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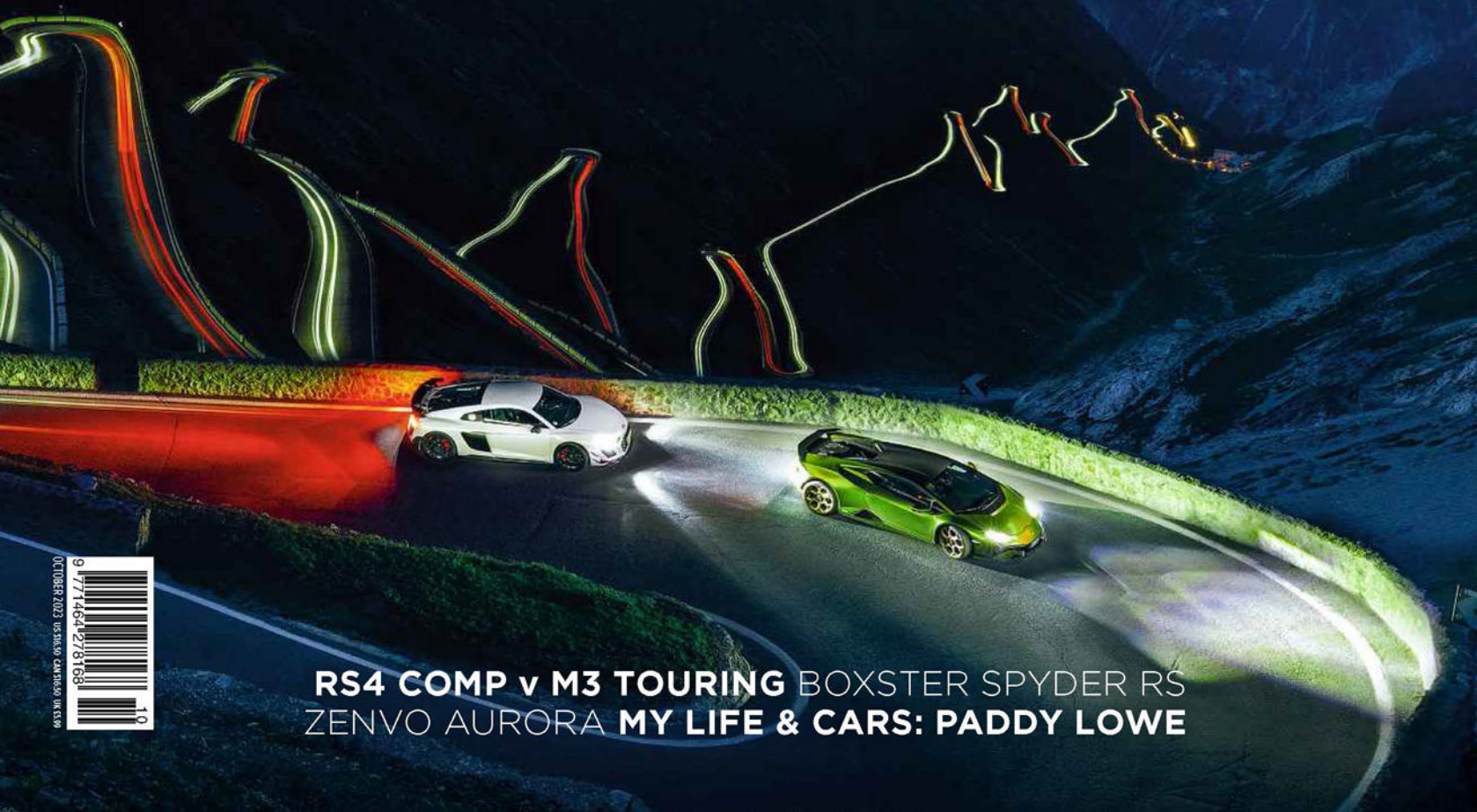
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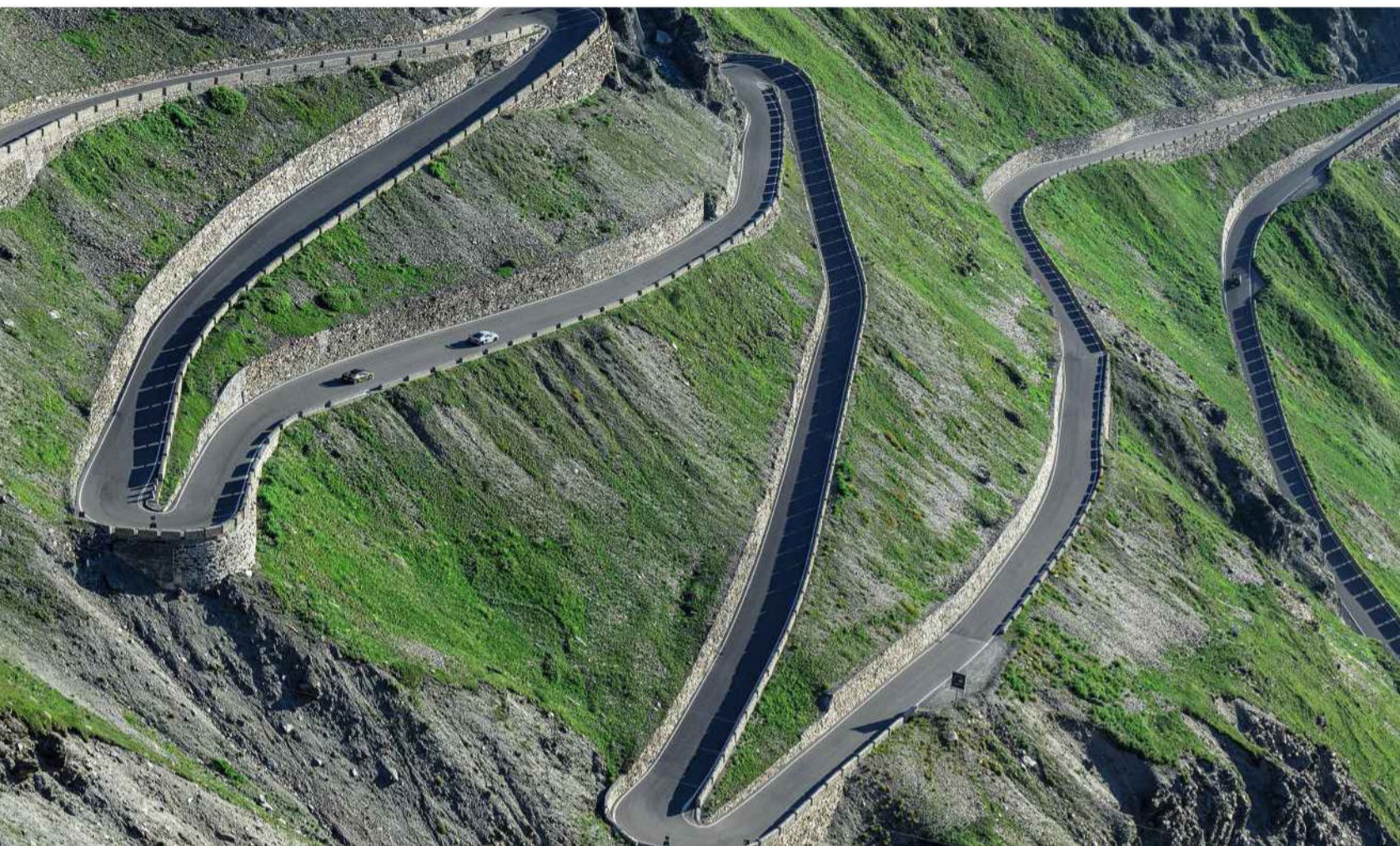
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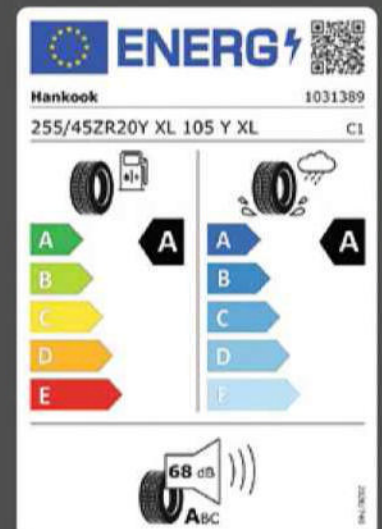
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1) TÜV SÜD Tire Test 2022, Report No. 713252186-BM01, -PM01. Test period March 2022. Test performed on the Hankook Ventus iON S with four competitor tyres, in the size 245/45 ZR19 102Y XL. Test vehicles: Tesla Model S 85, Tesla Model S P100D, Audi Q5 Sportback 40 TDI, VW Tiguan 2.0 TDI. Test location: IDIADA, Papenburg, Neubiberg, Garching. Applies to all further mentions of the TÜV SÜD Tire Test.



Ed speak



THERE WAS A PERIOD WHEN Noble and TVR were mainstays of this magazine, fighting for page count with Subaru Imprezas, Mitsubishi Evos and those newfangled water-cooled posh Beetles. And they both more than held their own in any test we cared to throw them into, be it a twin-test or eCoty.

Noble and TVR were the fast-growing British sports car brands that continually offered driver-focused alternatives to the mainstream, developing strong followings and supported by robust sales that upset the status quo. What they lacked in final fit and finish they made up for with thrills, engagement and performance that got the establishment to stop and take notice and formulate a plan to get their own slice of this untapped enthusiast pie.

Two decades on and the establishment is alive and well, kicking back as the profits from their performance line-ups

rain down on them. Yet Noble and TVR have been and gone and are now clawing their way back again. Well, Noble is; little has been heard from TVR since its latest 'relaunch' in a London nightclub last summer, leaving it to icons such as the Griffith 500 (driven on p100) to keep that flame flickering.

In the M500 Peter Boutwood and his team have created a mid-engined supercar that, even in prototype form with some rough edges yet to be smoothed away, is a car for the moment: simple in application, competitive in its performance and with the potential to reignite a brand that excited so many for so long.

Today's Noble isn't as affordable as its predecessors – is anything? – but if the M500 can pick up where the M400 left off, the established players will once again need to keep a close eye on what appears from Leicester's industrial estates.

Stuart Gallagher, Editor-in-Chief @stuartg917

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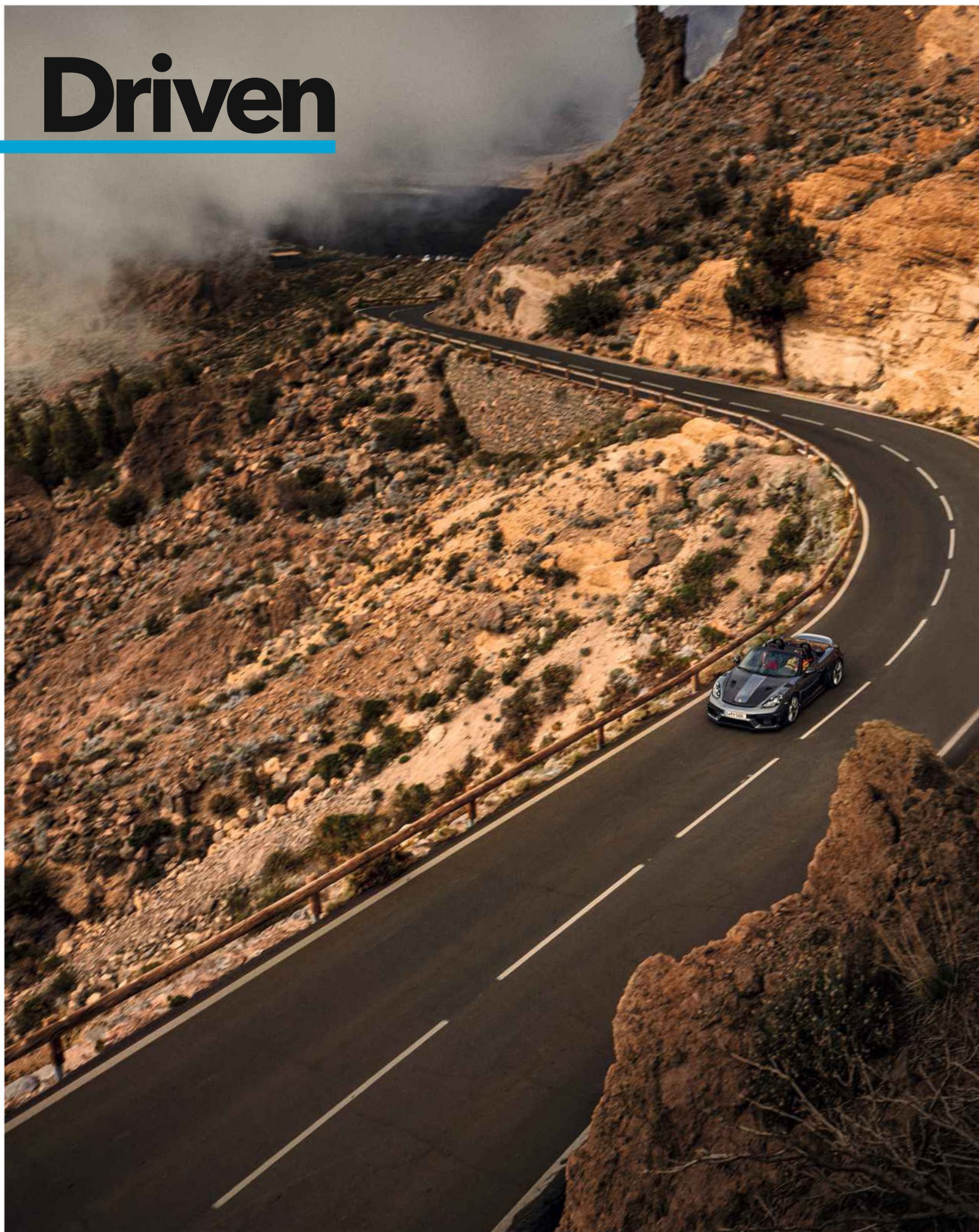
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Driven





by RICHARD MEADEN

Porsche 718 Spyder RS

The combustion-engined Boxster bows out with an RS makeover, creating one of Porsche's best modern sports cars for road driving

IT'S A SIGN OF THE TIMES THAT DESPITE being the fastest, sharpest, most powerful, most expensive and most extreme Boxster ever made, it is for the sad honour of being the last combustion-engined Boxster that the 718 Spyder RS will be best remembered. Let that sink in for a moment. The next time we see Porsche's entry-level sports car it will be powered by batteries.

Whether this product strategy proves to be prescient genius or premature folly remains to be seen. What we can say is that the finality of this moment makes the Spyder RS unusually significant. Thankfully, Andreas Preuninger and his team have made sure the ICE Boxster is receiving the best possible send-off, with a full suite of changes commensurate with being the first soft-top Porsche to be given the RS nameplate.

It's an approach and treatment consistent with the last few RS models. The wildly bewinged 992 GT3 RS and hard-as-nails Cayman GT4 RS both felt as if the architects of Porsche's GT model

line didn't want to leave anything on the table for fear it remained unused as their fast-car world pivots to one of lithium-ion and four-wheel torque vectoring. The £123,000 Spyder RS has the same end-of-days demob-happiness about it.

Its similarities with the GT4 RS are obvious and welcome, but this is more than an exercise in carry-over engineering. So, while the basic powertrain, brakes and suspension are shared, there has been considerable effort expended on character-shifting changes to springs, dampers, steering response and aerodynamics in order to position the Boxster as a sharper, faster and more extreme car than ever before, yet still one primarily intended to be enjoyed on the road.

Central (literally and philosophically) to the Spyder RS transformation is the 4-litre naturally aspirated flat-six from the 992 GT3. We know this motor like an old friend, but it never fails to blow our minds with its magical combination of response, revs and rabid soundtrack. The numbers are still impressive, 493bhp arriving at 8400rpm,



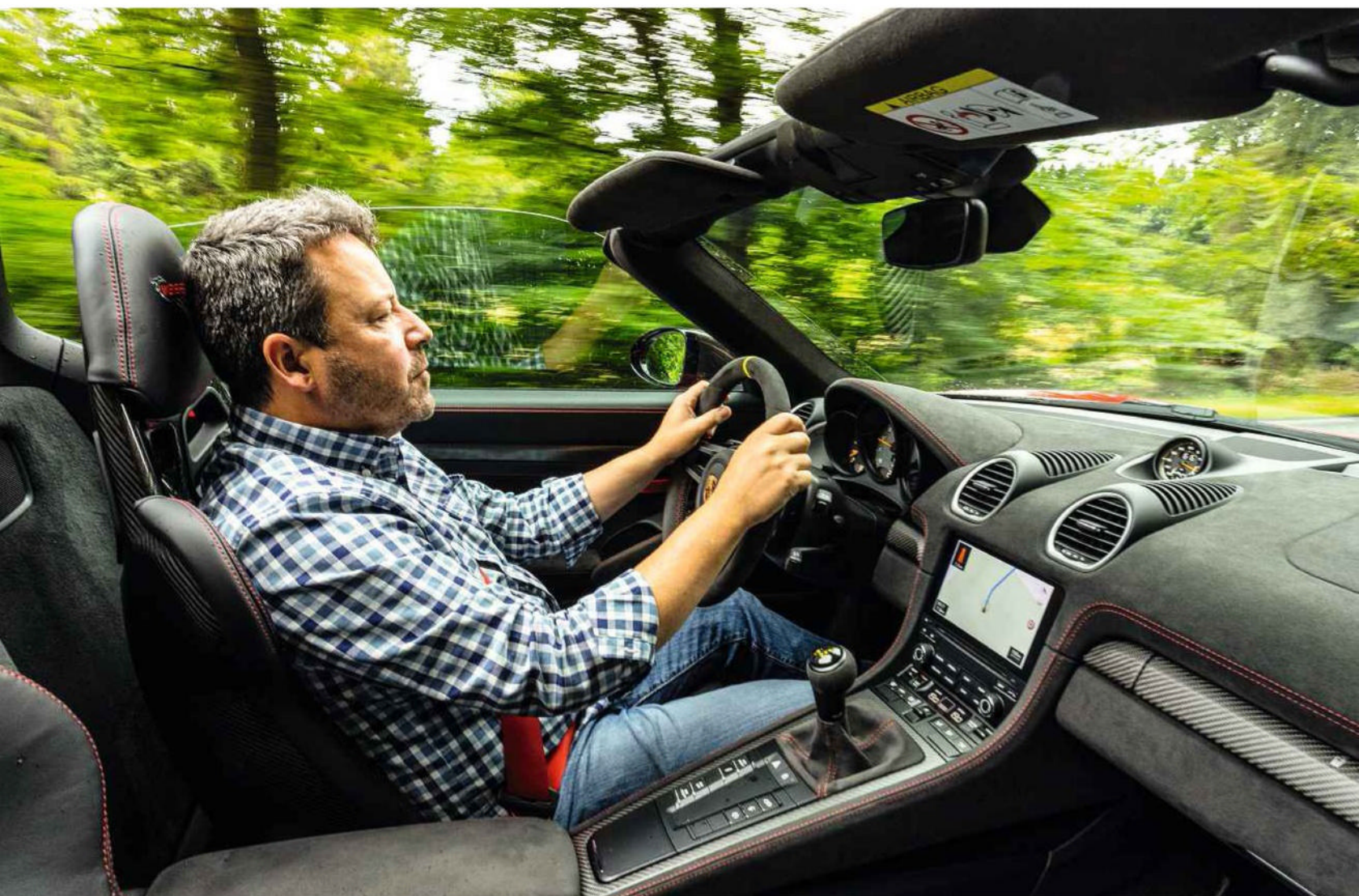
supported by 332lb ft at 6750rpm. That's 79bhp and 15lb ft more than the PDK-equipped version of the regular 718 Spyder (the RS, like the GT3 RS and GT4 RS, is PDK only).

In a car weighing 1410kg – that's 40kg less than the PDK 718 Spyder, 5kg less than the Cayman GT4 RS – it makes for a scintillating partnership. As you'd imagine, in-gear response is genuinely special, with a sense of muscle to match the 9k madness. It's no less special against the clock: 0-62mph is done in 3.4sec, 0-124mph in 10.9. Top speed is a vaguely irrelevant 191mph, but the fact this is achieved at maximum rpm in top gear (seventh) is more significant.

Porsche has adjusted the aerodynamics of this car to reflect its road bias. This means a shorter and less aggressively angled front splitter than the GT4 RS, which in turn means the prominent rear wing has been swapped for a large and rather appealing upswept ducktail spoiler. The underbody does without the guiding vanes found on the GT4 RS, too. All the changes have been made to dial out downforce to the point of zero lift while maintaining high-speed balance.

Weight has been saved over the 718 Spyder by the





use of a carbonfibre front bonnet and seats, while a further 10kg can be trimmed with the magnesium wheels that are available if you select the Weissach Package, which itself adds titanium tailpipes for the stainless steel exhaust. You can also save 8kg by leaving the roof kit in your garage.

Speaking of which, the weather protection is a minimalist marvel. Admittedly it's also somewhat fiddly and time-consuming to erect and stow, but considering the packaging constraints and focus on no extraneous weight it's arguably the finest exercise in improvised engineering since NASA ground staff saved the Apollo 13 crew from CO₂ asphyxiation by devising a hack using a roll of duct tape, two socks and a bungee cord.

The biggest challenge was making the 'sun sail' element of the kit (i.e. the main canvas part that goes over your head) thin enough that it could be rolled up and stowed in the space directly above the engine, which is much reduced versus the regular Spyder thanks to the GT3-sourced motor's taller intake system. The separate panel that wraps around behind the seats to provide full weather-tightness folds up easily and lives in a slipcase that velcros in the rear luggage compartment when not in use.

Left: single-layer soft-top can be used for sun protection or made fully weatherproof by adding the rear deflector element. **Above:** carbon-shelled buckets are standard, as is steering wheel trimmed in Race-Tex microfibre

Typically, despite Germany enduring a heatwave for the previous six weeks, our test drive day dawns to threatening skies and patchy rain. This brings added pressure to the compulsory post-breakfast 'Roof Workshop' in which we're instructed and then tested in the art of roof assembly and disassembly. Only when we've proved ourselves able to MacGyver the roof on are we permitted to head off into the Swabian Alps.

Despite the promising name it's not exactly the Dolomites, but the topography is ragged enough to make for some fun ascents and descents, with fast, sinuous stretches of road that run along wooded valley floors. It's good terrain for the Spyder RS, the variation in elevation and quick-fire twists and turns really highlighting this ultimate Boxster's abundant energy and general sense of being up for whatever you or the road throws at it.

With the roof off there's a great feeling of immersion in the elements, trills of birdsong and

the swoosh of windblown boughs adding texture to the otherwise steely soundscape. With the thin single-skin canopy clipped and stretched in place overhead you gain protection from showers (or baking sun) but there's still plenty of environment noise. Surprisingly there are no annoying eddies, so you can drive without the secondary element of the roof in place, although with both parts securely in position you feel surprisingly snug and could easily travel long distances in poor weather. The noise levels would eventually become tiring, but it's safe to assume Spyder RS owners aren't going to make a regular habit of transcontinental journeys.

Like the GT4 RS, the Spyder RS takes induction noise to a whole new level. There's not the same resonant frequencies that sometimes have you going cross-eyed in the Cayman, but the relationship between throttle opening and engine noise remains direct, intense and at times a little overwhelming. It is possible to make near-silent progress, but it requires you to tickle the throttle with monkish restraint. That's something you're unlikely to do, especially in a car that eggs you on as successfully as the Spyder RS, so you become acclimatised/resigned to the full gamut of roiling,



Driven

**‘It is perhaps the
most immediately
loveable of all the
current Porsche
RS models’**

gurgling, grumbling and bellowing as the butterflies open and air is drawn down through the rear deck-mounted carbon intakes (nicknamed 'music boxes' by Preuninger) with increasing volume, velocity and voracity.

Is it too much? At times, yes, but it feels churlish to moan about what is by any measure a quite remarkable sound. Besides, given the whole reason for the Spyder RS is to celebrate the dying days of Porsche's sensational flat-six (in the Boxster, at least) the occasional excesses can be forgiven. Or mitigated by pushing some cheap foam plugs in your ears. One thing's for sure: we'll miss it when it's gone.

Given the Spyder RS's reflective, end-of-era spirit it's tempting, if a little naïve, to imagine it

with a six-speed manual transmission. It was never going to happen because all modern RSs come with PDK, but it's the human condition to want the things we cannot have. There's no question this car would be fabulous with a stick-shift, but knowing it would come with a set of famously lanky ratios makes the pill a little less bitter.

When you've got the extraordinary 9000rpm range of that GT3 motor to explore, the upsides of this improved short-ratio PDK 'box are obvious. Rather than spending most of your time in 2nd and 3rd you find yourself punching hard between 2nd and 4th on give-and-take roads, maybe electing to work 4th and 5th if you want to let the mid-range torque do more work than the screaming top-end. The taller gearing in the regular GT4 or Spyder has

never felt like a total deal-breaker to me, but then their engines aren't as special as the RS versions, so you're missing out on less. As it stands, the more tightly stacked ratios act like a shot of adrenaline through the Spyder RS's system. And once in PDK Sport mode the shifts are hammer hard and blade sharp. Whether you're working up or down the 'box it's an event every time you pull a paddle.

The adoption of more relaxed spring rates (and similarly backed-off adaptive damping) is an interesting choice, for it underlines the distinction between the GT4 RS's track-focused intent and the Spyder RS's bias towards on-road enjoyment. Being an RS there's still full adjustability in terms of ride height, camber and anti-roll-bar settings, so you can tailor the Boxster's geometry to your taste,



but the underlying pliancy of this less-hardcore set-up is apparent within the first few miles.

It manifests itself in everything the Spyder RS does, but most notably it gives you more confidence and finds greater traction in damp and wet conditions. It feels agile and has a fabulous sense of front-end bite and more progression from the rear end. You don't feel the loss of downforce because road cornering speeds and braking efforts don't keep you in the zone where wings make a big difference. What you do feel is the front-to-rear balance has been preserved with careful matching of that new front splitter and eye-catching ducktail spoiler.

One of the best feelings you can have in the Spyder RS is diving deep into a corner, pinning the nose on the brakes and slicing in towards the apex. If the corner happens to tighten, you simply apply a bit more lock and feel the nose find more bite, all the while knowing that the rear end is equally nailed and not about to complain that it can't live with what the front end is asking of it. There's plenty of detail through the steering and just enough roll for your internal gyroscope to accurately read the lateral forces you're putting through the car. Your bond is intimate and immediate.

Understeer is rarely if ever an issue, even on wet

roads. Instead, once at or near the limit you feel like you're operating in a fluid zone where the front tyres are ever-so-slightly relinquishing their hold, but never losing meaningful purchase. Just when you need some reassurance, it always feels like you have something to work with.

Of course, this being a launch held on German roads, and *evo* being a UK-centric publication, we will have to reserve final judgement on the success of the suspension set-up for when we've explored some of our favourite British roads in the car. This said, early indications are very encouraging. Our love of the regular 718 Spyder on UK roads is well documented; that's significant, as the RS's suspension stiffness is closer to said Spyder's than the GT4 RS's.

As an overall experience the Spyder RS is perhaps the most immediately loveable of all the current RS models. Far less intimidating or overt than the 992 GT3 RS and less of a headbanger than the GT4 RS, the inherently more carefree nature of the Boxster places fewer demands on you to channel your inner Jörg Bergmeister. The RS upgrades make it markedly more aggressive and intense, but its default is still to have fun and enjoy every moment. That's hard not to like.

The inconvenience of the roof might put some people off, but it works very well. UK and indeed German summers may not be the most reliable when it comes to consistent sunshine, but as anyone who has ever lived with an impractical open-top car will tell you, it's often the drives when you get caught in a downpour that are the most memorable. So long as you're not suited and booted and heading to a life-changing job interview, the risk of wet clothes and windswept hair is a small price to pay for a car that unflinchingly has you driving in the moment.

That the 718 Spyder RS bids farewell to the Boxster as a combustion-engined sports car is a melancholy landmark in Porsche's history, but it couldn't bring the era to a close in more memorable or unequivocal style. What comes next has a very tough act to follow. ☒

Engine Flat-six, 3996cc **Power** 493bhp @ 8400rpm

Torque 332lb ft @ 6750rpm

Weight 1410kg (355bhp/ton) **0-62mph** 3.4sec

Top speed 191mph **Basic price** £123,000

evo rating ★★★★★

+ Hugely appealing RS for road driving

- We'll never see another like it

Below and opposite:

exposed-weave carbonfibre elements are part of the £9309 Weissach Package; magnesium wheels are £11,573 for a 10kg saving





by STUART GALLAGHER

Abarth 500e Turismo

There's already an electric version of the Fiat 500; now here's the go-faster model, with the scorpion badge, a very useful 152bhp, and a rather lofty price tag to live up to

T IN HAT ON, HERE WE GO WITH ANOTHER **evo** review of a car that isn't powered by an internal combustion engine. However, bear with us because this could just be the EV that makes the most sense – at least for those who value small cars that are fit for the purpose they were designed for.

You see, the Abarth 500e doesn't have a gazillion horsepower, only 152bhp and 173lb ft of torque. It doesn't squeeze your internal organs into an uncomfortable mess under acceleration because it takes seven seconds to reach 60mph. It also doesn't cost six figures and appeal only to those paying for it through their limited company

and enjoying the associated tax benefits. That said, it *is* hilariously expensive, the tin-top Turismo costing £38,795 and the Turismo Convertible costing an obscene £41,195.

Before we get into the nitty-gritty, it's certainly true to say that the Abarth makes sense for those who need a car for the everyday while their more **evo** automotive jewel sits on trickle charge and is dusted down for longer, more significant journeys. It's the ideal second car for today's world, in other words. For those who can afford it, obviously.

Why so? It comes down to the fit-for-purpose target. The Abarth has a 24mm longer wheelbase and its track width has been increased by 60mm





over the now-defunct petrol-powered models, but you can still park it, bob in and out of suburban traffic, and nip through spaces that would otherwise have you wincing at the forthcoming alloy-wheel repair bill. Just like an Abarth 595 with a 1.4-litre turbocharged engine, really.

It sits on a skateboard-style platform, with the 295kg 42kWh battery (the range is between 150 and 164 miles, depending on trim level) positioned between the axles and the nose stuffed with the 60kg, 113kW motor and the rest of the gubbins required for an EV – kit that would ideally be kept low in the car. So while its weight distribution is improved over the petrol Abarth (57:43 versus 63:37 front-to-rear) there's quite a few kilos high up in the nose as a result. And it feels it, primarily because the Turismo enjoys being driven with what might best be described as the 'hire car technique', which inevitably gets you to a car's dynamic shortfalls quicker than most.

There are three drive modes: Turismo, Scorpion and Track, with the first of these providing you

with a reduced 137bhp, greater regenerative braking performance and the ability to drive using the single-pedal technique. In Scorpion and Track you get the full 152bhp, less regen (none at all in Track) and meatier steering to mask the fact that the EPAS system provides little to no feel. The steering is at least quick and direct, so what it lacks in feedback it makes up for with an unexpected level of accuracy and a willingness to go where you point it, the limiting factor being the grip provided by the EV-specific Bridgestone Potenza Sport tyres. They resist slip well enough and to a high degree, but when they run out of purchase the drop-off is considerable and pretty much instant.

Lacking the playfulness of some of the great ICE superminis, such as VW's brilliant Up GTI, Ford's Fiesta ST and Hyundai's i20 N, not to mention its own petrol-powered ancestors, the sparky Abarth isn't the flat-footed, fun-free zone that most small EVs are either. It makes you adjust your style to suit its capability and within a

few journeys you're in tune with its strengths, balancing grip and slip at moderately low speeds, being hooked into the process as you go and smiling as you do so. Just as with all good superminis.

It has its shortcomings, however. The ride isn't terribly sophisticated (it runs MacPherson struts at the front and a beam at the rear) and can quickly get choppy across a poor surface if you keep your foot in and don't temper your enthusiasm accordingly. And it doesn't feel that quick, although to be fair, 1410kg is a lot for 152bhp to push around. Off the line to 30mph it is typically EV-strong and it reaches cruising speeds in a more than respectable fashion, but having just the single gear it lacks that sense of the performance building and feels incredibly one-dimensional as a result, despite its 'in-gear' performance being quicker by over a second than the petrol-powered models it replaces.

Unfortunately, it also sounds like it's stuck in second or third gear thanks to the standard fitment of the speaker behind the rear bumper and the artificial sound that Abarth spent 6000 hours tuning. Apparently you can turn it off (although I couldn't find the button to do so). Even better would be to throw it in a skip and save some weight.

Yet there's a bigger problem facing the Abarth 500e. Despite looks that are as close to a modern-day interpretation of a Fiat 500 as legislation allows, and an interior that's well appointed, like the majority of the small electric cars that make the most sense to make the biggest difference, the Abarth 500e simply can't justify its price tag. ❌

Motor 113kW **Power** 152bhp **Torque** 173lb ft
Weight 1410kg (110bhp/ton) **0-62mph** 7.0sec
Top speed 96mph **Basic price** £38,795

➕ Feels like a supermini should

❌ As expensive as a full-blown hot hatch

evo rating ★★★★★



by STEPHEN DOBIE

Mercedes-AMG SL63 4Matic+

The SL55 finished last at eCoty 2022. Does a performance and chassis upgrade make the SL63 more convincing?

