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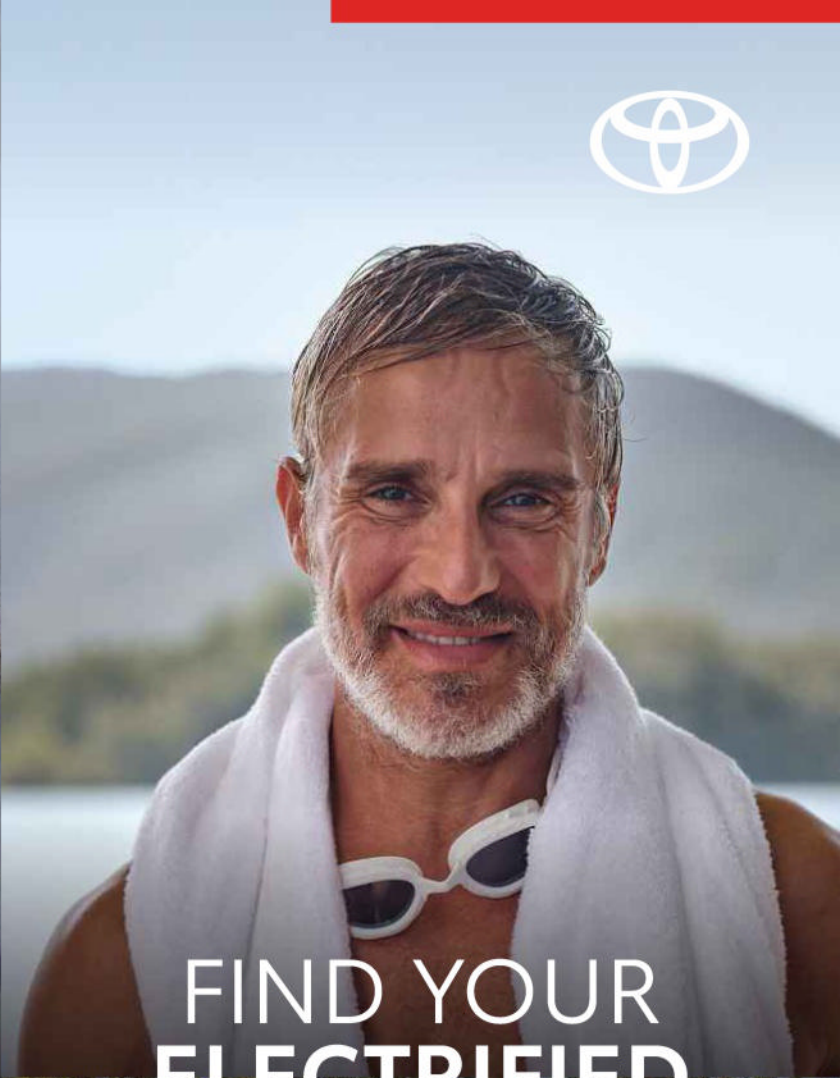
UK specs may vary. Models shown from left to right. Toyota Yaris Cross GR Sport. Official fuel consumption figures in mpg (l/100km): combined 54.3 (4.9) - 57.6 (4.8). Combined CO₂ 109g/km*. Toyota C-HR Excel. Official fuel consumption figures in mpg (l/100km): combined 313.8g (0.9). Combined CO₂ 19g/km*. Toyota Mirai Design. Combined CO₂ 0g. Electric range up to 400 miles*. Toyota bZ4X Vision. Combined CO₂ 0g. Electric range up to 278 miles*. Figures are provided for comparability purposes; only compare fuel consumption, CO₂ and/or equivalent all-electric range figures



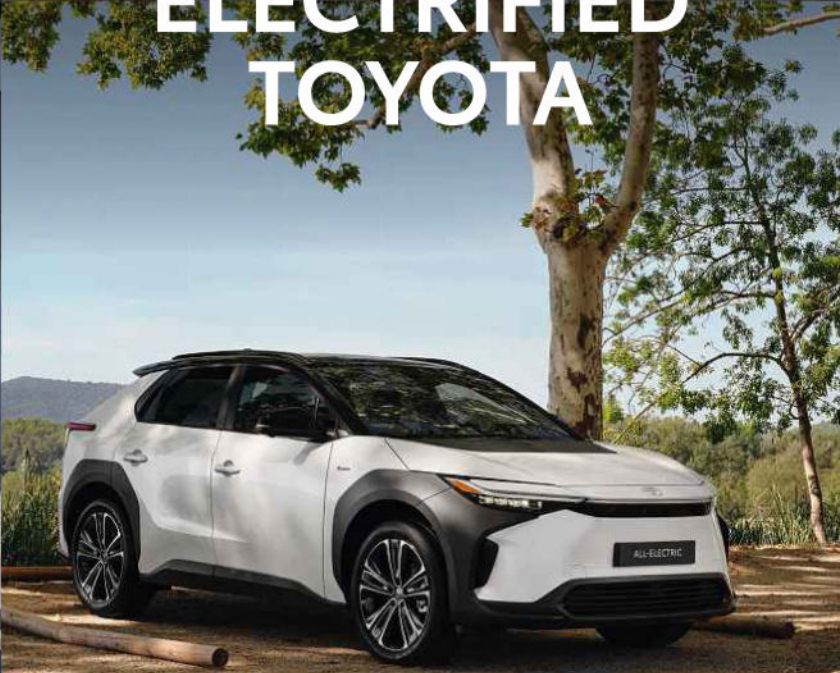
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4 | A110 R TURINI



Alpine A110 R Turini: fuel economy and co₂ results for the Alpine A110 R Turini in mpg (l 100km) combined: 41.5 (6.8-6.9). co₂ emissions: 156 g/km wltp figures shown are for comparability purposes. actual real world driving results may vary depending on factors including weather conditions, driving styles, vehicle load or any accessories fitted after registration. for more information, please see alpine-cars.co.uk



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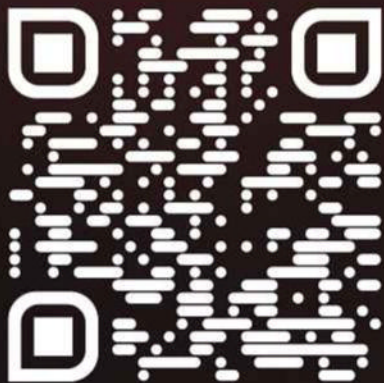


