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## ALSO INSIDE

**INSIGHT** SYNTHETIC & HYDROGEN FUEL: WHERE NEXT?

**PAST MASTERS** BMW M3 GTS KAMM 912C MINI COOPER S '75'

**DRIVEN** PININFARINA BATTISTA LOTUS EMIRA i4 SPARTAN TRACK CAR











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# The one that should have been.

The 70s — an era of boundless idealism and audacious dreams. Ours was the Pony Coupe concept, a car we dreamt up and built in 1974, despite never having made one before.

And although it never made it to market, it still became an icon and inspired a generation of cars — including a certain time-travelling one from the movies.

Then, it did something arguably even more iconic: it vanished. Now, you may wonder how it's possible to lose a car; we still do.

But the reality was that the Pony Coupe concept was gone. It was, however, not forgotten...

Its innovative spirit even influenced our award-winning IONIQ models today.

This is why we challenged its legendary designer, Giorgetto Giugiaro, to remake it. And here it is, crafted with the same love (and the same, steel-wedged nose).

A faithful recreation of the original, except for one thing: this ad. Because back then, this icon never got its moment in print. So, 49 years later, we're making it right with the one that should have been. The Pony Coupe concept: an ode to those unbridled dreams.

This is a concept vehicle and is not available for purchase.







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# Ed speak



## SO LONG FIESTA. SO LONG

the car that gave so many of us our first solo drive and that first taste of unbridled freedom to go anywhere we wished. Which often meant the Fiesta was also the car in which many experienced their first crash (not me, I had an older brother to demonstrate how to do that). And so long to the car in which many experienced the thrill and fear of their first motor race (that

was me, and I chose the same Fiesta race car to explore Paddock Hill Bend's gravel trap for the first time, too).

The Fiesta is also the first from its sector to throw in the towel. The whys and the wherefores have been discussed endlessly: falling sales, Ford's aim to be 100 per cent electric in Europe and hit net zero. It makes sense. Doesn't it?

Not when the top ten best-selling cars in Europe for the first six months of 2023 include the 208, Corsa and Clio in

fourth, fifth and sixth spots respectively, selling 311,634 between them. All but the 208, which saw a four per cent dip, posted significant growth (the Clio selling 44 per cent more). Even VW's Polo posted a 13 per cent sales increase.

What do these small hatchbacks have to do with this magazine? It's all about how new drivers experience the thrill associated with driving. It's about accessible car ownership and that first taste of performance that comes with your first hot hatch. It's about cars that fit in car parks designed 40 years ago. Cars with small, efficient powertrains that sip fuel and don't cost a ransom to maintain.

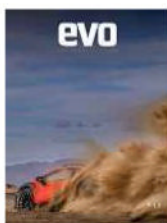
It's long been said that consumers don't know what they want until you give it to them, but I fear some manufacturers are going to learn the expensive way what happens when you don't provide consumers with what they need.

**Stuart Gallagher, Editor-in-Chief** @stuartg917

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by STUART GALLAGHER PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH

## Lotus Emira i4

This AMG-powered four-cylinder Emira is the last new ICE car Lotus will launch, so is it a fitting farewell?

IT'S FAIR TO SAY THE EMIRA DIDN'T have the smoothest of launches. And I don't mean the soaking that managing director Matt Windle got when the heavens opened over Hethel as he introduced Lotus's first 'all new' sports car since the Elise. Our first drive in the summer of 2022 yielded mixed results, and the same was the case for other magazines.

A mismatched specification for the pre-production test car presented us with a V6-engined, six-speed-manual First Edition with a Sport-spec chassis – stiffer springs and dampers – but equipped with the more road-biased Goodyear Eagle F1 tyres from the Tour-spec car in place of the Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2s that Sport models leave the factory with. It made for a strong on-road car, albeit one that reached the limit of its

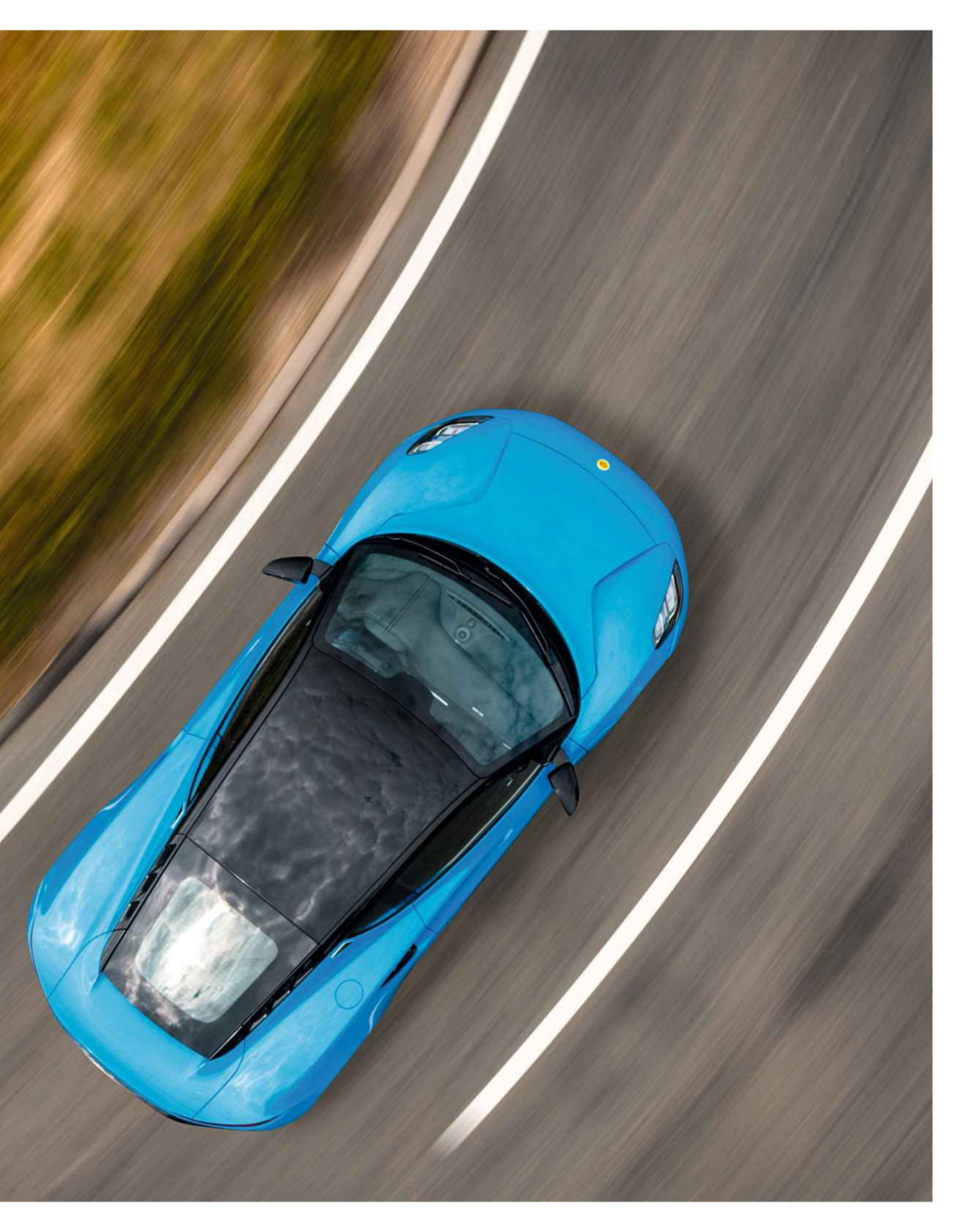
tyres quite quickly when pushed on the road and even quicker when driven on track.

A solid four stars was the result, with a strong desire to drive a finished production car as soon as possible, hopefully in time for eCoty 2022. Which didn't happen due to Lotus experiencing supply-chain issues, which pushed back customer deliveries and therefore the availability of a test car. We've still not been able to get behind the wheel of a production-spec Emira V6. Few have.

However, this is a production-specification four-cylinder Emira, or i4 in Lotus-speak. It's powered by a Mercedes-AMG 2-litre, four-cylinder turbocharged engine that's hooked up to an eight-speed dual-clutch gearbox, just as it is in the AMG A45 S hyperhatch (see page 28).

Why Mercedes for the powertrain? Using the









most powerful production four-cylinder in the world is quite a USP, although rather than the A45 S's full-fat 415bhp and 208bhp per litre, the Emira produces 360bhp and has to make do with 180bhp per litre. Although it doesn't take a genius to work out how this leaves plenty of headroom for future four-cylinder derivatives with more power and torque. Another rationale for the engine choice is that the CEO of Geely, which owns Lotus, is also a rather significant shareholder in Daimler.

It's not a great-sounding engine, with a coarse undertone that's ever-present and doesn't build to anything remotely close to a tune. There's a lot of air-intake noise immediately behind the passenger cell, both externally and in the engine bay against the bulkhead, that adds to the decibels. The note doesn't sound as light and as unobtrusive as that of the Alpine A110's turbocharged 1.8-litre four, but neither does it grate like Porsche's four-cylinder boxer motor in the Cayman. Switch to Sport or

Track mode and the exhaust flaps open, drowning out much of the engine's vocals.

What it lacks in aural accompaniment it more than makes up for with the performance it delivers. At a claimed 1446kg – 40kg lighter than the V6 we weighed on our scales – the Emira four-cylinder is no featherweight Elise, but its 253bhp per ton provides it with lightning reflexes off the line and a punch that continues to hit as you climb through the gears. Thankfully the gearbox's mapping isn't predisposed to reach eighth as quickly as possible; instead it allows the engine to breathe through its power delivery rather than heaving along on its chunky 317lb ft of torque. With power peaking at 6600rpm it is happy to rev, although if you've switched to using the paddles your trigger finger needs to be on its A-game to avoid a strong rebuttal from the engine's limiter.

Speaking of paddles, they're actually switches and are rather disappointing as a consequence.

**Top right:** Sport spec puts Cup 2 tyres on the 20-inch alloys. **Right:** low spokes on the steering wheel make reaching for the shift paddles feel a little unnatural

And the steering-wheel spokes, which the paddles are attached to the back of, are set lower than you would perhaps expect on the rim, requiring an unusually large stretch of your digit to change gear. Longer paddles with a nicer action would resolve it in a click of your fingers. And while we're on the interior, the seat still isn't right. It's comfortable with plenty of adjustment but it doesn't hold you across the shoulders strongly enough and you sometimes find yourself bracing your hips against the bolsters in quicker, tighter turns.

Back to the oily bits. Lotus didn't simply take the AMG powertrain and straight swap it for the V6. For a start it sits on a 12kg-lighter aluminium rear subframe compared to the Toyota engine, and from the B-pillar back much of what lies beneath





Russell Carr's exterior penwork is bespoke to the i4, including the electronic control systems, suspension uprights and aluminium wishbones, the wheels and the sheer panels. Despite the loss of two cylinders, packaging for the four-cylinder motor remains as tight as it does for the Toyota V6 when you lift the plastic engine cover.

'We worked with Mercedes and Bosch extensively on the software,' says Gavan Kershaw, Lotus's director of attributes and product integrity. 'We were able to ask [AMG] for the exact throttle progression and gearshift mapping we wanted and that we knew would suit the car in all the drive modes to deliver the consistency we wanted.'

This work was the most extensive of its kind that Lotus has carried out. Both the V6 and i4 models were developed alongside each other, but the first Mercedes engines didn't arrive at Hethel until some time after the programme had started, which would normally cause delays and introduce





costs, two factors Lotus wasn't keen on, or indeed able to entertain.

'Because we knew the weight of the four-cylinder powertrain, the power and torque characteristics, the weight distribution, etc, etc, we were able to ballast V6 test cars to be i4s and start work on its electronics while we waited,' explains Kershaw.

'Working directly with Bosch we were able to develop the two ECUs required [the engines use different units] to run identical electronics and then we adjusted these accordingly between the six- and four-cylinder cars in terms of torque management and the e-diff for the i4.'

One of the biggest adjustments was to incorporate Lotus's electro-hydraulic power-steering system on the i4 (the steering column, front suspension and brakes are the same as on the V6) to replace the Mercedes EPAS system that runs off the engine. Then there was the software required for the traction and stability control

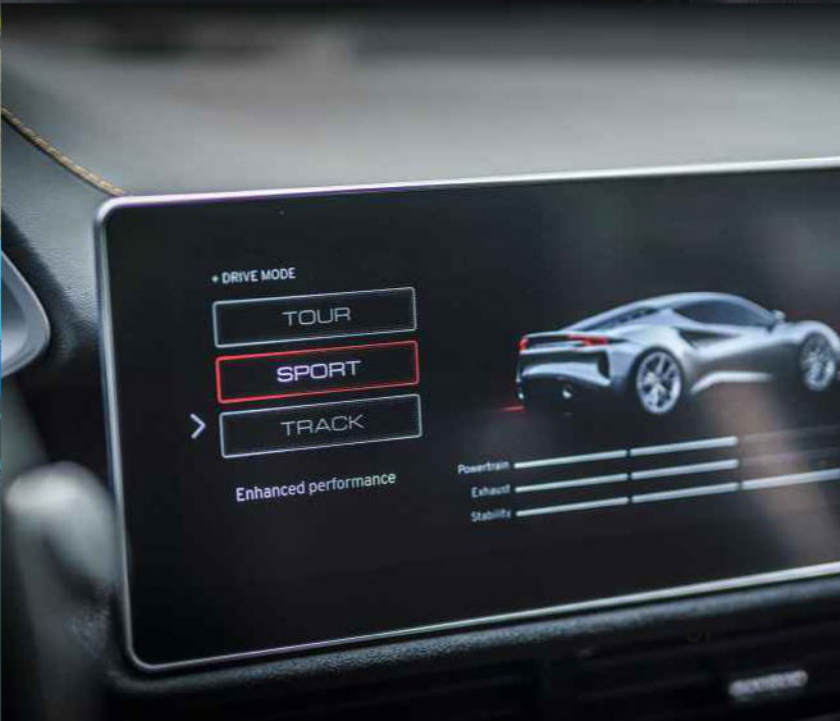
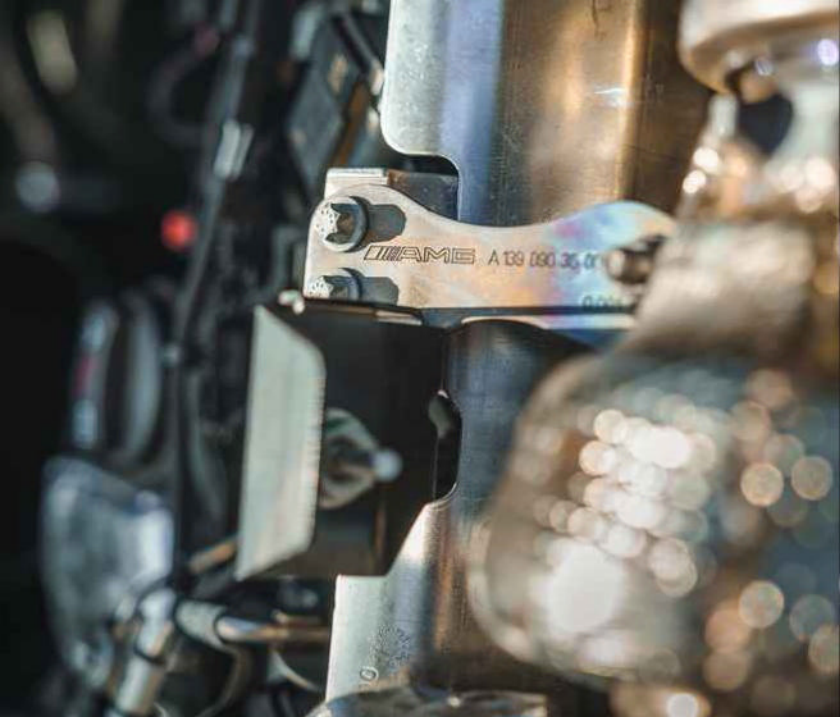
systems and the aforementioned new e-diff.

On the road the Emira i4 feels planted, hunched on its Sport springs and dampers (around six to seven per cent stiffer than the Tour items, but with up to 40 per cent greater operating range). It's stiffer than you would expect from a Lotus, with firm movements through the body, and on poor UK roads it's immediately noticeable and attention-grabbing, if not as sharp-edged as a Cayman GT4. Had I only driven the car for a day on the road I would be imploring every potential customer to avoid the Sport chassis at all costs. Yet with time and miles you begin to tune into its characteristics, know when to react to the steering wriggling in your hands and when to take a tighter grip. You also build the knowledge that those firmer movements through the springs and dampers at lower speeds settle as your pace increases, delivering a calmness and control as your confidence builds and the chassis begins to work to its full potential.

And it's some potential. The combination of a quick turn-in, some genuine feel (thank you Lotus) back through the steering and grip from those Cup 2s has the Emira's nose locked in with a single input from your wrists, then it's up to you to manage the throttle and drive out of the corner on the torque and power wave to be fired along the tarmac. It's a clean, singular motion from the moment you apply the first degree of lock to when you straighten the wheel again. Pure and precise.

Where at lower speeds there feels a reluctance and little desire to play, at medium pace the rewards begin to materialise as you learn to ask more of those sticky Michelins, receive more detail back to your fingertips via the Alcantara patches on the steering wheel, and begin to squeeze the throttle harder and earlier. Before you know it the e-diff has already rolled up its sleeves and is stuck in, braking each rear wheel independently and accordingly to manage your line and distribute the







performance you've asked for. It feels intuitive at all times, with no clumsy snatches of brake here or a dump of torque there to nanny and interfere, simply a flow of wizardry to assist where needed.

On track the i4 Emira's capabilities burst through to the surface. Drive like a Golf R owner in a TikTok video and the electronics will go above and beyond to prevent you from going viral. Greasy hairpin, third gear, full lock and full throttle and you barely feel the system kick in, despite the car still travelling in the direction you want it to go. Up the ante and turn in a little quickly through a damp fourth-gear kink and you will have already reacted to the messages streaming back at you as all four Cup 2s begin to slide across the surface, applying a little more right foot along with an equally small amount of corrective lock to straighten up on the exit as the diff loads and unloads to maintain the balance and guide you on your way. There's a natural intuition to the way the Emira gets in, through and out of

a corner. As the driver you're always dictating the process, the car responding to your commands, but when required there's a safety net on hand to nudge you in the right direction. How big a nudge you need is all down to you.

With more track time you build more confidence, winding the systems back as you nudge the drive modes up to Track, and immediately you begin to appreciate that the i4 is as precise and inspiring as every Lotus that has gone before it. It's not a car for showboating, but it allows even the most ham-fisted to hold a slide and enjoy that sensation of a car moving beneath them, feeling the limits and looking over the edge without scaring yourself into a spin. It feels less edgy at the limit than an A110, more planted and sure of itself, although it lacks the on-road pliancy the French fancy has in abundance. It also lacks that ultimate all-round polish of a Cayman, but then again, few cars can match the Porsche for this.

The Emira is not an Elise, Exige or Evora. Its DNA (and extruded aluminium construction) are shared but the new car's objectives are very different, as this first drive highlights. Some will think it's not Lotus enough, others will be blown away by the duality, quality and useability the Emira offers that no Lotus has done in the last 70 years. Yes, there are small areas of improvement required and potential customers should try both Tour and Sport chassis options before buying, but the four-cylinder Emira is an inspiring last petrol-powered Lotus and a great sports car. ✕

**Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1991cc, turbocharged

**Power** 360bhp @ 6600rpm **Torque** 317lb ft @ 3000-5500rpm

**Weight** 1446kg (253bhp/ton) **0-62mph** 4.3sec

**Top speed** 180mph **Basic price** £81,495

✚ Talented chassis provides an engaging driving experience

✚ Some will miss the trademark Lotus fluidity

**evo rating** ★★★★★





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**Driven**

by ADAM TOWLER

# Bentley Batur

The W12 engine bows out with 740bhp in the nose of this ultra-exclusive, endlessly customisable, £2 million (and up) coachbuilt coupe







**N**AMED AFTER A CRATER LAKE ON THE ISLAND of Bali, the Batur is a rebodied Continental GT Speed that follows on from the Bacalar (see *evo* 286), the run of 12 barchettas that if nothing else gave Bentley the increasing self-confidence to publicly undertake these more extreme projects.

Such endeavours fall under the remit of the company's in-house coachbuilder Mulliner – the oldest entity of its kind in the world – which offers, much like the exclusive operations of other high-end vehicle manufacturers, varying levels of 'bespoke', from unique colours through to complete cars. There will be 18 Batur's constructed, and yes, you guessed it, they're already pre-sold: at this level a company has a very good idea who will buy such cars before the designer's pen even touches the sketch pad.

Yet the Batur is more than just an ultra-exclusive Mulliner side project, it also heralds a new era for Bentley design that we'll see on its forthcoming EVs.

Moreover, it signifies the final flourish of the Bentley W12 engine after 20 years of being a motoring oddity, and, if nothing else, it's an interesting commentary on the world of the luxury performance car. All of which and more you might expect given it costs nearly ten times the price of the car on which it's based: a cool £1.65m plus local taxes.

What of that design, then? There are three key elements to the new styling language. Firstly, there's the grille, which is mounted lower and is more upright than on the current series production cars. Then there's what Bentley is calling the 'endless bonnet', which is a tangible line that runs from the grille, all the way back along the flank to the end of the side glass, the idea being to evoke the stately long noses of Bentleys past on cars with more modern packaging requirements. Finally, there's the 'resting beast stance', which translates to the profile view as a car ready to respond but not

overtly aggressively – think of the creases over the wheelarches as like a big cat's haunches. Apparently.

I'll let you make up your own mind on how the Batur looks, but it certainly has impact sitting purposefully on its 22-inch wheels, and to my eyes appears obviously 'Bentley', although perhaps that's why it's a little more under the radar than other two-million-quid supercars.

The body is made from carbonfibre, which while bringing a small (proportionally) weight saving overall – 40kg – is chiefly so that Bentley's designers could craft a more sharply creased, detailed shape than would be possible with a metal-suited vehicle that passes down the standard production line (just the windscreen and A-pillars are shared with the GT). There are no rear seats, while the other major change involves the W12, which has been given a final evolution for the Batur with outputs rising from 650bhp and 664lb ft in the Conti GT Speed to





740bhp and a rippling 738lb ft of torque in the Batur. The surge in figures has been made possible thanks to modifications on the compressor side of the two turbochargers, a new air intake with a 33 per cent improved flow rate, deeper intercoolers with 35 per cent greater capacity, and a unique calibration for the ECU. All together, they enable this to be the most powerful Bentley ever to leave Crewe.

Other than that, it's very much a GT Speed – which is no bad thing – including the eight-speed twin-clutch gearbox, four-wheel-drive set-up, active anti-roll bars, three-chamber air suspension, and so on. The track is slightly wider, and the engineers have taken the opportunity to have a play with the suspension settings, but any differences are minor.

The W12 fires up with its characteristic hearty *whumph* that troubles window panes and suggests the kind of heavy transportation engineering that Crewe used to also be famous for may be about to leave the engine shed. Yet, if you're in the standard 'Bentley' driving mode the engine quickly settles down and plays the role of the strong, silent type, smoothly whisking Batur occupants around with the kind of sumptuous excess surely desired by its well-heeled owners. Catch engine, gears and momentum just right and the W12 has a wonderfully elastic relationship with the horizon, pottering one moment and then furiously snapping the view taught through the windscreen, whatever the revs and speed, with a form of relentless persuasion that's almost impossible to resist.

**Above and top right:** exterior design previews the kind of look we can expect from Bentley's upcoming EVs. **Below right:** every element of the interior can be customised to the owner's taste (or lack thereof)

Here's a question, though: does it feel as exciting as 740bhp sounds? I'm not sure. It's amazing how 2.2 tons can normalise such a colossal output, even with 738lb ft of torque doing the bidding, and there are occasions when the Batur can feel just a little sluggish, as if its caught off guard. Then the inertia comes into play, and there's an uncomfortable pause before the sudden rush of torque begins, as if the gearbox is protecting itself first before dealing with the onslaught. The idea of 12 cylinders at this end of the market can't help but sound wonderfully extravagant, but this is no twelve-pot with the sheer specialness of say, a Ferrari V12, and certainly not with the same kind of voice – and how many times have we written that about W12-engined cars over the years, closely followed by the inevitable 'buy the lighter, more responsive, cheaper, twin-turbo V8 one'?

In most other respects the Batur is very good news. Bentley actively strives to make cars that mix everyday usability with long-legged luxury, and with a hearty dash of driver appeal mixed in for good measure. This is what you get with the Batur. It's at its best when 'making progress', dismissing straights and normal traffic with long lunges of power and securely dispatching sweeping curves on the way to an exotic destination. It has







admirably dogged traction, while those hilariously large carbon-ceramic brakes – 410mm discs with ten-pot calipers on the front axle – have a resilience and power that belies the forces they have to work against. Comfort is absolute behind the wheel, the ride wonderfully fluid despite those huge wheels, only tensing up if you're in Sport mode, and overall NVH is reduced down to a minimum. With this level of serenity you could really knock back some miles in a day.

Push beyond a clean, seven-tenths approach and inevitably the Batur is less content: the rear-wheel steering and active anti-roll bars can disguise the weight of the car to a very great extent, but try to throw it around on tighter, twistier routes and it starts to feel a little ragged, and while it will slide at the rear, the drivetrain clunk as power is redistributed suggests there are seismic forces being kept under control.

I enjoyed driving the Batur across some decent roads, but it's patently obvious that you could have virtually the same experience in a GT Speed. Yet you're not paying ten times the price to get essentially the same car that simply looks a little different: those 18 buyers have been enticed by the exclusivity of the model, and also by the virtually limitless customisation options available. Each Batur buyer gets to have multiple spec sessions with a Mulliner designer and can choose from a literally limitless palette of colours, and an even more baffling array of interior options, including plenty of sustainable materials, engravings,

embossings, leathers, carbonfibre panels that morph colours and so on. Our test car featured an intricate rotary control for the infotainment system that had been 3D printed and then covered in 18-carat gold, while you can upgrade the hi-fi system to the tune of (pun intended) £50k. All in, the average Batur will not leave Crewe until £100,000 of options have been specified. In many ways the model is a blank canvas.

Bentley, much like Ferrari before, and now every other high-end vehicle manufacturer, has sussed that the ticket to increasing revenue in a complex, crowded and cost-laden market is to maximise the take-up and profitability of the options list, and the Batur is gold dust in that regard. Perhaps, in some cases, literally. Bentley's revenue increased by nine per cent in the first quarter of this year, with a significant improvement in its overall financial results, and part of this has been driven by customers spending more on personalisation and options for the mainstream models. Post Covid, the 'haves' are spending their money in more extrovert ways, and that's good news for companies such as Bentley – and for the gestation of models like the Batur. ✕

**Engine** W12, 5950cc, twin-turbo **Power** 740bhp @ 5500rpm

**Torque** 738lb ft @ 1750-5000rpm

**Weight** 2230kg (est) (c337bhp/ton) **0-60mph** <3.3sec

**Top speed** 209mph **Basic price** £1,980,000

➕ As good to drive as a GT Speed; highly exclusive

➖ It's a bit pricey

**evo rating** ★★★★★





by JETHRO BOVINGDON

## Audi RS7 Sportback Performance

'Performance' update brings a sharper chassis plus more power and noise to create the best RS7 yet

**T**HE WORLD HAD STOPPED. FLIGHTS were grounded, borders closed, families communicated by Zoom and the sick and elderly died alone. Aside from those enjoying regular parties in Downing Street and the endless sunshine scorching the UK, we'll remember 2020 rather grimly. Bad times. Yet for a few wonderful months I was running an Audi RS7 Sportback and things suddenly looked a bit more promising. A big Audi RS model that didn't just look cool but was sharp, exhibited fine balance and possessed genuine poise? Could it really be true?

It was. Mostly. I really enjoyed its shockingly urgent performance, sky-high quality and the way it seemed to suck up poor road surfaces with no fuss at all to deliver a sense of unstoppable, irresistible omnipotence. Later, we discovered it still tended towards understeer on track and its easy sense of control started to finally unravel, but for the most part that monstrously powerful Tango Red RS7 charmed and impressed. Looking back at an early Fast Fleet report my

one real criticism concerned the Audi's reluctance to embrace its inner performance capabilities. 'A sprinkling more noise and attitude wouldn't do any harm,' I pondered.

Which brings us to the new RS7 Sportback Performance, replacing the standard RS7 in the UK at a price of £118,545. Audi says this new derivative is a little sharper, lighter and noisier than before. It's faster too, of course. Thanks to bigger turbos running higher boost (up from 2.4 to 2.6 bar) the 4-litre V8 gets a bump from 592bhp to 621bhp at 6000rpm, while torque is up from 590lb ft to 626lb ft. The RS7 Performance covers 0-62mph in 3.4sec and is limited to 180mph, or 190mph with the optional RS Dynamic Package Plus.

Reduced sound deadening saves 8kg. Take that. Standard 22-inch alloys shave another 20kg (which is actually quite impressive) and the result is a kerb weight of just 2065kg. Oh. But before we get too upset, remember the new C63 AMG is so heavy that owners are returning to their parked car to find superminis slowly rotating around it and having to

scrape Caterhams off the rear bumper. This is just the new reality. More encouraging is a smaller, quicker-acting centre diff, while the rear torque-vectoring Sport Differential is retained. Under normal circumstances drive is split 40:60 front-to-rear, but up to 70 per cent can flow forwards or 85 per cent rearwards.

Amazingly, the RS7 rides really nicely even on the optional RS Sports Suspension Plus with Dynamic Ride Control (horizontally opposed dampers are connected hydraulically to create additional damping force and reduce pitch, roll and dive), and the electronically adjustable dampers and steel springs provide a much greater sense of connection and control than the standard air springs. In Comfort mode, the RS7 Performance is a shade louder and the engine certainly feels more present than before, but it's still a deeply refined car. The interior is gorgeous, too. So, it's luxurious but there's a palpable sense of massive potential just lurking beneath the surface.





Not everything is rosy, though. The four-wheel steering certainly makes manoeuvring very easy but the rack is too light, conveys very little real information and creates a jumpy, unnatural feeling. It improves as you ramp up through the modes (there's Efficiency, Comfort, Auto and Dynamic, plus customisable RS1 and RS2 options) but the digitised sensation never disappears entirely. Similarly, body control is lacking in Comfort mode when you start to push, but cycle up to Dynamic and the ride deteriorates markedly, the supple, light-touch character becoming stiff and the car skittering across crumbling roads.

The engine is an absolute force of nature. There's a bit more lag than previously but you only really notice it in Efficiency and Comfort modes, where the programming for the eight-speed automatic gearbox is set to 'cabby trying to eke out every drop of fuel'. Utilise the paddles and that problem disappears. There's so much torque and the delivery has a

steely, pulverising energy as the revs increase. And yes, there's more aural drama than before. It's now somewhere between a rollicking AMG soundtrack and the subtler BMW M5's and, for me, strikes the perfect balance. It imbues the car with character even at everyday speeds.

Our test car is equipped with Pirelli P Zero tyres rather than the vaunted new Continental SportContact 7s mentioned in the press material, but grip and accuracy are not lacking. Just as before, the outright balance on the road is fantastic. For me the steering is a bit too quick for such a big car but it does create fantastic responsiveness, and whilst the ride can be unforgiving the body stays spookily flat. Understeer? You'll simply never encounter it on the road with 285/30 ZR 22 tyres. The RS7 just grips and goes where it's pointed.

In fact, the Sport Differential makes the RS7 Performance feel more tail-led, as it pins the front axle to the road every time you load it up with torque. It's a lovely sensation. If only that

**Above:** RS7 Performance has more grip than you'll ever need; quattro four-wheel-drive system can send up to 85 per cent of the available torque to the torque-vectoring rear Sport Differential, giving the car a tail-led feel

athleticism was followed through at the limit. The M division's xDrive system is now the benchmark in this space and its natural, progressive feel easily shades the RS7's tendency to hang on hard, then tie itself in knots as it shuffles grip around. Where you crave fluidity, instead there's an oddly jumpy, uncomfortable feeling as each corner fights for traction. Efficient but brutal, and at odds with the RS7 Performance's usual MO. ☒

**Engine** V8, 3996cc, twin-turbo **Power** 621bhp @ 6000rpm  
**Torque** 627lb ft @ 2300-4500rpm  
**Weight** 2065kg (306bhp/ton) **0-62mph** 3.4sec  
**Top speed** 180mph **Basic price** £118,545

**+** Quality; superb engine; effortless point-to-point speed  
**-** Hard to find the sweet spot in the settings

**evo rating** ★★★★★



by SAM JENKINS

## BMW Alpina B5 GT

With a 205mph top speed and M5 CS-rivalling outputs, this limited-edition, V8-powered 5-series is Alpina's fastest and most powerful model ever

BEGINNING IN 1976 WITH THE ULTRA-RARE B2, Alpina has been putting its stamp on BMW's 5-series for almost half a century, fettling dynamics, design and performance to produce some of the finest fast saloons we've seen. The limited-edition G30 B5 GT, and accompanying G31 B5 GT Touring, is Alpina's final take on the 5-series in its current form and is also the firm's most potent model to date, with more power than any car in its current or back catalogue.

Step inside its uniquely upholstered interior, thumb the starter button, and the deep, reassuring tones of BMW's 4.4-litre twin-turbocharged N63 V8 fill the cabin. While this is the same unit found

in the M550i, Alpina has made numerous changes in order to achieve the B5 GT's headline 625bhp figure. In addition to the standard B5's uprated cooling system, pistons, turbochargers and transmission, the GT is equipped with a less restrictive, flow-optimised intake, a modified exhaust centre section and an ECU update. The result is a 13bhp uplift from the regular B5 and a 75bhp advantage over the M550i, bringing the GT's output to just a single horsepower shy of the hardcore M5 CS's. Peak torque stands at 627lb ft between 3500 and 5000rpm, some 74lb ft more than the CS offers.

Those outputs are sent to all four wheels through a modified eight-speed ZF torque-converter auto







and the performance is predictably strong. The 0-62mph sprint takes a claimed 3.2sec for the saloon, 3.4sec for the Touring; 124mph arrives in 10.2sec/10.9sec; and subtle aerodynamic tweaks allow the B5 GT to hit a top speed of 205mph in saloon form. To give those times some context, the M5 CS touches 62mph in 3sec dead, a Ferrari 458 Italia takes 10.4sec to reach the 124mph benchmark, and the only saloon with a higher top speed is the 207mph Bentley Flying Spur Speed.

Heading out onto Zandvoort circuit, the GT immediately feels every bit of its 625bhp, with that high torque figure providing relentless in-gear pull. A torque converter will never be as sharp as a dual-clutch transmission, but updates to the ZF unit make it a snappier shifter than others we've tried, without the frustrating artificial kick that some have begun to adopt.

Luxury and refinement are a higher priority than track focus here, so weight isn't low, the saloon tipping the scales at 1980kg, the Touring 100kg heavier still. As with the standard (and now

discontinued) B5, the saloon features traditional springs on all four corners while the Touring utilises air springs at the rear; the active anti-roll bars have been carried across too, but a lowered ride height has allowed further changes to the suspension geometry.