IT'S FAIR TO SAY THE LATEST SL HASN'T yet bowled us over, despite now being developed fully by AMG and looking so much tauter than its predecessor. With its short overhangs, muscular arches and crisp detailing, you can scarcely believe they've squeezed in an extra pair of seats to make this R232 generation a 2+2. Upon seeing the weeny rear quarters up close, you might wonder why they bothered.

But the SL63's most interesting component sits up front: a 4-litre twin-turbo V8 like the SL55's albeit with a healthy boost, its 577bhp and 590lb ft representing impressive climbs (from 469bhp and 516lb ft) with cooling, intake and exhaust upgrades plus the obligatory retune. Revised active engine mounts and the addition of an electronically controlled limited-slip diff and hydraulically linked damping complete the dynamic makeover. Enough to justify a £25k hike to a chunky £171,965? Time to find out.

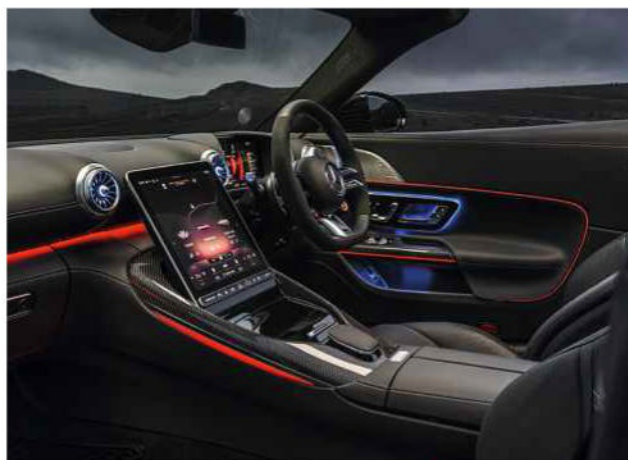
If you balked at where SL prices have swelled to, then best not look too closely at the rest of

the spec sheet. A more galling number is nestled right in the middle: 1895. That's how many kilos the SL63 now weighs and yes, despite a plethora of systems – four-wheel steering among them – you'll definitely notice. But then which modern performance car, outside of a GR86, doesn't slap your face with its kerb weight? It's a waste of energy fretting too much about it – rival engineers at M division admit it's of marginal concern when they can virtually trim the fat in corners with decent hardware and coding.

AMG seemingly does a remarkably good job of that, too, the SL's two-metre width more obviously stemming your flow on a favourite stretch of road. The more inevitable by-product of managing its mass is a firm ride. Comfort mode almost lives up to the name while occasionally feeling a bit aloof in its reactions, and pockmarked surfaces will always make themselves known. Not through any loss of composure, rather by the vocal thumping of those 21-inch wheels and exacerbated interior rattles that are unbecoming at this sort of price point. Eek.

Ramp things up to Sport and its composure only improves, albeit with an inescapable firmness that sends a clear message that the AMG-ification of the SL has lobbed some of its old grand touring capabilities over the wind deflector. Sport Plus feels – to little surprise – excessive for the road. Stick in the middle and you have a car that bludgeons the road beneath it with a swagger not unlike a GT-R's, a similar lack of subtlety on display. This is true whether the fabric roof is folded or closed, with no tangible wobble or tell-tale shake of the rear-view mirror. This is clearly a strongly reinforced roadster – as you'd well hope, given how much timber it carries.

It impresses you most as it leaves a corner. This is no agile sports car, rather a robust hot-rod familiar from AMG folklore. Like its 55 sibling, the 63 gets 4Matic+ all-wheel drive as standard, and it's a supremely proficient system that favours traction over mischief. M division has made a looser-hipped AWD



system than this, AMG playing things with a straighter bat. Perhaps a more dynamic tune of 4Matic+ is being saved for the next AMG GT, which borrows much of the SL's componentry but will surely exhibit its own dynamic character. For all the infinite headroom the SL offers, it feels like it's brushing against a glass ceiling of its own.

The brakes deserve praise, though, the optional ceramics of this test car (£4150) not once complaining about the unenviable shift they're putting in. The engine is an absolute corker, too, revving sharply and sounding every bit as thunderous as AMG V8s ever did, a flourish of turbo chuff and whistle increasing the drama at the lower revs you'll mostly hover around. The nine-speed gearbox is best left to its own devices; visit a well-loved second-gear corner and you might lunge frustratingly into the limiter before exit. Yet there's still satisfaction in pulling its paddles, the bigger frustration being how minor the gear display

is within the vastly configurable digital instrument cluster. With so many ratios you need a clearer picture of which one you're in.

There are a few more qualms in the same mould. While it's nice that AMG has had the good sense to lose the outgoing GT's bank of drive mode buttons from the transmission tunnel, the digital switches on the steering wheel prove distracting until you're fully familiarised with how they operate. The tablet-like touchscreen feels too pervasive inside a car with such an apparently sporting focus, too. Its angle can be electronically adjusted but must be done via an on-screen slider, whose slight time lag makes the process frustrating. Some joy at the apparent simplicity (and weight-saving) of the SL's return to a fabric roof will dissolve when you realise it's controlled in a similar vein. Twice it got stuck halfway and I needed to reboot the whole car to fix the issue.

The SL moves in lofty circles, priced against the Bentley Continental GTC, forthcoming

Above: addition of an electronically controlled diff, four-wheel steering, hydraulically linked damping and (in the case of our test car) the optional carbon-ceramic discs helps the SL63 keep its 1895kg and 577bhp in check

Ferrari Roma Spider and 911 Turbo Cabriolet. It feels a more composed and assured car than the 55, its extra power injecting some welcome bombast while those chassis tweaks breed more confidence. Perhaps there's more technical complexity than we'd like, and its curious remit – somewhere between GT and sports car – gains no more clarity here. But don't overthink the role this SL plays and it's largely very easy to like. ❌

Engine V8, 3982cc, twin-turbo **Power** 577bhp @ 5550-6500rpm **Torque** 590lb ft @ 2500-5000rpm **Weight** 1895kg **Power-to-weight** 309bhp/ton **0-62mph** 3.6sec **Top speed** 196mph **Basic price** £171,965

➕ A welcome performance boost over the SL55

➖ Still not a stellar sports car; pricey

evo rating ★★★★★



by SAM JENKINS

BMW Alpina B8 Gran Coupé

Alpina's 612bhp take on the 8-series Gran Coupé goes heavy on the luxury to offer a distinctive GT experience

WITH OVER 800 EXAMPLES SOLD SINCE its launch in 2022, the B8 Gran Coupé is an important model for Alpina. Primarily sold to the US market, it's an understated alternative to the likes of the Bentley Continental GT and Mercedes-AMG GT63, with a focus on luxury and dynamic ability. So where BMW's M8 Competition Gran Coupé has always seemed somewhat redundant in a world in which M5s exist, the more luxurious and more road-biased B8 makes a much clearer case for itself.

Which is exactly what Alpina intended. With effortless power, a class-leading top speed and distinctive yet discreet styling, the B8 is intended to be a go-to long-distance tool. Based on the BMW M850i, it comes with a development of that car's 4.4-litre twin-turbocharged N63 V8, a revised peak power output of 612bhp putting it just 4bhp behind Munich's M8 Competition, and peak torque of 590lb ft some 37lb ft stronger.

This new-found potency comes courtesy of an uprated turbocharging system, which in turn is bolstered by bespoke radiators with 50 per cent more surface area to ensure engine temperatures remain stable, plus improved cooling of the eight-speed ZF automatic to allow for that torque bump. With power sent through BMW's xDrive all-wheel-drive system, a brisk 3.4sec 0-62mph time is claimed – two-tenths behind the M8 Competition – while the absence of a speed limiter puts 201mph on the cards. In the saloon class only the 650bhp, W12-engined Continental GT goes faster, topping out at 208mph.

Having recently sampled Alpina's B5 GT (see **evo** 313), the B8 Gran Coupé feels an entirely different prospect. With an even greater focus on pampering its passengers, its tastefully trimmed cabin is more akin to what you'd find in a Bentley than a BMW, with truly excellent build quality and materials. Branded door sills, new aluminium

shift paddles and other subtle Alpina touches are scattered throughout, but the cabin can be completely reupholstered to the buyer's liking, with everything from the lurid to the restrained entirely possible.

Despite its supercar-troubling performance, the B8's exterior design is as understated as we've come to expect from Alpina. Building on the M850i, a new front splitter, rear diffuser and boot-mounted lip spoiler are the key giveaways. You may also notice the enlarged lower front intakes that ensure an ample flow of cooling air to that uprated engine, while within the aforementioned diffuser are the quad-exit tips for the new exhaust system. And, of course, it wouldn't be an Alpina without those trademark 20-spoke wheels, here in a 21-inch diameter.

Zandvoort is the location for our test, and while a fascinating circuit to drive, it's not exactly the natural home for a B8. Nevertheless, once



Left: classic slim-spoked Alpina alloys allow a good view of the 395mm drilled brake discs that sit behind. **Bottom:** interior is loaded with premium materials and a quality of finish that's a cut above standard BMW fare



underway the B8 offers some of the same confidence-inspiring grip and stability as the B5 GT, handling Zandvoort's tricky, high-speed banked sections without an issue. What the track does expose, however, is the car's weight. At 2100kg, the B8 Gran Coupé is 120kg heavier than the already-hefty B5 GT. Of course, kerb weight is hardly a priority in a luxury grand tourer, but when combined with a less rear-driven configuration than we'd perhaps like, it does contribute to a dose of understeer when the chassis is under pressure. Compounding the issue is a lack of off-centre steering precision, with the overly thick steering wheel rim delivering very little in the way of feel.

All-wheel drive and an output in excess of 600bhp will always be a recipe for strong straight-line performance, and the B8 is no exception to this rule, even if its mass does rob it of some of the urgency of similarly powerful rivals. Braking,





'With refinement, luxury and performance, it nails its GT brief'

meanwhile, is handled by four-piston front calipers and floating rear calipers acting upon 395mm and 398mm discs respectively, which should be more than adequate for spirited road driving, if not quite up to dealing with extended track sessions.

Chassis-wise, a set of Eibach springs are matched with adaptive dampers, with Alpina utilising new hydro mounts for the front struts to further enhance the ride quality. For the same reason, the bespoke Pirelli tyres feature sound-insulating foam on the front axle to eliminate undesirable frequencies. Said tyres are 245 and 285-section front and rear respectively, with a profile of just 30 all-round thanks to the large diameter of those forged



Above: twin-turbocharged 4.4-litre V8 produces 89bhp and 37lb ft more than in BMW's M850i, taking the total outputs to an M8-rivalling 612bhp and 590lb ft

alloys. Though this set-up provides the classic Alpina image, such minimalist sidewalls could be a brave choice on UK roads, if not for concerns over punctures and buckled wheels then for their effect on ride quality. That said, many an Alpina has defied the expectations engendered by its wheel and tyre package, and the refinement during our test – with that 'on track' caveat once again – is indeed impressive.

The B8 Gran Coupé isn't as driver-focused as Alpina's B4 or B5 GT, but with even more refinement, luxury and an abundance of useable performance, there's no doubt it nails its GT brief. Priced from £140,300, it costs almost £30,000 more than the 523bhp M850i it's based on, but is a negligible £2800 more than the similarly powerful BMW M8 Competition. Porsche's Panamera Turbo S (621bhp) is only £1100 more expensive, but lacks the exclusivity of the B8 and isn't a match inside, while a Bentley Continental GT offers considerably less on-paper performance for the money, the 542bhp V8 model beginning at just under £200,000. Viewed in those terms, the B8 Gran Coupé's popularity starts to make an awful lot of sense. ☒

Engine V8, 4394cc, twin-turbo **Power** 612bhp @ 5500-6500rpm **Torque** 590lb ft @ 2000-5000rpm
Weight 2100kg (296bhp/ton) **0-62mph** 3.4sec
Top speed 201mph **Basic price** £140,300

+ Strong performance, discreet design, 200mph capability

☒ Weight, price

evo rating ★★★★★



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Magic number

Alfa Romeo reinvents the 33 Stradale as a limited-run supercar with an EV option

by JAMES TAYLOR





A NEW, ROAD-GOING ALFA ROMEO supercar has been rumoured since... well, forever. There's been the 8C grand tourer and the 4C sports car, but arguably the only true supercar in Alfa's history is 1967's 33 Stradale, a road-going version of the achingly pretty Tipo 33 endurance racer.

Now a flagship Alfa supercar is about to become a reality – and it takes both its name and direct inspiration from the 33 Stradale. It's a low-volume special rather than a series-production car to battle Ferrari, Lamborghini and Maserati – so in that sense

it's not quite the full enthusiast's impossible dream made real – and only 33 cars will be built, echoing the name. All have been sold prior to reveal, at an undisclosed price (although expect it to be in the region of €3 million). Nevertheless, a road-going Alfa Romeo supercar is about to happen – and if its design stays true to the concept preview pictured here, it's going to be a show-stopping machine.

The modern-day 33 will be available as either a V6-powered petrol car or a fully electric battery-powered model. Alfa Romeo isn't currently disclosing details of the sales split between combustion and

EV versions, but since the company has committed to producing only electric cars from 2025, the 33 will be a swansong for the traditional Alfa performance car, and the company's mighty V6 engine.

The cars will be assembled outside of Alfa by the Touring Superleggera coachbuilding company, a historic name which currently builds one-off and low-volume rebodied commissions based on existing cars. Alfa Romeo CEO Jean-Philippe Imparato has implied more low-volume Alfas could be on the cards: 'The new 33 Stradale is the brand's first custom-built car since 1969, and I promise it will not be the last.'

DESIGN

The 33 is the first chance for new Alfa Romeo head of design Alejandro Mesonero-Romanos, previously design boss at SEAT before moving to Alfa (via a brief stint at Renault/Dacia) in summer 2021, to put his stamp on a project.

Although the design overtly references the original 33 Stradale, it's a thoroughly modern treatment in terms of volumes and surfaces.

Alfa Romeo is proud of the fact that the 33 does not feature active aerodynamics and yet still achieves a low drag coefficient and negative lift at high speeds. The headlights incorporate air intakes to both feed the radiator and channel airflow to reduce drag and lift. The door-mirror supports, too, are aerodynamic winglets.

The front and rear one-piece bodywork sections – or *cofangos* – open symmetrically as per the original: a deliberately theatrical touch as well as allowing easy access to the 33's innards.

The Alfa 33 is based around the structure of the Maserati MC20. The chassis is a carbonfibre monocoque with aluminium subframes, while the roof is a mix of carbon and aluminium. The butterfly doors are carbon and the rear screen is in weight-saving polycarbonate.

Right: if the finished car stays true to the concept, the 33 is going to be something very special indeed. We'll take ours with the V6, thanks

POWERTRAIN

The split-personality powertrain choice is either pure electric, with three motors, all-wheel drive and total power of around 750bhp, or petrol-powered via a 620bhp twin-turbo V6 related to that found in the Giulia and Stelvio Quadrifoglio.

Perhaps that shouldn't come as a surprise; after all, the related Maserati MC20 is available in combustion-powered form now, with the electric Folgore version soon to follow. Alfa states that the 3-litre V6 is a development of the 2.9-litre unit fitted to its road cars, and it's transversely mounted in the 33, whereas Maserati's 3-litre V6 Nettuno engine is longitudinally positioned in the MC20 supercar.

Top speed of both versions is claimed to be 207mph (or a poetically appropriate 333kph), with 0-62mph in less than three seconds.

While the BEV 33 is all-wheel drive, V6 versions will power the rear wheels only, via an eight-speed dual-clutch transmission and e-diff. Estimated range for the electric version is 280 miles.

INTERIOR

The driver sits behind a 3D 'telescope' instrument panel, with different displays depending on whether they have selected Road or Track driving modes.

Refreshingly, there are no buttons on the wheel: controls are instead split between the centre console and the roof, with a blend of mechanical switches and a retractable touchscreen.

Wraparound seats taking inspiration from the original 33 Stradale's are electrically powered with six-way adjustment. There's a choice of two trim schemes for the interior: Tributo (referencing the original car and pictured here) and Alfa Corse (a more modern, race-inspired look, swapping the steering wheel's aluminium spokes for carbonfibre, for example), with materials including aluminium, leather, Alcantara and carbonfibre.

DYNAMICS

Alfa promises the car will be at home on both track and road. The 33 features double-wishbone suspension all round, with active dampers, plus a 50mm front axle lift for speedbumps.

It also features a brake-by-wire system, operating Brembo-supplied carbon-ceramic brakes, with six-piston calipers at the front and four-pot at the rear, painted in whatever colour the customers desire.

Development is taking place at Alfa Romeo's Balocco test track, with F1 driver Valtteri Bottas involved in the car's development. **X**





By YOUSUF ASHRAF

Silence of the Lambo

Lanzador concept previews first battery-powered Lamborghini, due to arrive in 2028



LAMBORGHINI IS GEARING UP FOR ITS pure-electric future, and while the Revuelto and the forthcoming Huracán replacement will use hybrid powertrains to prolong the life of the combustion engine, the first Lamborghini EV isn't far away. With that comes the biggest challenge the brand has faced to date: more than any other manufacturer, the identity of Lamborghini is intrinsically tied to the sound, feel and response of the spectacular engines it has given us over the decades. How on earth do you capture that with an electric powertrain? Is it even possible? The new Lanzador concept is here to answer some of those questions.

It may look like a peculiar mish-mash of Revuelto and Urus, but the Lanzador isn't just the whim of Lamborghini's design team. It previews

a production model that will arrive in 2028 as the firm's first electric car: a grand tourer with a jacked-up two-door bodystyle and a 2+2 cabin. Why begin with an electric GT and not an all-out supercar? Lamborghini's chief technical officer, Rouven Mohr, admits that with current technology no electric supercar captures the essential emotion and excitement he's looking for, and an EV powertrain feels better suited to a more relaxed, useable GT at present. That doesn't mean electric supercars aren't on the horizon, but Lamborghini is holding fire until battery and motor technology becomes lighter and more advanced.

Performance figures for the Lanzador are thin on the ground, but we do know that it uses a dedicated EV platform with an electric motor mounted at each axle. The production car will draw

heavily from the Volkswagen Group's component toolbox – likely through the use of the SSP Sport platform that will underpin future Bentleys and Porsches – but Lamborghini stresses that the Lanzador's performance and engineering parameters have been ingrained from the outset.

In the concept, the two motors are claimed to generate more than one megawatt of power (1341bhp), and this seems entirely plausible in the context of the SSP Sport platform, which is confirmed to offer 1700bhp+ in its most powerful configuration. But Lamborghini recognises the need to deliver more beyond the raw numbers, and aims to instil the Lanzador with a unique dynamic character to distinguish it from other electric GTs.

The show car acts as a rolling laboratory for some of these ideas, most of which revolve around



a newly developed LDVI (Lamborghini Dynamic Vehicle Integration) system that tailors the car's dynamic behaviour on the fly. Compared with the current generation of LDVI fitted to the Revuelto, the Lanzador contains more sensors and actuators to optimise chassis response, rear-wheel steering and torque distribution, plus a new front-mounted radar to scan the road ahead and prime the car's active air suspension to suit.


Key to the Lanzador's handling characteristics is the calibration of the dual electric motor set-up, which uses a wheel-speed controller to regulate torque at each wheel to optimise turn-in and traction. According to Mohr, the reason for using two motors – rather than a triple motor system that would enable more precise torque vectoring – is that this layout offers a more natural feel when

sliding the car. The Lanzador categorically won't try to simulate the sound and delivery of an ICE car, but the firm will look at new ways to conjure a more engaging, interactive power delivery than existing electric cars.

It won't be built with track use in mind, either. Some of the car's development has taken place on circuit and it will be competent in this environment, says Lamborghini, but this is primarily a road-going GT – hence bodywork formed to reduce drag. For greater duality, the Lanzador offers two modes – Efficiency and Downforce – which configure its moveable aero devices and cooling ducts to optimise either range or high-speed stability, while the enormous 23-inch wheels feature their own aeroblade inserts to minimise turbulence.

Melding all of these systems together is a new

suite of drive modes, each of which provides a more distinct flavour than would be possible with an equivalent ICE model. Rather than giving the driver complete freedom to define the character of the car (as in a Rimac Nevera, for example), Lamborghini will develop its own presets to change steering behaviour, damping, torque delivery and aero settings (among others) in one hit.

The elephant in the room, of course, is how much all this is going to weigh. Mohr has set the target of producing the lightest electric GT car in the segment, with the Lanzador projected to weigh less than hybrids of a similar size. Admittedly, that's a low bar when most easily exceed two tons, but we're intrigued to feel the results of Lamborghini's full technical might in the electric age. 



Paddy Lowe

F1 engineer, efuel pioneer and classic rallying nut

We talk to the F1 engineer who won world championships with Williams, McLaren and Mercedes, and is now heading up the carbon-neutral fuel company Zero Petroleum

by JOHN BARKER

PADDY LOWE WORKED IN FORMULA 1 for 32 years, winning constructors' titles with Williams, McLaren and Mercedes, and drivers' titles with Mansell, Häkkinen and Hamilton, but F1 wasn't his first or even his second love. 'The East African Safari Rally used to come past our house every year and I was absolutely crazy about it,' he recalls. 'These were the days when it was a proper Safari, when you might only get seven finishers out of the whole field. Pro cars used to come from Europe, Porsche and the like, and generally got beaten by the locals, drivers like Joginder Singh. The only old car I'd love to own is a Datsun 240Z.'

Patrick Allen Lowe was born in Nairobi to parents who were Irish missionaries, and lived in Uganda until the age of 12. 'We were on our bicycles all day, exploring the neighbourhood, which was quite remote. I grew up with tyre spanners, inner tubes and chains. Then it got a little bit difficult because this was 1974, Idi Amin was in power and it was starting to get a little bit dangerous.'

Relocated to London, Paddy continued to shine academically. Without any real plan, he followed in his brother Michael's footsteps and studied engineering. 'I thought, I like the same things as him so that's obviously what I should do. So I went to the best place I could, Cambridge.' He was sponsored by the Metal Box Company, a packaging business that invested in young talent hoping that some would stay. 'It was a thing called a thick sandwich: you did a year training with them, three years in university, and then a year with them after.'

Lowe passed his bike test at 17 and for a few years rode a Triumph Tiger Cub that he'd built from

bits. 'It was old even then, in '79, but it was quite cool to have this old British bike when everyone else had Yamaha FS1Es.' He had bikes all through university, earning money as a long-distance dispatch rider between lessons, riding a Kawasaki Z650. 'Best bike I ever had,' he says.

Studies complete, he joined Metal Box and lasted almost a year. 'A friend said, why don't you work in Formula 1? I never thought that might be a job. There was no internet in those days; you had to find out everything from places like the school library.' He found the addresses of three teams – Williams, Arrows and Benetton – and wrote to them. Only Frank Dernie at Williams wrote back. Lowe went for an interview and got the job.

'My degree is in general engineering – at Cambridge they don't specialise particularly – but I had shown the strongest interest in control systems. The job at Williams was to be a control engineer for the active suspension project. This was September '87 and they had just decided to race it next season. Not only were they a bit late employing people to do that, they literally had nobody who knew anything about electronics or software...

'F1 teams were very small in those days. I was around the 100th employee and there were about four or five of us working on active suspension.' There was a working system that they'd taken to Monza but not raced, and it was famously abandoned at the British Grand Prix in 1988. 'It was absolutely the right thing to do because it wasn't ready and there were a lot of other more basic problems with that car,' says Lowe.

'We came back in '92 with a system that was reliable, safe and that delivered. When we started







out, the logging was very rudimentary. There were only about 16 channels of data, literally enough to record one lap, so we were very much relying on driver feedback. In the three years we'd developed the infrastructure to support the system, which included recruiting people and building up the knowledge of electronics, instrumentation, hydraulics, data recording and analysis tools.

'Nigel Mansell was one of our drivers. He'd had the bad experience of the system in '88, so he was a bit nervous, but as soon as he drove it he realised we now knew what we were doing. And he was a driver that could really exploit it because it was a system that required incredible confidence. Or bravery or lack of imagination! Nigel brought all of that in spades.' In '92, the Williams FW14B won the constructors' title, ending a four-year McLaren streak, and Mansell was drivers' champion.

The system allowed another innovation: traction control. 'The first time we tested it was with Damon Hill. He came in and said "I can feel it working but I think it's holding me back," and we said, yeah, we can see in the data that it's working hard, but you're actually a second per lap quicker...' The irony was that for all its complexity and time invested, active suspension gave exactly the same: one second per lap. 'Traction control was just a line of code. I know, I wrote it,' laughs Lowe.

'When I came into Formula 1, other than the engine ECU, they were really mechanical teams. There just weren't electronics or systems or software people there. Almost by default, I was the head of IT for Williams because I was the first person that bought a desktop computer!'

Having been instrumental in delivering active suspension, Lowe left to join McLaren for 1993. 'I thought it was a good moment to leave and do something different, move up the ladder a bit.' He came in as head of R&D at McLaren but found there was resistance to new ideas because they'd been so successful, so dominant until Williams beat them. 'They believed they'd simply messed up and just

needed to fix a few errors to get back to winning ways. In fact, there were many technologies they didn't investigate. That's why I was there. But there was some resistance to that and it took some years to come through.' It was another seven years before McLaren claimed the constructors' title again.

Although Lowe had moved up the ladder, his car tastes remained modest. For many years his daily driver was a lightweight, JDM Impreza STI. 'I'm not a collector of cars. I'm not even a collector of motorbikes. I imported the Subaru at a cost of £21,000 and the performance per pound was mind-blowing; it would outperform a Porsche any day. I drove it to work every day for seven years and I never had a moment that scared me because it was so well balanced and controlled. It was a four-door, in those days the car of choice for bank robbers; massive boot, you could get the whole gang in easily and no police car could catch it.

'McLaren always had a bit of an image back then of being grey, a bit dull, but actually we had a really good laugh. I wouldn't have stayed for 20 years if it wasn't a great place to work.' The highlight of his time there? 'I think 2008 would be the pinnacle, when we got Lewis his championship. It was tooth and nail with Ferrari, you couldn't leave anything on the table, and we got it in the end. Especially after the disappointment of 2007 when both our drivers missed it by one point. That was a very painful miss.'

Was Lewis a cut above? 'There are drivers that are really exceptional. Nigel is one of those, Lewis is certainly one of those... Lewis is never the guy you worry about in terms of pushing the car, race craft, can he overtake? He'll do anything to win. Nigel was the same. That's what separates the best from the very, very good. And they're all very, very good.'

From then on at McLaren it started to become frustrating, says Lowe, because they kept coming

second. 'I'm not there to come second. One of the frustrations was having an incredibly talented team that I couldn't enable to do what they needed to do because there wasn't the money to do it. We were not resourced to win. That's ultimately why I left. It was then the opposite at Mercedes.'

Lowe joined the newly formed Mercedes-AMG team as executive director in June 2013. Even knowing how committed they were, he was surprised at how quickly they were successful. 'They had done what they needed to do on all fronts, made the investment. So in 2014 when the new 1.6-litre V6 turbo regulations came in, their engine was much better than anyone else's.

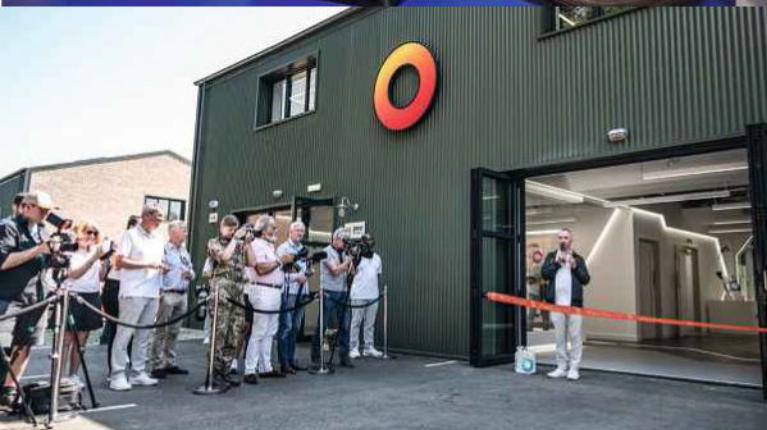
'There was an understanding that it wasn't a game of efficiency. We were going all-out for wins, not making paper clips, and that meant out-gunning everybody. It's a different sport now with the cost cap, which brings efficiency to the fore; you've got to spend your money on the right things.'

It was an incredibly successful time for Mercedes-AMG, yet after a hat-trick of team titles, in 2017 Lowe left and went back to Williams as CTO. There was to be no quick change of fortune for the team and in 2019 Lowe left. He describes the period as 'really hard work for no reward whatsoever' and the only part of his F1 career he didn't enjoy.

It hasn't taken the shine off a remarkably successful career. Lowe has seen the sport transition from purely mechanical to the age of electronics, from small scale to teams of 1000, and from innovation to prescription. 'I've lived through that entire transition, through that inversion from "you can do what you like but we're not very well equipped to deliver it" to "there are very few things we can do but we're incredibly well equipped to deliver them". Today, the rule book is very, very thick and opportunities for invention incredibly rare. You really can't invent a new gearbox or traction control or F-duct; all these things have been closed down. Yet the engineering is incredibly sophisticated and attracts some of the best engineers in the world.'

Re-joining Williams in 2017 wasn't all bad for Lowe because he reconnected with Simon Wells, then Williams' operations director. 'We go back right to the beginning,' says Lowe. 'We worked together on the Williams active car. Simon was instrumental in making that system work.' Wells is now operations director of Lowe's new venture, Zero, which is aiming to make carbon-neutral synthetic fuels in commercial quantities. Another ex-colleague is Zero's CTO, Doug McKiernan, the McLaren aerodynamicist who designed many successful cars, including the one that took Lewis to the 2008 title. 'That's what we want at Zero,' says Lowe, 'friends, colleagues and ex-colleagues, some of the very best people I've worked with.' ❧

Above: Lowe with Jenson Button after the Brit took the McLaren MP4-26 to victory in the 2011 Japanese GP. **Opposite, clockwise from top left:** Lowe built a Triumph Tiger Cub from bits when he was 17; Mansell in Williams FW14B; for many years Lowe's daily driver was a JDM Impreza STI; Hamilton was the other driver Lowe calls 'exceptional'; opening of Zero





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On the right tracks

I just wanted to praise Richard Porter for his over-analysis of song lyrics (column, *evo* 312). I laughed out loud!

As it happens, the lyrics for Feeder's 'Buck Rogers' were meant to be a temporary placeholder whilst they were working the song out – but the label then insisted the band used the song with those words unchanged, much to their chagrin. So the 'brand new car' is probably only 'like a Jaguar' because it rhymes.

As for Rihanna, I believe she still keeps her old Mk3 Suzuki Jimny in her native Barbados; maybe that'd do the 'zero to sixty in 3.5' that she mentions in her lyrics if she's Hayabusa-swapped it? An aspiration worth singing about, at least...

Michael Gooderham

Mission: very possible

I was amused to read Julian Andrews' letter (issue 313) in which he berates *evo*'s 'rocket scientists' for testing the new BMW M2 against a Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 when the latter 'can't even take a picnic hamper as sizeable luggage'.

I assume from his comments that he's not familiar with a Porsche Cayman but I can enlighten him...

Last month my wife and I had a ten-day road trip to Italy in our Cayman, visiting Ferrari, Lamborghini and Ducati, and finishing off with two days walking in the Dolomites and the Black Forest. Fortunately we hadn't planned any picnics so we left the hamper at home and made do with plenty of clothes, walking boots, rucksacks, etc.

Andrew Tempest



Changing times

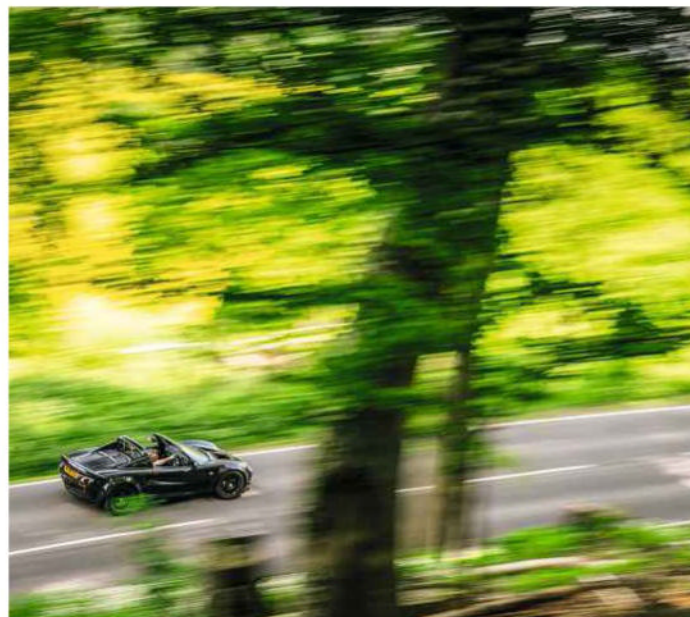
I feel compelled to write in response to the most moronic letter I've read in *evo* (Inbox, 312). I'll name no names as I am pulling no punches, but it was utterly idiotic – like a child stamping its feet because it's not getting its own way.

By featuring EVs, *evo* is just doing its duty in reflecting what's going on in the car world; there's no point in it acting the Luddite and solely covering the kind of cars for which the writing is on the wall. Surely it's also far better that manufacturers start making EVs now and hone their talents (with feedback from the better sections of the motoring press), rather than leaving everything to the last minute?