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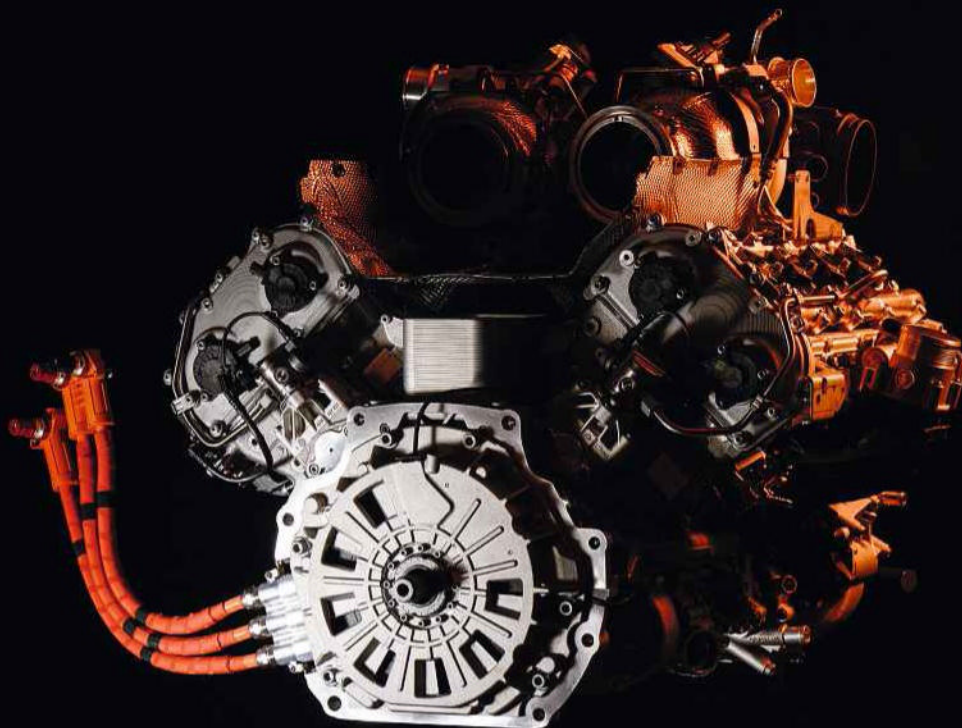
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Ed speak



ONE MONTH, THREE NEW internal combustion engines and five global OEMs announcing two new powertrain partnerships between them – Renault and Geely are joining forces (creating Horse Powertrain Limited) and Mazda, Subaru and Toyota have confirmed they will work together, too. Both programmes will focus on the development of new internal combustion engines better

suited to work with electric motors, batteries, hydrogen and sustainable fuels. Cosworth, too, has announced that its future product strategy will continue to focus on ICE.

Bentley, Lamborghini and Porsche haven't hastily developed their new ICE powertrains; these are not knee-jerk reactions to the public's apathy to buying electric cars that leave them cold and concerned for their service-station coffee consumption. Porsche and Lamborghini have never taken their feet off the right pedal despite the influx of battery packs and electric motors being delivered to their factory doors.

They have, like many of us, always considered electric motors as an addition to their existing powertrain options rather than replacements. They are, after all, global

brands that serve a broad customer base that's a long way from the noise on social media around why electric vehicles are the only option for everyone.

Operating in a less volume-orientated market (although there are some volume brands who dream of selling as many cars as Porsche does 911s) helps of course. Higher price points for the end product means more investment in more exotic and complex engines is easier to get signed off. But there still needs to be a business plan behind it and customers who want to buy what you're selling. Mate Rimac declaring that Rimac won't make another electric hypercar but Bugatti will always have a petrol engine at its heart tells you all you need to know as to where the hypercar market is heading.

Making cars is hard, selling them equally so. Making the wrong car and then trying to sell it is nigh on impossible, so don't be surprised to see more manufacturers follow Geely, Renault, Mazda, Subaru and Toyota in investing and developing new cleaner and more efficient combustion engines to power the cars its customers actually want and need.

Stuart Gallagher, Editor-in-Chief @stuartg917

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by YOUSUF ASHRAF

Ford Mustang GT

No more four-cylinder EcoBoost engines; the latest Mustang GT is V8 only – and it might just be all the Mustang you really need

DRIVING A FORD MUSTANG ALONG THE French Riviera isn't as romantic as it sounds. Not because there's anything especially wrong with the car or the roads, rather that neither was made with the other in mind. On the right there's a foot-high stone wall separating me from a long, painful tumble into the (admittedly stunning) scenery, and on the left the big 'Stang is bulging out of its lane as the local Berlingo vans and battered Peugeot hatchbacks whizz past within a whisker of the driver's door mirror. The windows are down, the shades are on and I should be enjoying myself, but I'm having to dial the speed right back. Nailing the point home, a Renault Modus

driver lunges past through a gap I've left at the inside of a hairpin; he has one hand on the wheel while making a gesture with the other. He must have been tailing me for a while, but I was concentrating too hard to notice.

With versions like the track-prepped Dark Horse and the unhinged GTD road-racer, Ford clearly wants us to take the latest, \$650-generation Mustang seriously, but it's equally keen to stress that this – the new Mustang GT – is absolutely, positively not a track car. It does without the Dark Horse's beefed-up transmission, more focused damper tuning, improved cooling package and uprated 447bhp V8, cutting the price from £67,995 to £55,725



Driven



'It's hard to think of many sub-£60k cars with such a sense of occasion'

to make this by far the most affordable Mustang, one that's best-suited for the road. We first drove the new Mustang in Dark Horse form in the US last year (*evo* 314), when deputy editor James Taylor concluded that it was 'as charismatic a road car as ever'. Here we'll find out if that remains true for the GT on the more ragged, technical roads that Europe has to offer.

Few European customers chose the four-cylinder EcoBoost engine in the old Mustang, so this time it's a V8 or nothing. We like that. The 5-litre Coyote unit has been revised for the new GT, with dual-intake throttle bodies, a new induction system and new cams. It produces 440bhp compared with the old car's 444, although torque is up by 8lb ft to 398. Blame tightening European emissions regulations for the power decrease (US-spec GTs get an extra 44bhp) but if that's what it costs to sell a naturally aspirated V8 coupe in 2024, then so be it.

The engine is linked to a six-speed manual gearbox as standard, but you can opt for a ten-speed automatic for an extra £2000. The auto has much shorter gearing, which does give you more opportunities to extend the engine, but it can be a little indecisive when juggling ratios and isn't that crisp when using the paddles (particularly on downshifts). The manual, on the other hand, clunks into gear with a heavy, positive action and suits the character of the Mustang, even though it's four-tenths slower to reach 62mph with a time of 5.3sec.

When the road opens up and there's more space to play with, the GT clicks. It still feels like a big, 1761kg coupe, but you can start to wring more

performance from it, finding a flow and stretching the V8 right through the rev range. It really is a lovely engine, smooth yet with a real bite to the soundtrack that makes you wonder whether Ford has taken any notice of European noise regulations at all. With the valved exhaust opened up, it snorts and rumbles at low revs, and while it doesn't surge forward with the intensity of a turbocharged V8, the torque build-up is linear and very manageable. In the manual, second gear takes you up to 80mph so you often end up short-shifting and using the mid-range rather than battering the red line. There's not a ripping top end to be enjoyed, so you don't feel like you're missing out on much.

There are modes galore in the new Mustang, from Normal through Sport and up to Track, with Slippery and Drag for good measure. You can mix and match settings for the steering, throttle map and damping (if you've specified the £1750 MagneRide dampers), but Sport feels cohesive out of the box. There's a bit more steering weight to work against, the engine has sharper pick-up and the dampers have a tighter control of all that weight, giving you more confidence to lean against the grip from the Pirelli P Zeros. On warm, dry tarmac the front end finds good bite unless you overcommit with your entry speed, though you find the limits through trust rather than feel; the steering is mute and there isn't much information coming through the chassis, but the Mustang's fundamental balance is as friendly as ever, so there are no surprises unless you really push your luck.