Sweeping, high-speed sections show just how capable the B5 GT can be, its chassis inspiring confidence with a neutral mid-corner balance. Certain sections of the circuit are far from perfectly surfaced, yet the GT deals with tricky mid-corner upsets without an issue, quality damping and those active anti-roll bars ensuring the ride is as refined as you'd hope. A UK road drive would provide the truest test of real-world ride quality, of course, but the signs suggest the GT would fare well, although 35 and 30-profile tyres front and rear respectively could be a sticking point over the toughest imperfections.

Despite its all-wheel drive system, the B5 GT feels refreshingly rear-biased, allowing for some play on the edge. There's not much in the way

of off-centre steering precision, but add some lock, load the chassis, and it becomes sufficiently responsive for a spirited drive. Given the luxury brief, there's no surprise Alpina stayed away from a hyperactive rack, but rear-wheel steering is standard and is impressively transparent when pushing on, but provides more control and useability in lower-speed scenarios.

Though unlikely to withstand multiple back-to-back track sessions, braking performance remains consistently strong during our laps. Initial bite and feel are lacking, though. We also try the Touring version back-to-back with the saloon, and while its additional weight is apparent under acceleration, it holds up well, its dynamic ability virtually indistinguishable from the saloon's.

Despite its swansong status, the B5 GT retains the marque's trademark understated design. A set of new 20-inch, 20-spoke wheels finished in Satin Bronze are the most notable change, with subtle front canards, the M5's ridged bonnet, and Alpina decals also part of the package. There are further changes inside, including an Alpina-themed digital dash, open-pore wood trim and bespoke aluminium shift paddles. Buyers can also opt for the more-supportive seats from the BMW XM, tweaked in design for Alpina.

Priced from €145,500 (c£124,300), the B5 GT is far from cheap. Its closest rivals from BMW M, Mercedes-AMG and Audi RS will set you back from around £100,000, but step up the luxury, and the equivalent Porsche Panamera or Bentley Continental GT will cost you more. Regardless of whether you feel its price is justified, the B5 GT offers a unique package of a kind we're unlikely to see again. And besides, the market has already spoken: every example from the 250-car run is already accounted for. ✕

**Engine** V8, 4395cc, twin-turbo **Power** 625bhp @ 5500-6500rpm **Torque** 627lb ft @ 3500-5000rpm

**Weight** 1980kg (321bhp/ton) **0-62mph** 3.2sec

**Top speed** 205mph **Basic price** €145,500 (c£124,300)

➤ Mighty road-biased performance; the ultimate Q car

➤ Size, weight, it's sold out

**evo rating** ★★★★★





by STUART GALLAGHER

## Mercedes-AMG A45 S

Our favourite four-wheel-drive hyperhatch receives a mid-life update – and continues to keep the RS3 at bay

**I**T MAY NOT LOOK LIKE IT BUT THIS IS THE facelifted AMG A45 S. Honestly. The press pack is staring me in the face telling me about the new headlights, the AMG-specific grille, and how the badge above said grille is no longer a three-pointed star but the Affalterbach coat of arms. The AMG Performance steering wheel is new too and there's been a serious upload of new software, but the hardware remains untouched.

This means the A45 S continues to be powered by the M139 turbocharged 2-litre engine, which is still the most powerful four-cylinder production engine in the world, with a specific output of 209bhp per litre. Its unchanged 415bhp peak beats the Audi RS3's five-cylinder by 21bhp, yet both generate 369lb ft of torque for their four-wheel-drive systems to manage, the A45's 4Matic+ providing a dual-clutch pack on the rear axle to allow for the de rigueur Drift mode.

Alongside the RS3s, Golf Rs and Civic Type Rs of the hyperhatch world, the A45 S has always delivered the biggest performance punch, along with a look that gets close in terms of in-your-face aggressiveness to the Honda's. Front-end dive planes, a prominent splitter, deeper sidesills, a rear diffuser and a roof-mounted spoiler are the AMG's signature uniform, along with a set of 19-inch black alloy wheels. It doesn't do subtle.

**Above and opposite:** exterior changes will take a very keen eye to spot; inside, the new AMG steering wheel features a pair of rotating dials beneath the spokes, enabling quick access to chassis and engine modes

For all its punch the engine isn't the dominant force you might expect, because the whole package is so well strung together. The engine and exhaust sound have been toned down and the latest particulate filter results in a flatter-than-anticipated soundtrack when you leave the drive mode in Comfort; if you weren't sitting in a winged-back seat and gripping that new steering wheel you might not even realise you're driving an AMG. Thankfully, where Sport settings once were best left to the circuit or ultra-smooth road surfaces, today their calibration provides a far greater operating window, and the A45 S is no different.

Engaging Sport tightens the dampers, loosens the engine's shackles, tenses up the gearchanges, opens the exhaust and starts to relax the stability and traction systems, although the steering remains untouched. And the A45 feels much closer to its maker's intentions as a result, its engine more alert and response times more befitting of a 400-plus bhp hatchback, the opportunity to crash into the hard rev limiter in lower gears more forthcoming. The

additional tightness through the body dials in more confidence, the firmer damper rate complementing the set-up without crashy results. It's the A45 as expected: sharp, decisive and blisteringly quick.

Happy to be bullied into a corner or placed with a sports car-like deftness at the apex, the rewards are the same either way: grip from the Michelin Pilot Sport 4 S tyres seemingly unbreakable at the front, the rear mobile on command but with an ability to remain calm under immense pressure, with clean transitions from grip to low-level slip. As with its predecessor, with each passing mile thoughts of mid-nineties and early noughties Japanese Group A road warriors flood your imagination; you can't help but wonder if AMG's R&D centre has a handful of RA Imprezas and Mitsubishi Evos under dust sheets having served their time as inspiration for the A45.

Where a Golf R starts to feel numb the harder you push, an A45 bubbles with a next level of enthusiasm, and where the latest RS3 relies on its oh-so-clever RS differential to bring fun, the A45 feels more organic, the more natural at wanting to leave a corner with a quarter turn of corrective lock as you feed in the throttle as the nose locks in on the apex. It uses its tech in a more natural way, blending it with a clarity rivals can't match.

When you want more from that explosive engine,





Sport+ and Race deliver the feral responses to the throttle, but both introduce a chassis setting that's too much for the road, so you're thankful for the Individual mode. Looser traction and stability settings arrive here too and allow more freedom from the rear axle, but this only highlights the lack of meaningful steering feedback, which leaves you to place a lot of faith in the tyres' performance as opposed to providing the detail to make clearer decisions. It's an oversight on AMG's part to overlook such a performance parameter.

As the hot hatch as we know it continues to fade away, the A45 S remains a blazing advertisement for the sector. It's bold and brash, and uncouth for many. At £63,285 it's also far too expensive: that sum could buy a previous-generation M2 Competition (manual or auto) and leave you with £20,000 to spend on rear tyres. But the call of a new hyperhatch is stronger for some, and for those who don't like the Civic Type R's looks, the A45 S is waiting under its wing. ☒

**Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1991cc, turbocharged **Power** 415bhp @ 6750rpm **Torque** 369lb ft @ 5000-5250rpm **Weight** 1560kg (271bhp/ton) **0-62mph** 3.9sec **Top speed** 168mph **Price** £63,285

➕ Point-to-point performance, unexpected ability

☒ Steering lacks detail, looks lack subtly

**evo rating** ★★★★★





IGNITION

by JOHN BARKER

# A gas-guzzling future?

BMW is forging ahead with trials of its hydrogen fuel cell-powered electric iX5. We try it on the road – and also assess Toyota's new hydrogen-fuelled racing concept





**T**HE HYDROGEN-POWERED BMW X5 accelerates like an EV to blend with the traffic on the M3, as expected. There's no internal combustion engine under the bonnet, the space instead occupied by a fuel cell that is being fed hydrogen and air to generate electricity which is then delivered to the rear-mounted motor and, when required, to a small but powerful battery. In fact, the only slightly unusual aspect of the experience is the sound, which starts as a woozy, *Tron*-like drone, like it's running over a corrugated surface, but is escalating with ever-greater urgency. 'It was composed by Hans Zimmer, the Hollywood composer,' says Dr Jürgen Guldner from

the passenger seat. I'm tempted to keep my foot hard in simply to discover what it sounds like at maximum speed.

Guldner is responsible for hydrogen vehicle development at BMW and this car, the iX5 Hydrogen, has been four years in the making. Coincidentally, before taking up the hydrogen role, Guldner was in chassis R&D, overseeing developing the iX5's dynamics, so it really is his baby. The ride is supple, the handling usefully agile for a big SUV, and the performance is convincing and indistinguishable from that of a BEV (battery electric vehicle). Why bother with the complexity of a fuel cell, then? The key advantage, says Guldner, is that a hydrogen-

powered FCEV (fuel cell electric vehicle) is 'an EV with fast fuelling'. Fully refilling the iX5 with 6kg of compressed hydrogen takes only five minutes, about the same as filling a petrol or diesel car, and gives a 311-mile (500km) range, as measured by the WLTP standard.

BMW describes itself as 'technologically agnostic' and is touting hydrogen not as an alternative to EVs but as another tool in the race to reduce CO2 emissions. It points out that not all sectors can be electrified effectively, saying that it won't work for coaches, trucks, aviation and maritime, or certain industries. It expects these industries to lead the way in growing the hydrogen infrastructure, which





is sparse in many countries, including the UK, which has less than a dozen filling stations. We are heading for one of them, adjacent to Heathrow airport.

This iX5 Hydrogen is a 'pilot vehicle'. Before it committed to EVs, BMW built a number of pilot cars and this FCEV pilot phase will see up to 100 iX5s released into the wild with selected customers and technology partners. It gives BMW the opportunity to understand how they are used, how they work in different situations and how people interact with them. It's a similar programme to that undertaken by Toyota with its Mirai FCEV.

This example feels, looks and drives like a finished item. There are different drive modes, including Sport, which lifts the volume of the Zimmer soundscape, plus an adjustable level of lift-off regen, increased and decreased by the +/- steering wheel paddles. Or you can select one-pedal drive with strong lift-off braking that can bring the car to a standstill. There's a turbocharger-like compressor feeding air to the fuel cell but it's silent in operation, and the only emission is water.

The fuel cell is rated at 125kW, making it currently the most powerful in the world, and is built in partnership with Toyota, while the small, high-performance, lithium-ion battery pack delivers 170kW for a total of 295kW, or 396bhp, with 524lb ft of torque. There are two carbonfibre-cased tanks, which carry hydrogen compressed to 700 bar and cooled to -40deg C. All up, it's just shy of 2500kg but about 100kg less than if it was a BEV, reckons BMW. Zero to 62mph takes less than six seconds and top speed is 115mph, which the battery can boost to 127mph for a few minutes.

'The nice thing about this technology is the different components determine different things,' says Guldner. 'In a BEV, the battery determines everything, but here the tank size determines the range, the fuel cell determines the maximum speed and the battery power determines the acceleration.' The battery has only two to three kWh, so on its own is only good for a few miles. It's not kept 100 per cent



full so that there's room for regen braking energy. 'It basically operates like a hybrid system, the fuel cell providing power generally, charging the battery as necessary, and the battery delivering the extra power for acceleration when required.'

Refuelling is similar to filling with petrol or diesel except there is infrared technology in the nozzle and filler neck to confirm that a sound connection has been made before compressed hydrogen begins flowing. As mentioned earlier, one issue facing hydrogen-powered vehicles in many parts is the scarcity of filling stations. Germany has just over 100, Japan over 150, but many have just a few.

Then there's the issue with where the hydrogen comes from. Currently, the amount of 'green' hydrogen – produced using renewable energy – is miniscule. Most hydrogen is 'grey', being derived from natural gas in an energy-intensive process that releases lots of CO2. Guldner sees opportunities here, pointing out that in Germany alone last year almost six terawatt hours of renewable energy was wasted because there was nowhere for it in the grid. 'It could have been transformed into 100,000 tons of hydrogen.'

Guldner predicts that hydrogen produced from renewable energy will be the 'new oil' in the Middle East, those countries leveraging another natural resource: sunshine. 'The same solar panel in the Middle East produces two and a half times more electricity than the one in Germany.'

'But there's no electric cable to bring it to Germany, so we have to go through hydrogen to make this renewable energy available.' Even after all the losses of electrolysis water to make hydrogen and then transporting it (as ammonia, which is much easier to transport than hydrogen), Guldner says that a solar panel in the Middle East drives an FCEV the same distance as a BEV powered by electricity from a solar panel in Germany.

**Above and right:** fully refilling the iX5 with 6kg of compressed hydrogen takes only five minutes and gives a range of over 300 miles. Scarcity of filling stations is a problem, though – UK has fewer than a dozen

Hydrogen-powered FCEVs are already factored into future models. 'Our next architectures will have a big battery box and we want to make the hydrogen tanks smaller in diameter and then use more of them in the design space of the battery,' says Guldner. BMW is also working on a four-wheel-drive FCEV. 'Obviously, the packaging of the fuel cell system needs to change a little bit but the power density of those cells is still evolving. We co-operate with Toyota on the cells; we've been working with them for ten years now on the whole system design.'

If the hydrogen revolution is going to happen, it will be driven by other industries, such as road haulage, that need to decarbonise but can't easily switch to battery electric. If that happens, BMW looks set to be ahead of most of its rivals with vehicles that are market-ready.











## Toyota's hydrogen-fuelled LMP racer

FAST FUELLING MAY BE A SELLING POINT FOR A HYDROGEN-fuelled FCEV, but as Formula E continues to show, the spectacle of racing is considerably diminished when you remove the sound of internal combustion engines. Toyota clearly thinks so because it used this year's 100th running of the Le Mans 24 Hours to reveal the GR H2 Racing Concept, a hydrogen-engined hybrid car designed for the newly announced hydrogen class. 'Le Mans is a place we can push boundaries and realise the future,' said Akio Toyoda, president of Toyota. 'My goal is to reach carbon neutrality without compromising the speed or excitement of racing.'

The Automobile Club de l'Ouest (ACO) has created a hydrogen class for 2026 that will be open to both hydrogen-combustion and hydrogen-fuel-cell race cars and has said that it will use Balance of Performance rules to create a level playing field with the other LMP1 cars. Toyota revealed few details of its hydrogen-combustion concept beyond the fact that it will have a hydrogen-fuelled engine and a hybrid system, and that it is 5100mm long and 2050mm wide, which makes it both longer and wider than its

current LMP1-H hybrid racer (4650mm long and 1900mm wide).

It won't be Toyota's first hydrogen-engined racer. Since 2021, it has entered a hydrogen-powered Corolla in Japan's Super Taikyu endurance series. Two years ago, its gaseous hydrogen Corolla finished the Fuji 24 Hours and earlier this year a Corolla running on liquid hydrogen – a first in racing – also finished the same race. In the hands of five drivers, including Akio Toyoda and rally star Jari-Matti Latvala, it completed 348 laps and was placed 47th out of 52 starters and sixth and last in the 'ST-Q' class for cars not conforming to any specific technical regulations. Toyota's works effort in the 2023 Super Taikyu series also includes a GR86 running on carbon-neutral fuel.

Could these racers lead to hydrogen-combustion road cars? 'We are about 50 per cent through the development path that is required to get to road car production. We don't know if we'll get there, but we are not giving up yet,' said Toyota. 'Considering the multitude of customer requirements and the environment across all markets, we prefer to keep a multi-tech approach open.'





**Left and below:** GR H2 has a hydrogen-fuelled engine. It's just a concept at present, but from 2026 it should be eligible for the new hydrogen class at Le Mans, where it would compete with the LMP1 cars



## Boost for efuels

ZERO PETROLEUM, THE COMPANY SET UP BY EX-F1 engineer Paddy Lowe (pictured) to produce carbon-neutral synthetic fuels, opened its first facility at the Bicester Heritage site in Oxfordshire in June. 'Plant Zero.1' includes the first fully integrated synthetic fuel plant and is 'effectively a giant chemistry set', said Simon Wells, who has worked with Lowe since the '80s and was instrumental in the design of the facility. Previous set-ups have been very small scale, producing mere cubic centimetres of fuel, and while the volumes made here will still be very small as the company refines the process, the equipment used will be full size, so rolling it out at commercial scale is 'simply a matter of multiplication,' says Lowe.

After some negotiation due to the site's conservation-area status, the facility will soon feature solar panels. The energy from them will be used to extract hydrogen from water, capture carbon from the atmosphere and synthesise the two to make up to 30 litres of gasoline, jet fuel or diesel per day, starting later this year. As with proposed green hydrogen production, full-scale plants will most likely be in remote locations with abundant sources of renewable energy – solar, wind, hydro – where it would be impractical to run a cable and deliver electricity to the grid. Instead, that energy will be used to create carbon-neutral synthetic fuels (efuels) that can be transported and fed into the established fuel infrastructure.

Makers of efuels were given a boost earlier in the year when the European Parliament announced a concession to allow the manufacture of internal combustion engine vehicles to continue after 2035, provided they are powered by efuels. More significant, though, was its announcement that in its efforts to decarbonise the aviation sector, aviation fuel suppliers will be required to blend sustainable aviation fuels with kerosene in increasing amounts, starting at 2 per cent of fuel supplied in 2025 and rising to 70 per cent by 2050. ✕





# Phil McGovern

Caffeine & Machine founder

From tuning Beetles to creating a must-visit automotive destination, Phil McGovern talks about where his love of cars has taken him

by ANTONY INGRAM PHOTOGRAPHY by LAURA HARRIS

**S**ITTING IN THE MIDDLE OF ENGLAND'S automotive heartland you'll find Caffeine & Machine. But we probably don't need to tell you that; chances are you're already fully aware of this distinctive café just outside Stratford-upon-Avon, which has become as much a part of the automotive landscape as Goodwood, Bicester Heritage or Silverstone. And Goodwood, Bicester and Silverstone don't have something on almost every day of the week.

It's a busy schedule, but for Phil McGovern, the man behind Caffeine & Machine, it's one he's worked hard to grow into the varied, inclusive, friendly environment it is today. From an idea that started simply as a way to connect with like-minded petrolheads while working out in the Middle East, McGovern has turned his themed car meets into one of the UK's most recognisable automotive venues.

We talk in a rare break between another couple of busy days; he's just spent an afternoon hosting Matt Farah and Zack Klapman from the popular *Smoking Tire* show and podcast in the US, and in a few hours' time he'll be getting ready to put on the latest 'I Love You, Man' night, a relaxed sit-down and a chat with a well-known automotive figure to discuss mental health.

McGovern's interest in cars came from familiar beginnings, albeit not perhaps in surroundings familiar to most of us. 'I had the posters hanging on my wall, I had the Matchbox cars, but I was raised in Saudi Arabia, and each time I'd fly back to the UK I'd stay with my granddad, who was the real petrolhead in the room. As a "hey, welcome home" he'd get me Bburago models, Matchbox cars... and it just kind of stuck.'

This progressed through the usual boyhood

interests: aircraft, sharks, space. 'I remember seeing the space shuttle at Cape Canaveral when I was about seven, and the idea that people went to space absolutely blew my mind. But then cars became a major focus again when I had the realisation that I needed glasses and was never going to become a pilot...'

Hopping behind the wheel of his dad's GMC Jimmy and Volvo 240 out in Saudi Arabia meant McGovern was already familiar with driving before he got his first car in the UK, a 1972 Volkswagen Beetle – a choice inspired by the burgundy Porsche 930 on colour-coded wheels owned by an aunt's boyfriend. 'It was just rude,' says McGovern, 'and I think it was the curves that got me and tweaked my inspiration to get a Beetle. From that moment my entire world revolved around Beetles and making them go as fast as I possibly could.'

McGovern admits that despite trying to be hands-on 'I never had the raw talent to do it myself. So I'd work and save up for it – I was that guy that people now call the chequebook kid.' But love for making Beetles go fast saw him fully immersed into the air-cooled world for a while, building drag-racers, trading the '72 for a 1956 oval-window Bug, with a 1961 split-screen van also in the mix, capable of 15-second quarter-miles. This, finally, was replaced by a Mk2 Golf GTI.

Progression through the ranks of Volkswagen's finest ran alongside a burgeoning career in the motor industry itself, again from a young age. 'I was very lucky that I was brought up in Kenilworth and living on the same street was a guy called David Schupak, who was an ex-Ilmor, ex-IndyCar guy turned Jaguar S-type project manager – as well as being one of the 12 members of the "Saturday Club" that delivered the XJ220. And then a few









doors up was [Volvo design director] Peter Horbury and another street over was [Range Rover engineer and Land Rover demonstration team leader] Roger Crathorne. I found myself, as one of the younger kids on the estate, being babysat by their kids, and got to know these guys.'

In an industry where making connections is everything, getting to know some instrumental figures in the British car industry soon led the young McGovern on to jobs at the nearby Jaguar and Land Rover – albeit at a time when each entity was still separate. 'As a teenager I started working over summer, Easter, Christmas, unpaid, just asking how I could get a lift to the factory and do something. I worked a bit at Browns Lane, then I did a four-year sandwich course at university and my third year was a placement at Jaguar, and I went straight back there after finishing my degree.'

'But at some point I started to ask myself why nobody knew how to sell cars – we can engineer them and build them and market them, but not sell them. So I politely left my very interesting career there and went to work at a dealer in Hockley Heath, which was selling Jaguars back then but is now a McLaren dealer.'

Still in his Mk2 GTI at the time, McGovern quickly found the commute was getting a bit expensive, leading to one of the more unusual diversions in his car history. 'Two or three guys at the dealership were bombing around in Smarts, all doing 50mpg, which was quite appealing, so I got one too! But at the same time I got the Smart, I also bought a 1968 short-wheelbase 912.'

If you follow McGovern on Instagram, or have been to Caffeine & Machine where it's frequently on display either outside or in, you'll have seen the 912. Carrot-hued, it sits low over a set of Fuchs wheels and has been built with a nod to the 'outlaw' style carried out by the likes of Rod Emory. It's a thing of beauty. 'I've taken most of the exterior trim off it, changed the seats, just simplified it as much as I can. It gets driven as often as I possibly can.'

But back when he bought the 912, it was only part of an even bigger plan. 'I had a list of things I wanted to do before I was 25. One of them was to buy a Porsche and another was to move to the Middle East...'

At 26, he moved out to the United Arab Emirates, selling the Golf and Smart but keeping the 912 safely tucked away back home. Living on the Persian Gulf coast brought new automotive opportunities, including a Mercedes-Benz 500E and a Ford Flex – 'the bastard love child of a Range Rover and a Mini Cooper; it was slammed and it looked amazing' – plus, working for Jaguar Land Rover, a run of company Land Rover Discovery 3s and 4s. 'I then had one of the first Toyota GT86s in the UAE, but I sold that for a replica 356A coupe that a friend in America had built, with a 2.3-litre engine.' Then there were the 964 RS, 993 RS, XJ220... 'This is going to sound awful, so please

don't judge me... I quite liked the concept of seeing what cars were moving in the right direction, and wanted to add a little value to my father's pension. The 964 was the perfect example of how it worked, really – when we first got our hands on one, that was a mid-20s car.'

McGovern found the car culture in the UAE fascinating and played his own part in trying to develop it into something everyone could enjoy. 'There were a lot of people putting in a lot of effort to stimulate it,' he says. 'I think I was one of the guys on the ground at the time, giving it a nudge. As with any country where there's so much variety and so many different cultures, it's quite fragmented, but it's definitely there – and if you scratch the surface of the Arabic side of things then things get really rad, with the sand-dune hill climbing, off-road buggies... it's a kind of "live off the land" car culture. Sometimes you'll go out and think, "Why is nobody here?" and then remember it's because it's hot and they all turn up at 9pm instead...'

McGovern also has a connection to the very magazine you're reading now, having run *evo*'s Middle East edition for several years. 'Our patch in the Jaguar office I was working for at the time covered Algeria, Pakistan, Sub-Saharan Africa and places like that,' he explains. 'I was floating around between these interesting countries and seeing interesting things. So I created a little website called crankandpiston.com, covering car culture out there, which got me into a position where I was offered a door away from Jaguar, or told to shut the website. I made the decision to say thank you to JLR and attempt to turn the website into something bigger.'

That decision coincided with meeting with the publisher of *evo* Middle East, who offered McGovern the opportunity to turn the magazine into a 50:50 localised product – a mix of content from the UK edition and content relevant to the Middle Eastern market; think features shot on the roads of Dubai, dune bashing, and a few more Land Cruisers and Patrols than you'd expect to see from the magazine produced in Bedfordshire. Under the crankandpiston banner McGovern ran the website, produced the magazine, and ran social media and content for automotive brands too. 'It was kind of like a very early creative agency publishing model, something that's popular now, but I was doing it back then. It opened up some really interesting doors.'

It was here too the seed was planted for what would become the Caffeine & Machine we're familiar with today. With friends and colleagues returning to the UK on a kind of rotating cycle every few years, McGovern had the idea of starting car meets in response to the loneliness of

staying in the UAE while everyone else eventually headed home.

'I did a 1980s meet first. And then an air-cooled gathering. I called them Caffeine & Machine and I just kinda kept doing these meets. I thought it'd be great if I could stand out front and go, "Hey, welcome to Caffeine & Machine. Park up, grab a coffee." And even if only one person showed up, then that's a winner. It was a way to get to know people. That's where it all began really.'

You can hold a meet anywhere, of course, but today's Caffeine & Machine demonstrates the value of having a permanent fixture where people can return time and time again. The inspiration for a fixed abode came from visits to popular 'cars and coffee' meets on trips to the United States, which attract incredible cars and passionate people, but can be let down by the 'venue' itself.

'I'm going to these Malibu supercar meets thinking, this is great, but I'm hungry. Or this is great, but I'm thirsty. Or it's really f\*cking hot! And I'm looking around and it's just a car park, no different to when we'd all go to Asda when I was 18. So I thought, how could I build something around this community? I couldn't find it anywhere else – not in America, in Australia, in Asia – so that was enough impetus to do it myself.'

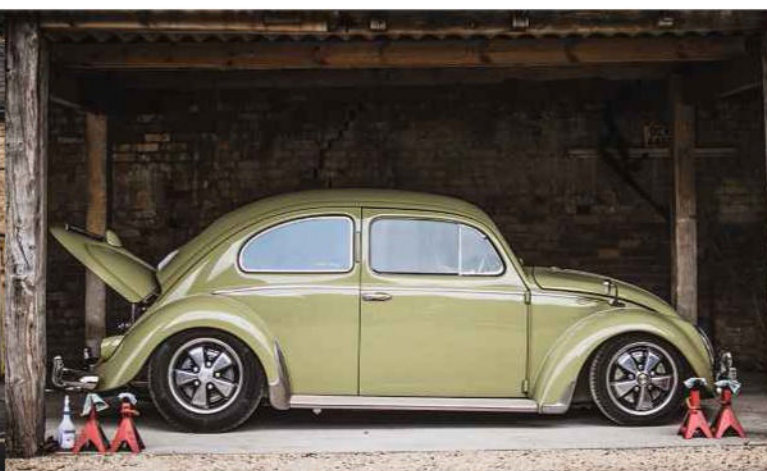
McGovern moved his life back to the UK in 2017, brought the 912 out of hibernation and set up shop in the building that would become today's Caffeine & Machine, within a stone's throw of some of the biggest names in the automotive sector. 'It absolutely had to be here,' he says. 'You've got Jaguar Land Rover, Silverstone, Donington, Brackley, Enstone, Prodrive, Norton, Coventry... it absolutely had to be here.'

You get the impression, talking to McGovern, that it absolutely had to happen, too. It's a place that petrolheads from across the spectrum now consider a second home, while events like the 'I Love You, Man' nights highlight the inclusivity that the venue, and indeed McGovern himself, has aimed to achieve.

'The most important thing about this venture is realising I'm not alone,' he says. 'There are some incredible people and an appreciation of inclusion. A fat wallet does not make you special; I got to a point in the Middle East when I decided not to wear a watch, not to wear any brands, and I could see them trying to figure me out. Caffeine & Machine has always been inclusive, everyone is welcome. And the fact I've met a load of like-minded people, speak to friends who met each other in the yard, couples who've got married after meeting in the yard... that kind of stuff is really wholesome for me, it feels really special.' ❧

**Opposite page, from top row:** 1968 short-wheelbase Porsche 912 has been owned by McGovern since he was in his 20s and can often be seen on display at Caffeine & Machine; his long-held passion for Beetles is today fulfilled by this stunning '57 'Oval'; Jaguar XJ220 is another desirable machine in his garage, along with 993 RS and 964 RS 911s





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## On the right track

I've been reading in **evo** recently how the small trackday-style car manufacturers (Caterham, Ariel, Radical, etc) are all trying to figure out the best way to become a part of the new-world EV landscape. The overriding issue they face is that EVs are inherently heavier than ICE vehicles, mainly due to the battery, yet lightness is core to the appeal of the cars these companies make.

So I've come up with a solution that I'm yet to hear from anyone else. Why not have two batteries in these cars? My thinking is that you need range to get to and from the circuit if you are using the car for a trackday, so you need a decent-size battery for that trip. But for the actual track driving you might need a lot less range in any given session. So why not split the battery in these cars into two parts, so you can use both to reach your destination, then drop half of it out for fast lapping? This also brings the added benefit of being able to charge the battery you are not using while you are on the track, giving you the potential to swap back and forth during the day to maximise your track time.

At the end of the day you bolt both batteries back in for the drive home, where the weight penalty is less important than the range.

So rather than struggling to find the optimum compromised battery size, or adding a range-extending turbine, maybe the answer is to just include less when required: the old 'add lightness' philosophy.

**Gavin Reid**

## Job satisfaction

What a pleasure to read about the stellar career of automotive engineer David Twohig (My Life &



Cars, **evo** 312). With all his many achievements he has not been afraid to risk his advancement for involvement in projects that appeal to him. His self-deprecation and the acknowledgement of the roles of colleagues also speaks volumes.

Like many, I have reservations about our enforced electric future, but with influential people such as Twohig, who appreciate the same things we do, there may be reason for optimism.

Largely due to **evo's** influence I have an Alpine A110, which is sublime, but a BEV Caterham could be tempting!

**Ian MacDonald**

## The Swede for speed

Richard Meaden's column (**evo** 312) about mischief on car launches brought back some memories from 'the good old days'. I think the passage of time makes the following tale safe to repeat...

I was a young dealer principal in the '80s and was lucky enough to have Saab as one of my franchises. Dickie's stories reminded me of the Saab 900 launch to dealers, when the entire network headed out to Trollhättan, Sweden.

I got to the hotel at about 7pm and everyone there was totally legless. Many of the dealers, and the Saab bigwigs of the day too, were, to put it mildly, eccentric. 'Lunatics' is possibly closer to the mark. Anyway, great fun was had.

The following morning the launch day commenced with a briefing attended and delivered by an assortment of bedraggled and hungover Saab-ists. Stern warnings were administered regarding 'safe driving', strict Swedish speed limits and an alcohol limit of



## LETTER OF THE MONTH

# Facing the future

## I FELT COMPELLED TO WRITE IN RESPONSE TO RICHARD

Downey's letter ('Going for woke', **evo** 312) lambasting your magazine for daring to write about 'battery cars' and thus betraying its core readership of 'driving enthusiasts'.

Putting aside the somewhat lazy co-optation of the word 'woke' (read: 'It's political correctness gone mad!') and even the arguments for and against the adoption of zero-carbon alternatives, the bottom line is that EVs are here and they are here to stay. They make too much sense to most people in most scenarios to go away, and whilst you may not agree with the way it's happening, it is most definitely happening.

So why is it important that **evo** covers EVs in its pages? Because without magazines such as **evo** standing up for you and me, Richard, and espousing the basic tenets of driving enjoyment (light weight, low centre of gravity, driver feedback, adjustability, etc, etc) in pretty much every article they print, the EV future really will be bleak.

For the record, I currently drive an M340i Touring, having recently traded in my Stelvio Quadrifoglio (how I miss the howl of that Alfa V6!). When friends ask why I haven't gone electric yet, my answer is that in 20 years I'd rather say I bought a car with one of the best ICE motors ever made rather than a car with one of the worst electric ones. But I know the future is coming, and I'm glad **evo** is here to give us 'enthusiasts' half a chance in it.

**David Lloyd, London**

## 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 £259. 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.

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zero milligrams. Then off we went, by minibus, to an airfield aircraft hangar where 90 green Saab 900s of assorted grades were assembled. Being young, I outprinted my older peers and jumped into a 900 Turbo Coupé. Realising there was no steering wheel I quickly ran around to the other front seat where there was one. This was going to be my first time driving on the 'wrong' side of the road.

Soon thereafter the first problem arose. We all had to pass a breathalyser test and all failed. Half an hour later we all failed again. Saab, being pragmatically Swedish, decided that at 9.15am we would all pass our breathalyser tests and we were allowed to begin.

Off we hurtled, with my petrified passenger reading out the route. Twenty minutes in, we rounded a sharp right-hander to find the chap from Saab UK who had earlier delivered the stern safety warning had parked his car upside down in a ditch. Sadly mobile phones had not yet been invented, but he and his passenger seemed jolly pleased by the 'helpful' insults we hurled at them.

Some time later I settled 'my' 900 Turbo into a long, steady-radius right-hander at roughly double the Swedish speed limit. All was well until halfway through the bend I overtook a slower-moving Volvo 244 GLT. Unfortunately it was a police car, and according to my passenger its occupants were not amused. I decided to carry on regardless and buried my foot as the bend opened up. As I rounded the next left-hander at well over 100, a joyful sight was beheld: approximately 30 sensibly driven green Saab 900s!

I overtook ten and tucked myself in. My whimpering passenger was now convinced we were doomed, but 15 minutes later the wheezing police

Volvo crawled past, its occupants looking angrily in all of the Saabs. I waved cheerily as they passed by.

At the lunchtime briefing the Saab UK bods didn't repeat the road safety warning, but did ask for whoever overtook the police car to own up. So 35 years later, I confess, it was me.

**Paul Scott**

### Mission: impossible

Congratulations to the rocket scientists at **evo** who chose to compare a four-seat coupe to two sports cars that can't even take a picnic hamper as sizeable luggage. I'm referring, of course, to the test between BMW's new M2, Porsche's 718 Cayman GT4 and Alpine's A110 R (**evo** 312).

Was it really a surprise that a car weighing just over 1000kg handles better than one that comes in at 1700kg? Doesn't take a genius to work that one out now, does it? How about comparing the M2 with its actual competitors: Honda Civic Type R, Mercedes-AMG CLA, Audi RS3 Saloon?

As for the Porsche, give me a Lotus any day. You know, something that doesn't look like a flattened-out Beetle. Seventy years with the same design... Booooooring!

**Julian Andrews**

### Slippery slope

You cannot be serious! Not wanting to attend Le Mans (Ed Speak, **evo** 312) must be the first step on the road to buying a Honda Jazz and wearing a trilby hat and Velcro-fastening shoes! What about the roar of the engines and the smell of the crowd after four nights' camping? Much as I love **evo** under your editorship, Stuart, I'm beginning to worry...

