 | 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 | 2015-16 | 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 D | £144,900 | 8/3982 | 503/6000 | 498/2000 | 1685kg | - | 303 | 4.0 | - | 187 | + Potent and characterful engine; sharper chassis than V12 - Do we still need the V12? | ★★★★☆ |
| Aston Martin DB11 | 235 F | 2017-18 | 12/5204 | 600/6500 | 516/1500 | 1800kg | - | 339 | 3.9 | 4.0 | 200 | + A great GT - Suffers in outright handling terms as a result | ★★★★☆ |
| 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 | ★★★★★ |
| Aston Martin DB9 GT | 214 D | 2015-17 | 12/5935 | 540/6750 | 457/5500 | 1785kg | - | 307 | 4.5 | - | 183 | + More power; still has bags of character - Needs an eight-speed auto 'box | ★★★★★ |
| Aston Martin DB9 | 178 F | 2004-16 | 12/5935 | 510/6500 | 457/5500 | 1785kg | - | 290 | 4.6 | - | 183 | + A great start to Gaydon-era Astons - Automatic gearbox could be quicker | ★★★★★ |
| Aston Martin DBS | 142 F | 2007-12 | 12/5935 | 510/6500 | 420/5750 | 1695kg | - | 306 | 4.3 | - | 191 | + Stupendous engine, gearbox, brakes - Pricey; can bite the unwary | ★★★★★ |
| 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 | ★★★★☆ |
| Audi TT RS (Mk3) | 249 F | £53,905 | 5/2480 | 394/5850 | 354/1700 | 1450kg | 1487kg | 276 | 3.7 | 3.5 | 155 | + Soundtrack; tremendous point-to-point pace - A bit one-dimensional in the long run | ★★★★☆ |
| Audi TTS (Mk2) | 193 F | 2008-14 | 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 | 2009-14 | 5/2480 | 335/5400 | 332/1600 | 1450kg | - | 235 | 4.7 | 4.4 | 155 | + Sublime five-cylinder turbo engine - Rest of package can't quite match it | ★★★★★ |
| Audi S5 | 252 F | 2017-19 | 6/2995 | 349/5400 | 369/1370 | 1615kg | - | 220 | 4.7 | - | 155 | + Chassis rewards commitment... - ...but doesn't offer a challenge. Plain engine, too | ★★★★☆ |
| Audi RS5 | 240 F | £68,985 | 6/2894 | 444/5700 | 442/1900 | 1655kg | 1799kg | 273 | 3.9 | 3.6 | 155 | + Lighter, quicker; makes green paint look good - Lacks the character of the old V8 | ★★★★☆ |
| Audi RS5 | 206 F | 2010-16 | 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 | 2007-15 | 8/4163 | 424/7900 | 317/4500 | 1560kg | 1624kg | 276 | 4.6 | 4.1 | 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 | 2018-21 | 12/5950 | 626/5000 | 664/1350 | 2244kg | - | 283 | 3.7 | - | 207 | + Astonishing agility for such a big, heavy car - Thirst | ★★★★★ |
| Bentley Continental GT Speed | 296 F | £209,900 | 12/5950 | 650/5000 | 664/1500 | 2273kg | - | 291 | 3.6 | - | 208 | + Dynamically Bentley's best - A V8 Speed would be better still | ★★★★★ |
| Bentley Continental GT V8 | 178 F | 2012-17 | 8/3993 | 500/6000 | 487/1700 | 2220kg | - | 229 | 4.8 | - | 188 | + A proper driver's Bentley with decent economy - Makes the W12 seem pointless | ★★★★★ |
| Bentley Continental GT V8 S | 204 F | 2013-17 | 8/3993 | 521/6000 | 502/1700 | 2220kg | - | 238 | 4.5 | - | 192 | + An even better driver's Bentley - Vast weight makes its presence felt in harder driving | ★★★★★ |
| Bentley Continental GT | 152 D | 2003-17 | 12/5998 | 567/6000 | 516/1700 | 2245kg | 2360kg | 257 | 4.5 | - | 198 | + Near 200mph in utter comfort - Weight; W12's thirst | ★★★★☆ |
| Bentley Continental Supersports | 234 D | 2017 | 12/5998 | 700/6000 | 750/2050 | 2205kg | - | 323 | 3.5 | - | 209 | + Massive performance, surprisingly agile - Styling and soundtrack far from discreet | ★★★★★ |
| Bentley Continental GT3-R | 203 D | 2014-17 | 8/3993 | 572/6000 | 518/1700 | 2120kg | - | 274 | 3.8 | - | 170 | + The best-handling Continental of its generation - Expensive; it still weighs 2120kg | ★★★★★ |
| BMW 1-series M Coupé | 277 F | 2011-12 | 6/2979 | 335/5900 | 369/1500 | 1495kg | - | 228 | 4.9 | - | 155 | + Character, turbo pace and great looks - Came and went too quick | ★★★★★ |
| BMW M240i xDrive Coupé | 303 F | £47,515 | 6/2998 | 369/5500 | 369/1900 | 1690kg | - | 222 | 4.3 | - | 155 | + A pocket GT with bulging muscles - You might balk at the bulk | ★★★★★ |
| BMW M240i Coupé | 229 D | 2016-21 | 6/2998 | 335/6800 | 369/1520 | 1470kg | - | 232 | 4.8 | - | 155 | + Adjustable and plenty of fun - Lacks finesse and precision | ★★★★☆ |
| BMW M2 | 243 F | 2016-18 | 6/2979 | 365/6500 | 369/1450 | 1495kg | - | 248 | 4.5 | 4.9 | 155 | + More progressive chassis balance than the M4 - Feels unsettled on rough tarmac | ★★★★☆ |
| BMW M2 Competition | 265 F | 2018-21 | 6/2979 | 404/5250 | 406/2350 | 1550kg | - | 265 | 4.4 | - | 155 | + A more capable and involving M2 - More expensive and heavier, too | ★★★★★ |
| BMW M2 CS | 285 F | 2020-21 | 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 | ★★★★★ |
| BMW M4 Competition (G82) | 292 F | £76,115 | 6/2993 | 503/6250 | 479/2750 | 1725kg | - | 296 | 3.9 | - | 155 | + Accomplished and fun - Weight gain and auto gearbox look questionable | ★★★★★ |
| BMW M4 Competition xDrive (G82) | 295 F | £79,775 | 6/2993 | 503/6250 | 479/2750 | 1775kg | - | 288 | 3.5 | - | 155 | + Preferable to the already excellent rear-drive M4 - 4WD adds another 50kg | ★★★★★ |
| BMW M4 CSL (G82) | 305 F | £128,820 | 6/2993 | 542/6250 | 479/2750 | 1625kg | 1640kg | 339 | 3.7 | - | 190 | + Ballistic pace, beautiful cornering balance - Whole package doesn't quite gel | ★★★★★ |
| BMW M4 (F82) | 218 F | 2014-19 | 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 | ★★★★★ |
| BMW M4 Competition (F82) | 262 F | 2016-20 | 6/2979 | 444/7000 | 406/1850 | 1570kg | 1645kg | 287 | 4.3 | 4.4 | 155 | + The car the M4 always should have been - Shame everyone specs DCT | ★★★★★ |
| BMW M4 CS (F82) | 254 F | 2017-19 | 6/2979 | 454/6250 | 442/4000 | 1580kg | 1610kg | 292 | 3.9 | - | 174 | + A further-honed M4 - It ain't cheap | ★★★★★ |
| BMW M4 GTS (F82) | 237 F | 2016 | 6/2979 | 493/6250 | 442/4000 | 1510kg | - | 332 | 3.8 | 3.7 | 190 | + Vast improvement on lesser M4s - So it should be, given its price | ★★★★★ |
| BMW M3 (E92) | 266 F | 2007-13 | 8/3999 | 414/8300 | 295/3900 | 1580kg | - | 266 | 4.8 | 4.3 | 155 | + Fends off all of its rivals... - ...except the cheaper 1-series M Coupé | ★★★★★ |