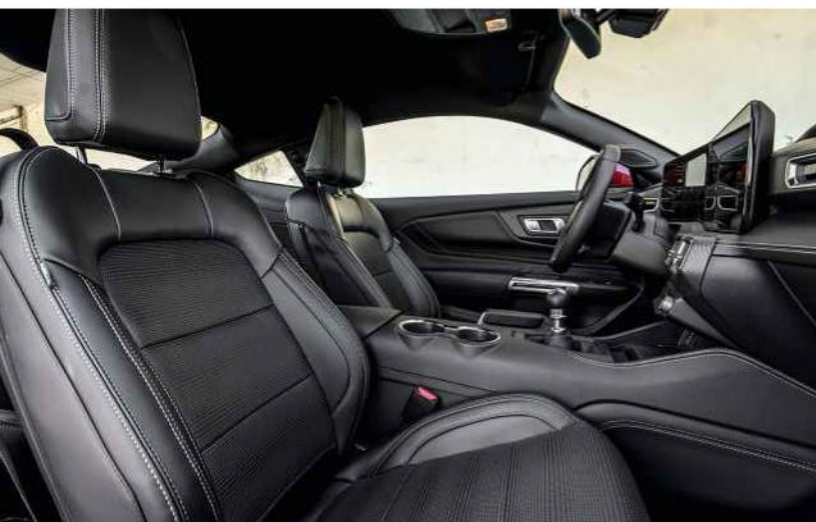
In fact, as my confidence grows I almost want the Mustang to bite back and show its wilder side. The GT looks and sounds like it should be a bit lairy, a bit of a challenge, but the handling is secure and restrained right up to the limit. Even out of first-gear hairpins, the 275-section rear tyres can take almost every ounce of torque from the V8, so you use the throttle to subtly adjust the balance through a corner. In the damp you can get the limited-slip diff working harder, but just as you feel the Mustang coming alive, the balance transitions back to neutrality quite quickly. After poking the bear for a few corners, I settle into how the Mustang prefers to be driven. Be smooth, wait for the outside tyres to take the load and it's a matter of spotting your exit, feeding in the power and letting the engine sing between corners. There are more sensory rewards than in a BMW M2, but there isn't the BMW's sharpness or expressive balance to be enjoyed beyond that.

Not an out-and-out thriller then, but that doesn't mean the GT isn't a satisfying car to drive. In fact, it's hard to think of many sub-£60k cars that dust every journey with such a sense of occasion. The Mustang's engine is a big part of this of course, but there's depth beyond this – the gearbox is a delight to use, the steering response is crisper than the old GT's and the brake pedal is firm with great bite (if anything it's a touch too sharp, making smooth heel-and-toe shifts a little tricky). All of this makes the GT a treat when you aren't

From far left: S650-gen Mustang is a lot of coupe for the money, a heavy one, too, at 1761kg; Brembo brakes have plenty of bite; handling isn't as lairy as the looks and noise lead you to expect



Driven



going quickly. So too the ride on the MagneRide dampers. They're firm even in their softest setting but not brittle or crashy, and at a cruise they help the Mustang feel settled and keyed-in. It's quiet too, with an active noise cancelling system that dials out unwanted noise without diluting the wonderful V8 backing track – in fact it's amplified by the lack of other sounds. These are the makings of an excellent long-distance GT, which is fitting I suppose.

Ford is making plenty of noise about the new interior tech, but I can't help feeling that something has been lost in moving to the same two-massive-screens solution as every other manufacturer; there's not much to tell you you're in a Mustang. The exterior is a different story. While I'm parked up, fiddling with the HMI, a schoolboy shouts 'J'aime ta voiture, monsieur!' from across the street, a reminder that the GT has all the presence a muscle car needs.

The central touchscreen is where you configure your drive mode profiles, which include a variety of options for the instrument layout ahead of you. Track mode serves up a horizontal rev bar across the display, but the '80s-style 'Fox Body' dials are the simplest and clearest. You cycle through the modes using handy buttons on the new (thicker-rimmed) steering wheel, and mercifully

Left and below: latest GT replaces traditional Mustang dash with twin screens and loses a little character in the process but provides access to driving mode configurator

'The GT is excellent value and provides the best bits of the Mustang experience'

there's a shortcut to turn off the lane keep assist, which you need to do at the start of every drive. Not even the Mustang can escape that. Another concession to modernity is the fitment of an electronic handbrake, but our test car has the optional 'drift brake' lever for making handbrake turns. You need a track to use it (which we don't have), but it certainly beats a fiddly plastic switch. Otherwise, the driving position is low and cocooned, the standard seats comfortable (if much less supportive than the Dark Horse's standard Recaros) and while the interior does feel built down to a price, it doesn't feel as cheap as it used to.

The GT really is an easy car to fall for, and it's one you sense Ford is pulling out all the stops to continue selling in the UK. Average fleet emissions regs mean it must limit the supply of Mustangs in Europe to avoid fines; theoretically it could produce more than it does to satisfy demand. That demand is only likely to grow with this new model, because there really isn't

an alternative if you want a manual, rear-drive, naturally aspirated V8 coupe in 2024. In fact, the GT's most obvious competitor comes from Ford's own stable in the shape of the Dark Horse.

That car effectively replaces the old Mach 1, which was the point at which the last-gen Mustang really began to gel as a driver's car. The good news for GT buyers (less so if you've ordered a Dark Horse) is that, purely for road use, the gap between the two is much narrower this time around. The Dark Horse's unique damper calibration and Torsen rear diff do bring added clarity and control but there isn't noticeably more bite to the driving experience. My internal G-sensor perhaps felt a little more push from the Dark Horse's extra 7bhp, but the engines feel and sound pretty much identical. The price premium mostly goes towards making the Dark Horse more durable for the track with a tougher gearbox, auxiliary engine cooler and rear axle cooler, but if you can do without those, the GT is excellent value and still provides the best bits of the Mustang experience. These days, it's an experience you won't find anywhere else. ✕

Engine V8, 5038cc **Power** 440bhp @ 7250rpm
Torque 398lb ft @ 5100rpm **Weight** 1761kg (254bhp/ton)
Tyres Pirelli P Zero **0-62mph** 5.3sec
Top speed 155mph **Basic price** £55,725

➕ Capable and likeable muscle car
➖ Lacks sharpness of best Europeans

evo rating ★★★★★



Driven

by YOUSUF ASHRAF

VW Golf R

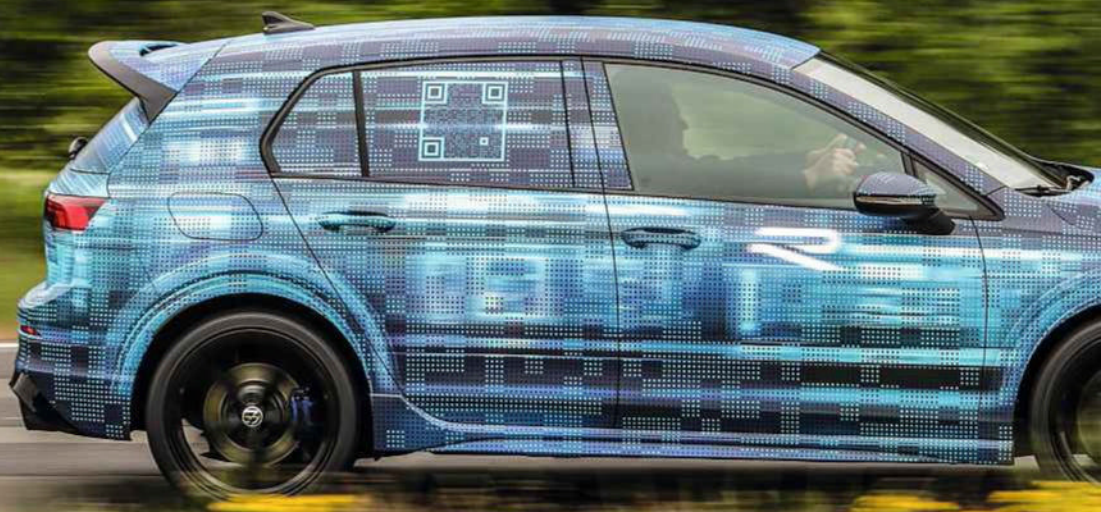
The Mk8 Golf R has never really wowed us. But can the Mk8.5 change all that? A drive in a prototype version provides some clues





