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25

YEARS OF EVO

**We name the most significant
driver's cars of the last 25 years**





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2024



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Ed speak



LONG-TERM STRATEGY PLANNING

is at the core of everything the automotive industry does. From new product and tech roll-out, to managing a model's withdrawal from the production line, every detail is sweated and supply chains managed until the last car leaves the showroom.

So you can understand the eruption of anger last month when the UK government decided to put back its

planned 2030 ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel cars by five years. Just three years after announcing that original deadline.

Car buyers and manufacturers were already facing enough challenges and confusion ahead of 2030, be it making new-car purchasing decisions, or committing several billion quid of shareholders' money to building new Gigafactories and deciding when to halt ICE production. This delay won't address any of these challenges, it's merely kicking them down the road, often for others to deal with.

Thankfully, *evo* has never been one for long-term planning (just ask our publishers), and certainly when Dickie Meaden, John Barker and I sat down 25 years ago to plan the first issue, with the steady hand of Harry Metcalfe making sure we didn't

include too many shots of Dickie going sideways, we didn't have an eye on what we would be planning for our silver anniversary issue this month. But what we eventually planned (a quarter of a century later) is the definitive list of the 25 most significant driver's cars of the last 25 years. Cars that defined a genre, a brand or an experience. Icons that have inspired and become more than benchmarks in their fields and are as influential today as they were when they were launched.

They are the cars that created new sectors that we can't imagine being without today – good or bad. They are the cars that have inspired and entertained us, made us rethink what we need or want from a driver's car. They are the ones that demonstrate that the very best can be available to everyone.

Over the last quarter of a century *evo* has benefited from remarkable support from the industry it supports and critiques with equal measure, and is immensely grateful for it. More importantly, if it wasn't for our subscribers and readers who have joined us along the way on our unbelievable journey we wouldn't be here today. So thank you all for your continued and unwavering support. Here's to another 25 years celebrating The Thrill of Driving.

Stuart Gallagher, Editor-in-Chief @stuartg917

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Autovia Limited, 109 Borough High Street, London SE1 1NL

EDITORIAL

eds@evo.co.uk

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Stuart Gallagher

DEPUTY EDITOR

James Taylor

SENIOR PHOTOGRAPHER

Aston Parrott

HEAD OF DIGITAL CONTENT

Steve Walker

MANAGING EDITOR

Ian Eveleigh

ART EDITOR

Rich Browne

STAFF WRITERS

Yousuf Ashraf

Sam Jenkins

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Steve Fowler

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

John Barker, Jethro Bovingdon, Henry Catchpole,
Richard Meaden, Richard Porter, Adam Towler

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Stephen Dobie, Jordan Katsianis, Harry Metcalfe, Peter Tomalin

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS

Jordan Butters, Sam Chick, Gus Gregory, Matt Howell, Olgun Kordal,
Andy Morgan, Kenny P, David Shepherd, Dean Smith, Matt Vosper

IT WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT

Peter Allen, Gavin Armstrong, Jonathan Baker, James Mills,
Mike Wood, Nicolas Mee & Co, Paragon Porsche

COMMERCIAL

ads.evo@autovia.co.uk

MANAGING DIRECTOR OF ADVERTISING

Steve Machin

AGENCY ACCOUNT MANAGER

Demi Meredith

demi_davies@autovia.co.uk 020 3890 3731

SENIOR OPERATIONS MANAGER

Kerry Lambird

SENIOR PRODUCTION MANAGER

Daniel Stark

HEAD OF SUBSCRIPTIONS MARKETING & CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Hannah Charlton

MANAGING DIRECTOR OF DIGITAL

Amrit Baidwan

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR

Ciaran Scarry

CLIENT SALES MANAGER

Pierre Clements

pierre.clements@autovia.co.uk 020 3890 3902

CLIENT SALES MANAGER

Miles Taylor

miles_taylor@autovia.co.uk 020 3890 3989

PUBLISHING EXECUTIVE

Nicole Creasey

HEAD OF CREATIVE DELIVERY

Avril Donnelly

MANAGING DIRECTOR OF PUBLISHING

Sarah Perks

AUTOVIA LIMITED

EXECUTIVE CHAIR James Tye

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Julian Lloyd Evans

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER Tom Swayne

EVO WORLDWIDE

Australia Jesse Taylor France Patrick Garcia
India Sirish Chandran Middle East Bassam Kronfli
Poland Lukasz Kamiński Turkey Bahadır Bektas

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Email nicole_creasey@autovia.co.uk

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by STUART GALLAGHER PHOTOGRAPHY by ANDY MORGAN

Ferrari Roma Spider

Forget the California. With this new open-top version of the Roma, Ferrari at last has an entry-level convertible it can be proud of

THE FERRARI ROMA SPIDER HAS BEEN six years and three CEOs in the making and it's all the California's fault. Poor thing can't catch a break even when it's been off sale for over half a decade. The car destined to be a Maserati, but which proved too costly for the Trident badge to carry off, soon became a Ferrari to wow and woo first-time customers who weren't ready for something mid-engined or with a V12 behind its grille. And it worked: 70 per cent of the 17,500 people who bought Californias were new to the brand.

Yet for some at Ferrari it dragged the marque down to a level they didn't feel comfortable with, then-CEO Sergio Marchionne telling the assembled media at the 2017 Geneva motor show that the model needed a rethink beyond the

2018 update that resulted in the introduction of a turbocharged V8, a design nip and tuck and some revisions to the chassis.

That car, rebadged as Portofino and launched under Louis Camilleri's tenure as CEO, went some way to making amends, the updated M version introduced in 2021 further still, proving that a 2+2, front-engined hard-top convertible could wear Prancing Horse shields on its flanks with some pride. But still it was felt the entry point to Ferrari ownership needed to be, well, a little more *Ferrari*. This is where the Roma came in in 2020 in coupe form. And now, with the Spider, it takes over the '2+' convertible position in the line-up too, the Portofino M order booked long since closed and the final examples being assembled under the current CEO, John Elkann.







With development starting after the Roma coupe's launch, the Spider transformation has required a little more work than simply finding a solution to replacing the fixed roof while retaining the simple, '60s-inspired design of the car overall. Basking in late-summer sun the latest Spider certainly exudes an elegance and simplicity of design that was lacking in both of its predecessors. It has a more confident posture and, crucially, is more comfortable on the eye. It blends modern attributes with the clarity of yesterday's design crispness without falling into the pastiche trap of trying to be modern while hauling old baggage around.

A switch from a folding metal roof to a canvas one has been of great help to its looks. Not only does the soft-top, according to Ferrari, provide a more warming approach to the car's design compared to the technical and cold style of a folding metal roof, but it also eliminates the

packaging issues that a folding hard-top creates, which resulted in the bulky and heavy-handed rear design that afflicted both the California and the Portofino. For the Spider the canvas roof only partially slips away out of sight, allowing the Roma to keep its hips trim and in shape. This new roof and the requirement for additional stiffening along each sill, the A-pillars and boot floor account for the Spider's 84kg weight gain over the coupe.

Such is the ferocity of the Roma's twin-turbocharged V8 that the weight gain is neither here nor there, both in a straight line and through the more interesting sections of road. The 611bhp that arrives with a bang at 5750rpm gives the V8 its screaming head as it rampages through to the 7500rpm peak, shift lights racing through to the red zone. Each upshift of the eight-speed dual-clutch transmission rips through with intense energy, landing you in the heart of the engine's 560lb ft of torque as you set off in a bid

Above: Spider's lines remain elegant soft-top up or down. **Right:** wind deflector (bottom of image) is highly effective at reducing air turbulence inside the cabin

to reach the horizon once again. It's intoxicating, frantic and mesmerising as only the best engines are able to be.

In a world of hybrid assistance and torque fill, the Roma Spider's V8 feels moderately old-school in its set-up, but it remains a mighty power unit with a wide operating window that allows the car to play its dual GT-supercar role. With 80 per cent of its torque available from a lowly 1900rpm the Spider is always on with its senses primed, although in Comfort mode and with the gearbox left in auto there can be times when you're expecting quicker downshifts when you spot an opportunity to pass slower traffic or need to make progress, but they don't come. The need to reduce emissions means the time it takes for



the command from your right foot to result in the desired forward propulsion has an unexpected lag to it. Twist the manettino round to Sport and the issue is eradicated. Switch the eight-speed to manual and interact with the brilliant paddles and you'll never give it another thought.

In its transition from coupe to Spider the Roma's control systems for the engine and gearbox responses have been adjusted only to match the increased weight; there are no changes to adapt the car's characteristics. The same approach has been taken with the Spider's chassis. The spring rates remain the same as the coupe's, so too the core settings for the active damper system. What has been altered is how the dampers react, to compensate for the weight increase; while the weight gain may equate to no more than always driving with a passenger in a Roma coupe, the change in weight distribution called for more detailed finessing.

As a result there's a softer edge to the Spider when the dampers are in their mildest setting, with more pitch and roll on turn-in, more compression to lean on through a corner, and a rear that squats harder before settling. However, as with the powertrain, wind the chassis up to Sport and the Spider connects to become sharper, more responsive and lighter on its toes. Ferrari's 'bumpy road' damper setting, while still a marvel, isn't always required either, due to the more measured fluidity the Spider delivers.

Before committing to a turn you're struck by steering that is very un-Ferrari-like. Where we have become used to super-quick reactions from the company's mid- and V12-engined cars when it comes to steering inputs, with a light but direct weighting, the Roma Spider's steering is appreciably slower and heavier (heavy for Ferrari that is). It suits the Spider's nature better, the calmer actions more measured and requiring a less laser-focused approach to every fourth-gear sweeper or city roundabout. When pushed and

with the systems set to 'let's see what it will do for the camera' mode, there's a wide sweet spot of balance to work with before you need to be quick with your hands and the throttle. Perfect for those experiencing their first Ferrari before they strap themselves into a 296 GTB.

Another difference on our test car from the coupe Romas we've driven before is the tyres. The coupe was launched with the choice of Michelin's Pilot Sport 4 S or Pirelli's P Zero, neither of which had been through a dedicated tyre development programme specific to the Roma, only Ferraris in general. While these are still available, both coupe and Spider can now be had with a Bridgestone Potenza Sport that has been developed specifically for the model. However, where the French and Italian rubber provided the response, crispness and stability expected of a 611bhp, rear-drive Ferrari, the Bridgestone lacks precision and feedback. You can feel the tyre roll on its treadblocks during the initial turn-in phase before it settles and starts to work its grip, and while it's doing so you're getting

muffled messages through the steering, resulting in a moment of uncertainty in your mind as to whether you need to apply more or less lock. Trust your instincts and the Spider responds accordingly, but let your confidence slip and either apply an additional degree or two of lock or wind some off and you inject uncertainty that requires further management from the driver's seat. It's not unruly, far from it, and it's only at higher speeds when firmer commitment is required, but it reduces your focus until you're confident that you have secured a bond between you, the car and its Bridgestones.

The Ferrari Roma Spider, like its predecessors, isn't a car in which to set a lap record at Fiorano (or any circuit for that matter), and when you dial the speed back and allow it to settle to its natural rhythm it makes for an absorbing driving experience, roof up or down – although down feels more special even if the sound from the outside offers little to write home about.

The 2+ concept of the Spider means the rear seats are best used for carrying objects rather than



'Settle to its natural rhythm and it makes for an absorbing driving experience'





people, and should you want to benefit from the innovative wind deflector the rear buckets are only useful for bag storage anyway. This is because the deflector is also the backrest for the rear seats, which arcs upwards to provide an extension to the rear deck that mostly covers the space above the back seats. An opening at the deflector's trailing edge then draws turbulent air in and away from the cabin. It's remarkably effective, too. Roof down, windows up and deflector in place the cabin is calmer and quieter than being in a fixed-roof car with its sunroof tilted open. Drop the windows and there's little additional buffeting over a rival convertible with its roof down and windows up. If you have the hairpiece to do so you can travel all day with the roof down, deflector up (but stay below 105mph) and suffer no ill effects.

You might be driven mad by the HMI system, however. Never a strong point in modern Ferraris,

some upgrades have been carried out to improve the interface and the driver interaction. The steering wheel buttons are now recessed in the spokes of the wheel, but there still remains a great number of controls on the wheel that need to return to their natural positions. And the touchscreen, while less laggy and not so counterintuitive, remains only a mild improvement on what's gone before. But even some within Ferrari admit the company needs to look at how it designs and presents its control interfaces on future models.

The Roma Spider is also the recipient of the latest Advanced Driver-Assistance System (ADAS), which includes lane-keep assist that will become mandatory from summer 2024 on all new cars sold. Thankfully Ferrari provides a shortcut to turning the hateful software off, and even a way to configure and fine-tune the ADAS to suit your requirements.

There is plenty to like about the Roma Spider, a great deal in fact. It feels bespoke in that way only Ferraris do, with distinct character traits that deliver an all-encompassing and rewarding experience. That it appears to suffer next to no downsides over the coupe from having its roof removed only goes to strengthen its appeal. Factor in that it's as punchy as a Porsche 911 Turbo S Cabriolet against the clock and on the road, and as elegant as Aston Martin's DB12 Volante, and the entry-level Ferrari conundrum could be solved once and for all. ☒

Engine V8, 3855cc, twin-turbo **Power** 611bhp @ 5750-7500rpm

Torque 560lb ft @ 3000-5750rpm

Weight 1556kg (dry) (399bhp/ton) **0-62mph** 3.4sec

Top speed 199mph **Basic price** £210,313

➕ Feels as good as the coupe

🚗 New tyre option won't appeal to all

evo rating ★★★★★

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Driven



by JETHRO BOVINGDON PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH

Porsche 911 GT3 RS

It's the most extreme 911 for years and we know it's sensational on track, but how will the latest RS fare on the road? Let's find out

DON'T DO IT. DON'T FALL INTO THE TRAP of hating the 992 GT3 RS because some people are willing to pay a vast premium over the already vast £192,600 asking price. Don't roll your eyes and think 'well, they'll just sit in air-conditioned garages, anyway'. Firstly, my experience suggests this is only partly true. For every 992 GT3 RS that will slip from one collector to the next without ever being truly exercised, there will be another that pounds around Silverstone, Spa and the Ring. Visit any trackday in the UK or Europe and you'll see new and nearly new GT3s and RSs represented very strongly.

More important even than this use case, though, is that Porsche Motorsport's engineers and test drivers sweated and toiled for the most enlightened customers. The ones who plan their year around weekends at the best circuits within a few days' drive of their home. They pushed in every area to make a truly enthralling driver's car with huge capability and endurance. Their version of the ultimate track-focused 911. In fact, this group went further than ever. Just look at the 992 GT3 RS. You may not like the overall aesthetic, but it's impossible to behold its distended, outrageous and brutally functional shapes and not conclude



that no stone was left unturned in this project. It's just plain bonkers.

We've already experienced the results of this intense development programme on the Silverstone GP circuit (issue 304) and were left agog at the aero performance of the RS and the commitment it can soak up and turn into raw lap time. It was a remarkable encounter but it left us wondering if the new RS could adapt its core attributes to the very different demands out in the wild. So today we're setting it free. Perhaps into an environment where things could get a little tricky for the stiffest, maddest and most extreme iteration of a 911 road car to emerge from Porsche since the homologation-satisfying GT1.

There's so much detail to navigate here and we'll try to get into it as the day unfolds.

However, so much of it seems irrelevant for the road. The RS is a downforce monster and a great deal of the engineering in the car is to create phenomenal load and utilise it as best as possible. It defines the entire car – from the single, centrally mounted radiator that lives where once your overnight bag would, to the massive swan-neck rear wing with adjustable rake and an operating range of 34 degrees from low drag to full airbrake deployment. Who thought there would ever be a DRS button on the steering wheel of a 911? The peak downforce figure – 860kg at 177mph – beats a 992 GT3 Cup car and is in the lower range of a full-on 911 RSR set up for the long straights at Le Mans.

We won't be hitting 177mph today. Maybe not even 170mph. So instead let's examine some of the other intriguing aspects of this 518bhp,

1450kg road car. It is a road car, after all. Most fascinating of all for our time on weather-beaten surfaces with unpredictable humps, material changes and strange cambers is the adjustable nature of the suspension. It has all the really cool stuff you'd expect, of course. This Weissach Package car has carbonfibre anti-roll bars (saving 1.5kg at each end), plus the delightfully geeky aero-optimised front control arms and gorgeous magnesium wheels (saving another 8kg). But you can also adjust bump and rebound for front and rear dampers on the fly via simple rotary controls on the steering wheel. Could this be a magic bullet to tame the RS for road use?

Funnily enough, this configurability is only unlocked in Track mode, which is reached by toggling through Normal and Sport modes. To confuse matters further, it's still possible to



‘The view over the bonnet is evocative of the shrill whizz of wheelguns’



stiffen or relax the dampers to a pre-determined level in these modes with the damper button on the centre console, as per the standard GT3.

It all sounds head-meltingly confusing but, in reality, you find yourself simply driving in Normal mode, or going straight to Track so you can play with the dampers manually. Bump and rebound settings range from -4 to +4 with the default set to zero. Porsche has been careful to ensure that even if somebody selected, for example, full soft on the front and full hard on the rear, the balance won't be dangerously wayward. When you consider that the RS is fully rose-jointed and has spring rates 50 per cent stiffer than the already uncompromising 992 GT3, you'd imagine that away from the confines of a racetrack it might all be in vain...

One thing the dampers can't do is ease away the sheer scale of the RS. The adoption of the Turbo shell might only add 29mm to the front and rear tracks and 48mm to the body itself, but the RS looks huge when you approach it and feels huge upon climbing inside. The driving environment is fantastic and the steering wheel is so small, but with the seat wound down low

the Turbo shell seems to sprawl around you. No complaints about the quietly serious messages that whisper from everything you touch or see, though. From the taut Alcantara trim to the satin-finish carbon for the door handles, the RS feels at once pared-back and reassuringly solid. Fittingly, like a car you wouldn't hesitate to jump into for a double stint through the night. The view out over the vented bonnet is evocative of the shrill whizz of wheelguns and that thick smell of hot tyres, too.

So it seems odd to start the 4-litre flat-six and slope quietly out into normal traffic, the seven-speed PDK 'box shuffling through ratios without so much as a bump and the RS doing, well, normal car things. Side mirrors are full of gaping intakes, the rear wing is so tall it would afford a fantastic view were it not for the thick spars of the oddly shaped but gorgeous carbonfibre roll-cage (part of the £29,600 Weissach Package, which also includes things like the titanium

paddleshifters and visible carbonfibre for the exterior, accompanying the aforementioned carbon anti-roll bars and mag wheels) and hot air streams through the bonnet to such an extent that the world occasionally seems to be in soft focus. But it is the real world, full of vans, hatchbacks and SUVs. The RS feels like a superhero in line at the supermarket check-out.

The real world is also littered with bumps. And cat's eyes. And crappy road repairs. This car rides on the less extreme Cup 2 tyres, but the 275-section fronts get hooked into all sorts of grooves and cambers and even within the 'Normal' mode's operating window the ride is disjointed and busy. The car's structure feels rock-solid and the rose-jointed suspension never knocks, creaks or rattles, but at low and medium speeds there's a physical, knuckly feeling to the way the RS gets down a road. Not so much limbering-up as cracking joints in preparation for what lays ahead.

The whole car feels like it's waiting for more speed and more positivity. The steering is unbelievably responsive; the solid brake pedal is accurate even with gentle inputs, but you

Left and above: latest RS is an aero monster – peak downforce exceeds even that of a GT3 Cup race car, while swan-neck rear wing also operates as an airbrake

Driven





‘Scything across country, Track mode is pretty much the only mode you’ll ever want’

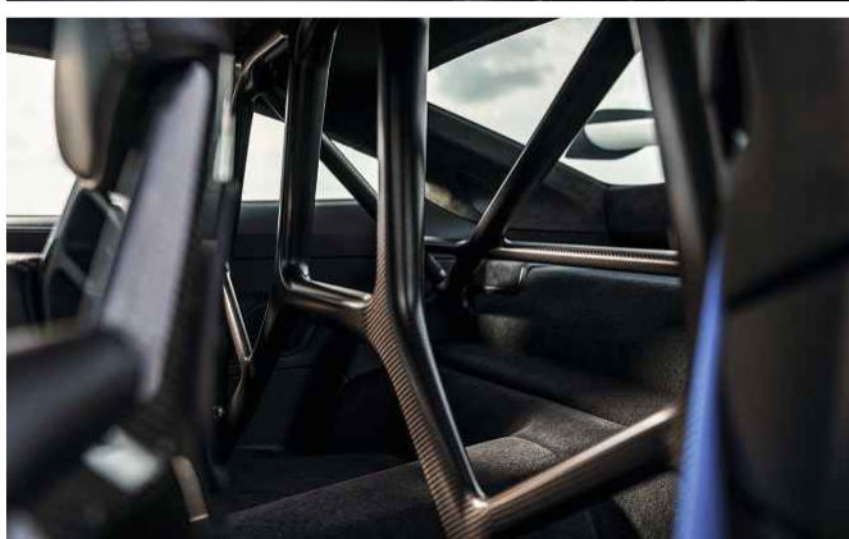
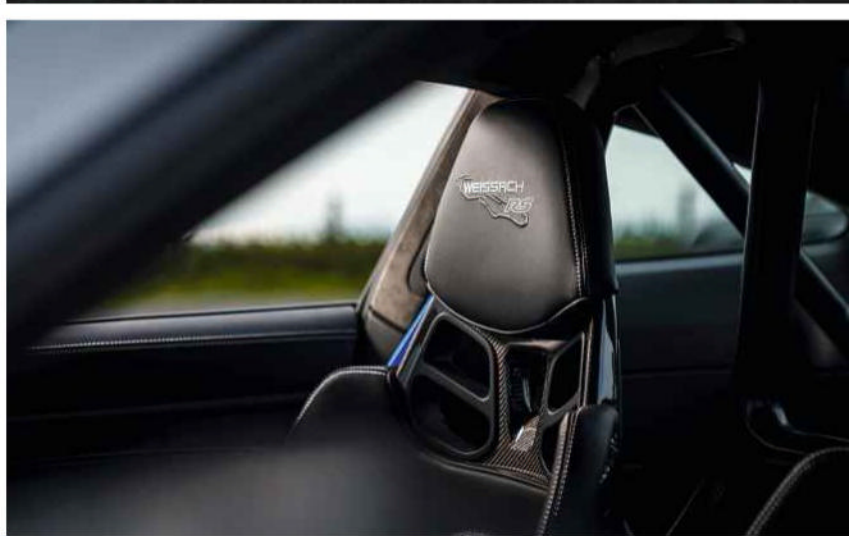
sense there's massive power just waiting to be deployed (amazingly, the carbon-ceramic discs fitted to this car are a cost option); there's a latent energy that almost demands to be unleashed. The only slightly more timid aspect is, um, the engine. Yes, the wonderful, howling, naturally aspirated flat-six that revs to 9000rpm. It sounds so crisp and pure even at low speeds but somehow the low- and mid-range performance seems at odds with what your eyes are relaying and the tense, sinewy responses of the chassis. It's no coincidence that the 5000rpm marker is located at 12 o'clock on the rev counter. That's about where things get going.

By the time I've peeled away from the motorway and started to scythe across country, I've already discovered that Track mode is pretty much the only mode you'll ever want. Just as with the GT3 and GT4 RS, the stiffer settings seems to settle the whole car down. From bobbly and slightly ill-at-ease, the ride becomes so much more decisive. It's not supple in the way of a McLaren or Ferrari, but the platform feels so stable and it deals with all but the very worst surfaces with instantaneous efficiency, leaving you to just focus on unpicking the road and unleashing the engine.

It's a fascinating and sometimes quite surreal experience. In many ways the seeds of the traditional 911 experience are completely gone. On the road at least, this is not a car that requires a unique driving style to exploit. No concessions are required for the peculiar engine position. The RS turns in with startling speed and accuracy. Not good in the sense that you don't really think about it. Good as in 'oh my god, how does it react so quickly?' It takes your breath away. Now layer on top the mechanical grip of a chassis with huge roll stiffness that still squeezes the massive tyres into the surface, plus the rear engine's natural advantages in terms of traction and the result is nothing short of outrageous. Corners no longer have 'phases'. The RS allows you to overlap turn-in and throttle application to the extent that even roads you



Left: such is the level of grip that the RS develops, you need to summon an exceptional level of commitment to breach its limits, but the speed it carries is phenomenal





know well become brand new. It plays by a different set of rules.

Part of this incredible tolerance of highly committed turn-in melding with all the throttle your brain will allow (it takes some time to create the new pathways) is due to the engine's relative lack of torque. I almost daren't say it, but even at the glorious, shrieking top end, the 4-litre flat-six is no match for the grip and traction on offer. I can see that being a frustration for some. Certainly, the needle is swung much further in the direction of grip than power, which is unusual in this world of the 450bhp BMW M2 or an 820bhp 'baby' mid-engined Ferrari.

So once again the GT3 RS requires a mental reset. The thrill comes from carrying speed, from opening up the engine early and living at high revs, from having the chassis fully loaded and being dazzled by the immense turn-in stability, the wonderful, neutral balance and the sheer agility it demonstrates. In itself that's a bigger thrill than reining a car in all the time, but on the road it does make the RS a curious proposition. To really enjoy its capabilities requires a level of commitment that's uncomfortable in all but the most remote and empty locations.

Luckily there's much to enjoy at lower speeds,

Left: carbonfibre roll-cage is part of Weissach pack, which also includes such delicacies as titanium paddleshifters and exposed carbon exterior panels

'There are new dimensions. In many ways, it's not a 911 experience at all'

too. The tactile sensation of the titanium paddles with their new heavier magnetic action, the precise throttle mapping, that immensely satisfying steering response and the overwhelming impression that you're in something that elevates the mundane into something heroic. The rear wing flattening off as the DRS activates in 3/10ths of a second should feel a bit silly, for example, but actually it's oddly cool and exciting. If you couldn't feel the added aero-enabled stability as speeds rise it would be a nonsense, but the RS is one of very few cars where you can start to feel the downforce work in quicker turns. There's a wonderful authenticity to the whole experience.

What about the suspension adjustment that could so easily slip into the realms of gimmick? It's fabulous. The on-the-fly adjustment of the suspension genuinely creates a greater sense of depth and it's really enjoyable to play around with different settings and feel how they affect the

car's dynamic responses. Playing with the lock-up characteristics of the rear e-diff is also particularly satisfying and does start to allow you to bring the rear of the car into play, too, should you want that slightly more rear-led feel that a 911 fan can't help but crave.

There are new dimensions to explore here. The old cliché about 911s was that owners would continue to learn and explore their many dynamic facets over a long period. It's why they've always held such a fascination. In recent years and with each subsequent generation – particularly since the 991 arrived – this notion has been eroded as the rear-engined foibles have been polished away. The 992 GT3 RS takes this to extremes. In many ways, it's not a 911 experience at all.

But by allowing so much mechanical configurability (and this is the key: mechanical) in such a simple, intuitive way, the driver can find a new level of engagement and start a new and deeply fulfilling relationship. Sounds corny, but then it always did, right? The 992 GT3 RS is an aero-monster. But it's a fascinating, multi-dimensional and highly enjoyable road car, too. ☑

Engine Flat-six, 3996cc **Power** 518bhp @ 8500rpm
Torque 343lb ft @ 6300rpm **Weight** 1450kg (363bhp/ton)
0-62mph 3.2sec **Top speed** 184mph **Basic price** £192,600

✚ Staggering grip and balance. Sense of occasion. Configurability
 ✖ Feeling its true magic at road speeds is challenging

evo rating ★★★★★



by JETHRO BOVINGDON

Cadillac CT4-V Blackwing

We've raved about its CT5-V big brother; can the M3-rivalling CT4-V work the same magic?

IN THIS MAGAZINE'S QUARTER OF a century we haven't been much troubled by Cadillac. There has been the odd foray into Europe and the UK, but mostly these experiments have been short-lived and doomed to failure. Cadillac seems somehow the most American of all brands. Which is our slightly snotty Western European way of saying... pretty crappy. 'Luxury' served up with cheap materials, dynamics tuned for roads very different from our own, and a sort of faded, brittle feel of a marque struggling to reanimate former glories for modern times.

However, what do we know? What does anyone know in these uncertain days? New brands pop up every five minutes, new technology sweeps in to decimate much of what we hold dear, but then the promise of efuels and flexible solutions provide a glimpse of a bright future. And Cadillac? Even before these tumultuous times it had been quietly upping its game and focusing on dynamics in an

impressively detailed way. This CT4-V Blackwing (along with its big brother, the CT5-V Blackwing, **evo** 293) was launched in late 2021 and we probably shouldn't have ignored it up to now. Think of it as a leftfield M3 rival with a very shiny new halo provided by the magnificent V-Series.R prototype racer that competes in WEC and IMSA and scoring a podium at the centenary of Le Mans earlier this year.

The CT4-V is a shade smaller than a current M3 and, at 1751kg, it's a little lighter, too. It's suspended by struts up front and a multi-link rear axle with hollow anti-roll bars and Magnetic Ride Control. Drive is through a six-speed manual gearbox or optional ten-speed automatic, plus there's an e-differential, all manner of assistance options thanks to Performance Traction Management, and a highly sophisticated launch control that allows the driver to tailor the revs in 100rpm increments between 2400 and 4000rpm.

What it doesn't have is the CT5-V Blackwing's magnificent 6.2-litre supercharged V8 engine.

Instead, there's a direct-injection 3.6-litre twin-turbocharged V6 delivering 472bhp at 5750rpm and 445lb ft at 3500-5000rpm. It's not quite the V8 supersaloon dream, then. But a top speed of 189mph and 0-60mph in 4.1sec is plenty of performance. More impressive still is Cadillac's insistence that the Blackwing is developed with hard track use in mind – hence the cooler for the rear diff and serious-looking Brembo six-piston calipers on the front and four-pots on the rear.

I love their confidence that this thing is track-ready as it makes assessing the car very simple. All that really matters is whether it's better than the BMW M3. Should the answer be yes, it would be a hell of an achievement. More so when you consider that, at \$62,390 in its home market, it undercuts the base BMW M3 by around \$14,000 and the Competition model we get here in the UK by \$18,000.

First impressions are of a car from a generation or two back. It looks sharp, neat,



Above and right: CT4-V is pleasingly compact – slightly smaller and lighter than an M3 – and packs a considerable punch from its twin-turbo V6. Can be had with a short-throw manual gearbox, too

avoiding the overt aggression of the M3 and instead letting the hardware do the talking. The stance, the chunky sidewall of the 275/35 ZR18 rear tyres and the 380mm brake discs glinting through the spokes of the front wheels carry a strong message to those who know. Carbonfibre dive planes and the substantial flick of the rear wing underline the promise. Inside there's a slight throwback feel, too, and I mean that as a positive. The steering wheel is actually circular, there's an adequate but not dominating touchscreen, and the simple gearlever with its leather gaiter is timeless and, well, heartening.

Operating the Blackwing is as intuitive as you'd hope. It feels relatively compact, the gearbox has a short throw and solid weighting – heavier than, say, a new BMW's but not





‘The modes really do make a marked difference to the car’s behaviour’

stiff or overly physical – and the ride has a really classy flow. It eases away imperfections but there’s a strong underlying sense of control. Brake feel is terrific, too. There’s instant bite and somehow the pedal conveys endurance even before you start working the system hard. Only the electric power steering disappoints. It’s a few ticks too light and there’s very little texture rumbling back through the rim. On this front, the M3 scores a decisive win.

After the incredible response, reach and soundtrack of the CT5-V Blackwing, it’s impossible not to identify the 3.6-litre twin-turbocharged V6 as another mild disappointment. The car is undoubtedly very fast, it makes a decent noise and throttle response is very good. However, it just doesn’t bring the whole experience to life as the V8



Top and above: detailing is neat and well-executed. Blackwing certainly wouldn’t look out of place on UK roads. Pity, then, that there are no official imports

does in the bigger CT5 model, nor does it have the rampant, rev-hungry delivery that so characterises the BMW M3. The fact that the limiter arrives at 6500rpm only reiterates what you’re feeling... that this is an effective rather than inspiring engine.

Luckily, there’s so much else to enjoy here. The various modes – Snow/Ice, Tour, Sport, Track, the customisable My Mode, plus V mode – really make a marked difference to the behaviour of the car. As advertised, the suspension in Track mode really does feel like a circuit setting. It’s too stiff up in the

hills around LA, but backing them off one notch really helps. You can also tweak steering weight, brake feel, engine sound and throttle response, and that’s before you delve into the PTM system for traction and stability settings.

Perhaps more important is that the Blackwing has an inherent balance and progressiveness that shines through whatever mode you’re in. This is a car that loves to turn, never seems to run out of front grip and puts it power down extremely well. Add powerful, feelsome brakes, a sweet manual gearbox and a differential that acts swiftly and gives plenty of options, and the end result is a straightforward, highly enjoyable car that you can push really hard with no fear of a sudden snap of oversteer. It doesn’t quite have the sharpness of the M3 Comp, nor the sheer drama of its bigger brother, but it’s a proper **evo** car. ✕

Engine V6, 3564cc, twin-turbo **Power** 472bhp @ 5750rpm

Torque 445lb ft @ 3500-5000rpm

Weight 1751kg (274bhp/ton) **0-62mph** 4.1sec

Top speed 189mph **Basic price** \$62,390 (c£51,000)

+ Performance, sweet manual ‘box, well-sorted chassis

- Steering lacks a little feel, engine lacks tingle factor

evo rating ★★★★★



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by SAM JENKINS

Ford Puma ST Powershift

Hot Puma variant gets a dual-clutch transmission and mild hybrid assistance – but there's a catch

AS WE MOURN THE LOSS OF THE FIESTA ST, the Puma ST has become Ford's closest alternative to the beloved hot hatch, blending strong dynamics and practicality into one affordable package. And now the performance division has added a second model: the mild-hybrid Puma ST Powershift.

While it has the same chassis and design and costs just £10 more than the regular ST, the new model swaps the torque-rich 1.5-litre three-cylinder for a smaller 1-litre turbo three, and the six-speed manual for a seven-speed dual-clutch with 48V mild-hybrid assist, increasing kerb weight by 36kg to 1394kg as a result. Peak outputs are 168bhp and 183lb ft, 29bhp and 53lb ft behind the regular ST for a 0-62mph time and top speed seven-tenths and 7mph slower.

The Powershift's 1-litre is immediately more gruff than you might expect – three-cylinder units are inherently unrefined, but this one feels particularly uneven, sending unwanted vibrations through the cabin. Engage drive via the somewhat cheap, generic gear selector and things improve, with seamless shifts and eager low-speed torque making it a pleasant drive around town. The low-end mild-hybrid pull does a very good job of imitating the feel of the full-fat 1.5-litre at low speeds, but this doesn't last.

Out of town, the Powershift's lack of torque



and top-end zing are very apparent. While a 36kg weight increase doesn't sound significant, the combination of this and the reduced output make for a significant drop in power-to-weight – the Powershift has 121bhp/ton to the standard car's 145, with torque-to-weight down 42lb ft/ton. No doubt many will opt for this model purely for the practicality of its dual-clutch automatic, and while it's very responsive in town and at speed, it does make the drive a little less engaging.

What isn't any less engaging is the chassis, with the same bespoke rear twist beam, 'force vectoring' springs and anti-roll bars carried across from the regular ST. The ride is undoubtedly firm, occasionally crashy and can be a tad unsettled on trickier roads, but if lively, engaging dynamics are what you're looking for, it delivers. The 11.4:1 steering ratio is also identical, 25 per cent faster

than the standard Puma's to make the ST feel darty and on its toes. Steering feel is also strong, with a surprising level of feedback and off-centre heft inspiring confidence.

As with the 1.5-litre ST, the brakes feel over-servoed and grabby on initial application but offer a satisfyingly tight pedal and plenty of stopping power in most scenarios. As with the Fiesta, though, fade is easily reached should you push on, with the Powershift's extra weight likely to bring that limit forward. One benefit of the mild hybrid system is a (slight) increase in perceived engine braking via energy recuperation, taking some load away from those discs.

The Powershift is an interesting proposition. While its chassis is equal to the regular ST, its powertrain is compromised and an average of 42mpg during our test won't break any efficiency records, making the automatic transmission the true USP. As a practical family hauler with strong dynamic ability, you can't go too far wrong, but the standard manual Puma ST remains our pick. ☒

Engine In-line 3-cyl, 998cc, hybrid assist **Power** 168bhp @ 5750rpm **Torque** 183lb ft @ 3000rpm **Weight** 1394kg (121bhp/ton) **0-62mph** 7.4sec **Top speed** 130mph **Basic price** £31,060

+ Sharp looks, strong practicality, engaging chassis

- Lacklustre powertrain, stiff ride

evo rating ★★★★★



Alan Gow

BTCC supremo and 24-hour 2CV racer

Director of the BTCC, a seat on numerous FIA committees, and a Dacia Sandero at home. We revisit one of *evo*'s very first interviewees for a catch-up 25 years later

by STEPHEN DOBIE PORTRAIT from ALAMY

BACK IN ISSUE ONE, *EVO* INTERVIEWED Alan Gow – perhaps crudely dubbing him ‘BTCC’s answer to Bernie Ecclestone’ – just as he was lifting British Touring Cars to their ascendancy. ‘It was never my desire to work in motorsport,’ he admits a quarter of a century later as he winds back through the journey that’s led him to seats on numerous FIA committees.

‘I first got hooked on motorsport when a friend of my sister’s took me to Calder Park Raceway in Melbourne in my early teens. It was a contemporary race meet: Holdens, Falcons and some Minis. I couldn’t tell you any of the drivers I saw that day but it was new, exciting, and I knew I wanted to get more involved. I didn’t know in the slightest it’s what my life would end up revolving around. I knew I wanted to be around cars, but I thought that would be as a car dealer. Motorsport was always going to be a hobby.’