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45
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| MAKE & MODEL | ISSUE NO. | PRICE OR YEARS ON SALE | ENGINE CVL/CC | BHP/RPM | LB FT/RPM | WEIGHT (CLAIMED) | WEIGHT (TESTED) | BHP/TON (CLAIMED) | 0-62MPH (CLAIMED) | 0-60MPH (TESTED) | MAX MPH | EVO RATING | |
|---|-----------|---------------------------|------------------|------------|-----------|---------------------|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------|---|-------|
| BMW M3 GTS (E92) | 262 F | 2010-11 | 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 | 2000-07 | 6/3246 | 338/7900 | 269/5000 | 1495kg | - | 230 | 5.2 | 5.1 | 155 | + One of the best BMWs ever. Runner-up in eCoty 2001 - Slightly artificial steering feel | ★★★★★ |
| BMW M3 CS (E46) | 219 F | 2005-07 | 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 | 2003-04 | 6/3246 | 355/7900 | 273/4900 | 1385kg | - | 260 | 4.9 | 5.3 | 155 | + Still superb - Changes from the automated single-clutch 'box are... a... bit... sluggish | ★★★★★ |
| BMW M3 Evolution (E36) | 148 F | 1996-98 | 6/3201 | 317/7400 | 258/3250 | 1515kg | - | 215 | 5.5 | 5.4 | 158 | + Performance, image - Never quite as good as the E30 | ★★★★☆ |
| BMW M3 (E30) | 279 F | 1989-90 | 4/2302 | 212/6750 | 170/4600 | 1165kg | - | 185 | 6.7 | 6.7 | 147 | + The best M-car ever - Prices have got out of hand | ★★★★★ |
| BMW Z4 M Coupé | 097 F | 2006-09 | 6/3246 | 338/7900 | 269/4900 | 1420kg | - | 242 | 5.0 | - | 155 | + A real driver's car - You've got to be prepared to get stuck in | ★★★★★ |
| BMW M Coupé (Z3) | 263 F | 1998-2002 | 6/3246 | 321/7400 | 261/4900 | 1375kg | - | 237 | 5.3 | - | 155 | + Quick and characterful - Lacks finesse | ★★★★★ |
| 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 | 2012-18 | 8/6162 | 460/6000 | 501/1500 | 1850kg | - | 303 | 4.2 | - | 155 | + Mighty ability, pace, technology - You'll want the Competition Package upgrade, too | ★★★★★ |
| BMW M6 (E63) | 106 F | 2005-10 | 10/4999 | 500/7750 | 384/6100 | 1635kg | - | 311 | 4.2 | 4.8 | 155 | + Awesome GT, awesome sports car - SMG gearbox now off the pace | ★★★★★ |
| BMW i8 | 210 F | 2014-20 | 3/1499 | 369/5800 | 420/3700 | 1535kg | 1544kg | 244 | 4.4 | - | 155 | + Brilliantly executed concept; sci-fi looks - Safe dynamic set-up | ★★★★★ |
| Chevrolet Camaro Z/28 | 220 F | 2014-16 | 8/7008 | 505/6100 | 481/4800 | 1732kg | - | 296 | 4.2 | - | 175 | + Scalpel-sharp engine, great chassis (really) - Feels very stiff on UK roads | ★★★★★ |
| Chevrolet Corvette Stingray (C8) | 303 F | £79,300 | 8/6162 | 475/6450 | 452/5150 | 1655kg | - | 292 | 3.5 | - | 184 | + Stunning achievement for the first mid-engined Vette - There's untapped potential | ★★★★★ |
| Chevrolet Corvette Stingray (C7) | 197 F | 2013-19 | 8/6162 | 604/6000 | 465/4600 | 1496kg | - | 312 | 4.2 | 4.4 | 180 | + Performance, chassis balance, supple ride - Body control could be better | ★★★★☆ |
| Chevrolet Corvette Z06 (C7) | 227 F | 2015-19 | 8/6162 | 650/6000 | 650/3600 | 1598kg | - | 413 | 3.7 | - | 196 | + Mind-boggling raw speed; surprisingly sophisticated - Edgy when really pushed | ★★★★★ |
| Ford Mustang 5.0 V8 GT | 266 F | £41,430 | 8/4951 | 444/7000 | 390/4600 | 1768kg | - | 255 | 4.9 | - | 155 | + 2018MY version gets improved dynamics - Still some way off Europe's finest | ★★★★☆ |
| Ford Mustang Mach 1 | 295 F | £56,995 | 8/4951 | 454/7250 | 390/4900 | 1754kg | - | 263 | 4.8 | - | 166 | + A 'Mustang Plus' for Europe - It's no GT500 | ★★★★★ |
| Ford Mustang Shelby GT500 | 292 F | £74,000 | 8/5163 | 760/7300 | 625/5000 | 1897kg | - | 407 | 3.3 | - | 180 | + The power and the fury - The last of its kind? | ★★★★★ |
| Honda Integra Type R (DC2) | 259 F | 1996-2000 | 4/1797 | 187/8000 | 131/7300 | 1101kg | - | 173 | 6.7 | 6.2 | 145 | + Arguably the greatest front-drive car ever - Too raw for some | ★★★★★ |
| Jaguar F-type P300 RWD | 271 D | £54,965 | 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 RWD | - | £70,500 | 8/5000 | 444/6000 | 428/2500 | 1660kg | - | 272 | 4.6 | - | 177 | + Strong and flexible supercharged V8 - Steering and chassis feel mismatched | ★★★★★ |
| Jaguar F-type R (RWD) | 218 F | 2014-17 | 8/5000 | 542/6500 | 501/3500 | 1650kg | 1803kg | 334 | 4.2 | - | 186 | + eCoty runner-up in 2014 - Bumpy and boistrous | ★★★★★ |
| Jaguar F-type R (P575 AWD) | 271 D | £98,110 | 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 | 2016-19 | 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 | ★★★★★ |
| Jaguar XKR-S | 168 F | 2011-14 | 8/5000 | 542/6000 | 502/2500 | 1753kg | - | 314 | 4.4 | - | 186 | + Faster and wilder than regular XKR - The F-type R | ★★★★★ |
| Jannarely 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 | ★★★★★ |
| Lexus RC F | 295 F | £66,000 | 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 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 | 2012-15 | 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 | 2016-21 | 6/3456 | 345/7000 | 295/4500 | 1125kg | - | 312 | 3.9 | - | 170 | + Further honed Exige, with vastly improved gearshift - Still not easy to get into and out of | ★★★★★ |
| Lotus Exige Sport 380 | 231 F | 2016-18 | 6/3456 | 375/6700 | 302/5000 | 1110kg | - | 343 | 3.7 | - | 178 | + Intense, absorbing and brilliantly capable - Perhaps not an everyday car | ★★★★★ |
| Lotus Exige Cup 380 | 240 D | 2017 | 6/3456 | 375/6700 | 302/5000 | 1105kg | - | 345 | 3.6 | - | 175 | + An absolute riot; feels worth the £83k (new) price tag - Limited build numbers | ★★★★★ |
| Lotus Exige Sport 410 | 283 F | 2018-21 | 6/3456 | 410/7000 | 310/3500 | 1110kg | - | 375 | 3.4 | - | 180 | + A first-rate swansong for the V6 Exige - Didn't come cheap | ★★★★★ |
| Lotus Exige Cup 430 | 253 F | 2018-21 | 6/3456 | 430/7000 | 325/2600 | 1093kg | - | 400 | 3.3 | - | 180 | + The ultimate Exige - With a price tag to match | ★★★★★ |
| Lotus Exige S (S2) | 253 F | 2006-11 | 4/1796 | 218/7800 | 158/5500 | 930kg | - | 238 | 4.3 | - | 148 | + Lightweight with a hefty punch - Uninspiring soundtrack | ★★★★★ |
| Lotus Exige (S1) | 200 F | 2000-01 | 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 | 302 F | 2009-15 | 6/3456 | 276/6400 | 258/4700 | 1382kg | - | 203 | 5.1 | 5.6 | 162 | + Sublime ride and handling, evo Car of the Year 2009 - The Evora S | ★★★★★ |
| Lotus Evora S | 168 F | 2010-15 | 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 | 2015-18 | 6/3456 | 400/7000 | 302/3500 | 1395kg | - | 291 | 4.2 | - | 186 | + Evora excitement levels take a leap - Gearbox still not perfect | ★★★★★ |