BE CAREFUL, THIS IS THE ACTUAL CAR we'll be timing at the Nürburgring,' says Volkswagen R engineer Jonas Thielebein as I open the door to a pre-production Mk8.5 Golf R in the paddock of Germany's Lausitzring. It'll be a little while before we see the final car, but it's clear that the camouflage isn't hiding any sort of radical redesign, and the signs are that it won't be much different to drive than the Mk8 either. 'It was a case of refining a few things,' says Thielebein. 'We were very happy with what we had before.'

It's fair to say that **evo's** assessment of the Mk8 R hasn't been quite as positive as that. It's a hot hatch we respect rather than adore, one which makes its performance effortlessly accessible but somehow doesn't deliver the satisfaction of the very best. On some of our favourite roads its point-to-point speed has left a big impression, with a willingness to carry good momentum almost everywhere. However, alongside Honda's Civic Type R, with its crisper responses and sports car-like sensations, you feel that your inputs have far less influence on the car's behaviour in the VW. It's



a good part of why the Type R won **evo's** 18-car hot hatch megatest in issue 318, while the Golf only just scraped into the top ten.

But this is a new day, a new(ish) car and a chance to approach the Golf R with a fresh mind. The Mk8.5 is very much an evolution of the recipe rather than an overhaul, and pretty much all of the mechanical hardware is carried over from the Mk8. The MQB platform is unchanged (and shared with the likes of the Audi S3 and Skoda Octavia vRS), so too the seven-speed DSG gearbox and four-wheel drive. The latter uses a variable torque-vectoring differential to apportion power between the rear wheels, with the ability to overdrive the outside rear to rotate the car through corners – or induce bigger angles when using the track-only Drift mode.

You won't be surprised to hear that VW's 2-litre EA888 turbocharged engine continues to serve in the new R, but learnings from the outgoing 20 Years edition have teased a little more power from it. It now offers the same 328bhp as the special edition (peak torque is still 310lb ft), along with that car's revised throttle valve map to hold boost pressure under light loads and improve initial response. The 20 Years also had a pronounced gearshift kick when flicking through the DSG 'box, but the Mk8.5 returns to a smoother calibration.

Climbing into the prototype, you drop a few inches lower than normal, enveloped by the reassuring hug of a Recaro Pole Position. These

Above: ignore the profusion of track shots; our drive in this late prototype was confined to the road, and none the worse for that; among the changes for the Mk8.5 are a slight uplift in power from 316bhp to 328bhp

seats completely transform the driving position into something much more purposeful and touring car-like, but I'm told there's no chance of them making production. The half-cage behind the seats also hints at what a hardened, stripped-back R could be like, but that too remains a fantasy.

There's a trackday at the Lausitzring today, so our time in the R is confined to the road. Thumb the starter button and the four-pot motor fires up with the same industrial-sounding gargle we've come to know, but new for the Mk8.5 is a tweaked synthesised engine noise inside the cabin. It's inoperable in this prototype so we're left with the raw tunes from the titanium Akrapovic exhaust, which itself has been revised. Also new is an Eco driving mode, and while that may not sound particularly exciting, it has allowed Volkswagen engineers to devise more aggressive powertrain calibrations for Comfort and Sport. As before, there's also a Race mode and a Nürburgring-developed Special mode, as well as the ability to mix and match settings for the steering, powertrain, DCC dampers and engine sound yourself.

If you've driven a Mk8 Golf R almost everything about the new car feels familiar. It's as easy to drive as ever, with calm responses and an engine

that builds boost gradually, finding an easy stride as you dip in and out of the throttle. With time tight, a few taps on the infotainment screen sees the car configured to the combination I remember feeling best in the outgoing R. That means ramping the drivetrain up to Race, leaving the dampers in Comfort and choosing the lightest mode for the steering (the weight build-up is excessive otherwise, particularly in Race). Now you start to feel the extra bite from the engine – the boost gauge shows higher pressures more consistently and there's more snap to the throttle, which does give the R a more 'switched on' feel. Push past this, use the revs and it's hard to detect the new car's 12bhp advantage, but there's real guts right up to autobahn speeds. The manual gearchanges are much sharper when you put more energy through the drivetrain, too.

Turning off the motorway and onto one of Germany's smooth, sweeping A-roads is the first chance to experience the new R loaded up, and sure enough, it feels almost exactly like its predecessor. You can lean hard into the grip from the Bridgestone Potenzas but there's the same sense of mass as before, a reluctance to carve to the inside of a corner with the tenacity of a Civic Type R. The steering is fuzzier too, particularly when the front axle skips and thumps over harsh imperfections. The ride is otherwise civilised and compliant with the dampers wound back, and the huge range of the DCC system gives you the ability to significantly tighten their responses. When the





surface allows, that is. I try the suspension in its Race setting for a few corners and build a nice flow – until the car skips half a metre wide over a bump that finds the limits of the dampers.

The R's defining dynamic tool is still the torque-vectoring rear diff, which gives you freedom to shift the balance with the throttle. When the front tyres start to scrub, your natural reaction is to back off, but being more aggressive with the throttle is more effective in neutralising the car and allows you to exit on an uninterrupted flow of power. Other times, though, the diff can confuse your internal gyros as it rotates the car at an unnatural rate, making it hard to read the limits and feel connected to the rear end. It's a complaint we had with the outgoing car, and though the diff has been recalibrated for the Mk8.5, the changes are primarily designed to improve its performance on mixed wet/dry surfaces.

The Mk8.5 is very much an incremental upgrade then, and it's one that you'd only appreciate having spent time in the Mk8 – subject to what's new for its (as yet unrevealed) design and interior. From this initial drive we can't help but wish that Volkswagen had gone a little further. ✕

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1984cc, turbocharged **Power** 328bhp @ 5200rpm **Torque** 310lb ft @ 2100-5500rpm **Weight** 1555kg (est) (c214bhp/ton) **Tyres** Bridgestone Potenza **0-62mph** 4.6sec **Top speed** 167mph **Basic price** c£45,000 (TBC)

- ➕ Small power uplift; as quick and capable as ever
- ➖ Gentle evolution hardly addresses the R's shortcomings

evo rating ★★★★★



Driven

by JAMES TAYLOR

Radical SR1 XXR

Radical's entry-level racing car has been re-released in enhanced XXR guise. We find out just how good it is in the most revealing way – by racing it



WHAT'S THE BEST CAR YOU'VE EVER driven? It's the question every automotive journalist gets asked the most. I've never come up with a good answer: like everything in life, it's all relative. But the most *fun* car I've ever driven, that one's easy. In 2016 I raced a season in a Radical SR1, the Peterborough track car company's entry-level racing car. It felt as if it spliced the genes of a kart with a three-quarter-scale prototype racer. I've never experienced another car so immediate, so controllable and so thrilling.