Gow did initially follow the trade route, selling cars and managing dealerships in his native Australia while going to sprint events at a local car club with friends to sate his passion at an amateur level. That was until his early 30s, when a business encounter put him in partnership with Peter Brock. Australia’s most celebrated racing driver needed financial help after Holden cut ties with him during the fallout over the infamous Energy Polaris device he’d fitted to some of its road cars. Gow was suddenly at the helm of a race team in the country’s top-tier series.

‘I was thrown in at the deep end,’ he recalls. ‘Peter needed help and I got stuck in. We ended up running the Brock racing team together.’ They scored an unlikely victory at the 1987 Bathurst 1000 – Brock’s ninth win, a record that still stands – their Commodore coming out on top after a pair of Sierra RS500s were disqualified. But it was clear the Ford

was competitive, and a visit to Andy Rouse the following year to purchase RS500s for themselves ended up paving the way for the rest of Gow’s career.

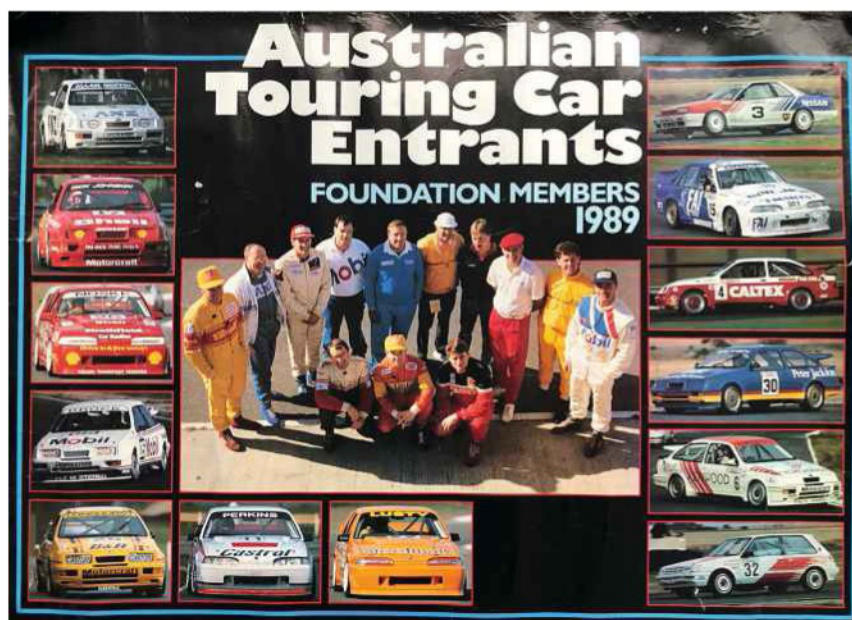
‘I was among a group of team owners that formed the Touring Car Entrants Group in 1989,’ he continues. ‘It went on to take over the rights to the Australian championship, which eventually morphed into V8 Supercars. We helped take the sport to a whole new level. But I sold the race business in 1990 and at that stage I had no ties. So I came to the UK. Like a lot of Australians, I came for 12 months just to have a look around and use it as a springboard for travelling elsewhere. I’m still here...

‘Andy always said to look him up if I came over. He wanted to do a business modifying Sierra Cosworth road cars, so I got involved in that – it was similar to work I’d done with Peter – and that proved to be my introduction to the BTCC and then the beginning of TOCA. In the early 1990s it was a very good championship, but it played second fiddle to single-seater series at the time. It had all the seeds in Britain – great competitors and teams, lots of manufacturer involvement – it just needed commercialisation in order to grow.

‘When I first got involved I think we had a 20-minute slot on BBC Grandstand,’ Gow recalls. ‘Murray Walker commentating on some highlights a week after the event. Our TV coverage grew enormously over the decades and we’re now live all day from 11am to 6.30pm on a free-to-view channel. It’s a big part of our success. But you also need the fans there to create the atmosphere. If spectators aren’t at the circuit, it’s not going to be good TV.

‘We could easily put ourselves behind a paywall but we’d lose hundreds of thousands of spectators. Our relationship with ITV is fantastic. At the end of





this current contract we'll have been with them for 25 years. Not many sports can claim that.'

He's also acutely aware that viewing patterns are changing and that BTCC needs to keep increasing its social media presence to entice younger generations into the sport and to maintain viewer loyalty, helped by the consistency of the series' grid.

'BTCC is a destination rather than something drivers do on the way through,' Gow smiles. 'Maybe drivers used to do touring cars at the end of their career, or at the beginning before they went off overseas. Jason Plato and Matt Neal competed from the 1990s until very recently, proving you can make a decades-long career out of racing in this championship. With that comes the fans. They can't get behind a transient grid. Here they follow a driver and the whole championship rather than just attending a sole event.'

Back in issue 001, Gow proudly declared he took more inspiration from NASCAR than Formula 1 when evolving his series. Does that statement hold true? 'I'm a magpie, I'll take inspiration from anywhere to improve our sport. I've always been inspired by NASCAR. F1 is an incredibly complex and technical sport, ours is not. We're about entertainment more than anything else.'

It's not stopped BTCC adopting electrification, though – the first touring car series in the world to do so, in 2022, thanks to hybrid technology from Cosworth – while Gow is keenly pursuing the route of fully sustainable fuel. 'There's no pressure on us to do so, but it's logical to keep yourself relevant to the world and marketplace around you. I'm talking about an increased hybrid element rather than fully electric cars, though. It gives you a good sustainability story while keeping internal combustion engines for the noise that we all love.'

'The championship is always open to whoever wants to drive the cars, too. The number of women working in our paddock is enormous – and not on a PR or managerial basis, but engineering. TOCA hasn't gone out of its way to do that, it's just happened.'

While it appears a tremendously positive story arc, Gow isn't easily drawn on specific highlights, even if the Super Touring Power event at Brands Hatch in July 2023 allowed an unashamedly rose-tinted glance at a golden era of BTCC. 'I'm always interested in the next race. I never sit back and rock in my armchair thinking "well that was a great season". I went to that event at Brands, though I didn't get a tear in my eye. It was nice to catch up with some of the old drivers and see the old cars, but I've always got my eyes looking forwards rather than backwards.'

It's a mindset he inherited from friend Peter Brock, who was killed at the Targa West Rally in Perth, Australia, in 2006. 'He's someone I miss to this day. I admired him and we became very close mates. Peter's outlook on life has stayed with me – no matter how much crap was going on in his life, he always had a positive attitude. It's why you should keep looking ahead, not at what's happened to you.'

Now 68, Gow shows little desire to wind down. As well as running the BTCC, he oversees tin-top racing across the world as president of the FIA Touring Car Commission. He also sits on a number of other panels, including the World Endurance Championship Committee – helping sculpt regulations for the 24 Hours of Le Mans – and the Motorsport UK Council.

'I like to think I bring my common sense to discussions, adding an objective and dispassionate

viewpoint to series that aren't my own. Likewise I'll always listen to people's views outside of BTCC to improve my own sport.' Fitting it all in is clearly a challenge – 'My diary is full every day!' – ensuring that when Gow wants to dip his bum in the actual seat of a racing car, he needs to be clever about it.

'Racing was always just a hobby on the side, but I've done some fun things. Namely a few of the 24-hour Citroën 2CV races and the C1 24 Hours. I've been pretty successful in those while also just having a bit of a laugh. I won the 2CV race in 1999 and came ninth in the C1 race at Rockingham [a circuit Gow dearly misses on the BTCC calendar] with Andy Priaulx, his son Seb and a mate of mine, Richard Solomons. It's great fun. It feels like switching off. And you might get around eight hours of driving time, which is as much as other people do in half a season of racing.'

That said, the racing car Alan is most gagging to try is a somewhat livelier animal. 'The Ford Capri RS 3100 that competed in the European Touring Car Championship was just a spectacular car. There was one raced in Australia by a good friend of mine, Allan Moffat. That really appeals to me – I'd love to have a go in one of those.'

Alan is pretty content with the vast array of road cars he's driven over the years. From a humble Honda Civic in his late teens after passing his test, things only improved. 'Being in the car trade, I had a succession of cars, including Holdens and an RX-7 when I ran a Mazda dealership. When I worked in property I had cars as diverse as a Land Cruiser, Mercedes S500 and even a Rolls-Royce Silver Spirit. It was second-hand, I hasten to add, and it was a bit of a dog – not one of my better purchases! Through the Brock Special Vehicles operation I had Brock Commodores and Falcons. Then, working with Andy Rouse, I ran Sierras.

'During the '90s we had various relationships with the suppliers of our safety cars. I drove Saab Aeros, a Mercedes C43 AMG and supercharged Jaguar XJRs. Porsche now supplies our official cars and I get the great pleasure of driving fast laps for the VIPs at race weekends. I take them around in a Panamera Turbo S and they're wowed by the way it performs.

'At home I've got a 1966 Alfa Romeo GT Junior which I've had for nearly 20 years. I just cherish it. A two-owner car with low mileage from the south of France. I've got a 1960 Beetle in concours spec and I'm not really sure why – I don't use it. Right now I've got a Maserati MC20 on my driveway, which a mate has given to me for a couple of weeks. What a spectacular thing that is. It's sat alongside my Dacia Sandero Stepway, which I use as my everyday car. I bought it brand new for £15,000 and it's perfect for what I need it to do. I don't care too much if doors get opened into it in the car park.' It's difficult to imagine Bernie having the same outlook. ❧

Clockwise from top: early days in the Touring Car Entrants (Gow fourth from left); at Bathurst in '93 with Peter Brock (right) and Neil Crompton (now 'the voice of V8 Supercars'); cherished Alfa GT Junior; a one-off mid-'90s BTCC support race entry; with friend and Aussie motorsport icon Allan Moffat; Porsche fast laps at Oulton Park and Snetterton



by JORDAN KATSIANIS PHOTOGRAPHY by GUS GREGORY

THE THRILL OF SPICING

evo deadlines have often been fuelled by late-night curries, so what better way to celebrate 25 years than with a unique menu created by one of London's top chefs

THERE ARE MANY COOL THINGS THAT I'VE BEEN TASKED WITH IN this job, but I will admit I never saw this coming. As part of **evo**'s 25th anniversary, I was asked to meet one of London's top chefs and co-create a unique, specialised menu for a fabulous dinner celebrating all things **evo**. Why a curry you ask? As one of **evo**'s later alumni, I have to admit that the Shell garage sandwiches usually associated with group tests and trackdays didn't seem to offer much of a culinary legacy, but there was apparently a culture of late-night curries on those press weeks in the office before remote working and high-speed internet became a thing.

So, in the same way that **evo**'s founders decided to create the ultimate car magazine for those who value the thrill of driving, we've decided to try to create the ultimate **evo** curry, with lots of help from someone who knows more on the topic of spicing and saucing than us. Introducing our maestro, Rohit Ghai, a Michelin-starred chef and restaurateur with multiple restaurants in central London who also happens to be a diehard car fan. The brief was simple. I was to accompany Rohit to some favoured suppliers just outside London and then head back to his Kensington-based restaurant, Kutir. Here we would create a unique dish that would form the centrepiece of a celebratory 25th anniversary dinner.

On Rohit's suggestion, we decided to base the dish around a slow-cooked lamb shank. Avoiding any tenuous connections to all the near misses we've collectively had driving through the sheep-filled roads of Wales, the idea was to pair this most celebratory of cuts with an unexpected flavour profile. It would be unlike anything our crew might have experienced at a perfectly fine, if unmemorable, Indian restaurant on the usual overnight stops in places like Betws-y-Coed, Hawick or Anglesey. This would be no Lamb bhuna.

So to our headline dish. Lamb with a sour masala sauce, perked up by the use of amchoor, a dried green mango powder, plus the colourful inclusions of both red and green peppers, tomatoes and just a hint of yoghurt to create what was, to my palette, one of the best curries I've ever tasted. The oily, rich and intense flavours completely knocked my socks off, and not just because Rohit insisted on his barman knocking up more than a few cocktails to make my rare appearance inside a professional kitchen even more enjoyable.

Alongside our lamb, we'll also be serving a southern-Indian inspired dish of sea bass in a gentle turmeric and coconut sauce, served with blistered cherry tomatoes and fried curry leaves, along with one of Kutir's signature chicken curries. Rohit also let me have a go cooking some naan in the tandoor, an exercise that thankfully yielded both warm and tender bread, plus a free hair removal session limited to only one of my forearms.

Of course, a celebration is nothing without a few beverages, and after tasting most of the cocktail menu, I can confidently say this will be quite the meal to remember. What a thing. To be part of a team capable of creating the best product in the business and having a right old ball whilst doing so. Oh, and working for a plucky little performance car magazine, too.





JOIN EVO & AUDI AT KUTIR FOR A 25TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION DINNER

EVO AND AUDI UK AMBASSADOR ROHIT GHAI HAVE TEAMED UP TO offer an exclusive opportunity for 20 **evo** subscribers to visit Ghai's Michelin-starred Kutir restaurant in Chelsea to enjoy an evening of cars and curry with **evo**, Audi and Ghai himself, sampling the unique dish he has created to celebrate **evo**'s 25th anniversary.

If you are already a subscriber to the magazine you will be contacted via email to ask if you would like to be entered into the draw (please log in to yoursubscription.co.uk to make sure we have your correct contact details). If you are not a subscriber but would like the opportunity to win a seat at the table, simply subscribe at subscribe.evo.co.uk and we will contact you to confirm your draw entry.

The event is scheduled to take place in March 2024 in London. Subscribers will be contacted via email to confirm their draw entry. Successful attendees will be notified by 1 March 2024 of their place at the event. All terms & conditions will be communicated via email.

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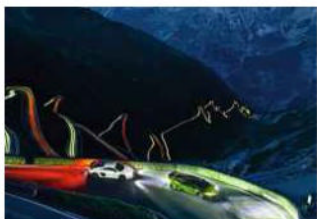
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Mist opportunity

I've just unwrapped the latest subscriber's issue of **evo**. What a front cover picture! Amazing. It looks wholly unlike when I drove the Stelvio with a friend.

We arrived at the Swiss side after a day-long drive from the overnight Hook of Holland ferry (don't bother with the on-board breakfast). Although clear at the base, the entire pass was enveloped in fog. We could see nothing – on occasion not even both sides of the road. All we could hear was those muffled cowbells clanking away in the distance.

After staying overnight in Bormio, the fog was still there in the morning. So, we drove onwards.

One day we'll get back there...

Tim Halket

Big bang theory

I was reading about Sam Jenkins' experience with the pops and bangs from his C63 AMG's V8 being more pronounced on the superunleaded he filled up with on the Continent (Fast Fleet, **evo** 313). I suspect that the ethanol content in superunleaded in Europe is higher than in the UK, as the increase in pops and bangs would indicate this.

The last time I drove on the Continent I noticed E5 and E10 superunleaded. In the UK we only get E5. However, 'E5' doesn't necessarily mean it is exactly 5 per cent ethanol, just up to 5 per cent.

I daily-drive a 205 GTI and when I bought it last year I was filling up with Shell V-Power 99 and the engine popped and banged a lot. I then discovered that where I live in the south of England, Esso Supreme 99 has no ethanol in it despite saying E5 on the pump. Old-school



petrol. The engine runs much better on Esso 99 with the pops and bangs considerably reduced. My fuel lines also won't corrode from the ethanol.

Esso's website confirms in which parts of the UK their superunleaded is ethanol free. If it is convenient I would recommend filling up with it exclusively. It may also release a few extra horsepower...

Alex Mills

Slim pickings

Flicking through **evo** 313, I have come to an unpleasant conclusion – I am poor. I have a good job and a decent house, but I am still poor.

Not just in money, although that much is made clear when reading about the seven-figure EV hypercar, the trio of six-figure restomods, the six-figure trackday toy and the still-six-figure Munich legend, none of which I will probably ever afford. But I am poor in choice as well.

Yes, I could apparently still get an affordable warm saloon if I wanted to retire into the humdrum of almost-mainstream motoring, or a £40k hot hatch if I wanted to indulge my inner teenager. But Alpine or Cayman aside there is nothing affordable that tugs on my heartstrings both for its aesthetics and its abilities. And if I dared to want a burbling, characterful V8 in this environmentally friendly world, even a Mustang is now over £50k, and there are few other options this side of an F-type R or Stuttgart's dying monsters.

Even the second-hand market, the beloved mainstay of those of us seeking to punch above our financial weight, is letting me down, as investors and fellow dinosaurs rush to claim the last few brilliant unicorns from the recent past.



LETTER OF THE MONTH

Economy class

READING ABOUT RICHARD PORTER'S ATTEMPTS TO HAVE affordable fun in his Fiat Panda 100HP (Fast Fleet, **evo** 314) got me thinking about the 2006 Fiesta Mk6 we purchased from a friend for £1000 for our sons to learn to drive in.

It has had many parts replaced over time, such as springs, dampers, brake lines, etc. I changed the front discs for £64 and the spark plugs for £24. It has now just passed its fourteenth MOT, at 100,122 miles. It will need a new battery soon, which will cost £44.99.

Meanwhile my 2016 BMW X3 3.0 diesel at £22,000 and 54,000 miles needed a new battery at a whopping £430 plus fitting, and a transfer box at £3121. Thank God it was still under warranty.

Whenever I drive the Ford the first mile is always a disappointment, as the brakes are weak, the steering has no power assistance and the tyres lack grip. However, once that mile is over, I listen to the squeaky alternator belt and laugh at the noise the window makes as it lowers into the door with the sound of a guillotine. I think most of the horsepowers left the engine bay a long time ago and it struggles to get up hills, but still I enjoy driving it. It is a simple, honest old car.

I also enjoy driving the BMW. It couldn't be more different from the Fiesta, but as vehicles to get from A to B, both have a certain appeal.

So more on the Panda, please, although I'm sorry to hear about the white smoke...

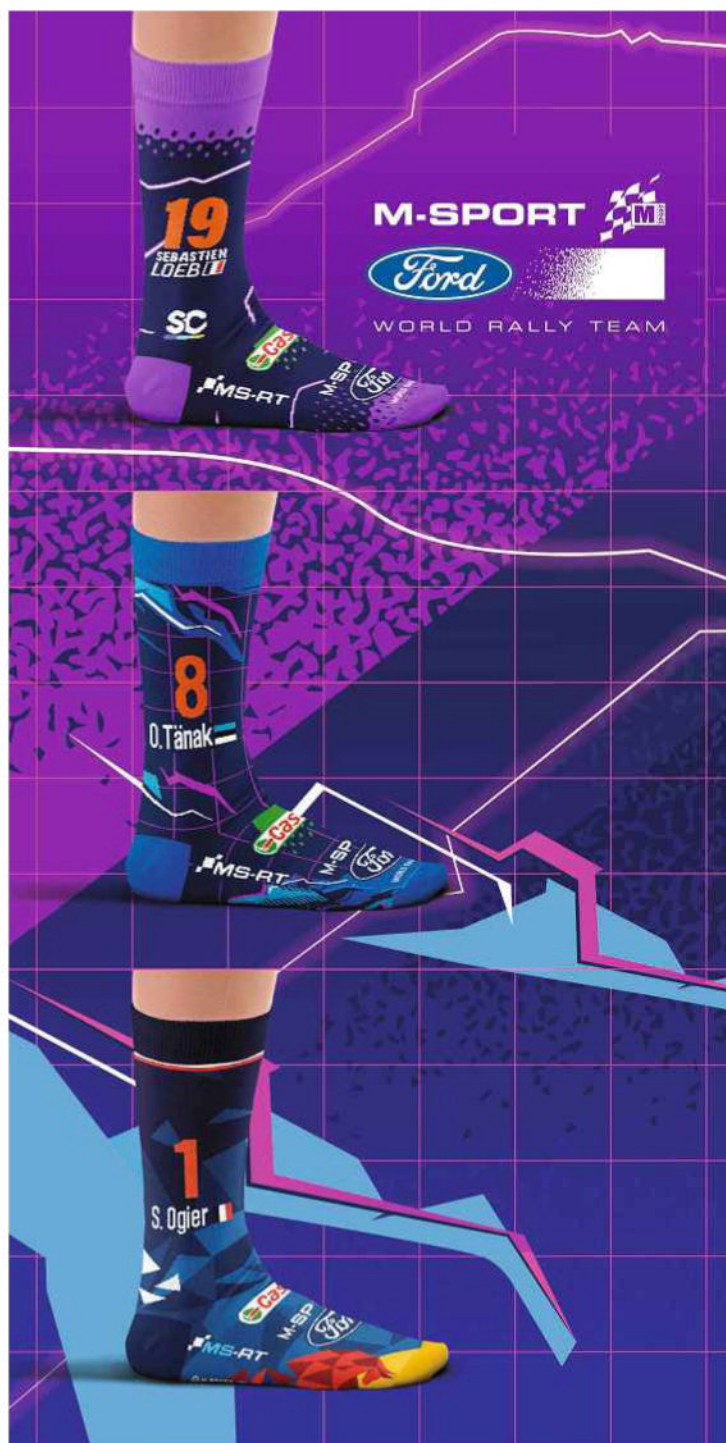
Steve Middleton

The Letter of the Month wins a Straton watch

The writer of this month's star letter receives a Straton Vintage Driver worth £325. 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.

Straton Watch Co.





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INBOX



I think we all accept that EVs are the future, but I for one do not want to go gentle into that good night...

Martin Willis

The end is not nigh

I read a wide range of car magazines but *evo* has been my favourite from the beginning. However, even you are now falling into the same trap.

If I read another road test or first drive lamenting the final petrol-powered iteration of this Porsche or that BMW I will explode.

Let's look at Porsche. Are we seriously saying that given its two largest markets are China and the USA it will stop selling petrol-powered Boxsters, or for that matter Macans, when it doesn't have to? Who knows when the USA will ban the sale of petrol vehicles, if ever. They have not created any legislation, just a wish that by 2035 half of sales will be electric, and that's if Biden remains in power. China by 2050?

There are a number of countries that have suggested 2040, but again there is no legislation to force them, and some have yet to commit, for example Australia. Meanwhile Germany has negotiated an efuel exemption from the EU, with others sure to follow suit. With sales of 30,000 Porsches in Germany in 2022, how many Germans will continue to buy non-electric Porsches if they are allowed?

Finally, if car companies continue selling new petrol-powered cars around the world after the UK ban in 2035, what is to stop Brits buying them at two months old from, say, Japan or Australia? If such a loophole exists, surely some enterprising importers will get busy...

So forget the ban and get on with enjoying your Porsches!

Ian Barlow, Adlington, Lancs

Corsa and effect

I had the unfortunate experience of driving one of the UK's best-selling cars for a number of days recently whilst our regular car was being repaired after a minor rear-end shunt. The suspension on said best-seller was noisy and crashy, the steering without feel and far too strong at trying to re-centre, the gearshift vague and way too long in throw. I'm not that tall but I couldn't sit behind myself, which I can in other superminis. But the front seats were comfortable, the infotainment reasonable, there were real dials for the heating and volume (take note VW), the wind noise was low and it had nice-looking alloys.

If a best-selling car can be that poor to drive, is it any wonder that the latest vehicles are devoid of any enjoyment. Just make sure it looks and feels nice in the showroom and don't spend any money on dynamics. You can see why EVs are criticised by the motoring press, yet people still (hire) purchase them.

The car in question was a Vauxhall Corsa. Such a shame that production of high-volume cars at a reasonable price point with decent ride and handling is coming to an end with the Ford Fiesta and Focus being consigned to history. It also means that other manufacturers no longer have such a high benchmark to develop against, so we'll all be the poorer for it.

Roy Beardshaw

On a plate

I *really* want a Prodrive P25 (*evo* 313). Shame about the cost, though. I'll just have to buy another lottery ticket, I suppose. But it does make the last three digits of the number plate on the example you drove rather apt: POA (Price On Application) indeed...

Harry Evans

Watches

This month's most compelling new pieces



Tissot PRX Digital

From £310 tissotwatches.com

When the second round of PRX variants was revealed last year, Tissot CEO Sylvain Dolla said it was 'just the beginning'. He wasn't joking. Today the range offers three different sizes, countless colour schemes, three-handers and chronographs, quartz and automatic movements – and now this digital version. It retains the distinctive shape of the analogue PRX and comes in a variety of sizes and colours.



Paulin Modul

From £450 paulinwatches.com

Glasgow-based Paulin is celebrating its first decade with the release of this new model, called Modul. Its name references the watch's innovative modular design, which allows it to accept a variety of third-party movements. The current choices are a Swiss automatic (£990) or a 'new-old-stock' vintage Japanese quartz (£450). Three different colour schemes are available.



Fortis Stratoliner S-41 White Dust Supernova

£8450 fortis-swiss.com

Fortis makes watches for a number of space agencies and recently tested a batch of its Stratoliner watches by sending them to the edge of the earth's atmosphere on board a Swedish Space Corporation rocket. Those 13 watches are now available for purchase – for a £3150 premium over a Stratoliner that hasn't experienced weightlessness.



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2013 FERRARI F12 BERLINETTA

Classified

This car's story

Some GT cars never get taken on long road trips - but this Ferrari certainly has been. I've subtly upgraded this F12 Berlinetta with genuine TDF wheels, maintained it fastidiously, and have used it for some fantastic trips around Europe down to Portofino, the Le Mans Classic, and more. It's how it deserves to be enjoyed!

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RICHARD MEADEN

A lot has changed since **evo** was launched, says Meaden. With one exception...

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS. TWENTY-FIVE BLOODY years! It can't possibly be a quarter of a century since a motley crew of disgruntled ex-EMAP employees and a gullible Maserati-driving farmer managed to launch their own car magazine. And yet, here we are: part of the motoring media establishment we set out to disrupt.

Unsurprisingly, **evo** has been a massive part of my life. A little under half of it, in fact. Knowing it has also been a regular part of yours – some of you since the very beginning – is a feeling I can't adequately describe. Writing about cars is a strange way to earn a living, but when you do it for **evo** you're part of something that's much bigger than you. Something I'm reminded of whenever one of you says hello at a race meeting, trackday, airport or petrol station forecourt. It means a lot.

I think the secret of **evo's** success is that it has always worn its heart on its sleeve. We worked hard from Day 1 to ensure the magazine expressed a consistent collective opinion. But we also knew that we needed to balance worthy journalistic objectivity with the freedom to express our own individual preferences. In doing so we made a connection with the readership, because you could get to know us as individuals. At the end of the day we all grapple with the same head-versus-heart dilemmas.

We never hid the fact that **evo** was an entirely self-serving enterprise, in so much as we came together to produce the magazine we wanted to read. Only now do I appreciate that means there is now an entire generation of car enthusiasts who have grown up reading **evo**. Our drive stories, eCotys, uncompromising (and sometimes unpopular) opinions, unashamed emphasis on vehicle dynamics and unhealthy obsession with gratuitous oversteer shots continue to provide a unique monthly fix for people like us.

Now, when I go on international car launches, I'll often meet engineers, test drivers and designers who are excited to tell me they started reading **evo** when they were at school or university. It makes me feel positively neolithic, but it also makes me smile, because in some small way we've not only fuelled a collective passion for cars, but there are now people in positions of influence who have an **evo** outlook. Sneaky, eh?

Looking back, I think it's fair to say that the changes we have

experienced between 1998 and now are truly extraordinary. I've mentioned it before, but when we launched **evo** it was a solely print proposition. This was a blessing because it meant we focused our attention and resources on doing one thing right. No consideration was given to a website because the internet was still in its infancy. Mobile phones didn't even have cameras, and actual cameras still used film. The world was a very different place.

Print certainly had little to fear. The big publishers were arrogant and complacent, but in their defence there was a permanence to print that seemed unshakable. Kudos and credibility, too. That's why we launched into the same fiercely competitive monthly magazine market from which *Performance Car* had been so lazily withdrawn. It's almost like we had a point to prove.

You wouldn't believe how hard it was to navigate our way through the cartel of big publishing companies who just so happened to collectively own all the main routes to newsstand distribution. They made it very clear they didn't want us on the shelf, but like Fernando Alonso lunging into Turn 1 at the start of a Grand Prix, we found a way. For the first year we lived on our nerves – and Harry's overdraft – but relished the fight, even resorting to guerrilla tactics, spreading copies of **evo** across the full length of newsagents' shelves to obscure our rivals. I think my mum still does it.

So much has changed since issue 001 it's hard to keep track. All-wheel-drive rally specials came

and went. Small coupes are virtually gone. Hot hatches are in the final throes of extinction, likewise two-seater sports cars. The manual transmission has gone from being standard equipment to a prized option on bazillionaire hypercars. Natural aspiration is all but eradicated, and the spectre of electrification is upon us.

I'm pleased to say some things don't change. Deadlines and me have never got along, so it was inevitable that writing this column would be a masterclass in irresistible force meets immovable object. Part of me likes the idea of being the writer who fails to file a piece they've arguably had 25 years to write. Fortunately, my brain has successfully activated Deadline Mode and I've done all the doings in the last minute. As per.

In all seriousness, there's important work to do. The Thrill of Driving is under attack from all sides. So, it's only right that the magazine created to celebrate it is now rolling up its sleeves in readiness to defend it. Here's to the next 25.

'I think the secret of **evo's success is that it has always worn its heart on its sleeve'**

@DickieMeaden

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

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RICHARD PORTER

Porter recounts the extraordinary day that led to the birth of **evo**

THE EDITOR HELD UP A BEAUTIFULLY FRAMED shot of the Jaguar XKR going sideways. 'Great oversteer, Meaden,' he beamed. 'This could make an ideal cover shot for our magazine, *Performance Car*.'

Richard Meaden allowed a smile to play across his boyish face. 'Thanks boss,' he grinned.

'Now get back to your computer and write it up,' the editor added, 'as the deadline was nine days ago.'

Meaden strolled back into the main office and sat at his desk.

'Great oversteer, Dickie,' said a soft voice next to him. Meaden turned to look at his friend and colleague John Barker, who was sitting at the next desk, casually smoking a rolled-up cigarette while writing an insightful review of a new Porsche.

'Thanks mate,' Meaden replied. 'I loved the pictures from your new BMW M3 review. Great oversteer...'

Barker was about to reply when a wave of grey men entered the office. Management Suits! This couldn't be good news. Instinctively, Barker and Meaden leapt up and followed their editor into the meeting room where the Suits had gathered.

'Gentlemen, I'll keep this brief,' the main Suit mewed. 'We're closing down *Performance Car*. Please finish the insightful reviews you're currently writing and then leave the building, having first handed in your ID cards and driving shoes.'

'You want our driving shoes?' asked Meaden, shooting a glance at Barker.

John knew exactly what his young friend was thinking. 'Our driving shoes?' Barker repeated slowly, his eyes twinkling mischievously behind his glasses. 'You'll have to catch us first!'

With that the two friends burst from the meeting room and sprinted through the office. With lightning reactions Barker seized a set of keys from his desk as he sped past and the pair disappeared into the stairwell, sliding down the bannisters and catapulting out of the emergency exit into the publishing company car park.

'What have we got?' shouted Meaden.

'Subaru Impreza Turbo, Terzo limited edition,' Barker replied briskly. '215bhp, 214lb ft at 4000rpm, 50:50 front-rear torque split.'

'Let's do this!' cried Meaden and they leapt into the Mica Blue saloon as furious Suits began firing their revolvers from the upstairs windows of *Your Puppy* magazine.

Barker lit the 2-litre turbocharged engine and in one smooth move dialled up 3k of twist, snicked the lever into first and smartly

released the clutch, sending the Subaru surging towards the car park exit. 'Shit!' exclaimed Meaden, 'The barrier's down!'

'Not a problem,' grinned Barker, quietly, launching the square-cut Subaru up a kerb and onto the ramp-shaped nose of the white Lotus Esprit belonging to one of the chief Suits, sending the Impreza soaring into the air, easily clearing the security fence before its rally-bred suspension effortlessly soaked up the landing in the street outside and the two friends sped safely away.

'What now?' questioned Meaden as his experienced colleague helmed the Impreza across the flatlands of the East Midlands.

'I suppose we ought to lie low for a while,' mused Barker, maintaining a steely focus on the road ahead. Suddenly he spotted a car coming straight for them.

'This lunatic is trying to run us off the road!' exclaimed Meaden.

'Hold on!' barked Barker, expertly mashing the powerful brakes as the other car skidded sideways on the handbrake, blocking their path.

'Isn't that a Maserati Ghibli Cup?' queried Meaden. As he spoke, a mysterious man emerged from the red Italian coupe. Barker noticed that from the corner of his mouth emerged a piece of straw.

'The name's Metcalfe,' the man said. 'Harry Metcalfe. I'm looking for a couple of chaps to set up a new high-performance motoring magazine.'

'What's your plan here, Metcalfe?' demanded Meaden, sceptically. 'It's simple,' Metcalfe purred, patting the hot bonnet of his Maserati. 'We get the

best cars, the best writers, the best photographers, and we make the best damn car magazine in the world. Are you in?'

'I suppose we are,' smiled Barker. 'But we can't do it alone.'

'Don't worry,' Metcalfe assured him. 'We'll get others, and over time we'll nurture new talent to handle a car as well as a sentence, and I want to give them names that sound ridiculously made up.'

'What, like...' Barker paused as his brilliant mind whirled to think of the most implausible name possible, 'Jethro Boving-Don!'

'Ha ha, ha,' Metcalfe chuckled. 'That's perfect.'

Meaden smiled. 'What about Henry Catch-Pole?'

'Steady on!' Metcalfe spluttered.

'When shall we start?' Barker asked.

'No time like the present,' Metcalfe exclaimed. 'Welcome aboard, gentlemen. And remember, if we do this right we'll create something that could last for at least 25 years!'

And that is how **evo** was founded. Probably.

'You want our driving shoes?' asked Barker. 'You'll have to catch us first!'

@sniffpetrol

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



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JETHRO BOVINGDON

A gathering of four of Ferrari's finest made for Jethro's most memorable **evo** test

I LOVE EVO MAGAZINE. ALWAYS HAVE, ALWAYS will. I remember seeing the first issue on the newsstand and being so excited to see that the boys from *Performance Car* were back, but with a much better, much more beautiful product and without the slightly dumbed-down project cars that had been introduced for readers theoretically graduating from *Max Power*. Don't you just love big publishing company strategy?

Anyway, that first issue, with a sinfully cool Maserati 3200GT on the cover, seemed so fresh and clearly lived and breathed its tagline. Devouring every page and every glorious photograph, I too was immersed in the Thrill of Driving. Little did I know that the magazine would one day become home to me, present so many opportunities and provide so many brilliant memories. On the occasion of its 25th anniversary I suppose I should write about the very best one...

This is no easy task. From the very first day I arrived at the OG **evo** Towers back in March 2001, there's been an oh-my-god moment every few days. The early years were all about education for me. Sitting beside John and Dickie as they laid down lap times and trying to absorb as much information as possible, watching how Peter Tomalin could turn a rough and not really ready story into something polished and pristine with a few seemingly effortless tweaks, and just driving as much as possible. Building up my own data bank of experiences and sensations.

For me, the real highlight was always the group tests. Bloody hell we used to drive fast. Hanging on to the back of the group was in equal parts fascinating, challenging and terrifying. Every car was driven on the door handles. For example, I vividly remember following the unlikely combination of John Barker and a Toyota Yaris T-Sport (105bhp, 118mph, £11,995) back from a shoot for a good couple of hundred miles in a Peugeot 106 GTi. In all that distance I don't think we took a breath from absolute maximum attack. Well, maybe John did. But for a relatively inexperienced Bov in a super-sharp Peugeot hot hatch it was a wild ride. There were several other cars in the convoy and later somebody said to me, 'Well, I think you passed the test.' Who'd have thought clinging on to the rear bumper of a Yaris could decide the fate of a hopeful young writer for the most exciting car magazine on the planet?

So, my best memory has to be a group test. And it has to be in

north Wales. Probably on those soaring, epic roads now ruined by average-speed cameras. (Perhaps the only detrimental thing **evo** has done for the car-loving community is making these roads widely known. For that, I think we all have heavy hearts.) And it can't involve a Yaris! No, despite adoring hot hatches, the very best days are the pinch-yourself ones that often involve truly special cars. The most special of all? It has to be the gathering of 288 GTO, F40, F50 and Enzo back in issue 064. What a surreal few days...

The Enzo, very much the latest and greatest at the time, turned up on a giant transporter, which somehow slid into a ditch. Luckily, the car was undamaged. The owner couldn't make the dates so just gave us the car for a few days to enjoy. The F50 we had for two weeks as its owner was travelling on business. Two weeks. Can you

imagine? The 288 GTO was supplied by friends in the industry. It arrived the next day with much fanfare. By which I mean several donuts in a bumpy, puddle-strewn layby. We couldn't quite believe the sight of a precious GTO being driven like a hire car, but it set the tone for a few days of testing these cars to the fullest. Len, the owner of the F40, was a good sport, too. We all knew this was going to be a special event.

There was police attention (they loved the rides in the Enzo and F50 and speed limits were suddenly very elastic), an irate farmer, rain, sunshine and plenty of liquid refreshment in the evenings. Most of all there was joy and awe and

a shared sense that we were doing something no other magazine could hope to make happen and doing it our way. The cars were enjoyed and pushed hard, not revered and wrapped in cotton wool. It was a regular group test, just with highly irregular cars.