I won't fall into the trap of making this email about my car but it's not economical and I'll never get rid of it. I have to accept that I've played my part in getting us where we are, so I use the car less and make sure I enjoy it thoroughly when I do. I'll also go for sustainable fuels when they become halfway sensible in availability and pricing.

But the fact remains, we're changing the world for the worse. The proof? 1) The science is good enough for Attenborough, so it's good enough for me. 2) There were 69,406 articles on the subject in peer-reviewed scientific journals (i.e. ones where you can't just make things up) in the 50-odd years leading up to 2015 (source: Steven Pinker's 'Enlightenment Now'), and all bar four agree that climate change is anthropogenic. 3) I used to sledge every winter as a child in the village in which I still live. If my kids had been given such things, they'd have literally never been used.

So, time to grow up and accept



LETTER OF THE MONTH

Restomadness

READING ABOUT ANALOGUE AUTOMOTIVE'S £100,000

Lotus Elise restomod (*evo* 311 and 313), I can't help but imagine those of us from the *Max Power* generation giving each other a knowing nod.

For years cars have been getting heavier and heavier, with more tech jammed in, taking us further away from what made us fall in love with cars in the first place. So now we celebrate the previously sneered-at modifiers, give their creations the new title of 'restomod', and don't even blink at the massive sums charged.

Yes, the execution may be of a much higher quality than most of us achieved in our garages at home, but surely this is proof – if more was needed – for the manufacturers that consumers are craving a return to old-school-style, light-weight and lower-powered cars, rather than their current bloated and often soulless electric offerings?

Until then, to the garage tinkerers, I salute you. There's money to be made from this *Max Power* revival...

Craig Muir

The Letter of the Month wins a Straton watch

The writer of this month's star letter receives a Straton Vintage Driver worth £289. With automotive-inspired styling, the Vintage Driver was Straton's first ever model. It has now been reimagined and rereleased for 2023 in six different colours.

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that our world as car enthusiasts is changing. Try to make positive contributions where you can, accept that you won't be perfect and bear in mind that those who point the finger often have their sins too. And don't use the word 'woke', unless you want to sound like a fool.

Simon Bartlett

Going for woke

It seems evident from Richard Downey's fashionable misuse of the word 'woke' (Inbox, **evo** 312), that he's not a details man, and so presumably has failed to notice the tagline of the magazine he's reading: 'The Thrill of Driving'. As the major print publication to concentrate on driving enjoyment, where better for people to read critical dynamic reviews of the coming generation of electric vehicles?

I have always assumed that **evo** is agnostic to the propulsion system, whether ICE, battery, gas turbine or hydrogen, and simply reports on whether it adds to, or detracts from, the driving experience.

A few issues back, I had to read 20-odd pages before I got to the first article that didn't involve an SUV, but I didn't write in wailing about it, because I realise the **evo** team have to cover what the industry presents to them, and tell us if it's any good or not!

The Thrill of Driving is more than just an engine, and hopefully that will continue to be recognised.

Andrew Kirkby, Cumbria

Driven to distraction

In the latest Fast Fleet report for **evo**'s Skoda Superb (issue 313) I finally read an honest statement about the 'touchscreen nightmare' of many VW Group cars, Jethro Bovingdon giving the example that he couldn't change the climate control temperature

'without wanting to crash the car into a tree, jump out and set it on fire in frustration'.

Since changing 18 months ago from an older, super-useable VW to a new model with the infotainment screen in question I can only wonder what conspiracy has existed to stop journalists exposing how poor the system is. The heating controls are dangerous if you're not stationary, navigation has a limited index and typing addresses reminds me of using computers in the 1980s, radio controls divert your attention, and even the fresh-air vents can't be opened without going through screens. And don't try to do any of this in a hurry after starting the car; you'll get used to the response of 'this function is not available'.

I could go on at length, but I am now selling the car.

Douglas Dryden

Best buying

Issue 310 arrived and I read with interest the 'Best Buys' article about roadsters, and particularly the section on the Mercedes SLK55 AMG

A couple of evenings later, after being dumped by my then girlfriend, a bottle of wine down and eBay open, I was soon the proud owner of an R171 SLK55 AMG! Thanks!

In actual fact I really mean it. Thank you. What a great fun little car it is, once you've got your head round the slow-witted gearbox, though resetting its memory has improved things greatly. It's loud, thirsty, good looking, (much like the ex-girlfriend actually...), oh, and fast enough to make you giggle out loud.

Please, though, no more articles of temptation. I'm not sure my bank account would cope...

Matt Baldry

Watches

Three of the best new three-hand models



Swatch What If?

£91 swatch.com

Back in 1982, when establishing the form of the original Swatch watch, the brand's designers decided that a round dial was the way to go. But a square dial was also considered and reached the prototyping stage.

Now, four decades later, it has entered production, with a case made from Swatch's latest bioceramic material (a blend of ceramic powder and biosourced materials) and a choice of four colour schemes.



Mido Multifort TV Big Date

From £980 midowatches.com

'TV dials' were all the rage in the 1970s, but the look rapidly fell out of popularity as the '80s took hold. Now it appears to be enjoying something of a resurgence, and Swiss brand Mido is embracing it wholeheartedly with this new take on one of its own classic designs. It's available with a green, blue or grey dial and on a stainless steel bracelet or a rubber strap.



Singer 1969

From £31,986

singerreimagined.com

So far Singer's watches have been a bit on the large side, so if it was their physical size rather than the size of their price tags that's been holding you back, the new '1969' collection could be for you. Using a more modest 40mm-diameter case, two versions are offered: 'Timer' (pictured), with a one-minute stopwatch function, and 'Chronograph', which can record up to 60 hours.

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RICHARD MEADEN

The last new petrol-engined Boxster is a pivotal moment, says Meaden

ELSEWHERE IN THIS ISSUE YOU CAN FIND A first drive of the Porsche 718 Spyder RS. Much like everything else I seem to write these days, it marks the end of an era. In this instance the last new Boxster to be powered by a petrol engine.

Until now there hasn't really been a moment we can point to that indicates a truly pivotal transition to EV. At least not in the pernicky, performance and dynamics-focused **evosphere**. Porsche committing to battery power for its entry-level sports cars changes all that. It certainly can't have been an easy decision.

The problem for Porsche – and indeed every other performance brand that builds cars noted for their powertrains – is that they are replacing perfected hardware with new technology. Tech that's nowhere near as evolved, yet advancing at an extraordinary rate. Development lead times have always been the automotive engineer's great frustration, but three or four years creating a new platform sees little change in combustion-engine development. Imagine the likely advances in battery technology over that same period and you can see how cars could now be rendered obsolete before they get launched.

Another problem for sports and supercar makers is that EV powertrains give us way more performance, which is the one thing we don't need. Worse, EVs rob us of all the things we crave – occasion, character and engagement in smaller, lighter cars. I'd like to tell you that the industry has a real grasp on this paradox, but whenever I meet automotive engineers and product planners they're all struggling with it just as much as we are.

It's perhaps an over-simplification of our great shared passion, but when it comes to cars and kudos, cylinders matter. I'm fortunate to have driven pretty much every permutation of cylinder count and configuration, from 1-litre Fiat TwinAir to 8-litre Bugatti W16. You can also add rotary, turbocharged, supercharged and even twin-charged to that list. It's that extraordinary range that means many of us treat car ownership as an opportunity to explore and experience their unique characters. In an EV world that stimulation and fascination will be gone.

If we're honest, the performance car ecosystem has required a reset for years. Going faster with less effort is not what The Thrill of Driving is about, yet fundamentally that's what car makers have

been offering us for more than a century. Because the progression has been in small increments, it's only in the last decade or so that we have begun to rail against the 'more is more' mantra and say that enough is enough.

Now we're in a situation where internal combustion is being legislated out of existence, with the cars we're all being steered towards having twice the power of our old steeds. If you're a product planner or sales director working in an industry that has been built on selling people new models on the basis that they have more power and performance, this should be an absolute gift. But whenever I speak to people in those kinds of roles they're all quietly questioning where we go from here.

I wouldn't normally point to Nürburgring lap times as a barometer of anything meaningful, but when a near-2000bhp Rimac Nevera hypercar is just 20 seconds faster than a Tesla Model S Plaid around the Nordschleife, you know our world is bent out of shape. Especially when the Rimac's 7:05 lap time is still a couple of seconds off a 500bhp Cayman GT4 RS. No disrespect to Rimac. It's doing amazing things, and ultimately only acting on the age-old engineer's impulse of making an already fast thing go even faster. Still, I can't help thinking the recent exercise at the Nürburgring is emblematic of an industry that's chasing its tail.

What will we make of the new Boxster and Cayman? Worryingly, I'm reminded of the absolute roasting we gave Porsche when it introduced the 2-litre four-cylinder boxer engine in the 718 Cayman and Boxster. Undeniably effective but possessed of a thrummy engine note, it is generally regarded as the poor relation compared to the sonorous, sweet-spinning flat-six. That's not a good omen.

Knowing the way Porsche does things, and having experienced the Cayman GT4 e-Performance last year, I have every faith that the new models will stop and steer better than any EV before. What I'm less convinced of is whether the overall experience will contain enough emotion or require enough from the driver to truly hold our attention in the way sports cars always have. Applying the curiosity factor that drives us to experience different petrol engines means some of you might be tempted to buy (or more likely lease) one. Whether the experience is sufficiently compelling for you to want to buy another is the real acid test, and ultimately on what the future of the sports car depends.

'EVs give us way more performance, which is the one thing we don't need'

@DickieMeaden

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



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RICHARD PORTER

Porter pays tribute to Harris Mann, perennially underrated car designer



WHEN DAVID BOWIE DIED I WAS FILLED WITH A selfish sadness that I'd never get to tell him how brilliant I thought he was. I felt the same when Roger Moore left us. Would have loved the chance to say how much I enjoyed his work. And I got that feeling again last month when news came through that we'd lost the designer of the Austin Allegro.

Harris Mann died on August 14, 2023, at the age of 85. He designed many cars during a long career and yet he exists in the popular consciousness primarily as the man responsible for one of Britain's greatest comedy cars. Which is true, but also not. Mann's actual design for the Allegro was neater and sharper. Then engineering insisted on using the massive heater from the Marina and the absurdly tall gears-in-sump engine from the Maxi, while the people designing the tooling took liberties with their measurements until the whole car became bloated and flabby. Mann was powerless to stop the incompetence iceberg of early '70s British Leyland and for evermore he became the bloke who designed that pig-faced, barrel-sided symbol of all that was wrong with the British motor industry.

But there was so much more to Harris Mann than that. He also designed the Triumph TR7, a car mocked at the time but which has some terrific detailing – the way the wipers hide at the base of the screen, the sculpting of the front wheelarches, those simple but distinctive rear lamps – and which, in the unusual swooping feature-line up the side, accurately predicted a whole school of car design that would take another 30 years to arrive.

The real Mann masterpiece of the era, however, was the Princess, a design that actually turned out the way its creator intended. Well, almost. The designer drew it as a hatchback, only for the marketing people to crush this idea, possibly because it would steal sales from the fugly old Maxi, or perhaps because the Rover SD1 was coming, also with a hatchback, and they didn't want a lesser model to embarrass the corporate flagship.

The SD1 was lauded for its looks, even though the body surfacing was literally copied from a Maserati Indy and the detailing cribbed from the Ferrari 365 GTB/4. Harris Mann's Princess, on the other hand, was a true original. No one else

made a family car that looked anything like it and, if you take away some of the prissy '70s detailing like the vinyl roof and chrome wheelarch trims, it's a design that stands up today. There's something rakishly Alfa-like about the quad-headlight model with the base-spec grille. If it had been created by an Italian design house we'd be hailing it as a work of genius.

What's remarkable is the backdrop against which Mann styled this forward-looking car. It was the '70s, a time of industrial unrest and economic uncertainty. Things were equally grim in Italy and France but at least they had decent food and weather to take their minds off things. Meanwhile, in the woodchip and pie-in-a-can world of '70s Birmingham, there was Harris Mann trudging past grey concrete buildings and old barrels with fires in them and somehow managing to come up with a four-door saloon more dramatic and radical than anything else in Europe.

At the end of the '70s Mann saved the Metro with a pre-launch emergency restyle that put some warmth and softness into a previously bleak and boxy design, and his shape was so fundamentally sound that the company managed to milk the same basic shell for 18 years. And then, in 1983, he left BL to set up on his own. Some of his early clients gave a clue to the strength of his talents. One was BMW, who used him for advanced design concepts on bikes and cars; another was Lotus, which had him work up a

dramatic design for a V8-powered supersaloon, notionally called the Eminence. Later in his career, Peter Stevens had him back at MG Rover working on the restyling work for the Z range. Mann was the real deal and it seems unfair that he's only associated with the terrible mess his employer made of his Allegro design.

But there's something else about Harris Mann that's as admirable as his design ability. Rather than snootily renounce his past, every summer you could find him at car shows, quietly chatting to Allegro perverts and Princess consorts, gently explaining bits of the design while signing people's brochures and sunvisors. When he died, the tributes from those who worked with him spoke not just of his talent and professionalism but also of what a thoroughly decent person he was. That's one reason why I'd loved to have met Harris Mann. But mainly because I wanted to tell him how brilliant I thought he was.

'Mann was powerless to stop the incompetence iceberg of early '70s British Leyland'

@sniffpetrol

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



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JETHRO BOVINGDON

EVs and turbos aren't the only options for future sports cars, says Jethro

EVERYTHING IS 'THE LAST' AT THE MOMENT. The Emira is the last combustion-powered Lotus. The Porsche 718 Spyder RS is the last ICE Boxster. No marque is sacred, no model spared. In the US, even Chevrolet has said the next Camaro will be an EV. Closer to home, the great new plan to make Alpine a success is to bring out a range of electric sports cars. So, a concept that literally nobody has proven to work will somehow magically overcome Alpine's real problems: brand awareness, the poor dealer network, badge snobbery... All you need is a plan that says so. Alpine's revenue in 2030 will be €8 billion. Because it says so.

Of course, Alpine's fantastical plans powered by the voracious demand for EV sports cars (that people in boardrooms all over the world are inventing and exaggerating as you read this fine magazine) shouldn't be singled out. Everyone is making 'the last and final' sports car before they uncover untold riches in the brave new EV world where all problems will melt away.

It's a bit like McLaren's and Aston Martin's and Ferrari's and Audi's absolutely watertight plan to win in F1. It's inevitable. Because they said in a boardroom that they'd win by 2027 or '29 or '31. Meanwhile I will be winning the EuroMillions in 2025 and will, without a shadow of doubt, discover the key to immortality by 2031. Because I said so. I thought about curing something terrible, but couldn't be bothered. Plus, I want to buy a 458 Speciale and enjoy it for at least 1000 years.

Yet for every 'last' there seems to be a little backtrack. Porsche downsized Boxster and Cayman engines to four-cylinder turbos all the way back in 2016. The 981 generation would be the 'last' to feature a naturally aspirated flat-six (although the GT-division cars did get a stay of execution). After people drove the new four-cylinder turbocharged 718s and vomited a little bit in their mouths, things changed. Now you can buy a six-cylinder 982. More recently it's been reported that AMG will revert to V8 power (hybridised) in 2026 after customers and the press struggled to get their heads around a four-cylinder C63. Real demand and real economics beat dreamt-up business plans every single time. So maybe all of these cars won't be the last at all.

The Speciale I mentioned earlier got me thinking about the dangers of jumping too soon to new technologies. It looks like Mercedes tried to pre-empt the market but actually took a giant

leap away from what forms the very core of its car's appeal. Ferrari survived the transition to turbocharging much more smoothly. But did it need to at all? And would customers and fans alike have enjoyed even better, wilder, more intense and more exciting mid-engined Ferraris if they'd just hung on a bit longer?

Lamborghini – long seen as lagging behind the likes of Ferrari and McLaren in terms of technology and power – has played it brilliantly. In the years since Ferrari launched the 488 GTB, the Huracán's ear-splitting V10 engine has provided joy and entertainment to nearly 20,000 new customers. And now Sant'Agata has launched its next V12 'dinosaur', the Revuelto, with a naturally aspirated engine that revs to 9500rpm for the full supercar sensory overload and electric motors for torque.

Who needs turbos?

At the same time, Chevrolet has admitted that the 5.5-litre flat-plane-crank V8 powering the new Corvette Z06 is inspired by and took many lessons from that savagely beautiful 458 Speciale engine. It produces 670bhp at 8500rpm. Ferrari had a smaller displacement V8 spitting out 597bhp at 9000rpm on sale in a road car in 2013. Imagine what a decade of development of that engine could have achieved. For reference, the 6.2-litre V12 in the F12 launched in 2012 produces 730bhp. That V12 is now 6.5 litres and in the Daytona SP3 it's good for 829bhp. The mind truly boggles at what we've missed with

Ferrari's early switch to forced induction for its V8 models.

There was no U-turn by Ferrari. That company's incredible pursuit of progress is something I truly admire, even if I sometimes disagree on where it goes looking for it. But I foresee more U-turns to come by other brands. Driven by customers wondering why their fun weekend car has just got heavier, quieter and less convenient. Driven by the EU's creeping realisation that the EV path isn't the only solution. Driven by real sales figures.

But let's not vilify those who suddenly make a new version of a car we were told was the last. U-turns are good if they're powered by the ingenuity of engineers finding new and better solutions rather than the whims of politicians. There's still hope, is what I'm trying to say. I mean, didn't Pagani say it was building the very last Zonda once or twice or 37 times before? And I've just ordered one for delivery in 2026. Just after that EuroMillions win that I've scheduled for 2025 on an Excel sheet on my laptop.

'The mind boggles at what we've missed with Ferrari's switch to turbos for its V8s'

@JethroBovingdon

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

FULLY



BMW has set a new benchmark for fast estates with the M3 Competition Touring, but Audi is fighting back with the RS4 Avant Competition, which brings a few new tricks of its own. We unleash them both in the Peaks

COMP

by JETHRO BOVINGDON PHOTOGRAPHY by ANDY MORGAN



IT'S THE HEIGHT OF SUMMER IN THE PEAK District. For which read 'quattro weather'. Later the sun will burst through the clouds for whole minutes at a time, but right now it's unrelentingly grey and a mist of rain hangs in the air and distorts the view ahead like a heat haze. If only. In the past, this would have been a very good thing for a resolute, heroically stable Audi RS4 squaring up to a BMW M3, the former's qualities magnified as the M3's are drowned by the prevailing conditions. But that was then. Now the M3 Competition Touring is armed with xDrive as standard. What hope an RS4 approaching the very end of its production life against a box-fresh M3 that's borrowed Audi's long-time secret weapon?

You sense Audi has asked itself the very same question and the answer it's come up with is intriguing and unexpected. The new Competition package for the RS4 – the current B9 generation of which was launched way back in 2018 – is strangely restrained in some ways. There's no more power for the 2.9-litre twin-turbocharged V6, for example. Driving through the same eight-speed automatic gearbox as before, it delivers 444bhp at 5700rpm and 442lb ft from 1900 to 5000rpm. The top speed limiter is raised to 180mph and thanks to new gearbox programming and stickier tyres the benchmark acceleration improves a touch, cutting two-tenths for a 0-62mph time of 3.9sec. The latter incremental gain can't match the M3, which outguns the RS4 with 503bhp, 479lb ft and 0-62mph in 3.6sec.

But honestly, who cares whether it's 3.9 seconds or 3.6, 503bhp or 444bhp... both cars have more performance than you can reasonably use on the roads. So, Audi's decision to chase precision, agility and adjustability and to shift the RS4's character via a radically different suspension set-up and by recalibrating the rear torque-vectoring

differential, steering, ABS and stability control to complement the upgrade is refreshing and rather heart-warming.

The core of the Audi's Competition package is three-way manually adjustable coilover suspension dubbed 'RS Sport Suspension Pro'. The hardware is supplied by KW and allows for individual adjustment of high- and low-speed compression (15 and 12 clicks respectively) as well as low-speed rebound. For road use this height-adjustable platform is delivered with a 10mm drop over standard, with scope to go 10mm lower still for, um, trackdays. In your 1745kg estate car.

I rather love the absurdity of it all. And there's no denying our black-everything test car looks positively evil with its 20-inch wheels tucked right up into sculpted wheelarches. The shallow 30-profile sidewall of the P Zero Corsas (a healthy 275mm wide at each corner) adds to the Audi's magnetic aggression. With thicker anti-roll bars and much stiffer springs, plus standard-fit carbon-ceramic brakes, the RS4 Competition is indisputably what you might call 'a proper job'. It costs from £84,600.

Price is one area it does beat the M3 Touring Competition xDrive, which starts at £86,570 and with the addition of carbon-ceramics and a few other necessities (who could cope without carbon bucket seats in their estate car?) easily trips into six figures. You can also buy an RS4 Comp without the sexy suspension, for reasons yet to be determined. Maybe it's just way too stiff on the road? Maybe somebody sane within the company realised that the Comp is an engineering project first and foremost and reasoned that many customers looking for a rapid family car might prefer a button on the dash to change between suspension modes rather than having to lie on their backs. Perhaps. Even so, I can't help hoping that the majority of the 75 UK-bound Competitions are fitted with the RS Sport Suspension Pro set-up. It spent a full year in development and should create a very different sort of RS4.

Below: RS4 Competition features a whole raft of chassis changes, including manually adjustable dampers







On the early-morning schlep north to the Peaks, the RS4 is full of surprises. The ride is taut and the Audi very definitely has the firm gait of a performance car, but it doesn't even get close to tripping over into harshness, and the sense of infallible wheel control adds new layers to the RS4 experience. Combined with slightly heavier and much more consistent steering (the rack now has a fixed ratio of 1:13.1) and a more natural connection between the front and rear axles, the Competition has a really satisfying togetherness. It's not a car that feels instantly energised but there's such precision and depth in evidence.

Sadly, the twin-turbocharged engine remains effective rather than inspirational despite reduced sound-deadening inside the car and a new RS Sport exhaust. At least the gearbox punches more cleanly between ratios. You'll want to program your favourite modes onto the RS1 and RS2 buttons mounted on the steering wheel, though. It's possible to tailor engine and gearbox response, exhaust noise, steering and the Sport differential. Now that the suspension is decoupled from this system it's basically Dynamic for everything other than the exhaust (the V6 never makes a great noise so stealth seems a much better option).

Even so configured, the engine does seem lazy in its response to throttle openings and erodes some of the excellent work done elsewhere. The gearbox performs best when shifting manually as soon as you're away from urban environments or the motorway. There's the usual malaise in Comfort mode and unnecessary aggression in Dynamic mode if left to its own devices. It seems strange to say it of a car that can do 180mph and 0-62mph in sub-four seconds, but the RS4 Competition is very definitely a car you'd choose for its chassis rather than a sparkling drivetrain. That much is clear even before the road starts to climb and turn.

One thing I haven't mentioned is that the RS4 Competition does feel

like a car slightly out of time. Mostly in good ways. It feels surprisingly compact and the swept-back roofline creates a sense of a car with all its mass concentrated nice and low. The interior is clearly high quality and has a central touchscreen and a TFT dash that offers a huge amount of configurability, but there are actual buttons to complement the touchscreens and everything feels functional. The showy and often needless complexity that's become the norm is pleasingly absent. An owner of a B7-generation RS4 would jump into this car, see a logical path to this driving environment and quickly master how to use every control. My only wish is for proper paddles rather than the apologetic switch-like items for the gearshift and a seat that would crank a little bit lower.

In sodden conditions the RS4 Competition is as assured as expected. Perhaps more so. Where the standard car's rear Sport differential seems to have a slightly artificial and abrupt actuation – working well to pin the front tyres to the road but then creating a whip of sudden oversteer on corner exit – the Competition just feels hooked-up, very neutral and with supreme traction. Perhaps you don't get the spikes of adrenaline, but it's really satisfying to build up a natural rhythm and realise that very few cars could even hope to keep up and fewer still with such precise composure. The Corsa tyres might not be ideal for streaming roads but you'd never know it. The treadblocks squeeze through the water and find incredible purchase.

The more aggressive suspension set-up uses the RS4 Comp's even higher limits and more sweetly honed differential programming to great effect. Aside from the deft control at each corner you can feel that the car has more roll stiffness, particularly at the rear, which creates much better turn-in response and a real shift in character. The standard RS4 is a good car – fast, grippy and so much more agile than the old Audi understeer clichés might lead you to expect. Yet

Below left and right:
conditions like these
used to give Audi a head
start, but M3's xDrive
negates the quattro
advantage



it never quite crystallises into something truly sharp and ready to go with you as the road gets more testing and your commitment clicks up a notch or two. It flatters to deceive. The RS4 Competition is more alive in every sense. Save for that slightly thin-feeling engine...


Drop into the M3 Touring and you'd swear it was a car from the class above. It feels huge. You sit much lower, the curved screen that serves as the full dash seems to tower above you and the glasshouse is so much bigger. I guess if this were a test of middling versions, a consumer magazine might call it much more 'airy and spacious'. In the context of a performance variant it just feels disconcertingly large and tall. The RS4 is smaller in every dimension than the M3, but even the BMW's extra 27mm width and 42mm in height doesn't convey the impression of scale you feel in the driver's seat. It is not a great start.

However, the narrow carbonfibre seats (admittedly an expensive option as part of the £11,250 Ultimate Pack), the mechanical nature of the gearshifter as you select D and the lovely rubber-backed carbon paddles begin to wipe away concerns. The M3 is more obviously built around the driver. Every contact point is a cut above. And the engine, even at idle, has an attitude that the Audi's V6 fails to summon even when extended to the limiter. The Competition version of Audi's estate may have had sound deadening removed, but stepping into the BMW makes you realise that there's still

a deep layer of refinement – or even separation – between driver and powertrain in the Audi. Remember I said that the RS4 never feels truly energised? The BMW bubbles like a Diet Coke bottle with half a dozen Mentos dropped inside.

That impression only grows out on the roads that meander across the Peaks. The M3 is so much more urgent in everything it does. In the wet that can make it feel a little more nervous, and where the RS4's slightly slower reactions convey that it's pushing through the surface water, with the M3 you have to learn to trust that the grip is there. Ultimately it can shadow the RS4 Competition move-for-move, but the driver will probably be slightly more stressed, working at a higher level of alert. The M3 also can't match the uncanny ability of the RS4 to swallow wicked compressions without ever hitting the bump-stops, nor the way it shrugs off heaving and corrugated crests with consummate ease. Those trick dampers simply have more range.

Flashes of brilliance from the Audi can't stop the stampeding brilliance of the M3 Touring, however. Its engine and auto gearbox are so much sharper, the four-wheel-drive system offers the sort of throttle adjustability of which the Audi could only dream, and the feel and feedback zinging back to the driver are simply of a different magnitude. The RS4 Comp's impressive showing in isolation is left in tatters by the BMW, which feels like a force of nature in terms of the sheer performance on offer and is so much more generous



Audi RS4 Avant Competition

Engine V6, 2894cc, twin-turbo **Power** 444bhp @ 5700rpm

Torque 442lb ft @ 1900-5000rpm **Weight** 1745kg

Power-to-weight 259bhp/ton **0-62mph** 3.9sec

Top speed 180mph **Basic price** £84,600


evo rating ★★★★★☆

in sharing the act of unravelling a road. The relationship between thrilling performance, secure grip and traction, a malleable balance and sheer exuberance is so finely drawn. This car has really redefined what a performance estate can be, and the M division's ability to make the most compromised of shapes and sizes feel completely uncompromising is becoming a fantastic and fascinating habit.

Perhaps this outcome was inevitable. Audi has done a fantastic job of creating a supple, precise performance estate with real poise and quite staggering composure, but the RS4 Competition is built upon a platform that simply isn't as versatile and inherently athletic as the BMW's. The slightly underwhelming engine and gearbox are exposed by the M3, which rips from one tightly stacked ratio to the next with breathtaking aggression. The controls feel slightly sludgy compared to the effervescent BMW's and – perhaps most galling of all for Audi – the M3's xDrive four-wheel-drive system just about matches the quattro set-up for stability yet retains the sharp, uncorrupted feel and sense of fun that has defined the M3 for decades. The margin of the BMW's superiority here is sobering.

Something approximating summer has broken out by the

time that I'm homeward bound. Covering maybe 45 minutes of cross-country lanes and wider but scarcely trafficked B-roads before joining up with the M1 south in the RS4 Competition is a lovely way to spend time. It passes slow-moving cars with shotgun force, eats up decaying roads with ease and never feels clumsy or nose-heavy. Moreover, it's a bit more subtle and undercover than the snorting M3 and I think the carbon-ceramic brakes have more feel, too.

The fact that I could conceivably roll into Donington Park on the way back, drop the ride height another 10mm, have a play with the dampers to provide even more support and get stuck in is a new dimension to RS4 ownership. Will owners actually do this? I doubt it. But projects like this deserve to be celebrated. In the end, it's hard not to conclude that the RS4 Competition is a futile exercise in trying to reclaim a segment that Audi once owned lock, stock and barrel. The M3 Touring Competition xDrive is now very much the benchmark. But the fact that Audi isn't prepared to go quietly into the night is encouraging. The fact that it looked beyond simply seeking out a huge power upgrade is inspiring. A failure in ultimate terms, then. But one with its heart very much in the right place. 



BMW M3 Competition Touring xDrive

Engine In-line 6-cyl, 2993cc, twin-turbo **Power** 503bhp @ 6250rpm

Torque 479lb ft @ 2750-5500rpm **Weight** 1865kg

Power-to-weight 274bhp/ton **0-62mph** 3.6sec

Top speed 155mph (limited) **Basic price** £86,570

evo rating ★★★★★





by ADAM TOWLER PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

GAME ON

Noble's new 506bhp V6-powered M500 is gearing up to challenge the establishment with its own unique take on the supercar formula.

We drive the prototype

A

NY JOURNALIST FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO HAVE arrived in Maranello to review a Ferrari will know the drill. The flutter of excitement as you pass beneath that famous arch, the rising tension as you look at the impossibly tight schedule for the day, then the mad southerly dash to the road that any committed reader will recognise, with its foliage-encased hairpins at the bottom and more open corners with far-reaching vistas as it climbs. Add in an F140-series V12, with its idiosyncratic gurgle and scream, plus the sound of tortured tyres, and it's an experience as strong as when a child gets to decide the appropriate ratio of concentrate to water in their juice drink.

Continuing the mind-association game, testing a Noble has no less clarity. Rutland lanes, green, fast and flowing; all those little villages with the suffixes of -oadby, -thorpe and -ville; and whatever the case in more recent years, forever the dry rasp of a Ford V6, overlaid with the whistle, chuff and sneeze of two hard-working turbos. Less romantic, granted, but in its own way equally as locked down in my subconscious as any other car-and-place combination. It's been nearly 20 years since a development Noble with a Ford engine pounded these lanes, but the hope is those glory days of the early noughties are back, because Noble is returning with this car, the M500.

The M600 actually ceased production some years ago. For a car that garnered such praise in the pages of this magazine at launch, its exit was a curiously anonymous one. Since then, a tiny staff of employees in Leicester have weathered the pandemic and bounced back with a new car, one that drops the firm down slightly from the higher echelons of the current supercar world and into more familiar territory: out goes the bespoke Volvo-based V8 and carbon panels, in comes the reassuringly traditional presence of glassfibre and the Ford Motor Company.

We covered the development of the new car in *evo* 295.

The chassis is closely related to the M600's, meaning a steel spaceframe structure with double wishbones at each corner in conjunction with coil spring/damper units. The gearbox is manual only, the six-speed exposed-gate unit from Graziano as found in the original Audi R8 V8 and Lamborghini Gallardo, and the engine it's connected to is usually found in the US-spec Ford F-150 Raptor.

Known as a 'DR35', this 3.5-litre, twin-turbo V6 is untouched internally, but Noble has developed a radically new installation for it, including a standalone ECU to run the show. It outputs 506bhp – 56bhp more than in the pickup – with a brawny 594lb ft of torque. There will always be some who sneer at the use of an off-the-peg Ford engine, but if it was good enough for Carroll Shelby, it's surely good enough for Noble...