That was the original SR1, launched in 2012. It was comprehensively updated in 2017 and

now this is its third generation, the Radical SR1 XXR, introduced halfway through 2023 with fresh electronics, revised aerodynamics (including an LMP-style central dorsal fin) and the fifth generation of Radical's 1340cc engine. As before, it's based on Suzuki's Hayabusa motorcycle engine but rebuilt by Radical's RPE engine division. Compared with the older SR1's unit, the Gen 5 engine is designed to last longer (with 80 hours between rebuilds) and features a new engine management system, drive-by-wire electronics and revised cooling.

To my eyes it's a more attractive car than before. The original SR1 was adapted from the

Radical SR4 released in the mid-noughties, with styling inspired by the Bentley Speed 8 Le Mans car. The redesigned bodywork is more contemporary in style and looks great in this car's Porsche 917 Can Am-aping livery. It's still tiny, less than 3.9m long and just over 1m high.

Settling into its lay-back driving position, the interior is neater than before too, with all the control switches integrated into a panel on the dash. It's much like its bigger brother, the impressive SR3 XXR we tried in *evo*'s Track Car of the Year test last month. It's a user-friendly, clearly laid-out cockpit, and the engine starts at a simple push of a button. Where the original



SR1's six-speed sequential gearbox was manual as standard or an electro-pneumatic paddleshift as an option, now it's paddles only. You stay flat on the throttle for upshifts and an autoblip system means there's no chance of locking the rears in the wet on downshifts.

Rather than an individual track test, we're experiencing the SR1 XTR in the most immersive way possible: by racing it, with a one-off return to the opening round of the SR1 Cup, Radical's dedicated race series for the car, at Donington Park.

Originally the SR1 Cup was open only to novice drivers, with their licence, a race suit and two introductory test days all integrated into the price of the car. Drivers were allowed to race in the Cup for two seasons before moving on. Now, drivers of all experience levels can enter but the SR1 Cup is still positioned as the first step on the Radical ladder. Previous champions include James Pinkerton, now head of R&D at Radical itself, and Darryl de Leon, now racing in the BTCC. (And, erm, me, somewhat less notably.)

Nowadays, the SR1 Cup runs as a separate class within the wider Radical Cup, sharing the grid with the faster Radical SR3 category (bigger engine, wider dimensions, more downforce, slick tyres). Many races are on the support card for the BTCC, with live coverage on TV and big crowds to race in front of.

Happily there are fewer crowds for practice,

Above and right: bodywork has been updated, including LMP-style central dorsal fin; cockpit is now much neater; suspension (far right) fully adjustable, handling still huge fun but more stable than before

as I brush off eight years of rust since last driving the SR1. It feels really quite different from my memories of the Gen 1 car. It even *sounds* different: a lower, gruffer engine note to the old car's banshee shriek. The original SR1 didn't know the meaning of the word understeer, and was a car in which you were constantly managing oversteer – which was one of the facets that made it so much fun, but was also mentally draining over a race distance. The new car is much more stable at the rear and planted generally. In fact, I find myself countering understeer in practice and Radical's factory team quickly work out a set-up to neutralise it. The SR1's suspension is fully adjustable, with interchangeable roll-bars.

One thing that hasn't changed is that the SR1 is quite lively under braking, and you often arrive at corners with a fractional turn of opposite lock, a little like a kart. That's partly because, as before, the SR1 races on long-lasting treaded tyres rather than slicks, for lower limits and reduced costs over a season.

I don't get the best from the car in qualifying, lining up third on the grid behind British karting championship graduates Sam Shaw and Marcus Littlewood. The quickest





SR1s can mix it with the slowest SR3s, so the two classes are separated into two staggered rolling starts. I get a good reaction to the lights and manage to squeeze past Littlewood on the run to Redgate, emerging in second place. Several laps later we're catching the Radical SR3 of Adrian Hallmark (yes that one, the outgoing Bentley/incoming Aston Martin boss, competing in his first ever race). Shaw dives down Hallmark's inside at Redgate, and I stay to the outside, cutting back for a good exit. That brings me alongside Shaw on the plunging, flat-in-fifth run down Craner Curves – not a place I'd choose to go side by side but you take your opportunities when you can, and the SR1 is rock-steady stable in fast corners – and I'm through. When the chequered flag falls, I'm still in front. It's my first win since 2016, and a ringing endorsement of the XXR's user-friendliness.

That puts us on pole for Race Two, and this time I'm a little too cautious on the brakes into Redgate, allowing Shaw to sweep around the outside and into the lead. The safety car comes out for an incident in the SR3 class upstream, and at the restart I manage to get a double-slipstream from both Shaw and Hallmark ahead (thanks, Adrian), allowing me to slot between the two cars and into the class lead. I put another SR3 between Sam and me later in the lap for some more breathing space and I'm first SR1 over the line at race-end.

I'm pretty happy, of course, but leaving emotion to one side, the new car is definitely a marked step on from the original in terms of user-friendliness and stability. It feels a more cohesive and well-rounded product, but it still has the same kart-like purity to its driving characteristics.

Like everything in life, the SR1 has become more expensive in the last eight years. The XXR costs £65,460 including VAT and running costs for a season vary; some competitors run the car themselves, others pay for teams to run it on their behalf to lower the race-day stresses. Some customers don't race the car at all and use it purely for trackdays, and some cars are bought by racing schools, particularly in the US.

Actually, I'd say the more tail-happy, shrieking-revs-soundtracked original is slightly more exciting to drive, but the XXR is unquestionably a better car. The answer to the question is still the same: the Radical SR1 is still the most fun car I've ever driven, and now it's an even better car than before. ✕

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1340cc **Power** 188bhp @ 9150rpm
Torque 115lb ft @ 7250rpm **Weight** 510kg (375bhp/ton)
Tyres Hankook treaded race tyres **0-62mph** c3.0sec
Top speed c140mph **Basic price** £65,460

➕ Huge fun to drive, user-friendly to run, up-to-date tech
 ➖ You might want to upgrade to a faster SR3 in the future

evo rating ★★★★★



by STUART GALLAGHER

Aston Martin DBX707

Much-needed interior overhaul, plus other mid-life updates, ready the DBX for its second act

A MID-LIFE FACELIFT IS TRADITIONALLY quite a thorough affair. Baked into the product plan at conception, its introduction scheduled for when the once-fresh new car is no longer the freshest. Therefore, around its fourth anniversary come the updates. A nip here, a tuck there, possibly some more oomph somewhere. Job done, three more years of sales for before its all-new replacement arrives.

These facelift cycles are also the opportunity to address any fundamental issues that were missed during several million miles of testing and while even more millions of pounds were spent on development, and weren't noticed until the early production stages after the sign-off had happened and there was no turning back. Such issues are rare today, but Aston Martin knew it had one with its DBX before it saw the light of day: its interior. With the budget spent on the car's bespoke platform, accompanying design, dynamics to give Porsche

sleepless nights and a 'new' factory to build it in, when it came to dressing the inside of the DBX Aston Martin was shaking the last pennies from its investors' piggy banks and was left with those small bits of fluff, a franc and a piece of Lego. Probably.