Kind and concerned regards,

**Tony Ireson**



# Watches

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Launched in 1962, the original DiaStar's case was made from highly scratch-resistant tungsten-carbide, ensuring many examples survive in great condition to this day. Brand new ones, meanwhile, are made from an even tougher material – a blend of ceramic and metal called Ceramos. There's a huge selection of colour schemes to choose from, as well as this new skeleton-dialed variant.



## Byrne Gyro Dial Zero

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Look at a regular Byrne Gyro Dial watch and you may not notice that it has a trick up its sleeve. Yet every 24 hours, at midnight, the indices at 12, 3, 6 and 9 o'clock flip to a new style. So one day the watch shows Arabic numerals, the next Roman numerals, the next simple baton markers, and so on. This new 'Zero' version removes the dial to reveal the mechanism that flips the four cubes responsible.



## Roger Dubois Excalibur Spider Flyback Chronograph

\$101,500 rogerdubuis.com

Taking inspiration from motorsport and high-end performance cars, Roger Dubois claims to make 'hyper-watches'. The brand's latest – unveiled at the Goodwood Festival of Speed – uses carbonfibre and ceramic as a tribute to supercar construction, and exposes its movement much like a V8, V10 or V12 on display beneath a clear engine cover.

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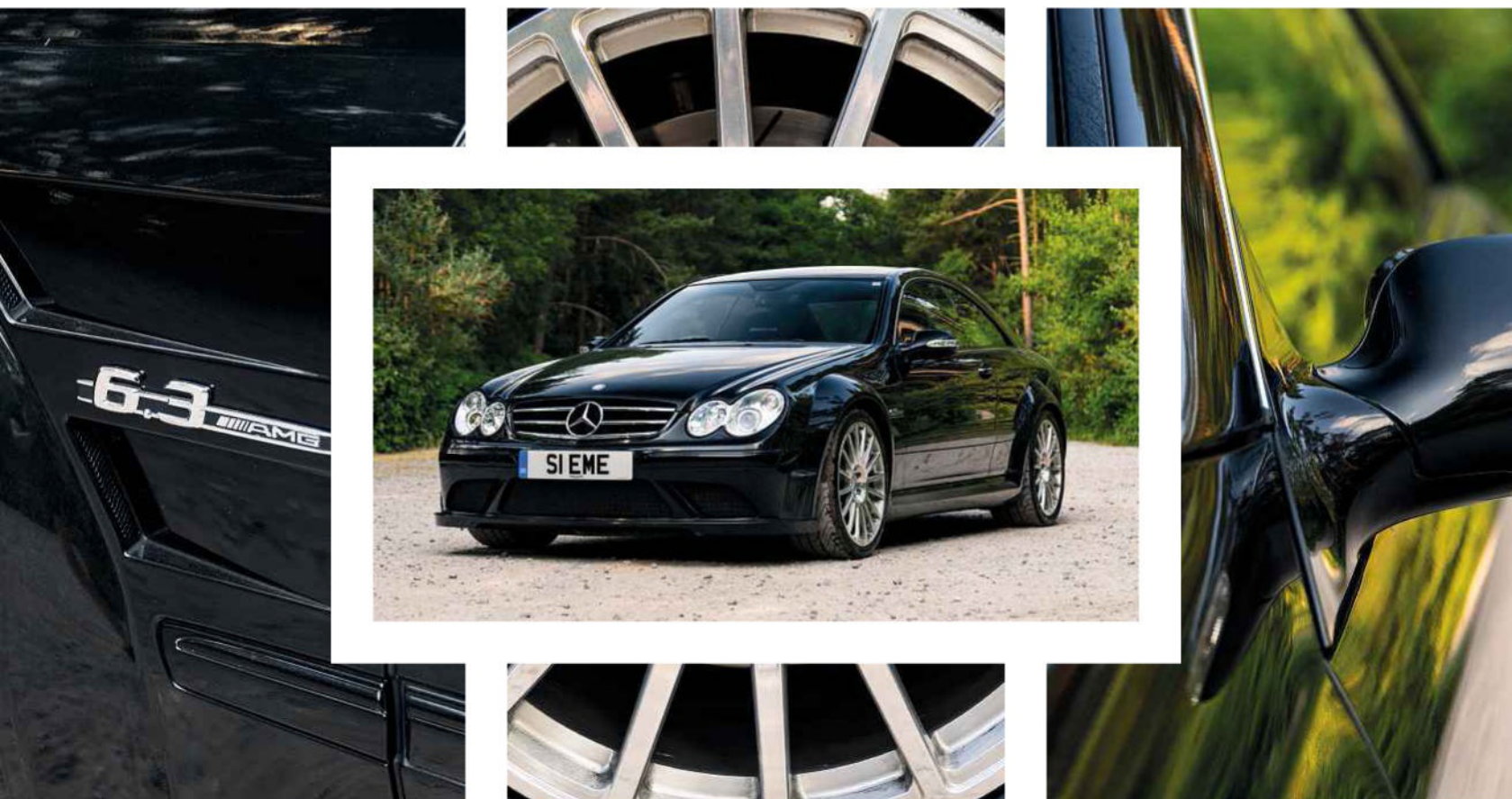
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# RICHARD MEADEN

Two recent four-wheeled encounters have led Meaden to have an epiphany

**T**HIS HAS BEEN QUITE A MONTH. IN THE SPACE of just a few weeks I've driven two extraordinary new cars. Nothing unusual there, you might think, this is **evo** after all. And yet, in 313 issues I don't recall ever driving two such fascinating and exciting yet utterly juxtaposed cars.

In case you're wondering, I'm talking about the Pininfarina Battista and Prodrive P25. Two more different machines you couldn't wish to meet. Each is so extreme in its own way that until a few years ago I'd have struggled to imagine either of them existing at all, the notions of a near-1900bhp battery-powered hypercar and a £500,000 Subaru Impreza seemingly equally preposterous. And yet here they are.

They come at just the right time, for lately I have to confess to feeling like I've been falling out of love with cars. Or at least the business of driving and assessing new cars for a living. In dark moments I've entertained the profoundly depressing thought that the best cars have already been built. At least when it comes to the cars most adept at delivering the type of driving experience we crave and savour.

Affordable sports cars and coupes disappeared years ago and the hot hatch is on life-support. Saloons and estates have largely been usurped by SUVs. Porsche has built its final ICE-powered Boxster model and iconic names such as Aston Martin, Bentley and Jaguar are all pledging themselves to bold electrified strategies. The writing has been on the wall for years. Now those walls are tumbling down.

But it's not all doom and gloom. For now we have to look to restomods and EV hypercars for inspiration, but for the first time in a long time I'm feeling optimistic about our driving futures precisely because it seems the presence of both these genres in the same timeframe has delivered us to a place where it's possible to be both progressive and nostalgic.

Synthetic fuels should mean we can continue to enjoy the classics we love. The spotlight is on high-end restomods, and rightly so because the best of them are exceptional projects that are enormously desirable. This doesn't mean all modern classics demand wholesale reimagining. A standard or lightly tweaked 205 GTI, S1 Elise or 996 Carrera will always be a wonderful thing to drive. The important thing is that legislation allows synthetic fuel to

be part of an overall solution. It won't be cheap, but if your petrol-powered car is your hobby then it's easier to justify the expense.

And as for EVs? It's easy to hate on them, or rather the infrastructure and blinkered legislation that's forcing us and the car industry down one route, but there are encouraging signs for people like us. Advances in battery technology will lead to breakthroughs in weight reduction and packaging, reversing the trend for bigger, heavier cars with all the associated efficiency and enjoyment benefits. Cars such as the Lotus Elise-based Nyobolt and BMW i3-based Makkina TR25 point to the not-too-distant possibility of battery-powered cars we can genuinely fall for and – maybe – afford to buy.

Most excitingly, the incredible efforts of engineers working at the frontier of digital dynamics will not only make future generations of high-performance EVs feel more natural, consistent and intuitive, but will rapidly develop the driving experience in ways we can't yet fully grasp. The very real possibility of AI systems that will enable a car to learn your driving style and tailor its responses accordingly being one of them.

I have no doubt we'll find things to dislike amongst the changes coming our way, but there's still plenty to look forward to if we allow ourselves to see beyond what we're losing. This will require a shift of emphasis from obsessing about engines to focusing attention on engaging more deeply with the way our cars ride, handle, stop and steer.

You'll have to trust me on this, but if my recent experience of the Battista and last year's drive of Porsche's Cayman GT4 e-Performance rolling laboratory are anything to go by, this is something that happens instinctively and surprisingly painlessly. Old habits die hard, but your driver's mind is already dialled in to interpret information from all points of contact with the car. Not having the vocal and emotive distraction of a petrol engine only makes it easier.

Don't get me wrong, my 8-bit brain is far more comfortable in a Prodrive P25 than a Pininfarina Battista, but in an unexpected way driving these ultimate analogue and digital cars in quick succession has highlighted something which thus far hadn't occurred to me. When it comes to the crunch it's not the sound and delivery of a petrol engine that I love most, but the endlessly absorbing process of driving; working out what a car is doing, why it's doing it and how I can adapt my inputs to make it go better. Soapbox or supercar, the thrill is the same. We just need to keep the faith.

**'It's easy to hate EVs, but there are encouraging signs for people like us'**

@DickieMeaden

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



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# RICHARD PORTER

Bentley's W12 is signing off in style; if only Porter had the wardrobe to match

**I**N 1997, WHILE RIDING THE BULLET TRAIN from Tokyo to Nagoya, hawk-faced VAG engineering maven Ferdinand Piëch had an idea: what if you combined two VR6 motors to create a W12? In fact, he foresaw a whole range of W-engines and, it's safe to presume, no one dared to contradict him. The usefulness of these engines varied. The W8 was pointless since it cost a Scheisse tonne to develop and was used only in an unpopular Passat. The W16 made more sense because it gave Bugatti bragging rights and never mind a development bill so big that VW, according to a 2013 Bernstein Research report, lost £3.9m on every Veyron sold.

Then there was the W12, which was a very good idea indeed since it provided the backbone for the 21st-century reinvention of Bentley. Pre-W12, cars from Crewe came with the old 6.75-litre L-series, aside from a few unloved Arnages with the BMW M62 V8, and the cars themselves were a little batty. They felt hefty and stout like a Norman church but there was always the sense that the seats had been stitched in someone's kitchen and the doors made to fit with the help of a cricket bat. The W12 was a vital part of making Bentleys modern and increasing sales, thereby securing the future of a company that couldn't survive forever on a few hundred agreeably eccentric road-going liners.

The W12 has served Bentley well, but now, after 20 years and over 100,000 engines, its time is coming to an end. In April next year the W12 will die, and to mark this the company has come up with Edition 12 versions of its four main models. To pay my respects, I borrowed a Flying Spur Edition 12 for a few days.

As you'd hope for a starting price of £231,200, it is a magnificent car, managing to feel weightily impressive and imperious without seeming sluggardly and fat. Also, as part of Edition 12 trim, the car I borrowed came in an unusual and strangely attractive paint finish called Opalite, which can look anything from beige to cream to pale green depending on the light. Better yet, the interior has various hand-stitched leathery bits but the centre panels of the seats are in a suede-alike material that's grippier than leather, and warmer too. I wish more car makers would offer something similar.

What they won't offer, because no one will in future, is a W12 engine. And that's a shame because the Bentley W12 has evolved into a lovely thing. From the 552bhp of the first Conti GT, it's now oozing out a thick-wristed 650bhp in the Flying Spur (and an even richer 740bhp in the 18-off Batur coupe – see page 20) and it feels fabulous. 'Effortless' is an overused word in car writing but if anything deserves it, it's a W12 Bentley that can pad about in silence on an invisible conveyor of torque then summon the distant thunder of AC/DC playing two towns over while yanking firmly on the invisible strings that connect you to the horizon.

I liked the Edition 12 enormously but it gave me one quite significant problem: in all the time I was driving it, I had simply no idea what to wear. The problem is that a large Bentley attracts a lot of attention. Adults double-take while small children tug at parents' arms and keep walking while looking in the car's direction until they collide with a wheelie bin. And there's me, a middle-aged dad, stumbling from the driver's seat in Converse All Stars and a faded T-shirt.

You might get away with such things emerging from an equally expensive Ferrari or McLaren because it's possible people will assume you are a musician or an ageing sports star, though on scant inspection it's clear I am neither. The Bentley is a bit more elegant than that, a bit more grown-up.

I wondered if my smartest pair of shoes might help, but then if you're going to wear those you might as well put a shirt on and, well, if you're doing that you should put on some smart trousers... sod it, I'm getting out the wedding suit. But then you might be mistaken for a chauffeur, and that's not it either.

In fact, I'm not sure what sort of clothes would match the Bentley so that you could step from it with confidence, knowing you weren't letting the side down. I was going to ask the only person I know who owns a Flying Spur, but that's TV's Jeremy Clarkson and I'm pretty sure the answer isn't to look like you've been dressed by two geography teachers fighting their way through a skip at the back of the Gant factory. So I gave in and accepted that for my time with the Flying Spur Edition 12 I was going to look chronically out of step with its unique brand of slightly thuggish elegance. It's a hell of a car, and a hell of a way to see off the W12 engine. Just as long as you've got the clothes for it.

**'There's me, a middle-aged dad, stumbling from the driver's seat in Converse All Stars and a T-shirt'**

@sniffpetrol

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





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# JETHRO BOVINGDON

Who's to blame for poverty, disease and everything bad? Jethro knows



IF ALL THE JOBS IN THE WORLD, WHICH IS the one you'd love to try for a day? Test driver for Ferrari? Maybe an F1 or WRC driver? Living the dream, driving in a realm that's completely beyond the reach of normal humans. Or perhaps the chance to climb into the mind of Adrian Newey and experience life through his unique gaze? Watching vortices swirl wherever you turn and calculating how next to destroy the sport you love so.

How about being Travis Pastrana? No worries about lap times or data. Just destroying tyres in cars designed to destroy tyres without a care. Maybe you're a hormone-addled teenager and have other jobs you'd like to try for a day. Centred around the San Fernando Valley, for example. There are so many options. A bit like the 'ten-car garage' game, it's one many of us have played in quiet moments of reflection.

Mine? I want to work at a European airport at a hire car desk. It's fascinating. What do they do? What the actual f\*\*k do they do? How can it take so long and be so complex? Why is it a different process for each and every customer? What traps are set for them in their computer systems that manage to baffle and delay them every single time? Where does all the information that you've laboriously inputted online in order to make the booking go? How can they not know your address that you supplied literally last week? Why is the car insurance they include in the fee not really car insurance at all? Maybe it is. In which case why are they asking everyone to take out many more insurances? And that thing about the petrol costing loads if you don't replenish it yourself? WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON?

My hope is that it really is the most involved, taxing process imaginable. And not because of ludicrous systems dreamt up by the hire companies themselves. I pray that these things are imposed on them for sinister purposes by governments and shadowy agencies of which we know nothing. That somehow these people, these poor, besieged, hated people (for yes, we do hate you in the purest sense of the word as we wait in line, rage coming in great waves as you ask for driving licences already uploaded onto vanishing booking systems and hand people post-it notes and a cracked old biro to write their address down. Seriously? This is what it's come to? Post-it notes?) are quietly fighting against impossible odds just to make our holidays better.

They are sacrificing their own place in society for the greater good. Shunned by family, abandoned by former friends. Diligently and with great dignity, these heroes accept their lot and push ahead, feigning staggering incompetence. If this isn't the case, then hire car companies and their bewildered staff might well be the root of all evil. Worse, they are actively slowing human evolution and technological advancement and are indirectly culpable for the deaths of millions.

You may think I'm exaggerating, but bear with me. The hire car market is projected to be worth \$99.54 billion in 2023. Or, more pertinently, to be used by 616.5 million people. In a single year. Let's assume each of these is spending 35 minutes at a desk waiting for their key and re-providing information and scrawling on post-it notes. That adds up to 21,577,500,000 minutes. Or 359,625,000 hours. That's nearly 15 million days of human ingenuity, endeavour and utility lost to hire car queues in one year. Now add in the time to pointlessly pre-book online, the trudge back from the car park to the desk when you discover the pristine car for which you paid has three wheels and dents on every panel. It truly boggles the mind.

So you can blame the hire car behemoth for world famine. For the failure of humans to cure cancer and countless other diseases. For the spread of Covid (the spittle flung around by livid customers surely supercharged the global pandemic). For everything, as far as I can tell. No other industry cuts across every sector of society with such crippling time-hungry processes nor saps more mental energy. Funnily enough, I recently sat down with Christian Horner and he said the main difference between Adrian Newey and other F1 technical directors was that Newey had, since the age of 17, been wrapped in cotton wool and never, ever exposed to car hire.

Maybe the job swap isn't such a good idea. Whether or not the staff are actually hidden heroes, the end result is the same. Human potential cut off at the knees, time and time again. Forget Dieselgate, this is the real scandal. They're probably gassing monkeys somewhere, too.


*This column was written in a queue of three people to collect a car at Milan Malpensa airport. It took 4 hours and 12 minutes to write. When finished, the queue was down to two people.*

**'Hire car companies and their bewildered staff might well be the root of all evil'**

@JethroBovingdon

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



A high-speed photograph of a bright yellow sports car, likely a Porsche Carrera GT, driving on a paved road that curves through a dense forest. The car is in the lower right foreground, angled towards the viewer. The background is heavily blurred due to motion, showing streaks of green foliage and brown tree trunks. The lighting is bright, suggesting daytime, with dappled sunlight on the road.

*by* RICHARD MEADEN

PHOTOGRAPHY *by* JAMES LIPMAN

# YELLOW





# FEVER

*You'd expect gorgeous  
lines from Pininfarina;  
you might not expect  
1874bhp and acceleration  
to make you nauseous.  
We drive the dizzying  
Pininfarina Battista*



**T**HE BATTISTA'S NATURAL FREQUENCIES DON'T readily resonate with those of the petrolhead. We interpret its rakish Pininfarina-penned lines and understand its speed well enough, but we prefer to converse in the relatable century-old language of cubic capacity, cylinders and horsepower, not kilowatt hours, lithium nickel manganese cobalt oxide batteries and permanent magnet AC synchronous motors.

No matter. These might be uncomfortable times for dyed-in-the-wool car fans, but if you embrace the fact that the EV supercar's job is in part to create a degree of dissonance, then the existential fear fades. Better, when presented with the opportunity to drive one, you're less concerned with the nomenclature and more engrossed in discovering how this new-age exotica speaks to you and works with the road.

As you'd expect from arguably the greatest of all Italian automotive styling houses, the Battista is an immaculate piece of work. Subtle, yes, but in shunning in-ye-face futurism it achieves a more classical elegance. This might seem at odds with the sledgehammer performance promised by its near-1900bhp Rimac-sourced powertrain, but the paradox between explosive pace and visual grace is something Pininfarina has clearly enjoyed exploring.

Indian ownership, Croatian underpinnings and engineering and manufacturing teams divided between Germany and Italy are a curious mix for any car, but Mahindra's discreet stewardship and the largely hidden nature of Rimac's EV hardware ensure the Battista is a cleanskin onto which Pininfarina has imprinted its own identity. And not just in the way the car looks. The extent

to which Automobili Pininfarina's engineering input defines the Battista's dynamics shows admirable commitment and deft skill and brings meaningful authenticity to the project.

It's common knowledge that the Battista shares a great deal of its hardware with the Rimac Nevera. No point getting hung up on it, because Rimac is to the EV supercar what Cosworth was to F1 teams in the DFV era. And indeed low-volume petrol-powered supercar and hypercar programmes in the 2020s. There's no shame in going to the best.

Automobili Pininfarina takes delivery of Battista rolling chassis from Rimac with all the powertrain installed and all four corners (suspension, brakes, etc) fitted, whereupon the cars are completed in a painstaking by-hand process at Pininfarina's Cambiano production facility. This is also home to the Pininfarina Automobili 'Atelier', where customers can visit to go through the process of deciding on colour, trim and extensive personalisation that ensures no two Battistas are the same. There are two levels of car: the regular Battista and the full Furiosa spec, which we're driving here, the latter featuring a more overt nose-to-tail aero package for increased downforce and visual drama.

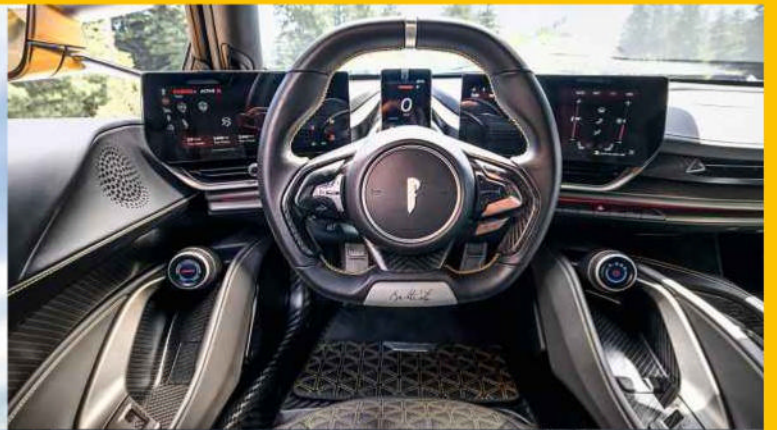
This build process is standard stuff, but the development of the Battista is more intriguing. It would be easy to assume the deal with Rimac was for a naked Nevera right down to the last line of code. That would be the easiest route. But instead Pininfarina decided to do all its own dynamic development, recruiting a small team of crack engineers and conducting an exhaustive development process at the world's leading proving ground facilities, just like all the big OE manufacturers.

**Right:** Furiosa spec has the full aero package, including splitters and dive planes, as well as the active rear wing. Body and tub are fully carbonfibre





**'IN SHUNNING  
IN-YER-FACE  
FUTURISM IT  
ACHIEVES A  
MORE CLASSICAL  
ELEGANCE'**





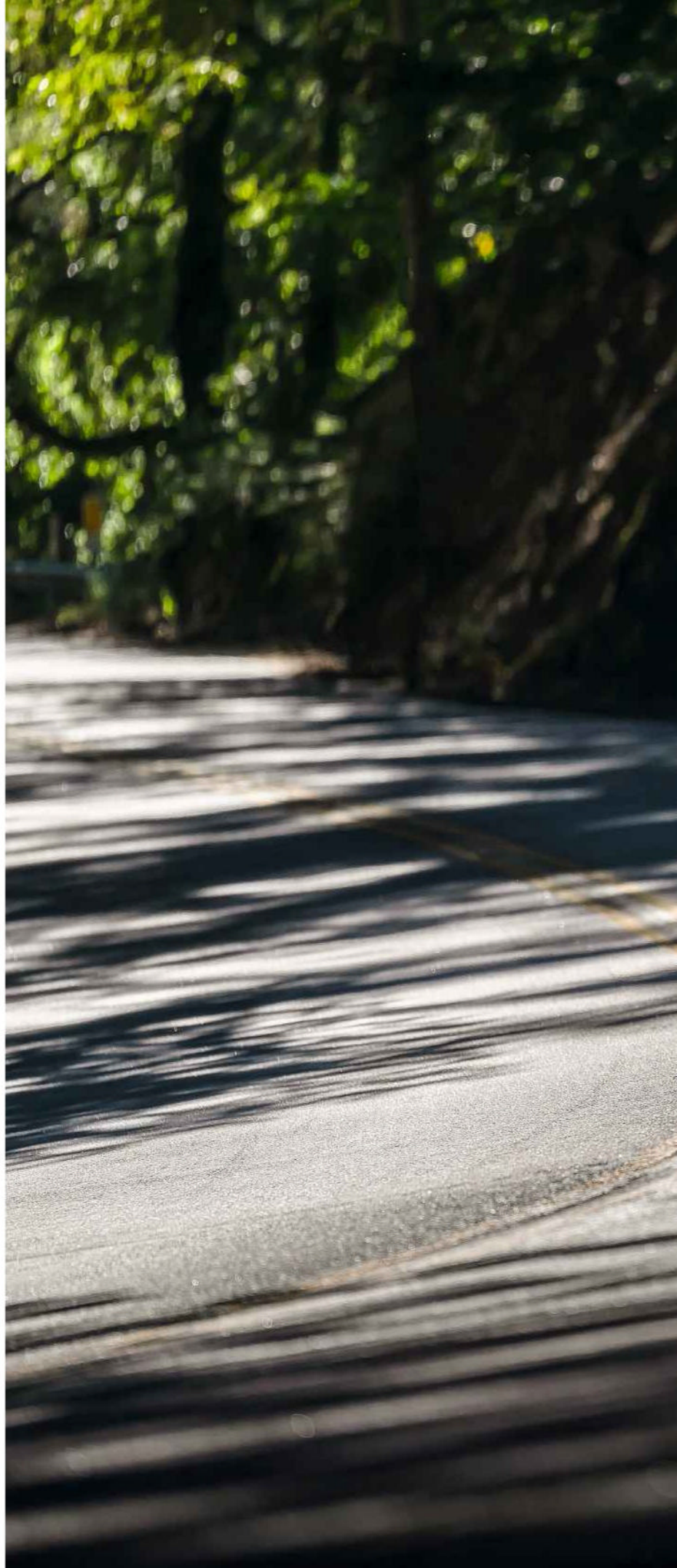
The man in charge of this daunting task is Georgios Syropoulos, chassis dynamics manager and chief test driver for Pininfarina Automobili. His CV is impressive, with five-plus years learning his craft as a ride and handling engineer at Lotus before moving to Tesla in 2013. In 2017 he switched to Faraday Future, eventually joining Pininfarina at the end of 2019. Clearly he knows new tech inside-out, but it's the foundation he gained at Lotus that's of most interest to people like us, because it means he knows what the best analogue cars feel like.

It's testament to everyone involved in the Battista programme that they managed to work under the extreme challenges of the pandemic. And once lockdown restrictions ended, the workload was mountainous – Syropoulos reckons he's spent between 200 and 250 days away from home in each year since. Nobody said building supercars was easy.

We'll get to the driving in a moment, but the development process for the Battista is just as revealing, because it highlights just how different this new breed of car is compared to a state-of-the-art ICE supercar. 'Everything talks to everything else,' explains Syropoulos. 'You can integrate pretty much every aspect of the car. People tend to focus on the raw performance of these cars, but it's the level of integration that's the biggest step.'

It's understood that the behaviour of a fully electric powertrain can be minutely controlled, but because we have four-wheel motors we have endless scope for torque vectoring. That's pure torque vectoring, with no brake intervention. Thanks to the instant response of electric motors there's no mechanical latency as you get with a combustion engine, so you can tune everything to the millisecond. Factor in brake-by-wire, steer-by-wire, adaptive dampers and an extensive suite of sensors monitoring movement in three dimensions and you can see that it's possible to create a level of integration that gives the car a global view of what it's doing and what you're asking of it. In fact, we've got to the point where it uses all that information to predict what you're going to do next...'

According to Syropoulos, exploring and refining the Battista's dynamics was a huge voyage of discovery. One in which he kept releasing more performance and capability in the car. Where once he imagined there to be a limit, the Battista proved it could go beyond. Mapping this ever-expanding performance envelope must have been a colossal task. Likewise trying to seamlessly blend all the different areas of the car to the point where it works as one homogenous, fully integrated system. The fact it can then take all that information and reference it against the dynamic limits mapped out by Syropoulos to achieve a kind of spatial awareness, and then cross-reference it against your inputs to prepare itself for your next move is mind-boggling.





**'YOU  
SUBCONSCIOUSLY  
BRACE YOURSELF  
FOR THE COMING  
ASSAULT ON YOUR  
SENSES'**







**‘THE WAY  
IT CHANGES  
DIRECTION YOU’D  
SWEAR IT WEIGHS  
1500KG, NOT  
OVER 2000KG’**

‘It doesn’t wait for you to do something or for something to happen,’ continues Syropoulos. ‘The system is working in real time and even fractionally ahead of real time. It’s working preemptively for you as soon as you turn, it’s there to assist you, to modulate the car, to predict your intention. And even if your intention was not what the system assumed, as soon as you try to do something different, the system is already a step ahead.’

Knowing this, and that there’s almost 1900bhp beneath your right foot, the moments immediately prior to driving the Battista are a little overwhelming. There’s a hushed ritual to start-up, a variety of hums, clicks and whirrs replacing a barrage of open-throated exhaust noise. Despite the calm, you subconsciously brace yourself for the coming assault on your senses, the act of dropping into the driver’s seat and pulling down the upswept door akin to the moment the rollercoaster operator pulls the restraining bar down over your shoulders before firing you into oblivion. It’s an overreaction, of course. But also a reassuring one in many ways, because true supercars *should* have that effect.

There are four set-menu dynamic modes – Calma, Pura, Energica and Furioso – plus a mix-and-match ‘Carattere’ mode where you can blend the attributes you like most. Calma is there to achieve the optimum WTLF range of 296 miles, and to offer the tamest of tame settings. Nonna Mode, if you like. Of course, being the Battista, this still means 670bhp, in this case all of it sent through the front wheels.

Each subsequent click of the rotary switch (which is mounted in the driver’s door) brings more power and torque along with a set of carefully crafted and entirely digital characteristics.





Calma isn't something you'll use more than once, but Pura (999bhp and 1018lb ft) is a very soothing way to travel. The novelty of moving in near silence with the smooth sensation of being seamlessly pulled along by some invisible bungee cord is pleasingly at odds with the supercar surroundings of the cockpit.

As its name suggests, Energica is an amped-up mode in which you get to experience further uncorked performance (1475bhp and 1357lb ft) and feel the four-wheel torque vectoring at its most, er, energetic. The next click to Furiosa gives you the full 1874bhp and 1726lb ft but handles it with a more clinical dynamic character, the torque vectoring dialled back a little to give a more linear sense of rotation into corners that's better suited to high-commitment cornering, or if you simply prefer a less augmented feel.

We'll explore the straight-line performance shortly, but it's the handling, and specifically the four-wheel torque vectoring, that deserves most discussion. The one-word summary is 'voodoo', but you could write a book on how this car feels. Such is the effect torque vectoring has on the rotational response and capabilities of the Battista, you'd swear the steering must have a variable ratio. Syropoulos insists it's consistent across modes, and that it's the way the vectoring is applied that creates such distinct feel and response. Energica provides the most vivid demonstration of this, the way the front end scribes a tightening line as the rear pivots like a shopping trolley is fascinating and scintillating.

For 99.9 per cent of the time the Battista's super-smart pre-emptive poise is brilliantly prescient. The steering may be 'by-wire' but it gives you a clear picture of how hard you're working the front tyres, and the brake-by-wire emulation (achieved with the world's first application of Brembo carbon-ceramic brakes on a pure EV supercar) and the way it blends with regen is also extremely good.

The only question mark arises in fleeting and very occasional moments when your steering input isn't quite matched by as much rate of turn as you expect. It's not a fault in the steering per se, but it's a little spooky because it feels like a split-second glitch in the torque vectoring matrix. It's very slight, but because it's the result of a mapped behaviour across multiple areas of the car rather than the mortal limitations of a passive, analogue, mechanical system, you feel less inclined to regard it as a quirk and more ready to see it as a failing.

As with all cars, the more seat time you have the more in tune you become, but the fact that I only felt this slight disconnect in Energica suggests it's mode-specific. The fact I tended to drive in Pura or Furiosa modes also points to my well-documented preference for more linear, less exaggerated feel and response. Ultimately, the fact I found settings I could connect with is an indication of the inherently enjoyable nature of the Battista and the extraordinary level of detail Syropoulos and his team have worked to. And, being engineers, they will only refine and improve things as time goes on.

**Above:** with fully independent motors on all four wheels and some of the most sophisticated electronics ever seen on a road car, Battista takes torque vectoring to a whole new level





**‘THE AMOUNT  
OF DEPLOYABLE  
PERFORMANCE IS  
BRAIN-SCRAMBLING  
TO THE POINT  
OF NAUSEA’**





As it stands, the Battista feels like nothing else I've ever driven. The way it points into corners and changes direction you'd swear it weighs 1500kg, not a little over 2000kg. Likewise, the way it transmits 1726lb ft into patchy, polished Italian tarmac suggests the Michelin tyres are equipped with adamantium studs that deploy, Wolverine-style, under peak accelerative loads.

Unless you earn a living flying fast jets off the deck of an aircraft carrier, the amount of deployable performance is brain-scrambling to the point of nausea, but that's the name of the game in an EV world. There's nothing remotely pleasurable about hitting 62mph from a standstill in 1.86sec. As for 0-186mph in 10.49sec, that's more like a dragster than a road car. A 217mph top speed is equally pointless, but since when have supercar capabilities been rooted in reality?

What I find far more appealing and impressive is the nuanced way in which you can flex all that muscle, the fun coming not from pulling the pin on that explosive, neck-snapping force, but rejoicing in the elastic and endlessly intensifying *s-q-u-e-E-Z-E* of propulsion. Similarly, the way you can use the regen to gently wipe off speed into a corner with a partial lift of the throttle becomes enormously satisfying. As ever, it's the shades of grey that matter.

I'm increasingly certain the momentum behind the development of sustainable fuels means ICE-powered supercars will see me into my dotage. I think most of us will take comfort from that thought, even if we're never likely to own one. What that scenario might mean for EV supercars like the Battista is hard to say.

In the short term there's an obvious novelty value for collectors who have the money to indulge in an exotic EV that provides a wild contrast to their petrol-powered cars. If they enjoy driving it and don't lose their Henry Poole shirt when they come to sell, they might just buy another. However, the bigger play is putting stars in the eyes of today's kids, who will grow up only ever knowing EV family cars.

Whether the Battista (or indeed the Rimac Nevera or Lotus Evija) will become their dream car is a question I can't answer. Perhaps the anarchic thrill of a shrieking V12 will prevail. What I do know is I enjoyed the overall experience. I'm not a fan of how extreme EV propulsion feels, but once I (quickly) learned you don't have to hammer the accelerator, I became increasingly fascinated by what the Battista does, how it does it and what wholly digital dynamics will bring in the not too distant future.

You don't have to like the idea of the Battista and its kind. Still, I think we can all agree that it's apt that a proud Italian name – one free from the baggage of petrol-powered legacy product – is doing great things in order to reassert the supercar's rightful status as apex predator of the EV world. ✕

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### Pininfarina Battista

**Motors** Four, 1400kW total **Power** 1874bhp **Torque** 1726lb ft  
**Weight** 2063kg **Power-to-weight** 923bhp/ton **0-62mph** 1.86sec  
**Top speed** 217mph **Basic price** c£1.96 million  
**evo rating** ★★★★★





# STING LIKE A

The P25 is Prodrive's dazzling tribute to the iconic Subaru Impreza 22B STI. But can it possibly justify its eye-watering £552,000 price tag? There's only one way to find out

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by RICHARD MEADEN

PHOTOGRAPHY by  
DEAN SMITH

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# B







S

O MANY YEARS. SO MANY MEMORIES. I'M NOT SURE which marks the relentless passage of time more starkly: the fact that it's 30 years since Prodrive's blue and yellow 555-liveried Subaru Imprezas first gunned it down a WRC stage, or that it's 15 years since the iconic partnership between Prodrive and Fuji Heavy Industries came to an end.