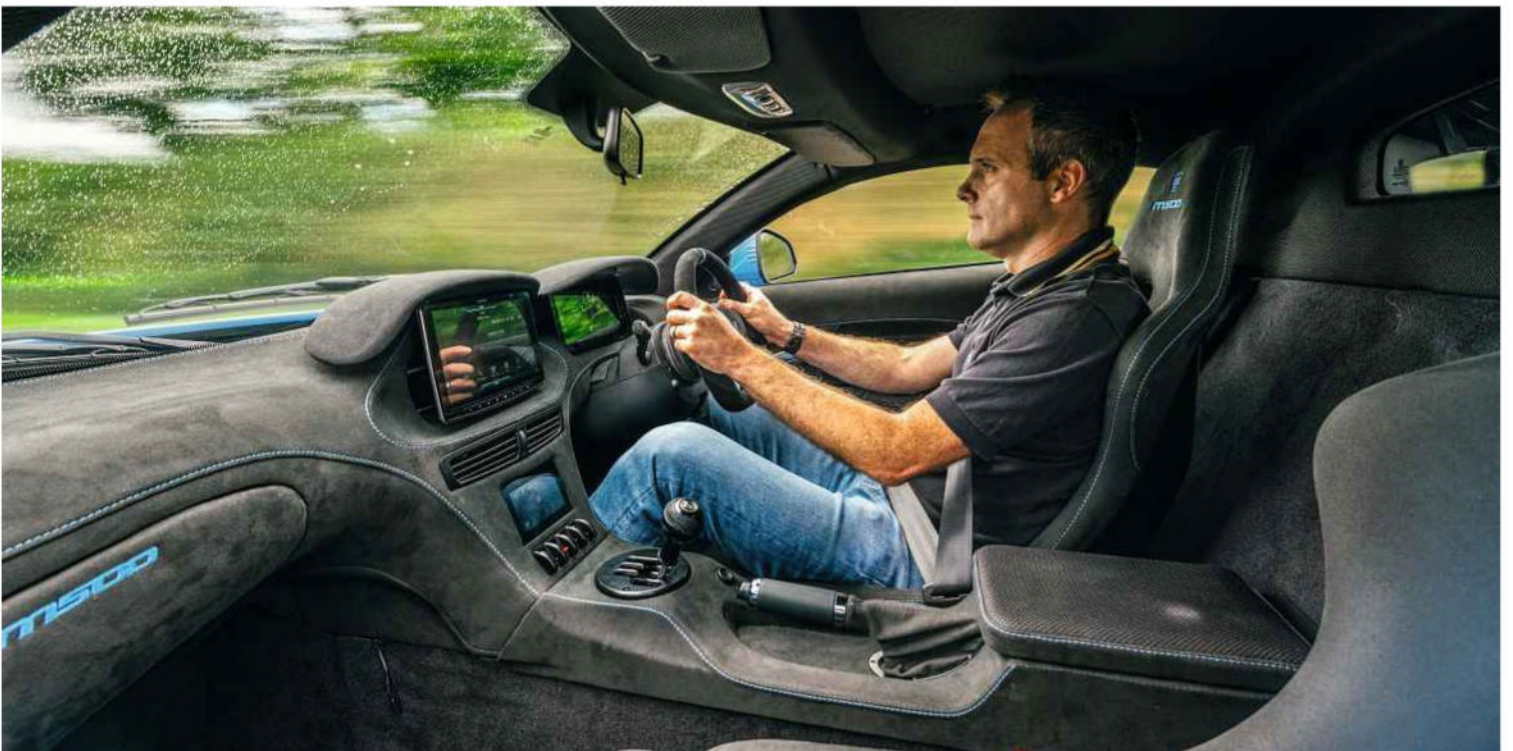
For many, a supercar lives and dies on its design, and that's something only the beholder can judge. The M500, styled by Noble boss Peter Boutwood, is by his own admission more of a 'supercar' than the determinedly functional M600. You could say the headlights have a touch of Ferrari 458, the large vertical slats behind the side glass may remind you of a certain hypercar from eastern France, and there's perhaps a bit of Porsche 918 Spyder to the rear. It certainly has its attractive angles, and while the effect isn't quite 'tractor beam from Santa'Agata' out on the road, plenty of young lads point and smile at it even as I drive through areas that constitute the car's home turf.

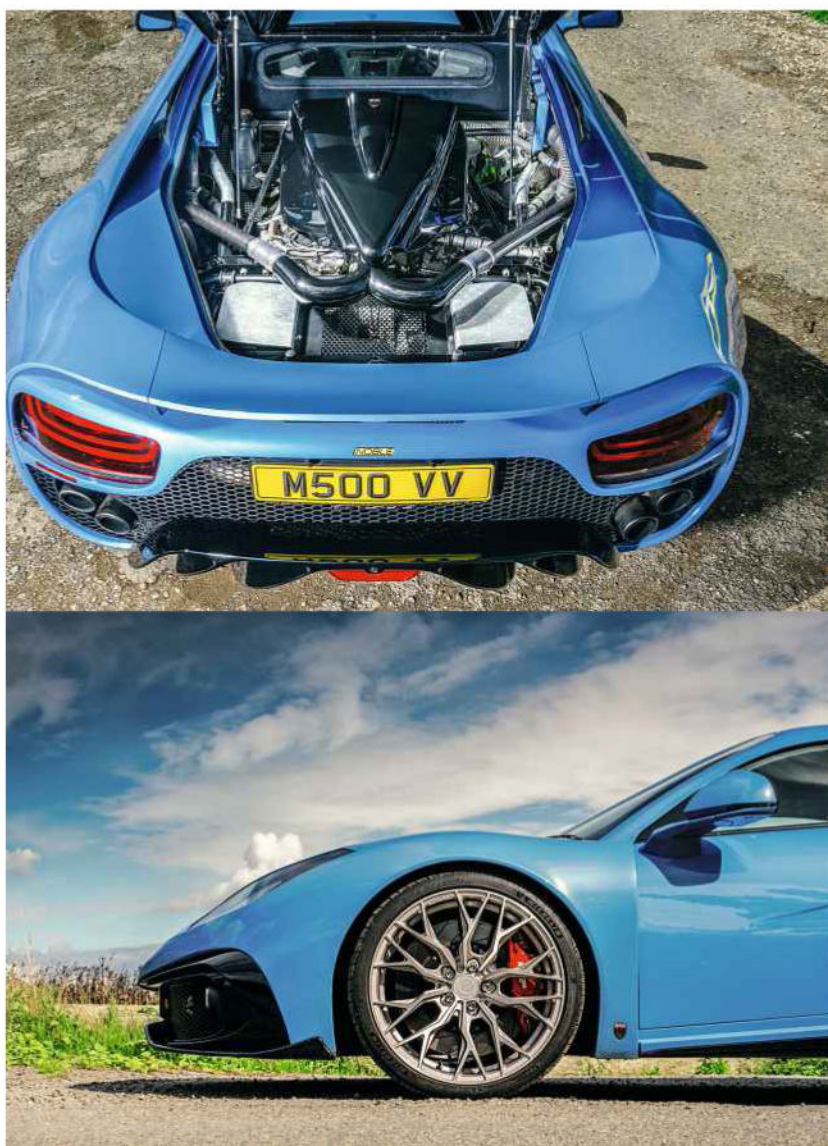
Then again, it must still be a rare sight because there is only one M500 in existence, and it's this car. I'm reminded by Noble that this is their prototype and therefore would I mind a) not stuffing it into the scenery and b) giving it the benefit of the doubt on certain fixtures and finishings. And it's true that the panel gaps on this car are not up to production standard, but Boutwood counters by saying the first production panels will be significantly better.

Below and opposite:

M500 was styled by Noble's MD; production version will feature some small changes to various aspects of the design; interior has Alcantara and simplicity aplenty







Above: twin-turbo V6 has an effortless potency; brakes do without ABS, but on dry roads you don't miss it; 'just the essentials' approach means there are no airbags either

They'll also be thinner, requiring less additional support, so should be considerably lighter, helping to reduce the car's kerb weight. I'm told this prototype currently weighs around 1450kg but that the ambitious target for the production cars is 1250kg.

For now, it's time to jump in and drive. The doors open in a conventional manner, and it's not the easiest of tasks for taller drivers to enter with any grace, because the gap between the seat side bolster and the top of the door opening is fairly narrow. Once inside, almost everything you see is awash with a charcoal Alcantara covering, and while there's a novel 'floating' top to the dial pack, most of the interior surfacing is disarmingly simple. The instrument cluster is a TFT screen, while to the left is a large multimedia head unit from car audio firm Alpine that offers CarPlay and other mod cons presented in the slightly over-complicated and graphically naive manner only third-party infotainment systems seem able to master. Still, you can connect your phone; it does the job.

There is some reach adjustment on the steering wheel, but I can't quite get the driving position to work for me. Ideally I'd sit a little bit lower, and the wheel would come out further so I could move the seat further back and not have my right knee foul the column, which makes

heel-and-toe work tricky. After much experimentation I find a workable compromise, but it feels like something Noble could solve fairly easily with just a little more adjustment range for the key elements. The switchgear is recognisably Ford, and the visibility is classic mid-engined supercar, which is to say compromised. The view ahead over the plunging nose is expansive, but over-the-shoulder three-quarters is almost non-existent and useful vision rearwards is concentrated in the centre. Once on the road the rear screen reflects the oncoming traffic, making it appear as if those vehicles are about to overtake you. I never quite get used to it.

Insert and twist the key – how thoroughly traditional – and the V6 fires after some determined cranking with a dry and bass-laden rasp. It's the beginning of a constant presence in the cabin, but it's not excessively loud outside. Noble says it is going to try some louder exhausts, but there's something quite retro – and appealing in my view – about a supercar that doesn't insist on shaking windows from 200 yards away. *Screech-click* into first gear and the M500 rumbles out of Noble's industrial-estate home and our journey of discovery begins.

My word, it's easy to drive. It has a vibe, like any well-defined vehicle, and in this case it's so laid back that once

you attune to its control weights and the arc of their operation, you can pad around in it with a kind of tuned-out soporific ease that's actually incredibly satisfying. The damping is relaxed, soaking up poor urban road surfaces in a manner that instantly betrays where it was developed, the gearshift and clutch are light, and while there's weight to the power steering it doesn't need much in the way of movement to adjust the course of the car. Off boost the V6 is very tractable and linear; you'd never really guess the potential mayhem that's lurking back there.

As the roads become a little less congested, I give the accelerator a little tickle, just to see... *Whizzz-Ker-Char!* The 500 bolts forward, the V6 suddenly yowling away to the right and behind my head, and all of it subjugated by the furious whistling of the turbochargers, followed by the demented sneeze of the wastegates when I lift. It's like fitting the Stage 3 big turbo kit in the early *Gran Turismo* games – a completely unfiltered, fabulous signature.

It doesn't take very long to get the measure of the M500. Your initial thoughts are dominated by the engine, or more specifically the turbochargers. It's a surreal and intoxicating blend of the old school and the modern: the soundtrack and the sheer forcefulness on boost, punctuated by the manual shift, evoke the spirit of turbocharged legends, yet there is very little lag and the V6 will pull heartily from as little as 2000rpm. You can dip in and out of the torque curve pretty much wherever and whenever you so choose, surfing the overwhelming muscle, or you can just keep the pedal to the carpet and ride out each gear, changing at around 6000rpm or perhaps just a little higher and then experiencing

the rush all over again. The fact that Noble might be able to make a significant weight reduction with the production-spec car makes this performance all the more formidable; it is already laugh-out-loud strong.

That gated shift is both as involving and character-laden as you might imagine, but not the hindrance to ultimate performance you also might assume, because the speed with which you can snap the lever through is nothing like as pedestrian as the dictatorial layout of the grid suggests it might be. As such, shifts become a blur, introducing barely a pause into the acceleration.

We take an innocuous-looking turn off the main road and immediately the road twists left and right, the line obscured by hedgerows and the surface deteriorating dramatically. Suddenly the M500 feels wide – the usual Achilles' heel of the supercar genre – but any feelings of restraint are themselves tempered by the accuracy of the Noble's steering. Around town it had felt slightly heavy for the sake of being overtly weighty (Boutwood confirms later that he's experimenting with different levels of assistance from the hydraulic system) and slightly inconsistent in its weighting too. At speed though, the sensations are more confidence inspiring, with rarely more than an input from the wrists required to keep the M500 heading where you want it to. A tighter corner exposes the limitations of the small, flat-bottomed steering wheel, which feels weird if you have to change the position of your hands; I'd much prefer a round one. Overall, the steering isn't chatty in the way you might think it would be in a low-volume sports car with hydraulic assistance, but it counters by suffering next to no kickback and



**‘IT’S AS INVOLVING
AS IT IS WILDLY
EXCITING, WITH
A CHARACTER
UNLIKE
ANYTHING ELSE’**



imparting a sense of calm on proceedings. As we whistle and chuff along at speed, the directional stability of the car is readily apparent, inspiring genuine confidence. In short, it's a really easy car to drive quickly.

It's also a car that feels at home on these roads, the suspension tuned to deal with the bumps rather than merely tolerate them on the way to the racetrack. The M500 is being pitched very much as a road car, and that's how it feels. Only occasionally does a big pothole seem to use up all the damper travel available, and a couple of times the long, low nose grazes on an awkward compression, which breeds a little more circumspection from then on, but the main feeling is of effortless poise, stability and sheer grip in an unflappable package.

You may recall that the M500 offers no airbags or anti-lock brakes, and while there is an ignition-based traction-control system on the way, via the ECU, at present it's inoperative. Such omissions immediately polarise the car's appeal in the eyes of many: would you fancy an emergency stop on a wet autobahn deep into three figures? Then again, many will find this resolutely mechanical approach the core of the car's appeal, and certainly on this drive in the dry the brakes never feel like they're anywhere near locking up. Instead, the pedal feel is superb, and they seem more than up to the task of slowing the car repeatedly from big speeds. Traction, also, is uncannily good. The M500 currently runs 255/30 ZR19 front and 345/30 ZR20 rear Michelin Pilot Sport 4 S tyres, but Noble would like to switch to narrower rears of a size that's much easier to acquire. As is, and in

spite of the huge turbo mumbo jumbo available, the M500 really wants to stay planted, even with some provocation.

The Noble can't hope to offer the same polished, tech-rich experience of a modern supercar from an established brand, and when you consider it's the product of a handful of people in an industrial unit and not a workforce of thousands – and a budget running to hundreds of millions of pounds – that's hardly surprising. But as our 'hobby' morphs rapidly in the contemporary era it feels as though there has to be room for the M500 and cars of its ilk. To say I'm glad it exists appears to damn it with faint praise, but I am, and moreover it offers a driving experience that is as involving as it is at times wildly exciting, with a character unlike anything else on the market.

As for the thorny issue of price, the aim is to keep down to as near to £150,000 as possible, but you can't help but detect the company's frustration at the ever-escalating bill of materials required to make the thing, and the official line currently is £150,000-200,000. A consultation with the Bank of England's website reveals that the cost of an M400 in 2004 – £62,548 – would be the equivalent of just over £107,000 in today's money. The M500 is a class above that quasi-Group B track car, with an awful lot more power, and Noble's quest to sell far more M500s than it ever did of the more pricey M600 is helped by the disappearance of entry-level supercars such as the Audi R8, Lamborghini Huracán and so on, but much will rest on whether it can reach an acceptable quality standard on the production cars. I hope it does, because there's so much that's good here already. ✕

Noble M500

Motors V6, 3496cc, twin-turbo **Power** 506bhp @ 5300rpm
Torque 594lb ft @ 4000rpm **Weight** 1450kg
Power-to-weight 355bhp/ton **0-62mph** 3.7sec (est)
Top speed TBC **Basic price** TBC (£150,000-200,000 estimated)
evo rating ★★★★★



GREAT



DAWES

Zenro is aiming to put Denmark on the map as a bona fide hypercar maker with its €2.6m Aurora, powered by a 1250bhp V12 and up to 600bhp of hybrid assistance

by JOHN BARKER



'IT WAS NOW OR NEVER,' SAYS JENS SVERDRUP, the chairman and chief commercial officer of Zenvo, describing not just the decision to build an all-new hypercar but to equip it with a brand new, quad-turbo V12. 'We considered V6, V8 and V12 or making it an EV. Everyone in the company wanted to do a V12 but we were worried it was just car guys living out a fantasy. It doesn't make any sense; we could probably get the same performance from a V6. So I started asking a lot of my old customers and friends from back in the day and the feedback was one hundred per cent V12. So it turns out everyone else wants it too, and this really is our last chance to make a V12 that will meet upcoming Euro 7 emissions standards.'

This is the Zenvo Aurora, the ground-up, all-new hypercar from the tiny Danish supercar maker, and it promises up to 1850bhp and a dry weight of as little as 1300kg. Its 6.6-litre, quad-turbo V12 will rev to almost 10,000rpm and develop 1250bhp, which will be boosted to 1450bhp by a 200bhp electric motor integrated into the gearbox. That's in the lightweight Agil (Agile) version. There's also a relatively luxurious Tur (Touring) model that gets two more motors, one for each front wheel, creating a four-wheel-drive version with that headline 1850bhp and a 280mph top speed.

The Aurora isn't about numbers, though, says Sverdrup. 'Our aim is to make a true driver's car, rather than chasing numbers or outright performance.' So the Aurora isn't aiming to be the world's fastest or most powerful or most expensive. Or most exclusive, which Zenvo's previous models might lay claim to by default; in the 16 years since Zenvo was formed in 2007, it has built just 14 cars. That didn't put off the Czech investors who bought the company in 2019 and have facilitated investment in Aurora.

Zenvo has never been a stranger to big power. The original Zenvo ST1 was a carbon-bodied, steel and aluminium-framed supercar powered by a mid-mounted, 7-litre LS7 V8 boosted to 1104bhp by a turbo and supercharger. This was succeeded by the TS1, which has now evolved into the TSR-S, with a flat-plane-crank, 5.8-litre V8 with twin superchargers that makes 1177bhp and features a novel 'centripetal' tilting rear wing. Even so it's quite a leap from the chunky TSR to the hybrid Aurora with its carbonfibre monocoque, inboard suspension, gullwing doors and hybrid, quad-turbo V12.

Sverdrup gets this. He's worked for BAC, Koenigsegg and Rimac and was CCO at Czinger before taking the role at Zenvo. 'I think it's hard for people, including you guys in the press, to reconcile TSR to this. Of course it was time to change. It's been overdue. But it's ironic; once you tell the world TSR is going out of production, then people want it again. Cars 15, 16 and 17 are currently in build and, including prototypes, we will have built 25 by the time Aurora takes over. Starting from scratch was not an easy decision. Emotionally yes, financially no. Aurora definitely puts us in a different league, which was the plan. It's almost not related to anything Zenvo has done so far; you can see some familiarity in the broad brush strokes, in the three lines of the profile, but of course it's a massive change.'

They considered building and developing the V12 themselves. 'Pretty quickly we realised that the emissions and homologation requirements meant that we needed to work with Mahle Powertrain, the guys that have done what, eight or nine other V12s?' (Mahle Powertrain was formerly Cosworth Technology Group, owned by Audi Group until 2005.) 'All the engineers are so enthusiastic about it because they've been doing electric powertrains



Above and top right: two versions of Aurora will be offered, the ultra lightweight, hardcore Agil and the relatively luxurious four-wheel-drive Tur. **Right:** Agil cockpit majors on exposed carbonfibre

**'OUR AIM IS TO MAKE
A TRUE DRIVER'S CAR,
RATHER THAN CHASING
NUMBERS OR OUTRIGHT
PERFORMANCE'**





Left: all-new 6.6-litre quad-turbo V12 takes its name from Thor's hammer.
Below: modular carbonfibre tub has front and rear carbon subframes and roof bonded on for ultimate rigidity



for the last few years. They were like, "Yes! We're gonna make the greatest V12 ever!" It's probably going to be the last V12 they do – maybe even the last internal combustion engine they do – so it's all about going out with a bang. They're putting everything into it to make the best, most responsive V12 turbo engine... ever!"

The 6.6-litre, 90-deg V12 will rev to 9800rpm and develop 1250bhp and just over 1000lb ft of torque. A key technology allowing it to meet Euro 7 is Mahle's 'jet ignition'. This is a miniature pre-chamber where the charge is initially ignited and then evenly distributed to the combustion chamber, resulting in a very complete burn, delivering up to a 95 per cent reduction in NOx emissions and a 10 per cent reduction in fuel consumption. With some elements in carbon, the compact, dry-sump, all-aluminium V12 is said to weigh less than 260kg.

The design of the Aurora is the work of Zenvo's chief stylist, Christian Brandt, and sees air flowing through the car as well as under and over. Head on, you can see how air is channelled inboard of the front wheels and then either side of the cabin, dictating a 'hot-vee' engine; the V12's four small turbos are nestled between the cylinder heads rather than hanging off the outside. The tub is made from carbonfibre and modular in design, with carbon front and rear subframes and the roof bonded on. It has been developed with Spanish carbon experts Managing Composites and is said to deliver torsional rigidity of 63,000Nm/deg, and weigh less than 120kg.

Electrically powered turbochargers were considered but in the end the weight penalty of the extra battery capacity required was deemed too much. The dry weight of 1300kg for the rear-drive Agil is ambitious, and Zenvo says it's not quite there yet, but why the two versions? "Talking with a variety of owners we realised that there are two distinct groups: drivers and collectors," explains Sverdrup. "Collectors want comfort and luxury, combined with stability at high speed – the ultimate GT car – while drivers want high-adrenaline, aggressive and track-focused. The most interesting piece of data we found in our research was that the split between the two is exactly 50:50."

The rear-drive Agil was created first, establishing the base concept. It has a mostly exposed carbon cockpit trimmed with lightweight materials and a more aggressive aero package, including a large rear wing that develops 880kg of downforce at 155mph, and pegs the top speed to 227mph. The additional motors and battery capacity of the four-wheel-drive Tur model add 150kg, taking the dry weight to around 1450kg, but the more slippery shape and extra 400bhp cut the 0-62mph time from 2.5 to 2.3sec, with 0-186mph in just 9.0sec and a 280mph top speed. Four-wheel drive will be an option on the Agil.

Zenvo intends to build 100 Auroras, 50 each of Agil and Tur, with first deliveries in 2026 and prices starting at €2.6 million (£2 million). "Of course you can go crazy and spend another 500k on carbon pattern options," says Sverdrup. "If we can break even on the 100 cars then fantastic. There will be other cars in the future that we will make money on."

"We have this modular carbon chassis, where we can change the subframes around the monocoque and the roof structures and do completely different cars with it. It's a modular engine too; we thought if we're going to spend all this money we'd better get more than one engine out of it, so we are doing simultaneous development of a 4.4-litre, twin-turbo V8 and 3.3-litre, twin-turbo V6. We already have a few customers lined up for both engines, so that helps to pay for Aurora, and we're upfront about employing Mahle Powertrain and that reduced the cost too. It will be easy for us to make a twin-turbo V8 junior hypercar in a few years without spending too much money. That's when it's starting to pay off. We have a base that's good for the next 20 years."

For now, though, the Aurora is the priority. "It's a bit tricky to sell it because the media is very numbers-based, but we're going all-in on the emotional thing," says Sverdrup. "Our car will be suitably noisy but we'll have active mounts and stuff like that for comfort and refinement, sacrificing a bit of weight and performance: we just want to make the best road car."

"I'd say our philosophy is not a million miles away from Gordon Murray's. Normally you set benchmarks for

horsepower and performance but that's not been the case with Aurora. Instead we're asking what's the sweet spot? Make it go as fast as you can until it's not comfortable to drive at normal speeds? How fast can you go before it's not fun anymore? We haven't set gear ratios to hit performance benchmarks but for what feels best, driving predominantly on the road.'

The gearbox is a seven-speed with an automated single clutch and an integral electric motor that additionally takes on the role of starter motor and reverse gear. It fills in the torque when the V12's turbos are spooling up and helps manage traction control too. The small battery allows a pure electric range of up to 21 miles. A twin-clutch gearbox capable of handling the torque of the V12 would have been far too heavy, says Sverdrup. 'We've had the gearbox on test for two and a half years now in one of our TSR mules. It's been developed with Wanni Albertini and NFX. It's based on lessons learned with a prototype gearbox [Zenvo founder] Troels Vollertsen and Wanni developed a few years back but it's all-new, not an upgrade of anything previous.'

Sverdrup says it can be mapped to be really smooth or give race car-like shifts, and will be offered with straight-cut gears too. Customer feedback is that they don't want DSG-style super-smooth shifts, he says, they want some engagement. The shift characteristics for the two models will differ dramatically: Agil will be very mechanical, Tur much smoother. The current task is to translate the current prototype gearbox into something much smaller and lighter: 'When you see the car you'll understand that the packaging is a challenge.'

Another engaging aspect of the Aurora will be the steering, which will feature a variable-ratio rack with hydraulic power assistance. EPAS just doesn't fit with the philosophy of the Aurora, says Sverdrup. He cites the Lotus Evora, 997-generation 911 and McLaren 675LT as

cars that deliver the steering feel and feedback Zenvo is looking for. 'I'm mentioning some of our benchmarking cars when it comes to steering. Right now we're doing a lot of testing in the simulator before we put prototypes on the road next summer. We'll have reliable engines by January.'

Aurora will be built at the Zenvo factory in Præstø, Denmark. 'We have a very good carbon department, and we'll build the engines in Denmark for sure. Our philosophy is super simple: we do it if we can do it better, faster, cheaper. If others can do it better, faster, cheaper then there's no reason for us to do it just for the sake of doing it. It ends up with us doing most things. We just care more. Also there's no motorsport valley on our doorstep. It's innovation out of necessity.'

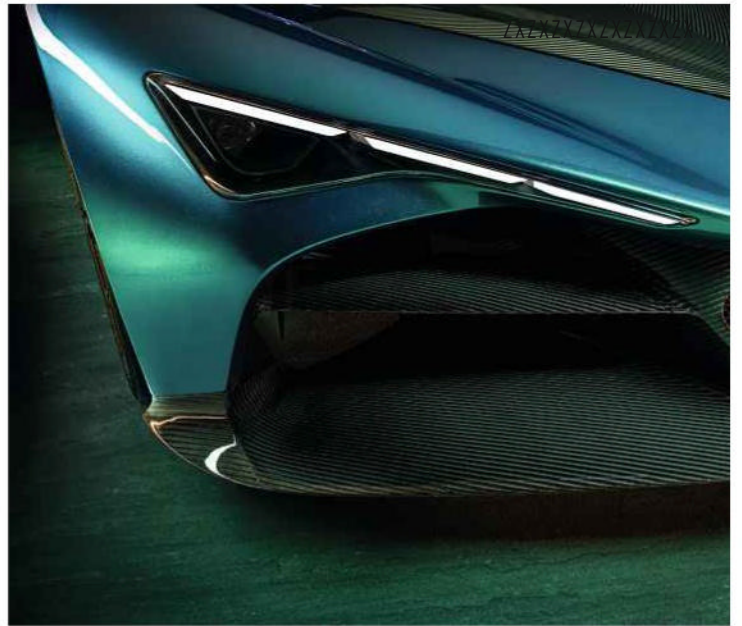
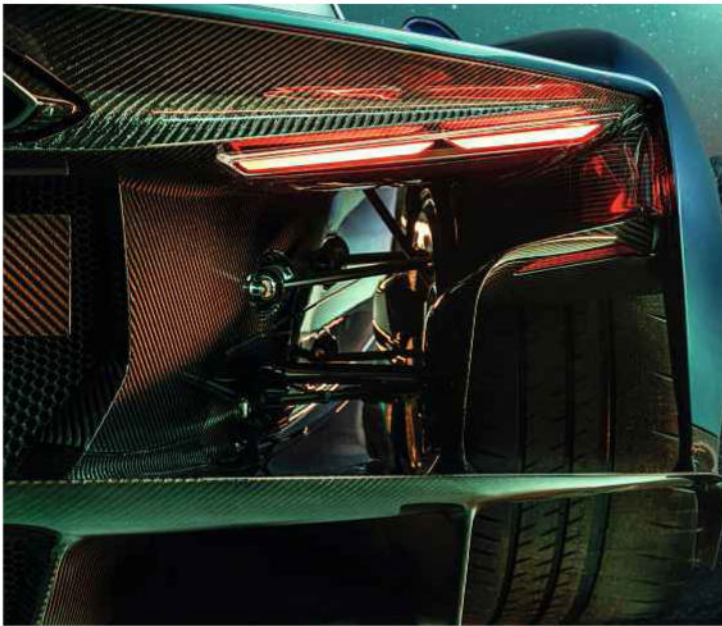
It's a big step for a small company that has delivered little more than a handful of cars – and cars that haven't always been favourably reviewed. It's a big risk, too, so will it deliver the reward? 'At some point people realise that you're here to stay,' says Sverdrup. 'I believe in this long game. You build up a loyal customer base and you learn a lot. I think we're at that sort of turning point now with this car. It puts us in a different league.'

A few days after we spoke with Sverdrup, the two show cars were revealed to the public at The Quail, Monterey. The reaction was very positive, he says, with many orders being placed. How many? 'Hard to tell exactly. We also had orders going into this, and it depends on how many invoices get paid, etc. The goal was always to come away 50 per cent sold out and so far it looks like we've overshot that, which is fantastic, but I'll know more when the payments start coming in. I've been in the game too long to consider anything sold until it's paid for, but it's extremely positive and orders are trickling in steadily from all over the world.'

'Aurora is our breakthrough car. We have the world's greatest V12 and a very bright future.' ❧



Right: Aurora makes a point of exposing much of its hardware, including its double wishbone suspension's dual springs and pushrod-activated dampers





by JAMES TAYLOR

D A R K S T A R

Trad muscle cars are a dying breed, but the Mustang fights on, with a new Mk7 model, a V8, a manual gearbox, and a track-focused Dark Horse variant. We put it through its paces



THE FORD TOURNEO PEOPLE-CARRIER CANTS over like a listing ship. Passengers' heads tilt in unison, shifting like the bubble in a spirit level. Grab handles are grabbed, torsos are braced against seats – or, for those sitting on the left-hand side, the windows. We've just entered the first banked turn of the Charlotte Motor Speedway, and is it ever steep.

We're on a sighting lap before driving the circuit in the new Ford Mustang Dark Horse, with the Ford racing school's chief instructor at the Tourneo's wheel to show us the best way around the really rather technical Charlotte 'Roval' course, which packs hairpins, sweepers and a surprising amount of elevation and camber inside the outer oval.

And it says a lot for the Mustang that a few minutes later, tackling the banking for the first time for real, it feels the most natural thing in the world to keep the throttle pinned wide open, trusting the car implicitly. That follows, because the Dark Horse is designed to be the most track-capable core model in the new, seventh-gen Mustang line-up. In the US, it sits above a 2.3-litre EcoBoost four-cylinder entry-level car we won't get in the UK and the mid-range 5-litre V8 Mustang GT, which we will. There'll be more extreme Mustang variants: a new 5.2-litre Shelby is highly likely and a wild Mustang GTD limited edition has been revealed, but in terms of 'normal' 5-litre Mustangs, this is the top of the tree.

Compared with its GT stablemate, the Dark Horse gets upgrades including extra power, bigger brakes, and cooling and aerodynamic improvements. It launches in the US around the time this magazine lands in your hands and will follow in the UK in early spring 2024.

The Mk7 Mustang is not an all-new, clean-sheet car: squint at its outline, blurring out the nips and tucks – and in the Dark Horse's case, a darkened colour-break around the grille, lower side skirts and a different rear wing – and you can still make out the hard points of the sixth-gen car. It's the same story inside, where there's much that's familiar. The A-pillar mouldings, door cards and lower centre console all look very much like carryovers, though the screen-dominated dash is all new – more on which in a bit.

First, back to that 24-degree banking. Admittedly, we're not piling into it at the end of a fast straight: the road course layout puts a tight hairpin just before it. But the Dark Horse is a car you quickly feel at ease with, and one that enjoys being driven quickly. It's still bulky, with dimensions all but identical to the previous generation car, and while Ford can't disclose a kerb weight pending European homologation, expect it to be broadly similar to the old Mustang Mach 1's 1750kg+ figure. Despite the heft, its balance is benign, and its limits feel a little less spiky than in the Mach 1, the model the Dark Horse indirectly replaces.

Ford has altered the strut tower bracing with the aim of better steering feedback, and given the Dark Horse larger rear anti-roll bars than other Mustangs, along with a unique

calibration for its standard-fit MagneRide dampers (an option on other Mustangs). Six-piston Brembo calipers at the front grab 390mm discs, and the Dark Horse stops well for a car of this size, although our runs are limited to three-lap bursts, including a warm-up and cool-down tour.

Like the Mustang GT, the Dark Horse is powered by the latest evolution of Ford's 5-litre Coyote V8, albeit with further upgrades including the lighter con-rods used in the 5.2-litre Shelby GT500, but not that car's flat-plane crankshaft. Open nostrils in the Dark Horse's front grille feed dual throttle bodies, and it has a lighter radiator than other variants, with more powerful cooling fans, along with a diff cooler for track work and a separate transmission oil cooler for manual cars (buyers can choose between six-speed manual or ten-speed auto), plus extra NACA intakes for the brake cooling ducts.

In the US it develops around 500bhp; in the UK, emissions and homologation requirements drop that to 449bhp – a good deal less than the 479bhp the Mustang GT puts out Stateside, but about 10 extra bhp over 'our' GT. There's more than an ECU tweak at play in the power gulf between UK and US cars, with additional particulate filters and an

**'THE DARK HORSE
IS A CAR YOU
QUICKLY FEEL AT
EASE WITH, AND
ONE THAT ENJOYS
BEING DRIVEN
QUICKLY'**

Right and above: our man Taylor settles into the latest Mustang; misses the traditional twin-cowl dash of yore, but the twin screens seem to work well



**‘THE EXHAUST
SOUNDS
SERIOUSLY
FRUITY, EVEN IN
THE QUIETEST OF
ITS FOUR MODES’**



altered exhaust system. No doubt a few specialist tuners have already devised ways to round up some of the missing horses, plus a few more.

You can hold the throttle wide open on upshifts, the flat-shift map enabling you to keep the pedal buried in the carpet while dipping the clutch and hooking the next gear. It's good fun, although gut feel says it's not a huge deal faster than doing it yourself with a quick lift of the throttle.

That six-speed manual is almost identical to the lovely, tactile, short-throw Tremec unit fitted to the Mach 1, and it's every bit as rewarding to use here. In place of the previous car's white plastic cueball gearknob, the Dark Horse gets a blue anodised titanium one which, despite being hollow, gets scaldingly hot in the sun. I frantically direct the air-con vents towards it after grasping it for the first time.