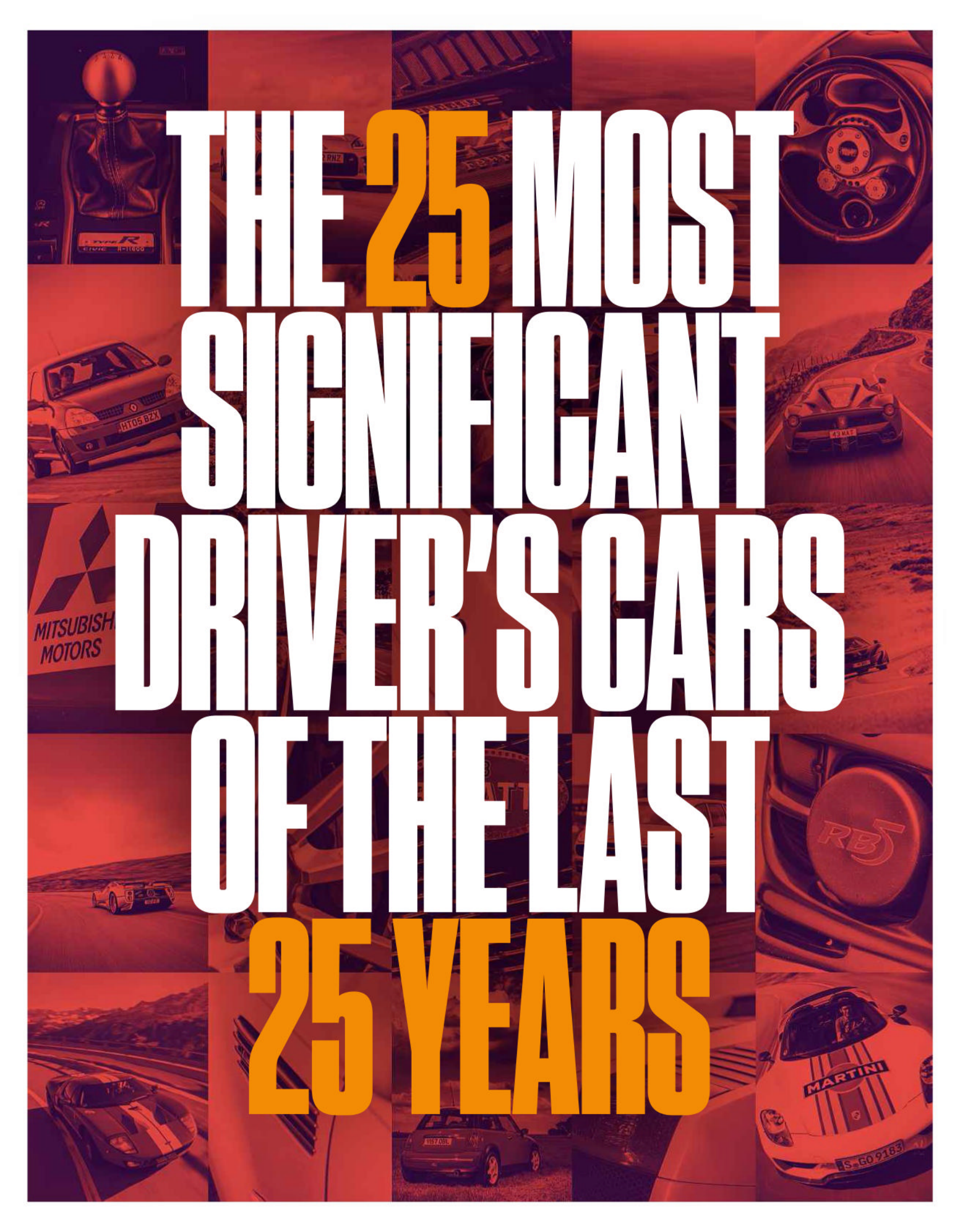
So often I've eagerly read tests of fantastic cars in other places, hoping to find out something new... only to hear the old clichés and received wisdom trotted out as fact because the 'driving' had been minimal and carried out at a dawdle. The Thrill of Worship. Understandable but ultimately empty. Cars are for driving and we *drove* those Ferraris. It was and remains the **evo** way.

On the final evening the weather cleared and the journey back to the hotel was pure magic. The unsilenced Enzo screamed its lungs out, the 288 GTO lit up dusk with great curls of flame and the F40 sparked against the road surface like an F1 car through Eau Rouge. I watched it all from the F50. Hanging on again. Just. I wouldn't have it any other way.

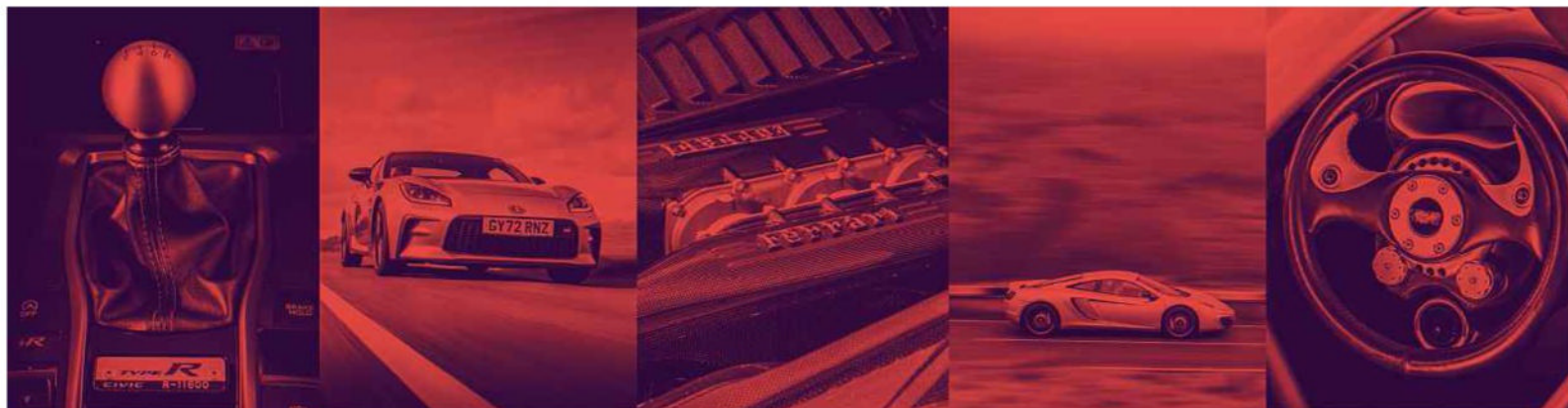
'The police loved the rides in the Enzo and F50 and speed limits were suddenly very elastic'

@JethroBovingdon

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



THE **25** MOST SIGNIFICANT DRIVER'S CARS OF THE LAST **25** YEARS



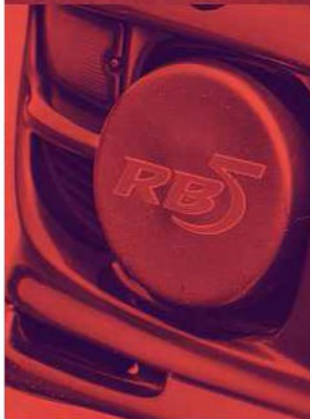
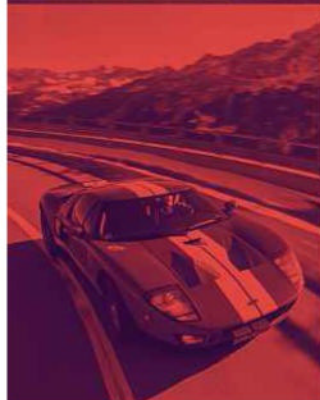
We've driven thousands of cars in 25 years. Here we name the 25 that we believe are the most significant, the cars that rocked our world

SO, THE 25 MOST SIGNIFICANT DRIVER'S CARS OF the last 25 years. We thought long and hard as to how to compile our list, 'discussed' at length the criteria as to what makes a car significant for us (and therefore for you). Cars were dismissed and then brought back into the fold. Others were a shoo-in up to the eleventh hour and then unceremoniously dumped because collectively it was decided that they didn't have that X factor or didn't really move the game on. Or both.

Categorically we didn't want to create a countdown of merely the fastest or most powerful, or the quickest around a track. Nor did we decide on models based purely on their reputation or popularity, or how good the launch was.

The selected cars are here on merit alone, yet because **evo** is a living, breathing magazine there's also a personal element to some of the choices. Because the very best cars have personalities and character to back up their significance, it was inevitable that some of ours was going to influence our decisions, too.

Of course, some of you will think we have selected 25 wrong 'uns, which is why we invite you to submit the cars that you feel should have been included – and why – to letters@evo.co.uk



**‘FOR £11,000 I
HAD A SUPERMINI
THAT WAS AS
EYE-CATCHING
AS A SUPERCAR’**



25 MINI COOPER (R50)

The 'new Mini' captured all the fun of the original

THE MINI WASN'T ON MY NOMINATED final five (see page 114). Or rather it was, but then I scratched it out because I feared I might be letting nostalgia elbow its way past rigorous objective journalism. You see, the R50 Mini Cooper was incredibly influential on me because I owned one for several years.

RE51 DMO – red, white roof, Pepper pack, 15-inch alloys, no air con – was my first proper **evo** car and I loved it. I bought it (three years before I joined the magazine) nearly new and when they were still a relatively rare sight on the roads, which meant it attracted a huge amount of attention. In fact, for £11,000 I had a supermini that was as eye-catching as a supercar, which was quite extraordinary. Not that attention-seeking was the reason I bought it. I wanted it because it had been lauded in these very pages.

Looking back at the three issues in 2001 in which it first featured, the praise it garnered was exceptional. John Barker's summation after sampling it on the launch (issue 033): 'There isn't a higher quality, more distinctive and better value for money hatch on the market.' David Vivian then elaborated when it was group-tested in the UK in the following issue: 'It brings assets to the price point that are unprecedented: exceptional bodysheet integrity, genuine BMW build quality and finish, a dynamic signature unlike anything else currently available and, perhaps the neatest trick of all, pastiche styling that looks startlingly original.'

Now, you might have noticed that those extracts major on quality and value for money, but the driving came in for huge praise, too. In the same group test, Vivian went on to say this: 'There is the kind of composure and precision that no other supermini has or ever had. Driving the new Mini is a truly new experience.' Ultimately the 106 GTi emerged victorious in the battle for best pure, driving-on-the-limit thrills, but the Mini won the war because, as Viv wrote, 'it makes you feel good every second you spend with it'.

What sealed the deal for me, however, was seeing the Mini (an **evo** subs desk decision was made early on not to follow BMW's style guide and go all-caps MINI) in that year's eCoty, duking it out in Tuscany alongside cars like the Vanquish, Zonda, and Murciélago. It wasn't put in the shade, either, with Peter Tomalin writing 'it feels special, even in Italy and even in this company'. In the end it finished 10th out of 12, which might sound a bit hum. However, of the two cars it beat, one was the

Clio 172, which was a huge scalp to take for a car like the Mini with just 113bhp.

The engine was never much to write home about but, as with most of the car, its slightly convoluted history makes its ultimate success all the more remarkable. When the new Mini was a Rover (the R in R50) project, a K-series was pencilled-in under the bonnet, but BMW switched this for a cheap, iron-block, 1.6-litre four-cylinder that was developed with Chrysler and built in Brazil. Much of the final work on the car, including the engine, was actually done by ex-Rover employees who had been moved to Ricardo when BMW sold the company.

The body was, of course, conceived by Frank Stephenson, with the help of car design's most famous beer can (the exhaust tip was modelled on a can of Bud). I'd argue that today we are still seeing the ripples of the retro styling that was popularised with the R50. Would the Mk5 Golf GTI have brought back Mk1 nods like the golf ball gearknob and the tartan trim without the Mini? Possibly, because the New Beetle had been around since 1997, but I'd argue that the Mini did retro much more successfully. And the Beetle definitely can't take any credit for pushing the Mk5 GTI to be better to drive.

The Mini also supercharged a new wave of personalisation in cars. The ability to have a Union flag on your roof, or to stand out with some stripes, was something a bit different at the time. It's possible to argue that the phenomenal Porsche 'paint to sample' trend and the lucrative businesses that are MSO (McLaren), Ad Personam (Lamborghini) and Q (Aston Martin) all have Mini to thank for kickstarting the modern obsession with having something unique.

But while it might seem as if the Mini's influence was mostly aesthetic, it also paved a much more performance-orientated way with the original John Cooper Works GP. Launched in 2006, it was unusually hardcore for a hot hatch at the time. Of most note was the removal of the rear seats – something we would later see in two of the greatest hatches ever, the 2008 Renault Sport Mégane R26.R and 2016 Volkswagen Golf GTI Clubsport S.

Would Jean-Pascal Dauce and his small team in Dieppe have got the nod for the R26.R from the suits above if BMW hadn't done it first? Maybe not. In which case it couldn't have appeared on my final five list. So perhaps I should have kept the Mini there after all.

Henry Catchpole (photo by David Shepherd)

24 SUBARU IMPREZA RB5

When the ubiquitous hero car of early-era **evo** found its sweet spot

YOU REALLY HAD TO BE THERE, AS THEY SAY. FOR A while the Impreza was a cult; then it became almost a cultural phenomenon. It was *the* car to have, right up until the point where someone without a valid claim to the keys snatched it, whereupon you stood a small chance of getting it back thanks to the efforts of the local traffic squad... in an Impreza. Then there was the rallying, with our two much-missed stars, first Colin McRae and then Richard Burns: both world champions at the wheel of an Impreza, and a whole story in itself. Subaru's unlikely anti-hero was everywhere, including in the pages of this magazine, where more letters than before or since were written about the merits or otherwise of its continual inclusion in some form or other.

Sadly, I'm old enough to remember when the Impreza Turbo 2000 first appeared in the early '90s and didn't win every group test it was entered into. Sensationally fast, and a genre-busting bargain, it wasn't quite the polished article. It took time – subtle revisions through the middle of the decade and a sprinkling of magic marketing dust from Prodrive's increasingly successful WRC campaign – to really propel the Impreza onto that wave of near hysteria a few years later. And as that happened, so here in the UK we became increasingly aware of the forbidden fruits available in the car's home market – the specials, the lightweight ones, the faster ones. Except, as exciting as a short-geared, 8000rpm-red-lined, hardcore Impreza could be, they were never officially

developed for the UK market in the era of the original 'GC8-series' Impreza, save arguably for a few small tweaks to the 22B and, of course, eventually Prodrive's P1.

That means a later UK-spec car, with its less frenetic power delivery, more supple suspension and outstanding traction, has all the key attributes to master our peculiarly ruinous roads, and of those, the ultimate is surely the RB5. At launch the latest in a growing lineage of special editions, the 'Richard Burns 5' – named after the emergent English star who'd taken the place of Colin McRae in the Prodrive Subaru team for 1999 – added 'Blue Steel' metallic paint, Alcantara trim, PIAA spotlamps and 17-inch Speedline alloys to the revised-for-'99 Turbo 2000 recipe, which offered 218bhp and 214lb ft of torque. Moreover, an optional WR Sport upgrade from Prodrive boosted power to 237bhp, but crucially swelled torque to 258lb ft, while also adding a high-level STI rear wing, a quick-shift gear linkage and air conditioning. Total cost? A keen £27,545.

Time has in no way dulled the impact of the Impreza. It 'only' has 205/45 ZR17 rubber, but it doesn't need anything more – it has so much poise, so much traction, that so little of the fabulous, turbocharged mojo from that boxer engine is wasted. It's still heroically fast yet so involving with it, so thoroughly loveable with that thudding, thumping soundtrack. Everybody should have an Impreza in their lives at some point, it remains an essential 'evo' car.

Adam Towler (photo by Dean Smith)



23 MITSUBISHI LANCER EVOLUTION VI

The foil to Subaru's Impreza and a highlight of the homologation years

A CAR SO INFLUENTIAL, THEY NAMED A MAGAZINE after it? Well, not quite, but the Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution still had to be here, didn't it? Rarely has a car of such humble origins bristled with so much exotic, motorsport-led energy as the Evo VI.

The Evo VI was the last of the pure homologation Evos – road cars built in specific quantities to qualify for use in motorsport's Group A and N categories – and the last based on the smaller, lighter, second-generation Lancer bodyshell. Later cars were faster, and more capable still, but there's just something about this era of Evo; where rival Subaru had adopted the World Rally Car rule set for '97, freeing it from links to the road car beyond the most elementary, Mitsubishi stuck with Group A and needed the road car to employ the wide arches, towering wing and tweaks to the front air dam – because Tommi needed them, too. It was also the first Evo to be imported in some form of official capacity, after an agreement between the then 'Ralliart UK' business and Mitsubishi UK. The lineage ended with the Tommi Mäkinen Edition (pictured), often referred to as the Evo 6.5, built as a celebration of Mäkinen's 1999 championship win – his fourth in a row.

Faster, more expensive and much rarer than the common or garden Impreza Turbo 2000, the Evo has always had a more exotic air about it on these shores, exaggerated by its uncompromising design and notoriously short service intervals. You might find that

effect lessens slightly when you jump inside and note the Japanese econo-box interior, but you'll just as soon note the amazing seats, just-so driving position and, once you've churned it into life with its characteristic lazy turn of the starter, the engine.

'Fizz' and 'zing' seem to be words specifically invented to describe the Evo's 4G63 engine, which sounds thin and digital after the Impreza's flat-four but more than makes up for it with its frenzied delivery (probably a chunk more than the quoted 276bhp) and ruthlessly sharp throttle response. Everything about this car is so precise, so perfectly in focus, it demands your full concentration, whether it's the stunningly tactile shift of the five-speed 'box – the envy of most pure sports cars – or the way the Active Yaw Control gives it a sense of hyper-agility. Where the Impreza is far more traditional in its handling balance, the Evo is a freak, seemingly always able to turn in, whatever the corner entry speed, then settling into a neutral power-on stance through and out of the turn. It's a car that demands and then brings out the best in you, the driver.

Inflation dictates that today's Evo VI would be an AMG A45 rival in both price and power, but to see it thus is to sell it so very short. Even today, there isn't much that can stay with a well-driven Evo VI on a good B-road: it's a deeply function-led vehicle with the heart and soul of a true **evo** icon.

Adam Towler (photo by Aston Parrott)





**‘A TRULY
EYE-WIDENING,
BREATHTAKING,
EXPLETIVE-
INDUCING TURN
OF PACE’**



22 McLAREN MP4-12C

The modern McLaren supercar story started here

‘GAME-CHANGER.’ ASIDE FROM BEING A cliché beloved of car writers, the dictionary defines it as ‘an event, idea or procedure that effects a significant shift in the current way of doing or thinking about something’. Which makes the MP4-12C a car more worthy of the term than most.

The 12C heralded a new breed of supercar; it took new design approaches and advanced the use of composites in road car manufacture; it formed a direct rival to Maranello’s finest; and it launched a new player onto the supercar stage, albeit one with an old name and an enviable origin story.

When McLaren Automotive was founded in 2010 by Ron Dennis it was, in many ways, a start-up. One with a direct link to 20 F1 titles, a previous incarnation as McLaren Cars (formed in the mid-’80s and resulting in arguably the world’s greatest ever supercar, the F1) and a recent collab with Mercedes-Benz on the less remarkable SLR McLaren under its belt – but a start-up nonetheless.

The clean-sheet MP4-12C was its first model, the foundation stone of a family that would eventually expand into four lines: the Super Series (12C, 650S, 720S and their variants), Sports Series (570S, Artura et al), Ultimate Series (P1, Senna, etc) and GT (the, erm, GT).

The car pictured here is ‘Job One’, the first production-spec MP4-12C to be built in 2011. (It and Job Two were retained by McLaren; Job Three was the first car delivered to a customer.) Early cars suffered from reliability woes: the touch-sensitive stroke-to-enter door-catch release wouldn’t always grant entry; the touchscreen, portrait-positioned in a slim spar mid-cockpit, used McLaren’s own native IRIS operating system, which was prone to bugs and glitches. But it was innovative, ambitious, part of McLaren Automotive’s push to do something different, fresh, novel, better.

Regular door buttons were added and the software maladies calmed with updates. Harder to cure was an image of being a little aloof, unemotional in character: ‘clinical’ is the phrase often used by detractors. The car captivated some but left others slightly cold at launch, and the reputation stuck.

McLaren took steps to address this. The Ricardo-built 3.8-litre twin-turbo V8’s note was tuned to sound slightly more nuanced, less industrial. The car’s name was shortened to 12C: the original sounded a little too much like a mathematical formula and not enough like an emotional supercar. As with McLaren’s F1 cars, MP4 stood for McLaren

Project 4 – Project Four being the name of Ron Dennis’s racing organisation before it merged with McLaren in 1980 – while 12 was a number assigned to the car from McLaren’s own performance index, comparing various metrics against the car’s rivals. You can see how the ‘clinical’ jibes came about... C stood for carbon, with the 12C and subsequent models built around a carbonfibre MonoCell tub. For its 2014 facelift, it was renamed 650S, distancing itself entirely from the original label.

After five years of continuous development, the 12C/650S had evolved into the limited-run 675LT, one of the all-time greats, a savagely fast, immersively involving car it would be difficult to describe as aloof or unengaging. Its successor, the 720S, was just as ambitious, taking even greater strides forward: expressive, sinewy design language with a fighter jet canopy-style cockpit and performance to rival that of the McLaren F1. It was another game-changer.

Reputedly, McLaren’s rapid launch of models and variants stimulated Ferrari to change the way it developed cars and how frequently it updated its own line-up; the rapid release of 488, 488 Pista and F8 Tributo, for example, were considered a response to McLaren’s quick-shift launch business model – although the strategy is thought to have contributed to a steeper-than-average depreciation curve for McLaren Automotive’s products.

Regardless, driving Job One today is a remarkable experience – and one that underlines everything that makes McLaren Automotive’s subsequent cars so wonderful: clean, laser-accurate steering, a supple ride quality that betters that of many luxury cars, and a truly eye-widening, breathtaking, expletive-inducing turn of pace.

The 12C also kicked off modern-era McLaren’s customer GT racing programme, which has made its mark since, winning countless races and becoming a mainstay of the global GT racing scene.

McLaren today is not without its problems. The Artura has suffered delays and the company has been sailing in choppy financial waters, notably requiring it to sell its Norman Foster-designed HQ to raise funds in a leaseback deal in 2021.

Let’s hope that McLaren Automotive remains fighting fit, because it’s made an indelible mark on the development of the supercar species. It has, to use that phrase again, changed the game. And the 12C was one hell of a way to kick off.

James Taylor (photo by Aston Parrott)

21 BUGATTI VEYRON

It was the fastest, most powerful production car we'd ever seen

IT'S SAFE TO SAY THE BUGATTI VEYRON ONLY EXISTS because of one man, VW's mighty (and slightly scary) overlord, Ferdinand Piëch, who held an ambition to create the world's greatest and most expensive supercar. His first move was to push through VW's purchase of the then-dormant Bugatti brand. This was in 1998 (the year *evo* launched) and it allowed his engineers to set about creating what we now know as the Veyron.

Initially, Bugatti teased us with a series of concept cars, but in 2000 the EB 16/4 Veyron concept was revealed and finally showed the expectant world exactly how the new supercar would look. And, in September 2001, Piëch confirmed the Veyron would go into production at the original Bugatti base in Molsheim, France. From that moment on I made it my mission that *evo* would be among the very first magazines in the world to drive it.

The stats swirling around the Veyron reveal were nuts: Piëch had decreed the 16-cylinder, quad-turbo 'W' engine would have over 1000bhp and the car would have a top speed in excess of 400kph (249mph). It would also cost one million pounds.

For the engineers behind the project, making Piëch's dream a reality was tough. By a quirk of fate, I knew the man in charge of creating the seven-speed dual-clutch transmission at UK company Ricardo. He once explained to me the difficulty they were having making the gearbox robust enough to withstand the power of the mighty W16 engine, especially during a standing start. He organised a meeting with Piëch to suggest limiting the engine's torque in the lower gears. It was a short meeting,

apparently. Piëch gave him one of his infamous steely stares and, in no uncertain terms, explained that the Veyron would have full torque available from the moment the ignition key was turned and not to bother him again until they had a pre-production car for him to drive. There were aero issues to deal with too, as the design of the Veyron wasn't particularly aerodynamic – during a test session at Nardo, legendary supercar development driver Loris Biscocchi crashed a prototype at over 400kph.

All of this meant it wasn't until 2005 that *evo* eventually got to drive the production-ready Veyron. I was one of a handful of journalists given the golden ticket to attend the exclusive two-day launch in Sicily. First impressions were that it was beautifully constructed, more compact than I expected and sounded like no other supercar I'd experienced, with a wall of sound that hit you at start-up and never became particularly tuneful.

But it was the acceleration that left you bamboozled, as it was utterly relentless. There's always a point when acceleration in any supercar starts to tail off, but not so in the Veyron. I had the opportunity to nail the Bugatti in Sicily and it breezed past an indicated 200mph just like a Ferrari 575 might pass through 100mph. I'd never experienced anything like it before and it made the Veyron the biggest game-changer I ever experienced during my time at *evo*. And all thanks to Ferdinand Piëch's determination to create the world's fastest supercar, whatever the costs. Mission accomplished, I'd say.

Harry Metcalfe (photo by Gus Gregory)



**'IT BREEZED PAST
AN INDICATED
200MPH JUST LIKE
A FERRARI 575
MIGHT PASS
THROUGH 100MPH'**

20 PORSCHE CAYENNE TURBO

The Cayenne changed the performance car landscape forever

WE WERE JUST GETTING USED TO THE IDEA OF THE 911 engine being water-cooled rather than air-cooled when Porsche sprung another surprise on us: the company was entering the SUV market with a big 4x4. In fact it did a brilliant job of keeping the Cayenne under wraps during the development process (the board decision to build it had been taken back in 1998), only announcing it was going into production a few months before the first press drives took place in November 2002.

Porsche aficionados didn't know what to make of the Cayenne at launch. It wasn't exactly pretty, with a cumbersome look, especially so the 450bhp Turbo version with its gaping grilles. With a claimed 0-62mph time of 5.6sec and a top speed of 165mph, the on-paper performance appeared very Porsche-like, though a Ring lap-time of 8 minutes perhaps told another story.

I remember asking Porsche's head of design at the time, Harm Lagaay, why there wasn't any form of front air-dam on the Cayenne to help control lift at big speeds and he quickly replied: 'The Cayenne has a kerb weight in excess of 2 tonnes, so who cares a shit about a few kilos of front lift!' Well, quite.

But whatever enthusiasts and commentators thought about the Cayenne, customers loved it and sales proved to be even better than Porsche had dared hope. With the Cayenne S priced at £44,530 at launch (the Turbo was £68,970), it was a cheaper way into Porsche ownership and had the added bonus that you could take your family along for the ride, too.

Other manufacturers soon noticed Porsche's success with the Cayenne and responded with their own performance SUVs. Think Range Rover Sport, Audi Q5 and, a few years later, the Lamborghini Urus, which would have been unthinkable before the arrival of the Porsche SUV.

The continued success of the Cayenne meant Porsche was seriously in the money. Boxster and 911 sales were already good in the early noughties but, historically, sales of sports cars were sensitive to any economic shocks. That wasn't such an issue with SUV sales, as they were deemed to be family cars and a more essential purchase; consequently the Cayenne helped Porsche ride out the 2008-2010 financial crisis, when sports car sales slowed dramatically. It also helped that the Cayenne was heavily based on the VW Touareg, which meant development costs weren't nearly as high as they could have been had they gone it alone. With the money pouring in, Porsche had the spending power to develop more specialist versions of the 911, including the highly successful GT3 and GT3 RS models, which kept the enthusiasts happy too.

It's not often that a car is launched and proves so successful that it changes the whole perception of the brand, but that's what the Cayenne did for Porsche, despite the many doubters at the beginning. However, the Cayenne's biggest achievement is that it also changed the performance car market forever – and that makes it something truly exceptional.

Harry Metcalfe (photo by Kenny P)



19 TOYOTA GT86/GR86

First it bucked all the sports car trends, then it got honed to perfection

IT DOESN'T FEEL ALL THAT LONG AGO TOYOTA WAS the blandest of bland, the beige of beige car brands. When *evo* issue 001 was published, Carlos Sainz's Corolla was vying with Tommi Mäkinen's Mitsubishi Lancer for the WRC title, a brace of Toyota GT-Ones had taken on the Le Mans 24 Hours, and the Celica and the MR2 were mainstays in the company's line-up. But in the years to come, performance cars disappeared from Toyota brochures while, elsewhere in the range, cars like the RAV4 morphed from inventive lifestyle vehicle to anonymous SUV dross. Despite a (slightly baffling) eight-season F1 campaign from '02 to '09, Toyota was a resolutely unsporting brand. One of the biggest car companies in the world, an industry powerhouse, but for enthusiasts – nothing to see here.

So it was perhaps a surprise when the GT86, created in partnership with Subaru, sprang onto the stage in 2012. Together with its Subaru BRZ counterpart, it was a car that pushed against the tide: less power, less weight, less grip – the antithesis of the automotive arms race. Even if it wasn't embraced quite as wholeheartedly as Toyota/Subaru might have hoped in terms of sales or praise (*evo* was guarded in its reviews,

applauding the car's ethos more than its execution), it's gone on to become a cult hero.

Rightly so. Driving one today, everything that's so fundamentally right about it comes flooding back: the just-so-ness to the driving position, the pedal set-up, the control weights, the suspension with just the right amount of give for British roads, the dimensions that are just the right size.

All of the shortcomings, too: the low-rent, tacky interior (with the ubiquitous red digital clock Toyota must have bought a serious job-lot of in the 2010s), the gearchange that's notchy and knobbly from cold, and the 2-litre boxer's dearth of low-down torque. The skinny, low-rolling-resistance Michelin Primacy tyres are a double-edged sword, giving the GT86 up-on-its-toes handling at all speeds but a tendency to stumble into oversteer abruptly. With the stability control switched on, it cuts in so jarringly, nipping the brakes to straighten the car, that it's more unnerving than the tyres letting go in the first place.

They're subjective niggles rather than problems as such, but they limited the GT86's appeal; 2022's GR86 replacement fixed them



all, and morphed the 86 into a more grown-up car, a more rounded proposition, without losing its sense of fun.

More than two-thirds of the car is all-new, and while the boxer uses the same block as the GT86, it's bored out to 2.4 litres; yet it is no heavier, thanks to thinner cylinder liners, resin rocker covers and other measures. A chunk of extra peak torque arrives 3000rpm earlier, meaning steep hills no longer require a downshift or two, and rice pudding skins can no longer rest easy.

A significantly stiffer shell helps make the handling more precise, and measures such as liquid-filled engine mounts make the car more refined too: a long journey in a GT86 can leave you feeling drained but the GR86 is a much more useable car, yet equally exciting to drive at all speeds. More exciting, in fact; not for nothing did the GR86 outscore both Ferrari 296 GTB and McLaren Artura on eCoty 2022. Meanwhile the increase in weight over the GT86 is negligible and the same goes for the price (£32,495).

If, that is, you can get hold of one. Production is scheduled to end next year due to tightening European safety protocols that would

require a substantial redesign of the car's shell, which dates back to the GT86. Initially fewer than 500 examples were destined for the UK, but due to high demand Toyota GB has secured further allocations.

Spurred on by Akio Toyoda, Toyota's arch-enthusiast chairman, the Gazoo Racing division – the slightly odd name for which there isn't a direct English translation – has supported the World Endurance Championship through lean times, continues to investigate hydrogen-fuelled engines as a future power source for road and race cars, has become a dominant force in the World Rally Championship (Toyoda is currently in talks with the FIA about finding a way to support a return of Subaru to the championship too) and spawned the brilliant GR Yaris road car in the process – and the equally brilliant GR86.

Perhaps the GR86's greatest significance is that it is likely to be the world's last brand-new affordable conventional sports car to be launched. It's a cruel set of circumstances that means it's not an attainable one. Because it's a brilliant concept, and one which crystallises all that the GT86 set out to achieve.

James Taylor (photo by Aston Parrott)



18 LAMBORGHINI GALLARDO

The car that catapulted Lamborghini into the modern age

UNTIL THE GALLARDO APPEARED ON THE SCENE IN 2003, Lamborghini hadn't built an entry-level model since the Jalpa, which ceased production in 1988. You either had the buncie to buy a Diablo or a Murciélago, or you caught the bus to Maranello and sheepishly enquired about a 360 Modena or F430.

To this day I rather like that old-school, unequivocal, *la dolce vita* approach to making supercars. I also love the string of obscure V8-engined baby Lambos that sold in their handfuls throughout the '70s and '80s, but it's impossible to overstate the significance of successfully bringing the Gallardo to market. Urus aside, it defines the Audi-owned era and defies the fears of those who felt the union would never work.

The Gallardo was more attainable. Thoroughly developed. Commercially sound. And, perhaps most surprisingly, still an unabashed Ferrari-eater. Packing a 5-litre V10, fancy aluminium construction and a razor-sharp design by Luc Donckerwolke, it was and remains a stunning piece of work.

It's worth recalling that this was the era of pre-credit crunch 'cheap' money. It's no coincidence that brands such as Aston Martin and Bentley also launched affordable cars around this time, the (just) sub-£80k Vantage and similarly priced Conti GT being the poster

cars for once aristocratic marques embracing enthusiasts who had previously only dreamed of owning such elite and exotic metal.

Born from the V10-engined Lamborghini Cala concept car proposed by Giugiaro (a car I was fortunate to drive back in 1995), the Gallardo was a sharp kick up the culo for sworn enemy Ferrari, who was still fielding the ageing and perennially rather limp 360 Modena when the new Lambo arrived.

Its advantage was clear. Better looking, blessed with two more cylinders and 1.4 litres of additional swept volume yielding a 100bhp and 100lb ft advantage, the Gallardo was a blockbuster. *evo* was well established by the time it was launched, but it still felt special to be amongst the first to drive what was clearly going to be a transformational car for Lamborghini. It speaks volumes that whenever I see one – or worse, see one for sale – the Gallardo still has star quality.

All that said, it wasn't perfect. All-wheel drive made it less expressive through a corner than the equivalent Ferrari (something Lamborghini would eventually acknowledge with the rear-wheel-drive Balboni edition) but, with two decades of perspective, any slight lack of delicacy and dynamic sparkle is amply compensated for by its raw hold of the road, powertrain drama and all-round effectiveness.



Reacquaintance with the original 5-litre engine serves to remind that it's a very different beast to the 5.2-litre Audi-developed motor that followed. These days, 500bhp might seem like relatively small beer, but back in 2003 it was major-league power. Coupled to a choice of single-clutch e-gear paddleshift or regular stick-shift gearbox, the Gallardo was a car conceived and sold on the cusp of major technological change.

Compared with the way current supercars are torque-vectoring to within an inch of their lives, the early Gallardo feels less three-dimensional in terms of handling and steering response, but its lack of weight, incendiary naturally aspirated engine, hydraulic power steering and absence of contrived dynamic modes lends it a simplicity and honesty that's hugely refreshing.

We drove the e-gear car on the launch, mainly to judge it against our experience of Ferrari's F1 transmission. It stood comparison well but, as with those early Ferrari efforts, it's the one area that now betrays the Gallardo's age. By comparison, a manual, as driven here, might not capture the new-millennium zeitgeist of an early e-gear car, but the driving experience is more satisfying, celebrating the union of an epic engine and an engaging gearbox in memorable style. The clutch lasts longer, too.

As the Gallardo evolved, so it matured, and in doing so lost some of the early car's grit, the 'pre-LP' models possessing a sharper and more raucous character thanks to the 5-litre motor and its 7-8-5-2-1-10-9-4-6-3 firing order. The engine note is more feral, with a serrated shriek at the top end that the later, creamier-sounding 1-6-5-10-2-7-3-8-4-9 5.2-litre cars would only get close to in more extreme versions such as the Performante.

It's a mark of the Gallardo's success that a total of 14,022 cars were built across pre-LP and LP generations. This compares with a paltry 791 Urracos, 410 Jalpas and just 54 Silhouettes. The real killer stat is that by the time it ceased production in 2013 the Gallardo accounted for 50 per cent of all Lamborghinis built since 1963.

Dozens of different variants were built during its lifetime, from coupe and Spyder to SE, Superleggera, Balboni, Performante and Squadra Corse amongst many others. Even when facing far younger and more technologically advanced rivals such as the Ferrari 458 and McLaren 12C, the Gallardo remained a force to be reckoned with. A potent, able and intoxicating machine right to the end, it transformed Lamborghini from anachronistic throwback to contemporary contender. The rest is history.

Richard Meaden (photo by Aston Parrott)





ALPINE A110

Now more than ever, Renault's sports car proves less really is more

THERE HAVE BEEN OTHER LIGHTWEIGHT, ALUMINIUM-intensive, mid-engined sports cars during the last 25 years. The 21st-century Alpine A110 is not a revolutionary car. But it is a brilliant one – and a significant one in that its existence at all is a bit of a miracle.

Born from an initial collaboration between Renault and Caterham (then owned by Tony Fernandes) 11 years ago, and driven by the enthusiasm of then Renault COO Carlos Tavares, the reborn A110 was besieged with setbacks before it could turn a wheel: the partnership with Caterham ended predominantly because the latter didn't have enough money to continue with the project; Renault went it alone but when Tavares left the company (now heading up Stellantis, via PSA Group), CEO Carlos Ghosn (now reportedly in Lebanon, reputedly via a double-bass case) was widely considered to be rather less emotionally attached to the project. Nonetheless it made production, perhaps because it would have cost more money to cancel than conclude it by that stage, only for an early car to burn to the ground during filming for *Top Gear*, requiring a last-minute internal investigation to analyse and fix the problem.

Somehow, the A110 made it into the world – and reminded us just how special a small, lightweight, thoughtfully designed car that matches power to weight and grip can be. The Lotus Elise isn't in this countdown – it launched two years before *evo* existed – but the A110 is a more modern, more useable machine that possesses much of the same magic. 'I give a massive tip of the hat to Caterham [for the A110's engineering fundamentals], and when I do that I'm

automatically giving it to Lotus,' chief engineer David Twohig (who took on the A110 in 2014) told *evo* – many of the British engineers on the project came from Lotus, as did much of the car's philosophy.

The automotive press eulogised the car – difficult not to once you've driven one – and thus inflicted the motoring journalist's curse upon it: great reviews, disappointing sales. That said, they have steadily increased – according to Car Industry Analysis by 34 per cent in 2022, to 3600 cars worldwide – perhaps as the possibility of another small, lightweight, semi-affordable sports car being released in the future looks increasingly unlikely.

It was also nominated for European Car of the Year 2019, an unusual feat for a two-seater sports car. And Gordon Murray has one as a daily driver, it being the first car he could find to satisfactorily replace his Smart Roadster, and has benchmarked its ride and handling for the T.50.