| Lotus Evora Sport 410 | 230 F | 2017 | 6/3456 | 410/7000 | 310/3500 | 1325kg | - | 314 | 4.2 | - | 190 | + Even lighter and sharper Evora - Engine and gearbox behind the best at this price | ★★★★★ |
| Lotus Evora GT410 | 278 F | 2020-21 | 6/3456 | 410/7000 | 295/3500 | 1361kg | - | 306 | 4.2 | - | 186 | + Fully immersive driving experience - V6 has its limitations | ★★★★★ |
| Lotus Evora GT410 Sport | 261 F | 2019-21 | 6/3456 | 410/7000 | 295/3500 | 1361kg | - | 306 | 4.2 | - | 186 | + As above, without the creature comforts - Too pared back for most tastes | ★★★★★ |
| Lotus Evora GT430 | 246 F | 2018 | 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 | ★★★★★ |
| Lotus Emira First Edition | 299 F | £71,995 | 6/3456 | 394/6000 | 310/3500 | - | 1486kg | 269 | 4.3 | - | 180 | + Supercar looks with a sports car price - Dynamic balance is more planted than playful | ★★★★☆ |
| 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 MC Stradale | 193 F | 2011-17 | 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-7 (FD) | 226 F | 1992-95 | 2r/1308 | 237/6500 | 218/5000 | 1284kg | - | 188 | 5.4 | - | 156 | + The high point for Mazda's rotary efforts - High fuel consumption, too | ★★★★★ |
| Mercedes-AMG C63 S Coupé (W205) | 262 F | £78,078 | 8/3982 | 503/5500 | 516/2000 | 1745kg | 1847kg | 293 | 3.9 | - | 180 | + Mouth-watering mechanical package - Light steering; hefty kerb weight | ★★★★★ |
| Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupé (W204) | 162 F | 2011-14 | 8/6208 | 451/6800 | 442/5000 | 1655kg | - | 277 | 4.5 | 4.4 | 155 | + A proper two-door M3 rival - C63 saloon looks better to most | ★★★★★ |
| Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Black Series (W204) | 171 F | 2012-13 | 8/6208 | 510/6800 | 457/5200 | 1635kg | - | 317 | 4.2 | - | 186 | + The C63 turned up to 11 - Too heavy; not as fiery as Black Series cars of old | ★★★★★ |
| Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG Black Series | 277 F | 2007-09 | 8/6208 | 500/6800 | 464/5250 | 1760kg | - | 289 | 4.2 | - | 186 | + AMG goes Porsche-hunting - Dull-witted gearshift spoils the party | ★★★★★ |
| Mercedes-AMG S63 Coupé | 251 D | £127,555 | 8/3982 | 604/6500 | 664/2750 | 1990kg | - | 308 | 4.2 | - | 155 | + Near-silent progress meets full-blown riot - Don't go thinking it's a GT R | ★★★★★ |
| 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 | 2016-19 | 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 | 2015-19 | 8/3982 | 515/6250 | 494/1800 | 1570kg | - | 333 | 3.8 | - | 193 | + Fantastic chassis, huge grip - Artificial steering feel; downshifts could be quicker | ★★★★★ |
| Mercedes-AMG GT C | 241 D | 2017-19 | 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 | ★★★★★ |
| Mitsubishi 3000GT | - | 1990-99 | 6/2972 | 282/6000 | 300/3000 | 1719kg | - | 167 | 5.8 | - | 159 | + Looks the business - Doesn't do the business | ☆☆☆☆☆ |
| Nissan 370Z | 204 F | 2009-20 | 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 | 2014-20 | 6/3696 | 339/7400 | 274/5200 | 1496kg | - | 230 | 5.2 | - | 155 | + Sharper looks, improved ride, extra thrills - Engine lacks sparkle | ★★★★★ |
| Nissan 350Z | 107 F | 2003-09 | 6/3498 | 309/6800 | 264/4800 | 1532kg | - | 205 | 5.6 | 5.5 | 155 | + Huge fun, and great value too - Muscle-car vibe not for everyone | ★★★★★ |
| Nissan GT-R (2017MY) | 242 F | 2017-22 | 6/3799 | 562/6800 | 470/3600 | 1752kg | - | 326 | 2.7 | - | 196 | + More refinement, much improved interior, still fast - Feels a touch less alert | ★★★★★ |
| Nissan GT-R Track Edition (2017MY) | 229 D | 2017-22 | 6/3799 | 562/6800 | 470/3600 | 1745kg | - | 327 | 2.7 | - | 196 | + Sharper than the standard GT-R - Pricier too | ★★★★★ |
| Nissan GT-R Nismo (2020MY) | 298 F | 2020-22 | 6/3799 | 592/6800 | 481/3600 | 1703kg | - | 353 | 2.8 | - | 196 | + Addictive performance - Track Edition gets 90 per cent there for a lot, lot less | ★★★★★ |
| Nissan GT-R (2012MY-2016MY) | 238 F | 2012-16 | 6/3799 | 542/6400 | 466/3200 | 1740kg | 1783kg | 316 | 2.7 | 3.2 | 196 | + Quicker and better than before - Stopping your Porsche-owning friends calling it a Datsun | ★★★★★ |
| Nissan GT-R (2010MY) | 252 F | 2010-12 | 6/3799 | 523/6400 | 451/3200 | 1740kg | - | 305 | 3.0 | - | 194 | + More powerful version of the original - They're not worlds apart to drive | ★★★★★ |
| Nissan GT-R (2008MY) | 257 F | 2008-10 | 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 | 1999-2002 | 6/2568 | 276/7000 | 289/4400 | 1560kg | 1653kg | 180 | 4.8 | 4.7 | 165 | + Big, brutal, and great fun - Needs more than the standard 276bhp | ★★★★★ |
| Nissan Skyline GT-R (R33) | 196 F | 1997-99 | 6/2568 | 276/6800 | 271/4400 | 1540kg | - | 182 | 4.9 | 5.4 | 155 | + Early proof that Japanese high-tech could work (superbly) - Limited supply | ★★★★★ |
| Noble M400 | 297 F | 2004-06 | 6/2968 | 425/6500 | 390/5000 | 1060kg | - | 407 | 3.5 | - | 185 | + Devilishly fast - Japanem Tweeks interior | ★★★★★ |
| Polestar 1 | 269 D | £139,000 | 4/1969 | 592/6000 | 737 | 2350kg | - | 256 | 4.2 | - | 155 | + One of the most appealing hybrids yet - It's left-hand-drive only, and jolly expensive | ★★★★☆ |
| Porsche 718 Cayman | 287 F | £46,540 | 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 | £53,870 | 4/1988 | 296/6500 | 280/2150 | 1350kg | - | 223 | 5.1 | - | 170 | + A further-honed 2-litre Cayman - Flat-four soundtrack still disappoints | ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 718 Cayman S | 249 F | £56,300 | 4/2497 | 345/6500 | 310/2100 | 1355kg | 1449kg | 259 | 4.6 | 3.9 | 177 | + Faster and better to drive than ever - Bring earplugs | ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 718 Cayman GTS 4.0 | 303 F | £68,700 | 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 | 299 F | £78,750 | 6/3995 | 414/7600 | 310/5000 | 1420kg | 1460kg | 296 | 4.4 | - | 188 | + evo Car of the Year 2019 - Long gearing isn't ideal for road driving | ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 RS | 305 F | £108,370 | 6/3996 | 493/8400 | 332/6750 | 1415kg | 1460kg | 354 | 3.4 | - | 196 | + Thrilling when the road suits it - Too many great roads don't | ★★★★★ |
| Porsche Cayman S (981) | 202 F | 2013-16 | 6/3436 | 321/7400 | 273/4500 | 1320kg | 1371kg | 247 | 5.0 | 4.5 | 177 | + The Cayman comes of age - Erm... | ★★★★★ |
| Porsche Cayman GT3 (981) | 219 F | 2014-16 | 6/3436 | 335/7400</ | | | | | | | | | |