The Prodrive P25 marks another significant landmark. No, not *evo*'s 25th anniversary, but the introduction of the ultimate factory Impreza, the bubble-arched 22B STI. It's a happy coincidence that the first issue of this magazine featured an exclusive UK first drive of the 22B. Yes, Subaru eventually shipped a batch of 16 Type UKs in 1999, but the early Japanese-spec model was a true unicorn. Securing the first (and at that time only) car in the country for our launch issue was a bit of a coup.

If you'd told me then that a quarter of a century later I'd be driving a £552,000 Prodrive-built tribute to the 22B, I would have suggested you see a doctor. To be fair I'd have said the same thing about any of today's restomod scene, and would likewise have raised an eyebrow at standard 22Bs selling at auction for well over £200k.

It's testament to the appeal and rarity of these late-'90s rally heroes that collectors are prepared to pay so much for cars that not so long ago could be found in the classifieds for £30k. On the flipside, if you're someone who was never into these cars in period, the rise of the half-a-million-quid

Impreza probably seems preposterous. Me? If I possessed the requisite moolah, I'd have one in a heartbeat. Spoiler alert: the P25 is so good it hurts.

It won't convert non-believers – more likely it would confirm all their prejudices – but if you grew up with 2000 Turbos, WRXs, STIs, Spec Cs and 22Bs, the P25 is an ultimate fantasy. Outrageously exciting and madly addictive, it retains the spirit of its series-production forebears but surpasses all of them by a huge margin. Everything about it is sharper, more immediate and more intense. By borrowing DNA from the WRC cars but stopping short of being too uncouth and uncompromising for regular road use, it is the car anyone who ever hooned an Impreza imagined they were driving.

Imprezas and Mitsubishi Evos have always excelled when the tarmac gets gnarly, but the P25 truly revels in roads that would reduce carbon-tubbed exotica and certain track-honed rear-engined icons to a hot mess of swarf and splinters. Point-to-point, yump-to-yump, apex-to-exit, it's an absolute monster.

Why is it so good? Well, the hardware's very special, as we'll see, but it's the P25's absolute authenticity that shines brightest and means the most. Nobody knows Imprezas better than Prodrive, so in all the ways that matter it's more 'factory' than a car built by Subaru. With key technical staff from the Group A and WRC programmes still working at Prodrive's Banbury HQ, you know the P25 benefits from the same brilliant brains and deft hands that led Subaru to a total of 46 WRC victories, a hat-trick of WRC manufacturers' titles in 1995, 1996 and 1997, and a trio of drivers' titles in '95, '01 and '03.

David Lapworth – mastermind behind the build of the original Group A and WRC Imprezas – is leading the P25 programme. Mechanics and technicians who worked on Colin's cars back in the day are also hands-on. Even Prodrive supremo David Richards has been directly involved, regularly driving the development car on his work commute to gauge progress and offer constructive criticism.

Typically, he hasn't held back. Having driven home in darkness and been dismayed at the performance of standard Impreza lighting, Richards returned the next day and committed to the manufacture of new, fully E-Marked headlights and tail-lights. That's a big investment for a run of 25 cars, but it's evidence of Prodrive's approach and, most pleasingly, signals that these cars have been created to be driven hard, on proper roads, in all weathers.


As you'd expect, the specification is straight from your wildest *Gran Turismo* dreams. Each P25 starts life as a two-door WRX STI. Then, in true restomod fashion, it is stripped to its bare bones until just the core body structure remains, whereupon it is restored to better-than-new condition. Most of the body panels are replaced by carbonfibre items, with only the original metal doors remaining for reasons of crash safety. Some of the panel gaps on this development car are a bit breezy, but we're assured production P25s will boast uniform 4mm shutlines.

Peter Stevens – legendary designer and the man responsible for the look of the original two-door Impreza WRC97 – has had a

**Right:** 19in Prodrive-designed alloys (2in larger than the 22B's) frame huge AP Racing discs. And how can you not love a car that shoots flames from its Akrapovic exhaust?






A blue Subaru P25 is shown from a side-rear perspective, driving on a winding asphalt road. The car is in motion, with a blurred background of green hills and a cloudy sky. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

**‘IF YOU GREW UP  
WITH WRXs, STIs  
AND 22Bs, THE P25  
IS AN ULTIMATE  
FANTASY’**





An aerial photograph of a winding asphalt road through rolling green hills. A small blue car is driving on the road in the lower right. The hills are covered in dense green vegetation. In the background, more hills and a valley are visible under a cloudy sky. The text is centered in the middle of the image, with a small blue rectangle above it.

**‘THE DRIVE  
MODES ONLY  
WIND THE  
ENGINE UP INTO  
AN INCREASING  
DEGREE OF  
FRENZY’**





hand in the design of the P25, adding another layer of credibility and continuity. It's a stunning machine. More sinewy than the 22B, it sits brilliantly on forged 19-inch Prodrive-designed rims (some 2 inches bigger than the 22B's), respectfully and refreshingly finished in silver-grey rather than default gold. Wrapped in 235/35 Bridgestone Potenza Sport tyres, it looks every inch the tarmac weapon.

If you're familiar with Imprezas, or indeed any Japanese performance car from the '90s and '00s, you'll be pleasantly surprised by the look, feel and execution of the P25's interior. Handled by Callum (Ian Callum's design and engineering consultancy) it feels suitably upgraded, with swathes of flawless double-stitched Alcantara upholstery and silky satin-finished carbon in place of the standard car's exposed plastics. There's even a decent hi-fi with integrated satnav and CarPlay. Despite the obvious improvements, it remains sympathetic to the simple, unpretentious style of the original car.

The undoubted highlight of the interior is the steering wheel and the large, crescent-shaped paddleshifter. The wheel really is an absolute delight. Devoid of switches and perfectly round (no awkward facets or squared-off bottom here) it feels perfect in your hands. The shifter is pure WRC, its fixed position and push-pull operation (push for downshifts, pull for upshifts) offering foolproof rally-style gearchanges.

That plain and simple steering wheel is indicative of an almost entirely analogue car. I can't remember the last time I drove a new car with hydraulic power steering, let alone one also featuring passive, manually adjustable dampers, a non-synchromesh gearbox, no ESC or TC and stripped of servo assistance for the brakes. It sounds laughably low-tech and anachronistic, but if you're fed up with toggling through myriad dynamic modes and generally ill at ease with the sometimes contrived and exaggerated responses these modes can deliver, the P25 is the antidote old-school purists such as myself have been yearning for. In a world where contemporary high-performance cars are defined by an increasingly digitised driving experience, it feels like coming home.

You could be forgiven for thinking such hardcore hardware must make the P25 a pig to drive, but it has manners. The six-speed dog 'box may not have any synchromesh, but the gears themselves are of helical design, not straight-cut. This brings a considerable improvement in refinement, with very little whine and chatter. There's some lash at low speeds when you're on and off the throttle, but you can mostly mitigate this with smooth inputs. The better you drive, the better it drives.

There are three pedals, but you only use the clutch for pulling away and when coming to a halt. The pedal is actually just a switch controlling the 'by-wire' clutch operation, so there's very little feel and not much in the way of pedal effort. Getting a feel for the bite point has your tongue poking from the corner of your mouth with concentration, but an auto-release hill-hold function on the handbrake and clever anti-stall calibration of the clutch engagement means you quickly trust in the technology and stop overthinking things. The gearbox itself brings a razor-sharp edge to the driving experience. Pulling first gear at a standstill occasionally results in a *kerchunk* and a bell-like ring as the gear engages. It's not as abrupt as it sounds, but it certainly puts you in the mood for the excitement to come. On the move, its shift speed is synaptic.

You have a choice of driving modes – Road, Sport and Sport+ – but they only serve to wind the engine up into an increasing degree of frenzy. According to Lapworth, the original plan was





to run with 'Stage' instead of Sport, but that was deemed too provocative. Ironical given that you're strapped into what is effectively a house-trained WRC car, complete with anti-lag and launch control.

We start in Road. The P25 is surprisingly mild-mannered and easy to manage as we work our way out of Hawick and head towards the sweeping, swooping roads that connect this Scottish Borders town with the forest roads of Kielder. Part-throttle gearshifts are smooth, the engine tractable at low revs. There's even some pliancy to the suspension, just enough to take the sharpest edges off impacts with potholes and drain covers. It's not exactly a pussycat, but it's no headbanger either.

Historically, the main failing with quick Imprezas was their lack of steering weight and feel. It was hard to find a connection, so you had to trust that the grip and traction were there to lean on. Similarly, compared with the Mitsubishi Evo, Imprezas were more resolutely 50:50 in terms of their handling balance. Later cars with adjustable centre diffs offered a bit more throttle steerability, but they never had the inherent agility of the livewire Lancer.

No such issues with the P25. In fact, it's a revelation. The steering has superb weight and feel, with the bonus of a perfectly linear rate of response. The resulting bond is immediate, your sense of where the front wheels are pointing and how much grip they have available unrelentingly consistent and completely instinctive. For someone who has spent years railing against overly sharp steering and EPAS that attempts to pass off effort as feel, the way the P25 points into corners is sublime.

There's still much to learn about its handling. The nose is absolutely nailed to the tarmac, but the rear feels unusually keen to rotate. It's slightly unnerving, in much the same way that an aggressively set-up front-wheel-drive car can be, but give yourself time to gain confidence and gradually you begin to understand what's going on beneath you.

The sense of rotation comes from the rear end's compliance, the split-second 'loose' feeling traced to the action of the active centre diff and the moment when the rear settles into its permitted degree of roll before transferring that load into the road and finding extraordinary traction. In this regard it's unlike anything else I've ever driven.

Later, when I mention it to Lapworth, he provides the perfect lightbulb moment, describing how the P25 was set up to suit the rally driver's preference for a car to always feel capable of making a direction change. This contrasts with a circuit racing mentality, in which the driver wants turn-in combined with a greater feeling of stability and neutrality.

The P25 has been set up by three-time British Rally Champion Mark Higgins – he of the hair-raising Isle of Man car lap record in a Time Attack WRX-STI and countless stunt driving sequences in the last four James Bond movies. True to Lapworth's description, Higgins has got the P25 up on the balls of its feet, ready to jink and

**Left:** engine is based on Subaru's EJ25 2.5-litre flat-four but heavily reworked by Prodrive to deliver a blistering 440bhp at 6000rpm



**‘YOU HALF  
EXPECT TO  
HEAR THE  
SHRILL BLAST  
OF MARSHALS’  
WHISTLES AS IT  
APPROACHES’**







**‘FIRING FROM A  
STANDSTILL IN  
FULL LAUNCH  
CONTROL MODE  
IS ABSOLUTELY  
OUTRAGEOUS’**







dart and react to the driver's inputs, but with immense underlying grip and predictability.

Some of this is down to a new front suspension design, which changes the pick-up points to closely mimic WRC Impreza geometry, plus trick Bilstein dampers with internals tuned to meet Prodrive-specific force and velocity curves. It's also heavily influenced by the active centre diff, which is controlled to aid stability under braking and help rotate the car in the initial turn-in phase before maximising cross-axle traction when you chase the throttle. It's not just different to any Impreza I've driven, but quite unlike any truly fast car I've ever experienced. If you enjoy the cerebral side of exploring a car's dynamics, the P25 a fascinating car to get to know.

Though much of the P25 is a lesson in analogue engineering, certain areas of the car are very much part of the digital age. Specifically, the powertrain management, which is controlled by Bosch Motorsport electronics using code taken directly from Prodrive's WRC, Rally Raid and GT racing programmes. There's an onerous amount of validation required to get this motorsport-grade management system homologated for road use, but it offers far more scope and allows Prodrive to leverage learnings gained from competing at the highest levels of international motorsport.

The engine, meanwhile, is a force of nature. It's based on the EJ25 2.5-litre found in the nose of the 2018 STI, Prodrive buying fresh crate engines from Subaru before rebuilding them in-house with forged pistons, steel con rods, ported cylinder heads and new cams, plus a new turbocharger, inlet and exhaust manifolds, baffled sump, and fuel and cooling systems.

The results are hugely impressive, with a solid 440bhp at 6000rpm and 457lb ft from just 3000rpm. Combined with an admirable 1180kg kerb weight, there's explosive in-gear punch and a scintillating lack of inertia that today's more powerful but significantly heavier contemporary cars simply can't match. If you're a fan of the early McRae-era Impreza soundtrack, then the P25's lack of off-beat rasp might disappoint (equal-length inlet manifolds are to blame, apparently), but the sharp rasp is so redolent of later Subaru WRC cars that you half expect to hear the shrill blast of marshals' whistles as it approaches.

Firing the P25 from a standstill in full Launch Control mode is absolutely outrageous, savage pops and bangs punctuated by shots of flame from the Akrapovic exhaust in the moments before the pin is pulled and you explode off the line. Anti-lag pumps raw, dirty decibels from the exhaust and feels arrest-me-now naughty. It sharpens on/off throttle response, too, but not to the extent it used to back in the day thanks to modern engine management that keeps the turbo spinning at meaningful rpm without the need for additional fuelling or holding boost pressure.

How quick? Well, on a damp road and cold tyres the P25 hit 60mph in 3.2sec, which suggests the 2.8sec run recorded during testing in ideal conditions was







far from a one-off. I'm not sure what's more exciting: being in the car as it does it or witnessing the action from outside, when it goes from here to *waaaaay* over there in a few blinks of the eye and a handful of gunshot upshifts. Top speed is limited to 150mph, but point-to-point pace is on another level: in testing, the P25 comfortably outpaced a 991 GT3 RS around Millbrook's rollercoaster Alpine Route. Frankly I'm not surprised.


What haven't we talked about? The brakes. Massive AP Racing discs and calipers sit barely contained behind the thin-spoked alloys. They don't have servo assistance, so need more pedal effort than you're used to, but they offer much more than the solid, wooden-feeling pedal you might expect. Once you understand they need a more insistent squeeze, you will marvel at the stopping power and exceptional feel.

Encouraged to test them from high speed, I accelerate to, um, considerable velocity before hitting the middle pedal as I would in a race car. The result is eye-popping, but it's the precision with which you can modulate the brakes that leaves the greater impression. Such is the level of feedback, you can work the brakes to the point where you can feel the tyres' tread blocks squirming in discomfort but not overwork

them to the point of locking. I'd be tempted to left-foot brake, but memories of stuffing an Evo VI RS Sprint into a hedge attempting to do just that provide a timely sense check. Uncannily exploitable though it is, it's wise not to confuse the P25's towering limits with your own.

In case you're in any doubt, this car is something truly remarkable. That it would have a scintillating turn of speed was a given. What makes it so bewitching is the fact that it generates this pace without relying on a suite of sophisticated electronic aids and delivers it in a way that's rewarding at any speed. This is driving at its most compelling.

£552,000 is an immense asking price for any car. And especially one that famously made its name as an affordable performance icon. However, this irony hasn't proved a barrier to purchase, with all 25 build slots taken and six cars already well on their way to completion. If only I'd worked harder at school...

Prodrive has worked wonders to ensure you don't have to be a WRC champion to get the best from the P25. Crucially just as much effort was put into making sure you feel like a WRC champion whenever you drop into its driver's seat. Flat over crest maybe. 

**Opposite:** all the body panels except the doors are rendered in carbonfibre; digital dash belies wonderfully analogue nature of P25

### Prodrive P25

**Engine** Flat-four, 2457cc, turbocharged

**Power** 440bhp @ 6000rpm **Torque** 457lb ft @ 3000rpm

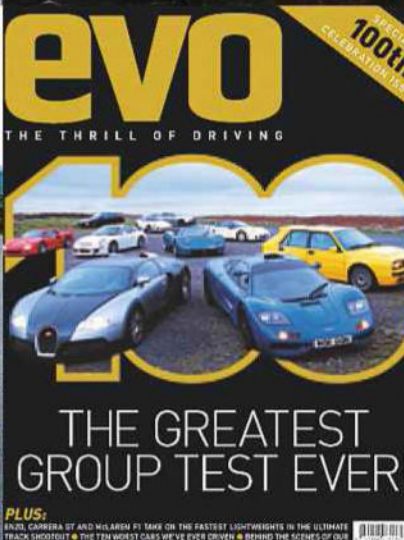
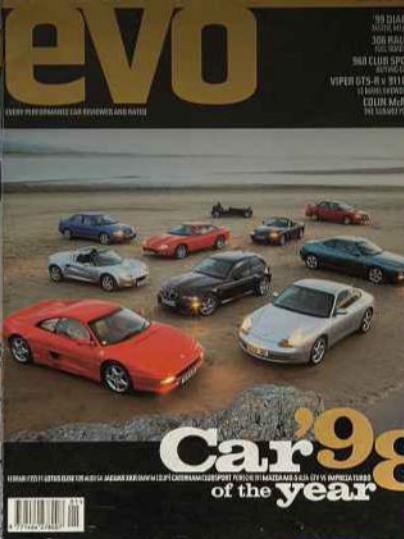
**Weight** 1180kg (379bhp/ton) **0-60mph** 2.8sec

**Top speed** 150mph (limited) **Basic price** £552,000

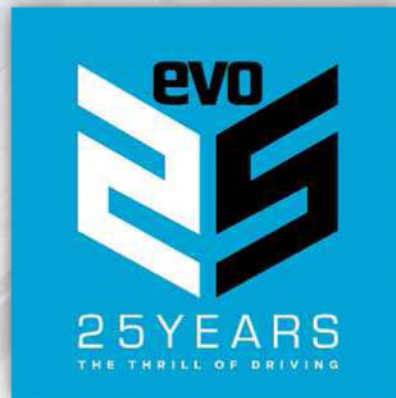
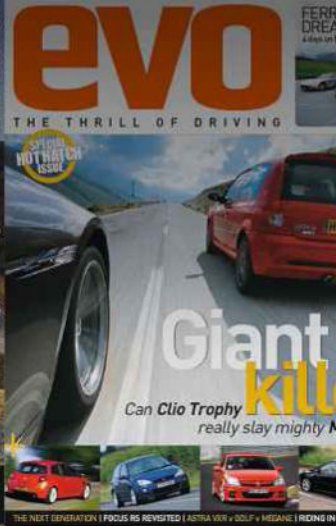
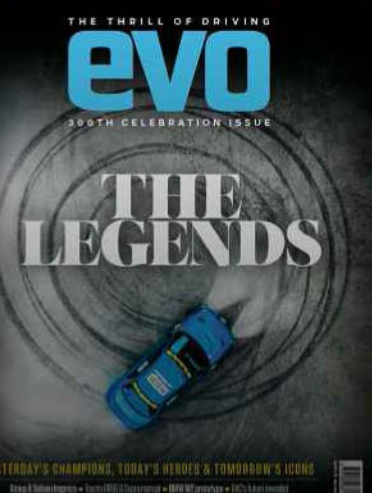
**evo rating** ★★★★★











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by JAMES TAYLOR

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

# KAMM AS YOU ARE

The flat-four Porsche 912 was once seen as the 911's poor relation. Budapest-based firm Kamm aims to unlock its ultimate potential



A

PPARENTLY WE ALL OUGHT TO SPEND MORE TIME being 'present', 'in the moment', 'conscious'. Right now, both hands on the unassisted wheel, sole of my right foot in conversation with the servo-free brake pedal, ears full of four horizontally opposed cylinders doing their thing and mind absorbed with the road ahead and the next gearchange to come, I feel pretty darn present.

Such is the way with many classic cars from the '60s of course. Just as so often the downside is that brakes, power, reliability and so forth aren't quite present enough. Herein lies the appeal of the restomod, a classic car with modern engineering upgrades, and the Porsche 911 has become the darling of the scene, myriad specialists offering their own take on the legend. Hungarian outfit Kamm Manufaktur, however, is concentrating not on the 911 but the 912.

On sale from 1965 to '69, the 912 was once snobbily seen as the poor man's 911, with a Porsche 356-derived flat-four in place of the 911's six. Today it's a sought-after classic. But not an especially potent one, with around 90bhp in most standard cars. The car pictured here has 190bhp and weighs 760kg, giving it a similar power-to-weight ratio to a present-day 911 Carrera.

It's Kamm's demonstrator, acquired by company founder Miki Kázmér as a solid but careworn standard 912 before beginning its transformation. The Budapest-based operation's 30-strong team (12 of which are full-time staff) includes engineers with expertise in motorsport, restoration, 3D scanning and composites, and the company manufactures almost all of the components in-house. Kázmér has a particular love for air-cooled engines born from his first car, a Beetle, and explains that Budapest has a culture of sympathetically tuning and improving classic cars, an ethos Kamm wishes to apply to the 912. The company's first three customer cars, created to buyers' individual specifications, are in build now.

Just how far customers go down the 'mod' route of the restomod equation is up to them; this car, being both working prototype and demonstrator, has the full works. Price depends how far along that scale customers would like

to indulge, and whether they supply their own 912 donor car (values of which, online listings suggest, are anything from £20,000 to £80,000+) or ask Kamm to source one on their behalf. Condition of the original car is a variable too, of course. As a rough guide, though, the base cost of a 'new' Kamm 912c is around £274,000, plus donor car.

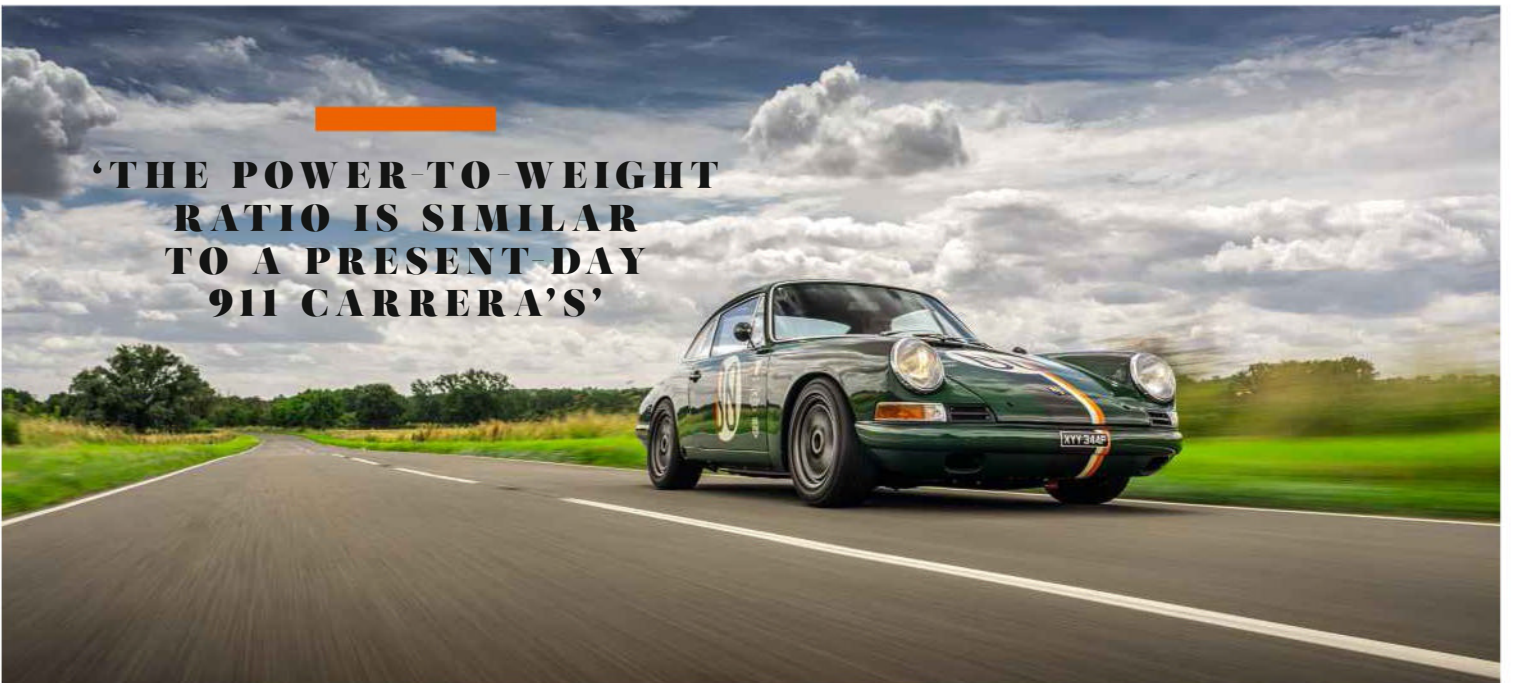
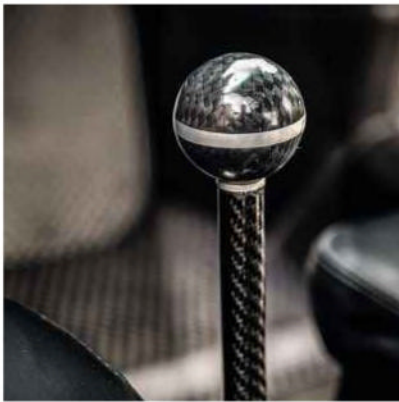
That, of course, is an exceedingly large amount of money. The extent of the engineering work at play beneath the surface does much to justify that. As does the surface itself: the 'c' suffix in 912c stands for carbon and practically all of the bodywork, including bonnet, wings, doors, engine cover and bay, boot floor and even roof if desired, can be made entirely from carbonfibre. Beneath the panels, the 912's steel shell is stiffened in places, for example around the suspension mounts. The beautifully finished carbon weave is deliberately partially exposed as part of this car's livery, alongside the period-correct Irish Green paint, but bare carbon or fully painted are also options. If the latter, you'd never know the bodywork was carbonfibre; to the naked eye it looks all but identical to the original.

To that end, Kamm has refurbed the original '60s headlights rather than fitting jarring modern LED units, and likewise much of the original chrome trim. The side windows are refitted with Lexan rather than glass, contributing towards that scant 760kg kerb weight (with air-con, oil and other fluids, but without fuel). Kázmér says they could make it lighter still but that would be at the expense of refinement. 'And I want this to be a car that people use,' he emphasises. This demonstrator has done all sorts, from track testing and ice driving to school runs and daily-driver donkey work.

The four-cylinder donkey in the tail has been bored out from its original 1.6 litres to just over 2, and has undergone all kinds of alterations, including a new cylinder head. Engine work is a collaboration between Kamm and Swiss-based specialist JPS Aircooled, which carries out machining and long block parts. Assembly is in Budapest, with top-end work done internally at Kamm, which also designed the intake system, individual throttle bodies and exhaust.







**THE POWER-TO-WEIGHT  
RATIO IS SIMILAR  
TO A PRESENT-DAY  
911 CARRERA'S'**



The 2-litre develops 160bhp in its regular 'touring' map; pulling out a little choke-like switch in the dash, labelled 'Drive Me Crazy', toggles to the full 190bhp. The engine is capable of being tuned to more than 200bhp, and a race-spec engine is available too, but Kamm has set the 190bhp ceiling for road use in the interests of long-term reliability.

The brakes have been uprated too, with four-piston calipers at the front by AP racing (two-piston at the rear), far more than strictly necessary for such a light car. They're hidden inside new five-spoke wheels, with Yokohama tyres bearing a naughty, trackday-style tread pattern. One of the biggest technological leaps is hidden within the arches: electronically controlled dampers, supplied by Dutch-based TracTive, with a five-way dial on the dashboard to adjust their damping force.

That dash is trimmed in carbonfibre but, again, can be specced with period-correct trim. A concealed Bluetooth speaker system can be fitted if customers want music, or an entirely stripped interior and integrated roll-cage if they want a track-spec 912c. The front passenger's feet meet a carbon kickplate, behind which the battery is currently located; that will soon move to the nose for extra space. There's carbon too for the seats and the gearlever, the latter a tall wand connected via a linkage of Kamm's own design to an original Porsche 901 gearbox. Slow synchromesh is a characteristic of said 'box, and I crunch it when shifting from neutral into first. Miki is commendably unconcerned. 'Don't worry; you can't break it,' he reassures.

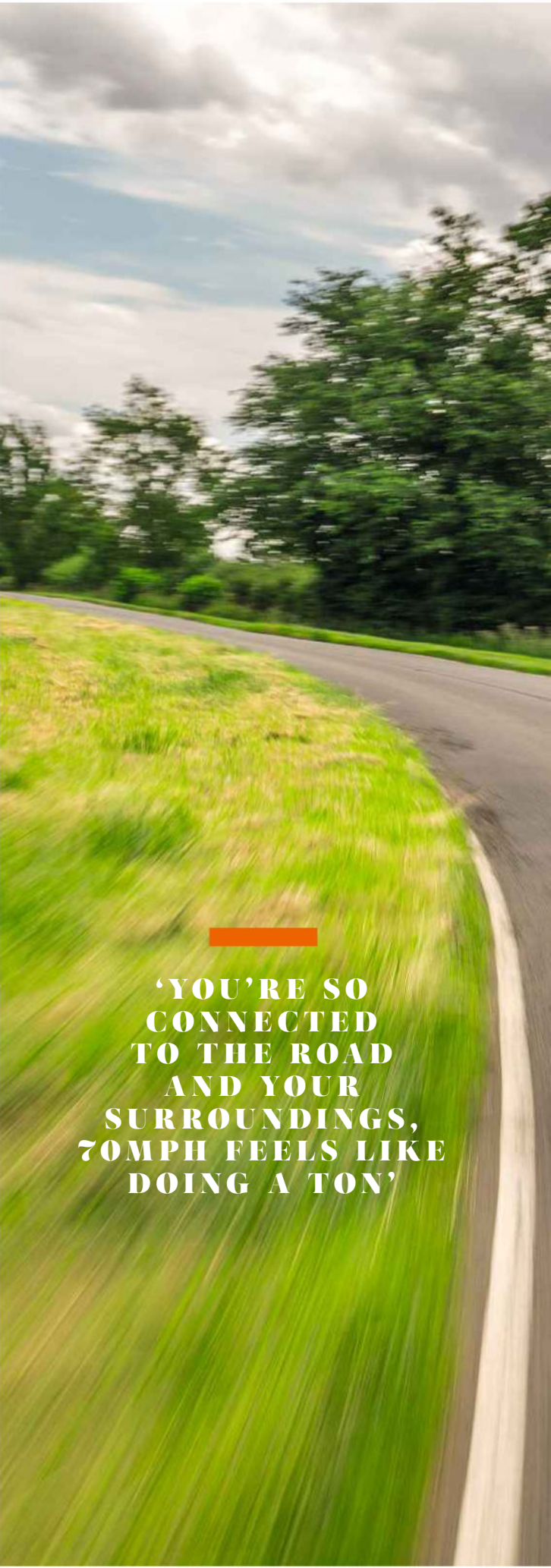
There are no gates to the five-speed gearshift either, and it demands concentration to avoid mis-shifting, but before too long it feels natural and you're swiftly swapping gears without a second thought (final cars will have a firmer spring to self-centre the lever, making shifts more intuitive.) The gearing is long – second and third will do most of the time on British B-roads – but since the car's so light, there's always a strong sense of pull. And the engine itself is a big character: raucous in a good way, with a rich, husky tone that's a genuine pleasure to listen to.

That note hardens above 4000rpm, where the engine does its best work. Particularly when the 'Crazy' map is toggled to unlock the extra 30bhp. The 912c is light enough for that to make a tangible difference, with an extra dose of urgency to both acceleration and response.

At urban speeds, in its regular map, the powertrain is docile, smooth and tractable – just very loud. At higher speeds, considerable road noise becomes part of the equation too. Kamm is investigating lightweight soundproofing options; at the moment earplugs would be a must for long journeys. Since our test, a valved exhaust has been fitted, aiding touring capability.

The dampers' five switchable modes are a secret weapon in that regard, becoming truly pliant in their softest setting and alert like a track car in their firmest. This is the second time we've driven this car – the first was last year, earlier in its development, when it had a more track-orientated, uncompromising set-up. It's now in near-final specification and there have been many changes in the interim: to brakes, suspension, gearshift, engine tuning, and steering too, exchanging a slightly frantic 1.7-turns-lock-to-lock rack for a more measured 2.4-turns item.

It feels lovely. The quicker rack will still be offered



**'YOU'RE SO  
CONNECTED  
TO THE ROAD  
AND YOUR  
SURROUNDINGS,  
70MPH FEELS LIKE  
DOING A TON'**













## Kamm 912c

**Engine** Flat-four, 2015cc **Power** 190bhp @ 6800rpm **Torque** 168lb ft @ 5450rpm  
**Weight** 760kg **Power-to-weight** 254bhp/ton  
**0-62mph** 5.8sec (est) **Top speed** 148mph (with long-ratio gearbox) **Basic price** c£274,000

evo rating ★★★★★

for more track-biased cars, but the slower version is ideal for the road. As is the new suspension set-up. Setting the new electronic dampers to their firmest, five-out-of-five setting recalls the car's previous, ultra-firm ride; one-out-of-five gives cushy ride comfort but feels a touch floaty if you're pressing on. Position three or four is about right for a typical British B-road.

The extra body movement afforded by the softer modes helps you feel what's going on, although it takes me a little while to build confidence to the point of pushing the car hard. It's partly a psychological thing, having heard so many ghost stories about '60s Porsches' tricky handling, but the 912 is a far more benign, neutral car on the limit. The lighter, shorter engine shifts the weight distribution further forward (open the engine cover and, apart from being struck by how much carbonfibre there is in there, you're also struck by how much space there is behind the engine in the 911-sized bay). And as Miki points out, 'we're a long way from the original handling.' Grippy, stiff-sidewalled Yokohamas play their part, too, and everything hangs together nicely dynamically. A limited-slip diff helps pivot the 912c into corners – and put its power down cleanly on the way out (on this admittedly warm, dry day).

Every touchpoint is much improved from our last encounter with the car: steering, gearshift, and especially the brakes, unassisted but powerful and with great feedback through the race-spec, floor-hinged Tilton pedal set. As with many classic cars, vision is superb through the slim-pillared, upright screen, while the 912's narrowness means you can choose a multitude of lines through a corner and also makes it easy to manoeuvre in town, even with the unassisted steering.

It would be a stretch to describe the 912c as fast. But it's

more than brisk, and I've no doubt that with a good driver carrying momentum it could embarrass a lot of far more powerful cars, on the road or on a track. It's a fun thought. And, as with many cars of this age, you're so connected to the road and your surroundings that it often feels like you're going faster than you really are. It's difficult to see past 60mph on the speedo because the steering wheel masks its upper reaches, but 70mph or so feels like you're doing a ton. Top speed is 148mph with a long-ratio gearbox; Kamm also offers a short-ratio option, topping out at 130mph.

It's a ton of cash, too, of course. I can't imagine parting with nearly £300,000 for this car. But I can see why somebody would. The 912c has a character all of its own. Kázmér's enthusiasm for his passion project is contagious, and the attention to detail is unstinting. And with the work being carried out in-house to such a thorough degree, it feels justifiable to think of it as a Kamm product, as opposed to an old car with some mods.