As with the Mach 1, there's nicely calibrated automatic throttle-blipping on downshifts, although you can disable that and do it yourself if you prefer. It's mostly foolproof although, braking into the about-face hairpin following the banking, a couple of times I hear the rear tyres chirrup and feel a squirm from the rear axle. Those tyres are new Pirelli PZ4s, with a bespoke construction developed for the car. Their edge of grip is smooth at the limit and, with a similar Torsen limited-slip diff to the Mach 1, the Dark Horse hooks up well out of slow corners.

We sample the ten-speed auto on the track too. For the first lap I select Track mode, leave the paddles untouched and keep it in auto to see how it fares. Remarkably well, it turns out, somehow finding the right gear at the right time in both fast and slow corners. Ford's engineers later explain that the long-suffering transmission software calibration team rode shotgun with the development drivers on track, and as a result the 'box can sense if you're hard on the brakes for a hairpin and need to barrel down the gears, or if you're delicately trailing the brakes into a long, fast corner, and need to hold a gear. That work feels like it's paid off, even if the Tremec manual is more fun to arm-wrestle with. Later we'll drive the ten-speed auto on the road, too; with so many ratios, its gearing is relatively short through the first few ratios, and shifts feel slurry at times; the manual is the more satisfying drive.

There are still various track-based modes as per the previous Mustang: Line Lock to keep pressure in the front brake lines and free the rears for smoky burnouts; Drag Strip to soften the rear dampers for optimum quarter-mile runs; and personal-best timers for acceleration and braking runs. One of the most intriguing, which sadly we don't have time or space to try out during our short acquaintance, is the Electronic Drift Brake. In place of the previous car's manual handbrake is an electronic lever in the same spot. In addition to its day job as a parking brake, it's designed to be used for tipping the car into a slide. 'Handbrake turns kind of went away with e-brakes; we wanted to bring that back,' says Mustang vehicle integration supervisor Tim Smith. A laudable aim. Once you've selected the appropriate mode via the touchscreen, the system loads the rear brake lines via the ABS software, which Smith says makes it easier to modulate the pressure required and avoids stretching a traditional handbrake cable.

Out on the road, the e-brake works like a regular handbrake: push it down to release, pull it up to apply. It's sited within what looks like the exact same asymmetrical



centre console as in the last Mustang, complete with a brace of cupholders in a perfect position for left-hand drive, but right in the way of the gearlever in right-hand drive cars. Ford's engineers explain that the sheer cost of retooling for a new design made the idea of changing it for RHD markets a non-starter. Reading between the lines, we should be happy there is a seventh-generation Mustang at all. The Chevy Camaro and Dodge Challenger both end production imminently, making the Ford the last muscle car standing.

Away from the circuit, amid the rolling North Carolina fields, it's as charismatic a road car as ever. A more comfortable one than before, too: the ride feels more pliant than the previous car's, smoother and more controlled than with the similar MagneRide system in the Mach 1. Smith explains that the latest generation of software has given them a much greater set of tuning parameters – 'we have a lot more knobs we can turn' – and it works sweetly on the road.

The steering is a little faster and more responsive than the old Mach 1's (a quicker rack, along with other measures, increases steering response) although still not the most feelsome in terms of feedback. The exhaust sounds seriously fruity, even in the quietest of its four switchable modes. UK cars will have a quieter system; here in the US, it sounds lovely, although borderline obnoxious in its louder settings. It has as deep and rumble a note as the previous car's older-generation Coyote engine, but with a harder, more exotic high-frequency edge as the revs build. Power delivery is deliciously smooth, and it's a lovely engine in general to spend time with.

Above and top:

Pirelli PZ4s use unique compound for 'Stang; front discs are grabbed by six-piston Brembo calipers; latest evolution of Coyote V8 makes 449bhp in Euro tune – US cars have an extra 50bhp



The interior still feels just the wrong side of the cheap/premium fulcrum, and there's the occasional audible creak from some trim parts, but it's a comfortable environment and one that does feel a step forward in plushness. The biggest change is the bit between the steering wheel and the long bonnet. If traditional Mustang folklore conjures images of drive-in movie theatres, this one takes the cinema screens and puts them directly on the dashboard. Two screens are housed behind the same piece of glass: 12.4-inch behind the steering wheel for the instruments, 13.2-inch mid-dash for everything else (including, sadly, the air-con controls).

Happily, the set-up doesn't interfere with your view ahead, and the central screen's large size makes it fairly user-friendly. The traditionalist in me misses the twin-cowl, 'double-eyebrow' dash of old (this is the first model to do away with that time-honoured feature), but it is a slick, modern-looking interface, using Unreal rendering software from the gaming industry to strong effect.

Ford trialled the screen interface with focus groups in LA, Texas and Florida. It had a positive reception from younger potential buyers and the interface 'didn't push the older generation away either; in previous Mustangs, the first thing people want to do is start the engine, but in this car they generally sat for 15 minutes before reaching for the starter button, playing with the screen,' brand manager Jim Owens tells us.

Seeking a younger demographic is part of the strategy behind the Dark Horse name. It's the first time Ford has chosen a new label for a Mustang variant since the Bullitt edition's introduction in 2001. Traditionally it's used classic nameplates – Mach 1, Boss 302 and so on. 'We want to look forward to a new audience,' Owens tells us. 'We want it to be a future collectable, something the new generation can take in.' Even the pony logo has been changed, with a forward-

facing horse face badge everywhere bar the grille. The branding also aims to emphasise the Mustang's track suitability, with multiple new racing versions of the Mustang in GT3, GT4, a one-make Mustang Challenge series and beyond, all badged Dark Horse too.

If the Dark Horse does capture the heart of future Mustang fans, it will surely be one of the last models made available with a naturally aspirated V8 and manual 'box. And still for strong value: Ford is tight-lipped on pricing but motorsports director Mark Rushbrook says it will be 'vaguely' similar to the Mach 1 (which cost around £55k in 2022) 'but with 2024 economics'. With that in mind, expect a UK price tag in the early £60k bracket. Please don't shoot the messenger.

What we won't get in Europe is the optional Handling Pack. Back at the Speedway, we sample a Dark Horse fitted with the kit, which includes far more aggressive camber (adjustable at the front), a bigger splitter, Gurney-flapped wing and Pirelli Trofeo RS tyres. These aren't homologated for the UK, and European rules preclude the squatty camber angles over here. A shame, because the Pack-equipped Dark Horse is seriously good. Where the standard car moves around under braking and power, the Pack Horse is rock-solid, its steering unshakeably precise. The on-board G-meter sees 1.4 g under braking and 1.2 g laterally in the Handling Pack car compared with 1.2 g and 1.1 g respectively in the standard Dark Horse.

Pack or no pack, it's good news that we'll have the Dark Horse on these shores. It builds on the genuinely talented Mach 1 with more polished handling, genuine track capability and *du jour* interior technology. Even if its styling looks a little fussier than that of its predecessor to these eyes, and even if the similarly priced BMW M2 is objectively the better buy, there's nothing else out there quite like it. It's likely one of the very last manual V8 cars available to buy – but that's not the only thing the new Mustang has going for it. ☒

Ford Mustang Dark Horse

Engine V8, 5038cc **Power** 449bhp @ 7250rpm (est)

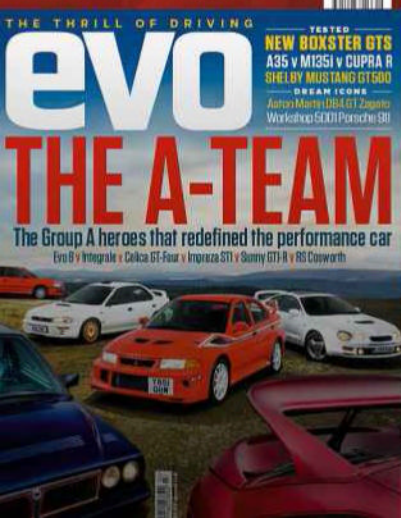
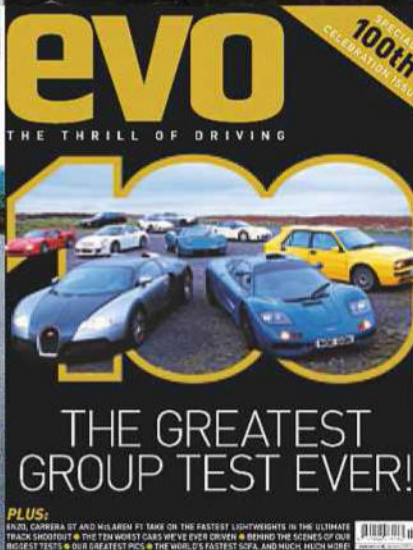
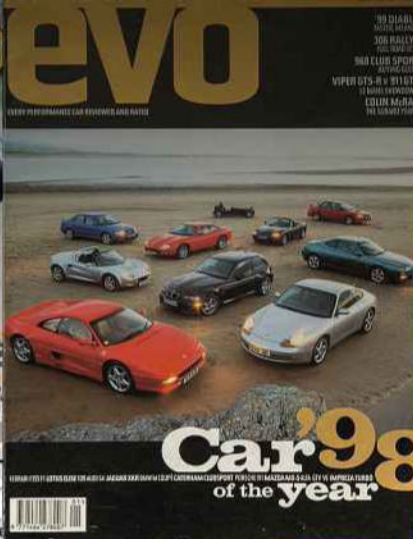
Torque 397lb ft @ 4900rpm (est) **Weight** 1770kg (est)

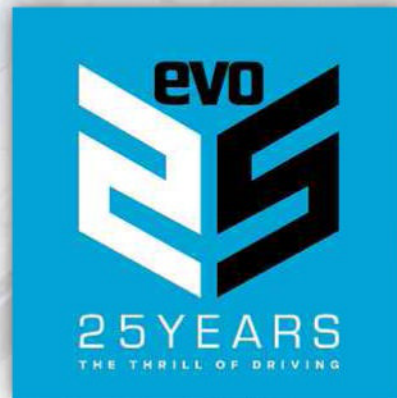
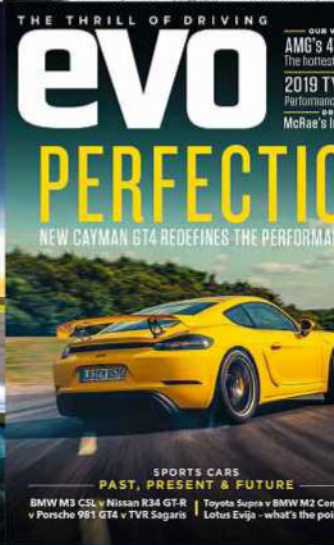
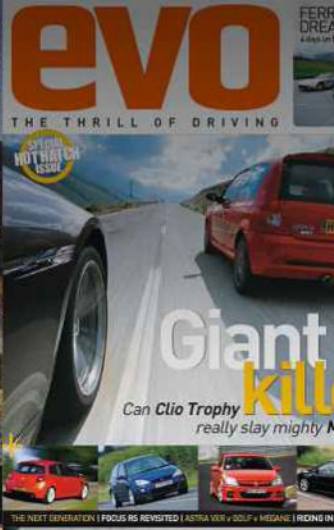
0-62mph 4.0sec (est) **Top speed** 168mph (est)

Basic price TBC (£61,000 est in UK)

evo rating ★★★★★







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THE LONG AND WINDING ROAD

As Audi's V10 R8 and Lamborghini's
Huracán near the end of their
journey, time for a final blast

by RICHARD MEADEN

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

W

WE SEEM TO BE DOING THIS A LOT LATELY.

Bidding farewell to cars that have been a formidable presence in our lives. This time not only is the bell tolling for the Audi R8 and Lamborghini Huracán, but also for the spectacular naturally aspirated V10 engine that powers them.

All three deserve a proper farewell, but where to take them? For a while the whole idea hangs in the balance, with neither an R8 GT RWD or Huracán Tecnica available in the UK. Then the Gods of Internal Combustion (and Google Maps) intervene. Bookings synched with Audi AG and Automobili Lamborghini's press fleets and collection arranged from Munich and Sant'Agata respectively, all that remains is to find a suitably spectacular rendezvous point that doesn't devour too much of our three-day trip to reach.

It doesn't take long to find our destination: Italy's snaking, 2757-metre-high Stelvio Pass. Roughly equidistant between our German and Italian start points, it's a brisk five-hour drive to the second highest road in Europe and one of the most famous driving destinations in the world. Yes, there are more flowing mountain passes with less traffic, but trust me, there

are few more remarkable places to take any car. As a place to celebrate two of the best-sounding cars money can buy, this 30-mile mountain pass, complete with a staircase of hairpins on one side and a bunch of avalanche tunnels on the other, is hard to beat.

We meet at the summit in the early evening, depicted James Taylor in the Audi, myself and photographer Parrott in the Lamborghini. Both cars look gloriously out of place street-parked amongst the beaten-up Subarus preferred by the locals. Rather than booking accommodation down in nearby Bormio, we're staying in one of the small hotels found atop this famous peak. It buys us more time for photography and lends the whole trip a bit more of an adventurous edge. It also means we can grab an early dinner before attempting to create one of the main set-piece images of the trip – a long-exposure shot for the cover that will hopefully capture the scale and spectacle of this great road.


It's a little-known fact that there are actually three Stelvios. The version most visitors see is the high-altitude theme park thronged with day-tripping cyclists, bikers, cars and campervans. Given the rapidly changing mountain weather, it's quite possible





**‘THERE ARE FEW MORE
REMARKABLE PLACES
TO TAKE ANY CAR
THAN THIS 30-MILE
MOUNTAIN PASS’**



A white Audi R8 sports car is shown in profile, driving from left to right on a paved road. The car has black accents on the side and rear, and red brake calipers. The background features a vast, green mountainous landscape with rocky peaks under a blue sky with scattered white clouds. The image has a motion blur effect, suggesting speed.

**‘BOTH ARE HONED TO
THEIR KEENEST EDGE
BY TEAMS WHO WISH
TO LEAVE NOTHING
ON THE TABLE’**



you'll also see its alter ego – the Stelvio cloaked in swirling cloud and wintry weather that sends everyone back down to more clement climes. However, only when darkness descends and the visitors have gone home does the most mysterious Stelvio reveal itself. Almost pitch black with few traces of human activity, the atmosphere on the pass is as eerie as you'll experience anywhere. Never more so than when you wind your way down the corkscrew curves, down and down into the dark, away from human habitation until the summit lights are just a faint twinkle.

Thankfully I've got Taylor for company. The cold white beams of his R8's headlights are bright in my rear-view mirror on the short straights but sweep the steep slopes on the far side of the escarpment like searchlights as we zig-zag our way down. We continue until our walkie-talkies crackle with Parrott's garbled signal to stop, before turning around and parking in readiness to make our ascent.

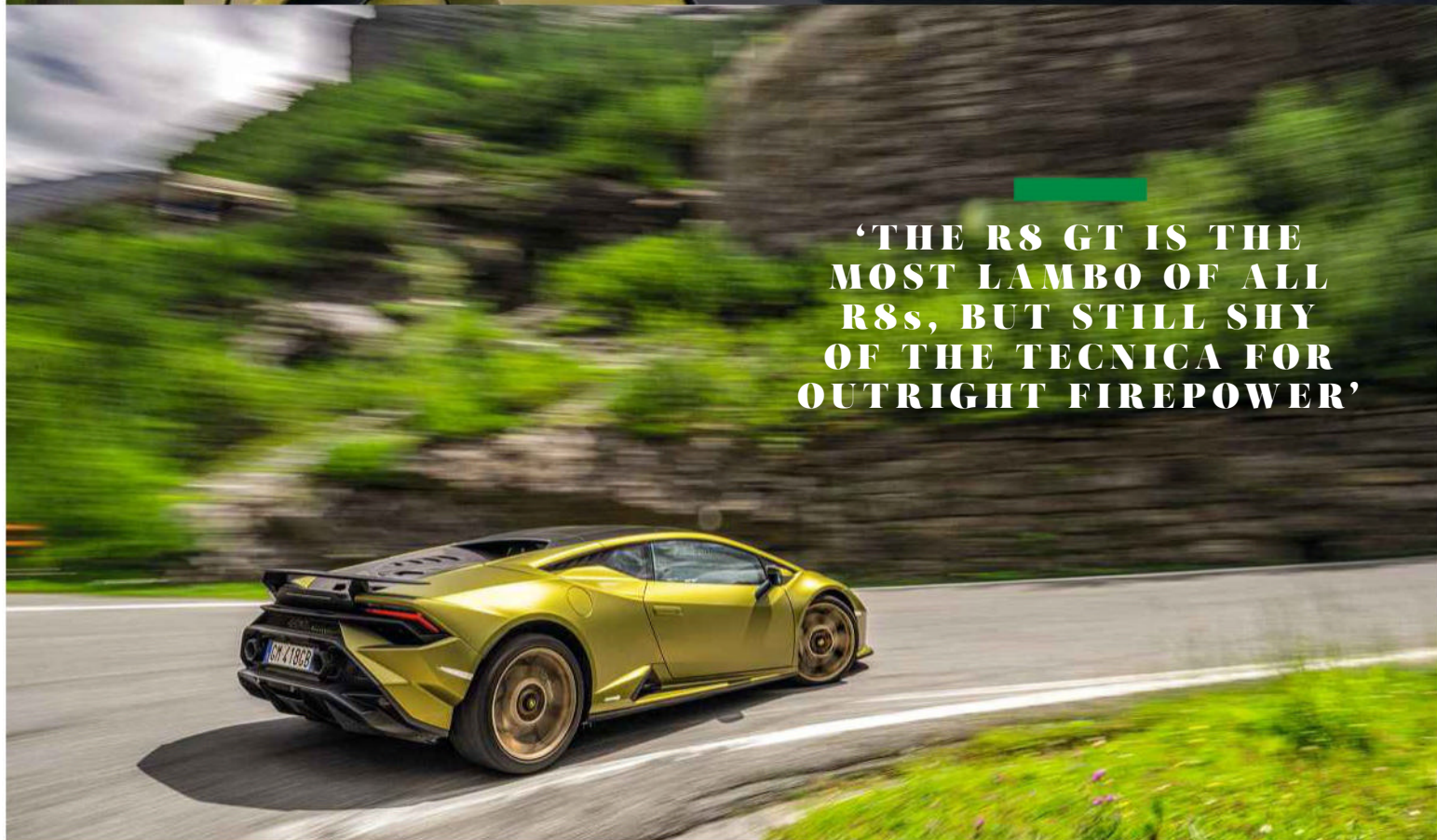
On Aston's signal we gun it in unison, Huracán heading R8 by a few car lengths as we begin the headlong rush back up the mountain. Unlike the daytime, where you have to approach every corner expecting a car, motorbike, cyclist or even a motorhome to be heading down towards you, the darkness means we'll see descending traffic from miles away. Not that there is any at 10pm on a Tuesday night.

Up we climb, punching hard through the lower gears, each hairpin taken in first gear before full throttle and full revs in second gear and perhaps a fleeting burst of third before blip-shifting back down to first for the next switchback. The Huracán sounds completely outrageous, its feral howl filling the valley before bouncing back off the main wall of the north face. This is what we came here for.

The darkness and decibels mess with your senses, amplifying the sound and focusing your vision on what's frozen in the bright daggers of main beam. Without the benefit of seeing the road rising towards the summit, your sense of place and progress relies on the writhing rhythm of the road. It creates a hypnotic cadence. One that skews your sense of time and distance until you're approaching a heightened state of adrenalised trance.

By the time we reach Parrott's perch on one of the uppermost hairpins, we're absolutely buzzing. Thankfully he needs us to do another run, so we turn around and head back down before charging back up once more. Apart from a van, which passes us as we're waiting at the bottom of the pass, we don't see another vehicle the whole time we're out. The second run is even better. Parrott says he's never heard anything like it in his life, and while it's tempting to turn around to make one last climb for some grainy hand-held iPhone video, we all decide we've ridden our luck enough for one night. It's one of the most surreal and spectacular experiences I've ever had and something I'll never forget. And, as our cover attests, the photo's not bad either.

Tearing up and down in the dark might be riotous, unforgettable and unrepeatable fun, but we've got a



**‘THE R8 GT IS THE
MOST LAMBO OF ALL
R8s, BUT STILL SHY
OF THE TECNICA FOR
OUTRIGHT FIREPOWER’**

lot of driving and photography ahead of us. Fortunately, there's not much in the way of nightlife atop Europe's second highest mountain pass, so we all retire to bed ready for a 6.30 start the following morning.

Staying at the summit affords you access to the Stelvio's hidden after-hours routines. Pro skiers leave at dawn for the summer training slopes carved into the glacier that clings to the mountainside. Not long after, a comedically short-wheelbase refuse truck makes the tortuous ascent, its crew noisily collecting the rubbish before the roads gets busy with the next influx of tourists. Note to self: add Stelvio bin lorry driver to list of 'World's Greatest Jobs'.

Dawn casts its light on a desolate, fascinating, weather-beaten place. Stripped of the life and colour brought by the visiting daytime hoards, it's a bit down at heel, but the view across the valley is majestic. The chill morning air is in stark contrast to the shirt-sleeve temperatures we'll enjoy during the afternoon, but its freshness is invigorating compared with the soupy summer heat and humidity we drove through on our way from Sant'Agata.

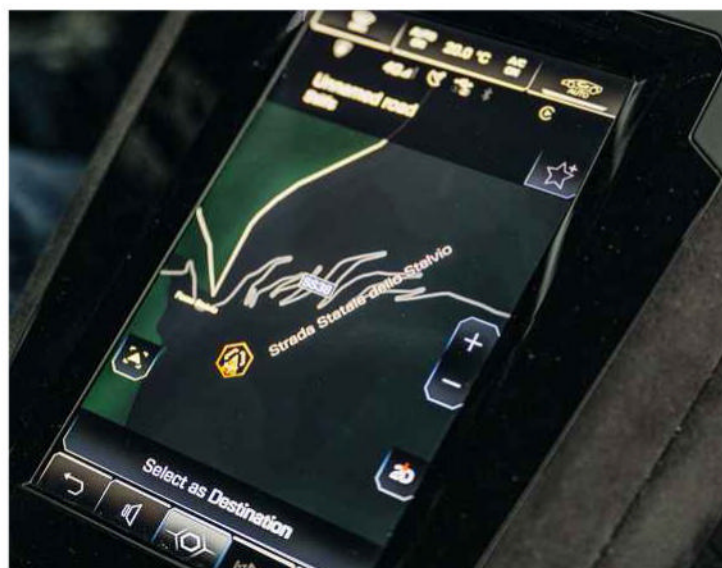
You get the sense that the hoteliers and skiers and cyclists who live and train up here for the summer season are hard to impress, but the sight of the Huracán and R8 causes as much of a stir as you'll get from the hardy souls of the Südtirol. It's blindingly obvious what we're here for, but nobody seems to mind the presence of these raucous machines, even as their open-valved exhausts shatter the morning peace.

Before we get into the driving experiences, it's worth comparing their specifications. Unlike early 'pre-LP' Gallardos, which were powered by Lamborghini's in-house 5-litre V10 that owed nothing to Ingolstadt, the Huracán uses the same Audi-sourced 5.2-litre V10 that is also bolted into the back of the Gen 2 R8. It was at this point that both cars also received a common platform, along with a shared seven-speed twin-clutch transmission and electric power steering amongst other major hardware and electronic architecture changes.

Unsurprisingly it marked a significant shift in the characters of both cars. Neither for the better it must be said, at least initially, but slowly both Lamborghini and Audi managed to improve the co-developed package and take it in directions that suit their divergent customer demographic best. Now, as both reach the end of the road, the rough edges have been smoothed, feel has been found and powertrain pips squeezed, as befits cars honed to their keenest edge by engineering teams who wish to leave nothing on the table.

The R8 GT is arguably the most Lambo of all R8s, but it's still shy of the Tecnica for outright firepower, with 611bhp and 411lb ft compared with 631bhp and 417lb ft. Ironically given both these cars are falling victim to the quest for Net Zero, the Audi's power deficit and more subdued delivery are due to emissions legislation and not intra-VAG politics; Lamborghini's sub-10k per-year production volume affords it certain emission exemptions denied to Audi, meaning it can uncork the Huracán with relative impunity while the R8 has to toe the line with party-poopng gasoline particulate filters and less aggressive fuel and ignition management.

Left and right: Huracán is the more dramatic, inside and out, and that's reflected in a more visceral driving experience. Its engine too, despite being essentially the same unit, has the edge thanks to emissions exemptions



Weight-wise, both cars are fighting fit, largely due to both of them ditching their all-wheel-drive systems. Thanks to Audi quoting kerb weight (1570kg) and Lamborghini quoting dry weight (1379kg) it's hard to get comparable figures, but given so much of both cars is shared and neither has gone to extremes in terms of lightweight components there's unlikely to be much in it in terms of mass.

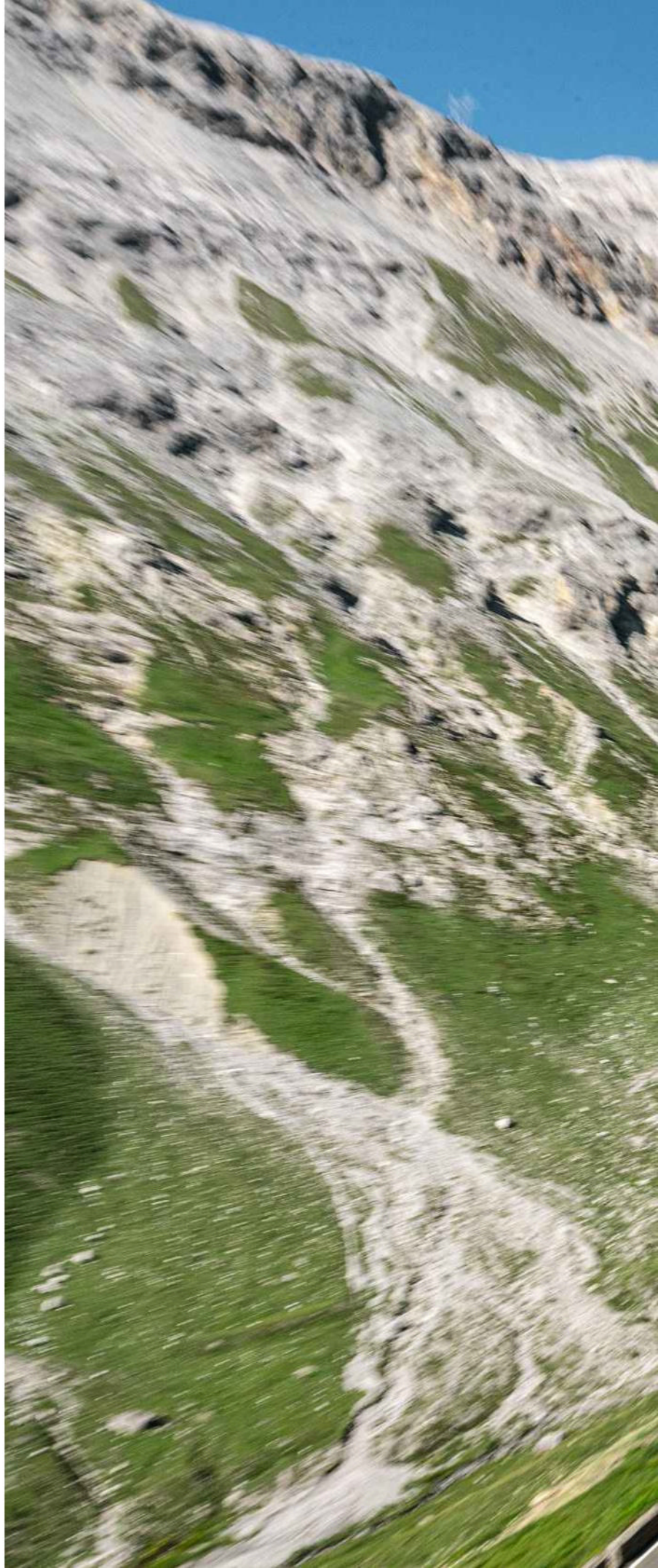
All-out each is extremely rapid – think 0-62mph in less than 3.5sec, and top speeds separated by a few mph (the Audi's just south of 200, the Lambo's just north) – but neither has the monster mid-range flex of more modern turbocharged or turbo-hybrid rivals. Then again, none of those can match the magnificent response, nor the fabulous building crescendo offered by this magnificent V10. Speed might be the essence, but sound is most definitely the emotion.

Few cars have styling that expresses their character more accurately than this pair's. The Audi is clearly influenced by motorsport, its stance and workmanlike aero package mimicking its hugely successful GT3 sibling, while the Tecnica is spectacular but leaves the road-racer vibe to its wilder-looking STO stablemate. Think of it as Lambo's GT3 Touring. Together they serve as a monument to VAG's resources, ambition and mastery of the platform-sharing art.

Having spent most of Day 1 in the Huracán's cartoonish fighter-plane cockpit, it's a real culture shock to start Day 2 in the R8. Roomier, calmer and considerably more comfortable, what it lacks in theatre it makes up for in useability. That might sound boring, but the easy ergonomics and simplicity of the driving environment are a lesson in subtlety without denying you a certain sense of occasion.

Start the engine and that feeling of restraint continues, even as the V10 warbles exuberantly on fast idle while it warms up. The shift paddles – well, rectangular buttons to be more precise – are a bit apologetic, but they operate a gearbox that feels sharper and more responsive than that of other R8s. Our test car is fitted with the GT's optional manually adjustable coilover suspension. It's old-school compared with modern adaptive dampers, but there's something refreshingly confident about a car that is what it is and does what it does without the need to switch between modes. As with all R8s, the steering is calm. In fact it's borderline slow in terms of ratio, which makes the Stelvio's switchbacks more of an armful than in the ultra-direct Huracán, which darts into the heart of the hairpins as if guided by laser. The Audi doesn't have the front-end bite either, so you're more likely to feel the nose push wide in the tightest turns where the Tecnica keeps digging in.

Both cars lift their inside wheels through the steepest corners, brief flares of wheelspin triggering the ESC before both rear tyres find terra firma. Funnily enough, on the steep, tangled northern approach both the R8 and Huracán would benefit from four-wheel drive, though we'll keep that confession between us. Both cars have sharp brakes, the Lambo's being the trickiest to





modulate smoothly. The upside is that neither suffers in the slightest from fade and their pedals remain firm and inspire absolute confidence, even under extreme use.

On the west side of the Stelvio, heading down towards Bormio, the road gradually relaxes its grip, slithering down the steepest sections in trademark style before taking a more direct route that hugs the valley wall. Open-sided tunnels offer protection from avalanches and tumbling rocks, and also provide the opportunity to enjoy our V10s in a more enclosed space. The R8 sounds fabulous – smooth, cultured and expensive – but can't compete with the Huracán, which drowns the Audi in decibels then strafes it with gunshot pops and bangs on the overrun.

Broadly speaking, how they sound is how they drive, the Huracán delivering its performance in a more explosive and visceral manner. On warm, dry roads you can revel in the sharper reactions and more aggressive direction changes,

chasing the throttle until the rear tyres relinquish their grip. The Audi's edges are softer and consequently less of a thrill, but when the weather changes the R8 comes into its own.

And change it does. You see the storms rolling in well before they arrive. Dark and malevolent even from afar, swollen clouds circle the distant summits and prowl along the valleys with malicious intent. Most skulk by harmlessly but some strike hard and fast, tendrils of cloud taking hold of the crags as if to haul the weight of the weather up to the summit. Moments later the wind is howling, propelling the rain and hail with such force that it's actually travelling upwards when it sweeps over the peaks. This is a wild place when it wants to be.

Having seen the maelstrom approaching, we've elected to swerve it, ducking into the excellent Tibet Hut to get ourselves some well-earned cake and coffee. If you're planning a Stelvio trip, be sure to try it. Half an hour later


Below: summit teems with cyclists, bikers and tourists – but becomes eerily quiet as darkness descends





**‘THE R8 SOUNDS
FABULOUS –
SMOOTH,
CULTURED AND
EXPENSIVE’**



A wide-angle photograph of a mountain valley. In the foreground, a steep, rocky slope with sparse vegetation leads down to a lush green valley floor. A winding asphalt road snakes through the valley, with several sharp turns visible. In the background, more mountain ranges are visible under a clear sky, with some peaks appearing hazy. The overall scene is one of a high-altitude mountain environment.

we emerge to a very different scene. The storm has blown through, leaving the mountain drenched and cold enough to have us reaching for our coats. Sheets of water riffle across the hairpins and hail sits inches deep at the road's margins. Cyclists who sought cover now re-emerge, keen to leave this exposed pinnacle for the valleys below, but wary of taking liberties on knife-edge tyres and slippery tarmac.

The downpour-driven exodus has its advantages, for with far fewer cyclists, motorcyclists and cars on the road it presents us with the perfect opportunity to get some action shots in the Audi. It's a good reason to dig into the Torque Rear mode, which allows you to dial in slip angle with some underlying electronic safety. It really is uncannily good at getting the R8 to rotate under power and then slide at a significant angle with enough throttle to make it feel entirely natural and under your control.