PERFORMANCE AWAITS

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| MAKE & MODEL | ISSUE NO. | PRICE OR YEARS ON SALE | ENGINE CYL/CC | BHP/RPM | LB FT/RPM | WEIGHT (CLAIMED) | WEIGHT (TESTED) | BHP/TON (CLAIMED) | 0-62MPH (CLAIMED) | 0-60MPH (TESTED) | MAX MPH | EVO RATING |
|---------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|------------------|----------|-----------|---------------------|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------|---|
| Porsche 911 Carrera 4 GTS (992) | 291 D | £120,800 | 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 ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 Carrera (991.2) | 218 F | 2016-18 | 6/2981 | 365/6500 | 332/1700 | 1430kg | - | 259 | 4.6 | - | 183 | + Forced induction didn't ruin the Carrera - Purists won't be happy ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 Carrera T (991.2) | 264 F | 2017-18 | 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 ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 Carrera S (991.2) | 217 F | 2016-18 | 6/2981 | 414/6500 | 369/1700 | 1440kg | - | 292 | 4.3 | - | 191 | + Blindingly fast - You'll want the sports exhaust ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 Carrera GTS (991.2) | 238 F | 2017-19 | 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 ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 Carrera S (991.1) | 201 F | 2012-15 | 6/3800 | 394/7400 | 324/5600 | 1415kg | - | 283 | 4.5 | 4.3 | 188 | + A Carrera with supercar pace - Electric steering robs it of some tactility ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.2) | 121 F | 2008-11 | 6/3800 | 380/6500 | 310/4400 | 1425kg | - | 271 | 4.7 | - | 188 | + Poise, precision, blinding pace - Feels a bit clinical ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.1) | 249 F | 2004-08 | 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 | 1998-2001 | 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 ★★★★★ |
| Subaru BRZ | 248 F | 2012-20 | 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 GR86 | 305 F | 2022 | 4/2387 | 231/7000 | 184/3700 | 1276kg | 1280kg | 183 | 6.3 | - | 140 | + The car the GT86 always wanted to be - Sold out in 90 minutes ★★★★★ |
| Toyota GT86 | 286 F | 2012-20 | 4/1998 | 197/7000 | 151/6400 | 1240kg | 1227kg | 161 | 7.6 | 6.9 | 140 | + Puts playfulness ahead of outright performance - Feels strategically hobbled ★★★★★ |
| Toyota GR Supra 2.0 | 287 F | £49,495 | 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 | 303 F | £53,495 | 6/2998 | 335/5000 | 369/1600 | 1502kg | - | 227 | 4.6 | - | 155 | + Better than its BMW Z4 cousin, especially with a manual - Not better than an M240i ★★★★★ |
| Toyota MR2 (Mk1) | 237 F | 1984-89 | 4/1587 | 122/6600 | 105/5000 | 977kg | - | 127 | 8.2 | - | 124 | + Mid-engined fun comes no more affordable - Finding a good one will take time ★★★★★ |
| TVR Sagaris | 265 F | 2005-07 | 6/3996 | 406/7000 | 349/5000 | 1078kg | - | 383 | 3.7 | - | 185 | + Looks outrageous - 406bhp feels a touch optimistic ★★★★★ |
| TVR Tuscan S (Mk2) | 076 F | 2005-07 | 6/3996 | 400/7000 | 315/5250 | 1100kg | - | 369 | 4.0 | - | 185 | + Possibly TVR's best ever car - Aerodynamic 'enhancements' ★★★★★ |
| TVR Cerbera Speed Six | 004 F | 1998-2004 | 6/3996 | 350/6800 | 330/5000 | 1130kg | - | 315 | 4.4 | 5.0 | 160+ | + Accomplished and desirable - When it's running ★★★★★ |

SUPERCARS / HYPERCARS



OUR CHOICE

Maserati MC20. A refreshing new addition to the supercar class, the MC20 is unmistakably Italian, has a wickedly brutal twin-turbocharged V6 and delivers old-fashioned excitement and emotion in spades – think F40, Edonis, Noble M600. The very deserving winner of our 2022 **evo** Car of the Year title.