And the A110's ride, handling and overall feel are sublime: just enough power, just enough performance, not too much weight and not too much grip or suspension stiffness (in standard, base specification, at least: other versions add poke to the 1.8-litre turbo engine shared with the Mégane RS, and aggression to the suspension, but for many the base car is the most charming driving experience). Yes, it would be nice if it had a manual gearbox and a more characterful engine, but no matter: it's a magical car. And one akin to a '60s sports car not only in the way it looks, but the way it drives too. It's a modern classic in every sense of the term.

James Taylor (photo by Aston Parrott)

**'GORDON
MURRAY HAS
BENCHMARKED
ITS RIDE AND
HANDLING FOR
THE T.50'**



16 RENAULT SPORT CLIO TROPHY

The ultimate 182 came close to hot hatch perfection

THERE'S A FORMULA FOR A GOOD HOT HATCHBACK.

It starts with the engine, which should give the sense that it's slightly too big for the car. All the best fast French hatchbacks feel like this. Some fast Fords too. Fast Volkswagens rarely have this sensation but make up for it in other ways. Being able to reach their third birthdays without zizzing like a trapped wasp, for example.

Then there's the chassis. Great hot hatchbacks are front-wheel drive, of course. Except the Sunbeam Lotus. So what you need is a front end that's absolutely nailed down, ready to dive into corners and claw out the other side with barely a hint of slip while the back end feels like it's on the same team, moving around and giving the car a sense of hip-wiggling mischief. A ride that's on the comfortable side of firm is nice too, and then you wrap the whole lot in a car that slips neatly into your everyday life.

The formula is simple, but not foolproof. For every FK8 Civic Type R there's a Toyota Corolla T Sport. For every 205 GTi there's a 206 GTi. Fortunately, plenty of hot hatches have got it right. The original Clio 172, for example, was a fine interpretation of the formula, what with that thick-wristed 2-litre engine threatening to punch a fist through one of the plastic front wings, and a grippy but playful chassis that made you want to shout 'WEEEEEEEE!' with every trip down a B-road.

But Renault Sport isn't an operation to rest on its laurels and so it kept fiddling with the Clio to extract every last drop of fun. Shorter gear ratios to make it feel faster, the Cup chassis to make it feel

sharper, and then, eventually, this. The already brilliant Clio 182 given a final, wonderful drizzle of truffle oil.

The key to the Trophy's very special set of talents is a set of Sachs remote-reservoir dampers, claimed by Renault to be ten times more expensive than regular dampers, along with 10mm shorter springs at the front, and hydraulic bump-stops. Chuck in a new set of Recaros that drop the driving position by 10mm and you've got the zenith of the Clio Renault Sport. You've got a hot hatch that pulls hard, that bangs through the gears with that typically Renault-ish rubbery-slick shift, that has a front end that seems suckered to the ground and a back end that dances so that the whole car flows down a road with a sophistication and a subtle depth of behaviour that allows this little red Renault to thrill like few others.

Of course it's not perfect; the driving position can seem a little wonky and some of the trim feels installed on a temporary basis. Plus they only made 500 (and another 50 LHD cars for Switzerland, the only place outside the UK to get the Trophy) so there isn't a lot of choice if you want one today. Some might also prefer one of the Renault Sport's other fine creations, the sensational Mégane R26.R for example, but what the Clio has on its side is size, or lack of it, which makes it unstressful to thread down narrower roads and gives it the cheeky, chirpy feeling you want from a hot hatch. In fact, it's got every element of the formula, buffed to a brilliant shine. That's why, for many, it's the greatest hot hatchback ever made.

Richard Porter (photo by Matt Howell)



THE EVO 25

**'IT FELT LIKE
THEY'D SET NEW
BENCHMARKS
FOR YEARS OR
EVEN DECADES
TO COME'**



15-13 McLaren P1, Porsche 918, LaFerrari

A trinity of hybrid hypercars unlike anything we'd seen before

HISTORY SHOULD TEACH US HUMILITY AND PROVIDE some context, even when new ground is being broken. Even the most bleeding-edge discoveries and products will one day become the norm and they'll inevitably be overtaken and relegated to being a monument of a previous era. Glorious, yes, but outgunned and out-manoeuvred. It regularly happens in our little world of the performance car. Sometimes it's a very slow process – the McLaren F1 being the best example – but it will happen.

Even so, you can forgive our excitement in 2013 when Ferrari, Porsche and McLaren all readied their new ultimate models. Augmented as never before with electric motors and weaponised with things such as torque-fill, powerful torque vectoring, complex driving modes and chassis settings, highly evolved aerodynamics and, well, knocking on the door of 1000bhp, the LaFerrari, 918 Spyder and P1 seemed so new and so alien in many ways that it felt like they'd set new benchmarks for years or even decades to come. I remember reading about the Porsche 959 and Ferrari F40 as a kid, their race to 200mph via wildly different means. This felt just as seismic and even more exciting.

The raw, shocking numbers behind these cars painted a vivid picture and McLaren's sinuous, organic P1 leapt from the canvas. The Porsche may have had a 4.6-litre V8 with a 9150rpm limiter and the promise of four-wheel drive, but its 875bhp would be straining against 1634kg even with the Weissach Package, which went as

far as to replace paint with stickers. It looked gorgeous but rather conventional, too. Ferrari's beautiful new challenger packed the most power with 950bhp and promised a dry weight of just 1255kg but it seemed to adopt the hybrid elements almost begrudgingly. There was to be no pure EV mode and the LaFerrari offered the least electric power of the three. Oh, and rumours circulated pretty quickly that Ferrari fluids were either very, very heavy, or the quoted figure was measured on some scales borrowed from JLR. Admittedly, though, the 6.2-litre V12 that ran to 9250rpm did sound rather appealing...

The P1 was different, though. It didn't want to take inspiration from the past, or use blood-red romanticism to drown out any objections over the new hybrid reality. Instead of music, it bellowed, snorted, chuffed, whined and fizzed with a heady mix of mechanical fury and electrical energy. Its 3.8-litre twin-turbocharged V8 produced 727bhp and, supplemented by an electrical motor cast into the side of the gearbox housing, a total of 903bhp could be deployed to the rear wheels.

It featured active aero and an extreme drive mode labelled Race to lower the car by 55mm and stiffen the spring rate by 300 per cent. At the same time the massive rear wing, raised to its maximum height and angle of attack, created 600kg of downforce at 161mph. Even its mirror-finish Akebono carbon-ceramic brakes seemed to raise the bar in alien ways. The P1 just seemed wilder,



more extreme, more single-minded and more confident in so many areas. Then reports emerged from the first drives on the Abu Dhabi racetrack. It was a car like no other that had gone before. The devil of the 'Holy Trinity' truly was other-worldly.

Well, that's great. But we could hardly leave it there, all theory and impressions gleaned from a highly orchestrated launch. So instead we arranged for a P1 and Porsche 918 Spyder to be delivered to Anglesey race circuit for lap times and driving on the fantastic roads nearby (*evo* 200). The Ferrari would arrive later and, as it was a customer car, time would be fleeting and the driving slightly more restricted. Ferrari was not happy, of course. A call from the panicked owner saying he'd never be able to buy another new Ferrari if we published a lap time did rather upset plans. Maybe they had something to hide...

The theatre of the P1 slowly adopting its attack position in the Anglesey pitlane didn't disappoint. Is there a more aggressive and dramatic supercar silhouette than a P1 with suspension dropped and rear wing raised? And it quickly claimed its first victim as then *evo* videographer Sam Riley got a little too close when trying to capture details of its elegant rear lights and the P1's exhaust melted his favourite jacket and set fire to his hair. Literally.

I wanted the full shock and awe and so immediately drove in Race mode and, honestly, it was mildly disappointing. McLaren's maddest creation felt and sounded suitably demonic but having read and seen so much about how the P1 completely changed the game, I suppose it was impossible to live up to the hype. It felt like a McLaren. Elevated, certainly, but the sensations were familiar, the torque-fill still couldn't quite fill the gaps in the delivery of a twin-turbocharged V8 delivering 191bhp per litre and, at Anglesey

at least, you couldn't get to that 600kg of downforce easily and so instead felt a little reined-in by the mechanical grip. I remember rolling into the pitlane and asking, 'So, you're sure it's in full-everything mode?'

However, once I accepted that the P1 was, after all, just a car (it had been written about as if a god) it was simply fantastic. And all the better for being just a car. You could tweak and slide it like a car, you could hear all its strange, industrial noises in such raw detail and most of all you could feel exactly what it was doing at all times. Just like the very best cars. The future suddenly seemed a lot like the present. Only faster. How could the 918 Spyder compete? Heavier, less powerful, lacking the purity of the P1 due to its four-wheel drive. A rare misstep from Porsche?

The answer was clear almost immediately. The quality of the engineering beneath the skin of the 918 Spyder seeps through into the art of execution in everything you touch, everything that connects you to the driving experience. It is just a beautiful thing to behold in every sense. Moreover, it does things that do feel new and alien, despite the more classical aesthetic. The torque is simply outrageous. Open the throttle at, say, 2000rpm in sixth gear and the Porsche snaps your head against the seat-back. Suddenly, the much bigger battery pack and the two electric motors make sense. The 918 feels raw and analogue thanks to its race-derived and rev-hungry 4.6-litre V8 (producing 570bhp), but it hits low-down like a big-block running on alcohol.

The steering is heavier and much more deliberate than the P1's but still relays so much information, the PDK 'box expertly balances mechanical connection with phenomenal speed, and although the car is four-wheel drive the balance is incredibly natural and easy





to exploit. It feels so absurdly fast, sounds like a full-on race car and has a superpowered feeling to everything it does. You'd never believe this is Porsche's first application of hybrid technology for a performance car. The depth of polish is mind-blowing. The Spyder easily stands toe-to-toe with the P1 and on the road it feels faster, more secure and every bit as exciting.

The LaFerrari is another animal again. Swing open the door and see how far it cuts into the narrow carbon tub. The seats are fixed, with an adjustable pedal box, a tangible marker of Ferrari's obsession to make the car as small and light as possible. Inside, it's pure drama and pure Ferrari. The steering wheel is, well, square... but it feels oddly right. Every structure and surface feels minimalist but lovingly crafted and the canopy puts you in mind of Le Mans. The engine is more F1, though. The good F1. So sharp, so freakishly, endlessly powerful that, as Dickie Meaden said when he first experienced it in Italy (evo 197), 'it owns your senses'. Unlike in the Porsche and McLaren, the electrical assistance – here driving the differential directly – is imperceptible. You'd swear it's just all V12 all of the time.

My most indelible memory of the LaFerrari is the traction. How can a rear-drive car with 950bhp hook up so cleanly? At first you tiptoe at an apex, fearful of reprisal, but very quickly the brain

recalibrates and instead of being timid you set the engine free on a stupefying journey to 9250rpm. It's an outrageous, preternatural experience. Even better is that Ferrari's ability to create ultra-precise, highly responsive chassis that retain blissfully progressive on-limit handling is still there. The noise, performance and sharpness of the whole experience is deeply intimidating, yet the dynamics are actually a bit of a breeze. How do they do that? One thing was for sure, Ferrari had nothing to hide. The LaFerrari was sensational.

Each of these cars deserves to be celebrated. The McLaren's aero obsession predicted the future of the supercar, the Porsche's sheer firepower and torque vectoring provided thrilling evidence of the advantages of electric motors and the LaFerrari demonstrated how taking inspiration from the past could create a wildly exciting new experience aided by a supplementary power source. Despite all arriving at very similar performance, these three hypercars have unique characters and provide distinct driving experiences. Before we drove the 918 Spyder its project leader, Dr Frank-Steffen Walliser, simply said: 'Forget the past, forget the future. Just drive the car.' The intimation being that the technology was almost incidental when set against the completeness of the driving experience. He was right. We await a pure EV for which that statement applies.

Jethro Bovingdon (photos by Dean Smith)



**‘AS TIME GOES ON
IT ONLY SEEMS
MORE PERFECTLY
CONCEIVED AND
EXECUTED’**

12 BMW M3 (E46)

M division's most celebrated model at its zenith

THE E46-GENERATION BMW M3 FIRST appeared on the cover of this magazine for issue 024. A simple side profile of the car finished in Imola Red, set against a black background. Nobody had driven the car at this point but there was already a big buzz surrounding BMW's new interpretation of its most celebrated model. 'Why this will be the best driver's car BMW has ever built' the cover proclaimed, unequivocally. Pretty bold stuff, but there are many who would agree with the sentiment to this day.

That's the thing about this car. As time goes on it only seems more perfectly conceived and executed. The E46 M3 is the right size, it has the right engine with the right amount of power, it looks right – clean and aggressive but subtle, too – it sounds right, the gearbox is (mostly) right, it has the right amount of technology and driver aids. We live in a complex world but there are some undisputed truths, and one of them is that the E46 BMW M3 is just *right*. On every level. It's an eternal benchmark and a moment in time just like, say, a Peugeot 205 GTI or an original Impreza Turbo or Porsche 997 GT3.

So much so, that little bits of E46 will have seeped into your brain. Even if you've never been anywhere near one. You don't have to be an expert to know, for example, that the SMG paddleshift 'box is A Very Bad Thing. That should you ever go looking for one you'd fervently seek out a car wearing 18-inch wheels instead of the near-ubiquitous 19s, which eroded the dynamic polish. You remember that the rear quarter-lights open a few degrees electrically and that, once they're pushed out, the sharp, metallic sounds of the 338bhp 3.2-litre straight-six are amplified and enhanced all the way to 8000rpm. You probably know that the E46 M3 was the first M-division car with the Variable M Differential Lock, too.

So why didn't it win eCoty in 2001? Well, it sort of did. By a pretty big margin it saw off the Lamborghini Murciélago, Ruf R Turbo, Lotus Elise S2, Aston Martin Vanquish, TVR Tamora and many more. On roads draped across the hills of Tuscany the M3 was simply fabulous, and by now we knew so much more about it. The joys of that free-spinning straight-six; the sublime balance of the chassis and the way the clever diff made it so easy to dictate the car's stance under power; the purity of the whole experience. Only a wedge of carbonfibre crammed with leather, Alcantara, titanium and AMG's finest V12 thwarted a cruise to the eCoty title. Placing second behind a Pagani Zonda C12-S is a victory in my book.

Downsides? An oddly elevated driving position,

a fat, squishy steering wheel, clumsy throttle programming in Sport mode (luckily it didn't change anything else so could be left well alone) and the distinctive vertical bounce that it exhibited over difficult surfaces. Oh, and the woeful brakes. Great feel and progression... for one big stop. How could they get this so wrong? Brakes were an M division blind spot for many years and the only real solution was the excellent upgrade offered by AP Racing. Try finding a CSL without it...

Ah yes, the CSL. Lighter, more powerful, breathing through the famous carbonfibre airbox, fitted with those gorgeous 19-inch rims and fixed-back seats and going as far as to have a carbonfibre roof. With the kicked-up rear bootlid and deeply cool round inlet on the front bumper, the CSL looks simply stunning. Incredibly, it's 110kg lighter than the standard car, too. It should have been an instant icon. Yet it fell a little flat. Hampered by the aforementioned SMG gearbox, fitted with extreme Michelin Pilot Sport Cup tyres that provided lots of grip but very little feel (and no wet-weather security whatsoever) and in the context of the second-generation Porsche 996 GT3, the CSL failed to meet our lofty expectations. At eCoty in 2003 it finished a rather humbling sixth. We've driven CSLs since and our view has softened, but the gearbox is still very hard to forgive.

Luckily things were put right with the M3 CS. It took much of the goodness of the CSL, including the revised steering rack, and melded it with the standard M3's core attributes. And, of course, you could specify a six-speed manual. Drive a CS today and it perhaps feels more special than ever. The engine is sublime. It has wonderful throttle response and is so linear, yet the journey to the 8000rpm cut-out has distinct phases characterised by new noises and the ever-sharpening sense of power. Compared to the digitised, synthesised sounds and deliveries we're used to today, it's a whole new world of excitement. It's a bit of a shock what we've now accepted as the norm when this level of mechanical joy was readily available over 20 years ago. The slow drip-drip-drip of 'progress' exposed in one lunge into the red.

The CS manages to feel highly strung and on the edge but also entirely intuitive and easy to drive. As with the standard E46 M3, it's an instinctive process. Oh man, the brakes really are crappy, though. And the gearbox isn't the greatest ever fitted to a sports car. Overall though, it's a stunning, timeless experience. And one that's getting ever more precious.

Jethro Bovingdon (photo by Matt Howell)

11 AUDI R8

The junior supercar that redefined the way the world saw Audi

SCIENCE SAYS SMELL IS ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL memory-joggers: the bits of the brain that process scents are also strongly linked to memory and emotion. Settling into a first-generation Audi R8's leather-and-aluminium cockpit instantly time-hops me back a decade to a past life, pre-magazine journalism, as a driving experience instructor.

Much of it involved passengering in supercars, of varying ages and conditions, doing my best to make sure drivers looked after the cars and enjoyed themselves for three or four laps of an airfield or test circuit. A pinch-myself dream job in many respects, stressful work in others, partly depending on what car you were in for the day: a shift in a Ferrari 360 Modena was going to be a fraught one, possibly catching lift-off oversteer from the passenger seat; a day in a Lamborghini Gallardo or Murciélago would leave you with ringing ears and a bad case of 'Lamborghini back'.

But a day in an Audi R8, that was a dream ticket. World's comfiest seats; brakes so powerful that no customer ever approached a corner too fast; surefooted, grippy handling. And an absolute hoot to drive on the rare times I was lucky enough to get behind the wheel myself to give a passenger ride or to get fuel.

The world was blown away by the R8 at its launch in 2007. An elegant but futuristic machine – its design staying remarkably true to the 2003 Le Mans quattro concept that inspired it – and a character that was part high-tech, part old-school sports car. Not least thanks to its open-gate, *click-clack* gearchange, which

demands concentration across the gate (another instructor once saw that a customer was about to mis-shift from second to first and so jammed his fingers in the slot to save the car – he was more dedicated than me) but is hugely satisfying to operate.

The R8's aluminium monocoque construction was twinned with the Lamborghini Gallardo, and later models shared its V10 too, but it's the 4.2-litre V8 that feels the more complete, rounded car today.

I remember it felt impossibly fast when I first instructed in one, revisiting it today, it doesn't feel overly fast by modern, warped, warp-speed standards. It certainly doesn't feel slow, mind, and with such progressive, turbo-free power delivery, you can be ultra-precise as you feed the throttle in. Lovely sound, too. And ride quality, via the switchable electronic dampers.

The Mk2 R8, released in 2015 and to end production imminently, is V10 only and more of a full-blown supercar – and it's still brilliant. But the original straddled the line between sports car and supercar in a way few cars have since, and poised a genuine alternative to the Porsche 911. Still does.

A few years after its launch, I was blown away too, even from the passenger seat, and so were the customers who drove it: by its speed, its grip, its agility. 'I never expected this from an Audi,' was nearly everyone's comment. Nor did the wider world: the R8 redefined its perception of Audi just as comprehensively as the Quattro years before, and gave it an all-time classic sports car to boot.

James Taylor (photo by Matt Vosper)



10 HONDA CIVIC TYPE R (FK8)

The hot hatch with engineering obsession on a different level

PREVIOUS TYPE R CIVICS HAD BEEN BRILLIANT IN parts, offering glimpses of the car it could be, and in the awesome FK8 it all came together. It was surreally good: astonishingly capable, wonderfully tactile and blisteringly quick.

Honda had persisted with its beloved naturally aspirated VTEC engine in the Civic Type R for a generation longer than was competitive, but the FK8, launched in 2017, benefited from the second development of its 2-litre turbocharged 'four', which delivered all the torque of its rivals and the character and top-end performance of a high-revving, naturally aspirated engine. It made 316bhp and a gutsy 295lb ft, and the FK8's front-drive chassis had the composure and capacity to deploy every last drop. Yet the first thing you notice about this Civic's dynamics is the remarkably supple ride. There's a mere band of low-profile rubber wrapped around each web-like 20-inch alloy, but it deals with everything a difficult road can throw at it, from low-speed lumpiness to high-speed crests and compressions. It's a car of exceptional focus yet somehow not at the expense of everyday usability.

The facelifted FK8 provided many supercar-bothering moments on eCoty 2020, where it harried the Huracán Evo, wrong-footed the Ferrari F8 Tributo and left the GR Yaris in its wake, but my most vivid memory of it is from a few months later, on the B6277, heading to Alston for a fast hatch group test (*evo* 288). It's not a road I know well, full of deceptive corners and tricky surfaces, but the Civic nailed every apex and made me feel like a local road rally expert. I was staggered at how tirelessly the front end found apex

after apex with absolute precision and no corruption from torque or the limited-slip diff, the suspension shrugging off a surface that bamboozled lesser cars.

And all the while I was locked into place by a superb seat, calmly conducting progress, enjoying the flow of feedback from the steering, the snappy, engineered feel of the gearshift and the outstanding brake feel. Especially the brake feel, actually. The performance of the brakes was fabulous but it was the brilliance of the pedal feel – the lack of dead travel, the perfect weighting, the precision with which you could lean into it – that made me realise how skilled the FK8 development team was.

I spoke to Hideki Kakinuma, FK8 project lead, and asked him the same question I'd asked a number top engineers: if you could lose 25kg from anywhere in your car, where would it be? His answer was as thoughtful as you'd expect: 'The wheels, roof and overhangs; they are quite far away from the centre of gravity and have a very high influence on dynamic behaviour. So maybe a carbon roof or bumper beams?'

The FK8 reeks of this obsessive level of engineering. It's the sort of mindset that produces Porsche's best driver's cars, and I don't think it's a stretch to call the FK8 Civic Type R the 911 GT3 of hatchbacks, and at an astonishingly good price. A steal, in fact. For me, there's no catch, but others just can't get past the overblown styling. It's not to my taste either, but when everything else the car does is so special, so satisfying, I'm more than prepared to look beyond it.

John Barker (photo by Aston Parrott)





9 TVR TUSCAN

When TVR raised its game and went toe-to-toe with the establishment

TVR WAS ALREADY RIDING HIGH WHEN EVO WAS launched. The glorious Griffith had won our hearts, the Chimaera was selling in its thousands and the wild Cerbera, complete with in-house 'AJP8' (later Speed Eight) engine, signified the company's growing ambitions.

We'd enjoyed all of them during the latter years of *Performance Car*, so it was natural TVRs should feature regularly in the pages of our new baby. Peter Wheeler's relationship with the motoring press was famously prickly, but thanks to the emollient efforts of TVR's then PR man, Ben Samuelson, we managed to navigate our way through those turbulent waters sufficiently to find ourselves behind the wheel of pretty much every new car to emerge from Blackpool. They were special times.

Why the Tuscan and not the Sagaris or T350 for this Top 25? Because the Tuscan felt like a real watershed moment. It was significant. A statement car in looks and deeds.

Wheeler never apologised for any of his cars, so it would be wrong to say this was the company's first 'no excuses' effort, but everything about it was aimed at establishing TVR in a market dominated by AMG, BMW M and Porsche. Not to outsell them, but to outperform them and provide enthusiasts with a characterful and exciting alternative they could be proud to own.

Of course, TVR did things its own way. Being British and it being the early noughties, there was inevitably some (allegedly) tongue-in-cheek 'fight them on the beaches' jingoism. It suited the cars and the moment, but deep down it was Wheeler's passion for engineering that drove product evolution and development.

The Tuscan was a thoughtfully conceived car. One that looked sensational and went like stink, but reflected Wheeler's wish to tone things down a bit compared to the feral Cerbera. The *l-o-n-g* travel throttle served as a very effective traction control (no ABS or ESC, remember) and the softer suspension set-up was intended to further ensure the Tuscan didn't bite its owners so readily. It was a fresh take on the classic Griff and Chimaera recipe and catnip for people like us.

Before writing this retrospective, I re-read my original Tuscan first drive from the June 2000 issue. Half expecting it to be light on criticism and generous with British bonhomie, I was pleasantly surprised to find I was very honest about its shortcomings. Most

notably the strange lack of synchronisation between the firm front end and softer, traction-friendly rear. I also marked down power-assisted steering that was weighty but sharp and seemed to exacerbate the lack of unison between the responsive front end and roll-limited rear. It was a wonderful machine, but dynamically out of kilter.

That took some courage, because unlike the faceless bosses of huge multinational car companies, Wheeler was TVR. And because the cars – and particularly the Tuscan – were very much built to his taste, you knew that in criticising the car you were criticising him. Which was tough, because although a formidable character he was also a quietly spoken, disarmingly honest and thoroughly decent bloke.

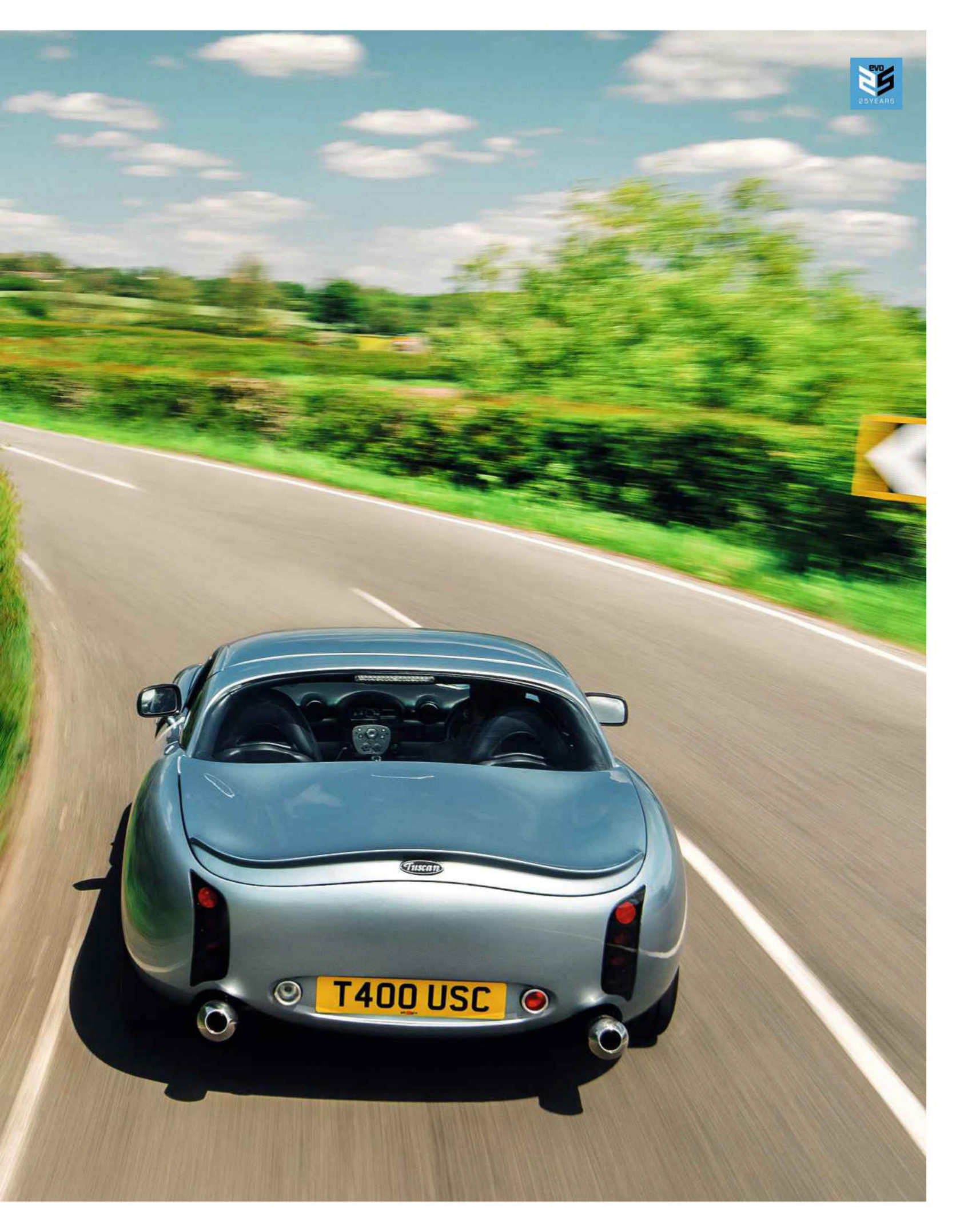
Looking back, we were both right. The subsequent Red Rose upgrade really dialled in the way the Tuscan drove, but the fundamentals of the car that Wheeler laid down remain amongst the best modern interpretations of the classic front-engined rear-drive sports car. From the extraordinary styling and steampunk brass instrument binnacle (complete with in-house-made LCD display) to the snorting 4-litre Speed Six engine, the Tuscan was a car that seduced and adrenalinised you in equal measure. It was the embodiment of evo's 'Thrill of Driving' mantra.

If I close my eyes, I can still feel the control weights and rifle-bolt gearshift, not to mention the glorious, rorty, long-legged delivery of that stonking engine. With 360bhp and weighing just 1100kg it was a latter-day E-type Jag or DB5 Aston, but a hundred times better to drive. And to think it cost £40k. For context, a 996 Carrera was £65k.

Today it seems inconceivable that a small, independent, free-spirited sports car maker could command such presence. It's certainly ironic that the faster and more aloof today's high-performance cars become, so we yearn for a car very much like the Tuscan: pure, light, potent and built upon the premise of prioritising on-road enjoyment. Peter, you were right...

For all these reasons and many more, the Tuscan ranks amongst the most enjoyable and fondly remembered cars I've ever driven. Flawed for sure and certainly not for everyone, it possessed an authenticity and, perhaps most crucially, attainability that was lost to all of us when TVR ceased trading. The last true sports car? I think it just might be.

Richard Meaden (photo by Aston Parrott)



8 FORD GT

Few supercars have allowed such easy access to their performance

IT WOULD BE EASY TO BELIEVE THAT THE FORD GT, evo Car of the Year 2005, got the win partly because it was so much better than we were expecting. After all, Ford hadn't built a proper supercar since, well, the GT40, and this pastiche of that legendary car was bigger, heavier and had been developed in the US, which, to be polite, wasn't sitting on an impressive supercar-making CV. But that would be an entirely false assumption. Truth was, the Ford GT was a simply sublime driving experience, a supercar with enormous, thrilling performance, a brilliant chassis and terrific feel.

Jethro Bovingdon had been to the launch in the US and came back enthused, insisting that we include it in eCoty. Ford delivered and one by one we fell under its spell. Yes, we were on the Route Napoléon, but its brilliance would have been obvious on the North Circular.

I still remember hopping in the first time, being unimpressed with the plasticky seats' fake eyelets, almost scalping myself when I closed the door, but then very quickly finding everything very much to my taste, from the lusty, smooth and tractable 550bhp V8 to the light clutch, precise throttle and snickety Ricardo six-speed manual. Dynamically, it got off on the right foot with superb ride quality, then added tactile, perfectly weighted steering and fluent handling.

Despite its lack of traction control and the instant, supercharged torque, it wasn't intimidating. The Ferrari F430 we had along was c150kg lighter and more compact but also edgier. A small leap of faith was required to unhook its rear. The big Ford was much friendlier and more biddable, prompting us to describe it as a 550bhp Elise.

I haven't driven another supercar that allows such easy access to its performance and which transitions so naturally into power oversteer and back again. With hindsight, if you drop a supercharged V8 that delivers 500lb ft of torque at 2000rpm into the back of a supercar that doesn't have traction control, you either have to make its rear grip virtually undefeatable or do the opposite, as Ford did, and make its handling supremely progressive.

Two, maybe three times a year, you get into a car, drive it just a little way down the road and recognise beyond all doubt that you are at the wheel of something remarkable. You never forget the moment. In my 2005 eCoty notes I wrote: 'Within a couple of hundred yards I knew it was something really special. Half a dozen corners later I knew it was the winner. In more than 15 years that's never happened to me before.' Hasn't happened since, either.

John Barker





FORD FOCUS (Mk1)

When a humble Ford set a new benchmark for hatch dynamics

THERE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN UNASSUMING, EVERYDAY cars that are nice to drive. Italian and French companies used to be especially good at this, but there was always a sense that the spring in the step of a Fiat Brava or Peugeot 306 was a happy accident because its creators liked driving. This wasn't the sort of thing Ford did. Ford was data-driven, furiously analysing and researching and then relentlessly paring costs. Hence the apocryphal story that a standard Ford job interview question was: 'What do we make here?' Successful candidates were the ones who replied 'money'.

Of course, Ford engineers knew that rival cars were more fun to drive. When they were developing the Mk3 Fiesta they studied the Peugeot 205 to discover its secrets, even filming one with slo-mo cameras to dissect the nuances of its delightful handling. But then carefully researched practicalities like cheap servicing and light steering got in the way and the '89 Fiesta arrived as a woolly sluggard, beaten only for dreariness by the all-new Escort of the following year. Yet these grey mush machines did us a favour because they attracted such lukewarm response that Ford of Europe, under newly appointed chief engineer Richard Parry-Jones, decided it could do better. Making cars that were nice to drive became an official corporate

position, based on Parry-Jones's belief that even less-enthusiastic customers felt more confident and therefore happier in a car that was crisp and responsive. This led to the Mondeo of 1993, then the Ka, the Puma and finally, in the year **evo** was born, the pinnacle of Ford's let's-not-be-crap policy: the Mk1 Focus.

The first shock of the Focus was the way it looked. This was a staggeringly bold bit of work from a company that used to think green bumper piping was brave. Better yet, the driving experience was as sharp as the looks. One of the keys was the rear suspension, a trailing-arm set-up with upper and lower lateral links labelled 'Control Blade' by Ford. The result was the Focus drove beautifully with a firm but supple ride, crisp turn-in and a lovely, clean feeling to the steering. Rumour was that Lotus had some early input into the chassis and you could believe from its manners that the Focus had spent a little time in Norfolk. Equally impressive was the sense that all the controls had been carefully tuned to demand an equal effort, giving the car that sense of polished integrity you usually got only from a Porsche or a BMW. But the Focus wasn't a Porsche or a BMW, or even a Fiat or a Peugeot. It was a Ford. And at the time it was a revelation.

Richard Porter (photo by Olgun Kordal)





ASTON MARTIN V12 VANQUISH

When Aston proved it could take on the world's best

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, ASTON MARTIN WAS BUILDING tiny handfuls of glorious but positively Jurassic V-car behemoths in Newport Pagnell. Sure, the Jaguar-based DB7, being built in rather larger numbers down the road in Bloxham, had provided a financial lifeline, but something bold, entirely new and entirely Aston was needed to prove that the winged badge had a future.

It was at the 1998 Detroit Auto Show that Jac Nasser, head of parent company Ford, revealed a startlingly handsome, front-engined supercar concept called Project Vantage. It had been styled by Ian Callum, it featured Aston Martin's first V12 engine, and it was received with something approaching rapture. Now all they had to do was put it into production.

The birth was somewhat protracted, partly because it coincided with the arrival of new CEO Ulrich Bez, who had his own ideas about some of the details. We got our first look at the production car, now renamed Vanquish, in the late summer of 2000, but it would be almost another year before **evo** and others drove the finished article. In the meantime, the DB7 Vantage with a slightly milder version of the Vanquish's V12 had been launched, which kind of stole some of the new model's thunder. Still, in the September 2001 issue of **evo**,

Dickie Meaden drove the new Aston flagship – and loved it. 'A front-engined supercar that redefines the breed,' was his conclusion.

With a radical (Lotus-developed) platform that combined extruded and bonded aluminium with composites, a six-speed paddleshift transmission (Aston's first) and a more vocal, 460bhp version of the DB7's V12, all wrapped in super-plastic-formed aluminium panels, the Vanquish was a giant leap forward for Aston Martin and the car to take the fight to Ferrari's 550 and 575M Maranello.

It wasn't perfect. The automated manual transmission was a little clunky and ponderous, especially in the earliest examples. That would be improved over the years, markedly so when the 520bhp 'S' version was launched in 2004, also heralding tighter suspension damping, more powerful brakes and a pleasingly updated fascia.

But right from the start the fundamentals were all in place. The construction was genuinely innovative and would lead directly to the VH platform that would underpin an entire generation of Astons, starting with 2004's DB9. Crucially, it gave a stiff and relatively lightweight platform for the suspension to work from, that suspension in turn providing GT levels of comfort with real composure.

The transmission, despite its teething problems, was another step

**'YOU ONLY HAD TO LOOK
AT IT TO BE SEDUCED.
ITS CHARISMA REMAINS
UNDIMMED TODAY'**

into the modern age for Aston, and the 5.9-litre V12 engine was simply glorious. Yes, it had its origins at Ford, but it was – and would remain – unique to Aston Martin. Indeed it would serve for an entire era of both road and race cars, including the Le Mans class-winning DBR9. But it has seldom sounded better than in the Vanquish.

That soundtrack was undoubtedly one of things that made driving a Vanquish such a very rich and rewarding experience. When the full orchestral effect hit at around 5000rpm even contemporary Ferraris struggled to match it. And the chassis' blend of suppleness with control – combined with bags of feedback to build the driver's confidence – would always be something to savour.

But you only had to look at it to be seduced. Ian Callum seemed to have an instinctive feel for reinterpreting classic Aston styling cues for the modern age. He'd pulled off a minor miracle in reworking a stillborn Jag as the DB7, but the Vanquish was in a different league. This time he'd taken his inspiration from the DB4 GT Zagato. You can see the ghost of that car in the Vanquish's broad, aggressively sculpted grille, the flow of the wings and the exaggerated rear haunches. Its charisma remains undimmed today. Just like certain people, some cars have presence: something about the way they hold themselves

draws your attention and won't let go. The Vanquish is like that.

Had the Vanquish not been such a game-changer, had it not been so warmly received, both by Aston enthusiasts and crucially by Ford management when Project Vantage was revealed back in 1998, then it's questionable whether the investment in Gaydon and the raft of new 'VH' models that followed would have happened at all. Had it been another dinosaur, it could have been game over.

Vanquish was very far from a dinosaur. It heralded a confident new design language; it ushered in new materials and construction methods; it put Aston Martin back at the forefront of high-performance cars, and it showed that Aston could lead and innovate.

If the DB4 of 1958 signalled the start of Aston's original golden era, the Vanquish kick-started a new golden age that would see Gaydon-built cars, led by DB9 and Vantage, achieve unprecedented sales. Quite simply, it sparked the most successful period in the marque's history, and for that Aston fans – and really anyone who enjoys the rich tapestry of performance cars – should be very grateful.