It meant the car now charged with lifting the company from its post-IPO hangover had an interior that was, at best, functional, but in reality not as good as that. It simply wasn't fitting for a car carrying the DBX's price tag and competing with Range Rovers, Bentleys and other higher-end VW Group products. It's why one of executive chairman Lawrence Stroll's first instructions upon his arrival was to fix the interiors of the DBX and all other Astons. We saw the first of these in last year's DB12, the next more recently in the new Vantage, and now the DBX707 benefits too. (The 707 is now the only model Aston offers in its SUV lineup, the original 550 having been dropped.)

Perhaps it's because the DBX isn't new-new

like the DB12 and Vantage that the makeover looks a far greater triumph. Where previously there were plain surfaces and scattered switchgear borrowed from Mercedes, there is now texture to the surfaces and jewellery for the controls. Those controls are also integrated rather than simply placed where they are required. There's a blend of haptic buttons and knurled metal knobs and wheels. There's a touchscreen with wireless Apple CarPlay with the same for Android to come via an over-the-air update. There are no more push buttons embedded in the dashboard for the gearbox controls; instead there's a kind of gearlever on the transmission tunnel.

There's more detail to the fascia facings and the instrument cluster is a configurable TFT screen that's integrated into the dash-top rather than simply plonked there. There's more personalisation for trims and finishes than before, too, allowing you to create something truly bespoke. It's a



cabin worthy of its nameplate and price tag.

The HMI unit is as per the new coupes and still grates in terms of how small some of the touchscreen controls are and how fiddly they can be to operate on the move. And there is still some work to do on the radio's willingness to find a station and stay with it.

Those familiar with a modern-day Mercedes will recognise the haptic controls on the steering wheel and, as is the case in Mercedes models, once you've mastered the controls and how they operate, the interactions are intuitive. After six hours in its driving seat the DBX felt totally on point in terms of its desire to be an 'ultra luxury performance SUV'. Although after a few hours I still got a numb bum, the seat suffering from the same thin padding as Porsche's current Cayenne.

During those six hours the updated DBX felt a larger-than-expected step up from the original. There's detail inside its predecessor lacked, such

as the brushed aluminium fitted to our example that occupies the space where those gear select buttons were, breaking up the roll of leather and providing a demarcation area between front-seat occupants. The strip of trim ahead of the passenger with its embossed 'Aston Martin' provides a small but much-needed piece of finishing. Details the DBX was missing from day one are present and correct.

There's more to this update than a new interior, though. There are new door mirror housings that move as one where previously it was only the glass that adjusted, and the carbon lip on the roof spoiler is now integrated rather than bonded in position. The same Bilstein DTX dampers fitted to the DB12 and Vantage are now installed here, the steering in GT mode recalibrated to provide more assistance when you push on and the suspension control unit modified to allow the systems to interact earlier and more seamlessly. And following requests from customers, under higher

torque loads and at lower engine speeds (below 4000rpm) the exhaust note is more prominent.

As a GT the DBX still covers endless motorway miles in the relaxed and responsive way it always has, providing a blend between a locked-down supersaloon and a luxury car that's happy to breathe with the surface. On roads **evo** often finds itself on during eCoty and group tests it deals with the bucking, challenging topography with that inherent balance, communication and surefootedness the DBX has always portrayed. It remains the best of its type for those who enjoy driving and now it has a far nicer interior to enjoy the experience from. ✕

Engine V6, 3982cc, twin-turbo **Power** 697bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque 663lb ft @ 2750-4500rpm **Weight** 2245kg (315bhp/ton)
0-62mph 3.3sec **Top speed** 193mph **Basic price** £205,000

➕ Interior is now befitting of the rest of the package

➖ Touchscreen could still benefit from some fine-tuning

evo rating ★★★★★

by STUART GALLAGHER

Theon Design GBR003

For its third UK commission, the Oxfordshire-based Porsche restorer and enhancer has turned its attention to a Targa, and the result is out of this world

I TS LARIMAR BLUE PAINTWORK GLIMMERS in the rare UK sun, the silver roll hoop and bullet-head mirrors reflecting the few pure white clouds in the rich blue sky. Those 18-inch Fuchs replica wheels fill every centimetre of spare space under the carbonfibre arches, the lip spoiler fixed to the underside of the front bumper

noticeable but not dominating your attention. Likewise the quarter-height ducktail sweeping up from the engine cover that's subtle rather than overt, and the white Porsche script running through the ghosted body-colour stripes along the flanks of GBR003, Theon Design's first Targa creation. Like all the best restomods the details are hidden in





plain sight, every glance serving up a new delight.

Swing the steel driver's door open (these are the only non-carbon exterior panels as they allow the 964 donor car's side-impact protection to remain) and you stop to take another moment. Liquorice leather covers many of the surfaces, including much of the carbonfibre that replaces Porsche's original trim to save yet more weight. Drilled aluminium footrests, aluminium gearlever sprouting from the floor, and the same material wrapping around the dials, with a colour-matched tacho in your centre line. A deep-dished leather-rimmed wheel waiting to be grasped. Every little detail is a distraction. You want to touch them all, feel their perfectly weighted movement and savour their precision.

And then it all goes out of the window when you're handed the sliver of a key, insert it into the ignition barrel, call your left leg into action to

Above: naturally aspirated, air-cooled 4-litre flat-six produces 403bhp. **Left:** doors aside, exterior panels are all carbonfibre. **Top left:** plenty of carbon inside too, but much of it is wrapped in high-quality leather

depress the clutch, then twist your right wrist. Instantly you forget every little detail your brain has been processing for however long you've been staring and enjoying the silence.

There's no explosion of revs, booming exhaust or gnarly, raspy tickover of a fragile racer, simply the most measured, balanced tone of a meaty engine capacity perfectly served by an expertly conducted intake and exhaust orchestra. It's the soundtrack you expect every old 911 to make, but very few do as they hunt for revs. Not here. Not now. Thirty years of engine development has, as is often the case with modern builds of old engines, resulted in a motor its original creators

could only have dreamt of. This is not to put Porsche's past masters in the shade, but modern materials and decades of experience allow old engines to become modern masterpieces.

This motor started life as a 3.6-litre air-cooled six before being taken from 1993 (the year the base car was produced) and brought into 2024. Capacity has been increased to 4 litres, the compression ratio set to 11.3:1 and the ITB individual throttle bodies breathe through open induction trumpets that distract you from the leather-lined firewall. Cats and lambda sensors remain, but power and torque are no longer what they were: 403bhp arrives at 7100rpm and 320lb ft at 5500rpm in a car Theon claims weighs just 1228kg with a full complement of fluids (to save you looking for your calculator that's 333bhp per ton – an exact match for a Gen 1 991 GT3).

You feel every measurement of its performance output. For the first two-dozen miles while the fluids are warming through you ride that torque curve, experiencing a hint of its muscular thump as you short shift around 3000rpm. The six-speed shift is nothing like that of a mid-'90s 993 Carrera, which is where it's taken from. There's a precision to it that the factory never truly mastered for its Carrera models as it did for its RS products, which is what Theon has based its transmission on. The gate feels tight, slack-free and instinctive.