BEST OF THE REST

The **Ferrari 296 GTB** (left) and **McLaren Artura** both demonstrate how rewarding a hybrid supercar can be, the **Lamborghini Huracán STO** and **Tecnica** remind us why big-capacity naturally aspirated engines still hold huge appeal, and the current **Porsche 911 GT3** is another highly desirable addition to the celebrated model line.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------|-----------|---------|-----------|-----------|---------|--------|------|-----|-----|------|---|
| 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' ★★★★★ |
| 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 ★★★★★ |
| Aston Martin Vanquish S (Mk2) | 260 F | 2017-18 | 12/5935 | 595/7000 | 465/5500 | 1739kg | - | 348 | 3.5 | 3.9 | 201 | + Noise, poise, drama and charm - Not as rounded as the DB11 ★★★★★ |
| Aston Martin Vanquish S (Mk1) | 110 F | 2005-07 | 12/5935 | 520/7000 | 425/5800 | 1875kg | - | 282 | 4.8 | 4.9 | 200 | + Vanquish joins the supercar greats - A tad intimidating at the limit ★★★★★ |
| Aston Martin V12 Speedster | 287 F | 2021-22 | 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 | 2010-12 | 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 | 2020-21 | 10/5204 | 533/7900 | 398/6400 | 1595kg | - | 340 | 3.7 | - | 199 | + More affordable than a 4WD R8 - But not more entertaining ★★★★★ |
| Audi R8 V10 Performance RWD | 305 F | £131,725 | 10/5204 | 562/7800 | 406/6400 | 1590kg | 1640kg | 359 | 3.7 | - | 204 | + Poise and polish - Newer mid-engined rivals feel sharper, faster and more capable ★★★★★ |
| Audi R8 V10 quattro | 261 F | 2020-21 | 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 quattro | 256 D | £151,830 | 10/5204 | 611/8250 | 428/6600 | 1595kg | - | 389 | 3.1 | - | 205 | + Stunning V10; approachable performance - Optional Dynamic steering feels unnatural ★★★★★ |
| Audi R8 V10 GT RWD | 305 D | c£200,000 | 10/5204 | 611/8000 | 411/6400 | 1570kg | - | 395 | 3.4 | - | 199 | + New aggression brings out the best in RWD R8 - We need to try it on UK roads ★★★★★ |
| Audi R8 V10 RWS(Mk2) | 254 F | 2017-19 | 10/5204 | 533/7800 | 398/6500 | 1590kg | 1640kg | 341 | 3.7 | - | 199 | + The first rear-wheel-drive Audi for 40 years - Drives largely like its 4WD counterpart ★★★★★ |
| Audi R8 V10 (Mk2) | 234 F | 2015-19 | 10/5204 | 533/7800 | 398/6500 | 1640kg | - | 330 | 3.5 | - | 198 | + All the R8 you really need - You can't get a manual gearbox ★★★★★ |
| Audi R8 V10 (Mk1) | 254 F | 2009-15 | 10/5204 | 518/8000 | 391/6500 | 1620kg | - | 325 | 4.1 | 3.9 | 194 | + Real supercar feel - The V8 is cheaper, and still superb ★★★★★ |
| Bugatti Chiron | 244 F | 2016-22 | 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 | 2005-11 | 16/7993 | 987/6000 | 922/2200 | 1888kg | - | 531 | 2.5 | 2.8 | 253 | + Superbly engineered four-wheel-drive quad-turbo rocket - Er, lacks luggage space? ★★★★★ |
| Bugatti Veyron 16.4 Super Sport | 151 F | 2010-11 | 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 | 1991-95 | 12/3500 | 552/8000 | 451/3750 | 1618kg | - | 347 | 3.6 | - | 213 | + Superbly engineered four-wheel-drive quad-turbo rocket - It just fizzled out ★★★★★ |
| 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 ★★★★★ |
| 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 hybrids are coming ★★★★★ |
| 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 | 2015-19 | 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 | 2018-20 | 8/3902 | 710/8000 | 568/3000 | 1385kg | - | 521 | 2.9 | - | 211+ | + Searingly fast and effortlessly capable - Takes a while to fully appreciate it ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari 458 Italia | 288 F | 2009-15 | 8/4497 | 562/9000 | 398/6000 | 1485kg | - | 384 | 3.4 | 3.2 | 202+ | + An astounding achievement - Paddleshift only ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari 458 Speciale | 301 F | 2013-15 | 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 | 2004-10 | 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 | 2007-10 | 8/4308 | 503/8500 | 347/5250 | 1350kg | 1374kg | 378 | 3.6 | 3.5 | 198 | + Successful F1 technology transplant - Likes to shout about it ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari 360 Modena | 163 F | 1999-2004 | 8/3586 | 394/8500 | 275/4750 | 1390kg | - | 288 | 4.5 | - | 183+ | + Worthy successor to 355 - Not quite as involving as it should be ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari 360 Challenge Stradale | 274 F | 2003-04 | 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 | 1994-99 | 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 | 1993 | 8/3404 | 316/7200 | 239/5000 | 1180kg* | - | 276 | 5.0 | - | 175 | + Utterly absorbing, with exceptional dynamics - Steering a little woolly ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari 296 GTB | 305 F | £245,000 | 6/2992 | 819/8000 | 546/6250 | 1470kg* | 1660kg | 566 | 2.9 | - | 205 | + Indulgently powerful, responsive, makes a success of hybrid tech - It's rather pricey ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari 296 GTS | 304 D | £279,248 | 6/2992 | 819/8000 | 546/6250 | 1540kg* | - | 540 | 2.9 | - | 205 | + Magical when you're in its groove - Lacks the last degree of control of the GTB ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari 812 Superfast | 275 F | £262,963 | 12/6496 | 789/8500 | 529/7000 | 1630kg | - | 492 | 2.9 | 3.1 | 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 812 Competizione | 292 F | £446,970 | 12/6496 | 819/9250 | 510/7000 | 1487kg* | - | 560 | 2.9 | - | 211+ | + Phenomenally exciting - Requires plenty of respect at all times ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari F12 Berlinetta | 275 F | 2012-17 | 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 | 2017 | 12/6262 | 769/8500 | 520/6250 | 1520kg | - | 514 | 2.9 | - | 211+ | + Alarmingly fast - Doesn't flow like a 458 Speciale ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano | 275 F | 2006-12 | 12/5999 | 611/7600 | 448/5600 | 1690kg | - | 368 | 3.7 | 3.5 | 205 | + evo Car of the Year 2006 - Banks are getting harder to rob ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari 599 GTO | 161 F | 2011-12 | 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 | 2002-06 | 12/5748 | 508/7250 | 434/5250 | 1688kg | - | 298 | 3.7 | 4.2 | 205+ | + Fiorano pack makes 575 truly great - It should have been standard ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari 550 Maranello | 275 F | 1996-2002 | 12/5474 | 478/7000 | 420/5000 | 1690kg | - | 287 | 4.4 | - | 199 | + Everything - Nothing ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari GTC4 Lusso T | 246 D | 2017-20 | 8/3855 | 602/7500 | 560/3000 | 1865kg | - | 328 | 3.5 | - | 199 | + Effortless, comfortable GT - Misses the richer soundtrack of the V12 ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari GTC4 Lusso | 264 F | 2016-20 | 12/6262 | 680/8000 | 514/5750 | 1920kg | - | 360 | 3.4 | - | 208 | + Rear-wheel steering increases agility - Not as engaging as other Ferraris ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari FF | 194 F | 2011-15 | 12/6262 | 651/8000 | 504/6000 | 1880kg | - | 347 | 3.7 | - | 208 | + Four seats and 4WD, but a proper Ferrari - Looks divide opinion ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari 612 Scaglietti | 090 F | 2004-11 | 12/5748 | 533/7250 | 434/5250 | 1875kg | - | 289 | 4.0 | 4.3 | 199 | + Awesomely capable grand tourer - See above ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari SF90 Stradale | 299 F | £376,048 | 8/3990 | 986/7500 | - | 1570kg* | 1742kg | 638 | 2.5 | - | 211 | + Hugely fast hybrid-hypercar - Can feel clumsy when hustled ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari SF90 Spider | 300 D | £418,233 | 8/3990 | 986/7500 | - | 1670kg* | - | 600 | 2.5 | - | 211 | + Mesmerising V8 with expertly integrated hybrid system - You need to pack light ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari Daytona SP3 | 302 F | c£2m | 12/6496 | 828/9250 | 514/7250 | 1485kg* | - | 566 | 2.9 | - | 211 | + Epic naturally aspirated V12; sports prototype looks - We didn't get invited to buy one ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari LaFerrari | 203 F | 2013-15 | 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 | 2002-04 | 12/5999 | 651/7800 | 485/5500 | 1365kg | - | 485 | 3.7 | 3.5 | 217+ | + Intoxicating, exploitable - Cabin detailing falls short of a Zonda or F1's ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari F50 | 275 F | 1995-97 | 12/6499 | 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 | 1987-92 | 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 ★★★★★ |
| Ford GT | 200 F | 2004-06 | 8/5409 | 550/6500 | 500/3750 | 1583kg | - | 353 | 3.9 | - | 205 | + evo Car of the Year 2005 - Don't scalp yourself getting in ★★★★★ |
| Hennessey Venom F5 | 302 D | c£1.5m | 8/6555 | 1817/8000 | 1198/5000 | 1360kg | - | 1357 | 2.6 | - | 311 | + Ballistic performance; surprising drivability - Finding somewhere to do 300mph+ ★★★★★ |