Peter Tomalin (photo by Jordan Butters)

The Vanquish S pictured is currently for sale at nicholasmee.co.uk



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THE THRILL OF DRIVING

evo





5

RENAULT SPORT MÉGANE R26.R

For much of the last 25 years, Renault ruled the hot hatch world. The ultimate expression of its brilliance, the R26.R

by ADAM TOWLER PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT



FUNNY, ISN'T IT, HOW HOT HATCHES have got very serious indeed in recent years – to the point where anything with less than 300bhp and an assortment of wings, vents and aerodynamic flicks seems distinctly undernourished.

Given all of that, when looking back at 2008's Renault Sport Mégane R26.R, you could be forgiven for wondering why those of us who were there still refer to it with such reverence. After all, it musters just 227bhp,

which doesn't even qualify as warm these days for a C-segment hatchback, and then there's its Nürburgring lap time, the first occasion such a claim had really been applied in a marketing sense to a hot hatchback. Eight minutes and seventeen seconds, you'll recall; impressive at the time, but barely breaking into the class top ten these days, given that the new Honda Civic Type R can lap in potentially under 7min 40 (adjusted for the older configuration used in 2008) complete with a comfortable and well-specified interior and 'normal' tyres.

In an era of excess, the R's French-hire-car-meets-recce-car simple functionality, whatever the now-rather-naive unpainted carbon bonnet and graphics might want to suggest, feels almost effete. But it's precisely that same simplicity that's the clue to its genius, because the R26.R is an extraordinarily thorough engineering exercise by a team of engineers, designers and test drivers at the very top of their game. This is the car that will always define the Renault Sport years of the early 21st century, when the team from Les Ulis ruled the world.

It takes dedication, inventiveness and extreme powers of persuasion at senior manager level to remove 125kg from the weight of a fully homologated hatchback, but that's exactly what Renault Sport achieved with the R, and it's the foundation of its mastery.

To do so, the R goes radical. Firstly, it crosses the beams of the hatchback world by losing the rear seats, willingly opening itself up to ridicule from some and also to inevitable and more direct comparison with far more exotic, purely two-seat machinery.

From there, it removes not only the front seats, replacing them with pure buckets from Sabelt, but also ditches the inertia-reel belts for four-point harnesses, saving 25kg. The bonnet is carbonfibre, the wheels lighter, but then there's the car's pièce de résistance: the polycarbonate rear and rear-side windows. Nothing says 'serious' like the replacement of glass with plastic...

The rest of the weight saving was achieved by parsimony with the specification list. The door mirrors are adjusted with a little stick, not electrically; there is no passenger's airbag, or curtain bags; no front fog lights in the Mégane's

Right: weight-saving measures included ditching the rear seats, though some of the saving was negated if you went for the half roll-cage, a £700 option that also added a set of Toyo 888 semi-slicks





blocky front bumper, and perhaps the biggest statement of all, not even a radio. What the eye can't see is the removal of various pieces of sound-deadening material as well.

Mechanically, there were new grooved brake discs and a shorter throw for the gearlever, but the snorty, peculiarly nasal-sounding turbocharged in-line four was left unchanged, save from doing without the extra grams of its usual, stylised plastic engine cover under the bonnet.

For the full R experience there were two important options. A further £700 bought the substantial half roll-cage that occupies the space where the rear seats once were, and was combined with a set of Toyo 888 semi-slick, but road-legal, rubber that replaced the standard-fit Michelin Pilot Sports. A further £2250 secured a titanium exhaust, saving further weight, giving the car a hard, breathy exhaust note, and turning a seared shade of blue with the application of some heat. Lovely.

You sit a little high in the R, but thanks to plenty of reach adjustment of the steering wheel (for a moment I couldn't recall if Renault Sport had ditched that too like they did

with the contemporary Clio 200 Cup, but thankfully not) the driving position is good. A glance around reveals a simple, rather plasticky interior, but one that also provokes a pang of nostalgia for Renault's inventive and idiosyncratic design of the period, particularly compared with the blandness of more recent offerings.

If you're turning out of a junction or driveway to get going you'll feel the gentle interventions of the torque-sensing limited-slip differential, but once up to cruising speed the R is oddly serene. Sure, the tyres constantly sing as though the wheel bearings are shot, and a sporadic gunfire of gravel pings on the less-insulated underside, but the R driver learns to compartmentalise this through the brain's own noise-cancelling software, and it's the sheer delicacy and fluidity of the car that astounds.

Far from being an overly aggressive, stiff-riding track refugee, the R is brilliantly at home on a B-road. Thanks to the significant weight saving, the engineers were able to actually reduce the spring rates, and while the damping deals with anything that's thrown at it decisively and in short order, the



**‘THE POISE AND
AGILITY STILL
ASTOUND, ALL
THESE YEARS
LATER’**



edges of the ride are buttery smooth. The steering, despite being electrically assisted, is beautifully subtle, precise and amazingly communicative, and gentle pressure on the wheel can adjust your chosen line down to the last millimetre. It's soon clear that it's a car that can be driven with the fingertips, not muscled, the same applying to the gearlever, which can negotiate the gate with the lightest of touches.

You'll want to go faster, of course. It goads you, constantly. And then you'll go faster still, and faster, and soon find that it covers ground as rapidly as anything else you can think of, in part because it feels like there's no combination of corner and road surface that could ever catch it out. The poise and agility still astound, all these years later, and once you're into a corner and on the power the diff's intervention means the car's nose actually tightens, even when you feel like you must surely be near the limit of grip. Ultimately, while those limits seem beyond reach on the public road, the R doesn't suffer from the modern performance car disease of operating too far within itself, because the driving experience at any speed is so rich and rewarding.

The engine plays a supporting role. Its hearty torque delivery combines with that lighter kerb weight to give the R a deliciously effortless way of accruing speed, but flat-out there's no denying it lacks the fireworks we've become accustomed to. It matters not one jot. The motor is an enabler to everything else, and that's more than enough.

Yet for all the hyperbole, the simple, now unfathomable truth is that the R26.R was a sales disaster. Despite the plaudits from the motoring press, including fourth overall at *evo* Car of the Year 2008, Renault UK was left with a stock of unsold cars, eventually disposing of a number to the Swiss market. Maybe the market thought it was expensive at £23,815 (or £26,765 fully specced); maybe the concept of a two-seat hatch was yet to be fully appreciated. Whatever. That just makes it all the more painful – for those of us who don't own one, at least – that values for low-mileage examples are now around the £40,000-£50,000 mark. That might seem like an incredible sum for a hot hatch, but just one drive in the R26.R confirms that this was a sublime creation – and the most significant hot hatch of the last 25 years.





4 & 3

NISSAN GT-R & PORSCHE 911 GT3

Porsche v Nissan was a head-to-head no one would have predicted in 1998, but then those two marques created the two most significant super-sports cars of the last 25 years

by JAMES TAYLOR PHOTOGRAPHY by SAM CHICK





**‘THE CRITICISM
WAS PROBABLY
STARTED BY 997
OWNERS WHO
HAD JUST BEEN
OVERTAKEN’**

TWO ENTIRELY DIFFERENT CARS: ONE FROM the beginning of a dynasty, one at its culmination. One manual, rear-driven and with the bare minimum of electronics; one all-wheel drive and all about technology. Both have become ever-present landmarks, both in the **evo** story and the wider evolution of the performance car.

When this magazine came into being, the Nissan GT-R was in its fourth, R33 generation and still called the Skyline. The musclebound R34 came along in 1999 but it was the R35 generation that arrived in 2008, dropped the Skyline label and became simply the GT-R, that picked up the performance car goalposts and set them down in a whole new playing field. Fifteen years ago. A long time. Yet the R35 only retired from sale in the European market in 2022 (largely due to EU and UK drive-by noise regulations) and it's still on sale in Japan and the US. It's been a unique yardstick for performance and sheer ability in three separate decades.

During that time, the GT-R has featured on umpteen **evo** covers, either starring as the main car or, frequently, a must-have component in a group test. Contributing editors Jethro Bovingdon and Henry Catchpole both voted the R35 in their top five: ‘When it came out it was this one car that did everything,’ says Henry. ‘We put it up



against everything, and it was an ultimate all-rounder in a way.' Ultimate enough to win **evo** Car of the Year in 2008, against Lamborghini's Gallardo LP560-4 and Porsche's 997-gen 911 GT2. Back then the GT-R cost little more than £50k, and an initially bargainous performance-to-pound ratio was an intrinsic part of both its appeal and its confounding nature.

Here was a car that was heavy – more than 1700kg – and big at more than 4.7m long and 1.3m tall, yet could out-grip, outpace and lap faster than more or less any six-figure supercar, in any weather. And be a completely involving, immersive experience for the driver while doing so. 'There has always been this criticism – probably started in trackday pitlanes by 997 owners who had just been overtaken – that it's a "PlayStation car", which it never was,' Henry says. 'That suggests something uninvolved and a bit remote, which it just wasn't. You could get a lot of speed out of it, but to drive it toward its limits you had to really think and almost override your instincts. You had to understand how its clever four-wheel-drive system wanted to do things – sort of like a Mitsubishi Evo in some ways, but bigger, more potent.'

'I remember driving it for the very first time and it made cars like R8 V10s and 911 Turbos feel somehow

instantly antiquated,' says Jethro. 'That didn't mean it made them bad, because they still had some qualities that the Nissan lacked, and still do. But at the time this thing had completely fast-forwarded what performance cars were capable of. I remember watching the boost gauge sit at maximum boost while changing gear, how big a difference that dual-clutch 'box made to the accessibility of performance, and the level of grip and agility for such a big car.'

'It was the first really big, heavy car to completely defy your expectations. Very few cars have done it since and it's only now that we're in that space, with the BMW M5 CS and various other M cars and Porsches. They've got heavier and heavier but, dynamically, they still retain that lightweight agility we all crave. The Nissan was the first car to do that. It's so fast, so competent, so aggressive in the way it changes direction. It just completely rewrote what was possible.'

Over time, the price crept up, 2022-model-year R35s costing more than £80k by the time sales closed in the UK. Priciest factory-spec GT-R of all, however (leaving the many wild tuner creations that are an equally big part of the GT-R story out of the equation) was the rare, specialised Nismo. Introduced in 2013, like the rest of the

Above: R35 GT-R reached its peak with the Nismo version; as with all GT-Rs, its size and weight belie a surprisingly nimble, playful chassis and steering that has real delicacy

R35 range it received iterative updates each year, many of which centred on weight-saving, aerodynamics, expensive dampers and powertrain enhancements. Only a handful of GT-R Nismos made it to the UK each year. Pictured here is the final version to be offered in the UK, sold in limited numbers in 2022, at a price exceeding £180k.

It was quite a way to close the R35's UK story. Driving the Nismo today, it strikes me it's the first time I've driven one when it's not raining. I have vivid memories of driving the 2017 version around a slippery Silverstone and an equally sodden ribbon of road in north Wales. One wide and snooker-table smooth, the other with barely enough room for the car. It was mind-blowing in both settings, eking out grip where instinct said there should be none and doing remarkable things with its damping.

Today, in Indian summer sunshine, it's as mind-alteringly, expectation-confoundingly, perception-redefiningly good as I recall. The experience is a strange mixture of enjoying

the surprising delicacy and directness of the steering, and withstanding the sheer pulverising cornering forces at work. The GT-R *digs* into the tarmac, grasping and finding grip like a rock climber getting a handhold, and summons ridiculous traction. Yet it feels playful, malleable too. It's truly tactile and exciting, and unique in feel.

It's a car of contrasts: enormous in size, heavy in weight, yet nimble; brutal yet delicate; and you sit in a lofty driving position under a high roof, yet feel hunkered down to the road. Computerised yet mechanical: you hear all kinds of almost agricultural sounds from the transmission and differentials, and feel them winding up as you manoeuvre at parking speeds. It's anything but digital.

Leaving aside the uniqueness of its driving experience, the R35 is a significant car in terms of its wider impact. The GT-R's otherworldly abilities on road and track (whether in drag races or around a damp Nordschleife) prompted head-scratching and drawing board revisitations at various



manufacturers – and an increased amount of attention paid to lap times around that aforementioned circuit. ‘In the context of the GT-R’s significance as a whole, it was both a positive and negative thing,’ ponders Henry, ‘because I’m sure it made everyone else think, “Right, we have to focus on performance, we can’t have this car from Japan that weighs a lot and looks massive outperform us.” I can imagine it stimulated development of dual-clutch transmissions and turbos, and influenced that direction of travel.’

Jethro adds: ‘It’s significant above and beyond its driving experience, and not necessarily for the good of performance cars, because what it did was make Porsche, Ferrari, everyone, chase this incredible efficiency of performance. And I think the 997.2 Turbo was the first time you saw that – Porsche chasing down another car rather than setting their own benchmark. And since then, what we’ve seen is more power, more grip, more accessibility, dual-clutch ‘boxes, twin turbos – it just set a blueprint for the future.’

‘You could very well argue it was where the performance car branched off, or pivoted, to this new direction we have now – and that we moan about – where performance is king, and things like low mass and so on have sort of been swept aside. So, arguably, the R35 is both a good and a bad car for its significance.’

What’s next for the GT-R story? Journalists have been asking questions about what the R36 has in store in three separate decades now, but the answer has always been: ‘Not yet.’ Creating another game-changer isn’t easy. Perhaps an all-electric GT-R will confound the world’s expectations once more, but it won’t be along any time soon.

Meanwhile, Jethro sums up the R35 like this: ‘A fantastic driving experience, and a unique one, and that’s what we should celebrate: cars that are unique. There are so many things that have the same chassis, same engine, the same dimensions almost. The GT-R is a one-off, in and of itself. Much maligned, but I think they’re fantastic.’

‘THE 911 GT3 WAS A CAR BUILT FOR DRIVING, AND WITH REAL MOTORSPORT GENES’





‘THE MEZGER ENGINE CLEARS ITS THROAT INTO A SWEET, SERRATED HOWL AT HIGHER REVS’

IF THE GT-R IS MALIGNED IN SOME QUARTERS, the Porsche 911 GT3 is almost universally eulogised. Virtually every **evo** contributor who voted in this countdown nominated a 911 GT3 of one kind or another. But this is the first one, where it all began: 1999's 996 GT3.

The 996-generation Porsche 911 in general has a strong link with **evo**: it was born only a short time before this magazine first appeared, and the regular 996 Carrera won the very first eCoty in 1998. It has also featured in a fair few Fast Fleet entries... But the GT3 was something special. If arch Porsche fans were still rankled by the fried-egg headlights (softened visually by clear indicator lenses on the GT3), smoothly hipless bodyshell and water-cooled engine, this raw road-racer was swiftly taken to their hearts – and those of people not normally enamoured by Porsches, too.

The GT3 was more than just a nameplate; it was so-called because it was created as a homologation car for the then-new GT3 racing formula, which was based around more production-spec cars than the category of the same name today. (Incidentally, the Nissan R35 GT-R has also had a glittering career in GT3 racing, winning races against much smaller, lither opposition – racing life imitating road-going art. The Nismo uses the same turbochargers as the race car among its money-almost-no-object component count.)

From its 18-inch split rims to its Salvador Dali-esque rear spoiler, the 911 GT3 was a car built for driving, and with



real motorsport genes. The 911 Carrera's sound deadening and extraneous equipment were summarily dismissed, although famously the 1350kg GT3 was considered to weigh a little more than the base 996 Carrera, owing to its bigger brakes, wheels and wing and its use of the stiffer Carrera 4 body. (As ever with kerb weight figures, the real picture is murky; Andreas Preuninger says the way Porsche's GT department records kerb weights is a little different to the wider company's approach. The only surefire way to see if a 996 GT3 is heavier than a Carrera is to stick them both on the same set of scales.)

The Carrera's 3.4-litre engine was switched for the now-fabled 3.6-litre powerplant known as the 'Mezger engine' in deference to being based on the race engine designed by feted Porsche engineer Hans Mezger. The GT3's lump shares DNA with both the 911 GT1 '98 Le Mans car and the 959 of the '80s, with regards to its dry sump and cylinder heads respectively, and it raised the red line to 7600rpm compared with the 996 Carrera's 7200rpm limit. It would go on to be used in all 997-generation GT3s (and versions of the 996 and 997 Turbo too), culminating in 2011's bored-out 997 GT3 RS 4.0.

Back to the beginning, and the here and now. This lovely 55,000-mile Arctic Silver car kindly loaned by Porsche specialist Paragon in Sussex looks tiny, petite, next to the hulking Nissan – and next to a present-day 911, for that matter. You sit in one-piece buckets (standard on Clubsport-spec cars and an option for 'Comfort' examples like this

one, as was the half roll-cage over the absent rear seats), adjust the door mirrors with stalks rather than buttons, and hold an equally button-free three-spoke steering wheel (with a big, '90s-spec airbag housing in the middle). This particular car's original owner also ticked the delete box for the centre console storage, an absence that would be a drawback in most cars but somehow makes the GT3 all the more desirable, fitting in with the homologation vibe.

No turbos here, GT3 racing-derived or otherwise, and the 911 GT3 has remained naturally aspirated ever since. As in many of the all-time-great 911s, the Mezger engine sounds slightly rough at idle, like a gently shaken cutlery drawer, then clears its throat into a sweet, serrated howl at higher revs.

The 996 GT3's nose bobs up and down in the manner of classic 911s, and the steering is very chatty, the wheel writhing gently in your hands; later 911s filter a little more of that movement out. And add an extra turn of pace: the original GT3 doesn't *feel* all that fast any more in a straight line. Which matters not a bit, because it's all about feel. The steering, the pedals, the short-throw six-speed gearchange, the feedback through the bucket seats and the seat of your pants, and the cacophony of sounds in your eardrums: it makes a glorious noise.

And, even with the deleted console and tinnier-than-average radio, it has all of the ergonomics and much of the usability of a regular modern-era 911. You can certainly see how the recipe has come to work so well.

Above: 996-gen 911's pebble-smooth body was given a welcome shot of attitude with the GT3's aero addenda, and the dynamics were similarly enhanced; feel is exquisite and the noise simply glorious

This car opened up a new division and product line at Porsche: the aforementioned GT department, which works closely with the company's motorsport arm and from which has since sprung multiple generations of 911 GT3 and GT2 families and their many variants, the 911 R and Speedster, Cayman GT4 and Boxster Spyder and more besides.

The director of the GT department almost since its beginning has been Andreas 'Mr GT3' Preuninger. The 996 GT3 was already in production when he joined; his first project was its '996.2' update in 2003. 'The 996 GT3 was the nucleus of everything,' he says. 'It was more or less a side-project of Roland Kussmaul [the famous Porsche

racing engineer with Dakar and Le Mans programmes and the 964 RS on his CV]; he had five, six, maybe ten people at times within the motorsport sales department to work on the car. It was not a specific department. Only when the second generation came in, which I had the pleasure to lead – everything went from there.'

Under Preuninger's direction the 996.2 GT3 added a straighter, less lava lamp-esque (but less visually interesting) rear wing, prettier headlights in a facelifted front end, a 21bhp power increase to 376bhp, better brakes, revised rear suspension and a stiffer body among other changes, but the purity of the 996.1, and its position in history as the very beginning of the



911 GT3 story, makes it something really quite special.

The GT3 generations descended from it since have become a high-water mark for driver's cars – and, for better or worse, as much a part of the investment market as stocks, shares, art and fine wine, with gravity-defying depreciation curves. 'The GT department, it's like an island in Porsche, or a castle with a moat around it,' Andreas Preuninger says. 'Sometimes we have to defend it – we can see an attack when it's on the water! – but we can do whatever we want to do, as long as it works.'

The 996 GT3 and its descendants would suggest the policy has been working pretty well. With every update, successive models would get faster, grippier, cleverer,

sharper in response, but they've always hung on to their naturally aspirated, two-wheel-drive, organic roots – all exhibited to great effect by the car on these pages.

Only 106 996.1 GT3s were brought to the UK. Paragon MD Mark Sumpter reckons there are perhaps 55 to 60 good cars remaining today. Even more than usual, I wish I had a spare £84,995, the asking price for this particular car.

GT3 and GT-R: two entirely different cars from two entirely different car companies. There's nothing quite like either of them. Both unforgettable once driven, and both part of a lineage of cars that have changed our world.

With thanks to Paragon Porsche (paragongb.com)



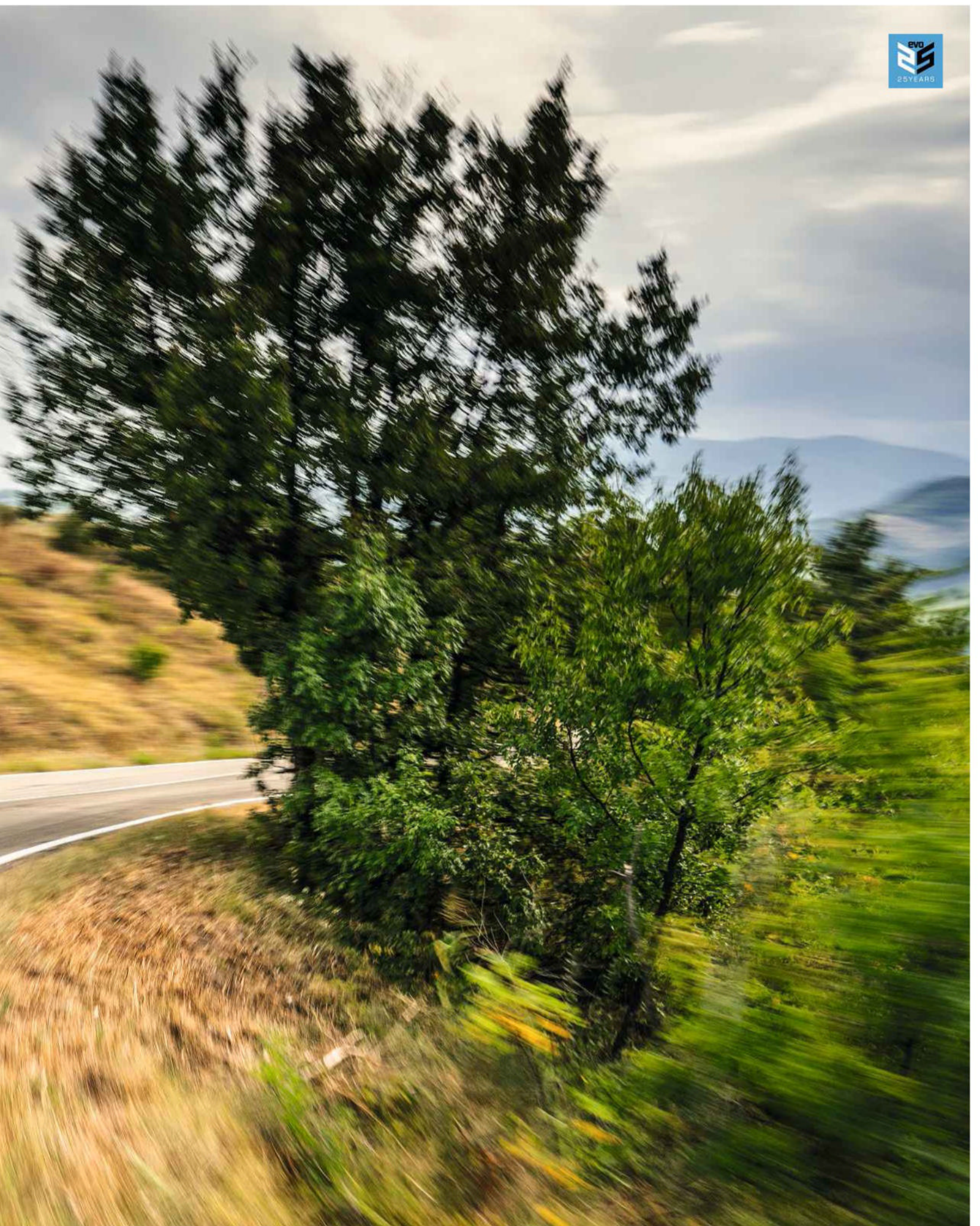
**‘BOTH ARE
UNFORGETTABLE
ONCE DRIVEN.
THERE’S NOTHING
QUITE LIKE EITHER’**

2 PAGANI ZONDA

Pagani was born in the same year as **evo**, and some of our fondest memories involve the Zonda. Time to get reacquainted

by RICHARD MEADEN PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT





LIFE IS GOOD WHEN YOU HAVE THE KEY TO A Pagani Zonda tucked in your pocket. It's a feeling we got to know very well at **evo** over the years, thanks to many visits to Pagani's factory in San Cesario sul Panaro, and, of course, the utterly surreal period when Harry Metcalfe's sensational C12-S regularly sat outside **evo** Towers.

It's a happy coincidence that both Pagani and **evo** were founded in 1998. Our paths wouldn't cross until March of 1999, when the Zonda C12 was launched at the Geneva motor show. Weirdly, few people seemed to pick up on it, but, curious about a new supercar that looked like nothing else and came from a company we'd never heard of, we stepped onto the show stand to find out more.

We were greeted by a Brit by the name of Mike Perry. Steeped in the supercar scene, Mike had been sales and marketing manager at Lamborghini London in the mid-to-late '80s and was now working for Pagani as a PR and marketing consultant. It was he who introduced us to – and translated for – a quietly spoken man by the name of Horacio Pagani.

Mike sadly passed away in 2020, but the connection he made that day remains an enduring highlight of the last 25 years. A month or so after that first meeting in Geneva we flew out to Modena to meet Mike for a tour of the Pagani factory. There we took a closer look at the Zonda, spent a few days with Horacio and met some of the people he had gathered around him to realise his dream. Amongst them was another

modestly brilliant man by the name of Loris Biscocchi – a test driver and engineer Horacio had known at Lamborghini, and to whom he entrusted the dynamic development of the C12.

A few months after that first visit, we returned, this time to be amongst the first in the world (and the first UK publication) to drive the C12. It was a trip I'll never forget. The Zonda – then in humble 6-litre specification – was Pagani's hard-worked test and development car, but its virtuosity shone through the slightly careworn patina. It was like nothing I'd driven before.

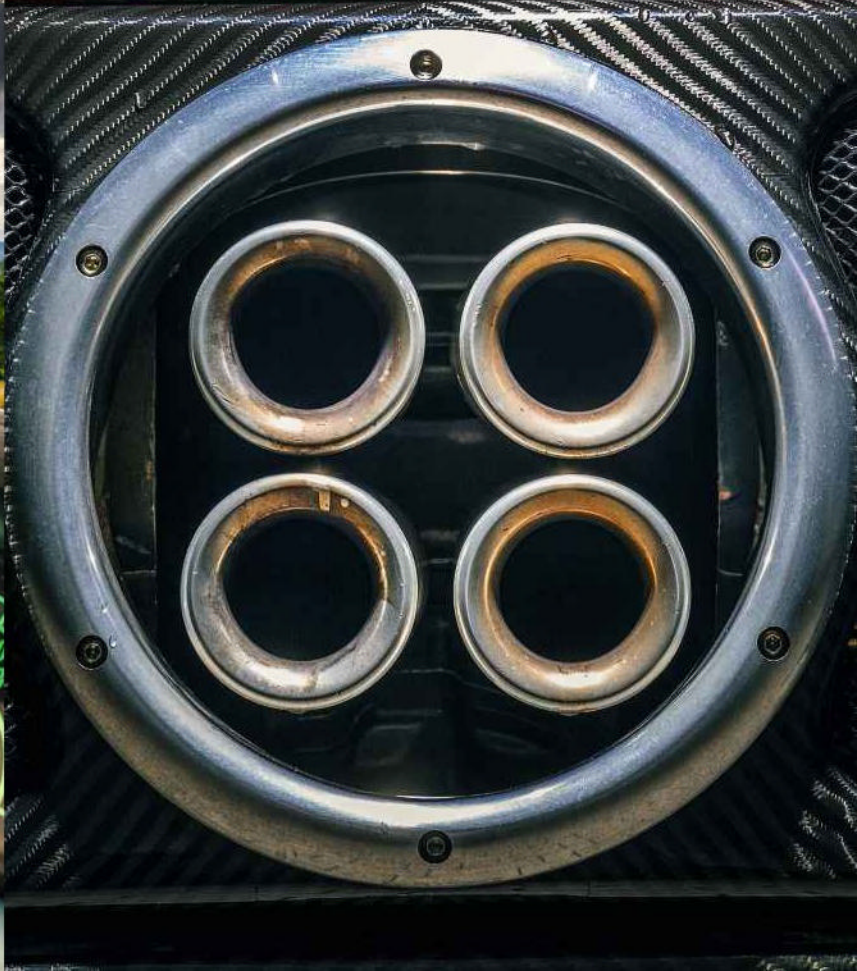
Until this point the only V12 carbonfibre supercar of note had been the McLaren F1. Tricky to drive and dominated by its magnificent BMW motor, the glow of its golden engine bay and extraordinary Le Mans win ensured it transcended conventional critiques. Meanwhile, Lamborghini was still building the Diablo – a glorious dinosaur in its twilight years.

Judged against these two counterparts, the Zonda felt like a supersized Lotus Elise. Supple and beautifully poised, with pinpoint steering and immense performance, it gave the lie to supercar lore that demanded exotica should be belligerent and/or intimidating to drive. It didn't (yet) have an engine to match those of the Macca or the Lambo, but Pagani's creation put its 389bhp (yep, that's all folks!) to sublime use.

I can still remember organising 'The Test' (**evo** 022) – a diverse supercar gathering of Ferrari 550 Maranello and 360 Modena, Porsche 996 Turbo, Chrysler Viper GTS, Diablo VT 6.0 and Zonda C12 in glorious Tuscany – the following summer.

**'THOSE ZONDA
QUALITIES
THAT SHONE
SO BRIGHTLY
REMAIN
DAZZLING TO
THIS DAY'**







Privately, my inclusion of the Pagani made me wonder if I'd been the victim of a Jedi mind trick, but only because the Zonda was yet to receive validation from the wider motoring media.

Much to my relief it made the same impression on the rest of the *evo* team, though that cooking-spec Merc V12 and a rather stiff shift in the hard-worked development car's five-speed gearbox meant our collective praise wasn't without caveat. Still there was a palpable sense the supercar landscape had shifted slightly on its axis. Pagani was a player from the get-go.

From this point things moved fast. Just six C12s were built (five coupes and one Roadster) between 1999 and 2000 before the Zonda C12-S, complete with 542bhp 7-litre motor, succeeded it. Sixteen such cars (all coupes) were built over the next three years, but it was an even more potent version – the Zonda S 7.3 – making its debut at Geneva in 2002 that really moved the game on, thanks to a new crankshaft, titanium con rods and a whoopier, loopier 7000rpm red line.

The second 7.3 S to be built – chassis 021 – was right-hand drive and served as Pagani's UK demo car. That car would appear in *evo* on a number of occasions, most notably our 'Supercar Heaven' cover story for the November 2003 issue. But it was when a certain CH Metcalfe purchased the car in the spring of 2006 that *evo*'s relationship with the Zonda reached its zenith. Okay, in hindsight we probably did overdo the whole Pagani thing – not for nothing did *evo* gain the nickname *What Zonda?* – but then we were one of the few magazines to have privileged access to a succession of genuinely extraordinary cars.

It's been many years – more than a decade, truth be told – since I've driven a Zonda. So it's with great affection and anticipation that I head back to Modena for a nostalgic drive in a 7.3 S. Much has changed at Pagani since my last visit, a new factory, significant Saudi investment and an extraordinary rise in Zonda values foremost amongst them, but the things that matter haven't changed a bit. Pagani remains a family business.

Sadly, Horacio Pagani is on vacation back in his native Argentina at the time of our visit, but his son Christopher (a child when I first visited) is a welcoming host. Best of all he has the

keys to his father's recently acquired 7.3-litre Zonda S Roadster. Freshly prepped, fuelled and looking pristine in silver, this exquisite all-carbon creation is mine for the day.

The passage of two decades can be cruel to once cutting-edge supercars, but the naturally aspirated Zonda, complete with six-speed stick-shift gearbox, feels timeless and epic. Apart from ABS and a rudimentary traction control system, the only dynamic modes are those controlled by your mood and prevailing conditions. Quality always stands the test of time, and those Zonda qualities that shone so brightly remain dazzling to this day.

So much of the driving experience remains unique. The flamboyant style and immaculate execution are unmatched, and the sense of being right at the pointy end of an arrowhead is still true to Pagani's vision of a Group C racer. The meaty steering weight is appropriate, but the accuracy and consistency with which you can place this hugely wide and outwardly intimidating machine is still uncanny and unexpected.

However, it's the colossal sense of propulsion that's truly extraordinary. Where contemporary supercars shout and shriek, or simply spool-up and slingshot you down the road, the Zonda moves with epic elasticity, that big, free-spinning Benz V12 simmering with seismic potency. It is majestic, as only large-capacity 12-cylinder motors can be.

With just 1280kg (plus fluids and driver) to propel, it pulls like a train from tickover to limiter, the sense of enormous shove accentuated by such minimal mass. The gearbox takes a bit of mastering, especially the cross-gate upshift from second to third, but there's so much stonk you can shred most roads using third and fourth. Working in the meat of the torque curve makes for imperious progress, with lunges into the final 2500rpm of the rev range delivering truly explosive acceleration and dizzying reach.

Early Zondas were road cars first and foremost and it shows in the way they drive. Ferociously fast when fully lit but relaxed and refined when you're savouring the moment, they exude the kind of maturity and confidence that makes today's hypercars seem laughably overwrought. Once driven, never forgotten.





1

FERRARI 458 SPECIALE

Of all the significant driver's cars
we've experienced over the last 25
years, one stands above all others.
Ladies and gentlemen, the sublime,
unsurpassed 458 Speciale

by JOHN BARKER PHOTOGRAPHY by ANDY MORGAN





“THE LAST NATURALLY ASPIRATED, V8-POWERED Ferrari, it’s a 458 Italia with 90kg slashed away via stripping the interior, lighter glass and a Lexan engine cover; a 458 fitted with a tweaked 4.5-litre V8 producing an astonishing 597bhp at 9000rpm and with gearshift times cut by 44 per cent; the Ferrari that introduced Side Slip Control; the only car ever to win eCoty unanimously.’

It’s quite the accolade, that unanimous 2014 eCoty victory; the only one in the history of the magazine. It could be argued that it wasn’t the strongest of years – the Jaguar F-type R Coupe was a distant second, the Porsche Cayman GTS third – but it was a ten-car field that also included a BMW M3, McLaren 650S and Aston Martin Vanquish, so the stronger argument is that the Ferrari was simply on a higher plane than everything else. Subsequent experience bears this out: every encounter with the Speciale since has only reaffirmed its brilliance.

The quote at the top was Jethro Bovingdon’s introduction for the 458 Speciale from last summer’s test of mid-engined, naturally aspirated supercars (evo 301). The other contenders were the Honda NSX-R (eCoty winner 2002), the Lamborghini Huracán STO and the new Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 RS, the car we’d designed the test for, reckoning it could set new

standards for the genre. It was a fabulous test, on and around the sun-soaked Route Napoléon, and we’ll come back to it later.

Right now I’m standing in north Wales, in the rain, next to Mike Wood’s Speciale, sitting on its standard-issue Michelin Cup 2s. Sounds like the wrong tyre call by Scuderia Ferrari but I’m really looking forward to driving it again on these epic roads. Four years ago, Mike and I were here with *Enzo* magazine for a group test of Ferrari’s extreme V8s – 348 GTC to 488 Pista – in similarly torrential conditions, and despite those Cup 2s the Speciale was extraordinarily good.

Within a few corners, I’ve discovered again why it was so impressive. Inevitably, it starts with superb steering. The Speciale’s is quick and accurate yet calm, and when you hit the apex with the car loaded up, even with water under the tyres, you can feel the grip at the treadblocks. So you know exactly where you are with the front end.

You know where you are with the rear, too. As with the front, grip is much stronger than you expect given the track-biased tyres, and so is traction, which you can exploit with remarkable precision thanks to that incredible naturally aspirated engine. The throttle is so precise that after you’ve spent a few miles tuning in, you can slice into a corner, see a



puddle at the apex and set the throttle opening to *just* unstick the rear when you hit it. Or not. It's your choice.

From the driver's seat, you have a car under you that allows you to exploit it with complete confidence, even with the wipers working hard. From the passenger seat, however, the pace can seem ambitious, unrealistic on those Cup 2s, as I found when the photographer on that *Enzo* shoot, the normally unflappable Malcolm Griffiths, started to get agitated. On the gnarliest bit of the road I was zipping along and using plenty of revs, which didn't help. The Speciale redlines at 9000rpm, which means it howls on through 7000rpm when most engines are done, so the noise and revs escalate manically when you might be expecting them to die, which rattled Malcy as we turned puddles to plumes of spray, to the point where he reminded me we hadn't finished the shoot, that it was an owner's car, that it was on Cup 2s, that it would mess up the magazine's no claims bonus, that he had a wife and family, and so on and so forth...

Of course, the Speciale was brilliant in the dry too, as Henry Catchpole described memorably in his winner's eulogy from eCoty 2014: 'Intensity, agility and a blistering pace are a given at this level, but the Speciale is something else... it flatters your driving but still tests your ability. Not by drawing you in

and then hanging you out to dry but by allowing you to work towards its (and your own) limits, step by step, layer by layer. Whatever your skill level, there's never been a car that lets you fly so close to the sun.' The revelation that its dynamics were just as communicative, exploitable and brilliant in the wet didn't just cement its reputation so much as lift it to a whole new level. Last year's group test on the Route Napoléon did the same thing again.

The regular 458 Italia was already a very good car with an amazing engine: its 'F136' flat-plane-crank V8 produced a remarkable 562bhp from 4.5 litres for an impressive 125bhp per litre, a superb figure for a naturally aspirated, fully homologated production engine. For the Speciale, Ferrari's engineers managed to lift that up to 597bhp, which doesn't sound a lot more – it's about six per cent – but it raised the specific output to an astonishing 133bhp per litre. Equally important was the Speciale's 90kg weight saving which, with the extra horsepower, helped boost the power-to-weight from the Italia's 384 to 435bhp per ton.