Each upshift brings with it a drop in revs, the lighter single-mass flywheel sees to this, but you always land back in a torque sweet-spot as you continue to watch the temperature gauge rise to where it needs to be.

At the first sign the warming-up process is complete, the GBR003 erupts into life as you squeeze the throttle harder, watch the revs build and the horizon grow in front of your eyes. It's been far from docile up until this point, but this is a whole new level. Push beyond 4000rpm and the cacophony of noise builds over your shoulder. Your pace increases with equal excitement. More revs, another gear, more noise. Pure magic. Approach the 7000rpm peak and you're thankful for the orchestral accompaniment of the soundtrack to mask your squeals of uncontrolled joy. Another gear. Rinse and repeat. It's as visceral as driving a Caterham, as exhilarating as nailing a pre-991 GT3 and as intoxicating as a full-blooded V12 supercar.

When it comes to slowing down, the process is repeated but in reverse. Your only frustration is that you want more gears so you never need to stop the heel-and-toe downshifts. The trade-



off is that this means you're about to tackle a corner. The 993 Carrera RS brakes have slowed you, the Michelin Pilot Sport 4 rubber has a purchase on the surface, and as you pour the Theon through the turn it feels connected and tied down, the process as one.

Left in their default setting the switchable adaptive dampers offer a blend of body control and ride comfort that perfectly suits British roads, but even when you experience the stiffer settings there's a compliance and comfort level that keeps the car useable across multiple surfaces and conditions. A 48:52

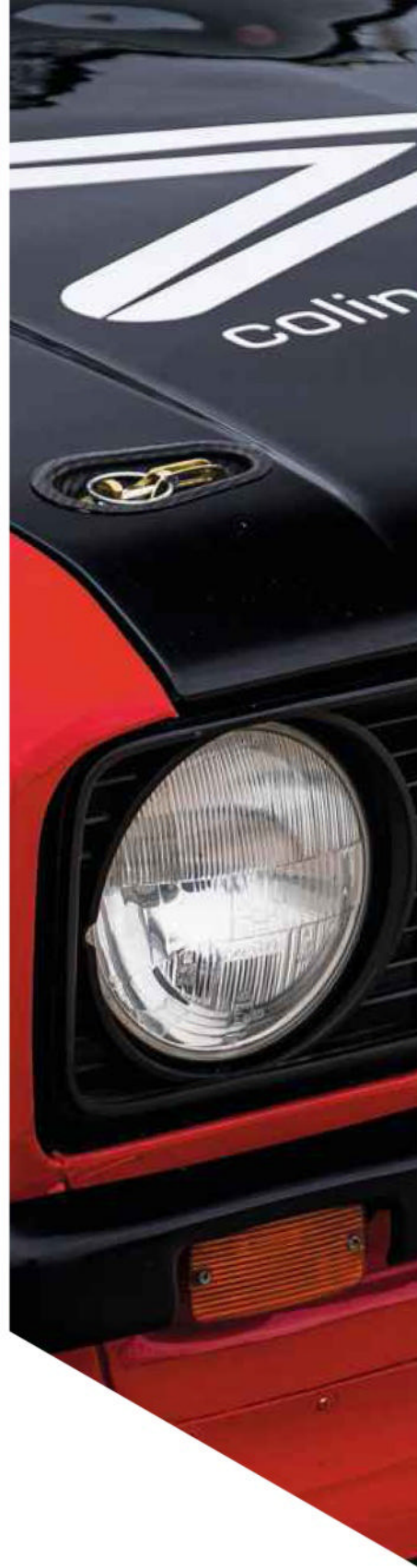
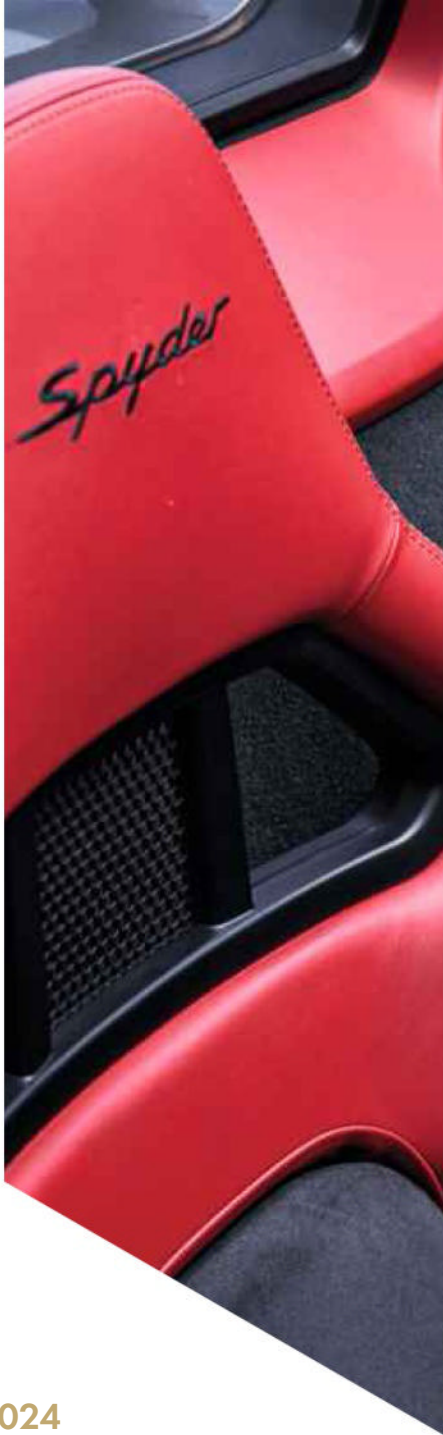
weight distribution helps with the balance (the dual air-conditioning compressors and an all-new electro-hydraulic pump for the steering – linear in its action, detailed in feedback – are relocated to the front), while the lighter kerb weight contributes to the quick, clean directional changes. Some will crave more movement across the rear axle, a little more opportunity to slip around a corner than the wide, 275-section rear rubber allows, but this is more a GT with an edge than a track special with air-con.

This comes – as you have well suspected – at a price: £415,000 for a Targa commission. But like all restomods there's so much more to the project than how much it costs, because the value is in the experience it delivers and, like the very best of their kind, GBR003 delivers a remarkable one. ☒

Engine Flat-six, 4.0 litres **Power** 403bhp @ 7100rpm
Torque 320lb ft @ 5500rpm **Weight** 1228kg (333bhp/ton)
Tyres Michelin Pilot Sport 4 **0-62mph** <4.2sec (est)
Top speed 160mph+ (est) **Price** £415,000