1



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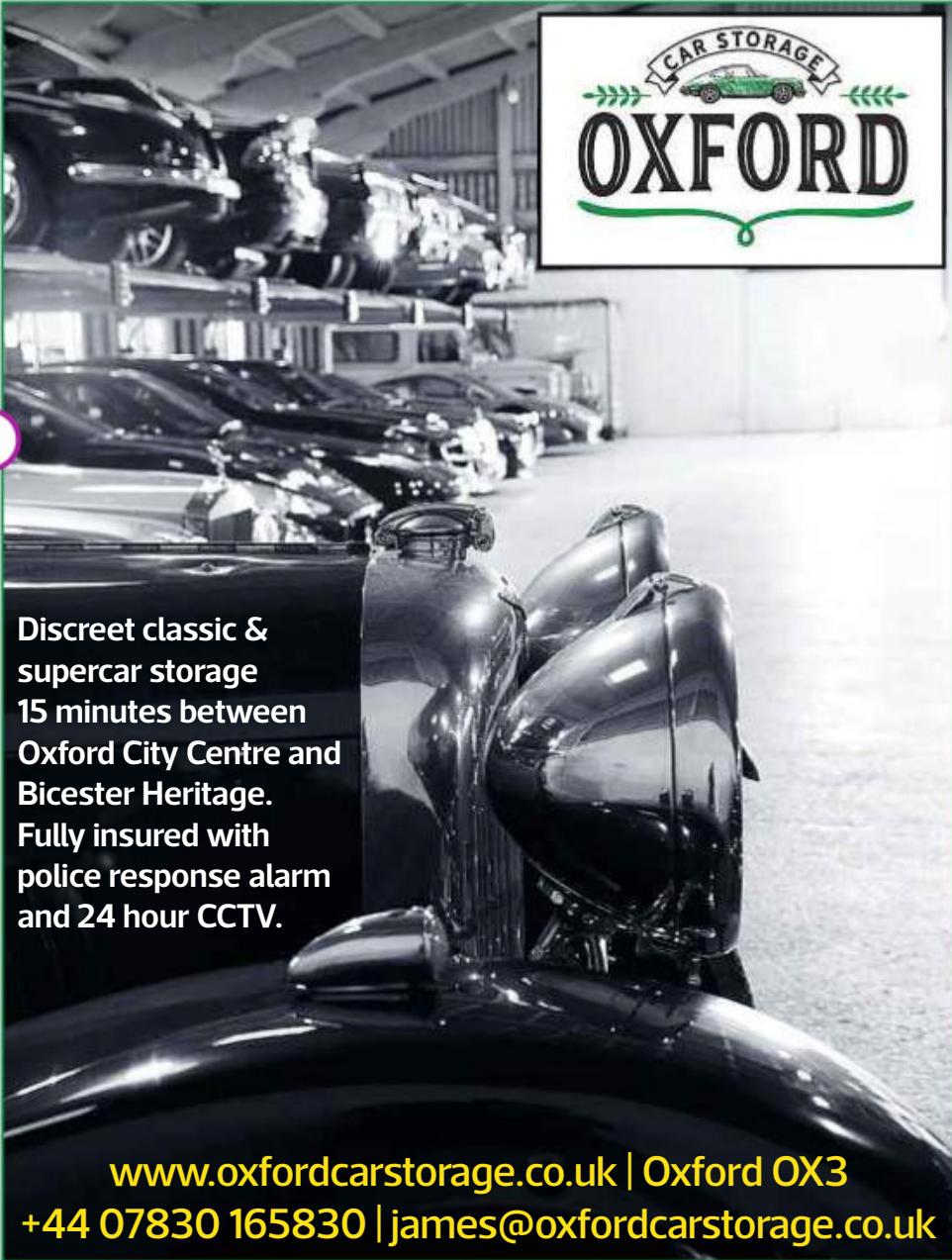
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|---|-----------|---------------------------|------------------|-----------|-----------|---------------------|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------|--|-------|
| Honda NSX | 270 F | £144,765 | 6/3493 | 573 | 476/2000 | 1776kg | - | 328 | 2.9 | 3.0 | 191 | + Blisteringly quick and brilliantly engineered - Limited range on a full tank | ★★★★★ |
| Honda NSX (NA2) | 188 F | 1997-2005 | 6/3179 | 276/7300 | 224/5300 | 1410kg | - | 196 | 5.7 | - | 168 | + The original useable supercar - 276bhp sounds a bit weedy today | ★★★★★ |
| Honda NSX-R (NA2) | 301 F | 2002-03 | 6/3179 | 276/7300 | 224/5300 | 1270kg | - | 221 | 4.4 | - | 168 | + evo Car of the Year 2002 - Hard to find | ★★★★★ |
| Jaguar XJ220 | 157 F | 1992-94 | 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 | 2014-15 | 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 | 2011-14 | 8/5032 | 1124/7100 | 885/2700 | 1435kg | - | 796 | 2.8 | - | 273 | + As fast and exciting as your body can handle - It's Veyron money | ★★★★★ |
| Koenigsegg CCRX Edition | 118 F | 2008-10 | 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 | 2016-19 | 10/5204 | 572/8000 | 397/6500 | 1389kg* | - | 385 | 3.4 | - | 199 | + More seductive than the 4WD Huracán - Felt like there was more to come | ★★★★★ |
| Lamborghini Huracán | 209 D | 2014-19 | 10/5204 | 602/8250 | 413/6500 | 1422kg* | 1554kg | 430 | 3.2 | - | 201+ | + Defies the numbers; incredible point-to-point pace - Takes work to find its sweet-spot | ★★★★★ |
| 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 | 2017-19 | 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 Tecnica | 301 D | £212,000 | 10/5204 | 631/8000 | 417/6500 | 1379kg* | - | 450 | 3.2 | - | 202 | + The Huracán bows out on an all-time high - We won't see its like again | ★★★★★ |
| Lamborghini Huracán STO | 301 F | £260,012 | 10/5204 | 631/8000 | 417/6500 | 1339kg* | 1548kg | 479 | 3.0 | - | 193 | + The Huracán's full potential finally unleashed - A touch showy, perhaps? | ★★★★★ |
| Lamborghini Gallardo LP550-2 Balboni | 138 F | 2009-10 | 10/5204 | 542/8000 | 398/6500 | 1380kg* | - | 399 | 3.9 | - | 199 | + Mad, rear-wheel-drive Lambo - Limited numbers | ★★★★★ |
| Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4 | 180 D | 2008-13 | 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 | 2010-13 | 10/5204 | 562/8000 | 398/6500 | 1340kg* | - | 426 | 3.4 | 3.5 | 202 | + Less weight and more power than original Superleggera - LP560-4 runs it very close | ★★★★★ |
| Lamborghini Gallardo | 094 F | 2003-08 | 10/4961 | 513/8000 | 376/4250 | 1430kg* | - | 364 | 4.0 | 4.3 | 196 | + On a full-bore start it spins all four wheels. Cool - Slightly clunky e-gear | ★★★★★ |
| Lamborghini Aventador | 194 F | 2011-17 | 12/6498 | 690/8250 | 509/5500 | 1575kg* | - | 445 | 2.9 | - | 217 | + Most important new Lambo since the Countach - Can feel a little clumsy | ★★★★★ |
| Lamborghini Aventador S | 246 F | 2016-21 | 12/6498 | 730/8400 | 509/5500 | 1575kg* | - | 471 | 2.9 | - | 217 | + A more agile, more connected Aventador - Synthetic steering | ★★★★★ |
| Lamborghini Aventador SV | 216 F | 2015-17 | 12/6498 | 740/8400 | 509/5500 | 1525kg* | - | 493 | 2.8 | - | 217+ | + More exciting than the standard Aventador - ISR gearbox inconsistent | ★★★★★ |
| 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? | ★★★★★ |
| 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 | ★★★★★ |
| Lamborghini Aventador LP780-4 Ultimae | 300 F | £324,000 | 12/6498 | 769/8500 | 531/6750 | 1550kg* | - | 504 | 2.8 | - | 221 | + The final traditional V12 Lambo - We'll never see its kind again | ★★★★★ |
| Lamborghini Sián FKP 37 | 284 F | £3,120,000 | 12/6498 | 808/8500 | 531/6750 | 1595kg* | - | 515 | <2.8 | - | 220 | + Our kind of hybrid - Ferociously expensive | ★★★★★ |
| Lamborghini Countach LPI 800-4 | 300 F | £2,000,000 | 12/6498 | 802/8500 | 531/6750 | 1595kg* | - | 511 | 2.8 | - | 221 | + Retro looks, Sián supercapacitor tech - An Ultimae is a sixth of the price | ★★★★☆ |
| Lamborghini Murciélago | 089 D | 2001-06 | 12/6192 | 572/7500 | 479/5400 | 1650kg* | - | 351 | 4.0 | - | 206 | + Gorgeous, capable and incredibly friendly - V12 feels stressed | ★★★★★ |
| Lamborghini Murciélago LP640 | 275 F | 2006-11 | 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 | 2009-11 | 12/6496 | 616/8000 | 487/6500 | 1565kg* | - | 429 | 3.3 | 3.2 | 212 | + A supercar in its truest, wildest sense - Be prepared for stares | ★★★★★ |
| Lamborghini Diablo VT 6.0 | 275 F | 2000-02 | 12/5992 | 543/7100 | 457/5500 | 1625kg* | - | 343 | 3.9 | - | 208 | + Best-built, best-looking Diablo of all - People's perceptions | ★★★★★ |
| Lexus LFA/LFA Nürburgring | 200 F | 2010-12 | 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 | 1999-2001 | 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 | ★★★★★ |
| Maserati MC20 | 305 F | £204,520 | 6/2992 | 621/7500 | 538/3000 | 1475kg* | 1700kg | 428 | 2.9 | - | 203 | + evo Car of the Year 2022 - Lacks the refinement and sophistication of some rivals | ★★★★☆ |
| Maserati MC20 Cielo | 304 D | £231,885 | 6/2992 | 621/7500 | 538/3000 | 1560kg* | - | 404 | 2.9 | - | 201 | + Gets you closer to that rip-snorthing engine - A tiny bit more ragged than the coupe | ★★★★★ |
| McLaren 570S | 229 F | 2015-19 | 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 | 2016-18 | 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 | 2018-21 | 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 | 2020-21 | 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 | 296 F | £165,230 | 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 Artura | 305 F | £189,200 | 6/2993 | 671/7500 | 530/2250 | 1498kg | 1560kg | 455 | 3.0 | - | 205 | + Surreal performance and total precision - Monotone biturbo V6 | ★★★★★ |