When I drove the car last year I found it a lovely thing but wondered if I might get as much enjoyment from a regular 912. Now it's a much more resolved entity: a car that drives in its own inimitable way, flows sweetly down the road, unlocks the 912's potential and evolves it into something different without losing its essential character or turning it into a caricature. It's a totally absorbing machine to drive, fast or slow; a car in which you're always in the moment. Of course, you could get a similar layer of involvement in, say, a Caterham or a Lotus Exige for colossally less outlay, but the Kamm is something different, is more practical and useable (to an extent) than a bare-bones open sports car, and, for a wealthy driver who has everything, can offer its own singular appeal. ✕

**Left and above:** plenty of exposed carbonfibre, inside and out, on Kamm's demonstrator; customers can choose to go for a more authentic period look



The limited-edition  
Cooper S '75' combines  
the best of old and new  
in the ultimate road and  
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# LITTLE REMIX

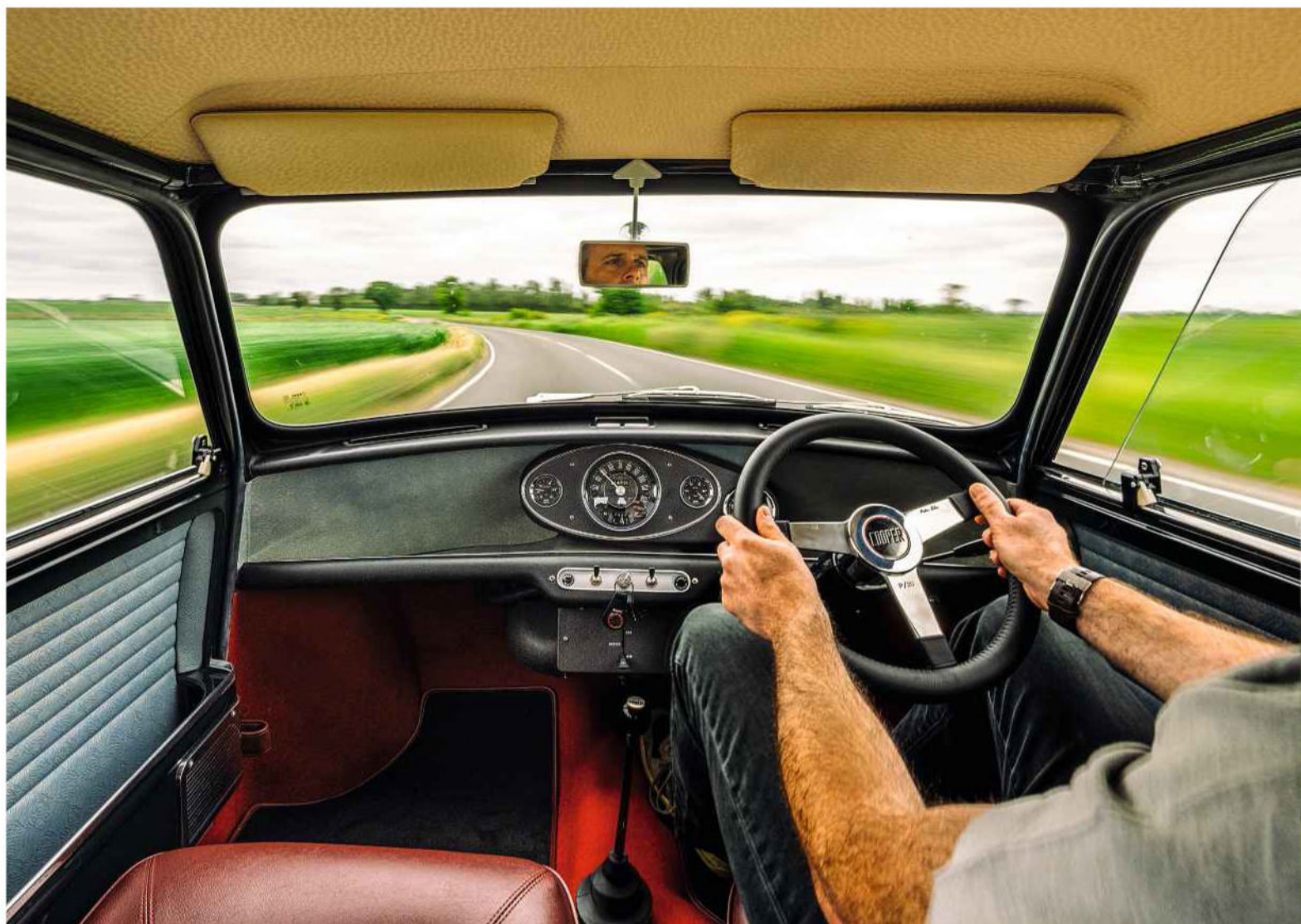
by ADAM TOWLER PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT



XED







**T'S AKIN TO RED BULL RACING TAKING A HUMBLE** hatchback, instructing the genius of Adrian Newey to make suitable modifications, painting it satin dark blue with yellow and red graphics, then destroying the opposition in the BTCC and beyond. Not a marketing exercise but a road-going homologation special, designed in the same workshops at Milton Keynes that build Max's cars, that becomes an unstoppable force on the track. As impossibly cute and cuddly as the little green Mini sitting expectantly in front of me is, I'm reminded that's exactly what happened all those years ago, when the then F1 world champions really did take our national car maker's people's car and forge it into a formidable competition machine.

All of which must make this 1965 Mini Cooper S more authentic and **evo**-appropriate than almost any other, for it carries the Cooper family's stamp of approval in its bloodline: this is the Cooper Car Company 75, designed and built to celebrate both the 75th anniversary of the Cooper Car Company and the 60th anniversary of the original Cooper S.

The Coopers of the rallying world were red because they were run by the BMC factory competition department; the lesser-known cars that won the British Touring Car Championship and various overseas series throughout the '60s were Connaught

Green with Old English White stripes and roof because they were run by John Cooper's Cooper Car Company, F1 champions in 1959 and 1960, and those were the team's racing colours. The 75 is a homage to those works cars, and also John's son Mike Cooper's idea of what an ultimate fast-road Mk1 Cooper S should be, useable on both road and trackdays.

Just 20 examples of the 75 will be built, and both the original concept and the cars themselves emanate from a new firm based near Southend-on-Sea called the Brightwell Motor Company. In a large, very clean workshop, bustling with an eclectic mix of classic and modern-classic cars, is a small team with decades of experience at some high-profile companies. Amongst them is Scott Turner, one of the UK's pre-eminent original Mini experts and a frequent concours winner. As with any conversation with someone highly passionate and incredibly well-informed on a specific subject matter, a chat with Scott about old Minis is a constant stream of information, intricate detail, parts numbers and colour charts that expands one's knowledge by multiple factors in mere minutes. I'm not surprised when he admits to having owned over 300 Minis in his lifetime.

The idea for the 75 began when Mike Cooper asked Scott to build him a concours-standard Mk1 Cooper S to fill a gap in





his collection. Conversations were had about Mike's Cooper Car Company building a limited series of cars, but everything was put on ice when the Covid pandemic began, while in the meantime Scott built up the prototype you see here. Fast forward to last year, and when Mike saw the car he gave the green light to proceed with the project.

The 75 isn't a true restomod, nor strictly a new build; it incorporates a few concessions to modernity but is largely a concoction of ultimate must-haves within a period-correct framework. Brightwell could start with a new Heritage shell, but it's not the correct Mk1 type, so instead each of the 20 cars will be based on an original S that's stripped down to a bare monocoque. These then take on average 300 hours to restore to completely correct, original condition, even when some of the donor cars bought for the project have looked more than reasonable when acquired; decades of bodged repairs and modifications are only revealed once the cars are back to bare metal.

From there, the cars start to take shape, each one to be built by Scott over the course of six months. The spec will be nectar to Mini aficionados (I have greatly condensed the following) with the engine starting life as a 1275 GT block before being bored out to 1380cc and fitted with cast pistons, a Swiftune

camshaft and twin HS4 SU carbs. Naturally, everything is balanced, and there's a close-ratio helical gearset to make best use of the claimed 95-100bhp. That modernity? LED bulbs in the headlamps, some CNC-machined parts under the bonnet, electronic ignition, a hidden USB connector for your phone...

Beyond the restoration and technical spec, 75s can be recognised by their detailing: the spark-eroded 'Cooper Car Co' script on the rim of the wheels, the unique fuel filler cap, the tiny Cooper badge mounted inside the headlights, the unique 'CCC' pedal set, the steering wheel badge and column dropper that changes the angle of the wheel (more on that in a bit) and so on. The tiny gearlever knob is actually a Jaguar E-type part with a lead weight inside for a more balanced throw, but machined out to carry the Cooper badge. Everywhere you look there are wonderful details to drink in, and these will be strictly kept for the run of 20 cars, all of which will be to the same colour and trim scheme, inside and out.

Enough of the spec though; I'm desperate to drive it. I know the cliché is 'Tardis-like' when discussing the interior of a Mini, but it's been a while, and as I fold my six-foot-plus frame into the 75, it's as if I've inadvertently selected the wide-angle lens on my phone's camera. How can the dashboard be so far away?

**Left and above:** Mini still miraculously spacious inside, though taller drivers might struggle with the driving position. Engine is bored out to 1380cc and has uprated internals – everything meticulously balanced – to produce a rorty-sounding 95-100bhp

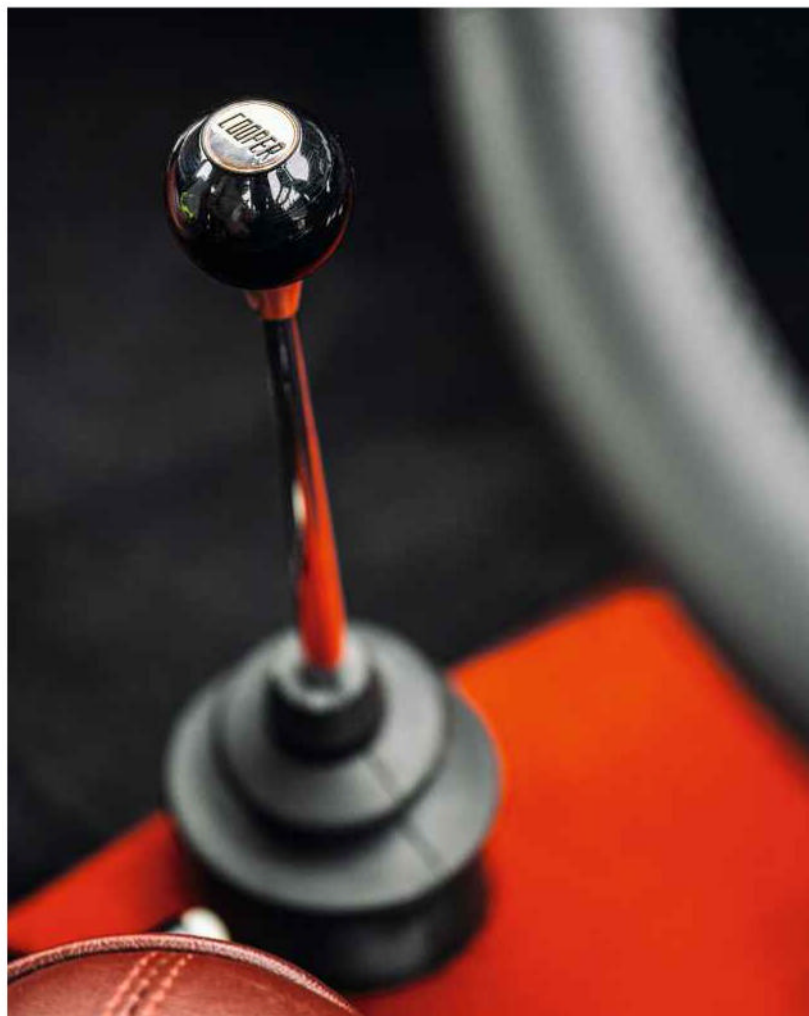


How can there be so much space? The answer in part will come once we're on the move, with the realisation that my squidgy bits are the crumple zone in the event of an impact, but for now such thoughts have been sidelined by the sheer rort of the A-series engine warming up. It needs a little tickle with the throttle to stay idling when cold, but you have to giggle at the immediacy of the response. Slice the lever into first, up with the fairly weighty clutch pedal and the Mini literally springs forward, like a cat released from a travel cage. And once you're on the move almost everything on your mind disappears out of the novel sliding side windows: it's so tiny, so agile, so ludicrously keen. It makes a mockery of our modern high-performance leviathans. In a matter of seconds, I fall completely in love with it.

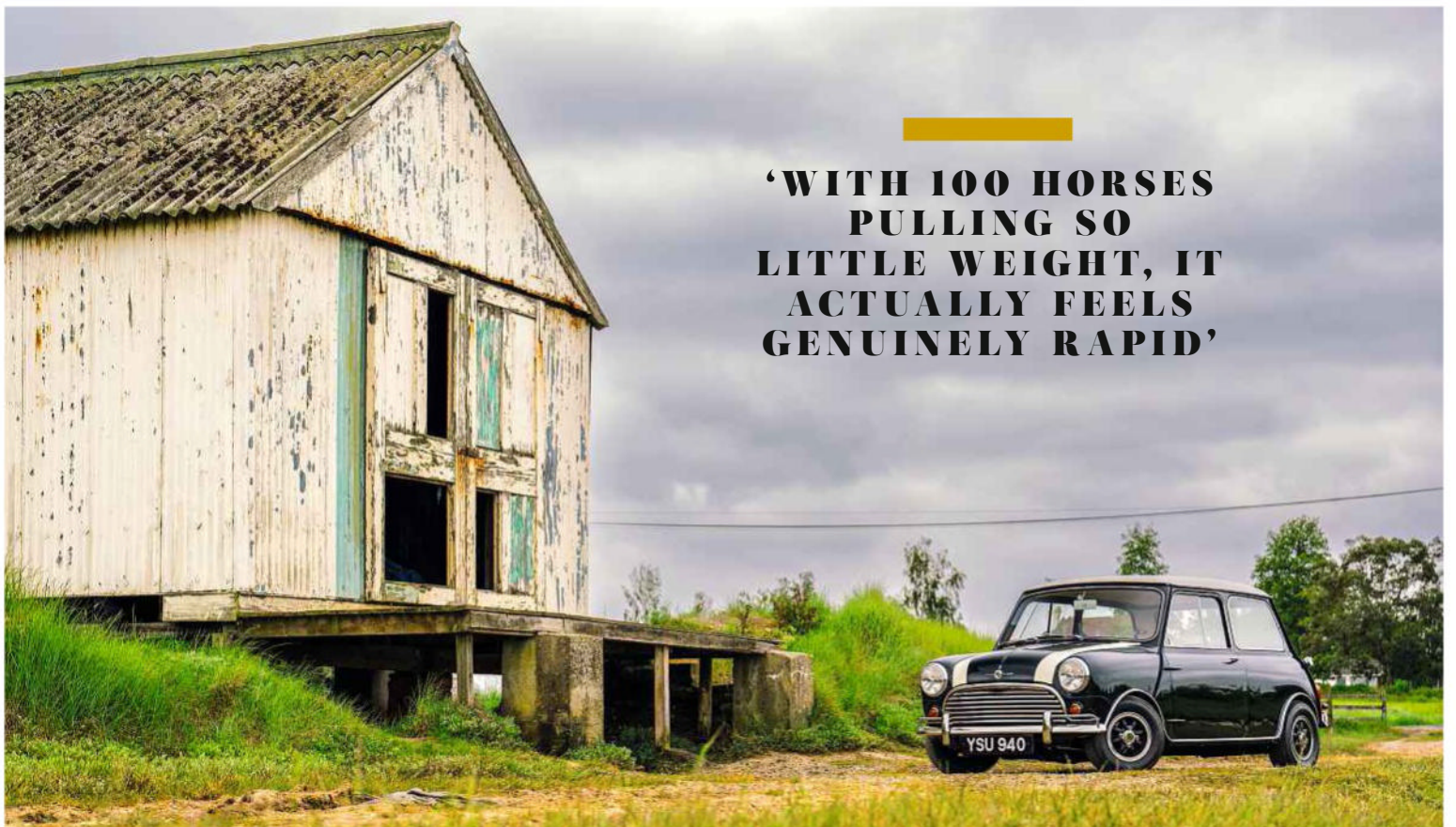
Of course, you don't have to be overly cerebral about driving the Mini. You can just revel in its responsiveness and the fact that with 100 horses pulling so little weight it actually feels genuinely rapid at realistic road speeds; quick enough that when you come around a blind corner to find a 38-tonner half over the centre line, it causes the small part of your brain that expresses caution to contribute its own two-penn'orth on the situation. It's a necessary intervention because it's easy to get sucked in by the 75's speed. The brakes – discs at the front with four-pot calipers and drums at the rear – are much more powerful than those of a standard Cooper S, but a clumsy 'modern' application of the right foot locks the wheels very easily and can alarmingly (or effectively, depending on the situation) adjust the attitude of the car. Similarly, those tiny 10-inch alloys, which do so much to give the 75 the correct stance, are shod with narrow Dunlop R7 tyres that can easily be coerced into relinquishing their grip via understeer or wheelspin if you're not prudent with the throttle.

And then, like Indiana Jones figuring out the motorised lock on an Aztec tomb, the puzzle of driving the Cooper S starts to unravel. It doesn't want to be driven like a modern hot hatch, to be braked hard and late into a corner before letting the diff sort things on the way out; you have to work *with* the 75, understand it, drive as a team. Be sensitive, use the brakes correctly, set the car up so it's balanced at both ends through fast curves and it comes alive. Now we're scything along at an improbable rate, the little Downton-style rev-counter confirming the thrash that's audibly filling the cabin, a hint of a four-wheel drift, a manic grin plastered all over my face. Conserving momentum and using effective road-positioning are what make the Mini quick, and such an engrossing challenge. The only glitch is the driving position – the wheel is at a better angle thanks to the column dropper, but now my knees foul it, making heel-and-toe work impossible. That would need a tweak to the driving position to sort out.

Ironically, just a few days before I drive the 75, Mini announces a special edition of the current Cooper S called the 1to6, which, as the name hints, is the very last Cooper S to go on sale equipped with a manual gearbox. The same weekend, a race-prepared 1to6 with Charlie Cooper amongst the drivers (he's son of Mike, grandson of John and great-grandson of Cooper business founder Charlie Cooper) comes second in class in the Nürburgring 24 Hours. It's the end of an era but also the continuation of another, a feeling reinforced by the 75, which proves the original recipe was oh-so-right back in the 1960s. £110,000 plus VAT might seem to some to be a lot of money for an old Mini, unless you're aware of classic Mini prices in general, but while we're used to any reimagined old car costing a fortune these days, this is one such example that, through its driving appeal, historical authenticity and sheer cool factor, feels like money well spent. ✕







**‘WITH 100 HORSES  
PULLING SO  
LITTLE WEIGHT, IT  
ACTUALLY FEELS  
GENUINELY RAPID’**



**S U I T E D**





by STUART GALLAGHER  
PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH

# & BOOTED



With Audi, BMW and Mercedes  
losing their lustre in the  
compact sports saloon market,  
Alfa and Jaguar are vying for  
top honours. We pit Giulia  
Veloce against XE P300



I

**KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING:**

where's the 3-series? The car BMW built to create and define the compact sports saloon sector. The benchmark in terms of driving dynamics, quality and, of course, sales. The 3-series is a phenomenon. Or rather it was. Its star hasn't faded as such, rather its position has been challenged, and not by the usual suspects. Audi Sport and Mercedes-AMG may square up to the M3, but further down the pecking order an A4 or C-class in non-performance dress-up have struggled to impress, their go falling short of matching their show. Not so the offerings of Alfa Romeo and Jaguar.

The XE isn't long for this world and production is a little on/off depending on parts supply and where JLR needs those all-important chips to be installed (Range Rovers normally, because they generate more profit than a PPE supplier back in 2020). Yet it's a car that, since its debut in 2015, has demonstrated that the people of Bavaria aren't the only ones who know how to make a compact sports saloon. Twelve months after the Brits did it, Italy also proved it could take on the 3-series, although this time both at grass roots level with four-cylinder models and on the main stage with the Quadrifoglio (Jaguar left the fireworks to the limited-run Project 8, another gem but one that was only short-lived and frighteningly expensive).

You will have spotted that neither car featured here is a V8-engined DTM refugee or a cut-down Ferrari-engined saloon; instead they represent a more accessible entry point to both models. In the case of the Jaguar this still means the range-topper: an XE P300 Sport AWD that will empty your current account to the tune of £43,500 before options (of which this example, one we've been running for the last three months and will report on in Fast Fleet soon, comes with nearly seven thousand pounds' worth). It makes the Giulia 280 Veloce look initially expensive at £47,759, but the Alfa wants for nothing, its Milanese serpent more than a match for Coventry's leaper in terms of on-paper spec.

Ian Callum's XE design has aged beautifully, as tends to be the case with all Callum designs, oozing confidence, class and, perhaps more importantly in today's world, a premium air that Audi, BMW and Mercedes spend millions trying to achieve yet continually fall short of. It's a theme that's carried over to the inside, too. Ergonomically, the XE feels designed for the driver – pedals, steering wheel and seat all adjust to where you want them. The layout ahead is clean and logical to use and read, the material fit and finish tight as a drum-skin.

The Jaguar's four-cylinder Ingenium engine doesn't have the soundtrack to match the other first impressions. There's a gruffness from idle to high revs that leaves a blemish on the otherwise fine sheen of everything the XE has delivered so far. Yet there is an energy to the 296bhp motor that brings enough of the XE to life to encourage you to settle in and enjoy its dynamic jewels.



**'THE JAGUAR FEELS  
DESIGNED FOR THE  
DRIVER, THE FIT AND  
FINISH TIGHT AS A DRUM'**









**Above:** Alfa is rear-wheel drive where the Jag drives all four, and the Italian is just a little more playful and throttle-adjustable; seats grip more tightly too

It starts with the ride; where else with a Jaguar? Pliant, quiet and soothing, as with all cars signed off by the now-retired Mike Cross, what you feel back through the steering and your backside is only ever everything you *need* to feel. The dampers read the road with such detail you have to remind yourself this is a car designed to appeal to fleet buyers and consumers who don't want to conform to the status quo. Then there's the way it steers – with a directness and fluidity you'd be impressed by in sports car, never mind a compact four-door saloon.

Four-wheel drive it may be, but the electronic system sends 90 per cent of the engine's torque to the rear axle until it's needed up front, which is rarely at all if it's dry. You can pitch the XE in at a serious pace, the front Pirellis biting

first time and the nose leading the car through the middle of the corner as you feed in more throttle as early as you feel comfortable with. Not having a particularly spikey power delivery, you find yourself driving harder with each mile, pushing the Jaguar's chassis with every turn. And when you do start to breach its limits there's a level of adjustability you can access through the throttle and steering that makes any transition smooth and cleanly telegraphed.

Surefooted and confidence-inspiring, the XE rewards across the tarmac to an unexpectedly high level, which brings you back to wishing it had more grunt to allow you to play and exploit it that much more. It's a car that feels overdeveloped for the task it was designed to do.

Step into the Alfa, after you've pondered how a car designed to be mainstream and built in considerable volumes can look so alluring, and within a couple of hundred metres you feel the immediate benefit of Alfa Romeo's decision to develop the Giulia around the Quadrifoglio's needs and requirements and allow the lesser models to benefit from the expertise of the team who also created the 458 Speciale.

It too has great ergonomics, but its seats hold you more firmly, pinching your hips and securing your shoulders, plugging you into the car where the XE feels like you're sitting *on* it when you jump between the two. There's more of a tune from its 2-litre turbocharged four, too, more depth to a soundtrack that's more inviting and enticing. Like the XE, it has an eight-speed auto and no manual option; here it's driving the rear wheels only – through a mechanical limited-slip diff – but it wants for nothing when you push on.

Even through the first handful of corners, the Giulia highlights what's lacking in the XE and it's that sense of



agility. Where the XE feels locked down and corners with a feeling of solidity, the Alfa provides more movement and lets you play a larger part in the process. Its quicker steering feels intuitive and natural, the car pivoting around your hip point as you pour it into a corner, the front end, like the Jaguar's, resisting push unless you become heavy-handed and ask too much. And where you think the XE's AWD chassis allows an impressive level of adjustability, the lighter – to the tune of 222kg – Giulia is even more responsive to you trimming your line with throttle and steering.

Neither has the power to drive out of corners with armfuls of corrective lock – unless you have a total disregard for your liberty – but they will dance across the surface to a decent tune that makes you always want to push and enjoy their talents rather than sit back and wish you had bought a car with massaging seats.

Yet it's the Alfa Romeo that hooks you in more. It feels better balanced and more organic in its movements. Its shift paddles' action and size inspire you to engage with them far more compared with the XE's switch-like buttons, while the Italian's 276bhp engine responds more keenly, even if power fades much sooner once it's delivered its peak compared with the British-built powerplant.

Only the Alfa's brakes remain a point of contention. In the XE, 355mm and 325mm front and rear discs are matched to a caliper and pedal set-up that is consistent in terms of feel and retardation; even when the discs heat up beyond their ideal operating temperature you can modulate accordingly. In the Giulia there is, as there always has been with current Alfas, a period of pedal travel that makes you question if they're going to do what you have asked. Modulating the slowing process requires more thought processing than it should, and while time and experience have you adjusting your approach, it will be too big a change for some, so our advice is try before you buy.

On the subject of buying, which one should you? The Jaguar is hugely impressive, and underrated to an even greater degree. It feels more of a 3-series than the equivalent-engined model that BMW sells today, blending quality with character that Munich's finest was once the master of.

But its engine lacks the spirit and its chassis the ultimate agility of the Alfa: the fiercely independent Italian that's not trying to be anything but its own take on the sports saloon recipe, delivering every flavour and sensation you want from such a car. Which is why it wins by a narrow but well-earned margin here. ☒



### Jaguar XE P300 Sport AWD

**Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc, turbocharged  
**Power** 296bhp @ 5500rpm **Torque** 295lb ft @ 1500-4500rpm  
**Weight** 1651kg (182bhp/ton) **0-62mph** 5.9sec  
**Top speed** 155mph **Basic price** £43,500  
**evo rating** ★★★★★



### Alfa Romeo Giulia Veloce

**Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1995cc, turbocharged  
**Power** 276bhp @ 5200rpm **Torque** 295lb ft @ 2250-4500rpm  
**Weight** 1429kg (196bhp/ton) **0-62mph** 5.7sec  
**Top speed** 149mph **Basic price** £47,759  
**evo rating** ★★★★★



**BASIC**







# INSTINCT

by JETHRO BOVINGDON PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

With Can-Am looks, a 460bhp supercharged Honda engine, just 700kg to propel and no driver aids whatsoever, the Spartan is the thrill of driving in its rawest form



T





## THESE ARE PRECIOUS MOMENTS AND THEY'RE GROWING

rarer by the hour, day, week, month and year. I'm handed a key – an actual key that must be inserted and twisted – to a car made by the Spartan Motor Company in Australia and imported, further developed and made road-legal by an outfit named Le Mans Coupes here in the UK. We know these guys well as they're also the people to go to for the fabulous Superformance range of GT40, Shelby Daytona Cobra and Corvette Grand Sport. Wonderful monsters all.

Anyway, the Spartan. That rarest of things. A new car that's properly light, that takes great pride in its manual gearbox and, refreshingly, doesn't try to be all things to all people. Forget bandwidth. The Spartan weighs 700kg and has 460bhp. It's hair-on-fire lunacy on road or track and all the better for it. The link for Le Mans Coupes, a company built upon selling wonderfully realised recreations of '60s race cars, might not be obvious at first, but the Spartan's Can-Am-inspired styling is key, as company founder Oliver Hulme explains: 'My father Nigel, he raced a Lola T70 for many years. So we just loved the idea of this, really. It's a fantastic addition to what we do.'

It's a pretty compelling link, isn't it? But you don't need a history of wrestling T70s around Spa-Francorchamps to get the appeal of the Spartan: styling inspired by perhaps the coolest race series ever devised; lightweight tubular steel chassis with carbonfibre bodywork; double wishbones at each corner acting on TracTive semi-active dampers; mid-mounted Honda K24 2.4-litre in-line four with a Rotrex supercharger; six-speed manual 'box; AP Racing brakes; production limited to 300. I'm pretty much sold on this thing even before seeing it in the raw, unpainted carbonfibre.

The only difficult thing to swallow is the price. A car in this top spec is £162,000. The entry-level glassfibre-bodied Spartan with a naturally aspirated K24 engine is still £126k, and you have to add import costs to both, so a few grand more. Even setting aside the humble but scintillating Caterham Seven in its extreme forms or the

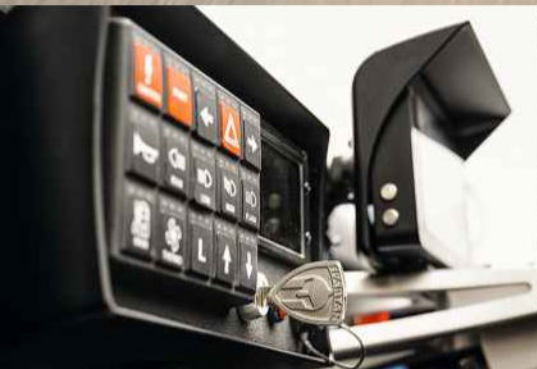
more technically intriguing Ariel Atom, the aggressive pricing is an eye-opener. Dallara – a company that designs and develops F1 cars, supplies the entire IndyCar field, and builds chassis for Bugatti and the structure for the Cadillac LMDh that recently took a podium at Le Mans – will sell you its Stradale, complete with a carbonfibre tub and chassis tuning by supercar test driver royalty Loris Biscocchi, for a similar asking price. The Spartan story is rather different...

It was designed and developed in Australia by twins Peter and Nick Papanicolaou. The Paps grew up in Sydney, where their dad had an engineering workshop. Driving, building, designing and engineering is clearly their passion and the Spartan has been a long time in the making. Nick is an electronics engineer first and foremost, Peter a graphic designer. However, both grew up using lathes and milling machines and steeped in hands-on engineering. It seems a project like the Spartan was just a matter of time.

Way back in 2007 they started working on a concept that would grow into the Spartan: a small, lightweight barchetta powered by a Ducati V-twin engine lifted straight out of a brand-new 1198S. 'The bike had only done 11km when we stripped it apart,' remembers Peter with no hint of regret but a clear understanding of how mad the process sounds. Four years later the car was ready and unveiled at the Sydney Motorcycle Show. 'We had great fun developing that thing on a friend's private road... which was more like a little Nürburgring. But we knew the car needed more torque and greater durability. So we re-engineered it to accept a 1.5-litre Honda Jazz engine fitted with a Sprintex supercharger.' The next chapter was a K24 and, as the promise of the project became clear, more experts were recruited for its fine-tuning: the chassis by Andre Nader, who has extensive experience in sportscar racing; aero by Sammy Diasinos, formerly of Toyota and Williams F1; and the final set-up work by ex-F3 driver Barton Mawer. It's been a long hard road to get to here, then. Oh god, I hope their baby is good.







**‘IT IS WILDLY,  
OVERWHELMINGLY  
AND, HONESTLY,  
QUITE TERRIFYINGLY  
QUICK’**



It looks the part, I have to say. There isn't the scale or drama of a real-deal Can-Am car but, well, nothing really has the presence of a real-deal Can-Am car. Even so, it's a lovely, clean, evocative shape and although the Spartan is a compact car there's nothing toy-like about it. I also love the sense of purpose. There's beauty in the lines and in the perfectly matched weave of the carbon, but the Spartan sweats a tough, businesslike aura. Later I'll come to wonder if there's enough engineering jewellery for this price point, but right now I just love the tension and the motorsport componentry. The AP Racing brakes poking through simple ten-spoke Advan RZ wheels and the Yokohama A052 semi-slicks with a proper sidewall just reek of racetrack. There are no driver aids. At all. Not even ABS.

As you may have noticed, there are no doors either. Simply step into the Spartan and then slide your legs down towards the Tilton bias pedal box. More good stuff. This is still a development car, so there's a button-free and surprisingly large Sabelt steering wheel with an AiM dash screen mounted behind. The final cars will feature the AiM SW4 steering wheel with integrated screen, which will add a dash of Formula-style technology to the classical sensibility. Mounted centrally there's a control panel with ignition and start buttons and other basic functions, and to its right a small readout for the TracTive semi-active dampers. More on which later.

Right now I'm just happy to have plenty of space to work, pleased by the simplicity and sound ergonomics of the driving position and intrigued by the exposed shifter of the six-speed gearbox. The Honda engine is fully exposed too, cam cover and intercooler poking through the bodywork, evocative of the great intake trumpets on a McLaren M8's mighty Chevrolet V8. (Okay, maybe I'm getting a little carried away. Anyway, I'm excited.) Today will be restricted to road driving and the car is running its correspondingly more forgiving ride height. Even so, the TracTive dampers offer plenty of adjustability and even eliminate mechanical anti-roll bars. M1 and M5 presets are nominal road and track settings but owners have plenty of scope to experiment on the fly or add new favourites to the remaining memory positions.

Twist the key, thumb Ignition and then Start and the supercharged engine buzzes to life and its fast idle tingles through the whole car. These Honda units rev beautifully and are strong and reliable, but the noise is plain and shrill. There's no throaty twin-cam roar, just a flat, busy mechanical thrash. The mini Can-Am vibe doesn't quite materialise. Hopefully the supercharger will add some aural excitement once the revs pick up. At least the view out adds a layer of the exotic. The curves that flow over the wheels are gorgeous and have the added benefit of locking-in the road ahead like a target. The periscope rear-view mirror full of wing is beguiling, too. Of course, the aero package isn't just for decoration. The Spartan produces 299kg of downforce at 200kph (124mph), 467kg at 250kph (155mph). Remember, the kerb weight is just 700kg.

First impressions are of a car that's intuitive and driver-friendly – helped by the abundant torque and the six-speed gearbox – but extremely intense. Even at low speeds the Spartan pulsates with the energy buzzing out of the Honda engine. The seat and pedals are alive to its every action and hence throttle inputs not only create vivid, inertia-free acceleration but seem to energeise the whole



car as it fizzes and vibrates like a go-kart. The aeroscreen might help isolate the driver from the slipstream a little, but your head still bobs in the rush of wind and there's a blaring, buffeting cacophony swirling around you all the time. A full-face helmet is a necessity for anything above about 20mph if you want to see where you're going.

Yet whilst the physicality of the Spartan is at times overwhelming, the dynamics are mostly calm and clearly trustworthy. The steering isn't darty or edgy at all and there's filtered but fine feedback. Start to roll the car into corners with more speed and it moves with that easy, effortless feel that only a light machine with sticky tyres can conjure. The grip seems almost boundless and there's so much natural agility. The Spartan may have been developed with cursory attention paid to the road, but driven quickly but smoothly and without awakening the really angry part of the rev range, it has a lovely sense of cohesion. I love the brakes, too. There's so much feel and progression that locking them isn't a worry at all, even in really bumpy braking zones.