The general industry swing from natural induction to turbocharging included the 458's successor, the 488, whose 4-litre twin-turbo V8 delivered over 40 per cent more torque

Above and opposite: it's nine years since the Speciale won eCoty, but it still feels every bit as intoxicating today, even on occasionally soaking Welsh roads. Its 597bhp naturally aspirated V8 remains a thing of wonder

than the Speciale at half the revs, even in regular GTB spec. It made for a different experience. A notable exception to the turbo trend is the current Corvette, which in Z06 form comes with a flat-plane, naturally aspirated V8 known as Gemini. It owes a bit to the F136, Chevy freely admits. The company benchmarked the 458, and so keen were they to see what they could learn from its engine that they bought a 458 motor off eBay, sending a cheque for \$25k to Poland. They were 'pretty pleased and thrilled that the engine actually did show up'.

On stripping it down they were amazed at how small the bearings were and learned how Ferrari protected various components from the vibrations inherent in the flat-plane-crank V8 design, particularly ignition coil isolation and securing of electrical connectors to avoid fretting. They made 'a lot of improvements' in how they went about their own engine from what they found, and the Z06's 5.5-litre V8 is impressive, making a strong 670bhp. Mind, with a specific output of 123bhp per litre it's shy of the stock 458, let alone the Speciale.

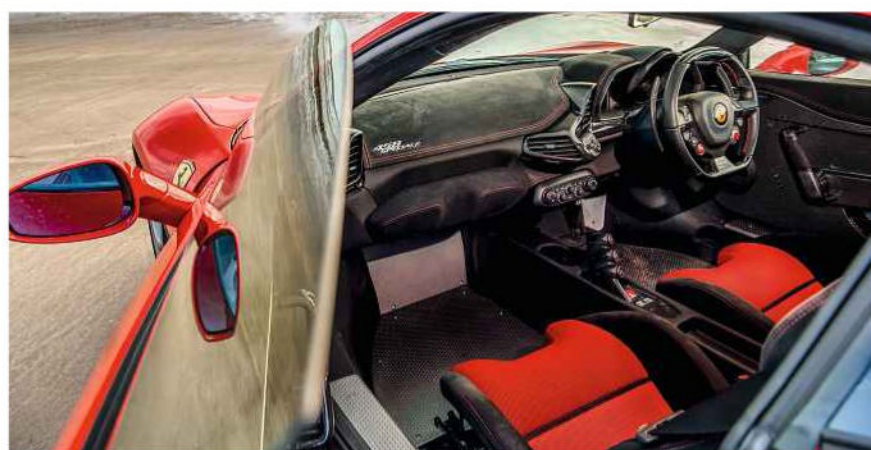
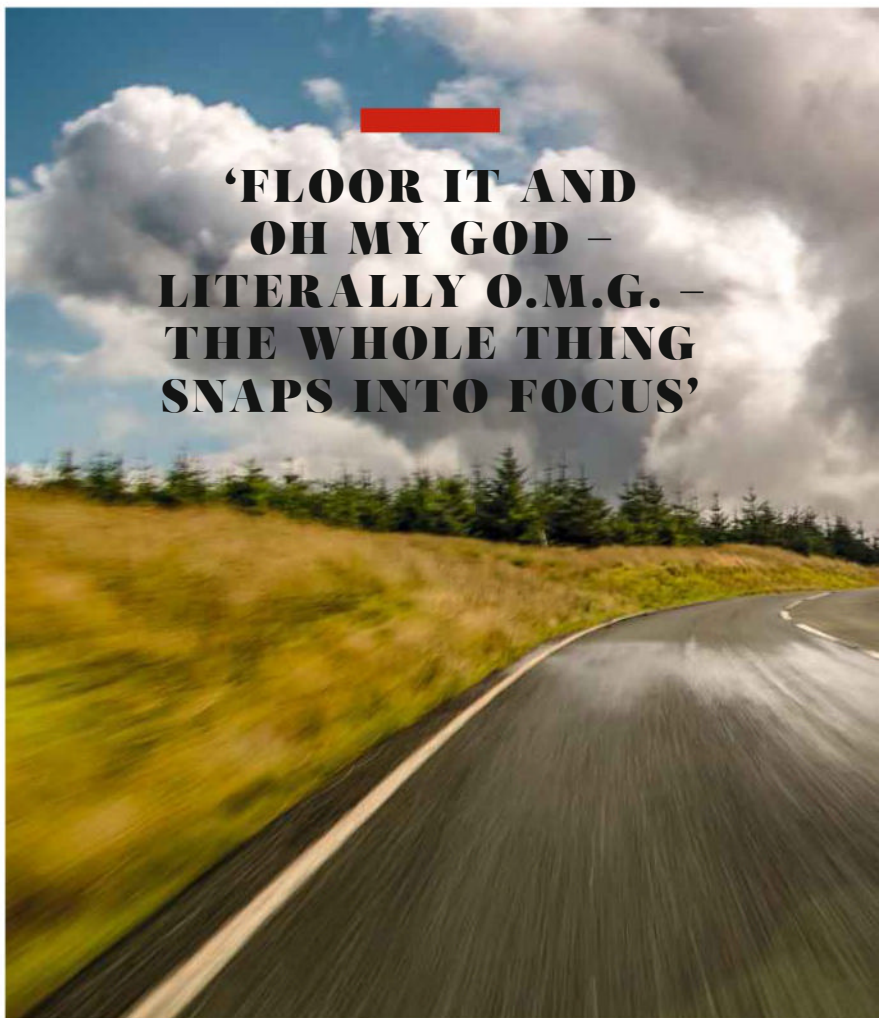
It does make you wonder where the F136 V8 or its naturally aspirated successor might have got to today with a further decade of development. Ferrari's V12s have remained naturally aspirated, and from the Speciale's contemporary F12 and its 730bhp 6.3 V12, giving 117bhp per litre, there was the 769bhp F12tdf, then the 6.5-litre, 798bhp 812 Superfast, and now, sweet mercy, we've got the 812 Competizione with 819bhp, for a mighty 126bhp per litre. If the naturally aspirated V8 line had evolved on a similar trajectory, we might have a junior Ferrari supercar with a 10,000rpm, 670bhp, 4.7-litre flat-plane-crank V8.

Appealing as that sounds, as we discovered last summer on the Route Napoléon, the Speciale certainly doesn't come up short against some of the newest and finest mid-engined cars ever built. It doesn't get off to a flying start, though. It's a bit of a faff with the (optional) full harness belts, when you fire it up it sounds a bit raw, a bit plain like an in-line four, as all flat-plane V8s do, and the steering wheel seems big and lumpy. So far, so unexciting. You grab a gear, scoot off down the road and there's an engine resonance at 2500/3000rpm too, and you can't help but wonder 'Where's all the magic I remember, the magic that's stored in solid-state form in my memory? This needs to improve quite quickly.'


Then you floor it and Oh My God – literally OMG – the whole thing snaps into focus. The engine is manic, the sharpness of response is insane. It's a proper shocker, like you've inadvertently touched a live feed. The first time you go for a 9000rpm full-throttle upshift, the gear thumps home emphatically, like the whole drivetrain is made from billet-machined steel, and the pace intensifies again. But after a short time driving this manic engine – or this manic engine driving you – you realise something almost profound, and it's that you're not on edge, you're not feeling overwhelmed, the car isn't too much. And this is because although the Speciale is frantic in sound and performance, it's calm in the way it drives.

That's down to two things. Firstly, the damping is extraordinarily good. It sort of passes you by initially, but the more roads you drive (and the more times you

**'FLOOR IT AND
OH MY GOD –
LITERALLY O.M.G. –
THE WHOLE THING
SNAPS INTO FOCUS'**







get back in after a run in other cars) the more obvious it is that the ride of the Speciale is very rarely caught out. It's exceptionally well-judged, filtering out all the tough stuff but leaving you feeling fully connected with the road. The second thing is the steering, which is quietly very precise, quick but not overly responsive, pitched just right; you get exactly what you want no matter what speed you're doing. And that, together with the flat, supple, unflappable ride, gives you massive confidence because the car never feels loose or ragged. You always feel in control, almost like you're in the eye of the storm. Indeed, when you follow it down a fast, tricky road, it looks how it feels: poised, almost serene.

Even when you flick-flack through a mini-roundabout at moderate speed, the whole car is agile and responsive but calm. At speed it's the same, so you sort of creep up on the limit of grip. It's the grip at the back that starts to run out first but it does so very, very gently. And of course you're on top of it, because the steering is so tactile, the feedback so good, so you sense it almost before it happens. It's usually inertia plus power, the combination just slightly overwhelming the rear grip. Fact is, for all its top-end fizz, in the dry the Speciale's engine is never going to overload the Cup 2s with torque unless you're provoking it aggressively, so it ends up being just gentle slips at the back, not even slides, just gentle slurs of the rear tyres.

The Huracán STO felt fabulous on that group test in the south of France... but after you'd driven the Speciale you recognised that the Lambo's front and rear are different entities whereas, in the Ferrari, the whole car pivots around the centre point where the gearlever of a manual would be (incidentally, a manual 'box is something that you never

find yourself hankering for). It slices into corners without a feeling of inertia at either end, whereas in the Lambo you start to feel the engine mass behind you. It's a feeling rather than an issue, and we know that on a circuit you can overload the Huracán's rear and have smokey, black lines for fun, but once you've felt the Speciale rotate effortlessly into corners, you know you've tasted something very special and everything else then seems to come up slightly short.

The Lambo's powertrain has more sonic character and a top end that, unexpectedly, makes the Speciale feel just a little bit flat, the V10 hitting the limiter hard like it's got another 1000rpm to go. But you have to remind yourself that the Ferrari is ten years old. Again, you wonder what a naturally aspirated successor to the Speciale might have been like with a decade more development but, in all honesty, it's a moot point because in the end the opposition on that French test served simply to show how polished and complete the Speciale is. It's on a different level because it is totally rounded and balanced in its abilities, and all those abilities are exceptional – the steering, the ride, the handling, the performance, the gearshift. It's phenomenal, a masterpiece of a car. Peak mid-engined Ferrari without question. Maybe even peak Ferrari, full stop?

Nine years ago we crowned Porsche's 997.2 GT3 RS the best car we had driven during this magazine's first 200 issues, and yes it beat the Speciale to that particular accolade and we still stand by that result. But when it comes to encapsulating what makes so many of the cars in this list significant and wrapping it up in a single, intoxicating package that leaves you breathless in admiration, the Ferrari 458 Speciale is The One – the purest essence of a driver's car.

**‘IT’S PHENOMENAL,
A MASTERPIECE
OF A CAR. PEAK
MID-ENGINE
FERRARI WITHOUT
QUESTION’**





THE WRITERS' TOP FIVES

You've seen the final **evo** 25, now our writers reveal which cars got their personal votes*



STUART GALLAGHER

Why I voted for... the BMW 1-series M Coupé

Skunkworks projects are always significant. They deliver the cars that no number of product strategy and finance meetings could ever agree to sign off on. They result in the cars the engineers know are possible but are rarely allowed to deliver. Skunkworks projects are more often than not our type of cars. Cars such as the BMW 1-series M Coupé – or 1M for short.

Conceived and developed in secret, mostly at weekends, the car presented to the board for approval was built, as with many skunkworks projects, using existing components: the turbocharged six-cylinder engine from the Z4; brakes, rear diff and axle from the naturally aspirated E92 V8 M3, and a mutated 1-series coupe body. The engineers knew that if their fantasy 1-series was to be given the green light it needed to fit down the production line with no adjustments.

But beyond the thrifty and crafty nature of its development, above all else the 1M demonstrated to BMW's board that while the future product plan of M-badged X-series cars would deliver huge profits, the appetite for purebred M sports cars was as strong as ever (2700 examples were meant to be built; more than 6000 were eventually delivered). Without the 1M, the current crop of Competition and CS models would most likely be left in an engineer's notebook of missed opportunities.

Stuart's significant five: BMW 1-series M Coupé, McLaren 675LT, Pagani Zonda, Porsche 911 Carrera (996.1), Toyota GR Yaris



JETHRO BOVINGDON

Why I voted for... the Honda NSX-R

Nominating the Honda NSX-R was the most natural thing in the world.

It speaks to me – and this magazine – on so many levels. It's rare-groove and obsessively stripped-back, it uses lightweight materials in all the areas that count, and it's intensely focused on pure driving enjoyment. Not performance numbers or lateral g, but purity of response, feedback and providing the driver with all the tools to exploit everything it has to give.

The combination of this strict brief, brilliant engineering and a fundamentally superb platform on which to build creates a unique and unforgettable driving experience. There's no slack at all in the blueprinted engine and gearbox. Imagine the freakish speed and connection of a GT3 flat-six and PDK 'box, but you're actually hitting those perfect shifts... that's the NSX-R.

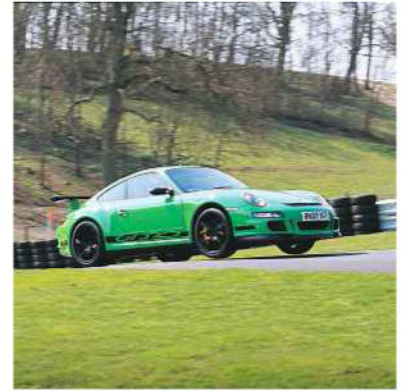
The steering is heavy and more deliberate than the super-pointy feel we've become used to, but it matches a chassis of such calm. It's an odd juxtaposition. The noise is fantastically urgent, you can slice through 'changes literally as fast as you can coordinate your inputs, and everything is happening at an elevated pace, but the car is unflustered, eager for ever more commitment. Throw more energy at the NSX-R and it just gets better and better. To me, that's the very definition of a great driver's car.

Jethro's significant five:

Ferrari 458 Speciale
Honda NSX-R
Mitsubishi Evo
Nissan GT-R
Porsche 911 GT3 RS 4.0



*Our writers' individual lists are in alphabetical order, not ranked 1st to 5th



JAMES TAYLOR

Why I voted for... the Ford Fiesta ST

If we're talking about the most significant driver's cars of the last quarter

century, then cars at a price point that have made the thrill of driving available to almost everyone are as significant as cars at the cutting edge of development.

I love mid-engined supercars and flyweight sports cars more than I do hot hatches, but some of my most enjoyable drives have been in Ford Fiesta STs. I know that 90 per cent of the time the Fiesta is as much or more fun than a Lamborghini Aventador, and easier to live with than 90 per cent of sports cars.

The original, Lego-blockish ST in 2004 was great but it was the 2013 ST, based on the sixth-generation Fiesta, that really moved the game on: deceptively fast and gleefully agile, happy to corner on three wheels at will and tail-happy to the point of wondering how on earth it was signed off for sale to customers. Thank goodness it was.

The next ST, launched in 2018 and which ended its production run this year, kept much of the previous car's blueprints while switching to a characterful three-cylinder engine that proved downsizing didn't mean downtrading. And, if anything, it was even more tail-happy.

It's the Peugeot 205 GTI of its generation. Hopefully its used values won't orbit out of reach in the same way, but don't bet against it happening one day.

James's significant five:

Alpine A110
Ferrari 458 Speciale
Ford Fiesta ST (2012 on)
McLaren 720S
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (991.2)



RICHARD MEADEN

Why I voted for... the Renault Sport Clio 172

The 182 Trophy tends to hog the limelight, but for

me the Clio 172 holds particular significance, for it marked the beginning of a remarkable run of truly great hot hatchbacks from the French maker – as good in their own way as Porsche's extraordinary dynasty of GT3 911s. When it came to exceptional front-wheel-drive performance cars, Renault Sport ruled the roost.

Launched in 1998, the Clio Renault Sport 172 was the first properly hot Clio since the Williams. Those early Phase 1 cars looked a bit gawky compared with the gorgeous blue-and-gold icon, but don't let the mild RS styling tweaks and tiddly 15-inch wheels fool you. The 172 is a feisty performer.

Its blend of gutsy, naturally aspirated engine and snappy manual transmission was a well-established hot hatch staple, but few have done it better. Mated to a tenaciously grippy-yet-playful chassis, the RS 172 was and remains a brilliantly energetic car with a truly infectious character.

Looking back, its genius was in modestly but masterfully moving the game on without trying to reinvent it. In so doing it immediately reminded everyone of Renault's hot hatch credentials and formed the foundation upon which Renault Sport went on to build some of the greatest front-wheel-drive cars of all time.

Dickie's significant five:

Pagani Zonda
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.1)
Renault Sport Clio 172
Subaru Impreza P1/RB5
TVR Tuscan



JOHN BARKER

Why I voted for... the Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.1)

It beat everything that it came up against, the 997

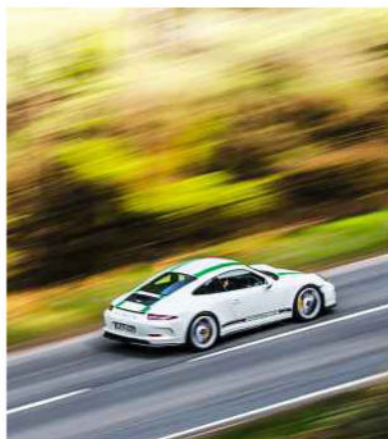
GT3 RS. Unequivocally, without mercy, and sometimes without breaking a sweat. After a day driving everything else at and around Cadwell Park for our 2007 Road and Track Car of the Year feature (*evo* 105), I finally got into the GT3 RS for the commute home. Within a few hundred yards I said out loud: 'Well, that's everything else f***ed, then.' Its quality was obvious almost instantly and every subsequent yard of the 75-mile drive home served simply to confirm and amplify its brilliance.

On overall scores, it took the narrowest of victories over the Ferrari 430 Scuderia at *evo* Car of the Year 2007. The Porsche was as thrilling and absorbing at the limit as the Scud but wonderfully engaging and rewarding when not, in that middle ground where we spend most of our wheel-time. The tactility of its steering and gearshift, the perfect tautness of its ride, and its depth of character were joyous. That it was half the price of the Ferrari was a bonus.

I admire what Andreas Preuninger and his team have done with subsequent GT3 RSs, but for me the 997.1 is the high-water mark, the peak of perfection, being that bit smaller and lighter, with a manual 'box and a 409bhp flat-six that revs to 8000rpm, which is more than enough.

John's significant five:

Ford GT
Ferrari 458 Speciale
Pagani Zonda C12-S
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.1)
Renault Sport Mégane R26.R



HENRY CATCHPOLE

Why I voted for... the Porsche 911 R

Three pedals. That's why I nominated the 911 R. It arrived at a point in 2016

when the H-pattern manual gearbox looked like it was stalling. Paddles and their perfect shifts were sweeping all before them, not least at Porsche where the 991.1 GT3 was offered only with PDK. And the rot wasn't confined to the upper echelons either, where the likes of Ferrari and Lamborghini had gone entirely two-pedal; the Renault Sport Clio had also switched to DCT-only.

But the 911 R seemed to be that most unusual of things, an admission of a mistake. Enthusiasts still wanted the tactility, interactivity and joy of a manual gearbox. The R rectified that and paved the way for the 991.2 GT3 to have the option of a manual (as well as emboldening Porsche's GT department to take more risks with more cars and limited editions).

OK, so it might not have been a total turning of the tide, but I'm sure King Canute would have given it a nod of appreciation. Who knows, perhaps it bolstered BMW to keep offering manuals. Aston Martin, too. I certainly think its success was a bit of an antidote to the trend started by the GT-R, and made some of the major manufacturers at least consider the possibility that performance isn't everything.

Henry's significant five:

Audi R8 (original)
Ferrari 458 Speciale
Nissan GT-R
Porsche 911 R/991.2 GT3 (manual)
Renault Sport Mégane R26.R



HARRY METCALFE

Why I voted for... the LaFerrari/P1/918 Spyder

Plug-in hybrid supercars didn't exist before the

arrival of these three hypercars, which soon became known as the Holy Trinity. What was odd was that they all arrived within months of each other in late 2013 and yet they couldn't have been more different, both in the way they drove and in the way they deployed their mix of electric and combustion power units to propel them down the road.

That makes it hard to decide which was the best of all, but let's say the Porsche 918 was the cleverest and technically the most impressive. The McLaren P1, meanwhile, was the maddest of the bunch, with its heavily boosted 3.8-litre V8 engine disguised perfectly by the electric motor helping out whenever boost was building. And the LaFerrari never actually felt like it had an electric motor helping out at all; it was as if the magnificent 6.3-litre naturally aspirated V12 had actually been enlarged to 10 litres but Ferrari had forgotten to tell anyone.

But the really great thing about the Holy Trinity for me was that, despite their added complication, they were all fantastic machines to drive, and if the tech on board these pioneering supercars was to be the future of performance cars then, as far as I was concerned, you could bring it on.

Harry's significant five:

Ferrari LaFerrari/McLaren P1/Porsche 918 Spyder
McLaren 12C
New Mini
Pagani Zonda
Porsche Cayenne Turbo



RICHARD PORTER

Why I voted for... the Audi TT

We have a bit of previous, the first-gen Audi TT and me. In 1999 one of the first

right-hand-drive TTs was delivered to the old *Top Gear* office where I worked at the time. I took it home for the night and promptly lost the back end on a roundabout, smacking a kerb and rolling it. Twice. But that's not why I voted for it to be included in *evo*'s 25 most significant cars.

It's easy to forget the impact that first TT had when it was announced. For years, concept cars were disappointing things, at best heralding a production car that looked far less impressive, at worst being as unrealistic as a talking dinosaur. Then all of a sudden there was a car that precisely resembled the concept from which it was derived. Bettered it, actually, while the interior was equally sensational.

They tried to make it interesting to drive, too, but realised that chumps like 23-year-old me with buttery fingers and hammy fists were going to keep stacking it, and hastily retuned the chassis while gumming on a rear spoiler to wind back any sense of tail-happy friskiness. Yet the original TT was a huge success, providing a useful reminder about the wider car world. We, the people who write and read this magazine, might worry about turn-in and steering feel, but most people just buy a car because it looks nice.

Richard's significant five:

Audi TT
Ferrari 458 Speciale
Ford Focus Mk1
Porsche 918 Spyder
Renault Sport Clio Trophy



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FAST FLEET



NEW ARRIVAL

Caterham Seven evo25

25 years of **evo**, 50 years of Caterham - the perfect excuse to create a unique Seven to celebrate both brands' milestones. So how did we spec it, and did we get our choices right?

OUR JOURNEY TO GOODWOOD FOR THE EVO trackday was to prove a remarkably complete, 24-hour test of the Caterham Seven whose specification I had helped decide. Back in March, my suggestion to Caterham's CCO, David Ridley, that it would be neat to celebrate **evo's** 25th anniversary and Caterham's 50th by adding a Seven to the **evo** long-term test fleet was met enthusiastically. Over the following weeks editor Stu and I lost hours on the excellent Caterham configurator, firing suggestions back and forth, homing in on the ideal spec.

What we wanted was a car that would blend everyday



p116 Caterham Seven evo25



p120 BMW M5 CS



p122 BMW M4 xDrive



p124 Jaguar XE Sport 300



'It was brilliant fun, tactile and transparent, carrying speed where bigger, heavier cars were tentative'

comfort (for a Seven) with excellent trackday capability, which resulted in a cross between the road 420 and track-biased 420R, based on the narrow chassis with lowered floors. For habitability we have the 'Trackday' roll-cage (a full cage but with less-restrictive roof bars than the Sport and Race versions, making for easier access), the comfort seats, quieter rear-exit exhaust, a heater and full weather equipment. On the track side we have 420 Cup mechanicals, with the 2-litre Duratec engine, dry-sumped and hooked up to a five-speed manual, plus wide-track front suspension, a limited-slip diff, ten-setting adjustable Bilstein dampers and Avon ZZS tyres on lightweight 13-inch wheels. The rims of said wheels are painted BMW Signal Green to match the body, while the seats are part-cloth, with a houndstooth material, illustrating Caterham's ability to provide bespoke finishes. Golf GTI tartan inserts were also an option.

The test of our choices began less than half an

hour from the office when we got stuck in the fallout from the M1 being closed. All the roads nearby were jammed, so we spent an hour and a half shadowing the motorway at very low speed. The Seven didn't get flustered but we got rather warm, flinging open the simple doors whenever stationary to get a breeze through the cabin.

The steering is quite weighty because of the relatively wide, 185/55 front tyres (the rears are 215/55s) but the engine is effortlessly tractable, the clutch and gearshift well weighted and, when we finally got onto clear motorway, we found the exhaust reasonably quiet. We went for the race-spec fuel tank, which gives a smallish, 36-litre capacity that we had reckoned in the worst case should take us at least 150 miles. The gauge suggested we were doing much better than that, the needle not yet at the half-full mark by the time we swept onto the M25, so it was quite alarming 20 miles later to spot the needle on zero. We backed off and soft-pedalled

it to the nearest gas station where we found it would take only 16 litres... and the needle stayed on zero. Hmm. Still, 35mpg was a pleasant surprise, and a few miles on, the gauge was working again.

A Seven is a cosy place to be at night on the A3, the interior bathed in a light blue glow from the minor switch lights. You do feel a little vulnerable though, because the view in all the mirrors is a little distorted and every other car that comes piling by is a chubby, high-rise SUV with wheelarch brows level with your eyeline.

I've never driven the Goodwood circuit before, but I've seen plenty of racing on it, particularly enjoying the Revival coverage that has often featured one R Meaden Esq at the pointy end. Given the weather forecast looked dodgy for **evo's** trackday, I made sure I got out as soon as possible after I'd done the first-timer sighting laps, which had revealed what I already suspected: to go quick here, you have to be confident and brave.

I didn't feel I was either of those things exiting



the pitlane, but any Caterham is the perfect learner car because it's fast enough on the straights and very light, so if you arrive too fast or on the wrong line for a corner you can usually correct things. I'd worried that the weighty steering would put a dampener on its on-limit playfulness but once I had a feel for the lines, it all became about the rear and managing mild, power-induced slip. It was brilliant fun, tactile and transparent, carrying speed where bigger, heavier cars were tentative, its braking points tens of yards after those same cars.

All the time at Goodwood comes from having the confidence to carry speed into the corners – all of them – arcing in for the apex with the car up on its toes, all four tyres on the limit of adhesion. As your commitment creeps up, you realise that to go really fast, you have to factor in the mid-corner crest at the first corner, Madgwick, the drop after the apex at St Mary's, and aim for the second apex at Woodcote. It's

brilliant but you don't want to get it wrong.

My colleague James Taylor (above) had taken delivery of our Seven and given it its shakedown test at our Brands Hatch trackday. He had nothing but praise for its performance and handling. However, he did note that it had an appetite for oil and topped up the dry-sump tank a couple of times. I kept a close eye on it at Goodwood and it didn't drink a drop. Odd, but in a good way.

Caterham's staff told James that the car is very responsive to damper settings, giving everything from a 'featherbed' on 1 to super-sporty on 10, and that softening them off for the wet makes a huge difference. So when the rain started to fall at Goodwood, we backed off the Bilsteins from 8 to 3. It's the easiest thing to do and even in the paddock the change in stiffness was obvious; the rear squatted just letting the clutch out.

On track it was amazing. The surface was fully wet but the rain was very light initially and I was amazed at how much traction and grip

the scantily treaded Avons found. The balance of the car was just as it had been in the dry, the rear breaking away in exactly the same places, the speeds feeling close too. The rain got gradually heavier, the surface becoming properly wetted and traction reducing further, but the handling was still progressive and even with the wipers on, the braking points seemed not far off where they'd been in the dry. We passed most of the 'regular' cars in that session and it was properly absorbing, entertaining and rewarding.

Unexpectedly, Goodwood has joined my list of circuits I'd jump at the chance of driving again. As expected, the evo25 Seven has proved great on road and quite superb on track.

John Barker (@evoJB)

Date acquired August 2023 **Total Mileage** 1361 **Mileage this month** 771 **Costs this month** £36 (2 litres of oil) **mpg this month** 28.0



END OF TERM

BMW M5 CS

After living with our 2021 eCoty champ for a full six months, has our opinion of it changed?

WELL, WE WERE WRONG. THE BMW M5 CS may have prevailed at eCoty, edging out the fabulous Lamborghini Huracán STO along the way, but after six months in its company and getting to know it in intimate detail, we all agree it's a bit of an old clunker. Stupid seats. Gold grille. Automatic 'box. Need I go on? I'm not sure what we were thinking back on those amazing roads in Scotland. M5 CS beats Porsche 992 GT3? Or Ferrari SF90? Come on... that's ridiculous.

BMW finally collected the M5 CS after we'd accrued some 9000 miles in the UK and Europe, on road and track. The plan for YH21 FWW is for it to now be inducted into BMW GB's Heritage Fleet. To sit alongside stars like the E30 M3, E46 M3 CSL, E39 M5 and all manner of other wonderful M products. I'm not sure it fits, guys. Honestly. Hands up, we made a mistake. I think the best course of action is just to deliver the CS back to me, quietly forget about it and pretend this whole thing never

happened. Agreed? You have my address.

So yes, the M5 CS has gone. And life will never be quite the same again. I can't think of another car that overcomes so many inherent challenges to deliver such outstanding dynamics. It is a big car. Huge, in fact. The G30-generation 5-series is very similar in size to the E65 7-series (the first Bangle one) and it feels it. At least initially. You sit low in those controversial carbonfibre seats and there's just so much car around you. Parking is a nightmare, although it does seem UK parking bays are marked out around the footprint of an original Golf.

So, it feels wrong. But the funny thing is that you only really notice the scale of the CS in these moments. As soon as you're on the move it feels light, agile and so wonderfully natural to drive. For those who can't see past the E39-generation M5 and turn away from elements such as four-wheel drive and the automatic gearbox, I can

only say the lineage between those two models is tangible and strong. The same easy, thrilling sense of power, sublime balance and aura of invincibility. It's just the CS is wildly faster and so much sharper when you really get going.

What about the everyday stuff? Well, the ride is stiff at very low speeds even in Comfort mode. The heavily bolstered seats worked superbly for me but people did complain about climbing in and out of them, plus the driver's chair showed some wear after just 20,000 miles. The lack of a centre

'It overcomes so many inherent challenges to deliver such outstanding dynamics'



armrest for keys and other paraphernalia was a bit annoying. And that's about it for negatives. The CS really is a tough car to fault. I suppose the fuel costs were a little bit tough to swallow. Or at least they should have been as the 4.4-litre twin-turbocharged V8 averaged around 23mpg. I never resented the consumption for a second, though. Having access to so much performance and such a characterful engine makes it all worthwhile.

However, it is worth saying that the sheer breadth of the CS's talents can lull you into forgetting just how good it is as a pure performance car. Once the ride smooths out – which isn't at much more than 25mph – it's so easy and relaxing to drive that you almost forget to push on occasionally to enjoy its wilder side. Of course, you get to appreciate the clean, connected steering all the time, the polish of those upgraded dampers and the seamless energy of the fast-spinning V8. Even so, a brief bit of full throttle,

carrying proper speed and loading up the chassis through corners is a proper oh-my-god revelation every single time. The CS is shockingly fast, but the real beauty is in its amazing capacity to change direction, and the way the four-wheel-drive system feels so malleable. The dynamics are honey-coated but with a steely control. Simultaneously outrageously sharp and spookily calm.

I suppose the trip to the Nürburgring demonstrated this multifaceted character most clearly. The CS and I quietly negotiated the M25 and M20, skipped through France and Belgium and into Germany, ripped up to an easy 190mph on the autobahn and, the next day, completed two fantastic laps of the track at unbelievable speed and with agility you'd never believe possible of a car that weighs 1825kg. The baby seat was still in the back.

Yet the real revelation for me was on the way back from Le Mans. It was early on the Monday

after the race and plenty of Brits were escaping as quickly as possible. The variety of cars at every fuel stop or toll gate was fantastic. But every time I looked around, the M5 CS won the little game of Top Trumps in my head. Rarer, cooler, less ostentatious, more aggressive, sweeter to drive, faster, more exciting. It just had everything covered. There was no car I'd rather have been driving and it's great to be in something that people who really know recognise is something very special indeed. I'm still regularly asked, 'Is the M5 CS really that good?' The answer is yes. Annoyingly, it deserves pride of place on that Heritage Fleet.

Jethro Bovingdon (@JethroBovingdon)

Date acquired February 2023 **Duration of test** 6 months **Total test mileage** 9153 **Overall mpg** 23.2 **Total costs** £0 **Price when new** £140,780 **Value today** £124,817

NEW ARRIVAL

BMW M4 Competition xDrive

As one M car departs, another arrives. But can M's stellar two-door coupe really justify a £100k+ price tag?

IT'S BEEN A BIT LIKE THE WAIT FOR A particularly longed-for Christmas present as a kid, knowing it's there, wrapped up under the tree, but not being able to play with it until the day itself arrives. (I remember one Christmas staring at a long-wished-for Tamiya radio-controlled car kit so intently I could just about make out the box illustration under the wrapping paper.)

The M4 xDrive arrived at *evo* Towers while I was away on an assignment. When I got back it was there waiting for me, fancy 'Frozen' paint and ceramic brakes and 503bhp squeezed into a parking space, begging to be driven. A few Christmases had come at once for me as I'd been appointed custodian of the M4 for its six months on Fast Fleet. But it arrived just as I needed a car with five doors and a bigger loading bay than the M4's to clear a family member's house. I walked forlornly past the BMW, its carbon seats and carbon roof and six cylinders and switchable all-/rear-wheel drive, and climbed into a permanently front-wheel-drive estate car instead. The M4 remained in its parking space, looking more malevolent than ever.

It didn't stay there for too long: while I was preoccupied with the house move, Dickie Meaden nobly looked after the M4 for me, and it embarked on adventures including a trip to the Borders for the Prodrive P25 cover story in *evo* 313. Now it's back and it's mine, for at least a little while, and it's magnificent.

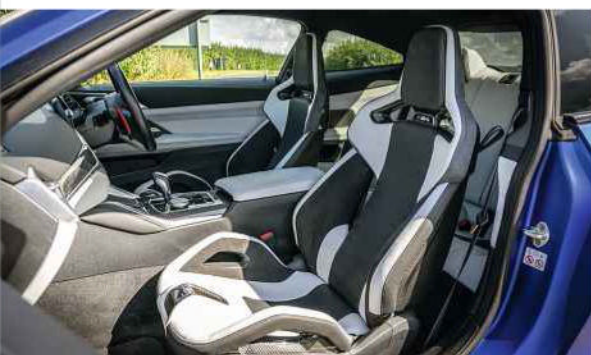
With the CSL sold-out, BMW offers two versions of the M4 in the UK: the rear-wheel-drive M4 Competition, and the all-wheel-drive 'BMW M4 Competition with M xDrive', which is a bit of a mouthful so we'll shorten it to M4 Competition xDrive here. That too can be purely rear-drive some of the time, with the ability to switch between three transmission modes – 4WD, more heavily rear-biased 4WD Sport, and purely 2WD – at a prod of the touchscreen. To do the same trick in the Tamiya I used to take the front driveshafts out; this is more straightforward.

The xDrive version costs £85,375 to the regular M4 Comp's £82,520. To that, this test car adds three ticked option boxes, which add up to a big number. Frozen Portimao Blue paint, which gives the car an

arresting sort-of-matt, kind-of-satin but still metallic finish, is £2985. Then there's the £8395 M Pro Pack, which adds carbon-ceramic brakes with gold calipers (which are proving grabbily sensitive when cold), and also bundles in the M Driver's Pack, which lifts the top speed to 180mph from its usual 155mph limit. Finally, there's the £11,815 Ultimate Pack, with heated steering wheel, keyless entry, automatic steering and lane-keeping (which thankfully can be deactivated), laser headlights, surround-view parking cameras, and carbonfibre trim for the mirrors, rear spoiler, air intakes and diffuser, plus more than a few other options besides.

All in, this is a £105,500 car. And one that I feel a little self-conscious about being in sometimes; there's something slightly ostentatious about driving a big, aggressively styled, eye-catchingly painted car. But the M4 gets a lot of love: the 20-something passenger of a 1-series shouted, 'Your car is *beautiful!*' from the adjacent lane on a dual carriageway loud enough for me to hear it through my closed driver's window; at a drive-through coffee





'To drive, it's fantastic. I think this is the best M4 I've ever driven'

shop, the staff's first words weren't 'Can I take your order?' but 'Wow! This car looks amazing.' The unusual paint is no doubt the biggest component of the head-turning mechanism, but the M4 definitely has presence.

Drinking coffee is a brave man's game in the 'Silverstone and Black' full Merino leather interior (for 'Silverstone' read 'white'), not that it's stopped me yet. That leather is a no-cost option, and in this car some of it is wrapped around the M carbon bucket seats, another part of the Ultimate Pack. These are every bit as controversial as Jethro found them in 'his' M5 CS, with their carbonfibre leg divider and steep lower bolsters that are awkward to climb over, but they really do hold you in place superbly well. BMW says they can even be used for racing, in conjunction with multi-point harnesses. They also

weigh 9kg less than the regular M4 seats, and I love the curved backrest, with fresh-air cutouts either side making it appear to be floating in space.

In the manual BMW M2 we tested in *evo* 312, the carbon centrepiece hit my leg every time I dipped the clutch, but that's less of an issue in the M4, which has no manual gearbox option: an eight-speed auto is the only choice.

I've got used to the controversial grille, a bit like that slightly weird piano-led Arctic Monkeys album; time has softened its impact and I don't mind it, even if I prefer the M4's earlier work from a design point of view. But to drive, it's fantastic. I think this is the best M4 I've ever driven.

Like waiting weeks for the chance to build and drive that Tamiya, being able to finally drive the M4 after the extra wait has made the experience all

the more satisfying. The xDrive is very rear-biased, more of a 'rear-wheel drive plus' than a permanent 4WD system, and much of the time the M4 doesn't feel all-wheel-drive at all. The front end feels just as spookily positive to me as the regular M4's, with fantastic grip on turn-in and a never-ending keenness without feeling nervous or oversensitive.