It's a reminder that not only can the Audi let its hair down

given the chance, but that it can do so with immaculate poise and precision. Historically the four-wheel-drive R8 has felt more convincing than the RWD models – and, weirdly, happier going sideways – so the fact that Audi has finally nailed the two-wheel-drive car's handling in this final iteration is both satisfying and a little bit sad. It certainly feels more exploitable and confidence-inspiring than the Lambo, which pays the price for its dry-road prowess with spikier and less communicative on-limit behaviour in the rain. Some of this is down to the Audi's Michelins versus the Lamborghini's Bridgestones, but it's also due to differences in the calibration of throttle and stability control systems.

With the last images safely captured and both cars explored and enjoyed to the full, it's with heavy hearts that Taylor and I point the R8 and Huracán downhill and head back towards Munich and Sant'Agata. We've only been in the mountains for two days and yet it feels unsettling to

be descending towards the hustle and bustle of life below the clouds. As we leave the summit the temperature is a chilly 9deg C. When Parrott and I roll into Sant'Agata that afternoon the Huracán's temperature gauge is showing 42deg C. It's all a bit discombobulating, but the best road trips do that to you.

The finality of knowing both these cars are about to die is equally unsettling. Both are so good it seems inconceivable that they are being phased out, especially as they have an infinitesimally small impact on global carbon emissions. Yet this is where we find ourselves.

Right to the end the R8 has remained a cool customer. Less explicit in voice and dynamics, it lacks the Huracán's raucous temperament and razor-sharp responses, preferring a more measured and cerebral approach to fulfilling the supercar brief. For some this means the GT is a missed opportunity, Audi not going far enough while it had

the chance. But spend enough time with it and you'll find hidden depths to the GT's abilities that elevate it above all previous iterations. It's a brilliantly executed car that brings the R8 story to a close in fine style. A battery-powered successor holds little appeal.

If the R8 GT is a full stop the Huracán Tecnica is a screaming exclamation mark. Few cars at any price are more exciting, and no modern Lamborghini has proved more adept at delivering an experience that appeals to the extrovert yet satisfies the purist. Its replacement looks set to feature a new twin-turbo V8 with battery-electric hybrid. Of course it'll be more potent, but surplus speed feels like a poor trade when it comes at the expense of one of the great internal-combustion soundtracks. We'll miss them when they're gone. But while they're here what better way to rejoice in what they represent than driving to the roof of Italy and let them scream one last time. ☒

Audi R8 V10 GT RWD

Engine V10, 5204cc **Power** 611bhp @ 8000rpm
Torque 411lb ft @ 6400rpm **Weight** 1570kg
Power-to-weight 395bhp/ton **0-62mph** 3.4sec
Top speed 199mph **Basic price** £195,253

evo rating ★★★★★

Lamborghini Huracán Tecnica

Engine V10, 5204cc **Power** 631bhp @ 8000rpm
Torque 417lb ft @ 6500rpm **Weight** 1379kg (dry)
Power-to-weight 465bhp/ton (dry) **0-62mph** 3.2sec
Top speed 202mph **Basic price** £212,000

evo rating ★★★★★

by STUART GALLAGHER PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

ANATOMY OF A V10

Developed by Lamborghini and built by Audi, here are the key components of both brands' last naturally aspirated engine



IT WAS THE FIRST ALL-NEW engine to be developed by Lamborghini after Audi bought the Italian marque in 1998 for \$110m. Starting life as a 5-litre unit in the Gallardo in 2003, this mesmerising powerplant has since propelled Lamborghini's 'entry-level' models for two decades and Audi's mid-engined supercar for the last 16 years too.

Built in Audi's vast, 5 billion-square-metre production facility in Győr, Hungary, each of today's 5.2-litre V10s is hand-assembled using 250 parts and takes six hours in total to build, with 19 put together per shift. Upon completion, every road-car engine is bench-tested for 90 minutes, with those destined for race cars spending 4.5 hours on the bench.

1. ENGINE BLOCK

Previous page Each block arrives in the assembly hall as a single aluminium casting, where it is separated, cleaned and inspected before entering the production process. The finished V10 measures 646mm (25in) long, 737mm (29in) wide and 696mm (27in) high.

2. CRANKSHAFT

The forged-steel crank sits inside an aluminium crankcase with non-split crank-pins. Where the original Lamborghini 5-litre V10 created an even 72-degree firing order, the latest 5.2-litre engine has uneven firing intervals of 90 and 54 degrees, improving acceleration.

3. VALVE GEAR

Each V10 engine requires 40 titanium valves for its four-valve cylinder heads, but while those used in the road cars are sourced from the US, Audi sources valves for its V10 race engines from a specialist German supplier.

4. CYLINDER HEAD

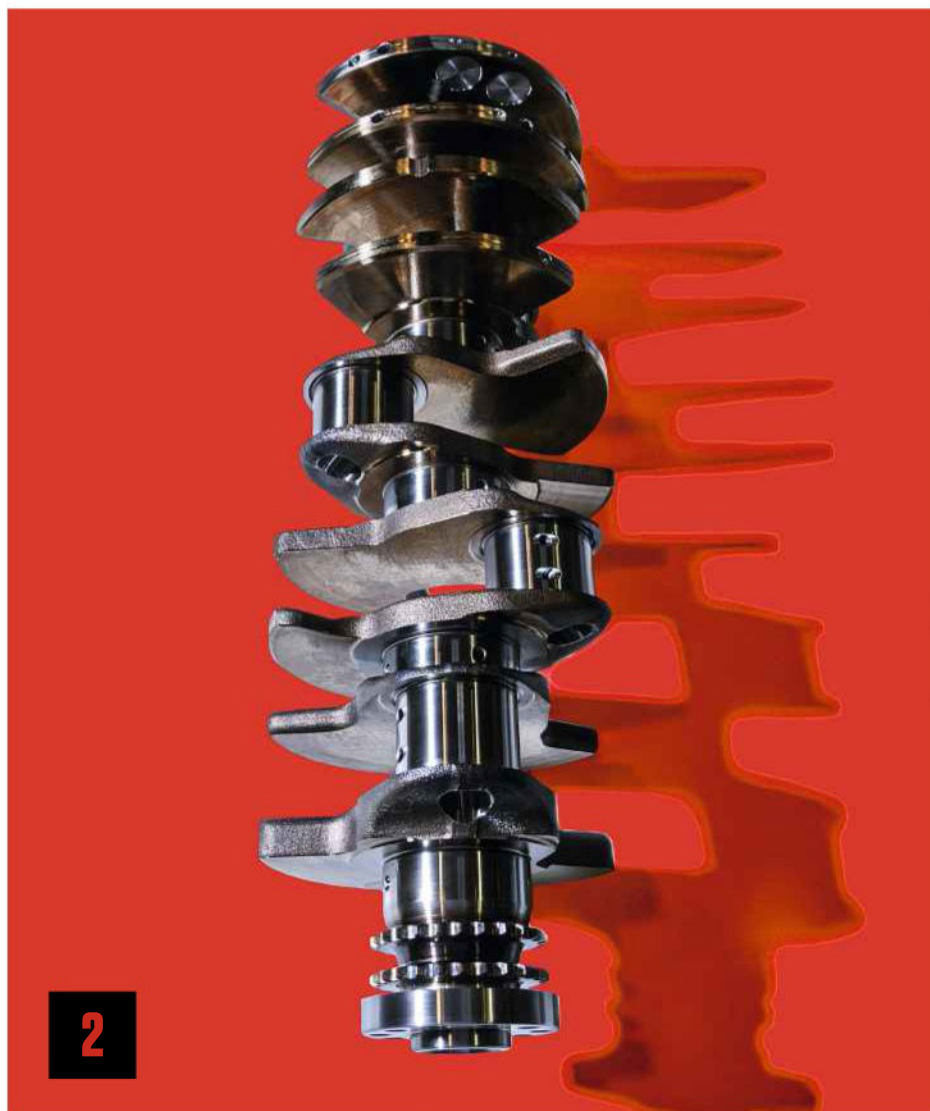
As with the block, the V10's 40-valve cylinder head is cast from aluminium and is both X-rayed and visually inspected by hand before its components are installed. It's fed by a dry-sump lubrication system, with a complete engine weighing 258kg, 31kg more than the first-generation R8's V8.

5. INDUCTION SYSTEM

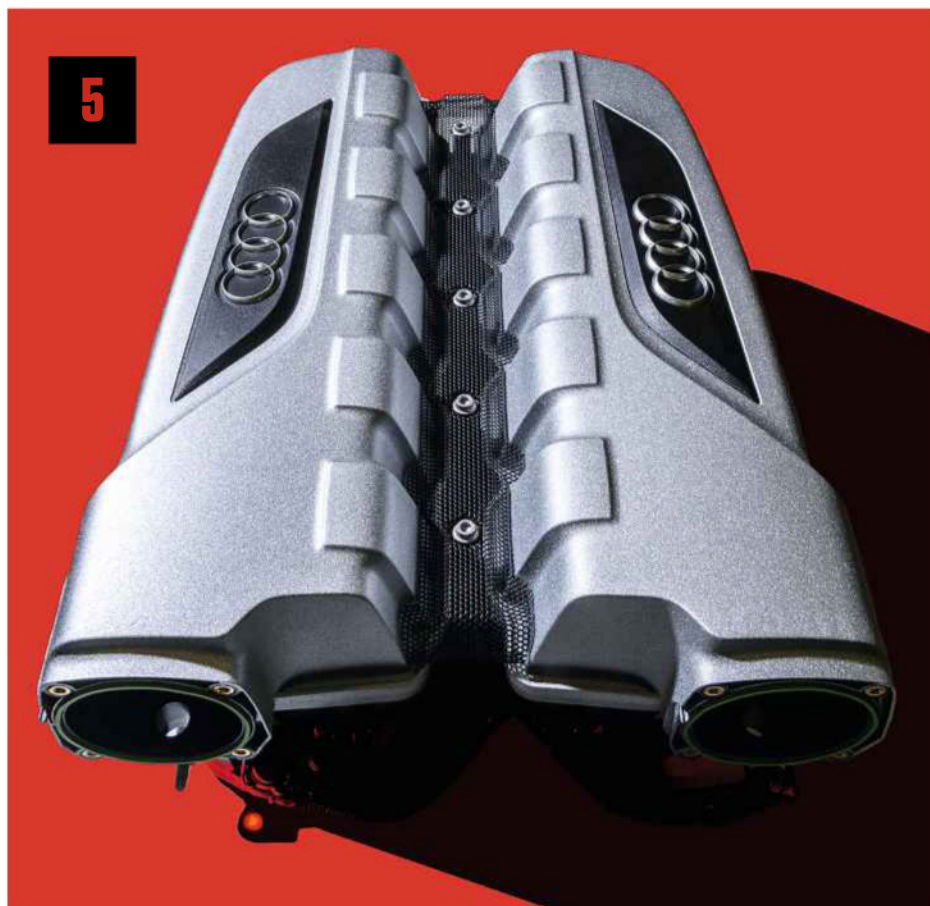
Manufactured from a lightweight plastic, the V10's air intake, intake manifold and cam covers represent the most significant changes between an Audi and a Lamborghini V10. Each engine is given an Audi or Lamborghini engine number before production begins, although the engine doesn't know its final identity until the ECU is plugged in to tell it.

6. PISTONS & CON RODS

The ten pistons are left- and right-sided per cylinder bank; the V10's connecting rods, manufactured by a specialist outside supplier, cost four times those used in the R8's original V8. Forged from aluminium alloy, each piston travels at 26.9 metres per second at the engine's 8700rpm limit (peak power arrives at 8000rpm).



2



5



ICON

TVR GRIF

by JOHN BARKER PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH



FIFTH 500

The Griffith established TVR as a genuine contender and transformed the company's fortunes – and it's still as exhilarating to drive now as it was in its '90s heyday



I

REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME I SAW A Griffith. It looked astounding, modern yet classic, like a traditional sports car that had been through a gemstone tumbler. It's been years since I've been up close with one and as the garage door goes up, I'm in awe all over again.

Great designs usually go through a process where they start out looking new and fresh, then become familiar and start to look a bit dated, and then, after about 20 years, they assume icon status. The Griff

appears to have skipped the awkward bit in the middle and gone straight from new to icon.

In fact, I suspect that somewhere in a dusty, forgotten attic of the former TVR Engineering works on Bristol Avenue, Blackpool, is designer Damian McTaggart's original styling sketch for the Griffith, ageing horribly; flat tyres, crusty alloys, headlamps lolling on the ends of their wires and bodywork crazed like the face of a 90-year-old Greek fisherman. The Picture of Damian's Griff, if you will. Except that this landmark car in TVR's history, credited to McTaggart, was a team effort, naturally involving enigmatic owner Peter Wheeler and, crucially, his right-hand man, engineer John Ravenscroft.

The owner of this gorgeous, metallic blue Griff, Carl Elston, talks me through the start procedure, and when I turn the key... *Ka-Boom!*, the garage, the street, the whole damn estate rocks to the rumble and woofle of the monster V8. It's utterly glorious.

TVR reworked its engines for greater performance but in the early '90s pretty much the whole small-volume British sports car industry was using versions of the venerable all-aluminium Rover V8, which had started life as a 3.5-litre Buick engine way back in 1960. It was still on active service

in current Range Rovers, creating a ready supply for TVR, Morgan, Marcos, Westfield, Ginetta and even Rover Group itself, which used it in the revived MGB, the RV8.

Some of these specialists were building cars in the same way as TVR too, so to elevate its cars beyond them, TVR needed more than a potent engine and stunning good looks. The Griffith delivered, with an interior that was as sculpted and stylish as the exterior, a genius roof design and involving dynamics.

The dramatic cockpit, designed by Nick Coughlan, was wonderfully detailed, with TVR-branded dials and bespoke aluminium switches and fittings, so that it couldn't be accused of being a parts-bin special. Even the plastic stalks of the rake-adjustable steering column (a Vauxhall part) were replaced with machined-aluminium items. And while the hoods of some rivals fitted badly and ballooned and flapped at speed, the TVR's looked crisply tailored. This was because although it looked like a soft-top it was in fact part hard-top, with a carbonfibre targa panel cleverly held in place by the tension provided by the over-centre arms of the folding rear section.

It was a decisive cut above everything else on the UK market, but TVR's real aim was to compete with Porsche. The Griff handled well but was less sophisticated, though TVR talked up its lack of technology, claiming that the absence of anti-lock brakes and traction control delivered a purer driving experience. There was no doubt that the Griff delivered terrific and superior performance per pound, or that the company took delight in making conquest sales from Porsche. At a British motor show in the mid-'90s, TVR's beaming PR manager gleefully revealed that they were doing great business having worked out that Porsche had given current and potential customers a lapel badge to allow them onto the Porsche stand, which of course made them easy to spot and invite onto the TVR stand...

It was quite a turnaround for the company. When Wheeler took it over in the early '80s he inherited the wedge-shaped Tasmin range, the very models that had, in part, been the downfall of his predecessor, Martin Lilley. Wheeler had been a customer and then an investor, so it was 'in for a penny, in for a pound'. He persisted with the Tasmins, adding the Rover V8 to the engine range to create the 350i and then, in '86, spotting that classic sports cars were making a comeback, created his first car. The TVR S was a curvy, affordable, Ford V6-powered car not unlike the 3000M of the '70s but in fact wore an all-new body. It was a big hit: two years after it launched, TVR sold over 500 Ss versus fewer than 200 wedges.

Among those wedges were a handful of examples of the mighty 420 SEAC. The letters stood for Special Equipment Aramid Compound, indicating that Kevlar was used in its body construction and not that it was the full-fat seaside special: Sausage, Egg And Chips. The edges of the wedge had already been softened on the SEAC and it was only a matter of time before Wheeler would combine proper curves with V8 performance.

When the 420 SEAC was banned from the Road Going Sports Car Championship for being too successful, Wheeler and his team created the Tuscan, a 420bhp, V8, slick-shod racer for a new one-make championship, the

Opposite: Griffith looks compact on the road to eyes used to the scale of today's cars; exterior design has aged remarkably well; each car took 600 hours to make





**‘TVR TALKED
UP THE LACK OF
TECHNOLOGY,
CLAIMING A
PURER DRIVING
EXPERIENCE’**



Tuscan Challenge. There was going to be a road car too, which would have been brutishly handsome, but as John Ravenscroft explained a few years ago, we got the rather more refined Griffith instead: 'Originally the Griff was going to be a replacement for the S and there was going to be another car, a Tuscan road car. But the Griffith sort of became that car...'

Indeed, the Griffith that wowed the crowds at the 1990 Birmingham show was built on the S chassis, but it was decided to use the beefier and bigger tubular chassis of the Tuscan racer for production. Ravenscroft was instrumental in the distinctive, smooth shape of the Griffith too. 'Peter wanted a traditional-looking British sports car, so we did the full-scale foam model with upright headlights. I thought it was a horrible, boring, old-fashioned thing. One day I just lopped off the front of the wing where the headlight was, and that left this sort of headlight shape, and I thought, hmm, that looks nice...'

The clean line of the faired-in headlamp set the tone for the rest of the design. There were no sharp edges to the body, no swage lines, no wheelarch brows, no visible door handles, even the rear number plate was lit from the back to reduce clutter. It was clever, too, in that the leading edges of the doors and the bonnet were overlapped, giving fewer panel gaps to finesse.

The Griffith didn't so much put TVR on the global sports car map as punch a dirty great hole through it and set fire to it on the way through. There had been significant TVRs before, but this Griffith was the key to unlocking a level of success the company had never known and that previous owners of the company had only dreamed of, paving the way for the Chimaera, which would be even more successful.

On meeting a Griffith for the first time, or again after a long time, certain things will wrong-foot you. Looking for the interior door handle, you will instinctively reach for the pop-out, half-circle ashtray on the door, forgetting that the handle is in fact by your left knee on the side of the centre console. Well, of course it is.

Owner Carl Elston has upgraded some parts on his car and refreshed others. Much of the cockpit has been retrimmed, the battery has been moved to the boot to give more space in the passenger footwell, and he's helpfully added discreet stickers to the various hidden-till-lit buttons scattered about the sweep of fascia. For good measure, he hands me the Filofax-sized handbook to help decipher what the dinky little aluminium heating and ventilation controls do. Days later, I'll still be dropping the windows when I'm too warm.

It's smaller than I remember (probably because all cars have got bigger in the last 30 years) and very low, so you sort of fall into the soft, narrow seats, which prove surprisingly comfortable even after hours at the wheel, with extra lateral support provided by the high centre console and door casing. Best pick your driving shoes carefully, though, because the footwell and pedals are narrow. The clutch is progressive and not too heavy, the big V8 effortlessly tractable, and the gearshift is as weighty and precise as you'd expect, given that the 'T5'





**‘YOU CAN GET
INTO SUCH A
WONDERFUL FLOW
WITH THE CAR ON
A SWEEPING ROAD’**



gearbox is directly beneath the short lever. What takes me by surprise is that the non-assisted steering doesn't lighten once you're clear of town. Other 500s I've driven have had much more manageable efforts.

I've heard plenty of versions of the Rover V8 and still own a saucy 5.2-litre example in my Capri, but this one is pretty much spot-on for a road car. Get past the start-up boom and high idle that seem to carry for miles like the roar of a lion and the quality of the sound is wonderful right across the rev and load range. This is despite – or perhaps because of – an exhaust system that's more stylish than functionally optimised; unequal-length headers run forward of the engine, turn 90 degrees and feed into industrial-scale, siamesed downpipes.

The V8's heavy beat ricochets spectacularly around basement car parks and off the walls of narrow streets, yet from behind the wheel most of the time you get a muted version of that soundscape, even at full throttle, probably because you leave the noise in your wake. It's surprisingly muted at cruising speed, too. In fact, there's probably more wind noise from the screen header, a sort of white noise that builds at 70mph and then doesn't seem to get much louder thereafter.

The sweet spot is full throttle in the mid-range when the note of the V8 is a delicious, smooth burr. Even pulling a high gear, it doesn't sound like it's working that hard to make the Griff fly, which is hardly surprising given the quoted 1060kg kerb weight. The earlier models with 4.0 and 4.3-litre V8s, tweaked to give 240 and 280bhp respectively, were less torquey and more rev happy, but I love the ever-ready, huge push of the 5-litre. You rarely feel the need to use 5000rpm, let alone 5500rpm where all 340bhp is delivered, instead relying almost entirely on the peak torque of 350lb ft, delivered at 4000rpm.

You can get into such a wonderful flow with the car on a sweeping road, joining up the curves with great gobs of torque, palming the gearlever snappily through its gate and filling the valleys with that V8 bellow. We almost didn't get the Griffith with this engine. After the 4.0 and 4.3, the Griff was rested and was supposed to be relaunched with TVR's own engine, the AJP8. However, the 4.2-litre, flat-plane-crank V8 was longer in development than expected, so the 4997cc version of the Rover V8 was created and the Griffith reintroduced in '93. Remarkably, it was still in production nine years later, and many more 5-litre engines went into Chimaeras, while the potent but rather charmless AJP8, which powered Tuscan racers from 1995, found its first and only road-car home in the Cerbera.

The Griff feels comfortable with the grunt, the rear end hooked up, and there's good grip too, even though the tyres look decidedly ordinary, almost quaint by today's sports car standard – 205/55s up front, 245/50s at the rear. With so little weight to deal with, they put quite enough rubber on the road. Similarly, the brakes are tiny but effective. The front wheels are an inch smaller in diameter than the rears, 15 inches versus 16, yet the front discs don't come anywhere near filling the rims. Stopping power is fine, though, and pedal feel is good too.

Opposite page: 5-litre engine produces 340bhp and 350lb ft of torque; tiny-looking brake discs are 260mm ventilated items at the front and 273mm solid on the rear



Traction and grip aren't an issue then, the Griff a dream on meandering roads, the steering efforts well judged, the car precise and composed, the lack of mass and even weight distribution delivering a natural poise. This car is a bit more demanding when you want to crack on down a twisty road, the steering a workout at every corner. Perhaps it can be remedied by geometry, which might also suppress some of the 'chatter' and kickback on lumpy roads and unlock one of the joys of previous Griffs: steering it on the throttle, if only modestly. Or less modestly on a wet roundabout.

I once asked Wheeler where they developed the ride and handling of TVRs and he joked that at the bottom of Bristol Avenue there were a couple of bumps and potholes and if the car rode those OK it was good to go. Ride and handling is one area where TVR improved every year, the last cars of the Wheeler era, the Sagaris and the Tuscan road car, being the best, their ride and handling

sweetly resolved. But design-wise, for me the Griffith was never topped.

There was nothing like it back in 1990 and there's been nothing as pure and unadulterated since. The fact that it stayed in production, fundamentally the same, until 2002 I find remarkable. All that changed was the fitment of 16-inch front wheels and the replacement of the inverted Vauxhall Cavalier Mk3 tail lights with clusters of individual lamps.

The Chimaera – built around the same underpinnings – was a little more comfortable and a fraction more practical and quickly became the big-volume car, outselling the Griffith by more than two-to-one to become TVR's best-selling model of all time. But it was the Griff that transformed TVR's reputation, elevated the Blackpool sports car maker to the world stage and set the tone for all the models that followed. It is, in short, a solid-gold icon. ☒

TVR Griffith 500

Engine V8, 4997cc **Power** 340bhp @ 5500rpm **Torque** 350lb ft @ 4000rpm

Weight 1060kg **Power-to-weight** 326bhp/ton **0-60mph** 4.1sec

Top speed 169mph **Price new** £38,015 **Value today** From £16,500

evo rating ★★★★★



**'THERE'S BEEN
NOTHING AS
PURE AND
UNADULTERATED
SINCE'**



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FAST FLEET

Ginetta G56 GTA

Once more unto the breach... Fast Fleet's race car returns to arms, this time with two different **evo** writers taking turns behind the wheel



G

INETTA KNOWS HOW TO THROW A PARTY. WE'RE AT G-Fest at Silverstone, a four-day spectacular for the marque's 65th anniversary. Classic Ginettas from the brand's past line the paddock, the strains of live music and the smell of barbecue are borne on the summer breeze, and there's a seriously tasty array of competition cars being readied in the pitlane for races and demonstrations – including the company's LMP1 racer, which played David to Toyota's Goliath at Le Mans in 2018 and will unofficially break the Silverstone National Circuit lap record in a demo run later this weekend.

But my mind's on other things. A packed schedule of races includes some for the Ginetta GT Academy series, and our last



p115 Fiat Panda 100HP



p116 Aston Martin V8 Vantage



p119 Mazda MX-5 2.0 GT



p118 Audi TT RS



racing foray in the Fast Fleet G56 before we hand it back to Ginetta and on to life as the official Academy demonstrator car. I'm strapping myself in for the first two races of the weekend, while **evo** staff writer Yousuf Ashraf – who has never driven a race car before – will line-up for the remaining two later on. Good luck, Yousuf!

My first time back behind the G56's cut-down steering wheel is Saturday morning's 20-minute qualifying session. Gulp. The wider Academy has been pounding round Silverstone since Thursday (just getting that excuse in early...), albeit on the full Grand Prix circuit; for Saturday and Sunday, we're on the short National Circuit. Start from the old Grand Prix pitlane, take a hard right just after Maggotts (making that a corner that's new for everyone), and rejoin the Grand Prix circuit on the Wellington Straight. Essentially there are only four corners, but they're all tricky ones.

I find it trickier to get into a rhythm than at the opening Oulton Park round (see **evo** 312), picking up more acute understeer in places, while in others the balance feels spikier, the car more on edge. Ginetta's team posit that might be because, on such a short lap, the road-legal Michelins get, and stay, hotter than at Oulton. (That's my excuse, anyway.) Come flag-fall I'm 0.68sec off pole-sitter Ravi Ramyeed, which sounds reasonably close but puts me eighth on the grid for both races. Short track, competitive series – a neat endorsement of the Academy's closely matched cars and drivers.

At Oulton's three races I managed two rapid starts and one lousy one when I short-shifted to try and manage wheelspin but ended up bogging down and going backwards. Clearly I learned nothing from that mistake because

I do exactly the same thing here, and lose two positions off the line. I manage to nick one of them back on lap two, and gain an extra place when Paul Livesey ahead picks up a time penalty for exceeding track limits. My eighth-place finish is a net zero gain/loss in terms of position but a huge reward in terms of sheer enjoyment.

Several times during the race my face creases into an involuntary giddy smile: accelerating hard out of Woodcote, chasing the pack ahead through a cloud of gravel dust kicked up by a hard-charging competitor, Silverstone gantry zinging past overhead, V6 singing to the cloudless sky above – I'm racing a GT car! At Silverstone!

Race two leaves me feeling even more buoyant, not least because I avoid botching the start, emerging from Copse in seventh place. That becomes sixth when Thomas Shelley runs



wide at Brooklands, and he fills my mirrors for the remainder of the race, giving me flashbacks to my first, fraught Academy experience. I manage to resist the pressure one more time and I'm elevated to a bonus fifth when Matt Shaw ahead also falls foul of the eagle-eyed track-limits marshals.

I'm more relaxed with more laps under my belt and there are glimpses, moments, of that elusive feeling of things happening in slow motion, of being ahead of the car, of being in a rhythm with it and the circuit. It's one of the best feelings in the world.

It's not the fairytale double-podium of the first round at Oulton Park but I feel content, and elated to have been behind the G56's wheel once more. It's as captivating a car as I remember. But it has more pace to unlock, as Yousef is about to prove.

James Taylor (@JamesTaylorEVO)

JAMES WISHES ME LUCK, THE DOOR clangs shut, and I suddenly feel quite lonely. My left foot is trembling on the clutch and I'm fixated on mechanic Nick Mugglestone waiting to wave me out of the garage. This is the bit you can't prepare for: how you absorb the pressure. And I'm not absorbing any of it; I passed my ARDS test three weeks ago, and now, having never driven a racing car before, I'm strapped into our G56 GTA about to qualify for my first race. I'm sweating in my borrowed race kit (sorry James) and repeating the engineer's advice in my head, but there's no more time to think. The green light comes on and it's time to get on with it.

As a complete novice I'm competing in Ginetta's fixed-setup Rookie class, sharing the grid with experienced runners in the GTA category. For the first half of qualifying I'm all at sea; the car feels very edgy and I nearly spin on

my first flying lap, but towards the end of the run I find a better rhythm. I'm astonished to find that, somehow, I've qualified fifth – 0.55sec off pole and second in the Rookie class. Better yet, with the grid for race two decided by the second best lap from each driver, I'll be starting fourth overall and first in class later in the day. I can't quite believe it, but it's proof that the G56 GTA really is accessible for inexperienced drivers.

But the nerves haven't faded yet. On the way to the grid for race one all I can think about is the launch. Lined up alongside Rookie championship leader Matt Shaw, I hold the revs at 4500rpm, watch for the lights and drop the clutch as they go out. But I'm barely moving; the rears have lit up spectacularly and I fall into the chaos of the midfield on the run down to Copse. With two GTA drivers now between me and Shaw, I need to find a groove – and fast – to have a hope of catching him.



Over the next few laps a three-way battle unfolds in front of me, and the fight boils over when Ed Acres lunges up the inside of Shaw into Maggotts. The two come together at the apex but I get a clean exit and nick the class lead. It doesn't last long though. Braking into Maggotts behind Acres the pedal hits the bulkhead, and with the orange G56 in front rapidly filling the windscreen, I jink left onto the grass to avoid contact. In a blink I'm a long way from the action and the brake issue has blown my confidence.

I cross the line behind Shaw, gutted to have dropped out of the fight. But as I clamber out of the car I'm handed the winner's cap – it turns out the three drivers in front have been given time penalties for exceeding track limits and I've been promoted to fourth overall and first in class. I've won! I didn't do the job on track but this is far more than I ever hoped for. And there's a chance to have another crack at it in race two...

Starting from the second row, the task seems

'The championship leader has spun and with 13 laps to go I'm third on the track'

much simpler, but I can't be complacent. Using fewer revs my getaway is much cleaner, and I hold position out of turn one, but by the end of the first lap Shaw's pastel green G56 is looming in my mirrors, dodging and ducking into every braking zone to sniff out a gap. I can't take my eye off the ball; a single lock-up or big slide would cost me the class lead, and Shaw nudges my rear bumper as if to remind me of this.

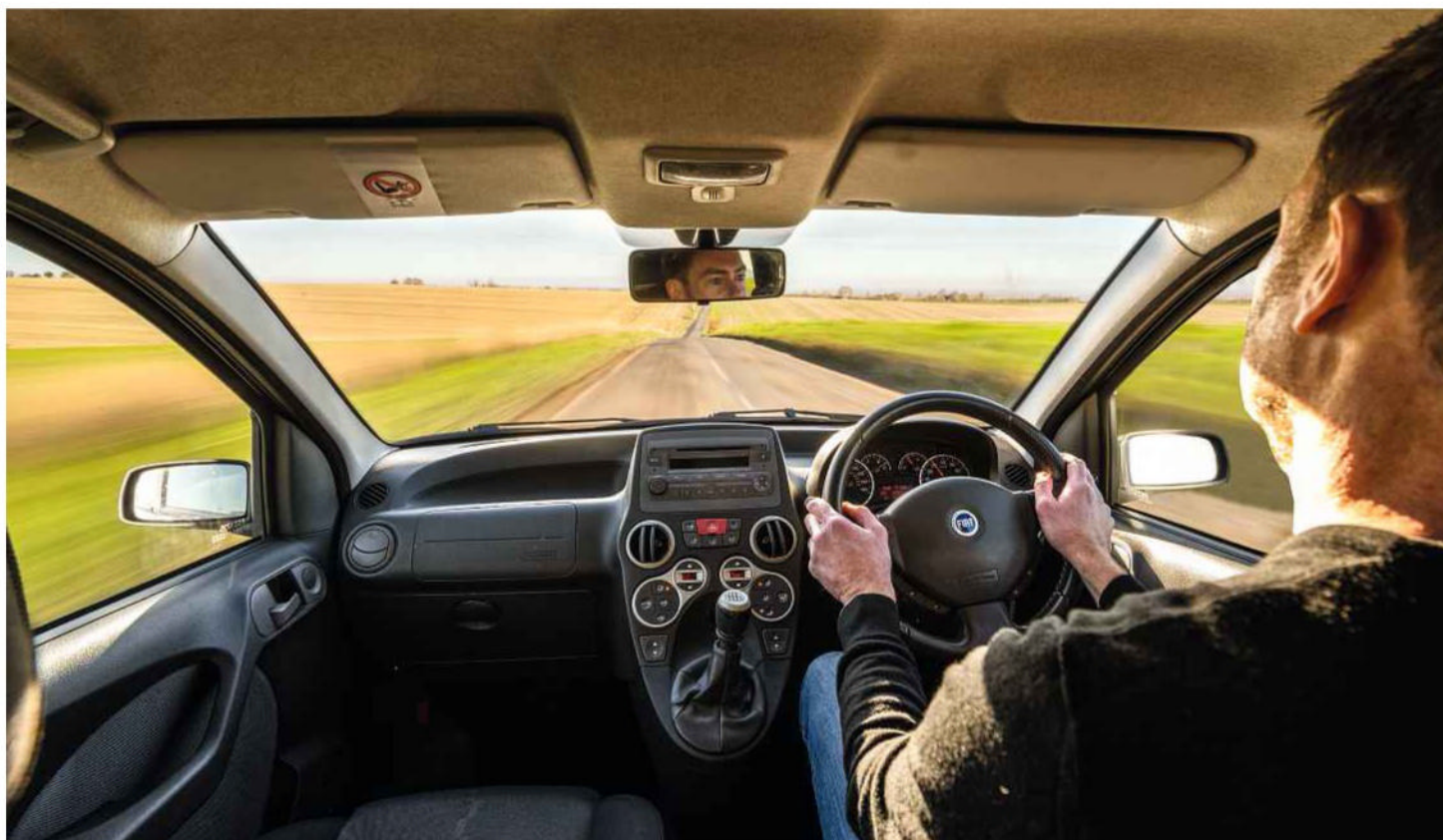
We're slowing each other down, though, and Shaw soon has his hands full with Livesey behind, giving me some breathing room as they

battle. The trio of GTA front-runners is a few seconds ahead by now, but as I enter Brooklands on lap six, one of them is facing the wrong way. Championship leader Ramyeed has spun in a fight with Mackenzie Walker for second place, and with 13 laps to go I'm third on the track.