| McLaren 720S | 262 F | £208,600 | 8/3994 | 710/7250 | 568/5500 | 1419kg | - | 508 | 2.9 | 2.9 | 212 | + evo Car of the Year 2017 - Favours precision over emotion | ★★★★★ |
| McLaren 720S Spider | 268 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 | ★★★★★ |
| 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 765LT Spider | 293 D | £310,500 | 8/3994 | 754/7500 | 590/5500 | 1388kg | - | 553 | 2.8 | - | 205 | + Everything the 765LT coupe is and more - It's even more expensive too | ★★★★★ |
| McLaren 650S | 196 F | 2014-17 | 8/3799 | 641/7250 | 500/6000 | 1428kg | - | 456 | 3.0 | - | 207 | + Better brakes, balance and looks than 12C; more power too - Which all comes at a price | ★★★★★ |
| McLaren 675LT | 248 F | 2015-17 | 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 | 2011-14 | 8/3799 | 616/7500 | 442/3000 | 1434kg | 1466kg | 435 | 3.3 | - | 207 | + Stagging 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 Elva | 294 D | £1,425,000 | 8/3994 | 804/7500 | 590/5500 | 1269kg | - | 644 | 2.8 | - | 203 | + Stupendous performance - Lacks the connection of the 765LT | ★★★★★ |
| McLaren P1 | 276 F | 2013-15 | 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 | 1994-98 | 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 D | £158,285 | 8/3982 | 577/6250 | 516/2100 | 1575kg | - | 372 | 3.6 | 3.3 | 198 | + Fun and blisteringly fast; a true rival for the 911 GT3 - A touch showy, perhaps | ★★★★★ |
| Mercedes-AMG GT R Pro | 269 F | 2019-20 | 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 | ★★★★★ |
| 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 | 2010-15 | 8/6208 | 563/6800 | 479/4750 | 1620kg | - | 335 | 3.9 | 4.1 | 197 | + Great engine and chassis (gullwing doors too!) - Slightly tardy gearbox | ★★★★★ |
| Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG Black Series | 204 F | 2013-15 | 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 | 2003-07 | 8/5439 | 617/6500 | 575/3250 | 1693kg | - | 370 | 3.8 | - | 208 | + Zonda-pace, 575-style drivability - Dreadful brake feel | ★★★★☆ |
| Noble M600 | 186 F | 2009-18 | 8/4439 | 650/6800 | 604/3800 | 1198kg* | - | 551 | 3.5 | 3.8 | 225 | + Spiritual successor to the Ferrari F40 - Quite a lot rarer | ★★★★★ |
| 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 | 2002-05 | 12/7291 | 547/5900 | 553/4050 | 1280kg* | - | 434 | 3.7 | - | 197 | + evo Car of the Year 2001 (in earlier 7.0 form) - Values have gone up a fair bit since then | ★★★★★ |
| Pagani Zonda F | 295 F | 2005-06 | 12/7291 | 594/6150 | 560/4000 | 1230kg* | - | 491 | 3.6 | - | 214+ | + Everything an Italian supercar ought to be - Looks a bit blingy next to a Carrera GT | ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 GT3 (992) | 299 F | £135,700 | 6/3996 | 503/8400 | 347/6100 | 1418kg | 1472kg | 360 | 3.9 | - | 199 | + Agile, sharp and hugely desirable - Deciding if you want standard or Touring spec | ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 GT3 RS (992) | 304 F | £178,500 | 6/3996 | 518/8500 | 343/6300 | 1450kg | - | 363 | 3.2 | - | 184 | + Highly sophisticated and a real weapon on track - We've yet to try it on the road | ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 GT3 (991.2) | 256 F | 2017-19 | 6/3996 | 493/8250 | 339/6000 | 1413kg | 1452kg | 355 | 3.9 | - | 198 | + Almost impossible to criticise - Wasn't the easiest car to place an order for | ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 GT3 RS (991.2) | 278 F | 2018-20 | 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 | 2018-19 | 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 | 2013-16 | 6/3799 | 468/8250 | 324/6250 | 1430kg | 1448kg | 333 | 3.5 | - | 196 | + evo Car of the Year 2013 - PDK only | ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 GT3 RS (991.1) | 223 F | 2015-16 | 6/3996 | 493/8250 | 339/6250 | 1420kg | - | 353 | 3.3 | 3.0 | 193 | + Sensationally good to drive - The Cayman GT4 is even better | ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 R (991.1) | 229 F | 2016 | 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 | 2009-11 | 6/3797 | 429/7600 | 317/6250 | 1395kg | - | 312 | 4.1 | 4.2 | 194 | + Even better than the car it replaced - Give us a minute... | ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 GT3 RS (3.8, 997.2) | 248 F | 2010-11 | 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 | 2011-12 | 6/3996 | 493/8250 | 339/5750 | 1360kg | 1463kg | 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 | 2010-13 | 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 | 2007-09 | 6/3600 | 409/7600 | 298/5500 | 1395kg | 1452kg | 298 | 4.3 | 4.3 | 192 | + Runner-up at evo Car of the Year 2006 - Ferrari 599 GTBs | ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.1) | 112 F | 2007-09 | 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 | 2003-05 | 6/3600 | 375/7400 | 284/5000 | 1380kg | - | 272 | 4.5 | 4.3 | 190 | + evo Car of the Year 2003 - Chassis a bit too track-focused for some roads | ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 GT3 RS (996.2) | 068 F | 2004-05 | 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 | 2004-06 | 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 | 1999-2001 | 6/3600 | 360/7200 | 273/5000 | 1350kg | - | 271 | 4.8 | 4.5 | 187 | + evo Car of the Year 1999 - Porsche didn't build enough | ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 Turbo S (992) | 295 F | £168,900 | 6/3745 | 641/6750 | 590/2500 | 1640kg | - | 397 | 2.7 | - | 205 | + More three-dimensional than recent Turbos | |