The noise never really improves – perhaps because developing subtler delights like this inevitably shuffles down the list of priorities with the binary needs of a track machine – and it does feel like this is a missed opportunity. We know from shrieking previous-generation supercharged Ariel Atoms that real drama and a sense of occasion can be extracted from these engines. The Spartan barely sounds supercharged at all and the plain, harsh noise is pretty uninspiring. However, you don't have time to realise this

**Above and left:** supercharged Honda K24 and intercooler sit just behind the driver's back; exposed shift mechanism for the six-speed manual gearbox is a nice touch; body is naked carbonfibre



until a few hours later, such is the scale of the performance. It is wildly, overwhelmingly and, honestly, quite terrifyingly quick. Wringing the Spartan out to the limiter takes real commitment. There's so much noise, the weight of your helmet is being buffeted around by the onslaught of wind and longitudinal g, the car is zinging like a tuning fork and the speed readout is a blur. Add to that the suspension starting to struggle with the lumps and bumps of a challenging road surface and the experience starts to feel uncomfortably thrilling. Like it shouldn't really be allowed.

The gearbox adds to the frenzy. It's light, precise and will take shifts as fast as your arm can move. It's wonderfully exciting firing through the upshifts. Perhaps there isn't the polish of a Dallara Stradale or the suppleness of, say, a well set up Atom, but the Spartan is intense and deeply, unsettlingly thrilling.

Incredibly, traction through the Quaife ATB differential is superb and on a cool, dry day there's no worry about wheelspin at all. Provoke the Spartan and it tends towards a little understeer and then very mild oversteer on corner exit. For me the car needs a bit more rake and it turned out that the ride height was set incorrectly for our test. I'd like to try it again with the front height reduced as I think it would breed more confidence and perhaps make the car feel a little more playful, too. Spartan tried a more traditional differential but felt it made the car too edgy under braking. On track that might be true, but I wonder if a plated diff would actually help the car to feel slightly more natural on the road.

The TracTive dampers are fascinating. They use a multi-axis g sensor to feed information to an internal DDA (Dynamic Damping Adjustment) valve. Capable of responding in 6-8 milliseconds, the DDA is said to react to surface changes and loads before you

even feel them. So, for example, as you hit apex or exit kerbs, the dampers can absorb the blow and then tense up again to maintain body control in incredibly short order. In theory, the balance of the car can be tweaked with fine adjustment of roll stiffness, pitch and dive and suspension behaviour at different phases of a corner.

The preset road and track settings certainly make a tangible difference to the car's balance and ride quality. I prefer the directness and more 'on the nose' feel of the track default, but clearly we're not in the right environment to judge the ultimate set-up. In fact, it feels unfair judging the Spartan on the road alone as the Paps are pretty clear that this thing is all about track fun and performance. 'Getting the cars road-registered here in Australia or places like the US is really difficult,' says Peter. 'In some ways, it's just a bonus that it can be driven to the track in the UK.'

This single-minded focus is fantastic in some senses. The Spartan's performance, agility, massive grip and superb traction will clearly be breathtaking on a circuit. It's also obvious that the mechanical package and the feel of the car has been just as expertly honed as the aerodynamic performance. However, perhaps it hasn't allowed the Paps to develop some of the seemingly small details that can turn a performance car into something inspirational. The finish of the carbon body is fantastic but the inside is more rudimentary and needs refining. The noise could and should be more musical – or more unhinged like those previous Atoms – and I think a bit more beauty in the details would elevate the car considerably. It's amazing how a gorgeous exhaust manifold can lift your mood: the BAC Mono is a great example of layering art on top of engineering function. If the Spartan can take that next step then it will begin to justify the asking price. ✕



### Spartan (Supercharged)

**Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 2354cc, supercharged **Power** 460bhp

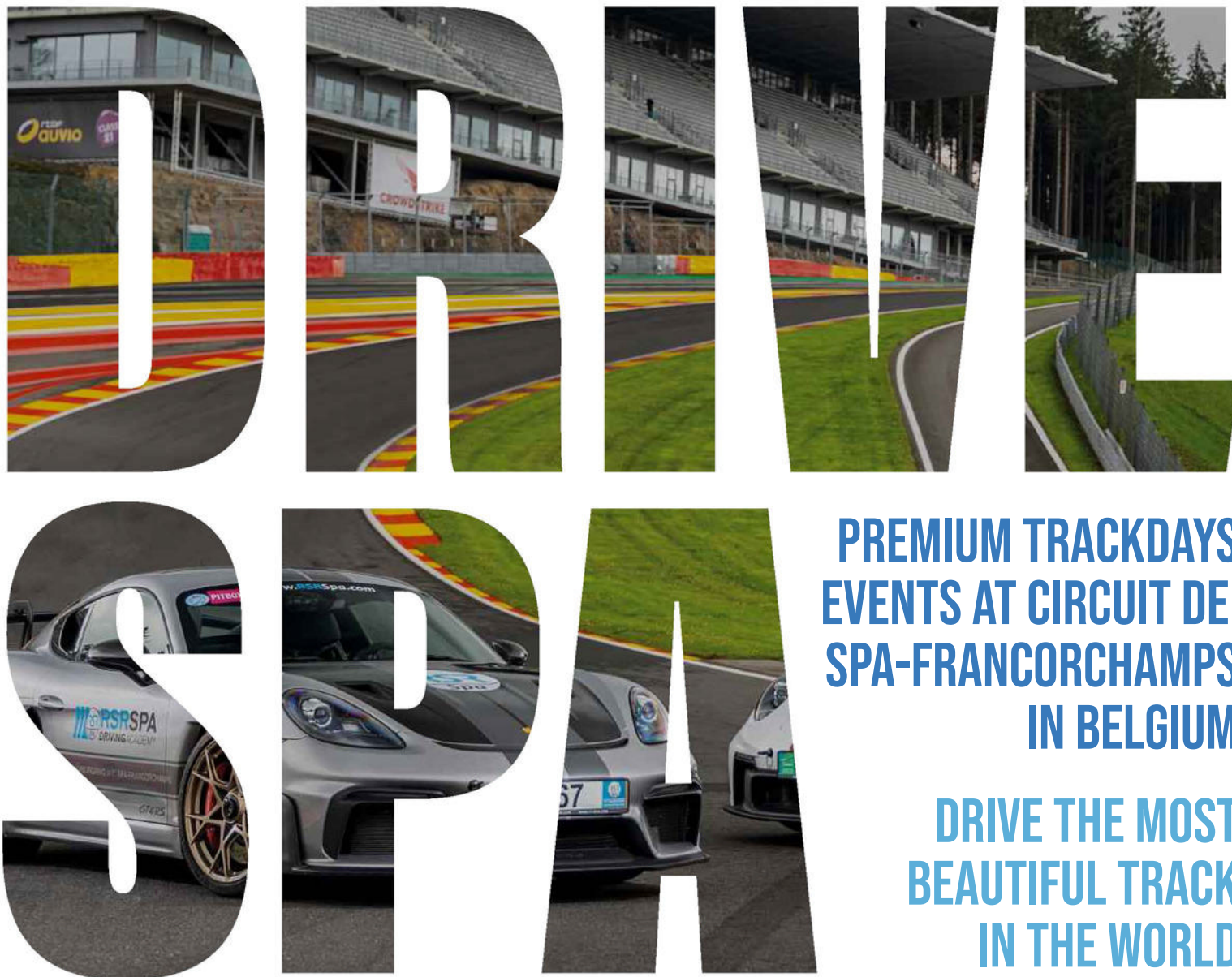
@ 7700rpm **Torque** 341lb ft @ 6550rpm **Weight** 700kg

**Power-to-weight** 668bhp/ton **0-62mph** 2.5sec

**Top speed** 155mph-plus **Basic price** £162,000

**evo rating** ★★★★★





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by RICHARD MEADEN PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH

# BMW 3GT





The background image is a full-page photograph of a landscape. In the foreground, a dark, wet asphalt road with white dashed lines curves from the bottom left towards the center. To the left of the road, the rear wheel and a portion of the orange body of a car are visible. The middle ground consists of rolling hills covered in green and brown vegetation, with a few dark evergreen trees scattered across the slopes. In the background, a large, dark mountain range rises under a heavy, grey, and stormy sky. The overall mood is atmospheric and dramatic.

ICON

With a price tag more than double that of a regular E92 M3, the M3 GTS was a tough sell back in 2010. But get behind the wheel today and there's no doubt that it ranks among the very best M cars ever made








 B

## BMW COULDN'T HAVE PICKED A TOUGHER TIME

to launch its most hardcore E92 M3, the GTS. Arriving mere months after the Gen 2 997 GT3 RS and a year before the revered RS 4.0, you could say it drove straight into the perfect storm. Worse, building so few of them ensured the vast majority disappeared into collections, rarely to be seen or indeed sold.

When it was revealed, BMW suggested a total of 150 GTSs would be made, but in fact just 138 were built by the M division; a criminally small number for such a special car. Looking back it seems like an anomaly in BMW's model line-up, but cast your mind back to 2010 and you'll recall the E92 M3 was a real force in GT2 and DTM. In the absence of having to build a true homologation special to go racing, the GTS was a pure celebration of the M3's motorsport success.

It's fair to say the ultra-short production run made it seem something of a collector's trinket when we should have embraced it as a fresh alternative to the default GT3. Instead, BMW drew criticism for asking too much money – specifically when compared to Porsche's 997 GT3 and RS models – but in truth £118k was small beer for such exclusivity. Especially when the transformation to GTS included a special long-stroke 4.4-litre V8, which was subsequently fitted to the near-mythical M3 CRT saloon.

Fast-forward to 2023 and that 2010 list price is something of a moot point as values have risen considerably. And that's assuming you can find one for sale. Then again, if you're fortunate enough to have one of these in your possession you'd have to be mad to part with it.

The comparisons to an RS Porsche are both inevitable and fair. Not least because of all the official factory performance arms, M division is one of the very few that can be mentioned in the same breath as Porsche's Motorsport department. It's also fair to say that of all M's efforts, the E92 GTS is the car which most closely resembles one of Flach's best efforts, with a focus on performance gains through weight savings and a comprehensive suite of upgrades to the engine, chassis, brakes and aero. This M3 and its rival RSs are very much cut from the same cloth.

All GTSs came in Fire Orange. It's a look-at-me colour that's not for everyone and arguably detracts from the car's purist mission, but there's no denying it makes a statement. Then again, such is the modest extent of the exterior changes versus a regular E92 M3 that if it weren't for the Space Hopper colour scheme the GTS would be all too easy to overlook.

The multi-adjustable boot-mounted rear wing (borrowed from the 320Si WTCC car) is the most obvious addition, but in the context of a downforce-obsessed 2023 it is positively weedy. The front splitter juts more aggressively into the airflow but is far from lantern jawed. Considering this car's genetic lineage back to the 3.0 CSL Batmobile its exterior is surprisingly and – depending on your taste – perhaps disappointingly understated.

Trained eyes will see the GTS's stance is the biggest giveaway. Sitting low on adjustable KW coilover suspension, the handsome lightweight 19-inch alloys and Michelin Pilot



Sport Cup 2s are tucked tight in the wheelarches (when new the GTS wore Pirelli P Zero Corsas). The way the GTS hugs the tarmac suggests minimal wheel travel and a set-up aimed more at the Nürburgring than the road to Blaenau Ffestiniog. We shall find out soon enough.

Inside, the GTS makes a more overt statement, with a beefy bright orange half-cage dominating the space once occupied by the deleted rear seats. A pair of Recaro Profi SPGs trimmed in plain black fireproof fabric ensure the GTS gets straight down to business, with blue Schroth harnesses emphasising its focus on track work. Thankfully there's still a regular inertia-reel seatbelt for road driving.

The overall ambience is pared back but retains the polished execution of an OE project. Together with the missing rear seat the fitment of perspex side and rear windows saves further weight, as do the simple door cards and model-specific centre console. In total the GTS is 70kg lighter than a regular paddleshift-equipped E92 M3 coupe, lowering the kerb weight to 1530kg. That's chunky compared to a 911 of the same period, but almost 100kg lighter than today's M4 CSL.

Being a pre-facelift E92 the dashboard is a 'single hump' unit with no infotainment system. Such is the simplicity of the cockpit you almost do a double-take. With a 'Power' button to sharpen the throttle response, another to adjust the shift speed of the DSG transmission and a simple ESC Off button to disable the stability control, it is in complete contrast to today's multi-mode machines and much the better for it.

The most evocative switch is the Engine Start/Stop button, for it brings to life the GTS's special 4361cc V8. This long-stroke version of BMW's S65 V8 motor gives more power and torque, with peaks of 444bhp at 8300rpm and 324lb ft at 3750rpm versus 414bhp at the same revs and 295lb ft at 3900rpm for the standard 4-litre M3. It starts with a brief flare of revs before settling into a throbbing, no-nonsense idle that betrays the more liberal silencing afforded by the lightweight titanium silencer and reduced sound-deadening material.

Sunk deep into the Recaro you're perfectly located behind the fat-rimmed Alcantara-trimmed steering wheel. Just low enough to feel part of the car, but still high enough to see the summit of the bonnet's pronounced power bulge, you feel immediately settled and ready to go to work. The analogue instruments are clear and simple, the tachometer wearing an impressive 8300rpm red line and a neat array of shift lights incorporated into the top of the dial. There's everything you need, but nothing more.

With two pedals and two paddles it's a contemporary machine to operate, but there's a pleasingly mechanical feel to the GTS that's uncommon in today's cars. It feels compact too; not small exactly, but there's not the sense of bulk you get in an M4 CSL.

Cars like the GTS deserve a big stage on which to play, so my first-ever exposure to this ultimate M3 is on the four-hour journey from home to Bala and the roads that scrawl their way across Snowdonia. It could have been a grind, but the GTS brings a pleasing mission-like edge to every journey, even one involving a significant chunk of motorway miles. No matter the road, its added rawness and lack of frills focus you on the driving, the immersive qualities of which distract you from the weedy hi-fi, increased noise levels, fixed-back seat

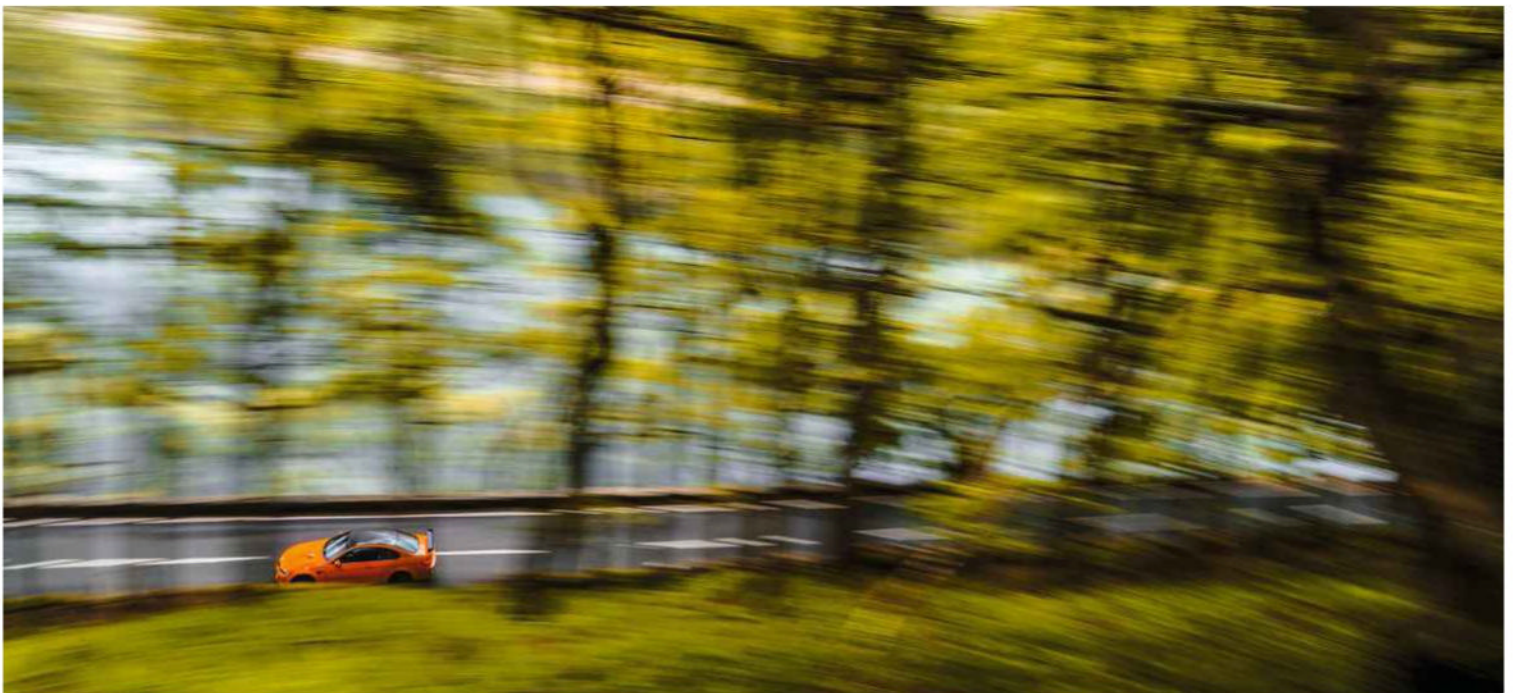


**'THERE'S A PLEASINGLY  
MECHANICAL FEEL  
THAT'S UNCOMMON IN  
TODAY'S CARS'**













and fist-tight damping. It's a refreshing experience; the four-wheeled equivalent of a digital detox.

North Wales is worth the effort. Snowdon is partially obscured by a wispy curtain of cloud, but the tendrils of moist air clinging to the uppermost crags are holding on to their payload, for now at least. If you love driving, this place still takes some beating. The GTS concurs, its steely manner perfectly suited to the scale, pace and rhythm of the roads. Right from the off it feels born for these stretches of tarmac, breathing through compressions that make you wince and slicing through direction changes with pinpoint precision. There's abundant grip and traction, but it comes with detailed feel and delicious progression. It's one of those cars that gives its speed freely, with no edge or intimidation. The bond is both intimate and immediate.

This transparency, consistency and connection makes for magical progress. Rare is the car that has such a neutral balance yet has such confident front-end bite and tenacious traction. And few feel so natural when provoked. It's an absolute joy in this respect, neat and tidy when the road demands it, but exuberant and indulgent when you want to be rowdy. Most special, and perhaps most unexpectedly, when the dark clouds finally burst, the GTS shines just as brightly. Rain most definitely does not stop play.

It's the steering that makes the most immediate impression, though. We've spent so long convincing ourselves that EPAS is more than a match for hydraulic power steering, but the GTS gives the lie to that oft-peddalled statement. Such is the harmony of steering weight, response and progression that you drive with complete freedom of thought. The on-centre feel is so clean and precise that you are intuitively at one with the car. The slightest steering inputs translate into movement and the union between front and rear-end is perfect, no matter how savage the direction change. Very few cars in my experience have such sweet steering and balance.

The damping is right up there, too, thanks to a passive two-way adjustable coilover KW Clubsport kit with bespoke valving and set-up. There's a neat tool kit in the boot with C-spanners and caps should you wish to make tweaks. Camber and ride height can also be adjusted, with the car sitting 16mm lower at the front and 12mm at the rear on factory settings. It really does look the part. At low speeds you can hear the springs fidgeting on their seats, but though hard, it yields enough to give some compliance and work with the surface and topography. It might be aimed at track use, but the GTS has sacrificed nothing in terms of on-road enjoyment and capability.

And the engine is an absolute gem. Much like rediscovering the joys of hydraulic power steering, there's something truly wondrous about a sharp naturally aspirated engine that eclipses all but the very best forced-induction units. When that engine happens to have individual throttle butterflies and breathes freely through a titanium exhaust system, the result is sparkling. Throttle response is truly magnificent, made even more memorable because of the fabulous blend of deep induction bellow and brittle exhaust note, which shifts and swells according to throttle opening and rpm.

**This page and opposite:** naturally aspirated V8 gained 362cc and 30bhp in GTS form; interior's road-racer makeover included the fitment of fixed bucket seats and a half-cage; exhaust system featured titanium silencers; tools to manually adjust the dampers can be found in the boot



I can't play a musical instrument to save my life, but I can get a helluva tune out of the GTS.

It's a much more impressive engine than its outputs suggest. Not that 444bhp and 324lb ft are shabby, but the last decade or so has seen our expectations bent out of shape, both by EVs and the ever-increasing power and torque figures of forced-induction petrol engines. No matter, for the GTS prioritises quality over quantity. It has so much character, response, range and reach that every gear is something to relish. Not just for the acceleration, but for the V8's scintillating delivery, which shuns slabby torque-laden propulsion in favour of a rev-hungry performance that builds to a crescendo as you chase the red line.

Nevertheless, I'll confess that the first few times I floor the throttle I wonder where the grunt is, but then what do I expect at 2500rpm in fourth gear? Abandon the lazy habits encouraged by modern turbocharged engines, drop a gear or two and the GTS crackles with energy, the combination of optimum ratio and generous revs serving to light the touchpaper. When fully lit the soundtrack is something else: completely pure and authentic with a blissful absence of contrived pops and bangs. It's an endlessly enjoyable engine to explore.

Inevitably you cast a slightly disparaging eye at the rather apologetic DCT selector that sprouts from the transmission tunnel. The fact you could get a manual E92 M3 means there's opportunity for wistful thoughts of how BMW could have made the GTS a completely analogue machine, but – whisper it – the twin-clutch 'box is really rather nice.

Its aforementioned mechanical-feeling gearshift brings welcome connection. Tellingly, while I tend to leave current twin-clutch and auto 'boxes to shift for themselves unless I'm really going for it, I spend almost all my time in the GTS working

the paddles manually. Given the thing that tends to date quickest on modern classics is an old paddleshift transmission, this is a welcome discovery. There are fringe benefits, too; seven gears mean the ratios are that little bit closer and more urgent than the six-speed manual, and the calibration is pleasingly slick, with generous throttle blips on the downshifts and clean, punchy upshifts. It suits the GTS's brief to a tee.

The shift speed can be adjusted via a button on the transmission tunnel, one click back from the most aggressive setting being my reliable go-to. Dialling it back brings a more relaxed demeanour to make low-speed driving that little bit smoother, and if you've been in maximum-attack mode, just knocking things back a few clicks serves as an acknowledgement that you're cooling things off, like an athlete doing some warm-down stretches.

Historically, if there's one area of weakness in old M3s it's the brakes. The GTS works hard to buck this trend with cast-iron discs of significantly increased diameter. Gripped by six-pot Brembo calipers, the 378mm front discs and 380mm rears (18mm and 30mm bigger respectively) are extensively drilled and vented. The pedal is firm with a great combination of early bite and controlled progression. Work them hard and you hear the thrum of the pads working against all those perforations, but they never struggle for stopping power or stamina. I can't vouch for track use, but they're more than ample for fast road driving.

There aren't many significant cars that have slipped through my net in the last dozen or so years, but this car is one of them. I wasn't sure if the passage of so much time might render it a bit underwhelming, but I really shouldn't have worried for it has only served to accentuate its brilliance. On the evidence of this encounter it deserves far greater recognition, for by any benchmark the M3 GTS is The Real Deal. **X**



### BMW M3 GTS (E92)

**Engine** V8, 4361cc **Power** 444bhp @ 8300rpm **Torque** 324lb ft @ 3750rpm

**Weight** 1530kg **Power-to-weight** 295bhp/ton **0-62mph** 4.4sec

**Top speed** 190mph **Price new** £117,630 (2010) **Value today** From £150,000

**evo rating** ★★★★★





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# FAST FLEET

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## Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Estate

With road-trip season in full swing, our 480bhp wagon heads for the Eifel mountains to give the car, and its recent upgrades, their most thorough test yet





**L**AST YEAR'S VISIT TO THE NÜRBURGRING (see **evo** 307) allowed the C63 to show just how much it has to offer, so more of the same was always on the cards for 2023. Hence why this month I found myself back at the Eurotunnel for another trip to the Eifel region, this time in a group whose cars included a BMW Z4 M, an E92 M3 Competition and, just to make a mockery of our fuel consumption, a Volkswagen Up GTI.

Another smooth Le Shuttle crossing complete, we hit the French autoroute then briefly tolerated Belgium's corrugated roads before a fuel stop at Spa-Francorchamps. While not deliberate on our part, last year's trip happened to coincide with a €0.30-per-litre



**p118** Fiat Panda 100HP



**p121** Audi TT RS



**p120** Lotus Elise 111S



**p122** Lamborghini Huracán Evo





tax reduction on petrol prices in Germany, making the fuel bill less alarming than I'd imagined. This time, though, ordinary prices had returned – one of many fuel stops had 98 RON at an eye-watering €2.40 per litre (around £2.05).

Thankfully, the C63 achieves remarkable fuel economy on journeys such as this, with long 130kph (80mph) sections bringing the average to just shy of 26mpg. OK, so it's hardly a Prius, but contrary to what some seem to believe, the 6.2-litre V8's consumption rate is far from permanently in the low teens. After crossing the border into Germany, a derestricted autobahn run to finish the journey did drag the aforementioned average down quite considerably, though...

There are some excellent roads surrounding the Nürburgring Nordschleife, so our first port of call was the same excellent route we'd stumbled upon last year, up into the Eifel hills on deserted, single-track routes with numerous switchbacks. While hardly the natural home for an 1800kg estate,

the Quaife LSD and fast-road alignment that formed part of last year's modifications make it remarkably capable on virtually any route.

This said, it wasn't faultless. Though the C63 was bulletproof in terms of mechanicals and overall reliability for the duration of the trip, heat-related issues did make themselves known. Extended full-throttle, uphill runs with tight hairpins are great fun, but with peak speeds relatively low and the ambient temperature nearing 30deg C, the V8's oil quickly got on the warm side. Even with its standard auxiliary oil cooler, the W204 C63 is known to run hot (no surprise given how tightly packed the engine bay is), but five minutes on these roads saw the oil temperature nearing 125 degrees. Though the ECU doesn't pull power until closer to 150, I simply couldn't bring myself to push the engine at such high temperatures, so frequent cooling-down stints were required. Thankfully temperatures dropped quickly on

faster, flowing sections, and the coolant temp never moved from its usual position.

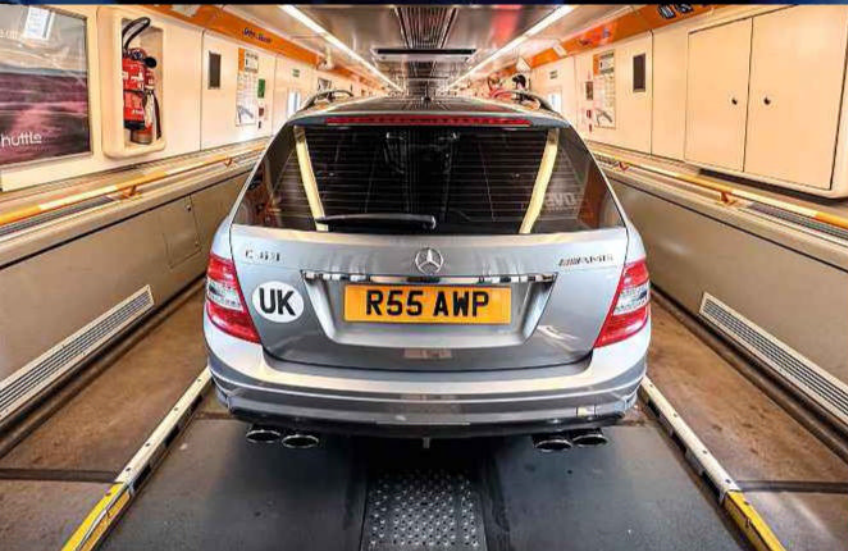
Curiously, I didn't encounter this issue quite as frequently on the same roads last year. I have swapped from 5W-40 oil to 0W-40 since then, however, so this could well be the culprit. A change back to 5W-40 is now on the to-do list, and a Black Series oil-cooler upgrade is something else I plan to look into.

Also a new development for this year was a very minor power-steering fluid overspill, perhaps simply a result of the high engine-bay

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**'It wasn't faultless, and some heat-related issues did make themselves known'**





temperatures. This only seemed to happen on those lower-speed roads with tight hairpins, but a fluid swap is on the agenda regardless.

Heading back towards Nürburg a different way each day, it soon became apparent that virtually any route within the vicinity of the Ring is a good one – simply pick a road on Google Maps with plenty of visible twists, and drive. Wider, perfectly surfaced, medium to high-speed roads proved far better suited to the AMG than the slower, tighter stuff, keeping temperatures under control and power-steering fluid within its reservoir. Despite tyres of just 235 section at the front and 255 at the rear, the grip the C63 generates never ceases to impress me, while excellent high-speed stability makes it an incredibly satisfying drive. And even with the gearbox out of manual and in its ordinary auto mode, the naturally aspirated V8's ample torque (443lb ft) makes carrying speed effortless.

Despite the car's weight, its brakes held up

well on the road, fade virtually non-existent when assisted by some early downshifts to soak up some energy through engine braking. More initial bite and feel from the pedal wouldn't go amiss, but braided lines and uprated fluid should go some way to improving this. Speaking of downshifts, the V8 sounded even more ludicrous on European Super 98 fuel, with authentic crackles, gurgles and snaps considerably more frequent than on British 97 octane; coasting downhill through 30kph villages had it gurgling under its breath for minutes at a time. I'm not entirely sure of the reason behind this, but I'll take it.

I know what you're thinking: how was the C63 on the Nürburgring itself? Well, after taking it for a token lap last year, I felt no need to do the same again. While it was awfully tempting on quieter days, the lack of insurance coverage kept that temptation in check. Also, regardless of how well it disguises it on the road, the car's

weight means that hard track driving is always going to eat through costly consumables. The thought of a lightened, stripped-out C63 set up specifically for the track does fascinate me, but the kind of aftermarket parts that this would require are mostly developed only for its BMW rival, so it would be a tricky exercise.

After 1500 miles and almost 350 litres of fuel, the trip had shown how much more pleasurable it can be to drive the C63 on the Continent than in the UK. A disastrous journey back home from the Eurotunnel made this abundantly clear, with laughable road conditions, appalling driving from other road users, and some of the worst traffic I've ever had to endure. Europe, I'll be back...

**Sam Jenkins** (@evosamj)

**Date acquired** May 2021 **Total mileage** 58,137 **Mileage this month** 1614 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 19.2





## Ginetta G56 GTA

With another race date on the horizon, our novice second driver gets up to speed in Ginetta's sim

**H**AVING BEEN DRAFTED IN BY GINETTA FOR an intensive customer testing programme, **evo's** Fast Fleet G56 GTA has barely taken a breather since our own James Taylor drove it to an impressive double podium result at Oulton Park (see last month's Fast Fleet). We'll be racing it in the GT Academy series once more this season, at Silverstone, where I, as a complete novice, will be sharing the drive with James. But with our G56 tied up with other duties until then, there'll be no time for me to get a feel for it until lights-out. Gulp. I've never driven a racing car of any kind before and the prospect is daunting and deeply exciting all at once.

Thankfully, I won't be going in completely blind, because Ginetta suggested I attend its driver training programme, which uses a simulator at its Leeds HQ. Works driver Charlie Robertson would also be made available to assist on the day. As a former Ginetta Junior and GT4 Supercup champion with a top-five Le Mans finish in the LMP1 class, Charlie was the perfect man to help get the most out of me, the

G56 GTA and the Silverstone National circuit.

Ginetta's simulator is built around the cockpit of a real GT car (in this case an Aston Martin Vantage GT3), with sim racing hardware integrated seamlessly into it. A direct-drive motor is installed at the base of the steering column to relay feedback through the wheel, while electronic sensors in the pedal box translate inputs into the sim software. The brake pedal in particular is ingenious, as it's linked to a real caliper and disc to provide accurate feel. The system is tied together by the popular *Assetto Corsa* software with a bespoke G56 GTA car and tyre model developed by Ginetta's works drivers.

Looking out at a curved, six-metre panoramic screen, the sense of scale and depth is incredibly lifelike from inside the sim. At first, I sat in the passenger seat as Charlie talked me around the 1.64-mile National layout. In typical racing driver fashion he was eerily calm at the wheel, nudging up to the limits and gently scrubbing the digital

Michelines across the track beautifully. 'It's such a difficult track on which to find time because there are only four corners,' he explained, 'but it rewards the best drivers because of that.' With a benchmark lap of 1:03.9 set, it was time to swap places.

Now in the driving seat, the car's friendly nature put me at ease straight away. The road-biased tyre model provides a wide operating window that makes it easy to find the limit, but making best use of the available grip still requires finesse. After four or five scruffy laps of wrestling the car, I managed to string a clean one together to post a 1:03.8, pipping Charlie by the smallest of margins. What then ensued was essentially two hours of friendly but highly competitive one-upmanship as each of us took a turn to attempt to set a quicker lap. As well as being a thoroughly enjoyable experience, this approach forced me to hone in on the finer details of my driving.

Stepping out for a well-earned cool-down break (it gets pretty muggy in the sim despite the onboard fan), we took a look at the data and found that





although we were now lapping within a few thousandths of each other in the mid-1:03s (near last year's GTA pole time), the way we were approaching the lap was quite different. I tended to drive a slightly tighter line into Copse by being harder on the brakes into the apex, while Charlie carried more mid-corner momentum but lost out on the exit. This trend continued through Maggotts, Brooklands and Luffield, until we crossed the line pretty much simultaneously.

Charlie reckoned that – if I can pull it off on race day – the real G56 GTA will respond well to my driving style. I hope he's right, otherwise I could be in for a rude awakening at Silverstone.  
**Yousuf Ashraf** (@ashrafoncars)

**Date acquired** April 2023 **Total mileage** n/a **Mileage this month** 98 (in the sim)  
**Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** n/a



## Skoda Superb Estate 280 4x4

Another European jaunt – and another admirer – for the Skoda

**T**HE MIGHTY M5 CS DESERVED A rest. Two European adventures in the space of just a few weeks – one of which included a couple of laps of the Nürburgring – and a corresponding spike in **evo's** fuel costs meant I was 'relegated' to the Superb SportLine Plus for a recent trip to Spa-Francorchamps. To be honest, I didn't feel hugely hard done by! There's something inherently cool about the Superb's functionality, and with 276bhp, four-wheel drive and a dual-clutch 'box it is perfectly suited to a long, quick drive across northern France and into Belgium.

And that's pretty much how it played out. The Superb is almost absurdly comfortable, quiet too, and although it looks a little bit drab inside it's a real quality item. Even better, Skoda seems to have escaped the touchscreen nightmare of many other VW Group cars and so you can, for example, change the temperature of the climate control without wanting to crash the car into a tree, jump out and set it on fire in frustration. Just turn a rotary dial. Incredible.

Even on such a Superb-suitable journey there are some frustrations, though. For me the 'SportLine Plus' tag is pushing it a bit. Ultimate performance is impressive and the Superb can be hustled along at a decent lick, but in normal driving it feels incredibly reluctant to get going at all. The gearbox programming in Comfort mode is swung so far in the direction of economy you often feel like at least 200bhp has gone missing. It's deeply frustrating and,

at times, pretty disconcerting. Entering a busy roundabout from a standstill in what feels like fifth gear is not ideal. Sport mode or selecting gears manually on the paddles is a necessity.