And that's how the race ends: an overall podium and another Rookie win! I burst out laughing inside my helmet as the flag falls – it feels so sweet, much more so than the last race, and as the tension lifts, it suddenly dawns on me that I'm driving a racing car at one of the greatest circuits on the planet. I look around and drink it all in. What a privilege, and what an introduction to the world of car racing.

Yousuf Ashraf (@ashrofoncars)

Date acquired April 2023 **Total mileage** n/a **Mileage this month** 181 **Costs this month** n/a **mpg this month** n/a



Fiat Panda 100HP

Just as the suspension gets sorted and validated, another woe strikes the Panda

AT THE END OF MY LAST PANDA REPORT the car was still in the local garage with its creaking front suspension in pieces. In order to make sense of the apparent bodgery around the bushes and bolts, Paul from the garage came up with a plan which involved reconstructing the front end using parts from a scrap Panda.

'Hang on,' I asked nervously, 'what sort of Panda?' Not a 100HP, it turned out. Obviously this was a worry because 100HP suspension isn't like the suspension on other Pandas. The rear axle is bespoke, for example. And the front? Well, it's hard to know what's unique at that end because if you search for parts online many bits, including the lower wishbones and anti-roll bars, come up as suitable for all Panda variants. But online parts shops can be wrong and, since neither Paul nor I could get a definitive answer, he said he'd put everything together again, see how the car felt, and take it from there.

A few days later I went to collect the Panda, expecting to find it sitting all wrong and driving even worse, but actually the usual hunkered-down 100HP stance was still there and, to drive, well, it felt pretty good. Maybe not quite as crisp on turn-in but generally not a million miles from

where it should be. Or was I imagining this? I felt like I needed a control specimen and, as luck would have it, that very week an unmolested Panda 100HP came up for sale in my area, so I sent a message with a cheeky request: no, I didn't want to buy the car, but could I have a quick drive in it anyway?

Happily, the seller turned out to be a very nice chap called James who was happy to let me use his car for some benchmarking. And I was delighted to discover that, actually, the two Fiats didn't seem so different. In fact, in some ways, my car felt better, notably because of a less jiggly ride. Although driving another 100HP also reminded me that the Sport button in mine brings in a sharper throttle calibration, as it should, but also makes the steering lighter rather than heavier, in this respect behaving like

'I was revelling in the engine right up until the point it started idling unevenly'

the City button in lesser Pandas. I don't know if the EPAS brain has defaulted to the wrong map or if this means my car has the wrong power steering motor altogether, but that's one to worry about another time.

On the plus side, in comparison to James's 100HP, the engine in my car definitely felt heartier, perhaps because there are more miles under its belt. Whatever the reason, I was revelling in this aspect of my car right up until the point it started idling unevenly. Something's not right, I thought. Then I noticed an excess of white smoke coming from the exhaust and my heart sank. Sure enough, a smear of mayo under the oil filler cap confirmed my worst fear: it's the head gasket.

And so, once again, the Panda confounds my hope of some cheap thrills. Deep sigh. Frankly, in the past few months running this car has felt like playing a game of Whac-A-Mole.

Richard Porter (@sniffpetrol)

Date acquired September 2022 **Total mileage** 105,975 **Mileage this month** 52 **Costs this month** £436.80 **mpg this month** 39.6



Aston Martin V8 Vantage

The Vantage stretches its legs on a driving tour alongside other Astons old and new

I'D NEVER INTENDED THE VANTAGE TO BE a daily driver; the plan was always to keep it for high days and holidays – and annoy the neighbours with its window-rattling start-up, obviously. And always in the back of my mind was the thought of doing some proper road trips in it. Last year we spent a wonderful week exploring the North York Moors and the adjacent coastline. I was contemplating options for this summer when, with immaculate timing, an invitation arrived from Derby-based AM specialists Aston Engineering to join a group of 20 Aston Martins on a three-day tour of the Peak District and North Wales. That would do very nicely indeed.

First there was the small matter of the annual service and health check – always a slightly anxious time for people like me who can *j-u-s-t* afford to run an Aston provided nothing completely unforeseen is uncovered. Model experts advise to budget around a grand a year for all the routine stuff, and that's

proving to be the case (so far). This year it was back to Hatfield-based Nicholas Mee & Co for a regular 10,000-mile service plus brake fluid change. Which would have brought it in at a sub-par £850. Except that I also asked them to replace the door struts, which after 17 years of use had all the door-propping strength of a limp lettuce leaf. And that brought the total to £1143.77. Mercifully, the 43-point check that covers everything from the suspension to the screen washers didn't throw up any nasty surprises – R100 AMV was in good health.

And so we set off on the 100-mile drive north to Derby to join up with 20 other Astons (including the DBX support car) at Aston Engineering. We opted to drive up the day before the run, and the gentle, mostly motorway cruise was the first time I'd been able to quantify what the V8V could return on a light throttle. Answer: 24mpg, comfortably a new record, giving a theoretical range of around

380–400 miles. Predictably that average would take a bit of a tumble over the next three days...

Aston Engineering – celebrating its 40th birthday this year – is one of the UK's leading specialists, restoring and servicing a broad spectrum of Astons, and that was reflected in the line-up for the Peak Classic 2023 tour. Everything from DB4s to Gaydon-era Vanquishes gathered outside the works for the 9am start, and I'm pleased to say that R100 AMV

'Push on, rev the 4.3-litre V8 right out, and rediscover what a fine sporting GT the Vantage is'



PHOTOGRAPHY BY PAUL SMITH

didn't look out of place, despite being at the, shall we say, more accessible end of the range.

With Mrs T on road-book duties (and Google Maps as backup, just in case) we eased into the tour with a superb run on the undulating A515 from Ashbourne to Buxton before spearing off towards Chatsworth for lunch. The afternoon's drive then took in some of the finest roads the Peak District has to offer – spectacular Winnats Pass, the sublime Snake Pass through the Pennines, and the infamous Cat & Fiddle across the tops of the moors towards Macclesfield. I used to drive these roads a lot when I worked up here many moons ago, and to be able to revisit them in the Vantage was a major thrill. Many of them have blanket speed limits these days, but if you play the system you can cruise the straights and still enjoy the corners.

Day two saw the loosely linked chain of Astons drive out towards Snowdonia, stopping for lunch at the Rhug Estate, not far from *evo's* traditional Welsh

stomping ground. We didn't get quite as far as those familiar roads, but the breathtaking Horseshoe Pass was a more than adequate substitute with a similarly challenging combination of fast and slow corners, often edged with Armco, mountains and valleys beyond.

After two days of decent weather we were clearly due our share of grey skies and mizzle, and day three provided it, rendering Saddleworth Moor – infamous for its connection with the 1960s Moors murders – suitably sombre. More great roads, though, especially around Digley Reservoir, and the Vantage was loving every mile of them. There was a clear speed differential between some of the classics and the moderns, and lovely as it was to follow a brace of DB5s, it was fun to latch onto the tail of the DBX and really start to cover ground.

In fact the further and harder I drove, the better it felt. I think because by now I had relaxed into it, happy to push on, rev the 4.3-litre V8 right out,

really lean on the grip and the brakes, rediscover what a fine sporting GT the Vantage is. I just love this era of performance car – an era that also gave us the 997-gen 911 and early Audi R8. Together with the Vantage, all three offer a brilliant blend of character, performance and usability while remaining unashamedly analogue in feel.

The Peak Classic was a great way for Aston Engineering to celebrate 40 years: great roads, great cars and as friendly a bunch of owners as you could hope to meet. In four days, the Vantage had covered almost 700 miles and performed brilliantly. In fact it returned home totally unscathed. Well, almost. More on that next time.

Peter Tomalin

Date acquired March 2021 **Total mileage** 46,582 **Mileage this month** 710 **Costs this month** £1143.77 **mpg this month** 20.3

Audi TT RS

Our TT follows in the long-distance tyre tracks of an earlier Audi RS long-termer

WHILE OUR M5 CS, SKODA SUPERB AND MX-5 have all ventured into Europe recently, this month I pointed our TT's nose in the opposite direction for a journey of similar distance: the best part of 500 miles, from Cambridgeshire up into the Scottish Highlands.

My benchmark for this trip was set in another Audi, the RS5 long-termer I ran back in 2017. Its grand-touring abilities really came to the fore over a week spent travelling to, from and around Scotland, but it also showed it could knuckle down and be genuinely engaging, specifically on a very memorable drive along 20-or-so miles of largely deserted, fast, sweeping A-road. By the end of that week the RS5 had

wormed its way into my affections more than I ever expected it would. Could the TT RS repeat the trick?

The basic ingredients suggested it might. While it's a smaller car, it still has all the luggage space two people could ever need and the cabin never feels cramped. It's also no less luxurious than the bigger RS and can match it for effortless performance too, thanks to a near identical power-to-weight ratio.

Yet despite all this it's not the most relaxing thing to cruise around in. Once again it's the ride quality that's the fly in the ointment, reporting back the smallest imperfections – or even just coarse surface textures – in far too much, harsh detail. Spend a long day at the wheel at it becomes particularly grating.

Clearly the TT RS is more sports car than GT, and accordingly it delivered its own moment to remember with a blinding performance along a tight, tricky road that I suspect would have got the bigger, heavier RS5 in a fluster. For those few miles, the compromise elsewhere almost seemed justifiable. Even so, if I had to repeat all 1500 miles again next week, I'd still rather do so with the RS5's broader spread of abilities.

Ian Eveleigh

Date acquired July 2022 **Total mileage** 11,688 **Mileage this month** 2054 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 33.1





Mazda MX-5 2.0 GT Sport Tech

Can the little roadster really do the job of a grand tourer? A run to the Netherlands holds the answer

IF OUR AUDI TT RS FALLS SHORT AS a long-distance GT, you'd expect our MX-5 to face an even bigger struggle in similar circumstances. However, a recent trip to Zandvoort for the launch of the Alpina B5 GT (see Driven, *evo* 313) proved that it's far more capable than you might expect.

Last-minute travel arrangements meant taking the Eurotunnel rather than a more efficient Harwich to Hook of Holland ferry crossing, and given my northerly starting point this called for 200 miles of driving in the UK alone – each way. Heading from Calais, through Belgium and finally into the Netherlands, then all the way back home again, saw the MX-5 cover just shy of 1000 miles over the course of a few days, and it performed exceptionally well.

I'd embarked on numerous lengthy journeys in the MX-5 before, but none had been quite as taxing as this. Thankfully the Mazda's cabin suits me well, rarely giving me any discomfort even after multiple hours at the wheel, but the one thing that concerned me most, prior to this trip, was cabin noise. Scuttle shake, a soft-top roof and a distinct lack of sound-deadening measures make it a rather loud car at motorway speeds, especially in the rain (which I



encountered plenty of). The Bose sound system can overpower it – just – which helps, but it's the one element of the MX-5 that makes longer journeys less comfortable than I'd like.

Though the cabin is relatively pared back by 2023 standards, with body-coloured, painted door cards and minimal leather beyond the seats, I find the MX-5 a comfortable place to be for the most part. Someone of taller stature might not be able to say the same, but it remains one of the most ergonomically resolved cabins I've experienced. The steering wheel offers plenty of adjustment, while the seating position, armrests and raised gearstick are all perfectly suited for long stints. Midway through the trip I did begin to notice some elbow discomfort from

the armrests, with vibrations at higher speed likely not helping matters, yet while this wouldn't be an issue in a car with slightly plusher materials, it's also something you're only likely to encounter in the Mazda during unusually long drives.

Generally, though, motorway driving is a breeze, thanks to the intuitive, no-nonsense cruise control, with no complex radar assistance or lane guidance systems to compete with. At the other extreme, navigating the narrow, bicycle-packed roads of the Netherlands was an interesting experience to say the least, but the MX-5's small dimensions made it far less challenging than it might otherwise have been.

While returning home through a dark, sodden France, the MX-5 surprised with its best average mpg figure yet: 44.2mpg. Incredible considering the frequent stop-start traffic in the Netherlands and the not-so-economical dash to catch the last Shuttle home. Once again, small dimensions and low weight prove their worth.

Sam Jenkins (@evosamj)

Date acquired July 2022 **Total mileage** 10,823 **Mileage this month** 1878 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 44.2



Aston Martin DBX707

Our super-SUV squares up to a rival in the form of Porsche's Cayenne Turbo GT

A VISITOR FROM STUTTGART FOR THE DBX this month in the shape of the Cayenne Turbo GT, the super-SUV that Porsche sent to its Weissach GT department for a workout in order to show the Brit upstart who produces the best performance SUV. It's a sector that remains a mystery to many of us, in terms of why manufacturers invest so much to chase performance figures with cars you would never start the process with in the first place. But bills need to be paid, investors rewarded with dividends, high-margin specials funded and, for some, EV ramp-up costs bankrolled.

Yet regardless of how well such machines drive and fulfil their remit – and some of them do so surprisingly well and considerably beyond expectations – they still feel like trying to train a spin bowler to throw down 90mph howitzers, or turning a central defender into a flighty winger. A remarkable achievement if you pull it off but still

the answer to a question few asked. I will always struggle with the appeal of an RS Q8 for as long as Audi produces the more practical, quicker, better driving and less ostentatious RS6.

Alongside the DBX707 in *evo*'s car park, the Porsche certainly doesn't have the same visual aggression. Closely resembling the regular Cayenne Coupé on which it's based, it forgoes the aggressive aerodynamic battledress that adorns the Aston. With no jutting diffusers or front-end dive planes, it's all very subtle by comparison. Better? I'll let you decide. However, during their time together the DBX started more conversations but only the Cayenne resulted in someone following me and actually asking to buy it. This was when I stopped to try to squeeze in all the flatpack components required to fit-out a utility room – and for those *What Car?* readers who have picked up *evo* by accident this month, I can reveal that the DBX swallows

considerably more than the Cayenne Coupé.

The Turbo GT's recent disappearance from Porsche's configurator following the introduction of the midlife model facelift no doubt had something to do with the purchase offer, so too the struggle to see where the additional £42,000 goes on the Aston – and that's before options. The Porsche carried an RRP of £147,510 whereas a 707 starts at £190,000 and our car tops out above £200,000.

You don't need to be using any of the Turbo GT's 631bhp to understand this Porsche was developed

'The DBX can don its loafers while the Cayenne is unable to ditch its running spikes'



with pure performance in mind. Alcantara smothers every surface, and while the seats aren't GT3 buckets they are pretty close to them in how they grip and hold you, which all highlights the broader remit the 707 works to as it blends its luxury agenda with its ultimate performance objective. Step from one to the other and the DBX feels like a car you sit on, not in.

Yet the DBX is the more vocal when you wake its twin-turbo V8, its exhaust note raucous to match its dress code, whereas the Cayenne burbles and prefers to hit you when you're on the move rather than irritate the neighbours when you're not.

Despite the DBX707's 66bhp power advantage over the Cayenne it's the latter that feels the more highly strung and switched on from the outset. If anything, it never feels switched off. Everything about the Turbo GT has a sharpness about it, from the first moments of the throttle and steering responses, via the solidity that

permeates through the chassis regardless of your speed, to an eagerness that tells you that even in its mildest setting it's a match for the 707 when the Aston is in its higher Sport configuration.

There's a smoothness and calm in the Aston. Its soothing stride masks the nastiness of poor roads and dull drives, whereas the Porsche feels unable to settle, always engaged and ready to go. This is where the DBX shines, donning its loafers while the Cayenne is unable to ditch its running spikes; the Porsche's eight-speed auto is always a gear lower regardless of how you're driving.

Yet when you want to experience all rather than nothing of the Turbo GT's performance, the pedigree that's been engineered throughout rises to the top in an instant. It may look like a Cayenne, but the way it drives feels totally bespoke, like no other Cayenne, not even the impressive GTS.

There's not a millimetre of slack in anything it does. Where the 707 can feel slow to respond, the

Turbo GT is already primed. Its engine punches harder, the shifts drive home harder still, and the revs are more than a match for a Black Series AMG V8, never mind the regular M177 that Aston Martin has calibrated for its models. Even in its most extreme Sport+ setting the Aston doesn't have the responses, directness or togetherness of the Porsche.

What the Cayenne Turbo GT doesn't have is the DBX707's suppleness and comfort on longer treks. Ideally you'd want the Turbo GT's precision injected into the 707's DNA. A DBX707 AMR would probably do it, and would certainly add to Aston's bottom line.

Stuart Gallagher (@stuartg917)

Date acquired April 2023 **Total mileage** 7822 **Mileage this month** 1104 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 21.7

by STEVE
by YOUSUF ASHRAF

BEST BUYS

GRAND TOURERS

LONG-DISTANCE GRAND TOURERS PREDATE THE SUPERCAR as one of the cornerstones of motoring, but truth be told, it's harder than ever to justify their existence. Today's supercars are more useable than ever and cover great distances with ease, fulfilling the task once reserved for front-engined behemoths like the Ferrari Daytona, Lamborghini Espada and Maserati Ghibli. The two roles have converged through advancements in technology, comfort and refinement, but even so, there's still an undeniable majesty about a classical grand tourer.

A GT's more regal, sophisticated character is deeply appealing, and one that's tantalisingly accessible if you venture into the used market. The potential maintenance costs of running such a lavishly engineered machine tend to ward off second-hand buyers, but if you know what you're getting into, you could land yourself a sumptuous cross-country express for hot hatch money. Read on to discover **evo**'s picks from the current market.



MERCEDES-AMG S63 COUPÉ

Discreet and underrated, but brilliantly fit for purpose

DON'T BE FOOLED BY THE AMG BADGE: THE S63 COUPÉ is tightly confined to its role as a grand tourer, and it's certainly not an out-and-out sports car. If you like your GTs with real bite and purpose, there are better ways to spend £40,000. On the flip side, for a more graceful long-distance machine you'll probably need to pay twice as much.

For whatever reason, the S-class Coupé never managed to translate its engineering brilliance into sales success. Perhaps the allure of a Bentley or Aston Martin was too strong alongside a car that, for all intents and purposes, looks like an E-class Coupé in 110 per cent scale. That's a shame, because its refinement, ride comfort and cabin quality are genuinely world-class, and in AMG guise the S-class Coupé feels nigh-on omnipotent; a restrained, well-mannered hot-rod that's wonderfully cohesive in character.

At its 2014 launch, the S63 Coupé was fitted with AMG's 5.5-litre twin-turbocharged V8, which has fantastic flexibility and range, making its presence known with huge torque reserves and a distant rumble without intruding on the S-class's vacuum-like cabin isolation at a cruise. Producing 577bhp the engine makes light work of the car's two-ton mass; the 4-litre M177 V8 in the facelifted model (2017-21) is more powerful still, with 604bhp, but both engines satisfy the S63's brief of shrinking continents.

The tauter, more connected AMG chassis tuning that sometimes feels incongruous in the S-class saloon feels more appropriate in the lower, shorter coupe. The S63 still laps up bumps and undulations within its suspension, but the AMG treatment gives

it more vertical control and keeps the body in sync with the road, and when specified with the optional Magic Body Control system, the air suspension's ability to contain roll is almost freakish. While this might encourage you to dig deeper into the S63's abilities, its mass and power overwhelm the tyres when you stretch beyond its comfort zone. It's much happier at a brisk, flowing pace, where it stays eerily refined and composed while cocooning you in a sculptural, highly advanced and beautifully built cabin. It's a grand tourer in the truest sense of the term.

With the first examples being built almost ten years ago, the S63 coupe is also startlingly good value. Early 5.5-litre cars start from just £40,000 with around 60,000 miles on the clock, while facelifted models (as pictured) begin beyond £60,000. Equipped with a more powerful, more efficient V8 and a snappier nine-speed MCT gearbox in place of the older car's seven-speed unit, the updated S63 is a meaningful – if expensive – upgrade.

Thankfully, given that much of its mechanical make-up can be traced to the mainstream S-class saloon, buying a used S63 Coupé isn't as much of a shot in the dark as other more specialist GT cars can be. Both V8s are well proven and resilient, and while the earlier seven-speed auto is sometimes jerky through the ratios, this can often be solved by a software update at a Mercedes dealer. Other minor niggles include a poor window seal that can let in a whistle of wind noise at speed – the pillarless side glass is an elegant design touch, but the seals need careful adjustment to insulate the cabin and provide the cossetting experience you'd expect.

Specification (5.5)

Engine V8, 5461cc, twin-turbo **Power** 577bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque 664lb ft @ 2250-3750rpm **Weight** 1995kg **Power-to-weight** 294bhp/ton **0-62mph** 4.3sec **Top speed** 155mph
Price new £125,595 **Price today** From £40,000



ASTON MARTIN VANQUISH (MK2)

The big-hearted Brit that remains one of its maker's best

THE SECOND-GENERATION ASTON MARTIN VANQUISH sits somewhere between the more sedate cruisers from Bentley and the volcanic, hyperactive front-engined V12 Ferraris of its time, and in doing so it offers a captivating blend of talents. It may not have achieved the Hollywood stardom of the original 2001 Vanquish, but by every other measure the 2012 version is a far more accomplished grand tourer, and one of Aston's finest.

Each element, from the engine to the steering and the fundamental chassis balance, has an old-school flavour without sacrificing the refinement and ease of use expected of a GT. There's a measured response to all of its controls that makes long motorway jaunts a breeze, and while 568bhp might not sound like a towering number in 2023, the Vanquish never feels anything other than effortless. You can thank the 5.9-litre naturally aspirated V12 for that, which digs deep from any gear and erupts with a rich, multi-layered sound each time you extend it.

Presented with tighter, more technical roads, the Vanquish doesn't feel quite so at home, partly due to its size and also because of its lack of ultimate finesse, but it's still indulgent and rewarding. You pour the Aston into corners, feeling the steering build with load, and it will indulge you if you choose to overwork the rear tyres with the throttle for a flurry of oversteer on the way out. To really make the most of its ability you need to switch to Sport mode to get extra control from the dampers; this gives a more jarring, thumping ride, but on the right road, this Aston is a delight.

Having said that, not every Mk2 Vanquish was created equal. While it quickly wormed its way into our affections at launch, it felt in need of a new gearbox to replace its slow-witted six-speed Touchtronic II auto. Thankfully Aston Martin agreed, installing a far more appropriate eight-speed ZF unit in 2014 and taking the opportunity to apply a host of changes to the car's chassis. And this updated model is the one you really want.

These start from around £80,000, and while this might seem like a lot for a nine-year-old Aston, it's still seventeen grand short of a brand new (and far less glamorous) base Porsche 911 Carrera. With Aston's AM29 V12 connected to the aforementioned ZF 'box, the Vanquish's core components are familiar and robust, but its carbonfibre body panels are frighteningly expensive to repair. The front splitter in particular is prone to scrapes against kerbs and speed bumps, so make sure it's intact.

While we could just about forgive the car's clunky pop-out Garmin satnav when new, it's become harder to accept nearly a decade on. Thankfully, it's possible to retrofit an aftermarket Apple CarPlay and Android Auto-compatible infotainment set-up for less than a grand, which provides a marked step up in ease of use and functionality. Typically of an Aston Martin, the Vanquish has a tactile, handmade feel inside with lovely attention to detail and a great driving position, although it's not uncommon for ill-fitting switchgear and rattles to accumulate through years of use, so check carefully for such before agreeing on a price.

Specification (2014-18)

Engine V12, 5935cc **Power** 568bhp @ 6650rpm
Torque 465lb ft @ 5500rpm **Weight** 1739kg **Power-to-weight** 332bhp/ton **0-62mph** 3.8sec **Top speed** 201mph
Price new £192,995 **Price today** From £80,000



FERRARI F12 BERLINETTA

Part grand tourer, part supercar, wholly irresistible

THE F12 BELONGS TO THE SAME MODEL LINE AS the Daytona, but while its mechanical layout mirrors that of a traditional Ferrari grand tourer, the execution here is more extreme, and closer to that of the smaller, lighter mid-engined cars from Maranello. The F12 isn't as soothing as the Aston Martin Vanquish – and certainly not as an S-class Coupé – but it's hard not to be seduced by its all-consuming ferocity.

The engine is the centrepiece, as is often the case with the best GTs. Ferrari's F140 V12 is one of the finest engines to be found in any road car, with uncanny response and power; the 6.3-litre unit generates 730bhp and pulls harder to 100mph than a McLaren F1, wailing like a banshee on its way to an 8700rpm red line. The numbers are stunning, but it's the wild nature of the delivery that really leaves an imprint. That instant thrust could easily vaporise the F12's rear tyres as the V12 spins up to peak power, but thanks to an advanced E-diff and a fiendishly complex suite of chassis electronics, it's a friendlier car than you might expect.

There's some pitch and roll in the chassis to give a sense of how hard you're working the tyres, and if you don't ask for full power all at once the F12 digs in and finds impressive traction. With light, super-quick steering it always feels primed for action and hyper-alert, and when you work it hard the F12 remains one of the most spectacular and exciting cars you can buy.

If that doesn't sound like a GT in the traditional sense, you'd be right; the F12 is better thought of as a supercar that can be used every day, with a decent-sized boot, a slick dual-clutch gearbox and a cabin that doesn't feel as confined as something smaller and mid-engined. Even so, hit the 'Bumpy Road' button on the steering wheel, dial the manettino switch back to Sport and the F12 is perfectly happy at a cruise, covering distances in relative comfort.

It seems a touch disingenuous to call a car costing upwards of £150,000 great value, but it does still feel like you're getting an awful lot for your money. Prices have remained steady for some time now, so you're unlikely to bear the brunt of much – if any – depreciation as an F12 owner today. Another plus point is that the F12 came with Ferrari's free seven-year service plan, so most examples have solid maintenance records. Cars delivered in 2017 (the final year of production) may even have one free service remaining for the next owner, as the scheme is transferable.

The F12's seven-speed transmission can be prone to oil-seal failure, so an inspection is worthwhile to avoid unexpected bills later down the line. A more obvious weak point is corrosion around the rear-wing vents, but most affected cars have been treated and repainted under warranty. Other cosmetic issues can include leather shrinkage on top of the dashboard when left out in the sun, but that's not a prominent issue for UK cars for obvious reasons...



Specification

Engine V12, 6262cc **Power** 730bhp @ 8250rpm
Torque 509lb ft @ 6000rpm **Weight** 1630kg **Power-to-weight** 455bhp/ton **0-62mph** 3.1sec **Top speed** 211mph+
Price new £239,736 **Price today** From £150,000

MASERATI GRANTURISMO SPORT

The Italian that's such a GT they couldn't call it anything else

A KIA STINGER GTS COULD OUT-SPRINT IT TODAY, but Maserati's GranTurismo was never quite as accelerative as its gorgeous Pininfarina looks might have led you to believe. However, in an age where electric crossovers can walk away from our favourite supercars off the line, that lack of outright firepower seems to matter less than ever.

The GranTurismo evolved significantly throughout its 12-year lifespan, first with the introduction of the S version and its uprated 4.7-litre V8 (up from 4.2 litres), then the more hardcore MC Stradale before the GranTurismo Sport arrived in 2012. A comprehensive facelift came in 2018, but for the best balance of value and performance, the 454bhp Sport presents the most appealing used buy. You can pick up a decent example for £30,000, or about the same as a well-specced new Volkswagen Golf.

You don't immediately detect the Ferrari origins of the GranTurismo's V8, primarily because its cross-plane-crank arrangement gives it a meatier, more gravelly tone than what we're used to from Maranello's flat-plane-crank versions. It quickly becomes apparent that the Maserati needs some revs to come alive, and while this might feel alien if you're used to modern torque-rich turbo engines, the rewards are worthwhile.

Pressing the Sport button on the dash releases extra volume from the exhaust and one of the best engine notes of any modern car, reaching a magnificent, baritone crescendo at 7500rpm. To unlock the Maserati's full potential as a GT, it's best to opt for the standard six-speed ZF torque-converter gearbox rather than the optional MC Shift version, which uses a lumpier robotised

manual and firmer suspension to echo the full-fat MC Stradale. The punchy shifts of the optional 'box are an acquired taste, and the ZF, if slower, is more seamless day-to-day.

Contrary to what its name might suggest, the GranTurismo Sport's 1880kg bulk doesn't evaporate on a testing road, and you're always conscious of the width of those shapely hips. However, its switchable Skyhook dampers are very nicely judged for pliancy and control, with feedback and texture permeating through the steering wheel as the speed and loads build. On more open, flowing A-roads it's a joy to bat away at the paddles and indulge in that engine, and the chassis stays right with you.

With its largely bulletproof V8 and well-proven six-speed ZF transmission, the GranTurismo has a strong reliability record, despite what you might expect from a ten-year-old car from a specialist brand. Be warned, though, as early examples are now so accessible that some owners tend to cut corners on maintenance. Engine oil leaks are not uncommon, but these can usually be attributed to perished valve-cover gaskets rather than anything more serious. Some electrical snags – including flickering rear brake lights and malfunctioning rain sensors for the automatic wipers – can sometimes be rectified by reflashing the ECU, and early cars tend to suffer from worn interior switchgear and peeling leather. The GranTurismo's standard infotainment system is archaic and lacking in features (some cars didn't even have Bluetooth), but Apple CarPlay is available via an aftermarket installation, bringing some modernity to an otherwise appealingly analogue – and affordable – V8 grand tourer. **X**



Specification

Engine V8, 4691cc. Power 454bhp @ 7000rpm
Torque 383lb ft @ 4750rpm Weight 1880kg Power-to-weight 245bhp/ton 0-62mph 4.8sec Top speed 186mph
Price new £90,390 Price today From £30,000

WINTER ESSENTIALS



Heel Tread socks

If you're after a fun gift that offers plenty of style and quality, then a pair of car-inspired socks from Heel Tread could be just the ticket. Designed to pay tribute to some of the world's most famous automotive icons, you'll love the quirky patterns, textures and colours on offer.

Price: From £11.25
Visit: heeltread.com



Overland and Overland+ jump starters

Winners of four Auto Express Best Buy reviews, the Overland and Overland+ are excellent expedition-proven 5V/12V power banks that can also jump start any engine from 0.1 to 5.0 litres. The units can be recharged via either mains/car USB or an optional fold-out solar panel, and are supplied with 12V female cigarette socket leads to run 12V devices.

Price: From £79.95
Visit: mobilesolarchargers.co.uk or call: 01935 824918



CTEK CS ONE

If you're after a fuss-free battery charger that is impressively easy to use, then you won't be disappointed with the CTEK CS ONE. It's one of the most advanced chargers on the market today, with its innovative APTO÷ (Adaptive Charging) technology that's intelligent enough to recognise what battery you're using and what charging program is best. You won't find any fiddly buttons or sub-menus to navigate, just a straightforward LED display, while the clamps are spark and polarity free - so no more charging anxiety trying to remember how the leads connect to the battery.

You can depend on the CTEK CS ONE in harsher winter weather, too. An integrated temperature sensor automatically balances the output voltage in both hot and cold conditions to provide the quickest and safest charging times, so you'll be swiftly on the move. And, with the added flexibility of being able to utilise a maintenance mode over longer periods, the CTEK CS ONE has all your charging needs covered.

Price: £220
Visit: ctek.com



AlcoSense Pro Breathalyser

The AlcoSense Pro breathalyser is a valuable investment to help you accurately check you're safe to drive the morning after the night before.

Previously commended in an evo breathalyser product test, the AlcoSense Pro uses technology to measure the blow pressure, flow rate and volume of breath exhaled to gain the most accurate sample during every test.

The results are easy to see on the AlcoSense Pro's 1.8-inch colour screen and if it detects that you're close to, or over, the limit it will warn you not to drive. Other features which make the Pro model simple to use are the BlowCoach function, which shows you how you're blowing via the screen in real time, and the Time Until Sober & Retest Alarm which will even calculate how long it could take until you're ready to get back behind the wheel. If you want, you can set a reminder to take a retest just by pressing the alarm icon - so there's no excuses.

Price: £149.99

Visit: alcosense.co.uk/pro or call: 01628 778885



Roue TPS watch

The motorsport-themed TPS watch from Roue pays homage to the 910 racing car with which Porsche snared a long-awaited 'home victory' at the Nurburgring 1000km. To celebrate this, the TPS features an embossed image of the famous car on its caseback. Inside is a proven, reliable Seiko movement, while the triple-layer dial features Swiss Super-Luminova for excellent legibility in the dark. The watch can be purchased in six distinct forms, including the panda-style TPS Two. Each is limited to 1,000 pieces, but despite the exclusivity, this is a very affordable timepiece, at £250 including shipping and two pre-colour-set interchangeable leather straps.