DOA: ALPINE GTA USA

The tale of how a revised '80s Alpine nearly became a halo car for Renault in America

IN 1979 AMC MADE A DEAL WITH RENAULT to sell the French company's cars through its vast US dealer network. From there things got serious and by late 1980 Renault was taking a 46 per cent stake in the struggling American company and drawing up grand plans for a US invasion, led by locally assembled versions of the R9 and R11 and an Americanised version of the R18. But to lure Americans to their local AMC showrooms Renault really needed a sexy, low-slung flagship.

Happily, the company's advanced research division, BEREX, was working on just such a thing: a striking successor to the Alpine A310, to be called the Grand Tourisme Alpine or GTA. Less happily, by the time Renault realised the GTA could be useful across the Atlantic the project was already well advanced and, given its shoestring budget, no effort had been made to engineer it for US regulations. But Renault's appetite was whetted by projections that said 2500 Americans a year would buy one, thereby doubling GTA production numbers, so once the Euro Alpine had entered production in late '84, Renault HQ gave BEREX an extra 180 million francs to create a GTA that would meet US rules and requirements.

The changes needed were many, starting with a stronger front-end structure, bigger and tougher bumpers, and side-impact beams in the doors.

The glassed-in headlights breached strict US standards so they were replaced by pop-up lamps, sitting above an enlarged front intake for better cooling. Also on the outside there were Federally mandated side marker lights and a central stop lamp, while on the inside Americans would get standard air con, leather seats and cruise control.

All told, the US market Alpine was 136mm longer, 200 kilos heavier and ten per cent weaker, its emissions-control kit knocking the 200 horsepower turbocharged V6 of Euro cars down to 180bhp. By late 1986 the Federalised GTA was ready and pre-production cars were loaned to a generally enthusiastic US media, *Motor Trend* even proclaiming it a 'European Corvette fighter'.

Unfortunately, in November 1986 Renault boss Georges Besse was assassinated by left-wing terrorists, and his successor, Raymond Lévy, had no patience for the company's expensive American adventure when La Regie's ship urgently needed stabilising at home. In March '87 AMC Jeep

was sold to Chrysler and the American-spec GTA was culled just as series production was about to begin. Of the 21 cars built before the blade fell, 12 were sold to the public and the rest used in the development of the Alpine A610, a revised GTA incorporating many of the engineering changes created for the American model. This, however, wasn't the only way in which a part of the Federal GTA lived on.

Around the time the American Alpine was cancelled, Lotus was signing off Peter Stevens' design for the M100 Elan, which was intended to use Isuzu Piazza rear lights behind perspex covers. Only after the design had been approved was it found that these didn't emit enough light to meet homologation rules, triggering an urgent search for replacements that ended when Stevens spotted a GTA in an episode of BBC yacht schlock drama *Howards' Way* and reckoned its tail lights were the right size and shape for his Elan.

A quick trip to a local Renault dealer confirmed his suspicion and the French were happy to sell Lotus the parts, including the redundant Federalised version of the GTA rear light (with red turn signals rather than orange) which was used on Elans exported to the USA. As such, while the US-spec GTA died with Renault's American ambitions, a piece of it lived on with every M100 Elan sold in the United States.

**'PROJECTIONS
SAID IT WOULD
DOUBLE GTA
PRODUCTION'**

FLOW FORMING



Technik aus dem Motorsport

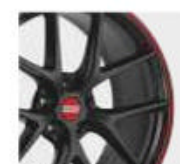
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