Similarly, the chassis is very, very soft unless you ramp up the modes. It floats over big undulations and the car feels lazy and heavier than it is. Select the most aggressive setting and the ride becomes noticeably firmer, which is promising, but the increase in body control isn't really commensurate with the degradation in ride quality. I suppose this is why this car isn't a full vRS. Of course, this mostly isn't an issue on the autoroutes towards Spa...

The Superb was fantastic for the demands of this particular journey and on the days before and after it proved to be the perfect family car. It's huge inside but has quite a narrow build so doesn't feel overblown and is easy to thread between parked cars on the school run, for example. It's just so fit for purpose you can't help but admire it. I'd like it to feel more sporty and hence a bit more special for the asking price, I'm baffled by the gearbox programming and it's no M5 CS. Which goes without saying. Overall though, the big Skoda is one of those cars that's just lovely to have around.

**Jethro Bovingdon** (@JethroBovingdon)

**Date acquired** December 2022 **Total mileage** 12,709 **Mileage this month** 1621  
**Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 37.1



# Fiat Panda 100HP

A trip to the garage unearths some nasty secrets in the Panda's suspension

**S**OMEONE FROM KIA OFFERED EVO THE loan of a Picanto GT-Line S, a small car with 99bhp and therefore as close as you'll get these days to a Panda 100HP. After a week with it I learnt that, unsurprisingly, the Picanto (see p113) feels more modern and more refined than the Panda, and that it rides more softly as well. What it lacks, however, is some of the Fiat's frenzied terrier charm.

The Kia's 1-litre triple is down one cylinder and 370cc on the Panda's 1.4-litre four but, because it has a turbo, it's got the same power and 127lb ft of torque, 30 more than the Fiat. As a result, you don't have to rev it like the Panda and, actually, this makes it less fun. It also rolls more, has slower steering, and feels less lively overall. It's still an amusing little car, it shares some of the Panda's puppyish pugnaciousness in its styling, and it makes a good, if muted, noise, but it just can't match the raw fun of the 100HP.

On the other hand, I imagine a brand new Picanto with its seven-year warranty would be cheaper to run than my Panda, which is once again trying to ruin my cheap-thrills plan with another trip to the garage. This was driven by the need for an MOT, but while it was in it seemed sensible to have the fluids changed and, for

## 'I didn't want to find myself being shown a tray of bent valves'

peace of mind, a new timing belt. There's no evidence of when this was last done and, given the car seems to have had an interesting life, I'd rather know it had been sorted than find myself four months down the line being solemnly shown a tray of bent valves.

The other issue that needed addressing was a worsening creak from somewhere in the front suspension, triggered most commonly by low-speed manoeuvring rather than vertical inputs like speed bumps. All evidence pointed to the strut-top bearings, a known weakness on these cars, and I hoped replacing them might sort a weird inconsistency with turn-in at higher speeds, which had become darty into right-hand bends while remaining stable and confident into left-hand ones.

So, the Panda went off to my local garage for what

I assumed would be a series of very straightforward jobs. But no. An email came in from the garage asking me to call them and when, with trembling hands, I did, the news was not great. 'Have you done anything to this suspension?' asked Paul, the affable chap from the garage. 'It's just, I've heard your podcast and... you know.' I assured him that the meandering amateurishness I bring to my weekly audio show with Jonny Smith did not extend to chassis set-up work on small Fiats and after that he politely accused 'someone else' of creating problems that included ill-matched nuts, badly fitted bushes and an anti-roll bar that was touching things it probably shouldn't have been touching.

Rather than cobble it all back together and slap me with the bill, Paul said he wanted more time to work out what was going on. Leave it with me, he said. So I have...

**Richard Porter** (@sniffpetrol)

**Date acquired** September 2022 **Total mileage** 105,923 **Mileage this month** 148  
**Costs this month** TBC **mpg this month** 39.9







## Aston Martin DBX707

Our DBX laps Silverstone alongside rare and expensive company at the British Grand Prix weekend

**B**OND WAS CAUTIOUS AFTER THE camera cars had peeled off the circuit. At the front of the field the pair of Valkyries – a road car and a track-only Pro – had bolted, their vulnerable V12s in need of some fast cooling air after a 40mph lap of filming. Yet for all their downforce and searing speed they couldn't compete with the riotous pair behind them: a DB3S and DB4 GT Zagato. The former's disdain for rear tyres could put Jethro's antics to shame, the latter's soundtrack was, I'd wager, the best the Silverstone crowd heard throughout the Grand Prix weekend.

But BMT 216A was playing it safe. Along the Hamilton Straight its straight-six was stretched, yet through turn one and the fiddly sequence that follows it took it easy, as you would if you found yourself behind the wheel of a £3.3m asset.

Into Luffield the 2023 Formula 1 Vantage Safety Car was anxy. Its eight-speed ZF was in second, its twin-turbo V8 hovering around the red line. As it entered the old pit straight the revs dropped as third was selected. Now a decision had to be made: stick behind Bond or pass? He went for it, giving the Silver Birch DB5 enough room to avoid its body-tearing wheel spinners, and bolted for Copse. I did the same in the **evo**



DBX707 that had found itself at the pointy end of Aston Martin's 110th anniversary parade lap.

The Vantage pulled only a small gap on the 707, MVD's torrent of grunt from its more powerful AMG-sourced V8 not prepared to embarrass itself in front of the Friday-evening crowd. Although I nearly did when forgetting the Safety Car runs a set of sticky Michelin Cup 2 tyres and our Fast Fleeter doesn't. It meant the entry to Copse was a little brisk, the middle a bit of a mess and the clean(ish) exit a welcome relief. No amount of bribery was going to stop my daughter telling her mother how much fun that was. I'm glad someone enjoyed that particular moment.

Maggotts is fierce from an SUV's perch, Becketts another opportunity for embarrassment,

but with a little more self-control the 707 completed the task before thundering along the Hangar Straight at 130-plus mph.

Stowe is a brake-eater, Vale ready to catch out those who consider it a simple 90-left, and the long right onto the start-finish straight feels the most important corner of the circuit if you want a good lap time. Aston Martin, and certainly not Silverstone, didn't want any lap records setting though, and before the fun became an insurance claim MVD was heaving for breath and trying to keep cool in the 30-degree ambient temperatures back at AM's new F1 team campus (not a factory). I think it enjoyed it more than the lap of the M25 it had completed the day before.

Embarrassingly, that lap and a bit of Silverstone was the most exciting thing the DBX and I have done this month. The miles pile on, the glances – the vast majority admiring/positive – continue, and fuel continues to be drunk at a near-unacceptable rate.

**Stuart Gallagher** (@stuartg917)

**Date acquired** April 2023 **Total mileage** 6718 **Mileage this month** 1821 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 21.6





## Lotus Elise 111S

Our largely standard Elise meets Analogue Automotive's expertly enhanced alternative

**I** KNEW IT AS SOON AS JOHN BARKER dropped a gear and screamed past the dawdling Toyota Avensis. Giving chase in my S1 Elise, I fumbled into second gear and pulled out to overtake, throttle against the stop, and watched the squat, jet-black car grow smaller and smaller in front. Stones were pinging from under its aluminium diffuser as if to ward me off the pursuit, and after just a moment or two I'd fallen well outside the danger zone. The Analogue Elise Super Sport is a different animal, and getting a taste of it might just cost me a large sum of money in new parts...

I've spent the last two years rebuilding and rejuvenating my Elise, being extremely careful not to tamper with the ethos set out by its designers. It's all too easy to spoil a well-engineered car with poorly judged modifications, so I got to know the Elise in its original form for a few months before having a go with the spanners. Now, with uprated dampers, a slack-free gear linkage, a quicker steering

rack and a host of detail changes, the car is wonderful: still distinctly Elise-like with the same bewitching character and pliant ride, but with a more precise and cohesive feel. I haven't wanted more power, stiffer suspension, more grip, more of anything really. But context is important, and I have wondered whether there's a car out there that could potentially overwrite my idea of perfection – just as the Elise did when I first drove one.

When the Hampshire-based Lotus specialist Analogue Automotive got in touch to offer a drive of its new creation, the Elise Super Sport, I thought I might have found that car. You may have read John Barker's review of the £100,000 restomod in issue 311, but in a nutshell the Super Sport is a comprehensively re-engineered S1 Elise built from the ground up with bespoke suspension, lightweight components and a 210bhp Rover K-series motor. It's the work of company founder and Lotus guru Steffen Dobke

and is the culmination of more than two decades of Elise ownership and development work.

Sitting low in a snug-fitting carbon-shelled bucket, harnessed in with the engine pulsing away, the Super Sport permeates with an intensity I haven't felt in an Elise before. The environment is familiar, but there's a more serious, sinister energy throughout the car; it's significantly louder, the steering relays stronger messages from the road surface and there's an immediate directness to the ride. It's no more harsh than the standard car, but the Analogue Elise tends

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**'Could the Analogue Elise be the car that overwrites my idea of perfection?'**





to follow the contours of the road rather than lap them up within its suspension travel.

With its extra torque – 160lb ft to my car's 128 – it feels even more weightless under light throttle openings, but also more physical, the gearshift in particular requiring some muscle. There's a third more power too, and a kerb weight of 695kg makes it 70kg lighter than my car. The first time the Super Sport snaps forward in a flurry of induction roar, I'm genuinely startled. The noise and ferocity are immense, but the raw sense of connection allows you to commit with confidence; the chassis loads up instantly where a standard Elise needs some coaxing, and exiting corners I find myself driving it on the throttle as you might in a Caterham. It's an entirely alien experience in an Elise, but one made possible by the added grunt and Quaife limited-slip diff. It's intoxicating.

In fact, my overriding impression of the Analogue car is that its character has shifted

further towards a Seven's, with its beefier control weights, more urgent responses and rampant nature. More than once I found myself peering down at the peaks of the wheelarches through the windscreen to remind myself I was in an Elise.

Driving home from Analogue's workshop in my car, the Elise's defining characteristics – the ones I fell in love with – were suddenly crystal clear again, from the light, delicate steering to its natural chassis flow and on-its-toes mid-corner adjustability. Both Elises are undoubtedly five-star cars, but a standard S1 will always be a thing of joy in its own right; hence why my spend this month is zero...

**Yousuf Ashraf** (@ashrafoncars)

**Date acquired** August 2021 **Total mileage** 59,219 **Mileage this month** 181 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 32.4

## Audi TT RS

The TT becomes the latest Fast Fleet pothole victim

**F**ROM THE MOMENT I FIRST SET EYES on our TT's 20-inch wheels I was absolutely determined to avoid damaging them on the UK's plethora of potholes. So for a year now I've driven everywhere with my eyes obsessively scanning the asphalt (or lack thereof) ahead, then slaloming around any remotely suspicious-looking shadowy spots.

But eventually, inevitably, there was one crater-like imperfection that I simply couldn't avoid. You know the drill: the sickening bang, followed by the arrival of a subtle but constant vibration through the steering, followed by the swearing. Lots and lots of swearing.

So our RS paid a visit to the Audi press garage this month for a new wheel. Being typically thorough, Audi also fitted four new Pirelli P Zeros while the car was there, even though the rears still had a couple of thousand miles left in them and the fronts weren't even halfway to the legal limit. I suspect the rear brake discs and pads that were also replaced may have lasted a bit longer too... But I'm not complaining: the TT is in tip-top shape again. Let's hope we can keep it that way.

However, why such noble aims are becoming increasingly hard to achieve was brought into focus by a stat I stumbled across recently. In the month when our RS's wheel became buckled, the AA attended 52,000 breakdowns related to potholes. That's 1700 *per day* – and of course doesn't include members of other breakdown services who required similar assistance, and all those drivers who suffered damage but arranged their own repair. Shocking.

**Ian Eveleigh**

**Date acquired** July 2022 **Total mileage** 9634 **Mileage this month** 735 **Costs this month** £2161 **mpg this month** 31.6







END OF TERM

## Lamborghini Huracán Evo Spyder

After six months and nearly 6000 miles, time with our V10 'daily' is up. These were the highs and lows

**T**HIS IS THE END, NOT ONLY FOR OUR Huracán Spyder on the Fast Fleet, but also for its spine-tingling, eardrum-bursting, borderline-antisocial yet totally endearing, exciting and heroic V10 appearing in a production car. There *might* be a further run-out special to accompany the Sterrato, but in terms of series-production Huracáns, the current Evo models – coupe, Spyder and Tecnica – are the end of the road. Over 20,000 Huracáns will have passed down the Sant'Agata production line when the last one is built next year and the model makes way for its hybrid replacement that's due soon after. And if you want a new Huracán, sorry, you're too late: the remaining cars are all sold. Classifieds it is, then.

Our Spyder arrived in the midst of winter. Not the perfect time for a soft-top Italian supercar, although its four-wheel drive provided some safety net. If only the car hadn't been fitted with Pirelli P Zero Corsa rubber... Said tyres coped admirably

well with the slimy conditions our winter served up, mind, finding traction when you expected a clumsy slip, clawing for grip when you knew you'd been greedy and asked too much of everything.

A technical war chest of electronic all-wheel drive, active all-wheel steering and Lamborghini's Integrated Vehicle Dynamics (LDVI) underpinned it all, and while these systems were unobtrusive, they offered more in terms of security than upping the engagement and thrills. A rear-drive Huracán is such a visceral and exciting car, but the four-wheel-drive version dilutes some of this for no discernible gain when it comes to driving. After all, a Huracán with only two driven wheels isn't exactly a bucking bronco with a personality disorder. As Jethro Bovingdon noted following his stint in our long-term: 'It doesn't have the sharpness of the STO or the calm playfulness of the Evo RWD.'

The following month, John Barker reported

that 'the Huracán is a very good convertible in the sense that the integrity of its aluminium monocoque has been minimally compromised by lopping off its roof'. It's a benefit of a car designed from the outset to be both a coupe and a drop-top, eliminating the need for extreme bracing to reintroduce the stiffness that's lost when taking the tin-snips to the roof. And, of course, an open-topped Huracán provides the benefit of even greater exposure to that glorious V10. Doesn't it?

Er, not quite. The Huracán is a loud car, louder

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**'Lamborghini doesn't do half measures or compromises, and its cars are better for it'**





still when the aluminium roof is replaced by a piece of canvas, even when you're cocooned beneath it. Drop the small rear window over your shoulder and the volume barely changes; drop the roof and there's still little difference in decibel levels, just more exposure to that raw, razor-edged soundtrack. The Spyder also increases your awareness that venturing into the last quarter of the V10's rev range is best reserved for moments when no one is around to be offended. Lamborghinis have never been for shy and retiring types, but we all felt there was too much noise for the sake of noise here. God, I feel old writing that.

While we're griping about having access to a free £275,000 supercar for six months, the frustration remains that the driver modes are too restrictive. Lamborghini's 'Ego' setting is absent and therefore the ability to select individual engine, steering and damper settings to create your preferred set-up isn't possible. This remains the Huracán's biggest

failing, because within its technical armoury is a supercar with the potential to be the very best of its kind, so it's frustrating knowing it's locked away from the driver. Oh, and the HMI is hopeless, but that will change with its replacement. Hopefully the driver mode options will too.

Ignoring these foibles there's no escaping that every drive in the Huracán Spyder was an event. Knowing you were going to drive it, regardless of the drive in question, delivered that fizz of anticipation you only get with cars that you know are going to entertain and exhilarate. As the hazard lights blinked on unlocking, the sense of what's to come heightened further. Swing the door open and fall into the interior (fifty-fifty on who got on with the seats and who would rather sit on a spike) and you were hooked, wrapped up in the moment. Flick the red toggle switch up, hold the button beneath and wait for the starter to whirl into life, prepare for the bark from the

exhaust and for your spine to shiver, hairs to rise and other clichés to wash over you. It's supercar theatre at its best. Lamborghini at its best.

Some of today's supercars are too sanitised until you wind them up and light the fuses that allow them to explode into life. Only then do they become the cars their creators set out for them to be before they were required to wind back the histrionics to broaden the appeal. Lamborghini doesn't do half measures or compromises when it comes to the experiences it offers, and its cars are all the better for it. Although if they could turn the volume down a notch they wouldn't get any complaints from us.

**Stuart Gallagher** (@stuartg917)

**Date acquired** January 2023 **Duration of test** 6 months **Total test mileage** 5750 **Overall mpg** 16.8 **Total costs** £0 **Price when new** £274,700 **Value today** £230,200



by STEVE

by SAM JENKINS

# BEST BUYS

## S U P E R C A R S

CLIMBING PRICES, HIGH DEMAND AND INCREASINGLY arduous allocation procedures have made owning many of the latest thoroughbred supercars no more than a pipe dream for the majority. Look to the classifieds for their recent predecessors, though, and there's a healthy supply of outstanding performers available for a fraction of the price and effort.

Unlike supercars of old, more modern offerings won't necessarily break the bank to run, either, many models coming with surprising reliability and the reassurance of lengthy warranty programmes, should the worst happen.

So what will it be? From Italian exotica in the form of the Ferrari 458 Italia to Japan's high-tech, hybridised Honda NSX, via the bargainous but brilliant McLaren 650S and an **evo** Car of the Year-winning Porsche 911 GT3, here are our recommendations for some of the best used supercars you can buy today.







# HONDA NSX (NC1)

A brilliantly engineered – and rarely seen – tech pioneer

**AS THE SUCCESSOR TO HONDA'S GAME-CHANGING** '90s supercar of the same name, the 2016 NSX received a mixed reception upon its launch. Rather than bringing the original NSX recipe up to date, the new offering added turbochargers and hybrid assistance to the mix, ingredients that many believed went against the purist principles of the earlier models.

Before its arrival, however, the reborn NSX had already been through numerous revisions behind closed doors, with initial plans beginning once the NA2 version had gone off sale way back in 2005. You may have seen grainy trackside YouTube videos of a V10-powered, front-engined NSX prototype being tested in 2008, but this concept was ditched not long after amidst the global financial crisis, with Honda scrapping all non-essential projects. When new CEO Takanobu Ito took the helm in 2009, he sought an NSX that was 'clever, with a focus on dynamic development'. That car would be the mid-engined, hybrid-powered NC1.

Honda's engineers settled on a 3.5-litre twin-turbocharged V6 assisted by a trio of electric motors – two on the front axle and one between the engine and transmission – enough for a combined 573bhp and 476lb ft of torque. While the 'holy trinity' of Ferrari LaFerrari, McLaren P1 and Porsche 918 Spyder had brought hybrid assistance into the spotlight for hypercars a few years prior, it was all but unheard of in the more attainable supercar sector at the time, making the NSX a curious and unique machine.

Although it can operate in silent, full-electric mode, the hybrid assistance is primarily for torque fill. The result is acceleration

to rival that of the very quickest supercars, drive sent to all four wheels for a 2.9sec 0-62mph sprint. Despite being a first-generation hybrid supercar, the NC1 – much like the original NA1 and NA2 in their heyday – is exceptionally well refined, perhaps slightly to its detriment. Compared with competitors such as the McLaren 540C and Porsche 911 Turbo S the NSX does lack some character. The steering is quick and precise but doesn't provide an awful lot of feedback, and the powertrain is not the most musical, either. However, the expert integration of the V6 and e-motors along with the car's engaging dynamics make it a worthy consideration – one that could be a future classic, too.

While not particularly useful for those looking for a used bargain, values have stayed relatively steady since production came to an end in 2022. The low take-up for the model no doubt helps – just 2908 were built in total, with 150 of those allocated to the UK, making it considerably rarer than most of its European rivals. Consequently there are usually just a handful to be found in the classifieds at any given time.

Prices began at £149,950 from the factory, but today they range from £100,000 to £130,000. And whatever you pay you'll almost certainly be getting a very lightly used example: mileages in the 20,000s or even 10,000s are uncommon, while many have barely gone beyond delivery figures. For this very reason it's hard to gauge the true reliability of the NC1 just yet, but as long as you're aware of battery degradation over time, its Honda engineering should stand you in good stead.



## Specification

**Engine** V6, 3493cc, twin-turbo, plus three electric motors  
**Power** 573bhp **Torque** 476lb ft @ 2000rpm  
**Weight** 1776kg **Power-to-weight** 328bhp/ton  
**0-62mph** 2.9sec **Top speed** 191mph  
**Price new** £149,950 **Value today** From £100,000



# FERRARI 458 ITALIA

## The last of its kind, and Maranello on peak form

**AS FERRARI'S FINAL NATURALLY ASPIRATED V8** model, the 458 is undoubtedly destined for classic status. Of course, the Speciale is the ultimate, but the lesser Italia is an outstanding supercar in its own right. At its launch in 2009 it offered true next-generation performance, with a leap in output and technology over its F430 predecessor, and its abilities are standing the test of time as well as its Pininfarina styling.

Powered by the 4.5-litre flat-plane-crank F136 V8, 562bhp and 398lb ft of torque are sent to the rear axle for a 3.4sec 0-62mph time and 202mph top speed. Not only is it potent in a straight line, but the 458 offers some of the finest dynamics in a car of its kind – a quicker lap around Ferrari's Fiorano test track than the hardcore 430 Scuderia is all the proof you need.

Finely honed chassis and relatively low 1485kg kerb weight aside, one of the 458's most notable features was its new seven-speed dual-clutch transmission. Developed by German firm Getrag as its very first DCT, the Powershift 7DCL750 was a groundbreaking piece of engineering, offering almost zero latency between shifts (sub-50 milliseconds) for optimum balance and pace. Small wonder the same unit was later adopted, in different states of tune, by the likes of the Mercedes-AMG SLS and GT and even the V6-powered Ford GT.

A cutting-edge electronic differential and F1-Trac stability control also help the 458 achieve its incredible performance, as does bodywork capable of generating 360kg of downforce.

There's active aero too – the winglets in the front air intakes drop by 20mm at speed to reduce turbulence and increase efficiency.

The 458 has eventually proven to be reliable, but immediately after its launch numerous examples caught alight due to a poorly designed heat shield in the rear wheelarch. However, all cars with this component were swiftly recalled to resolve the problem. Occasional leaky dampers, sticking interior buttons, rippling dashboard leather and arch corrosion are items to look out for, but they needn't be deal-breakers.

Pre-2011 examples have been known to develop gearbox glitches, but these are largely limited to electrical issues that can be solved with a simple software recalibration. The standard-fit carbon-ceramic discs are pricey to replace at £10k a set, so keep an eye out for excessive wear. Ensure the correct tyre sizes are fitted too, as the 458's traction control system is prone to throwing numerous error codes without them. The F136 engine, meanwhile, is tried and tested with very few issues to note; its lack of cambelts also helps keep servicing costs down.

Around £115,000 is enough to secure a tidy early Italia. Consider that most examples cost their first owner in the region of £200,000 once options had been added and that figure looks even more appealing. An unmolested, well-specced car with around 20,000 miles could be yours for the £135,000 mark, or if you'd prefer a Spider, complete with its complex retractable aluminium hard-top, one could be yours from £140,000.



### Specification

**Engine** V8, 4497cc **Power** 562bhp @ 9000rpm  
**Torque** 398lb ft @ 6000rpm **Weight** 1485kg **Power-to-weight** 384bhp/ton **0-62mph** 3.4sec **Top speed** 202mph  
**Price new** £169,545 **Value today** From £115,000



### Specification

**Engine** V8, 3799cc twin-turbo **Power** 641bhp @ 7500rpm  
**Torque** 500lb ft @ 6000rpm **Weight** 1428kg **Power-to-weight** 456bhp/ton **0-62mph** 3.0sec **Top speed** 207mph  
**Price new** £195,250 **Value today** From £85,000



## McLAREN 650S

The 641bhp 12C successor with performance ahead of its time

**WITH MORE STYLE AND EVEN MORE PERFORMANCE** than the blistering MP4-12C that went before it, the 650S was a worthy replacement for new-era McLaren's first road car. Launched in 2014, it built upon its predecessor's strong formula to enable it to go head-to-head with the likes of the 991-generation Porsche 911 GT3 and the hardcore Ferrari 458 Speciale.

Under its restyled, P1-inspired skin, the 650S features an early iteration of McLaren's trademark carbonfibre monocoque. Weighing just 75kg, this MonoCell helped the 650S achieve an overall kerb weight of 1428kg, making it lighter than the 458 Italia – and with a sizeable power advantage to boot.

This came via a development of the 12C's 3.8-litre twin-turbocharged M838T V8, designed in collaboration with Ricardo. With new pistons, cylinder heads and exhaust valves, plus tweaked cam timing, an additional 25bhp and 58lb ft of torque were extracted, taking the totals up to 641bhp and 500lb ft. Do the maths and you'll find the 650S achieves an astonishing power-to-weight ratio of 456bhp per ton, helping it hit 62mph from standstill in 3 seconds flat and go on to a 207mph top speed. Perhaps even more impressive is its 5.7sec 0-100mph time, a figure that puts it half a second ahead of the marque's iconic F1.

The 650S rides surprisingly well in its default mode, even on less-than-perfect surfaces. Increase the aggression with a prod

of the 'Active' button and a twist of the 'Handling' control and it's immediately clear that it's a brutally capable machine, incredibly composed and with raw straight-line acceleration that's a match for many of today's offerings. This said, the 650S was ahead of its time in many ways: launched into a world of naturally aspirated heroes, it could feel lacking in emotion in its day, but in today's era of hybrid-assisted, forced-induction supercars, the 650S slots in nicely, especially when you consider how much they now cost...

Though it came at a £20,000 premium over the 12C at just shy of £200,000 before options, McLaren depreciation has worked its magic, bringing earlier, higher-mileage coupes and Spiders down to as little as £85,000. Spend £10-15k more and you'll have yourself a high-spec example with sub-10,000 miles, with the very best MSO-optioned cars costing in the region of £105,000.

Of course, there are reasons for this. An oversupply of newer McLarens is one explanation, but poor overall reliability is the primary culprit. While there's not a single point of failure on the 650S, numerous issues relating to poor quality control have emerged over the years, ranging from imperfect panel alignment to spontaneously shattering glass. One plus is that the M838T engine saw use in everything from the 12C to the P1 GTR, and so while still pricey, spare parts (and even whole engines) aren't quite as ruinous as a more bespoke unit.



## PORSCHE 911 GT3 (991)

Our 2013 eCoty winner continues to make a strong case for itself

**YOU CAN'T GO TOO FAR WRONG WITH A 911 GT3** of any generation. Each version has meticulously refined every aspect of an already-accomplished sports car to create an even more capable and fulfilling driving machine, and the 991-generation car was no different. Revealed at the Geneva motor show in 2013, the first 991 GT3 offered a substantial increase in performance over the outgoing 997 thanks to the use of rear-wheel steering, PASM adaptive dampers and a PDK dual-clutch transmission as standard. While many mourned the loss of the Mezger engine, the new 3.8-litre flat-six, complete with 9000rpm red line, was certainly nothing to complain about.

With 468bhp and 324lb ft of torque, the 3.8's outputs are shaded by those of the other cars in this guide, but the Porsche still manages to achieve a rapid 3.5sec 0-62mph sprint and a 196mph top speed. If you can stretch to it, the Gen 2 car of 2017-19 brings a revised 4-litre unit to the mix, with 493bhp, 339lb ft of torque and the option of a manual transmission.

But it's not all about the numbers, of course: the GT3's focus is on driver engagement as opposed to outright pace. That screaming red line, an endlessly rewarding chassis and eye-poppingly powerful brakes make the 991 version one of the greatest road cars ever and a seriously brilliant track car too. While it borrows its electrically assisted steering from the standard 911 of the era, its new tuning, plus the car's stiffened front end and electro-mechanical rear-steer ensure this is a GT3 at the top of its game.

The 991 GT3 isn't known for poor reliability, but there is one issue in particular to be aware of. Not long after the first cars hit

the road, numerous owners encountered engine issues, ranging from misfires to catastrophic failures. Following an investigation, Porsche disclosed that the problems related to the use of a defective batch of valvetrain rocker arms, something that had the potential to cause significant damage elsewhere in the unit. As a result, all 785 GT3s delivered up to that point were recalled and fitted with brand new engines – these are often referred to as the 'G6' unit.

While complete replacement of the defective engines should mean you won't experience any engine troubles, there have been reports of failures since. Aside from oil analysis to check for excess wear and a listen for any concerning sounds emanating from the engine bay, there's not a whole lot you can look for prior to purchase to ensure a particular engine is strong. Fortunately Porsche still seems to be rectifying any issues under warranty for no charge, which is good for peace of mind. Opt for the more pricey 991.2 and you can avoid this concern altogether. Elsewhere, the 991 GT3 is typical Porsche, with electrical issues almost unheard of and build quality top notch.

A decade since the 991 GT3 made its debut, you can find relatively clean, low-mileage examples for just over £90,000. You'd be right in thinking that's not much change from its original list price, but with demand far outstripping supply during its production run and Porsche providing a robust warranty, it's no surprise they've held well. Stump up an additional £10,000 and cars with under 10,000 miles come into reach, with the 991.2 starting around the £130,000 mark. And as current values show, depreciation is unlikely to be a concern. ✕



### Specification (991.1)

**Engine** Flat-six, 3799cc **Power** 468bhp @ 8250rpm  
**Torque** 324lb ft @ 6250rpm **Weight** 1430kg **Power-to-weight** 333bhp/ton **0-62mph** 3.5sec **Top speed** 196mph  
**Price new** £100,540 **Value today** From £92,000



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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

**Honda Civic Type R.** Improving upon its already phenomenal FK8 predecessor, the FL5 Type R feels special from the moment you drop into its driver's seat, then on the move offers feedback of a quality rarely found at any price. Its looks shouldn't be a hurdle this time around, either.



### BEST OF THE REST

The **Hyundai i30 N** (left) is a thoroughly engaging hot hatch in the classic mould. The **Mercedes-AMG A45 S** matches a ludicrously potent in-line four with a genuinely involving 4WD chassis, while the **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 ON TEST (VAT INCL)	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	★★★★★
Abarth 595 Esseesse	264 D	£25,295	4/1368	178/5500	184/3000	1044kg	-	173	6.7	-	140	★★★★★
Abarth 695 Biposto	205 F	2014-18	4/1369	187/5500	184/3000	997kg*	-	191	5.9	-	143	★★★★★
Alfa Romeo 147 GTA	187 F	2003-06	6/3179	247/6200	221/4800	1360kg	-	185	6.3	6.0	153	★★★★★
Audi A1 40 TFSI	256 D	£24,470	4/1984	197/6000	236/1500	1260kg	-	159	6.5	-	155	★★★★★
Audi S1	246 F	2014-18	4/1984	228/6000	273/1600	1315kg	-	176	5.8	-	155	★★★★★
Audi A1 quattro	264 F	2013	4/1984	253/6000	258/2500	1420kg	-	181	5.7	-	152	★★★★★
Audi S3 Sportback	279 D	£38,475	4/1984	306/5450	295/2000	1500kg	-	207	4.8	-	155	★★★★★
Audi S3	188 F	2013-20	4/1984	296/5500	280/1800	1395kg	-	216	5.2	5.4	155	★★★★★
Audi RS3 Sportback	292 D	£55,230	5/2480	394/5600	369/2250	1570kg	-	255	3.8	-	155	★★★★★
Audi RS3 Sportback	256 F	2017-21	5/2480	394/5850	354/1700	1510kg	-	265	4.1	-	155	★★★★★
Audi RS3 Sportback	221 F	2015-16	5/2480	362/5500	343/1625	1520kg	-	242	4.3	3.6	155	★★★★★
BMW 128ti	290 F	£33,885	4/1998	261/4750	295/1750	1445kg	-	184	6.1	-	155	★★★★★
BMW M135i xDrive	271 F	£38,440	4/1998	302/5000	332/1800	1525kg	-	201	4.8	-	155	★★★★★
BMW M235i xDrive Gran Coupé	274 D	£39,315	4/1998	302/5000	332/1800	1570kg	-	195	4.8	-	155	★★★★★
BMW M135i	212 F	2012-15	6/2979	321/5800	332/1300	1430kg	-	228	5.1	5.2	155	★★★★★
Citroën DS3 1.6 THP	142 F	2010-15	4/1598	154/6000	177/1400	1240kg	-	126	7.3	-	133	★★★★★
Citroën DS3 Racing	153 D	2011-12	4/1598	204/6000	203/2000	1240kg	-	167	6.5	-	146	★★★★★
Citroën AX GT	195 F	1987-92	4/1360	85/6400	86/4000	722kg	-	120	9.2	-	110	★★★★★
Cupra Born 230 (77kWh)	-	£34,495	170kW	228	229	1875kg	-	124	7.0	-	99	★★★★★
Cupra Leon e-Hybrid	280 D	£34,495	4/1395	242	295	1596kg	-	154	6.7	-	140	★★★★★
Cupra Leon 300	290 F	£35,575	4/1984	296/5300	295/2000	1415kg	-	213	5.7	-	155	★★★★★
DS 3 Performance	222 D	2016-18	4/1598	205/6000	221/3000	1175kg	-	177	6.5	-	143	★★★★★
Fiat Panda 100HP	273 F	2006-11	4/1368	99/6000	97/4250	975kg	1028kg	103	9.5	-	115	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST (Mk8)	259 F	£21,655	3/1497	197/6000	214/1600	1187kg	-	169	6.5	-	144	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST Edition / Performance Edition	292 F	£28,770	3/1497	197/6000	214/1600	1187kg	-	169	6.5	-	144	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST (Mk7)	207 F	2013-17	4/1596	197/5700	214/2500	1088kg	1193kg	184	6.9	7.4	137	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST200 (Mk7)	309 F	2016	4/1596	212/6000	236/2500	1088kg	-	198	6.7	-	143	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST (Mk6)	075 D	2005-08	4/1999	148/6000	140/4500	1137kg	-	132	7.9	-	129	★★★★★
Ford Focus ST (Mk4)	310 D	£36,950	4/2261	276/5500	310/3000	1433kg	-	196	5.7	-	155	★★★★★
Ford Focus ST Edition (Mk4)	294 D	2021-21	4/2261	276/5500	310/3000	1433kg	-	196	5.7	-	155	★★★★★
Ford Focus ST (Mk3)	207 F	2015-18	4/1999	247/5500	265/2000	1362kg	-	184	6.5	-	154	★★★★★
Ford Focus ST (Mk2)	119 F	2005-10	5/2522	222/6000	236/1600	1392kg	-	162	6.8	6.7	150	★★★★★
Ford Focus RS (Mk3)	246 F	2015-18	4/2261	345/6000	347/2000	1547kg	1569kg	227	4.7	4.9	166	★★★★★
Ford Focus RS Edition (Mk3)	246 D	2018	4/2261	345/6000	347/2000	1547kg	-	227	4.7	-	166	★★★★★
Ford Focus RS (Mk2)	195 F	2009-11	5/2522	300/6500	324/2300	1467kg	-	208	5.9	5.9	163	★★★★★
Ford Focus RS500 (Mk2)	256 F	2010-11	5/2522	345/6000	339/2500	1467kg	-	239	5.6	5.6	165	★★★★★
Ford Focus RS (Mk1)	312 F	2002-03	4/1998	212/5500	229/3500	1278kg	-	169	6.7	5.9	143	★★★★★
Ford Escort RS Cosworth	271 F	1992-96	4/1993	224/6250	224/3500	1275kg	-	179	6.2	-	137	★★★★★
Ford Puma 1.7	095 F	1997-2002	4/1679	123/6300	116/4500	1041kg	-	120	9.2	8.6	122	★★★★★
Ford Racing Puma	262 F	2000-01	4/1679	153/7000	119/4500	1174kg	-	132	7.9	7.8	137	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (FL5)	307 F	£46,995	4/1996	324/6500	310/2500	1429kg	1437kg	230	5.4	-	171	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (FK8)	288 F	2017-21	4/1996	316/6500	295/2500	1380kg	1409kg	233	5.8	5.9	168	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R Limited Edition (FK8)	293 F	2021	4/1996	316/6500	295/2500	1333kg	-	241	5.8	-	168	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (FK2)	227 F	2015-17	4/1996	306/6500	295/2500	1378kg	-	226	5.7	5.4	167	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (FN2)	102 F	2007-11	4/1998	198/7800	142/5600	1267kg	-	158	6.6	6.8	146	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R Mugen (FN2)	248 F	2009-11	4/1998	237/8300	157/6250	1233kg	-	195	5.9	-	155	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (EP3)	287 F	2001-05	4/1998	197/7400	145/5900	1204kg	-	166	6.8	6.8	146	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (EK9)	210 F	1997-2000	4/1595	182/8200	118/7500	1040kg	-	178	6.8	-	135	★★★★★
Hyundai i20 N	293 F	£24,995	4/1591	201/5500	203/1750	1190kg	-	172	6.2	-	143	★★★★★
Hyundai i30 N	307 F	£34,595	4/1998	276/5500	289/2100	1419kg	1465kg	198	5.9	-	155	★★★★★
Hyundai i30 Fastback N Performance	269 F	£29,995	4/1998	271/6000	279/1750	1418kg	-	191	6.1	-	155	★★★★★
Hyundai Kona N	291 D	£35,395	4/1998	276/5500	289/2100	1510kg	-	186	5.5	-	149	★★★★★
Kia Ceed GT	267 F	£25,850	4/1591	201/6000	195/1500	1386kg	-	147	7.2	-	143	★★★★★



MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE ON YEAR ON SALE	ENGINE CV/L CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT (KILG)	WEIGHT (LBS)	BHP/TON (CLIMB)	0-62MPH (CLIMB)	0-60MPH (1/8MI)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
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	★★★★☆
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-Benz A45 AMG	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	★★★★★
MG4 Trophy	312 D	£32,495	150kW	200	184	1685kg	-	121	7.7	-	100	+ Value for money - Don't expect any thrills	★★★★☆
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	★★★★★
Peugeot 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	+ Bizarrely, 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 F1 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 - F1 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 adopted - 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 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	2010-17	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	2020-22	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 GSe	307 D	£40,500	4/1598	225/-	265/-	1703kg	-	132	7.5	-	146	+ Polished dynamics, neat looks - Lacklustre hybrid drivetrain and lack of performance	★★★★★
Vauxhall Astra/GTC VXR (Mk2)	207 F	2012-18	4/1998	276/5500	295/2500	1475kg	-	190	6.0	-	155	+ Loony turbo pace - Hasn't got the precision of a Renault Sport Mégane	★★★★★
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	£38,320	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)	310 F	£41,890	4/										



## MAKE &amp; MODEL

Volkswagen Golf GTI (Mk6)  
Volkswagen Golf R (Mk6)  
Volkswagen Golf GTI (Mk5)  
Volkswagen Golf R32 (Mk5)  
Volkswagen Golf R32 (Mk4)  
Volkswagen Golf GTI 16v (Mk2)  
Volkswagen Golf GTI (Mk1, 1.8)

ISSUE NO.	PRICE IN 1980s ON SALE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT (KILLAGED)	WEIGHT (1800kg)	BHP/TON (1800kg)	0-60MPH (CLAMMED)	0-60MPH (1800kg)	MAX MPH
172 F	2009-13	4/1984	207/5300	207/1700	1318kg	-	160	6.9	6.4	148
140 D	2010-13	4/1984	266/6000	258/2500	1446kg	-	187	5.7	-	155
259 F	2004-09	4/1984	197/5100	207/1800	1336kg	-	150	7.3	6.7	146
087 F	2006-09	6/3189	246/6300	236/2500	1466kg	-	170	6.5	5.8	155
053 F	2002-04	6/3189	237/6250	236/2800	1477kg	-	163	6.6	6.4	154
195 F	1988-92	4/1781	139/6100	123/4600	960kg	-	147	7.9	-	129
224 F	1982-84	4/1781	112/5800	109/3500	860kg	-	132	8.2	-	114

## EVO RATING

+ Still a very accomplished hot hatch - 207bhp isn't a lot any more  
+ Great engine, tremendous pace and poise - High price, adaptive dampers optional  
+ Character and ability; the GTI's return to form - Lacking firepower?  
+ The traction's great and you'll love the soundtrack - We'd still have a GTI  
+ Charismatic - Boomy engine can be tiresome  
+ Still feels everyday useable - Too many have been modified  
+ The car that started it all - Tricky to find an 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

The first ever **BMW M3 Touring** (left) is everything we hoped it would be, and its saloon sibling is highly desirable too. 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 and estate) provide a trio of strong options.