Like Christmastime in a household with lots of siblings, however, the rest of the team is keen to play with this new toy too. As I write this, John Barker has borrowed it...

James Taylor (@JamesTaylorEVO)

Date acquired July 2023 **Total mileage** 3242 **Mileage this month** 2161 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 25.3

3-MONTH TEST

Jaguar XE 300 Sport

We've just spent three months with Jag's 3-series rival. Three members of the **evo** team give their verdicts

WHISPER IT, BUT I'VE NEVER REALLY BEEN a fan of Jaguars. Don't get me wrong, I've not had any bad experiences with them that have led me to this judgement, rather it's an irrational view based entirely on my dad's absolute blind devotion to the brand. He's had loads over the years before settling on an X-type – probably the closest he'll get to living out his Inspector Morse fantasy. Such is his obsession that throughout my three months running the XE 300 Sport you see here, it was the first thing he asked about on the weekly box-ticking Sunday phone call. 'So, you don't want to know your grandson's GCSE results, no?'

However, when KW72 TYK turned up at **evo** Towers, my lifetime of prejudice evaporated. The XE may have been on sale since 2015, but taking a good look around one again I was struck by how

fresh it still looks. No doubt it helps that the majority of saloons you see these days wear Audi, BMW and Mercedes badges, meaning the XE has been spared the curse of overexposure; you're far more likely to see an F-Pace or one of its SUV siblings than a Jaguar from the class that the brand built its name on.

As **evo**'s art editor, my heart usually sinks when cars arrive looking like they've been specced by Bruce Wayne, but for personal use rather than for the purpose of grabbing your attention on a magazine page, the Carpathian Grey metallic paint (£970) and black trim seemed an excellent combination, bringing an air of subtle menace and aggression (ruined only by a horrible neon-yellow '300 Sport' rear logo that looked like it'd fallen off Valentino Rossi's bike).

Completing the look, and adding a touch of flair when the car was stationary, was the set of 20-inch diamond-turned and satin grey wheels – a no-cost option, as are all the 18 and 19-inch alternatives.

The XE's interior really impressed, too. I immediately fell in love with the black Windsor leather sport seats (£750) and the excellent driving position they afforded, while the dashboard's layout, finish and build oozed quality. The latest infotainment system, which is shared with current Land Rover models, was a pleasure to use, as was the refreshingly sensible mix of digital and real buttons. Top marks to the UI designers. Other options, including a sliding panoramic roof (£1345), head-up display (£700) and ten-colour configurable cabin lighting (£300), brought the total for our XE up from £43,355 basic to £48,950.



'You're more likely to see an F-Pace than a Jaguar from the class the brand built its name on'



TYK's first job was to bring my daughter and all her possessions home from university for the summer, necessitating a dull, straight, three-hour slog up the A1 to Durham. But the ability to tackle such mundane journeys without fuss is exactly why you might choose a car like the XE, isn't it? Sure enough, it crunched the miles in smooth, effortless, comfortable style, the 296bhp four-cylinder returning a respectable mid-30s mpg average.

Loading up the XE before the return leg, however, I feared I might have taken the wrong long-term, as its now-obvious lack of space compared with an estate or SUV was being exposed. A game of Tetris on the back seat got everything in OK, but such practicalities are perhaps a contributing factor in the sad decline in the number of saloon cars on our roads.

A week later and a run to Southwold made for a more enjoyable drive, as the XE got

to wind its way to the coast along many miles of Suffolk B-roads. It handled all their bumps and humps with aplomb, but it was on this journey that I also began to question if the car's undoubted competence in this regard contributed to it feeling less overtly sporting than it might. This was something that played out shortly afterwards when we put TYK into a twin test with Alfa Romeo's Giulia Veloce (see *evo* 313). Having driven both cars, I'd agree with our verdict that the Italian is the more agile and immediately engaging of the pair, but as a car to live with every day, I'd stick with the Jag. You can read what our road-tester types thought about it over the page.

The three months we had with our XE flew by, and when it came to say goodbye, I wished we could've kept it a bit longer. I didn't see it coming, but I've become a Jaguar convert. Maybe it's time for me to start watching *Endeavour* on ITVX...

Richard Browne (@washlander)



OF THE LAST THREE JAGUARS WE HAVE run on **evo's** Fast Fleet, all have delivered far beyond our expectations. You can put an element of this unexpectedness down to Jaguar's position within JLR – feeding off the leftovers from the Land Rover and Range Rover machine that delivers vast profits and unprecedented waiting lists. Jaguar hasn't stood a chance.

Yet it, or rather those responsible for the storied British brand's products, have continued to create models that punch far above their weight. Our F-type 450 left us wondering how Jaguar had built a sports car to rival Aston Martin's Vantage and at the same time a GT that, absence of two rear bucket seats aside, wouldn't embarrass itself in front of Bentley's Continental GT V8 – and for a fraction of the price of either. In fact, in some departments – ride, handling and a sense of being part of the experience rather than a spectator – the tables would be very firmly turned in the F-type's favour.

It was a similar story with the F-Pace SVR that preceded the arrival of our XE. Here was a performance SUV with the prowess to take on Porsche's most focused Macan and Cayenne variants, go grille-to-grille with Aston's DBX and even roll up its sleeves and square up to an RS6 or E63 S estate. Punchy stuff.

Our XE proved to be equally compelling. Hailed at launch as the company's long-awaited and much-talked-about BMW 3-series rival, the model faltered at first, being competitive with its nemesis as well as Mercedes-Benz's C-class and Audi's A4, but not class leading. Yet over time Jaguar has tweaked, finessed and tuned the XE to be more than a genuine rival to all three and a better car in most cases.

What impressed me most with our 300 Sport was how it took the strain out of the mundane motoring we spend the majority of our time at the wheel enduring, but not at the expense of

isolating you from the experience of driving a good car. The majority of those in the market for a three-box saloon will, let's be honest, not have damping control, steering weight and chassis fluidity at the top of their criteria, but they will appreciate the results even if they don't know why.

Such as how the XE floats over poor surfaces without leaving you feeling distanced from the action, the sense of connection throughout the car when it changes direction, the calmness that relaxes when required but also its willingness to get up on its toes if asked.

Only its uninspiring Ingenium engine let the XE down for me. It was quick enough for a family car but lacked the sparkle that is evident throughout the rest of the 300 Sport's DNA. As the XE prepares for retirement I'm left wondering what could have been had it enjoyed the kind of development funds that are lavished on its established rivals.

Stuart Gallagher (@stuartg917)



I'D PRETTY MUCH FORGOTTEN THE XE existed until 'ours' joined the Fleet. Sure, it had a nip-and-tuck in 2019, but it's been on sale for eight years now – in which time Audi, Mercedes and BMW have all launched new-generation compact execs with updated platforms, more tech and, of course, more screens. But dynamic class is timeless, and as I found out during our sports saloon twin test in issue 313, the XE delivers this by the bucketload.

It helps that the XE's relatively compact footprint and aluminium-intensive structure make it lighter than most of its more modern equivalents. A 1651kg kerb weight isn't bad going for a four-wheel-drive sports saloon in 2023 – the BMW M340i xDrive carries an extra 74kg, for example – and this breeds a fluidity and deftness that few of the XE's rivals can emulate.

The best Jaguars have always worked with, rather than against, the road surface, and

the XE is no different – it takes gnarly roads in its stride. The adaptive dampers (part of the Adaptive Dynamics pack that's standard on the 300 Sport) continuously adjust to the conditions, but you wouldn't know it, such is their seamless activation. The XE responds with a clean consistency that draws you into the drive and yields real confidence.

Most refreshing of all, though, is that the XE is just about the right size. Some so-called compact saloons feel like they're outgrowing the class with each new generation, but in the Jag there's scope to enjoy the car on a tight road, carving a line and skimming between the hedgerows. The steering has a natural, linear rate of response, although the XE can feel a touch nose-heavy when you lean on it through direction changes – even with an all-aluminium four-cylinder up front.

Ah yes, the engine. Jaguar's Ingenium four-cylinders have never been the smoothest or most refined, and there's a gruff edge to the 296bhp

unit in the XE. It's a shame, as it undermines the polish elsewhere, but the 300 Sport does pull hard and there's enough grunt to energise the chassis through and out of a corner. The window of adjustability is narrower than in something like a Giulia Veloce, which feels lighter on its feet and more sensitive to tweaks of the throttle and steering, but the Jag counters with more modern tech and tighter fit and finish than its Italian rival.

Ultimately, my money would probably go towards Alfa, but both cars are easily competent enough to keep the German establishment on their toes – even if their sales figures suggest otherwise.

Yousuf Ashraf (@ashrafoncars)

Date acquired May 2023 **Duration of test** 3 months **Total test mileage** 5750 **Overall mpg** 27.5 **Total costs** £0 **Price when new** £48,950 **Value today** £37,990

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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 ROAD (VAT INC)	ENGINE CYL/CVS	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT (CLAIMED)	WEIGHT (TESTED)	BHP/TON (CLAIMED)	0-62MPH (CLAIMED)	0-60MPH (TESTED)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING
Abarth 595 Competizione	256 D	£21,985	4/1368	178/5500	184/3000	1035kg	-	175	6.7	-	140	+ Spirited engine; still looks great - Favours fun over finesse ★★★★★
Abarth 595 Esseesse	264 D	£25,295	4/1368	178/5500	184/3000	1044kg	-	173	6.7	-	140	+ A bundle of fun if you're in the mood for it - Dynamically dated; expensive ★★★★★
Abarth 500e Turismo	314 D	£38,795	113kW	152	173	1410kg	-	110	7.0	-	96	+ Plays the electric supermini role well - It's as expensive as a full-blown hot hatch ★★★★★
Abarth 695 Biposto	205 F	2014-18	4/1369	187/5500	184/3000	997kg*	-	191	5.9	-	143	+ Engineered like a true Abarth product - Expensive for a city car ★★★★★
Alfa Romeo 147 GTA	187 F	2003-06	6/3179	247/6200	221/4800	1360kg	-	185	6.3	6.0	153	+ Mk1 Focus RS pace without the histrionics - Slightly nose-heavy ★★★★★
Audi A1 40 TFSI	256 D	£24,470	4/1984	197/6000	236/1500	1260kg	-	159	6.5	-	155	+ Capable - It's no SI replacement ★★★★★
Audi S1	246 F	2014-18	4/1984	228/6000	273/1600	1315kg	-	176	5.8	-	155	+ Compliant and engaging chassis; quick, too - Looks dull without options ★★★★★
Audi A1 quattro	264 F	2013	4/1984	253/6000	258/2500	1420kg	-	181	5.7	-	152	+ Polished 253bhp 4WD A1 - Just 19 came to the UK, with a Porsche Cayman price ★★★★★
Audi S3 Sportback	279 D	£38,475	4/1984	306/5450	295/2000	1500kg	-	207	4.8	-	155	+ Less one-dimensional than its predecessor - Breaks little new ground ★★★★★
Audi S3	188 F	2013-20	4/1984	296/5500	280/1800	1395kg	-	216	5.2	5.4	155	+ Lots of grip and one of the best-sounding four-pot turbos - Still a little too clinical ★★★★★
Audi RS3 Sportback	292 D	£55,230	5/2480	394/5600	369/2250	1570kg	-	255	3.8	-	155	+ Improved chassis makes the RS3 a contender at last - Engine and gearbox hold it back ★★★★★
Audi RS3 Sportback	256 F	2017-21	5/2480	394/5850	354/1700	1510kg	-	265	4.1	-	155	+ Hugely quick point-to-point - Sometimes speed isn't the be-all and end-all ★★★★★
Audi RS3 Sportback	221 F	2015-16	5/2480	362/5500	343/1625	1520kg	-	242	4.3	3.6	155	+ Addictive five-cylinder noise; monster pace - Chassis not exactly playful ★★★★★
BMW 128ti	290 F	£33,885	4/1998	261/4750	295/1750	1445kg	-	184	6.1	-	155	+ Strong showroom appeal - Lacks precision ★★★★★
BMW M135i xDrive	271 F	£38,440	4/1998	302/5000	332/1800	1525kg	-	201	4.8	-	155	+ Strong performance, monster 4WD traction - Engine lacks character ★★★★★
BMW M235i xDrive Gran Coupé	274 D	£39,315	4/1998	302/5000	332/1800	1570kg	-	195	4.8	-	155	+ Quick, with an able chassis and quality cabin - Just not that exciting ★★★★★
BMW M135i	212 F	2012-15	6/2979	321/5800	332/1300	1430kg	-	228	5.1	5.2	155	+ Powertrain, noise, chassis - M235i looks nicer, and has an LSD option ★★★★★
Citroën DS3 1.6 THP	142 F	2010-15	4/1598	154/6000	177/1400	1240kg	-	126	7.3	-	133	+ A proper French hot hatch - Petrolheads might find it too 'designed' ★★★★★
Citroën DS3 Racing	153 D	2011-12	4/1598	204/6000	203/2000	1240kg	-	167	6.5	-	146	+ A faster, feistier DS3 - Not as hardcore as its 'Racing' tag suggests ★★★★★
Citroën AX GT	195 F	1987-92	4/1360	85/6400	86/4000	722kg	-	120	9.2	-	110	+ Makes terrific use of 85bhp - Feels like it's made from paper ★★★★★
Cupra Born 230 (77kWh)	-	£34,495	170kW	228	229	1875kg	-	124	7.0	-	99	+ A good everyday EV - Not as exciting as you'd hope ★★★★★
Cupra Leon e-Hybrid	280 D	£34,495	4/1395	242	295	1596kg	-	154	6.7	-	140	+ Steers and handles neatly; tax-friendly - Can't decide if it's a hot hatch or a Prius rival ★★★★★
Cupra Leon 300	290 F	£35,575	4/1984	296/5300	295/2000	1415kg	-	213	5.7	-	155	+ More agile than a Mk8 Golf Clubsport - Not as confidence-inspiring; forgettable looks ★★★★★
DS 3 Performance	222 D	2016-18	4/1598	205/6000	221/3000	1175kg	-	177	6.5	-	143	+ All the right ingredients - Undercooked ★★★★★
Fiat Panda 100HP	273 F	2006-11	4/1368	99/6000	97/4250	975kg	1028kg	103	9.5	-	115	+ About as fun as small cars get - Optional ESP can't be turned off ★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST (Mk8)	259 F	£21,655	3/1497	197/6000	214/1600	1187kg	-	169	6.5	-	144	+ Highly talented, with real depth to its character - Can get wrong-footed on bad tarmac ★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST Edition / Performance Edition	292 F	£28,770	3/1497	197/6000	214/1600	1187kg	-	169	6.5	-	144	+ Like the regular Fiesta ST, but with added composure - How much?! ★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST (Mk7)	207 F	2013-17	4/1596	197/5700	214/2500	1088kg	1193kg	184	6.9	7.4	137	+ Chassis, price, punchy performance - Have you heard of Mountune? ★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST200 (Mk7)	309 F	2016	4/1596	212/6000	236/2500	1088kg	-	198	6.7	-	143	+ Massive fun - Wasn't around for long ★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST (Mk6)	075 D	2005-08	4/1999	148/6000	140/4500	1137kg	-	132	7.9	-	129	+ Great looks, decent brakes - Disappointing chassis, gutless engine ★★★★★
Ford Focus ST (Mk4)	310 D	£36,950	4/2261	276/5500	310/3000	1433kg	-	196	5.7	-	155	+ A return to form - Lacks the poise and precision of the very best ★★★★★
Ford Focus ST Edition (Mk4)	294 D	2021-21	4/2261	276/5500	310/3000	1433kg	-	196	5.7	-	155	+ Elevates the Focus ST from its underdog status - Needs a better engine and steering ★★★★★
Ford Focus ST (Mk3)	207 F	2015-18	4/1999	247/5500	265/2000	1362kg	-	184	6.5	-	154	+ Excellent engine - Scrappy when pushed ★★★★★
Ford Focus ST (Mk2)	119 F	2005-10	5/2522	222/6000	236/1600	1392kg	-	162	6.8	6.7	150	+ Value, performance, integrity - Big engine compromises handling ★★★★★
Ford Focus RS (Mk3)	246 F	2015-18	4/2261	345/6000	347/2000	1547kg	1569kg	227	4.7	4.9	166	+ Torque-vectoring 4WD brought new sensations to a hot hatch - Needs to be driven hard ★★★★★
Ford Focus RS Edition (Mk3)	246 D	2018	4/2261	345/6000	347/2000	1547kg	-	227	4.7	-	166	+ Front limited-slip differential brings more precise handling - Pricey and still heavy ★★★★★
Ford Focus RS (Mk2)	195 F	2009-11	5/2522	300/6500	324/2300	1467kg	-	208	5.9	5.9	163	+ Huge performance, highly capable FWD chassis - Body control is occasionally clumsy ★★★★★
Ford Focus RS500 (Mk2)	256 F	2010-11	5/2522	345/6000	339/2500	1467kg	-	239	5.6	5.6	165	+ More power and presence than regular Mk2 RS - Pricey ★★★★★
Ford Focus RS (Mk1)	312 F	2002-03	4/1998	212/5500	229/3500	1278kg	-	169	6.7	5.9	143	+ Some are great - Some are awful (so make sure you drive plenty) ★★★★★
Ford Escort RS Cosworth	271 F	1992-96	4/1993	224/6250	224/3500	1275kg	-	179	6.2	-	137	+ The ultimate Essex hot hatch - Unmodified ones are rare, and pricey ★★★★★
Ford Puma 1.7	095 F	1997-2002	4/1679	123/6300	116/4500	1041kg	-	120	9.2	8.6	122	+ Revvy engine, sparkling chassis, bargain used prices - Rusty rear arches ★★★★★
Ford Racing Puma	262 F	2000-01	4/1679	153/7000	119/4500	1174kg	-	132	7.9	7.8	137	+ An affordable exotic - Corroding rear arches ★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (FL5)	307 F	£46,995	4/1996	324/6500	310/2500	1429kg	1437kg	230	5.4	-	171	+ Still at the top of its game - Can feel too stiff on rough roads ★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (FK8)	288 F	2017-21	4/1996	316/6500	295/2500	1380kg	1409kg	233	5.8	5.9	168	+ One of the greatest hot hatches ever - Its looks are challenging for some ★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R Limited Edition (FK8)	293 F	2021	4/1996	316/6500	295/2500	1333kg	-	241	5.8	-	168	+ Terrifically capable, blisteringly quick, still practical - Standard FK8 is a better road car ★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (FK2)	227 F	2015-17	4/1996	306/6500	295/2500	1378kg	-	226	5.7	5.4	167	+ Great on smooth roads - Can be punishing on less-than-smooth roads ★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (FN2)	102 F	2007-11	4/1998	198/7800	142/5500	1267kg	-	158	6.6	6.8	146	+ Looks great, VTEC more accessible - Steering lacks feel, inert balance ★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R Mugen (FN2)	248 F	2009-11	4/1998	237/8300	157/6250	1233kg	-	195	5.9	-	155	+ Fantastic on road and track - Only 20 were made, and they're a tad pricey... ★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (EP3)	287 F	2001-05	4/1998	197/7400	145/5900	1204kg	-	166	6.8	6.8	146	+ Potent and great value - Duff steering ★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (EK9)	210 F	1997-2000	4/1595	182/8200	118/7500	1040kg	-	178	6.8	-	135	+ Sublime early incarnation of the Type R recipe - Good ones are thin on the ground ★★★★★
Hyundai i20 N	293 F	£26,530	4/1591	201/5500	203/1750	1190kg	-	172	6.2	-	143	+ A serious threat to the Fiesta ST - Ride can be a bit thumpy ★★★★★
Hyundai i30 N	307 F	£35,110	4/1998	216/5500	289/2100	1419kg	1465kg	198	5.9	-	155	+ A brilliant, thoroughly developed hot hatch - Its engine isn't the most charismatic ★★★★★
Hyundai i30 Fastback N Performance	269 F	£29,995	4/1998	271/6000	279/1750	1441kg	-	191	6.1	-	155	+ As above, but with a fractionally more mature ride and soundtrack - As above ★★★★★
Hyundai Kona N	291 D	£35,395	4/1998	276/5500	289/2100	1510kg	-	186	5.5	-	149	+ Unexpectedly tight chassis - Worthy of a better engine ★★★★★

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE (IN THOUSANDS ON SALE)	ENGINE CV/L CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT (KILOGRAMS)	WEIGHT (POUNDS)	BHP/TON (KILOWATT)	0-62MPH (SECONDS)	0-60MPH (SECONDS)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
Kia Ceed GT	267 F	£25,850	4/1591	201/6000	195/1500	1386kg	-	147	7.2	-	143	+ Feels like a detuned i30 N - Lacks personality	★★★★☆
Kia ProCeed GT	259 D	£28,135	4/1591	201/6000	195/1500	1438kg	-	142	7.2	-	140	+ Flexible engine, handsome shooting brake body - It's warm rather than hot	★★★★☆
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 S (F56)	254 D	£17,635	3/1499	134/4500	162/1250	1085kg	-	125	7.9	-	130	+ Driving a slow car fast - Driving a car with Union Jack tail lights	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S (F56)	268 F	£20,925	4/1998	189/4700	221/1250	1195kg	-	161	6.8	-	146	+ Feels darty and alive at moderate speeds - Loses its composure when you push harder	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works (F56)	211 F	£25,950	4/1998	228/5200	236/1250	1200kg	-	193	6.3	-	153	+ Fast, agile, nimble - Chassis lacks sparkle found in previous JCWs	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works GP (F56)	280 F	£33,895	4/1998	302/1750	332/1750	1255kg	-	244	5.2	-	164	+ Street-fighter looks, illustrious predecessors - Better at style than it is substance	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works Challenge (F56)	237 F	2016-17	4/1998	228/5200	236/1250	1215kg	-	191	6.3	-	152	+ A more hardcore JCW - The ride could be considered a little too hardcore	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper (R56)	185 F	2009-14	4/1598	120/6000	118/4250	1075kg	-	113	9.1	-	126	+ Brilliant ride and composure; could be all the Mini you need - You'll still buy the 'S'	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S (R56)	149 F	2006-14	4/1598	181/5500	177/1600	1140kg	-	161	7.0	7.0	142	+ Like the Cooper, but with added shove - Google 'Mini death rattle'	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works (R56)	184 F	2008-14	4/1598	208/6000	206/2000	1160kg	1228kg	182	6.9	7.2	148	+ A seriously rapid Mini - Occasionally just a little unruly	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works GP (R56)	231 F	2013-14	4/1598	215/6000	206/2000	1160kg	1178kg	188	6.3	-	150	+ Brazenly hyperactive - Too much for some roads and some tastes	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works Coupé (R58)	164 F	2011-15	4/1598	208/6000	206/2000	1175kg	-	180	6.3	-	149	+ The usual raucous Mini JCW experience - But wearing a backwards baseball cap	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S (R53)	077 F	2002-06	4/1598	168/6000	155/4000	1140kg	-	143	7.2	7.8	135	+ Strong performance, quality feel - Over-long gearing	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S Works GP (R53)	262 F	2006	4/1598	215/7100	184/4600	1090kg	-	200	6.5	-	149	+ Storming engine, agility - Almost too mannered for a road racer	★★★★☆
MG4 Trophy	312 D	£32,495	150kW	200	184	1685kg	-	121	7.7	-	100	+ Value for money - Don't expect any thrills	★★★★☆
Nissan Juke Nismo RS	208 D	2015-17	4/1618	215/6000	206/3600	1315kg	-	166	7.0	-	137	+ Quirky character and bold styling - Not a match for a pukka hot hatch	★★★★☆
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 2)	273 F	1997-98	4/1587	103/6200	97/3500	865kg	889kg	121	8.8	-	121	+ Bargain no-frills thrills - Not as much fizz as original 1.3	★★★★☆
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 1)	095 F	1994-96	4/1294	100/7200	80/5400	826kg	-	123	10.6	-	118	+ Frantic, thrashy fun - Needs caning to extract full potential	★★★★☆
Peugeot 106 GTi 16v	034 F	1997-2004	4/1587	120/6600	107/5200	950kg	-	128	7.4	-	127	+ Fine handling supermini - Looks its age	★★★★☆
Peugeot 208 GTi by Peugeot Sport	254 F	2015-18	4/1598	205/6000	221/3000	1160kg	1195kg	180	6.5	-	143	+ A brilliantly focused small hatch - Obscured dials	★★★★☆
Peugeot 208 GTi	184 F	2012-16	4/1598	197/5800	203/1700	1160kg	1210kg	173	6.8	6.8	143	+ Agile chassis works well on tough roads - Could be more involving	★★★★☆
Peugeot 205 GTi 1.9	195 F	1988-91	4/1905	130/6000	119/4750	910kg	-	145	7.6	-	124	+ Still scintillating after all these years - Brittle build quality	★★★★☆
Peugeot 308 GTi by Peugeot Sport	245 F	2015-18	4/1598	256/6000	251/2100	1205kg	1316kg	224	6.0	6.0	155	+ A great entertainer with a cracker of an engine - Tiny steering wheel	★★★★☆
Peugeot 306 GTi 16	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	-	169	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	+ Pocket 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 / RS Trophy	298 F	2018-21	4/1798	296/6000	310/4000	1443kg	-	209	5.7	-	158	+ More potent and capable than ever - Auto only; Trophy's ride can be unforgiving	★★★★☆
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 enjoyed - Can feel rather plain	★★★★☆
SEAT Leon Cupra R	244 D	2018	4/1984	306/5800	280/1800	1378kg	-	226	5.8	-	155	+ Sharper handling and better body control - High price and limited availability	★★★★☆
SEAT Leon Cupra	105 F	2007-11	4/1984	237/5700	221/2200	1375kg	-	175	6.4	-	153	+ Great engine, composure - Doesn't have the adjustability of the old Cupra R	★★★★☆
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk4)	281 D	£29,815	4/1984	242/5000	273/1600	1445kg	-	170	6.7	-	155	+ A capable Q-car for the masses - Engine lacks character	★★★★☆
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk3)	187 D	2013-17	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1345kg	-	164	6.8	-	154	+ Quick, agile, roomier than a Golf - Ride is harsh for what could be a family car	★★★★☆
Skoda Octavia vRS 245 (Mk3)	250 F	2010-20	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)	314 F	£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 xDrive (G81)	314 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 Touring (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 are only two rear seats?	★★★★★
BMW M5 (F10)	208 F	2011-16	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1870kg	-	300	4.4	-	155	+ Twin-turbocharging suits M5 well - Can feel heavy at times	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E60)	129 F	2004-10	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1755kg	-	289	4.7	-	155	+ Close to being the ultimate supersaloon - SMG gearbox feels old-tech	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E39)	268 F	1998-2003	8/4941	394/6600	369/3800	1795kg	-	223	5.3	4.9	155	+ Magnificent V8-engined supersaloon - We'd be nitpicking	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E34)	110 F	1988-95	6/3795	335/6900	295/4750	1725kg	-	197	5.8	4.9	155	+ The Godfather of supersaloons - The family can come too	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E28)	258 F	1984-88	6/3453	282/6500	251/4500	1431kg	-	200	6.1	-	156	+ The original storming saloon - Understated looks	★★★★★
BMW M6 Gran Coupé	190 D	2013-18	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1875kg	-	299	4.2	-	155	+ Enormous performance, stylish looks - Looks overpriced next to rivals, M5 included	★★★★★
BMW i7 xDrive60	310 D	£110,545	420kW	536	546	2640kg	-	206	6.1	-	149	+ A great EV limo - An S-class is better	★★★★★
BMW XM	309 D	£148,060	8/4395	644	590	2710kg	-	241	4.3	-	168	+ Stunning high-speed cruising ability - Heavy and clumsy	★★★★★
BMW Alpina D3 S Touring	286 D	£66,000	6/2993	350/5500	538/2500	1935kg	-	184	4.8	-	167	+ The best fast diesel you can buy - The B3	★★★★★
BMW Alpina B3 Touring	281 D	£80,700	6/2993	456/5500	516/2500	1865kg	-	248	3.9	-	186	+ A richer, smoother drive than an M-car - Little different to an M340i at low speeds	★★★★★
BMW Alpina B4 Gran Coupé	311 D	£79,900	6/2993	488/5000	538/2500	1890kg	-	262	3.7	-	187	+ Exclusivity, refinement, pace - Slightly aloof in terms of involvement	★★★★★
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	★★★★★
BMW Alpina B8 Gran Coupé	314 D	£140,300	8/4394	612/5500	590/2000	2100kg	-	296	3.4	-	201	+ Nails its luxury-GT brief - Not as driver-focused as some other Alpinas	★★★★★
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	★★★★★
Forer 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	£133,220	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	1717kg	-	143	6.4	-	146	+ Striking looks, quality interior - Lacklustre engine; dull and unresolved handling	★★★★★
Jaguar XE 300 Sport	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	★★★★★

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE ON YEAR'S ON SALE	ENGINE CV/L CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT (CARS)	WEIGHT (TEST)	BHP/TON (CARS)	0-62MPH (CARS)	0-60MPH (TEST)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
Jaguar XFR	181 D	2009-15	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1800kg	-	284	4.7	4.8	155	+ Brilliant blend of pace and refinement - Doesn't sound as special as it is	★★★★☆
Jaguar XFR-S	208 F	2013-15	8/5000	542/6500	501/2500	1800kg	-	306	4.6	-	186	+ XF turned up to 12 - Tyres aren't cheap	★★★★☆
Jaguar XJR	191 D	2014-17	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1875kg	-	294	4.6	-	174	+ Hot-rod vibe, fine cabin - Opinion-dividing looks	★★★★☆
Jaguar F-Pace SVR	262 D	£78,165	8/5000	542/6000	501/2500	1995kg	-	276	4.3	-	176	+ A great candidate for SVO's attentions - It's still an SUV	★★★★☆
Jaguar I-Pace HSE	251 D	£74,395	294kW	394	513	2208kg	-	181	4.8	-	124	+ Impressive chassis and point-to-point pace - Range anxiety and hefty kerb weight	★★★★☆
Kia 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	361/2300	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	£170,500	1000kW	1111	1025	2360kg	-	478	2.5	-	168	+ An EV that engages the driver - Sacrifices ultimate handling for a longer range	★★★★☆
Maserati Ghibli Trofeo	290 D	£110,900	8/3799	572/6750	538/2250	1969kg	2076kg	295	4.3	-	203	+ Subtle performance elegantly delivered - It's quite expensive	★★★★☆
Maserati Grecale Trofeo	310 D	£95,860	6/3000	523/6500	457/3000	2027kg	-	262	3.8	-	177	+ Rapid and accomplished - Lacks character and ultimate flair	★★★★☆
Maserati Quattroporte S	184 D	2013-18	6/2979	404/5500	406/1750	1860kg	-	221	5.1	-	177	+ Tempting alternative to V8 - Feel-free steering, ride lacks decorum	★★★★☆
Maserati Quattroporte GTS	226 D	2016-18	8/3798	523/6800	479/2250	1900kg	-	280	4.7	-	193	+ Still pretty - Off the pace dynamically	★★★★☆
Maserati Quattroporte Trofeo	287 D	£134,285	8/3799	572/6750	538/2250	2000kg	-	291	4.5	-	203	+ An alluring alternative to the German defaults - How much?!	★★★★☆
Maserati Quattroporte S	137 F	2008-12	8/4691	425/7000	361/14750	1990kg	-	216	5.4	5.1	174	+ A QP with the bhp it deserves - Grille is a bit Hannibal Lecter	★★★★☆
Maserati Quattroporte Sport GTS	141 F	2008-12	8/4691	433/7000	361/14750	1990kg	-	221	5.1	-	177	+ The most stylish of supersaloons - Slightly wooden brakes, unforgiving ride	★★★★☆
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 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	1955kg	-	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 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	577/5500	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	577/5500	560/1750	2275kg	-	258	4.2	-	155	+ Subtler than an X6 M - More force than finesse	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG G63	250 D	£164,550	8/3982	577/6000	627/2500	2485kg	-	236	4.5	-	137	+ Vastly improved chassis, fabulous engine - Dynamic ability still limited	★★★★☆
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-300 SST	118 F	2008-14	4/1998	290/6500	300/3500	1590kg	-	185	4.5	5.2	155	+ First Evo with a twin-clutch transmission - Not as exciting as its predecessors	★★★★☆
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-330 SST	134 F	2008-14	4/1998	324/6500	322/3500	1590kg	-	207	4.4	-	155	+ Great engine and gearbox combo - It still lives in the shadow of the Evo IX	★★★★☆
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-360	122 D	2008-14	4/1998	354/6500	363/3500	1560kg	-	231	4.0	-	155	+ Ridiculously rapid Evo - A five-speed gearbox?	★★★★☆
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-400	181 F	2009-10	4/1998	403/6500	387/3500	1560kg	-	262	3.8	-	155	+ Most powerful factory Evo ever... - ...about X grand too much when new	★★★★☆
Mitsubishi Evo IX FQ-340	088 F	2005-08	4/1997	345/6800	321/4600	1400kg	-	250	4.2	4.3	157	+ Gives Porsche drivers nightmares - Points. Lots of	★★★★☆
Mitsubishi Evo IX MR FQ-360	181 F	2005-08	4/1997	366/6887	363/3200	1400kg	-	266	4.0	-	157	+ Well-executed engine upgrades - Prison food	★★★★☆
Mitsubishi Evo VIII	055 F	2003-05	4/1997	276/6500	289/3500	1410kg	-	199	5.1	-	157	+ The Evo grows up - Brakes need beefing up	★★★★☆
Mitsubishi Evo 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 4SE-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 F	£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 - Swoopier 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 RS. Less of a headbanger than the Cayman GT4 RS and far less intimidating than the latest 911 GT3 RS, the 718 Spyder RS is perhaps the most immediately loveable of all the recent Porsche RS models and sees the internal-combustion-engined Boxster bow out on a high.