Price: from £250

Visit: rouewatch.com



Bilt Hamber Double-Speed Wax

After you've finished meticulously cleaning your car, it's important to make sure your hard work doesn't go to waste. That's why wax is a vital part of any home-detailing kit - it provides a layer of protection over the paint finish while also giving a glossy finish. Bilt Hamber's Double Speed Wax is an award-winner that's both water-repellent and detergent-resistant, giving great-looking results that'll last. It's better value than paste waxes, which can be expensive, with Double Speed Wax coming in at £16.95 for a 250ml tin.

An applicator pad and a microfiber cloth are included.

Price: from £16.95

Visit: bilthamber.com/product/double-speed-wax



Nextbase 622GW Dash Cam

Even the most careful of drivers can end up in an accident on the road, so it makes sense to invest in technology that can help keep you safe and save you money. The best-selling Nextbase 622GW Dash Cam is able to deliver quality footage thanks to its 4k image quality and inbuilt polarising filter that removes glare. But it's the raft of extra features offered with the 622GW that lifts it above rivals, including Alexa voice activation, integrated what3words location data and an Emergency SOS Response function. Plus there's a handy £30 promotional discount running until 25th September - what's not to like?

Price: from £239
Visit: nextbase.co.uk



Nilfisk Core 130 bike & auto pressure washer

You want your car looking its best during the summer months so regularly treating it to a proper wash is essential. Nilfisk's Core 130 Bike and Car Pressure Washer has 130 bar of pressure and an anti-kink hose that's easy to store. Available to buy on eBay, it comes with some free bonus accessories, too. These include a car brush, an auto nozzle, an under-chassis nozzle and a super foam sprayer. Keeping your car clean has never been so easy.

Price: From £149.99
Available on ebay



GYEON Q²M Glass+ and Q² CanCoat EVO

GYEON Q²M Glass+ not only cuts through dirt and grime with ease, its hydrophobic qualities mean that it has supreme repellency properties to give you the best possible vision in any conditions. The Q²M Glass+ cleaner will leave your car windows so slick that any rain and excess water just rapidly runs off, leaving the way ahead clear and safer to navigate - it's a must-have product for wintertime in the UK.

Once you've taken care of the windows you'll want to keep your car's paintwork in tip-top condition, and GYEON's Q² CanCoat EVO ceramic coating offers an easy way to protect your car's exterior for winter. Suitable for paint, trim, wheels, metal, carbon fibre or paint protection film surfaces, its versatile formula is outdoor-friendly, meaning it can be safely applied outside in fine weather, via a simple wipe-on wipe-off process using the supplied towel.

Price: From £14.50
Visit: cleanyourcar.co.uk/gyeon

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- BMWCar Magazine ★★★★★

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- Autocar ★★★★★



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Leather. 91 Miles. **£159,850**



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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 INC)	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	£26,530	4/1591	201/5500	203/1750	1190kg	-	172	6.2	-	143	★★★★★
Hyundai i30 N	307 F	£35,110	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 CVL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT (KILLAG)	WEIGHT (LBS)	BHP/TON (KILLAG)	0-62MPH (KILLAG)	0-60MPH (LBS)	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-AMG A35	267 F	£43,440	4/1991	302/5800	295/3000	1480kg	-	207	4.7	-	155	+ A formidable A-to-B device - Some front-drive rivals are more fun	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG A45 S	313 D	£63,285	4/1991	415/6750	369/5000	1560kg	-	271	3.9	-	168	+ A 21st-century reincarnation of late-'90s Imprezas and Evos - It isn't cheap	★★★★★
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	£25,590	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	★★★★★
Renault Sport Twingo 133	175 F	2008-13	4/1598	131/6750	118/4400	1050kg	-	127	8.7	-	125	+ Renault Sport experience for pocket money - Optional Cup chassis gives bouncy ride	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 200 Auto	184 F	2013-18	4/1618	197/6000	177/1750	1204kg	1294kg	166	6.7	6.9	143	+ Faster, more refined, easier to drive - We miss the revvy NA engine and manual 'box	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 220 Trophy	229 D	2016-18	4/1618	217/6050	206/2000	1204kg	-	183	6.6	-	146	+ Willing chassis - Awful paddleshift gearbox	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 200 Cup	247 F	2009-13	4/1998	197/7100	159/5400	1204kg	-	166	6.9	6.6	141	+ The hot Clio at its best - They don't make 'em like this anymore	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 197 Cup	115 F	2007-09	4/1998	194/7250	158/5550	1240kg	-	161	6.9	-	134	+ Quick, polished and capable - Not as much sheer fun as 182 Cup	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 182	066 F	2004-05	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1110kg	-	165	7.1	6.6	139	+ Took hot hatches to a new level - Flawed driving position	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 182 Cup	187 F	2004-05	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	-	168	6.9	-	139	+ Full of beans, fantastic value - Sunday-market upholstery	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio Trophy	262 F	2005-06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	-	168	6.9	6.6	140	+ The most fun you can have on three (sometimes two) wheels - Only 500 were built	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 172 (Phase 2)	034 F	2001-03	4/1998	170/6250	147/5400	1110kg	-	156	7.2	7.1	138	+ Poised, predictable, fast - Lacks aggressive edge	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 172 Cup	048 F	2002-03	4/1998	170/6250	147/5400	1011kg	-	171	6.9	6.5	138	+ Bargain old-school hot hatch - Nervous in the wet, no ABS	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 172 (Phase 1)	146 F	2000-01	4/1998	170/6250	147/5400	1035kg	-	167	7.2	6.6	138	+ Brilliantly accomplished - Imperfect driving position	★★★★★
Renault Clio Williams	233 F	1993-96	4/1988	148/6100	126/4500	981kg	-	153	7.8	7.6	134	+ One of the best hot hatches ever - Can be fragile	★★★★★
Renault 5 GT Turbo	255 F	1987-91	4/1397	118/5750	122/3000	855kg	-	140	7.3	-	120	+ Clio Williams' granddaddy - Few unmodified ones left	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio V6 255	294 F	2003-05	6/2946	251/7150	221/4650	1400kg	-	182	5.8	-	153	+ Supercar drama without the original's edgy handling - Uninspired interior	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio V6	029 F	1999-2002	6/2946	227/6000	221/3750	1410kg	-	164	6.6	5.8	145	+ Pocket supercar - Mid-engined handling can be tricky	★★★★★
Renault Mégane RS (280)	267 F	2018-20	4/1798	276/6000	288/2400	1407kg	1464kg	199	5.8	6.3	158	+ Outrageous grip and agility - Cup chassis option doesn't do its composure any favours	★★★★★
Renault Mégane RS 300	298 F	2020-21	4/1798	296/6000	310/4000	1443kg	-	209	5.7	-	158	+ Finally combined the Trophy's more potent engine with the softer chassis - Auto only	★★★★★
Renault Mégane RS Trophy	267 F	2018-21	4/1798	296/6000	310/4000	1443kg	-	209	5.7	-	158	+ An RS with knobs on - Unforgiving ride can make it feel ill at ease on trickier roads	★★★★★
Renault Mégane RS Trophy-R	280 F	2019-21	4/1798	296/6000	295/2400	1306kg	-	230	5.4	-	163	+ An absolute beast on track - Too much of a beast on the road	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane 275 Cup-S/Nav 275	223 D	2016	4/1998	271/5500	265/3000	1394kg	-	198	5.8	-	158	+ The same engine as the Trophy-R - They don't make it anymore	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane 265 Cup	195 F	2012-15	4/1998	261/5500	265/3000	1387kg	-	191	6.0	6.4	158	+ A hot hatch benchmark - Cupholder could be better positioned	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane 275 Trophy	212 F	2014-15	4/1998	271/5500	265/3000	1376kg	-	200	5.8	-	159	+ Another cracking Trophy model - Stripped-out Trophy-R is even more thrilling	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane 275 Trophy-R	231 F	2014-15	4/1998	271/5500	265/3000	1297kg	-	212	5.8	-	158	+ As absorbing as a 911 GT3 RS on the right road - Too uncompromising for some; pricey	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane 250 Cup	139 F	2009-12	4/1998	247/5500	251/3000	1387kg	-	181	6.1	6.1	156	+ Fantastic chassis... - partially obscured by new-found maturity	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane dCi 175 Cup	119 F	2007-09	4/1995	173/3750	265/2000	1470kg	-	119	8.3	8.3	137	+ A diesel with a genuinely sporty chassis - Could take more power	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane 230 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	2017-20	4/1984	242/5000	258/1600	1370kg	-	179	6.6	-	155	+ A credible, entertaining performer - You won't get out of bed at 4am to drive it	★★★★★
Suzuki Swift Sport (Mk3)	267 F	£17,249	4/1373	138/5500	170/2500	975kg	-	144	8.1	7.6	130	+ Composed and brisk - Adjustability and character have been diluted	★★★★★
Suzuki Swift Sport (Mk2)	175 F	2012-17	4/1586	134/6900	118/4400	1045kg	-	130	8.7	-	121	+ Still a great pocket rocket - Not quite as adjustable as the original	★★★★★
Suzuki Swift Sport (Mk1)	132 F	2005-11	4/1586	123/6800	109/4800	1030kg	-	121	8.9	-	124	+ Entertaining handling, well built - Lacking in steering feedback	★★★★★
Toyota GR Yaris	299 F	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	4/1984	296/5000	295/2000	1461kg	-	206	5.6	-	155	+ Super-effective - But not as exciting as you might hope	★★★★★

MAKE & 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 (KGM)	WEIGHT (LBS)	BHP/TON (LBS)	0-60MPH (LBS)	0-60MPH (LBS)	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 or estate) provide a trio of strong options.

Alfa Romeo Giulia Veloce	313 F	£47,759	4/1995	276/5250	295/2250	1429kg	-	196	5.7	-	149	+ Supple and satisfying - 'By wire' brakes not the most reassuring underfoot	★★★★★
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	+ 444bhp 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 Performance	313 D	£118,545	8/3996	621/6000	627/2300	2065kg	-	306	3.4	-	180	+ Effortless point-to-point speed - Hard to find the sweet spot in the settings	★★★★★
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	568/1900	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 (F90)	123 F	2008-11	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1605kg	-	262	4.9	4.9	165	+ Every bit as good as the E92 M3 coupe - No carbon roof	★★★★★
BMW 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	358/2500	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	★★★★★
BMW Alpina B5 GT	313 D	£124,000	8/4395	625/5500	627/3500	1980kg	-	321	3.2	-	205	+ Mighty road-biased performance - Size, weight	★★★★★
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	12/6496	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	1773kg	-	143	6.4	-	146	+ Striking looks, quality interior - Lacklustre engine; dull and unresolved handling	★★★★★
Jaguar XE P300 AWD	313 F	£43,500	4/1998	296/5500	295/1500	1651kg	-	181	5.9	-	155	+ Fluent handling; 4WD grip and security - Would really come alive with more power	★★★★★
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	502/6000	461/2500	1800kg	-	284	4.7	4.8	155	+ Brilliant blend of pace and refinement - Doesn't sound as special as it is	★★★★★

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE ON YEAR ON SALE	ENGINE CV/L CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT CARS/ED	WEIGHT TESTED	BHP/TON (CARS/ED)	0-62MPH (CARS/ED)	0-60MPH (TESTED)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
Jaguar XFR-S	208 F	2013-15	8/5000	542/6500	501/2500	1800kg	-	306	4.6	-	186	+ XF turned up to 12 - Tyres aren't cheap	★★★★☆
Jaguar XJR	191 D	2014-17	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1875kg	-	294	4.6	-	174	+ Hot-rod vibe, fine cabin - Opinion-dividing looks	★★★★☆
Jaguar F-Pace 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	627/2300	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	627/2250	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	£70,500	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 OP 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	240/6750	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 E63S - Could be a little too discreet for some tastes	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG E63 S (W213)	286 F	£116,995	8/3982	604/5750	627/2500	1935kg	2085kg	317	3.4	3.4	186	+ Fast, refined, effective and fun - At nearly two tons, it's not 911 nimble	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG E63 S Estate (S213)	272 F	£118,995	8/3982	604/5750	627/2500	1995kg	-	308	3.5	-	180	+ As above - It's even heavier than the saloon, and five metres long	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG GT63 S 4-Door Coupé	269 F	£150,440	8/3982	630/5500	664/2500	2045kg	-	313	3.2	-	196	+ Agile and immensely quick - Lacks the coupe GT's drama	★★★★☆
Mercedes-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 AMG S (W212)	208 F	2013-16	8/5461	577/5500	590/1750	1795kg	1971kg	327	4.1	-	155	+ Effortless power; intuitive and approachable - Sluggish auto 'box	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W212)	165 F	2011-13	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	1765kg	-	298	4.4	-	155	+ Turbo engine didn't dilute the E63 experience - Sometimes struggles for traction...	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W212)	134 D	2009-11	8/6208	518/6800	465/5200	1765kg	-	298	4.5	-	155	+ Indulgent chassis, brilliant engine - Steering still vague	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W211)	096 D	2006-09	8/6208	507/6800	465/5200	1765kg	-	292	4.5	-	155	+ Brilliant engine, indulgent chassis - Vague steering, speed limits	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG	052 F	2003-06	8/5439	469/6100	516/2650	1760kg	-	271	4.7	4.8	155	+ M5-humbling grunt, cossetting ride - Speed limits	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG S63 L (W222)	246 D	2013-20	8/3982	604/5500	664/2750	1940kg	-	316	4.3	-	155	+ Performance doesn't come at the expense of luxury - But pure driving thrills do	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG EQS 53	299 D	£157,160	-	649	700	2605kg	-	253	3.8	-	155	+ Refinement - The non-EV S-class	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG GLE 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	571/5500	560/1750	2270kg	-	258	4.2	-	155	+ Stoking pace, extreme refinement - Feels remote	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG GLE 63 S Coupé	213 D	£130,000	8/5461	571/5500	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	323/4000	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 Ohlins 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 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 Cayenne S (Mk3)	243 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)	253 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?	★★★★☆
Prodrive P25	313 F	£552,000	4/2457	440/6000	457/3000	1180kg	-	379	2.8	-	150	+ The ultimate Impreza - Price reflects this	★★★★☆
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	5.8	5.4	144	+ Destined for classic status - Thirsty	★★★★☆
Subaru Impreza RB5	187 F	1999	4/1994	237/6000	258/3500	1235kg	-	195					

ROADSTERS / CONVERTIBLES



OUR CHOICE

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



BEST OF THE REST

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

MAKE & MODEL

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*	-	c486	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 TT S 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	354/7700	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	2436kg	-	271	3.7	-	208	+ Very nearly as calm and controlled as the coupe - Heavy W12 impossible to disguise	★★★★★
Bentley Mulliner Bacalar	286 F	£1.5m	12/5950	650/5000	664/1500	2384kg	-	277	<3.8	-	200+	+ A luxury cruiser that's a bit of a rebel roadster - They're only making 12, at £1.5m each	★★★★★
BMW Z4 M40i	256 D	£56,475	6/2998	335/5000	369/1600	1535kg	-	222	4.6	-	155	+ Inherent agility and ability - Undemanding and unengaging	★★★★★
BMW Z8	026 F	2000-03	8/4941	400/6600	369/3800	1585kg	-	256	4.7	4.8	155	+ 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 IIIS (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*	-	256	5.2	-	149	+ Compelling blend of old and new - Busy, almost old-fashioned ride on bumpy roads	★★★★★
Morgan Plus Four CX-T	294 F	£204,000	4/1998	255/5500	258/1000	1213kg*	-	2141					

Porsche 718 Boxster S	222 F	£63,800	4/2497	345/6500	310/1900	1355kg	-	259	4.6	4.4	177	+ Still sensationally capable - Turbo four-cylinder engine lacks appeal of the old flat-six	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Boxster GTS	249 D	2018-19	4/2497	360/6500	310/1900	1375kg	-	265	4.5	-	180	+ The best four-top Boxster spec - Doesn't come cheap	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Boxster GTS 4.0	286 D	£75,300	6/3995	394/7000	310/5000	1405kg	-	286	4.6	-	182	+ It's got the Cayman GT4 six-cylinder, minus 200rpm - Gearshift not as crisp as the GT4's	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Spyder	272 F	£80,200	6/3995	441/7600	310/5000	1420kg	-	296	4.4	-	187	+ Essentially a drop-top Cayman GT4 - Including its long gearing	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster (981)	238 F	2012-16	6/2706	261/6700	206/4500	1310kg	-	202	5.8	-	164	+ Goes and looks better than the 987 Boxster - Shame about the electric steering	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster S (981)	186 F	2012-16	6/3436	311/6700	265/4500	1320kg	-	239	5.1	-	173	+ Boxster steps out of 911's shadow - But gets 911's less appealing electric steering	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster GTS (981)	203 D	2014-16	6/3436	325/6700	273/4500	1345kg	-	246	5.0	-	174	+ Superb dynamics, fantastic engine, great looks - Sport suspension is very firm	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster Spyder (981)	223 F	2015-16	6/3800	370/6700	310/4750	1315kg	-	286	4.5	-	180	+ An even faster, even more rewarding Boxster - Feedback trails the Cayman GT4's	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster S (987)	161 F	2005-12	6/3436	306/6400	266/5500	1355kg	-	229	5.3	-	170	+ Second-gen Boxster's as brilliant as ever - It's a typically Porsche redesign	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster Spyder (987)	277 F	2010-12	6/3436	316/7200	273/4750	1275kg	-	252	4.9	-	166	+ Lighter, more driver-centric Boxster - Collapsed-broly roof not the most practical	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster S (986)	070 F	1999-2004	6/3179	256/6200	229/4600	1320kg	-	200	5.7	-	164	+ Added power over the non-S Boxster is seductive - Very little	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera 4S Cabriolet (992)	262 D	£126,000	6/2981	444/6500	391/2300	1600kg	-	282	4.4	-	185	+ Performance, handling, usability - It's no lightweight; body not as stiff as the coupe's	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Targa 4S (992)	277 D	£126,000	6/2981	444/6500	391/2300	1640kg	-	275	4.4	-	189	+ Distinctive; driving experience is barely touched - You can't get a rear-drive Targa	★★★★★
Radical Rapture	274 F	£108,000	4/2261	360/6000	360/3500	765kg*	-	478	3.0	-	165	+ Unfiltered and utterly addictive - It's more at home on the track than the road	★★★★★
Renault Sport Spider	231 F	1996-99	4/1998	148/6000	136/4500	930kg	-	157	6.5	-	131	+ Rarity; unassisted steering - Heavier than you'd hope; disappointing engine	★★★★☆
Toyota MR2 (Mk3)	258 F	1999-2007	4/1794	138/6400	125/4400	975kg	-	144	8.0	7.2	131	+ Tight lines, taut dynamics - Minimal luggage space	★★★★★
TVR Tamora	070 F	2001-07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1060kg	-	335	4.2	-	175	+ Well-sorted soft-top TVR - Awkward styling	★★★★☆
TVR Chimaera 5.0	258 F	1993-2003	8/4997	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	-	307	4.4	-	167	+ Gorgeous noise, tarmac-ripping grin - Details	★★★★★
TVR Griffith 4.3	068 F	1992-93	8/4280	280/5500	305/4000	1040kg	-	274	4.4	4.8	155	+ The car that made TVR. Cult status - Mere details	★★★★★
TVR Griffith 500	009 F	1993-2001	8/4997	340/5500	350/4000	1060kg	-	326	4.1	-	169	+ Gruff diamond - A few rough edges	★★★★★
Vauxhall VX220 Turbo	066 F	2003-05	4/1998	197/5500	184/1950	930kg	-	215	4.9	-	151	+ Nothing comes close for the money - Marginal everyday usability	★★★★★

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.



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	1191kg	-	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	£159,500	8/3982	527/6000	505/2000	1570kg*	-	341	3.6	-	195	+ Honies 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 rampanly quick	★★★★☆
Aston Martin Vantage GT8	274 F	2016-17	8/4735	440/7300	361/5000	1530kg	-	292	4.4	-	190	+ Enough drama to fill a Netflix mini-series - Just 150 made	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V12 Vantage	264 F	2009-13	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1680kg	-	308	4.2	4.4	190	+ The car we hoped the V8 Vantage would be - Erm, a tad thirsty?	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V12 Vantage S	285 F	2013-17	12/5935	563/6650	457/5500	1665kg	-	344	3.9	-	205	+ Amongst the best Astons ever made - Old-school automated 'box (so get the manual)	★★★★☆
Aston Martin Vantage GT12	214 F	2015-16	12/5935	592/7000	461/5500	1565kg	-	384	3.5	-	185	+ The GT3-style Vantage we waited so long for - Only 100 made	★★★★☆
Aston Martin 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 was	★★★★☆
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 TTS (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 TTS (Mk2)	193 F	2008-14	4/1984	268/6000	258/2500	1395kg	-	195	5.4	-	155	+ A usefully quicker TT, with a great drivetrain - Still steers like a computer game	★★★★☆
Audi TT RS (Mk2)	158 F	2009-14	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1450kg	-	235	4.7	4.4	155	+ Sublime five-cylinder turbo engine - Rest of package can't quite match it	★★★★☆
Audi S5	252 F	2017-19	6/2995	349/5400	369/1370	1615kg	-	220	4.7	-	155	+ Chassis rewards commitment... ..but doesn't offer a challenge. Plain engine, too	★★★★☆
Audi RS5	240 F	£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	260 F	2010-16	8/4163	444/8250	3174/000	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	-	197	+ 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	-	208	+ Astonishing agility for such a big, heavy car - Thrill	★★★★☆
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	6/2997	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	1720kg	-	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	425/5500	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	1610kg	292	3.9	-	174	+ A further-honed M4 - It ain't cheap	★★★★☆
BMW M4 GTS (F82)	237 F	2016	6/2979	493/6250	442/4000	1510kg	-	332	3.8	3.7	190	+ Vast improvement on lesser M4s - So it should be, given its price	★★★★☆
BMW M3 (E92)	266 F	2007-13	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1580kg	-	266	4.8	4.3	155	+ Ends off all of its rivals... ..except the cheaper 1-series M Coupé	★★★★☆

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BMW M3 GTS (E92)	313 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 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)	333 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	€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 RCF	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 Evija 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 Evija Sport 350	221 F	2016-21	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1125kg	-	312	3.9	-	170	+ Further honed Evija, with vastly improved gearshift - Still not easy to get into and out of	★★★★★
Lotus Evija 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 Evija 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 Evija Sport 410	283 F	2018-21	6/3456	410/7000	310/3500	1110kg	-	375	3.4	-	180	+ A first-rate swansong for the V6 Evija - Didn't come cheap	★★★★★
Lotus Evija Cup 430	253 F	2018-21	6/3456	430/7000	325/2600	1093kg	-	400	3.3	-	180	+ The ultimate Evija - With a price tag to match	★★★★★
Lotus Evija 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 Evija (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 i4	313 D	£81,495	4/1991	360/6600	317/3000	1446kg	-	253	4.3	-	171	+ Talented chassis - Some will miss the traditional Lotus fluidity	★★★★★
Lotus Emira V6	299 F	£85,995	6/3456	394/6000	316/3500	-	1486kg	269	4.2	-	180	+ Super car looks with a sports car price - Dynamic balance is more planted than playful	★★★★★
Maserati GranTurismo Trofeo	307 D	€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	2016-19	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 CLK63 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-blow 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	1507kg	-	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 as being a GT as it is a sports coupe - Difficult to drive fast and smoothly	★★★★★
Mitsubishi 3000GT	-	1990-99	6/2912	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	-	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 GTS (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										

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MAKE & 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	2009-11	16/7993	1183/6400	1106/3000	1838kg	-	654	2.5	-	258	+ Was once the world's fastest supercar - Limited to 258mph for us mere mortals	★★★★★
Bugatti EB110	078 F	1991-95	12/3500	552/8000	451/3750	1618kg	-	347	3.6	-	213	+ Superbly engineered four-wheel-drive quad-turbo rocket - It just fizzled out	★★★★★
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	+ Indulgently powerful, responsive, makes a success of hybrid tech - It's rather pricey	★★★★★
Ferrari 296 GTS	304 D	£279,248	6/2992	819/8000	546/6250	1540kg*	-	540	2.9	-	205	+ Magical when you're in its groove - Lacks the last degree of control of the GTB	★★★★★
Ferrari 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 488 GTB	228 F	2015-19	8/3902	661/6500	561/3000	1475kg	-	455	3.0	-	205+	+ Staggeringly capable - Lacks a little of the 458's heart and excitement	★★★★★
Ferrari 488 Pista	262 F	2018-20	8/3902	710/8000	568/3000	1385kg	-	521	2.9	-	211+	+ Searingly fast and effortlessly capable - Takes a while to fully appreciate it	★★★★★
Ferrari 458 Italia	288 F	2009-15	8/4497	562/9000	398/6000	1485kg	-	384	3.4	3.2	202+	+ An astounding achievement - Paddleshift only	★★★★★
Ferrari 458 Speciale	301 F	2013-15	8/4497	597/9000	398/6000	1395kg	-	435	3.0	-	202+	+ evo Car of the Year 2014 - If you don't own a regular 458, nothing	★★★★★
Ferrari F430	254 F	2004-10	8/4308	483/8500	343/5250	1449kg	-	339	4.0	-	196+	+ Just brilliant - Didn't you read the plus point?	★★★★★
Ferrari 430 Scuderia	274 F	2007-10	8/4308	503/8500	347/5250	1350kg	1374kg	378	3.6	3.5	198	+ Successful F1 technology transplant - Likes to shout about it	★★★★★
Ferrari 360 Modena	163 F	1999-2004	8/3586	394/8500	275/4750	1390kg	-	288	4.5	-	183+	+ Worthy successor to 355 - Not quite as involving as it should be	★★★★★
Ferrari 360 Challenge Stradale	274 F	2003-04	8/3586	420/8500	275/4750	1280kg	-	333	4.1	-	186	+ Totally exhilarating road-racer - Automated single-clutch 'box dates it	★★★★★
Ferrari F355 Berlinetta	231 F	1994-99	8/3496	374/8250	268/6000	1350kg*	-	281	4.7	-	183	+ Looks terrific, sounds even better - Are you kidding?	★★★★★
Ferrari 348 GT Competizione	274 F	1993	8/3404	316/7200	239/5000	1180kg*	-	276	5.0	-	175	+ Utterly absorbing, with exceptional dynamics - Steering a little woolly	★★★★★
Ferrari 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+	+ Alarmingly fast - Doesn't flow like a 458 Speciale	★★★★★
Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano	275 F	2006-12	12/5999	611/7600	448/5600	1690kg	-	368	3.7	3.5	205	+ evo Car of the Year 2006 - Banks are getting harder to rob	★★★★★
Ferrari 599 GTO	161 F	2011-12	12/5999	661/8250	457/6500	1605kg	-	418	3.4	-	208+	+ One of the truly great Ferraris - 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 GT C4 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 GT C4 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	c£2m	12/6496	828/9250	514/7250	1485kg	-	566	2.9	-	211	+ Epic naturally aspirated V12; sports prototype looks - We didn't get invited to buy one	★★★★★
Ferrari LaFerrari	203 F	2013-15	12/6262	950/9000	664/6750	1574kg	-	613	3.0	-	217+	+ Perhaps the greatest Ferrari ever - Brakes lack a touch of precision on track	★★★★★
Ferrari Enzo	275 F	2002-04	12/5999	651/7800	485/5500	1365kg	-	485	3.7	3.5	217+	+ Intoxicating, exploitable - Cabin detailing falls short of a Zonda or F1 s	★★★★★
Ferrari F50	275 F	1995-97	12/4699	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'	★★★★★
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	★★★★★

1

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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE ON YEAR ON SALE	ENGINE CVL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT (KILOS)	WEIGHT (LBS)	BHP/TON (KILOS)	0-62MPH (SECS)	0-60MPH (SECS)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
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	\$1,800,000	8/6555	1811/8000	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	487/6500	1565kg*	-	429	3.3	3.2	212	+ A supercar in its truest, wildest sense - Be prepared for stares	★★★★★
Lamborghini Diablo VT 6.0	275 F	2000-02	12/5992	543/7100	457/5500	1625kg*	-	343	3.9	-	208	+ Best-built, best-looking Diablo of all - People's perceptions	★★★★★
Lexus LFA/LFA Nürburging	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	617/7500	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 looks than 12C; more power too - Which all comes at a price	★★★★★
McLaren 675LT	248 F	2015-17	8/3799	666/7100	516/5500	1328kg	-	510	2.9	-	205	+ Runner-up at eCoty 2015; asks questions of the P1 - Aventador price tag	★★★★★
McLaren 12C	264 F	2011-14	8/3799	616/7500	442/3000	1434kg	1466kg	435	3.3	-	207	+ 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	373/2250	1350kg*	-	542	3.3	-	224	+ Joint evo Car of the Year 2012 - Engine isn't as nape-prickling as the Zonda's	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda S (7.3)	096 F	2002-05	12/7291	547/5900	553/4050	1280kg*	-	434	3.7	-	197	+ evo Car of the Year 2001 (in earlier 7.0 form) - Values have gone up a fair bit since then	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda F	295 F	2005-06	12/7291	594/6150	560/4000	1230kg*	-	491	3.6	-	214+	+ Everything an Italian supercar ought to be - Looks a bit blingy next to a Carrera GT	★★★★★
Pininfarina Battista	313 F	£1,960,000	14/00Kw	1874	1726	2063kg	-	923	1.9	-	217	+ Fascinating weight-defying dynamics - Nausea-inducing acceleration	★★★★★
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 (991.2)	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	



DOA: JAGUAR C-X75

Jag's forward-looking supercar went from concept to prototype to stunt car, but never to the showroom

THE C-X75 CONCEPT WAS REVEALED AT the 2010 Paris motor show, ostensibly as a stunning, XJ13-inspired way to celebrate Jaguar's 75th birthday. Behind the scenes, however, there was more to it than that.

The birthday story was neat, but the car was really conceived by the Jag design studio as a three-dimensional mission statement to remind navel-gazing management that Jaguars should be, above all, fast and beautiful. Its other job was to highlight Jag's work in future propulsion tech and, since the company had already shown off a prototype XJ with a range-extender powertrain, it made sense for the C-X75 to take this thinking one step further. So the concept had four electric motors, one per wheel, and on-board electricity generation from two microturbines made by British company Bladon Jets.

At least, in theory it did. In practice, the show car could be (gently) driven but powered by just one electric motor and no jets. Nonetheless, the whole thing seemed so fantastically exciting that it couldn't remain just a one-off.

Sure enough, in May 2011 Jaguar announced that it was going to build the C-X75 in a run of 250 cars costing 'from £700,000' and with first deliveries in 2013. To meet this tight timetable Williams Advanced Technology was brought in to get the car ready for the street and was given a set of challenging targets: the production car had to have the 0-100mph performance of a Veyron, the CO2 emissions of a Prius and the EV range of a Chevrolet Volt. Oh, and it had to look exactly like the original concept car.

To achieve these lofty goals the glorious skin couldn't change, but everything under it had to. So where the concept was built around an aluminium understructure dressed in plastic, the production car would use an ultra-stiff carbonfibre hull covered in carbon panels. And while those tiny jets were a nice idea, they generated too much heat to be practical, so the powertrain was reinvented as a plug-in parallel hybrid using an electric motor per axle feeding from a 19kWh battery mounted behind the seats and just in front of an astonishing 1.6-litre four-cylinder engine derived from an ill-fated Cosworth F1 project. This would rev to 10,200rpm and, with help from a turbocharger and supercharger, deliver 502bhp.

Total system output was beyond 850bhp, giving a 0-62 time of under three seconds and a top speed of 220mph. True to the brief, pure EV range was around 40 miles and the official CO2 figure just 89g/km. Packaging all of this tech without ruining the concept car shape took some lateral thinking, which is why, for example, the fuel tank ended up under the centre console. Keeping all the various powertrain elements at the right temperature was even more of a challenge and demanded a total of ten radiators, forcing Ian Callum and his design team to add some subtle new intakes and outlets to the show car's shape.

With the engineering set and the style adapted to suit, five prototypes were made and for 18 months Jaguar and Williams engineers cracked on with development work until dark clouds gathered over the project. The global economy was not at its most healthy and plenty of people

at Jaguar remembered the last time the company tried to sell a flagship supercar against a backdrop of financial uncertainty. Haunted by the memory of unsold XJ220s, in December 2012 Jaguar management cancelled the C-X75. The prototype fleet continued testing for a while in the name of R&D, one of the cars was reduced to dust after an unfortunate thermal incident at the Gaydon test track, and then a sheet was quietly pulled over the whole project.

Except the C-X75 was too pretty to disappear and rose again for the 2015 Bond film *Spectre* as the transport of Dave Bautista's bad guy, Mr Hinx. To make this possible, Jaguar and Williams tidied up two of the engineering prototypes to be used for close-up hero shots and built a batch of five stunt cars with steel spaceframes, fibreglass panels, tarmac rally-spec suspension, and 5-litre V8s in the middle, ready to chase Bond's Aston DB10 through the streets of Rome.

The final chapter in the sad tale of the C-X75 came post-filming when Jaguar decided to sell four of the stunt cars. Before releasing them into the wild, they were rebuilt by Williams and then shipped to a shared motor-industry proving ground in Spain for a pre-sale shakedown. The story goes that when the glorious orange C-X75s were unloaded from the truck, even normally jaded engineers from other car companies did an excited double take, believing for a moment that Jaguar had changed its mind and decided to make this fabulous car after all. But no. The C-X75, like so many of the wonderful cars featured on this page, was dead on arrival.





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