Alfa Romeo Giulia Veloce	310 D	£47,759	4/1995	276/5250	295/2250	1429kg	-	196	5.7	-	149	+ Supple and satisfying - Engine reluctant to rev	★★★★★
Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio	287 F	£75,204	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	★★★★★
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 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	307 F	£56,230	5/2480	394/5600	369/2250	1570kg	1597kg	255	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	£63,930	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)	307 F	£106,020	8/3996	592/6000	590/2050	2075kg	2188kg	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 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 Touring (G21)	309 F	£60,605	6/2998	369/5500	369/1900	1795kg	-	209	4.6	-	155	+ As fast as your family wagon should need to go - You still want an M3 Touring, don't you?	★★★★★
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 Competition Touring xDrive (G81)	307 F	£80,550	6/2993	503/6250	479/2750	1865kg	1858kg	274	3.6	-	155	+ Feels smaller and more capable than the CSL - Less refined than most super-estates	★★★★★
BMW M3 CS (G80)	312 D	£115,900	6/2993	542/6250	479/2750	1765kg	-	312	3.4	-	188	+ Pure sports car approach to chassis upgrades - More steering clarity would be welcome	★★★★★
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 (E90)	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 M5 (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	2021-22	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 i7 xDrive60	310 D	£110,545	420kW	536	546	2640kg	-	206	6.1	-	149	+ A great EV limo - An S-class is better	★★★★★
BMW XM	309 D	£148,060	8/4395	644	590	2710kg	-	241	4.3	-	168	+ Stunning high-speed cruising ability - Heavy and clumsy	★★★★★
BMW Alpina D3 S Touring	286 D	£66,000	6/2993	350/5500	538/2500	1935kg	-	184	4.8	-	167	+ The best fast diesel you can buy - The B3	★★★★★
BMW Alpina B3 Touring	281 D	£80,700	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	★★★★★
BMW Alpina B4 Gran Coupé	311 D	£79,900	6/2993	488/5000	538/2500	1890kg	-	262	3.7	-	187	+ Exclusivity, refinement, pace - Slightly aloof in terms of involvement	★★★★★
Bowler Defender	312 D	£141,600	4/1984	296/5500	295/1500	2165kg	-	139	6.7	-	119	+ A serious bit of off-roading kit; price includes a season of rallies - Just 139bhp per ton	★★★★★
Ford Ranger Raptor	309 D	£58,900	6/2956	288/5500	362/2300	2454kg	-	119	7.9	-	111	+ Character, on-road civility, off-road capability - Not living near a desert	★★★★★
Ferrari Purosangue	308 D	£313,220	12/6456	715/7750	528/6250	2033kg*	-	357	3.3	-	193	+ Drives like a Ferrari should - Not as practical as rivals or as desirable as other Ferraris	★★★★★
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	★★★★★
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	★★★★★



## MAKE &amp; MODEL

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE ON YEAR ON SALE	ENGINE CVL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT (KGM)	WEIGHT (LBS)	BHP/TON (KGM)	0-62MPH (S)	0-60MPH (S)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
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 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 F-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 EV6 GT	306 F	£62,645	430kW	577	546	2200kg	-	266	3.5	-	162	+ Shows glimmers of character - Becomes more one-dimensional the harder you push	★★★★☆
Kia Stinger GTS	242 D	2018-22	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	★★★★☆
Lamborghini Urus	249 F	2018-23	8/3996	641/6000	627/2250	2200kg	-	296	3.6	-	190	+ A freakish manipulator of physics - But also rather one-dimensional	★★★★☆
Lamborghini Urus S	309 D	£188,000	8/3996	657/6000	621/2300	2197kg	-	305	3.5	-	190	+ Less of a blunt instrument than the original Urus - It's still a 2.2-ton SUV	★★★★☆
Lamborghini Urus Performante	309 D	£209,000	8/3996	657/6000	621/2250	2150kg	-	310	3.3	-	190	+ Dynamically superb on track - Unexpectedly hard work on the road	★★★★☆
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	£110,900	8/3799	572/6750	538/2250	1969kg	2076kg	295	4.3	-	203	+ Subtle performance elegantly delivered - It's quite expensive	★★★★☆
Maserati Grecale Trofeo	310 D	£95,860	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 C43 Saloon (W206)	301 D	£64,100	4/1991	402/6750	369/5000	1690kg	-	242	4.6	-	155	+ Hugely accessible performance - Sterile steering, some transmission jerkiness	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG C63 S E Performance Estate	306 D	£99,715	4/1991	671/6750	638/5250	2115kg	-	322	3.4	-	168	+ Hybrid tech works brilliantly... - But brings excess weight	★★★★☆
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	516/2000	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 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 GT5's drama	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG GT63 S E Performance	308 D	£178,704	8/3982	831	1084	2305kg	-	366	2.9	-	196	+ Can feel absolutely indomitable - Benefits of more power defeated by added weight	★★★★☆
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 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 GLE 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	571/6000	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 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	309 F	£56,575	4/1598	355	383	1875kg	-	192	5.2	-	155	+ A hybrid worth considering - Especially if someone else is paying	★★★★☆
Polestar 2	280 D	£46,450	300kW	402	487	2048kg	-	199	4.7	-	127	+ A credible Tesla alternative - Avoid the super-hard-riding Performance upgrade	★★★★☆
Polestar 2 BST Edition 270	306 D	£68,990	350kW	469	501	2146kg	-	222	4.4	-	127	+ Adjustable Öhlins dampers great for track but surely this is a road car?	★★★★☆
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 - Less light on performance next to turbo'd rivals	★★★★☆
Porsche Taycan (Performance Battery Plus)	283 D	£83,654	350kW	375	-	2130kg	-	179	5.4	-	143	+ Half the price of a Taycan Turbo S - Less is less	★★★★☆
Porsche Taycan GT Sport Turismo	294 D	£111,200	380kW	510	-	2310kg	-	224	3.7	-	224	+ One of the best performance EVs yet - Charge anxiety	★★★★☆
Porsche Taycan Turbo Cross Turismo	287 D	£126,800	460kW	616	-	2320kg	-	270	3.3	-	155	+ A convincing and crushingly capable crossover - Needs big roads	★★★★☆
Porsche Taycan Turbo S	267 D	£148,300	460kW	616	-	2295kg	-	273	2.8	-	161	+ Straight-line oomph will leave you in awe - Inadequate EV infrastructure	★★★★☆
Porsche Macan T	307 D	£58,400	4/1984	261/5000	295/1800	1865kg	-	142	6.2	-	144	+ All the usual Porsche dynamic qualities - With none of the performance	★★★★☆
Porsche Macan S	257 D	£59,800	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	£77,300	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	£112,400	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	£115,100	8/3996	542/5750	568/2000	2200kg	-	250	3.9	-	177	+ As good to drive as the regular Cayenne - Swooper roof adds thousands to the price	★★★★☆
Porsche Cayenne Turbo GT	290 D	£150,500	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?	★★★★☆
Range Rover Sport P510e	309 D	£112,040	6/2996	503	516	2735kg	-	187	5.4	-	150	+ Hybrid powertrain provides a genuine benefit - Feels big and heavy, because it is	★★★★☆
Range Rover Sport P530 First Edition	303 D	£119,580	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 Autobiography P530	298 D	£142,260	8/4395	523/5500	551/1800	2585kg	-	206	4.6	-	155	+ Quicker 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	+ Unrivaled 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 ('Blobeye')	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					



## 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 &amp; MODEL

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 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 3.24S	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 - Pricey	★★★★★
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	2020	4/1998	335/7200	243/4300	670kg*	-	646	2.9	-	134	+ Intriguing and effective mash-up of track car and off-roader - They only made five	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vantage Roadster	279 D	£131,250	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	2018-23	8/3982	503/6000	498/2000	1870kg	-	273	4.1	-	187	+ Impressively wide range of dynamic personalities - Cabin could be better at this price	★★★★★
Audi TTS Roadster (Mk3)	207 D	£56,435	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	£59,915	5/2480	394/5850	354/7100	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	£218,000	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	2346kg	-	271	3.7	-	208	+ Very nearly as calm and controlled as the coupe - Heavy V12 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	£56,475	6/2998	335/5000	369/1600	1535kg	-	222	4.6	-	155	+ Inherent agility and ability - Undemanding and unengaging	★★★★★
BMW Z4	026 F	2000-03	8/4941	400/6600	369/3800	1585kg	-	256	4.7	4.8	155	+ MS-powered super-sportster - MS's more fun to drive	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 170R	291 F	£32,585	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	£40,085	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	£43,585	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	£56,990	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	£64,990	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	£97,890	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	£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 Rpt (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	★★★★★
Ferrari Portofino M	288 D	£175,345	8/3855	611/5750	560/3000	1664kg	-	373	3.5	-	199	+ Matches usability to supercar performance - Lacks the passion of the best Ferraris	★★★★★
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	£84,125	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	2013-22	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	2010-22	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 - As above	★★★★★
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	725kg	-	165	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	4/1796	190/7800	146/5000	701kg	-	275	4.5	4.5	126	+ Hardcore road-racer... - ...that looks like a dune buggy from Mars	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5.1.5 (Mk4)	230 F	£25,825	4/1496	129/7000	111/4800	975kg	-	134	8.3	-	127	+ Lightest MX-5 since the Mk1 - Lacks intensity	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 2.0 (Mk4, 184PS)	299 F	£30,410	4/1998	181/7000	151/4000	1052kg	1073kg	175	6.5	-	136	+ At last, a more powerful factory MX-5 - It's still no fireball	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 RF 2.0 (Mk4, 184PS)	256 F	£32,310	4/1998	181/7000	151/4000	1073kg	-	171	6.8	-	137	+ As above, but with a retracting hard-top - Which adds weight	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 2.0 (Mk4)	228 F	2015-18	4/1998	158/6000	147/4600	1000kg	-	161	7.3	-	133	+ Brilliant basic recipe - The desire for stiffer suspension and more power	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 2.0i (Mk3.5)	212 F	2009-15	4/1999	158/7000	139/5000	1098kg	-	146	7.6	-	138	+ Handles brilliantly again, folding hard-top also available - Less-than-macho image	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk3)	091 F	2005-09	4/1798	124/6500	123/4500	1080kg	-	108	9.3	-	122	+ Gearchange, interior - Lost some of the charm of old MX-5s; dubious handling	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk2)	017 F	1998-2005	4/1839	146/7000	124/5000	1065kg	-	140	8.5	-	123	+ Affordable ragtops don't get much better - Cheap cabin	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.6 (Mk1)	268 F	1989-97	4/1597	115/6500	100/5500	971kg	-	120	8.8	-	114	+ The original and still (pretty much) the best - Less than rigid	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG SL S55 4Matic+	305 F	£147,715	8/3982	469/5500	516/2250	1875kg	1940kg	254	3.9	-	183	+ Impressive damping and 4WD - Is neither chilled-out cruiser or AMG GT replacement	★★★★★
Morgan Super 3	300 F	£43,165	3/1432	118/6500	110/4500	635kg*	-	189	7.0	-	130	+ The three-wheeler gets modernised - Driving experience is still vintage	★★★★★
Morgan 3 Wheeler	198 F	2012-21	2/1976	82/5250	103/3250	525kg*	-	159	6.0	-	715	+ Quirky, characterful, brilliant - Can become a two-wheeler if you push too hard	★★★★★
Morgan Plus Four	279 F	£71,830	4/1998	255/5500	258/1000	1013kg*							



## MAKE &amp; MODEL

Porsche 718 Boxster S  
*Porsche 718 Boxster GTS*  
 Porsche 718 Boxster GTS 4.0  
 Porsche 718 Spyder  
*Porsche Boxster (981)*  
*Porsche Boxster S (981)*  
*Porsche Boxster GTS (981)*  
*Porsche Boxster Spyder (981)*  
*Porsche Boxster S (987)*  
*Porsche Boxster Spyder (987)*  
*Porsche Boxster S (986)*  
 Porsche 911 Carrera 4S Cabriolet (992)  
 Porsche 911 Targa 4S (992)  
 Radical Rapide  
 Renault Sport Spider  
 Toyota MR2 (Mk3)  
 TVR Tamora  
 TVR Chimaera 5.0  
 TVR Griffith 4.3  
 TVR Griffith 500  
 Vauxhall VX220 Turbo

ISSUE NO.	PRICE ON YEAR ON SALE	ENGINE CV/L CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT (KGM)	WEIGHT (LBS)	BHP/TON (CLIMB)	0-62MPH (CLIMB)	0-60MPH (LBS)	MAX MPH
222 F	£63,800	4/2497	345/6500	310/1900	1355kg	-	259	4.6	4.4	177
249 D	2018-19	4/2497	360/6500	310/1900	1375kg	-	266	4.6	-	180
286 D	£75,300	6/3995	394/7000	310/5000	1405kg	-	285	4.5	-	182
272 F	£80,200	6/3995	414/7600	310/5000	1420kg	-	296	4.4	-	187
238 F	2012-16	6/2706	261/6700	206/4500	1310kg	-	202	5.8	-	164
186 F	2012-16	6/3436	311/6700	265/4500	1320kg	-	239	5.1	-	173
203 D	2014-16	6/3436	325/6700	273/4500	1345kg	-	246	5.0	-	174
223 F	2015-16	6/3800	370/6700	310/4750	1315kg	-	286	4.5	-	180
161 F	2005-12	6/3436	306/6400	266/5500	1355kg	-	229	5.3	-	170
277 F	2010-12	6/3436	316/7200	273/4750	1275kg	-	252	4.9	-	166
070 F	1999-2004	6/3179	256/6200	229/4600	1320kg	-	200	5.7	-	164
262 D	£126,000	6/2981	444/6500	391/2300	1600kg	-	282	4.4	-	188
277 D	£126,000	6/2981	444/6500	391/2300	1640kg	-	275	4.4	-	189
274 F	£108,000	4/2261	360/6000	360/3500	765kg*	-	478	3.0	-	165
231 F	1996-99	4/1998	148/6000	136/4500	930kg	-	157	6.5	-	131
258 F	1999-2007	4/1794	138/6400	125/4400	975kg	-	144	8.0	7.2	131
070 F	2001-07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1060kg	-	335	4.2	-	175
258 F	1993-2003	8/4997	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	-	307	4.4	-	167
068 F	1992-93	8/4280	280/5500	305/4000	1040kg	-	274	4.4	4.8	155
009 F	1993-2001	8/4997	320/5500	320/4000	1060kg	-	307	4.1	-	167
066 F	2003-05	4/1998	197/5500	184/1950	930kg	-	215	4.9	-	151

## EVO RATING

+ Still sensationally capable - Turbo four-cylinder engine lacks appeal of the old flat-six  
 + The best four-pot Boxster spec - Doesn't come cheap  
 + It's got the Cayman GT4 six-cylinder, minus 200rpm - Gearshift not as crisp as the GT4's  
 + Essentially a drop-top Cayman GT4 - Including its long gearing  
 + Goes and looks better than the 987 Boxster - Shame about the electric steering  
 + Boxster steps out of 911's shadow - But gets 911's less appealing electric steering  
 + Superb dynamics, fantastic engine, great looks - Sport suspension is very firm  
 + An even faster, even more rewarding Boxster - Feedback trails the Cayman GT4's  
 + Second-gen Boxster's as brilliant as ever - It's a typically Porsche redesign  
 + Lighter, more driver-centric Boxster - Collapsed-brolly roof not the most practical  
 + Added power over the non-S Boxster is seductive - Very little  
 + Performance, handling, useability - It's no lightweight; body not as stiff as the coupe's  
 + Distinctive; driving experience is barely touched - You can't get a rear-drive Targa  
 + Unfiltered and utterly addictive - It's more at home on the track than the road  
 + Rarity; unassisted steering - Heavier than you'd hope; disappointing engine  
 + Tight lines, taut dynamics - Minimal luggage space  
 + Well-sorted soft-top TVR - Awkward styling  
 + Gorgeous noise, tarmac-rippling grunt - Details  
 + The car that made TVR. Cult status - Mere details  
 + Gruff diamond - A few rough edges  
 + 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	£52,490	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	£62,490	4/1798	296/6300	251/2400	1119kg	-	269	4.2	-	155	+ The Goldilocks A110 for road driving - Trackdays	★★★★★
Alpine A110 S	268 D	£62,490	4/1798	296/6300	251/2400	1109kg	-	271	4.2	-	171	+ Firmer and faster - But not necessarily better	★★★★★
Alpine A110 R	312 F	£94,990	4/1798	296/6300	251/2400	1082kg	-	278	3.9	-	177	+ An even lighter and more extreme A110 - Falls short on track with no power hike	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vantage	280 F	£142,000	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	£159,000	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 - Err, 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 DB12	312 F	£185,000	8/3982	671/6000	590/2750	1685kg*	-	405	3.6	-	202	+ Stunning urge: exceptional control and precision - Less of a GT than the DB11	★★★★★
Aston Martin DB11 V8	253 D	2017-23	8/3982	528/6000	513/2000	1760kg	-	305	4.0	-	192	+ Potent and characterful engine; sharper chassis than V12 - Makes the V12 redundant	★★★★★
Aston Martin DB11	235 F	2017-18	12/5204	600/6500	516/1500	1870kg	-	326	3.9	4.0	200	+ A great GT - Suffers in outright handling terms as a result	★★★★★
Aston Martin DB11 AMR	290 F	2018-21	12/5204	630/6500	516/1500	1870kg	-	342	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 TT S (Mk3)	261 D	£49,740	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	£58,165	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 TT (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	£77,715	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	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT (V8)	290 F	£176,400	8/3996	542/6000	568/2000	2165kg	-	254	4.0	-	198	+ Pace, quality, polish - A bit one-dimensional	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT S	309 D	£198,600	8/3996	542/6000	568/2000	2090kg	-	263	4.0	-	198	+ Unparalleled comfort, unexpected performance - Lacks dynamic flourish of some rivals	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT (W12)	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	£219,400	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 (W12)	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	★★★★★
BMW M230i M Sport Coupé	310 F	£41,065	4/1998	242/4500	295/1600	1525kg	-	161	5.9	-	155	+ Satisfying depth of ability - Four-cylinder engine sounds workmanlike under load	★★★★★
BMW M240i xDrive Coupé	303 F	£49,225	6/2998	369/5500	369/1900	1690kg	1695kg	222	4.3	-	155	+ A pocket GT with bulging muscles - You might balk at the bulk	★★★★★
BMW M2 (G87)	312 F	£65,885	6/2993	454/6250	406/2650	1700kg	-	271	4.3	-	155	+ Still has that hot-rod feel - Feels heavy and remote alongside some rivals	★★★★★
BMW M2 (F87)	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 (F87)	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 (F87)	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 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 M440i xDrive	282 D	£58,330	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	£82,520	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	£85,375	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	2023	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	425/5000	406/1850	1570kg	-	275	4.3	-	155	+ Ferociously fast - Can be 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	-	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 (F92)	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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## MAKE &amp; MODEL

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE ON YEAR ON SALE	ENGINE CV/L CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT (KGMED)	WEIGHT (LBSMED)	BHP/TON (KGMED)	0-62MPH (LBSMED)	0-60MPH (LBSMED)	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 M50i xDrive	256 F	£114,150	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	£138,090	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	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1850kg	-	303	4.2	-	155	+ Mighty ability, pace, technology - You'll want the Competition Package upgrade, too	★★★★★
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	£92,890	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	460/6000	465/4600	1496kg	-	312	4.2	4.4	180	+ Performance, chassis balance, supple ride - Body control could be better	★★★★☆
Ferrari Roma	290 F	£174,910	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	★★★★★
Ford Mustang 5.0 V8 GT	266 F	£50,315	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	£60,315	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	£79,420	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)	311 F	1996-2000	4/1797	187/8000	131/7300	1140kg	-	167	6.7	6.2	145	+ Arguably the greatest front-drive car ever - Too raw for some	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type P300 RWD	271 D	£62,235	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	-	£78,330	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 boisterous	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type R (P575 AWD)	271 D	£102,870	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	★★★★★
Jannarelli 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	★★★★★
KTM X-Bow GT-XR	310 D	c£316,800	5/2480	493/6350	429/5550	1226kg	-	409	3.4	-	174	+ A real racing car for the road - A real racing car for the road	★★★★★
Lexus RC F	295 F	£76,560	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	£95,660	8/4969	470/7100	398/4800	1935kg	-	247	4.7	-	168	+ Glorious engine, rewarding chassis - Lacks ultimate body control, numb steering	★★★★★
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 spurs 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 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 Trofeo	307 D	c£160,000	6/2992	542/6500	479/3000	1795kg	-	307	3.5	-	199	+ Stunning performance, capable chassis - Feels its weight, needs space to come alive	★★★★★
Maserati GranTurismo Sport	188 F	2013-19	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1880kg	-	245	4.8	-	186	+ A real sense of occasion to drive; wonderful engine - Feels long in the tooth	★★★★★
Maserati GranTurismo MC	239 D	2017-19	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	★★★★★
Mazda RX-8	122 F	2003-11	2R/1308	228/8200	156/5500	1429kg	-	162	6.4	6.5	146	+ Never mind the quirkiness, it's a great drive - Wafer-thin torque output; thirsty	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG C63 S Coupé (W205)	262 F	2015-23	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	2017-21	8/3982	604/5500	664/2750	1990kg	-	308	4.2	-	155	+ Near-silent progress meets full-blown riot - Don't go thinking it's a GT R	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG S65 Coupé	209 D	2015-21	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 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 - Demon Tweaks interior	★★★★★
Polestar 1	269 D	2019-22	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	£51,800	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	2020-23	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	£61,800	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	£73,300	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	312 F	2019-23	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	175	+ The Cayman comes of age - Err...	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman GT3 (981)	219 F	2014-16	6/3436	335/7400	280/4750	1345kg	-	253	4.9	-	177	+ Tweaks improve an already sublime package - Slightly 'aftermarket' looks	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman GT4 (981)	265 F	2015-16	6/3800	380/7400	310/4750	1340kg	-	288	4.4	-	1		



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## MAKE &amp; MODEL

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 (996.1)	249 F	1998-2001	6/3387	296/6800	258/4600	1320kg	-	228	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	£258,000	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	£32,495	4/2387	231/7000	184/3700	1276kg	1280kg	183	6.3	-	140	+ The car the GT86 always wanted to be - Limited UK supply	★★★★★
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	£50,545	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 3.0	303 F	£58,580	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	£238,725	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	£257,125	12/5204	715/6500	664/1800	1863kg*	-	390	3.6	-	211	+ Dazzling looks, immense performance - Width and weight bring compromises	★★★★★
Aston Martin DBS 770 Ultimate	311 F	£314,000	12/5204	759/6400	664/1800	1770kg	-	436	3.4	-	211	+ Chassis refinements - We're not sure it needed the extra power...	★★★★★
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 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	★★★★★
Aston Martin Valkyrie	308 F	£2.5m	12/6500	1139/10,600	681/7000	1270kg*	-	911	3.0	-	220	+ Unique and uncompromising - Horrendous cockpit noise	★★★★★
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	£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 V8 (Mk1)	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	★★★★★
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 Chiron Super Sport	307 F	2021-22	16/7993	1578/7050	1180/2250	1995kg	-	804	2.4	-	273	+ Hit 304.77mph in pre-production form - Are you Andy Wallace enough to go there?	★★★★★
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	2011-15	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	★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette Z06 (C8)	310 F	£135,000	8/5463	670/8400	460/6300	1561kg*	-	436	2.6	-	195	+ Mighty engine; absorbing driving experience - Some steering feel wouldn't go amiss	★★★★★
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	★★★★★
Ferrari 296 GTB	305 F	£245,000	6/2992	819/8000	546/6250	1470kg*	1660kg	566	2.9	-	205	+ Intriguingly 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 F8 Tributo	281 F	2019-23	8/3902	710/8000	568/3250	1435kg	-	503	2.9	-	211	+ Ferrari's best series-production V8 ever - It's hybrids after this	★★★★★
Ferrari F8 Spider	276 D	2020-23	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+	+ Worth 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 812 Superfast	275 F	2017-23	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+	+ Alarming 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 - Struggles for traction on poor surfaces	★★★★★
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 GT4 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 GT4 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 456 GT	209 F	1992-97	12/5474	436/62500	406/4500	1690kg*	-	262	5.2	-	186	+ A genuine GT supercar - Running costs	★★★★★
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	£2.2m	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 Ferrari	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	12/4699	513/8500	347/6500	1230kg*	-	424	3.9	-	202	+ A better driver's Ferrari than the 288, F40 or Enzo - Not better looking, though	★★★★★
Ferrari F40	275 F	1987-92	8/2936	471/7000	426/4000	1100kg*	-	437	4.1	-	201	+ Brutally fast - It's in the dictionary under 'turbo lag'	★★★★★



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## MAKE &amp; MODEL

	ISSUE NO.	PRICE ON YEAR ON SALE	ENGINE CVL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT (KGM)	WEIGHT (LBS)	BHP/TON (LBS)	0-62MPH (LBS)	0-60MPH (LBS)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
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	\$1.8m	8/6555	1817/8000	1198/5000	1360kg	-	1357	2.6	-	311	+ Ballistic performance; surprising drivability - Finding somewhere to do 300mph+	★★★★★
Honda NSX (NC1)	270 F	2016-21	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	★★★★★
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	2020-23	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	2019-23	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 Huracán Sterrato	311 F	£232,820	10/5204	602/8000	413/6500	1470kg*	-	418	3.4	-	162	+ A 4x4 that's right up our dirt road - We're a bit short of desert in the UK	★★★★★
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	2018-23	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	2020-23	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	2022-23	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	661/8000	487/6000	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-snorting 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 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	£166,300	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	611/7500	530/2250	1498kg	1560kg	455	3.0	-	205	+ Surreal performance and total precision - Monotone biturbo V6	★★★★★
McLaren 720S	262 F	2017-23	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	288 F	2018-23	8/3994	710/7250	568/5500	1468kg	-	491	2.9	-	212	+ Every bit as ballistic 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	306 F	£310,500	8/3994	754/7500	590/5500	1388kg	-	553	2.8	-	205	+ Everything the 765LT coupe is and more - Including more expensive	★★★★★
McLaren 650S	196 F	2014-17	8/3799	641/7250	500/6000	1428kg	-	456	3.0	-	207	+ Better brakes, balance and loads more - 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 PI - Aventador price tag	★★★★★
McLaren 12C	264 F	2011-14	8/3799	616/7500	442/3000	1434kg	1466kg	435	3.3	-	207	+ Staggering performance, refinement - Engine noise can be grating	★★★★★
McLaren Senna	252 F	£750,000	8/3999	789/7250	590/5500	1198kg*	-	669	2.8	-	211	+ Astounding performance, stellar presence - Only 500 being made	★★★★★
McLaren P1	276 F	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	2019-21	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	2021	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	2011-22	12/5980	720/5800	737/2250	1350kg*	-	542	3.3	-	224	+ Joint evo Car of the Year 2012 - Engine isn't as nape-pricking 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	560/4200	1300kg*	-	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	£146,400	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	£192,600	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	£180,600	6/3745	641/6750	590								





## DOA: RENAULT TWINGO COUPÉ

A first-generation Twingo, stripped-out and powered by a 150bhp Clio Williams engine? If only...

**I**N THE EARLY 1970S RENAULT INITIATED *projet VBG* ('Véhicule Bas de Gamme' or 'Low Range Vehicle') with the aim of making a low-cost people's car. This morphed, via some zany schemes involving round side windows, reversible passenger seats and on-board bean-bag chairs, into a small, functional three-door hatchback that reached the running prototype stage before being cancelled at the dawn of the '80s. Undeterred, Renault spent the following years making multiple doomed attempts to get a cheap, entry-level model across the line and every time these projects failed for the same reason: a firm 'non' from le département d'accountancy.

To get a new people's car into production Renault's engineers had to be ingenious, and that's exactly what they were with X06, the project that became the original Twingo. Even its name – a portmanteau of twist, swing and tango – was clever. The real cleverness, however, was in and around its bold monobox skin. To ensure the Twingo was quick and cheap to build it had cunning features like upholstery glued directly to the seat foam and a radio aerial mounted on the door mirror rather than the roof to save a few centimes in wiring, and to keep things simple on the production line the car was launched with just one trim level and four paint colours. The Twingo

was a masterclass in cost-effective industrial design and Renault later used many of the lessons learnt in creating the modern-day Dacia range.

The quest for simplification also extended to engine choice, or lack of it, because initially the Twingo came with a 1.2-litre four-cylinder – a modernised version of the old Cléon-Fonte motor first used in the 1960s – and that was it. Designing the car around this lone motor meant everything could be optimised to its modest 54 horsepower output, creating a virtuous circle in which suspension and braking systems could be simpler and therefore cheaper, safe in the knowledge they wouldn't have to handle greater power outputs.

Unfortunately, this seemed to rule out the prospect of a hotter variant to rival the Fiat Cinquecento Sporting. But Renault motorsport boss Christian Contzen wasn't so sure and a couple of years into the car's life he began

dreaming of an affordable one-model race series using the Twingo, predicated on being able to put some more pep in its step. To that end, Contzen's team squeezed a 1.6-litre four from a Mégane under the stubby bonnet, tuned to give a sizzling 135 horsepower. But apparently this wasn't enough and in 1995 they went further with the fabulous machine you see here: a stripped-out, caged-up Twingo painted like an old Gordini rally car and running the 2-litre, 150bhp F7R engine from a Clio Williams. It was called the Twingo Coupé, in this case 'coupé' meaning 'cup', and as you can see, with its additional bonnet intake and the same Speedline alloys as the Clio Williams, it looked sensational.

Sadly it was not to be. Cramming a larger powertrain into a car never designed to take it created issues with NVH and the turning circle that would have been hard to resolve, never mind all the bespoke parts the Coupé would have required and the expense that would have entailed, contra to the Twingo ethos. Sad to say, the Coupé really was dead on arrival. But at least Renault kept this experiment tucked away for posterity, and every once in a while – such as at the Twingo's 30th birthday celebrations at the Retromobile show in Paris earlier this year – shares it with the public so we can see what might have been.

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