BEST OF THE REST

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

MAKE & MODEL

	ISSUE NO.	PRICE ON ROAD ON SALE	ENGINE CVT/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT (CLAMOR)	WEIGHT (TESTED)	BHP/TON (CLAMOR)	0-62MPH (CLAMOR)	0-60MPH (TESTED)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING
Abarth 124 Spider	256 F	2016-19	4/1368	168/5500	184/2500	1060kg	-	161	6.8	-	143	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo 8C Spider	161 F	2009-11	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1675kg	-	273	4.4	-	181	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 4	273 F	£39,975	4/1996	320/6500	310/3000	595kg	-	546	2.8	-	162	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3.24S	248 F	2018-12	4/1998	245/8600	177/7200	520kg	-	479	3.1	-	145	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3.5 Supercharged	180 D	2013-18	4/1998	310/8400	169/7200	550kg	608kg	573	2.7	-	155	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3.5R	255 F	2014-18	4/1998	350/8400	243/6100	550kg	-	647	2.6	-	155	★★★★★
Ariel Nomad	294 F	£33,000	4/2354	235/7200	221/4300	670kg*	-	365	3.4	-	134	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vantage Roadster	279 D	£131,250	8/3982	503/6000	505/2000	1745kg	-	293	3.8	-	190	★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage Roadster (4.7)	130 F	2009-16	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1710kg	-	250	4.8	-	180	★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage S Roadster	161 F	2011-17	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1690kg	-	258	4.8	-	189	★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage Roadster	175 F	2012-14	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1760kg	-	294	4.5	-	190	★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage S Roadster	212 F	2014-17	12/5935	565/6750	457/5750	1745kg	-	329	4.1	-	201	★★★★★
Aston Martin DB11 Volante	258 D	2018-23	8/3982	503/6000	498/2000	1870kg	-	273	4.1	-	187	★★★★★
Audi TTS Roadster (Mk3)	207 D	£56,435	4/1984	302/5400	295/2000	1495kg	-	205	4.8	-	155	★★★★★
Audi TT RS Roadster (Mk3)	250 D	£59,915	5/2480	394/5850	354/1700	1530kg	-	262	3.9	-	155	★★★★★
BAC Mono 2.5	229 F	£167,940	4/2488	305/8000	227/5500	580kg*	645kg	534	2.8	-	170	★★★★★
BAC Mono R	320 D	£218,000	4/2488	342/8800	243/-	555kg*	-	626	2.5	-	170	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT Speed Convertible	291 D	£230,900	12/5950	650/5000	664/1500	2436kg	-	271	3.7	-	208	★★★★★
Bentley Mulliner Bacalar	286 F	£1.5m	12/5950	650/5000	664/1500	2384kg	-	277	<3.8	-	200+	★★★★★
BMW Z4 M40i	256 D	£56,475	6/2998	335/5000	369/1600	1535kg	-	222	4.6	-	155	★★★★★
BMW Z8	026 F	2000-03	8/4941	400/6600	369/3800	1585kg	-	256	4.7	4.8	155	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 170R	291 F	£32,585	3/660	84/6500	86/4000	440kg*	-	194	6.9	-	105	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 360	209 F	£40,085	4/1999	180/7300	143/6100	560kg*	-	327	4.8	-	130	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 420	223 F	£43,585	4/1999	210/7600	150/6300	560kg*	-	381	3.8	4.0	136	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 420 Cup	299 F	£54,990	4/1999	210/7600	150/6300	560kg*	578kg	369	3.6	-	136	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 620S	220 D	£56,990	4/1999	310/7700	219/7350	610kg*	-	516	3.4	-	155	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 620R	255 F	£64,990	4/1999	310/7700	219/7350	572kg*	580kg	551	2.8	-	155	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 160	239 F	2013-17	3/660	80/7000	79/3400	490kg*	-	166	6.9	-	100	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Roadsport 125	105 F	2007-14	4/1596	125/6100	120/5350	539kg*	-	235	5.9	-	112	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Supersport	165 F	2011-14	4/1596	140/6900	120/5790	520kg*	-	273	4.9	-	120	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Supersport R	180 D	2013-14	4/1999	180/7300	143/6100	535kg*	-	342	4.8	-	130	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Superlight R300	150 F	2009-12	4/1999	175/7000	139/6000	515kg*	-	345	4.5	-	140	★★★★★
Caterham Seven CSR 260	094 F	2006-17	4/2261	256/7500	200/6200	565kg*	598kg	460	3.1	3.8	155	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Superlight R500	123 F	2008-14	4/1999	263/8500	177/7200	506kg*	-	528	2.9	-	150	★★★★★
Caterham Seven R500	200 F	1999-2006	4/1796	230/8600	155/7200	460kg*	-	510	3.4	3.6	146	★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette Stingray Convertible (C8)	292 D	£97,890	8/6162	475/6450	452/4500	1692kg	-	285	3.5	-	184	★★★★★
Dallara Stradale	267 F	£162,000	4/2300	394/6200	369/3000	855kg*	-	468	3.3	-	174	★★★★★
Elemental Rpt (2.3)	255 F	£139,800	4/2261	320	354	620kg*	-	557	2.6	-	165	★★★★★
Ferrari Portofino M	288 D	£175,345	8/3855	611/5750	560/3000	1664kg	-	373	3.5	-	199	★★★★★
Honda S2000	243 F	1999-2009	4/1997	237/8300	153/7500	1260kg	-	191	6.2	-	150	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type Convertible P450 RWD	271 D	£84,125	8/5000	444/6000	428/2500	1660kg	-	272	4.6	-	177	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type Project 7	212 F	2015	8/5000	567/6500	501/2500	1585kg	-	363	3.9	-	186	★★★★★
KTM X-Bow GT	183 D	2013-22	4/1984	281/6400	310/3200	875kg	-	326	4.1	-	144	★★★★★
KTM X-Bow R	165 F	2010-22	4/1984	296/6300	295/3300	816kg	-	369	3.9	-	144	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Club Racer (S3)	183 F	2011-15	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	852kg	-	160	6.5	-	127	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Sport 220 (S3)	244 F	2017-20	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	904kg	-	244	4.6	-	145	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Sprint 220 (S3)	254 F	2018-19	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	878kg	-	251	4.5	-	145	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Sport 240 Final Edition (S3)	285 F	2021	4/1798	237/7200	181/3000	922kg	-	261	4.1	-	147	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Cup 250 (S3)	279 F	2016-21	4/1798	245/7200	184/3500	931kg	-	267	3.9	-	154	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Cup 260 (S3)	243 F	2018-19	4/1798	250/7200	195/5500	902kg	-	282	4.2	-	151	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Sport 135 (S2)	040 D	2003	4/1796	135/6200	129/4800	726kg	-	189	5.4	-	129	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S (S2)	104 F	2006-10	4/1794	134/6200	127/4200	860kg	-	158	6.1	6.3	127	★★★★★
Lotus Elise 111S (S2)	049 F	2002-04	4/1796	156/7000	129/4650	860kg	-	197	5.1	-	131	★★★★★
Lotus Elise SC (S2)	131 F	2008-11	4/1794	218/8000	156/5000	870kg	-	254	4.6	4.5	145	★★★★★
Lotus Elise (S1)	235 F	1996-2001	4/1796	118/5500	122/3000	725kg	-	165	5.9	6.1	126	★★★★★
Lotus 3-Eleven	220 F	2016-17	6/3456	410/7000	302/3000	925kg*	-	450	3.4	-	174	★★★★★
Lotus 3-Eleven 430	248 F	2017-19	6/3456	430/7000	325/4500	920kg*	-	475	3.2	-	180	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven	126 F	2007-11	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	720kg	-	267	4.5	-	140	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven Supercharged	123 F	2007-11	4/1796	252/8000	179/7000	745kg	-	344	4.0	-	150	★★★★★
Lotus 340R	126 F	2000	4/1796	190/7800	146/5000	701kg	-	275	4.5	4.5	126	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.5 (Mk4)	230 F	£25,825	4/1496	129/7000	111/4800	975kg	-	134	8.3	-	127	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 2.0 (Mk4, 184PS)	299 F	£30,410	4/1998	181/7000	151/4000	1052kg	1073kg	175	6.5	-	136	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 RF 2.0 (Mk4, 184PS)	256 F	£32,310	4/1998	181/7000	151/4000	1073kg	-	171	6.8	-	137	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 2.0 (Mk4)	228 F	2015-18	4/1998	158/6000	147/4600	1000kg	-	161	7.3	-	133	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 2.0i (Mk3.5)	212 F	2009-15	4/1999	158/7000	139/5000	1098kg	-	146	7.6	-	138	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk3)	091 F	2005-09	4/1798	124/6500	123/4500	1080kg	-	108	9.3	-	122	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk2)	017 F	1998-2005	4/1839	146/7000	124/5000	1065kg	-	140	8.5	-	123	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.6 (Mk1)	268 F	1989-97	4/1597	115/6500	100/5500	971kg	-	120	8.8	-	114	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG SL55 4Matic+	305 F	£147,715	8/3982	469/5500	516/2250	1875kg	1940kg	254	3.9	-	183	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG SL63 4Matic+	314 D	£171,965	8/3982	571/5550	590/2500	1895kg	-	309	3.6	-	196	★★★★★
Morgan Super 3	300 F	£43,165	3/1432	118/6500	110/4500	635kg*	-	189	7.0	-	130	★★★★★
Morgan 3 Wheeler	198 F	2012-21	2/1976	82/5250	103/3250	525kg*	-	159	6.0	-	115	★★★★★
Morgan Plus Four	279 F	£71,830	4/1998	255/5500	258/1000	1013kg*	-	256	5.2	-	149	★★★★★
Morgan Plus Four CX-T	294 F	£204,000	4/1998	255/5500	258/1000	1213kg*	-	214	c6.0	-	c140	★★★★★
Morgan Plus Six	269 F	£90,390	6/2998	335/6500	369	1075kg*	-	317	4.2	-	166	★★★★★
Morgan Aero 8	105 F	2001-10	8/4799	362/6300	361/3400	1180kg*	-	312	4.5	-	170	★★★★★
Morgan Aero GT	255 F	2018	8/4799	367/6300	370/3400	1180kg*	-	316	4.5	-	170	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Boxster	224 D	£53,800	4/1988	296/6500	280/1950	1335kg	-	225	5.1	-	170	★★★★★

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE OR YEAR ON SALE	ENGINE CV/L CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT (CL. LMD)	WEIGHT (LBS)	BHP/TON (CL. LMD)	0-62MPH (CL. LMD)	0-60MPH (LMD)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
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	-	266	4.6	-	180	+ The best four-pot Boxster spec - Doesn't come cheap	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Boxster GTS 4.0	286 D	£75,300	6/3995	394/7000	310/5000	1405kg	-	285	4.5	-	182	+ It's got the Cayman GT4 six-cylinder, minus 200rpm - Gearshift not as crisp as the GT4's	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Spyder	272 F	2019-23	6/3995	414/7600	310/5000	1420kg	-	296	4.4	-	187	+ Essentially a drop-top Cayman GT4 - Including its long gearing	★★★★★
+ Porsche 718 Spyder RS	314 D	£123,000	6/3996	493/8400	332/6750	1410kg	-	355	3.4	-	191	+ A hugely appealing RS for road driving - We'll never see another like it	★★★★★
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-broily 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	-	188	+ Performance, handling, useability - 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	214 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 Chimera 5.0	258 F	1993-2003	8/4997	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	-	307	4.4	-	167	+ Gorgeous noise, tarmac-ripping grunt - Details	★★★★★
TVR Griffith 4.3	068 F	1992-93	8/4280	280/5500	305/4000	1040kg	-	274	4.4	4.8	155	+ The car that made TVR. Cult status - Mere details	★★★★★
TVR Griffith 500	314 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	★★★★★

COUPES / GTs



OUR CHOICE

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



BEST OF THE REST

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

Alfa Romeo 4C	209 F	2013-19	4/1742	237/6000	258/2200	895kg*	-	269	4.5	-	160	+ Carbonfibre tub, mini-supercar looks - Hot hatch engine, clunky gearbox	★★★★★
Alfa Romeo 8C Competizione	120 F	2007-09	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1585kg	-	288	4.2	-	181	+ Looks, exclusivity, noise, balance - Cost more now than they did new	★★★★★
Alpine A110	285 F	£52,490	4/1798	249/6000	236/2000	1102kg	1094kg	230	4.5	4.6	155	+ Fast, fun and genuinely different - If only it had a manual gearbox	★★★★★
Alpine A110 GT	304 F	£62,490	4/1798	296/6300	251/2400	1119kg	-	269	4.2	-	155	+ The Goldilocks A110 for road driving - Trackdays	★★★★★
Alpine A110 S	268 D	£62,490	4/1798	296/6300	251/2400	1109kg	-	271	4.2	-	171	+ Firmer and faster - But not necessarily better	★★★★★
Alpine A110 R	312 F	£94,990	4/1798	296/6300	251/2400	1082kg	-	278	3.9	-	177	+ An even lighter and more extreme A110 - Falls short on track with no power hike	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vantage	280 F	£142,000	8/3982	503/6000	505/2000	1685kg	-	303	3.6	4.5	195	+ Performance that's a huge leap forward - Chassis struggles when really pushed	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vantage F1 Edition	293 F	£159,500	8/3982	527/6000	505/2000	1570kg*	-	341	3.6	-	195	+ Hones the Vantage recipe - Not the trackday refugee the stickers and spoilers suggest	★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage	298 F	£265,000	12/5204	690/6500	555/5000	1795kg	-	391	3.5	-	200	+ The last of its kind - Hobbled by ham-fisted handling	★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage (4.3)	288 F	2005-07	8/4280	380/7000	302/5000	1630kg	-	237	5.0	5.2	175	+ Gorgeous, awesome soundtrack - Can't quite match a 911 dynamically	★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage (4.7)	169 D	2008-16	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1630kg	-	262	4.8	-	180	+ Still feels special - But also a little dated	★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage S	168 F	2011-17	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1610kg	-	271	4.8	-	190	+ Keener engine, V12 Vantage looks - Slightly sluggish auto only	★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage N430	218 F	2014-16	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1610kg	-	271	4.8	-	189	+ Malleable, involving - Never feels rampantly quick	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vantage GT8	274 F	2016-17	8/4735	440/7300	361/5000	1530kg	-	292	4.4	-	190	+ Enough drama to fill a Netflix mini-series - Just 150 made	★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage	264 F	2009-13	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1680kg	-	308	4.2	4.4	190	+ The car we hoped the V8 Vantage would be - Erm, a tad thirsty?	★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage S	285 F	2013-17	12/5935	563/6650	457/5500	1665kg	-	344	3.9	-	205	+ Amongst the best Astons ever made - Old-school automated 'box (so get the manual)	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vantage GT12	214 F	2015-16	12/5935	592/7000	461/5500	1565kg	-	384	3.5	-	185	+ The GT3-style Vantage we waited so long for - Only 100 made	★★★★★
Aston Martin 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	£58,164	4/1984	268/6000	258/2500	1395kg	-	195	5.4	-	155	+ A usefully quicker TT, with a great drivetrain - Still steers like a computer game	★★★★★
Audi TT RS (Mk2)	158 F	2009-14	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1450kg	-	235	4.7	4.4	155	+ Sublime five-cylinder turbo engine - Rest of package can't quite match it	★★★★★
Audi S5	252 F	2017-19	6/2995	349/5400	369/1370	1615kg	-	220	4.7	-	155	+ Chassis rewards commitment... - but doesn't offer a challenge. Plain engine, too	★★★★★
Audi RS5	240 F	£77,715	6/2894	444/5700	442/1900	1655kg	1799kg	273	3.9	3.6	155	+ Lighter, quicker; makes green paint look good - Lacks the character of the old V8	★★★★★
Audi RS5	206 F	2010-16	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1715kg	-	263	4.5	4.3	155	+ Brilliant engine and improved chassis - Lack of suspension travel; inconsistent steering	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT (V8)	290 F	£176,400	8/3996	542/6000	568/2000	2165kg	-	254	4.0	-	198	+ Pace, quality, polish - A bit one-dimensional	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT S	309 D	£198,600	8/3996	542/6000	568/2000	2090kg	-	263	4.0	-	198	+ Unparalleled comfort, unexpected performance - Lacks dynamic flourish of some rivals	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT (W12)	255 F	2018-21	12/5950	626/5000	664/1350	2244kg	-	283	3.7	-	207	+ Astonishing agility for such a big, heavy car - Thirst	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT Speed	296 F	£219,400	12/5950	650/5000	664/1500	2273kg	-	291	3.6	-	208	+ Dynamically Bentley's best - A V8 Speed would be better still	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT V8	178 F	2012-17	8/3993	500/6000	487/1700	2220kg	-	229	4.8	-	188	+ A proper driver's Bentley with decent economy - Makes the W12 seem pointless	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT V8 S	204 F	2013-17	8/3993	521/6000	502/1700	2220kg	-	238	4.5	-	192	+ An even better driver's Bentley - Vast weight makes its presence felt in harder driving	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT (W12)	152 D	2003-17	12/5998	567/6000	516/1700	2245kg	2360kg	257	4.5	-	198	+ Near 200mph in utter comfort - Weight; W12's thirst	★★★★★
Bentley Continental Supersports	234 D	2017	12/5998	700/6000	750/2050	2250kg	-	323	3.5	-	209	+ Massive performance, surprisingly agile - Styling and soundtrack far from discreet	★★★★★
BMW M230i M Sport Coupé	310 F	£41,065	4/1998	242/4500	295/1600	1525kg	-	161	5.9	-	155	+ Satisfying depth of ability - Four-cylinder engine sounds workmanlike under load	★★★★★
BMW M240i xDrive Coupé	303 F	£49,225	6/2998	369/5500	369/1900	1690kg	1695kg	222	4.3	-	155	+ A pocket GT with bulging muscles - You might balk at the bulk	★★★★★
BMW M2 (G87)	312 F	£65,885	6/2993	454/6250	406/2650	1700kg	-	271	4.3	-	155	+ Still has that hot-rod feel - Feels heavy and remote alongside some rivals	★★★★★
BMW M2 (F87)	243 F	2016-18	6/2979	365/6500	369/1450	1495kg	-	248	4.5	4.9	155	+ More progressive chassis balance than the M4 - Feels unsettled on rough tarmac	★★★★★
BMW M2 Competition (F87)	265 F	2018-21	6/2979	404/6250	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	479/2150	1725kg	-	296	3.9	-	155	+ Accomplished and fun - Weight gain and auto gearbox look questionable	★★★★★
BMW M4 Competition xDrive (G82)	295 F	£85,375	6/2993	503/6250	479/2150	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	479/2150	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-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	★★★★★

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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 (LBS)	0-60MPH (LBS)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
BMW M3 (E92)	266 F	2007-13	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1580kg	-	266	4.8	4.3	155	+ Fends off all of its rivals... -...except the cheaper I-series M Coupé	★★★★★
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)	303 F	£92,890	8/6162	475/6450	452/5150	1655kg	-	292	3.5	-	184	+ Stunning achievement for the first mid-engined Vette - There's untapped potential	★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette Stingray (C7)	197 F	2013-19	8/6162	460/6000	465/4600	1496kg	-	312	4.2	4.4	180	+ Performance, chassis balance, supple ride - Body control could be better	★★★★★
Ferrari Roma	290 F	£174,910	8/3855	611/5750	560/3000	1570kg	-	395	3.4	-	199+	+ Not far off being a front-engined F8 - Choosing between a Roma and an F8	★★★★★
Ford Mustang 5.0 V8 GT	266 F	£50,315	8/4951	444/7000	390/4600	1768kg	-	255	4.9	-	155	+ 2018MY version gets improved dynamics - Still some way off Europe's finest	★★★★★
Ford Mustang Mach 1	295 F	£60,315	8/4951	454/7250	390/4900	1754kg	-	263	4.8	-	166	+ A 'Mustang Plus' for Europe - It's no GT500	★★★★★
Ford Mustang Shelby GT500	292 F	£79,420	8/5163	760/7300	625/5000	1897kg	-	407	3.3	-	180	+ The power and the fury - The last of its kind?	★★★★★
Honda Integra Type R (DC2)	311 F	1996-2000	4/1797	187/8000	131/7300	1140kg	-	167	6.7	6.2	145	+ Arguably the greatest front-drive car ever - Too raw for some	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type P300 RWD	271 D	£62,235	4/1997	296/5500	295/1500	1520kg	-	198	5.7	-	155	+ Genuinely exploitable performance - Turbocharged four-cylinder lacks top-end verve	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type P450 RWD	-	£78,330	8/5000	444/6000	428/2500	1660kg	-	272	4.6	-	177	+ Strong and flexible supercharged V8 - Steering and chassis feel mismatched	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type R (RWD)	218 F	2014-17	8/5000	542/6500	501/3500	1650kg	1803kg	334	4.2	-	186	+ eCoty runner-up in 2014 - Bumpy and boisterous	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type R (P575 AWD)	271 D	£102,870	8/5000	567/6500	516/3500	1743kg	-	331	3.5	-	186	+ More composed than before, now with SVR power - Eye-watering price	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type SVR	224 D	2016-19	8/5000	567/6500	516/3500	1705kg	-	338	3.7	-	200	+ A marginally better drive than the AWD R - Not by enough to justify the extra outlay	★★★★★
Jaguar XKR-S	168 F	2011-14	8/5000	542/6000	502/2500	1753kg	-	314	4.4	-	186	+ Faster and wilder than regular XKR - The F-type R	★★★★★
Jannarelli Design-1	279 F	£85,969	6/3498	321	274	950kg	-	343	3.9	-	135	+ Genuinely good sports car that stands out from the crowd - May be too quirky for some	★★★★★
KTM X-Bow GT-XR	310 D	£316,800	5/2480	493/6350	429/5550	1226kg	-	409	3.4	-	174	+ A real racing car for the road - A real racing car for the road	★★★★★
Lexus RC F	295 F	£76,560	8/4969	470/6400	391/4800	1765kg	-	271	4.3	-	168	+ Great looks, noise, sense of occasion - Too heavy to be truly exciting	★★★★★
Lexus LC 500	290 F	£95,660	8/4969	470/7100	398/4800	1935kg	-	247	4.7	-	168	+ Glorious engine, rewarding chassis - Lacks ultimate body control, numb steering	★★★★★
Lotus Exige S (V6)	209 F	2012-15	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1176kg	-	298	3.8	-	170	+ Breathtaking road-racer; our joint evo Car of the Year 2012 - Gearshift not the sweetest	★★★★★
Lotus Exige Sport 350	221 F	2016-21	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1125kg	-	312	3.9	-	170	+ Further honed Exige, with vastly improved gearshift - Still not easy to get into and out of	★★★★★
Lotus Exige Sport 380	231 F	2016-18	6/3456	375/6700	302/5000	1110kg	-	343	3.7	-	178	+ Intense, absorbing and brilliantly capable - Perhaps not an everyday car	★★★★★
Lotus Exige Cup 380	240 D	2017	6/3456	375/6700	302/5000	1105kg	-	345	3.6	-	175	+ An absolute riot; feels worth the £83k (new) price tag - Limited build numbers	★★★★★
Lotus Exige Sport 410	283 F	2018-21	6/3456	410/7000	310/3500	1100kg	-	375	3.4	-	180	+ A first-rate swansong for the V6 Exige - Didn't come cheap	★★★★★
Lotus Exige Cup 430	253 F	2018-21	6/3456	430/7000	325/2600	1093kg	-	400	3.3	-	180	+ The ultimate Exige - With a price tag to match	★★★★★
Lotus Exige S (S2)	253 F	2006-11	4/1796	218/7800	158/5500	930kg	-	238	4.3	-	148	+ Lightweight with a hefty punch - Uninspiring soundtrack	★★★★★
Lotus Exige (S1)	200 F	2000-01	4/1796	192/7800	146/5000	780kg	-	247	4.6	-	136	+ Looks and goes like an Elise racer - A tad lacking in refinement	★★★★★
Lotus Evora	302 F	2009-15	6/3456	276/6400	258/4700	1382kg	-	203	5.1	5.6	162	+ Sublime ride and handling, evo Car of the Year 2009 - The Evora S	★★★★★
Lotus Evora S	168 F	2010-15	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1430kg	-	245	4.8	-	172	+ A faster and better Evora - But one which spars with the Porsche 911	★★★★★
Lotus Evora 400	216 F	2015-18	6/3456	400/7000	302/3500	1395kg	-	291	4.2	-	186	+ Evora excitement levels take a leap - Gearbox still not perfect	★★★★★
Lotus Evora Sport 410	230 F	2017	6/3456	410/7000	310/3500	1325kg	-	314	4.2	-	190	+ Even lighter and sharper Evora - Engine and gearbox behind the best at this price	★★★★★
Lotus Evora GT410	278 F	2020-21	6/3456	410/7000	295/3500	1361kg	-	306	4.2	-	186	+ Fully immersive driving experience - V6 has its limitations	★★★★★
Lotus Evora 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	+ Supercar 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	2012-19	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1880kg	-	245	4.8	-	186	+ A real sense of occasion to drive; wonderful engine - Feels long in the tooth	★★★★★
Maserati GranTurismo MC	239 D	2017-19	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1873kg	-	246	4.7	-	187	+ As above but with knobs on - Those knobs don't make it feel any younger	★★★★★
Maserati GranTurismo MC Stradale	193 F	2011-17	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1800kg	-	256	4.5	-	188	+ Brilliant blend of road racer and GT - Gearbox takes a little getting used to	★★★★★
Mazda RX-7 (FD)	226 F	1992-95	2R/1308	237/6500	218/5000	1284kg	-	188	5.4	-	156	+ The high point for Mazda's rotary efforts - High fuel consumption, too	★★★★★
Mazda RX-8	122 F	2003-11	2R/1308	228/8200	156/5500	1429kg	-	162	6.4	6.5	146	+ Never mind the quirkiness, it's a great drive - Wafer-thin torque output; thirsty	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG C63 S Coupé (W205)	262 F	2015-23	8/3982	503/5500	516/2000	1745kg	1847kg	293	3.9	-	180	+ Mouth-watering mechanical package - Light steering; hefty kerb weight	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupé (W204)	162 F	2011-14	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1655kg	-	277	4.5	4.4	155	+ A proper two-door M3 rival - C63 saloon looks better to most	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Black Series (W204)	171 F	2012-13	8/6208	510/6800	457/5200	1635kg	-	317	4.2	-	186	+ The C63 turned up to 11 - Too heavy; not as fiery as Black Series cars of old	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG Black Series	277 F	2007-09	8/6208	500/6800	464/5250	1760kg	-	289	4.2	-	186	+ AMG goes Porsche-hunting - Dull-witted gearshift spoils the party	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG S63 Coupé	251 D	2017-21	8/3982	604/5500	664/2750	1990kg	-	308	4.2	-	155	+ Near-silent progress meets full-blown riot - Don't go thinking it's a GTR	★★★★★
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 at being a GT as it is a sports coupe - Difficult to drive fast and smoothly	★★★★★
Mitsubishi 3000GT	-	1990-99	6/2972	282/6000	300/3000	1719kg	-	167	5.8	-	159	+ Looks the business - Doesn't do the business	★★★★★
Nissan 370Z	204 F	2009-20	6/3696	323/7000	268/5200	1496kg	-	219	5.3	-	155	+ Quicker, leaner, keener than 350Z - Not quite a Cayman-killer	★★★★★
Nissan 350Z	107 F	2003-09	6/3498	309/6800	264/4800	1532kg	-	205	5.6	5.5	155	+ Huge fun, and great value too - Muscle-car vibe not for everyone	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R (2017MY)	242 F	2017-22	6/3799	562/6800	470/3600	1752kg	-	326	2.7	-	196	+ More refinement, much improved interior, still fast - Feels a touch less alert	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R Track Edition (2017MY)	229 D	2017-22	6/3799	562/6800	470/3600	1745kg	-	327	2.7	-	196	+ Sharper than the standard GT-R - Pricier too	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R Nismo (2020MY)	298 F	2020-22	6/3799	592/6800	481/3600	1703kg	-	353	2.8	-	196	+ Addictive performance - Track Edition gets 90 per cent there for a lot, lot less	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R (2012MY-2016MY)	238 F	2012-16	6/3799	542/6400	466/3200	1740kg	1783kg	316	2.7	3.2	196	+ Quicker and better than before - Stopping your Porsche-owning friends calling it a Datsun	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R (2010MY)	252 F	2010-12	6/3799	523/6400	451/3200	1740kg	-	305	3.0	-	194	+ More powerful version of the original - They're not worlds apart to drive	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R (2008MY)	257 F	2008-10	6/3799	473/6400	434/3200	1740kg	-	276	3.8	-	193	+ evo Car of the Year 2008 - You won't see 20mpg often	★★★★★
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R34)	265 F	1999-2002	6/2568	276/7000	289/4400	1560kg	1653kg	180	4.8	4.7	165	+ Big, brutal, and great fun - Needs more than the standard 276bhp	★★★★★
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R33)	196 F	1997-99	6/2568	276/6800	271/4400	1540kg	-	182	4.9	5.4	155	+ Early proof that Japanese high-tech could work (superbly) - Limited supply	★★★★★
Noble M400	297 F	2004-06	6/2968	425/6500	390/5000	1060kg	-	407	3.5	-	185	+ Devilishly fast - Demon Tweaks interior	★★★★★
Polestar 1	269 D	2019-22	4/1969	592/6000	737	2350kg	-	256	4.2	-	155	+ One of the most appealing hybrids yet - It's left-hand-drive only, and jolly expensive	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Cayman	287 F	£51,800	4/1988	296/6500	280/2150	1335kg	-	225	5.1	-	170	+ Chassis remains a dream - Sounds like a Toyota GT86	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Cayman T	270 F	2020-23	4/1988	296/6500	280/2150	1350kg	-	223	5.1	-	170	+ A further-honed 2-litre Cayman - Flat-four soundtrack still disappoints	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Cayman S	249 F	£61,800	4/2497	345/6500	310/2100	1355kg	1449kg	259	4.6	3.9	177	+ Faster and better to drive than ever - Bring earplugs	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Cayman GTS 4.0	303 F	£73,300	6/3995	394/7000	310/5000	1405kg	-	285	4.5	-	182	+ Ninety per cent of the GT4's magic - Can feel a little too capable and polished at times	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Cayman GT4	312 F	2019-23	6/3995	414/7600	310/5000	1420kg	1460kg	296	4.4	-	188	+ evo Car of the Year 2019 - Long gearing isn't ideal for road driving	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 RS	305 F	£108,370	6/3996	493/8400	332/6750	1415kg	1460kg	354	3.4	-	196	+ Thrilling when the road suits it - Too many great roads don't	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman S (981)	202 F	2013-16	6/3436	321/7400	273/4500	1320kg	1371kg	247	5.0	4.5	175	+ The Cayman comes of age - Err...	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman 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	380/7400	310/4750	1340kg	-	288	4.4	-	183		

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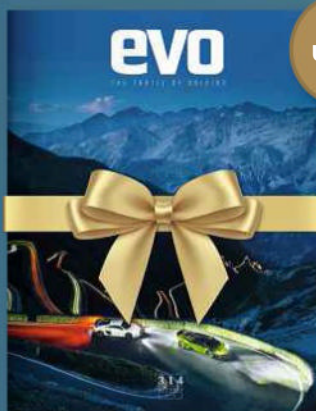
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Porsche 911 Carrera (1991.2)	218 F	2016-18	6/2981	365/6500	332/1700	1430kg	-	259	4.6	-	183	+ Forced induction didn't ruin the Carrera - Purists won't be happy	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera T (1991.2)	264 F	2017-18	6/2981	365/6500	332/1700	1425kg	-	260	4.5	-	182	+ Lightweight windows, no rear seats, an LSD... - Only 5kg lighter than a basic Carrera	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera S (1991.2)	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 (1991.2)	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 (1991.1)	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 (1997.2)	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 (1997.1)	249 F	2004-08	6/3824	350/6500	295/4600	1420kg	-	246	4.6	-	182	+evo Car of the Year 2004- Do your homework on potential engine issues	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera (1996.1)	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	+ Purc's playfulness ahead of outright performance - Feels strategically hobbled	★★★★★
Toyota GR Supra 2.0	281 F	£50,545	4/1998	254/5000	195/1550	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 24 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	500/6800	330/5000	1330kg	-	315	4.4	5.0	160+	+ Accomplished and desirable - When it's running	★★★★★

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.



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 Vanguish 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 Vanguish S (Mk1)	110 F	2005-07	12/5935	520/7000	425/5800	1875kg	-	282	4.8	4.9	200	+ Vanguish joins the supercar gangs - 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 lacks 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-engine 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	314 F	£195,253	10/5204	611/8000	411/6400	1570kg	-	395	3.4	-	199	+ A brilliantly executed finale for the R8 - Not as extreme as some rivals	★★★★★
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	2010-11	16/7993	1183/6400	1106/3000	1838kg	-	654	2.5	-	258	+ Was once the world's fastest supercar - Limited to 258mph for us mere mortals	★★★★★
Bugatti EB110	078 F	1991-95	12/3500	552/8000	451/3750	1618kg	-	347	3.6	-	213	+ Superbly engineered four-wheel-drive quad-turbo rocket - It just fizzled out	★★★★★
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	4.0	-	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 need the plus point?	★★★★★
Ferrari 430 Scuderia	274 F	2007-2007	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	5.7	-	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 312 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 GT4 Lusso T	246 D	2017-20	8/3855	602/7500	560/3000	1865kg	-	328	3.5	-	199	+ Effortless, comfortable GT - Misses the richer soundtrack of the V12	★★★★★
Ferrari GT4 Lusso	264 F	2016-20	12/6262	680/8000	514/5750	1920kg	-	360	3.4	-	208	+ Rear-wheel steering increases agility - Not as engaging as other Ferraris	★★★★★
Ferrari FF	194 F	2011-15	12/6262	651/8000	504/6000	1880kg	-	347	3.7	-	208	+ Four seats and 4WD, but a proper Ferrari - Looks divide opinion	★★★★★
Ferrari 612 Scaglietti	090 F	2004-11	12/5748	533/7250	434/5250	1875kg	-	289	4.0	4.3	199	+ Awesomely capable grand tourer - See above	★★★★★
Ferrari 456 GT	209 F	1992-97	12/5474	436/62500	406/4500	1690kg*	-	632	5.2	-	186	+ A genuine GT supercar - Running costs	★★★★★
Ferrari SF90 Stradale	299 F	£376,048	8/3990	986/7500	-	1570kg*	1742kg	268	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	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	★★★★★

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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE ON YR SALE	ENGINE CVL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT (CLAMP)	WEIGHT (TESTED)	BHP/TON (CLAMP)	D-52MPH (CLAMP)	D-50MPH (TESTED)	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	1817/8000	1198/5000	1360kg	-	1357	2.6	-	311	+Ballistic performance; surprising drivability - Finding somewhere to do 300mph+	★★★★★
Honda NSX (NC1)	270 F	2016-21	6/3493	573	476/2000	1776kg	-	328	2.9	3.0	191	+Blisteringly quick and brilliantly engineered - Limited range on a full tank	★★★★★
Honda NSX (NA2)	188 F	1997-2005	6/3179	276/7300	224/5300	1410kg	-	196	5.7	-	168	+The original useable supercar - 276bhp sounds a bit weedy today	★★★★★
Honda NSX-R (NA2)	301 F	2002-03	6/3179	276/7300	224/5300	1270kg	-	221	4.4	-	168	+evo Car of the Year 2002 - Hard to find	★★★★★
Jaguar XJ220	157 F	1992-94	6/3498	542/7200	475/4500	1470kg	-	375	3.7	-	213	+Britain's greatest supercar... - ...until McLaren built the F1	★★★★★
Koenigsegg One:1	202 F	2014-15	8/5065	1341/7500	1011/6000	1360kg	-	1002	2.9	-	273	+One of the most powerful cars we've tested - We couldn't afford one	★★★★★
Koenigsegg Agera R	180 F	2011-14	8/5032	1124/7100	885/2700	1435kg	-	796	2.8	-	273	+As fast and exciting as your body can handle - It's Veyron money	★★★★★
Lamborghini Huracán	209 D	2014-19	10/5204	602/8250	413/6500	1422kg*	1554kg	430	3.2	-	201+	+Defies the numbers; incredible point-to-point pace - Takes work to find its sweet-spot	★★★★★
Lamborghini Huracán Evo RWD	281 F	2020-23	10/5204	602/8000	413/6500	1389kg*	-	440	3.3	-	202	+The most complete Huracán yet - Prescriptive driver modes still frustrate	★★★★★
Lamborghini Huracán Evo	264 F	2019-23	10/5204	631/8000	442/6500	1422kg*	-	451	2.9	-	202+	+Performante engine, trick chassis - Badly needs an 'Ego' mode for road driving	★★★★★
Lamborghini Huracán Evo Spyder	269 F	£218,137	10/5204	631/8000	442/6500	1542kg*	-	416	3.1	-	202	+Drop-top driving enhances that epic V10 - Being mistaken for a King's Road poser	★★★★★
Lamborghini Huracán Performante	242 F	2017-19	10/5204	631/8000	442/6500	1382kg*	-	464	2.9	-	201+	+The realisation of the Huracán's ever elusive potential - Kitchen-worktop carbonfibre	★★★★★
Lamborghini Huracán Tecnica	314 F	£212,000	10/5204	631/8000	417/6500	1379kg*	-	465	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	1665kg*	-	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	487/6500	1565kg*	-	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	671/7500	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 - Favourites precision over emotion	★★★★★
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 M500	314 F	£192,600	6/3496	506/5300	594/4000	1450kg	-	355	3.7	-	-	+A unique take on the junior supercar - Are you comfortable with 506bhp with no ABS?	★★★★★
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	1400kW	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 (997.2)	204 F	2010-13	6/3600	611/6500	516/2250	1370kg	-	453	3.5	-	205	+More powerful than a Carrera GT. Handles, too - Erm...	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.1)	182 F	2007-09	6/3600	409/7600	298/5500	1395kg	1452kg	298	4.3	4.3	192	+Runner-up at evo Car of the Year 2006 - Ferrari 599 GTBs	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.1)	112 F	2007-09	6/3600	409/7600	298/5500	1375kg	-	302	4.2	-	193	+evo Car of the Year 2007 - A chunk more money than the already brilliant GT3	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.2)	221 F	2003-05	6/3600	375/7400	284/5000	1380kg	-	272	4.5	4.3	190	+evo Car of the Year 2003 - Chassis a bit too track-focused for some roads	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (996.2)	068 F	2004-05	6/3600	375/7400	284/5000	1360kg	-	280	4.4	-	190	+An even more focused version of the superb GT3 - Limited supply	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT2 (996.2)	072 F	2004-06	6/3600	475/5700	472/3500	1420kg	-	338	4.0	-	198	+Revisions made it even more of a star than the 456bhp 996.1 GT2 - Care still required	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.1)	266 F	1999-2001	6/3600	360/7200	273/5000	1350kg	-	271	4.8	4.5	187	+evo Car of the Year 1999 - Porsche didn't build enough	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo S (992)	295 F	£180,600	6/3745	641/6750	590/2500								

GREATEST MISSES

HONDA S2000

So you've read about 25 driver's cars that categorically nailed their briefs. But what about those that totally missed their marks? Jethro Bovingdon kicks off a new series with a look at Honda's regrettable roadster

IT WOULD BE EASY TO START THIS NEW series with a 550-word assassination of the Alfa Romeo 4C. Too easy. The Alfa has been filed away as a disaster in most people's minds and we'll beat that particular dead horse on another occasion. No, it needs to be something more celebrated. A car that met with a lukewarm reception but has somehow grown into an icon with a fantastic reputation, rapidly appreciating values and a thriving fan base. It could only be the Honda S2000.

This isn't intended as a criticism of those for whom the S2000 is an object of reverence. God knows we need all the passionate car people we can find. Instead, I'll attempt to lay out a reasoned, logical and dispassionate argument for why the Honda S2000 was (and is) a crushing disappointment and why those people are stark, raving lunatics who should probably be locked up or, at the very least, sterilised.

The S2000 arrived in 1999 and was the most mouth-watering prospect imaginable. Aside from featuring the highest-revving and most powerful 2-litre normally aspirated engine ever fitted to a road car, Honda's new sports car also featured

double wishbones all around and an extremely stiff monocoque with a backbone tunnel, diagonally braced at each bulkhead and with reinforced sills, labelled the 'high X-bone frame'. Honda, a company with engineering beauty embedded deep in its DNA, also endeavoured to centralise the masses to create an extremely low yaw moment and 50:50 balance. Then there was the stunningly precise six-speed manual 'box and Torsen limited-slip differential. Not to mention the NSX and Integra Type R in its recent cannon. I mean, come on...

No wonder **evo** sent a welcoming party for the S2000 to its international press launch in St Tropez. Consisting of a Porsche Boxster, TVR Griffith 500 and Lotus Elise 111S, the theory was that the Honda might deliver the precision of the Elise, the flow and integrity of the Porsche and the timeless front-engine, rear-drive entertainment of the Griff. It didn't turn out that way. 'It loses out everywhere,' we stated. 'with the possible exception of braking. It lacks the accessible power, handling poise and overall polish to make its mark. It rarely performs like a 240bhp sports car; even more crushing is its lack of intimacy

and feel.' The S2000 came a resounding last.

Today those criticisms sound harsh. Until you jump in an S2000. The driving environment is fundamentally flawed – you sit oddly high, the steering wheel is fixed, the central tunnel cuts into the footwell and creates a pedal offset – and the driving experience is similarly compromised. The F20C may produce 237bhp at 8300rpm on its way to a 9000rpm rev limit, but it sounds so harsh at low and medium revs and has the thinnest, meanest torque curve. Just 153lb ft at 7500rpm. Even the lauded top-end fireworks feel vaguely underwhelming. On a test track you might be able to wring an S2000 to 60mph in 5.5 seconds but in the real world it would get mugged by an MX-5 more often than not.

Then there's the completely lifeless electric power steering, plus a chassis that melds soft reactions with razor-sharp on-limit handling traits. The Honda S2000 looks great and appears to have it all, but pretty quickly you come to realise the one indisputably brilliant dynamic component it offers is the six-speed manual gearbox. It's fabulous. Truly. But it's not enough. The S2000 just isn't very good. It's a simple and as heart-breaking as that.





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