+ Exquisitely designed, sublime to drive
- Requires very deep pockets

evo rating ★★★★★



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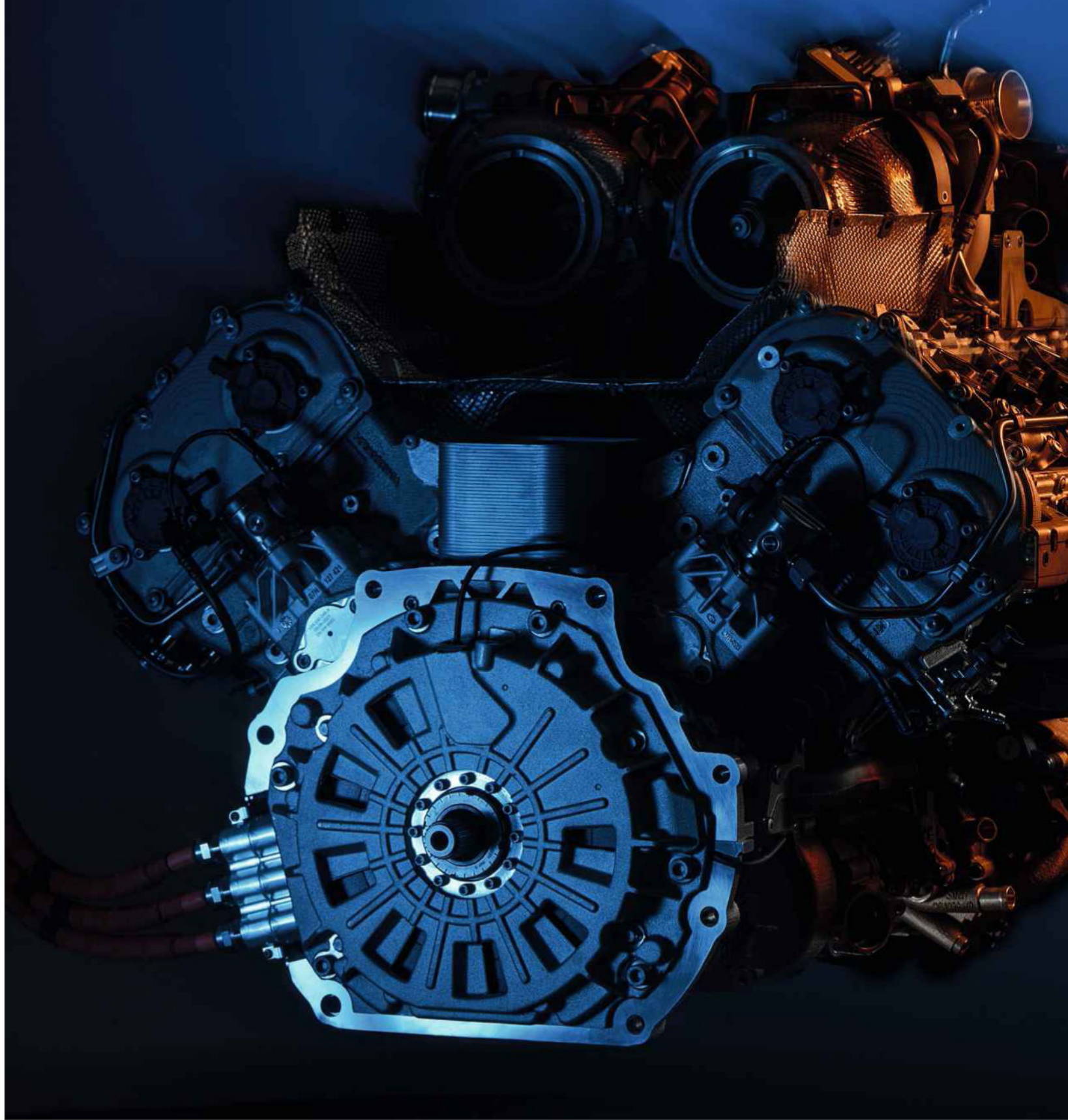
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Baby boomer

Lamborghini's new entry model will replace the V10 with a hybrid V8 powertrain of massive potency: think 900bhp-plus and a raft of new chassis tech too

WE KNEW THIS WAS COMING. WE KNEW that its time was up and that the wailing, shrieking, spine-tingling soundtrack of a V10 would soon be available only to those who shop in the used-car space rather than ordering a box-fresh supercar. Now, following Lamborghini's announcement that the Huracán's replacement is on its way, the first details of what will power it have been confirmed.

V10s have never been as ubiquitous as their V8 and V12 counterparts, but they have an exotic quality nothing else can match. Formula 1 played a part in the V10's cult following without a doubt, with 20,000+rpm red lines and a shattering soundtrack that froze you to the spot the moment you heard one approach. Sometimes from several miles away. What, then, of Lamborghini's replacement for an engine that's enthralled us for more than 20 years?

The home for Sant'Agata's new powertrain will be an all-new car codenamed 'Lamborghini 634' that will debut later this year and will sit beneath the range-topping V12-engined Revuelto as the firm's second new-age, two-seat, hybrid-engined supercar. The hybrid powertrain will be mated to an adaptation of the firm's new, lighter, eight-speed dual-clutch transmission that was introduced with the V12 last year. And the configuration is very different from what has gone before.

Capacity shrinks to 4 litres, while the cylinder count now stops at eight, and there will be the addition of a pair of turbochargers. And before you point out that there is already a 4-litre, twin-turbocharged V8 fitted to a Lamborghini, this is not a reworking of the Porsche-Audi V8 that appears across the VW Group portfolio. Rather, it's a ground-up, brand-new Lamborghini design.

Peak power for the V8 alone is claimed to be 789bhp, or 197bhp per litre, delivered between 9000 and 9750rpm. That's 158bhp more than the outgoing Huracán Tecnica and STO models (for further reference, the Aventador SV produced 740bhp from its mighty V12). As you'd expect, peak torque from the twin-turbo V8 is also considerably up on the naturally aspirated V10, with 538lb ft – a 121lb ft uplift – delivered all the way from 4000 to


7000rpm. Something the V8 will have in common with its V10 predecessor, though, will be its appetite for revs, topping out at 10,000rpm.

That's not all. Augmenting the new V8 are three electric motors: an axial-flux unit installed between the engine and the eight-speed dual-clutch gearbox that will produce 148bhp and 221lb ft, plus additional e-motors on the front and rear axles. It means the '634' will have in excess of 900bhp and in the region of 700lb ft of torque to play with.

The Huracán's replacement will lean heavily on the Revuelto's chassis and hardware but also include more bespoke packaging and design elements. Therefore, while the V8 and eight-speed transmission will be positioned behind the cockpit in a carbonfibre central monocoque chassis, the slimline battery is expected to be positioned in the transmission tunnel (in the V12 the battery sits behind the two seats). Meanwhile the front and rear subframes, from which the suspension will hang, are most likely to be fabricated from aluminium, with the pair of e-motors positioned fore and aft to maximise weight distribution.

In terms of pure electric driving range, don't expect much more than around ten miles (the Revuelto manages 6.1 from its 3.8kWh battery). The Huracán's replacement, like the new Porsche 911 Carrera GTS T-Hybrid over the page, uses its hybrid tech primarily to maximise the engine's performance and efficiency rather than to coast silently through urban landscapes.

Adopting a hybrid powertrain and high-voltage electrical architecture will also allow Lamborghini's engineers to introduce more complex chassis technology such as torque-vectoring, active anti-roll bars and rear-axle steering to its smallest supercar for the first time. You can also expect the Revuelto's regenerative braking system to be adapted for the new entry model.

Due to be revealed in August and with a price expected to start from around £200,000, the '634' will compete with Ferrari's 296 GTB and McLaren's Artura. Speaking of which, the British firm releases updated versions of both Artura coupe and Spider next month. It should be quite a group test... 

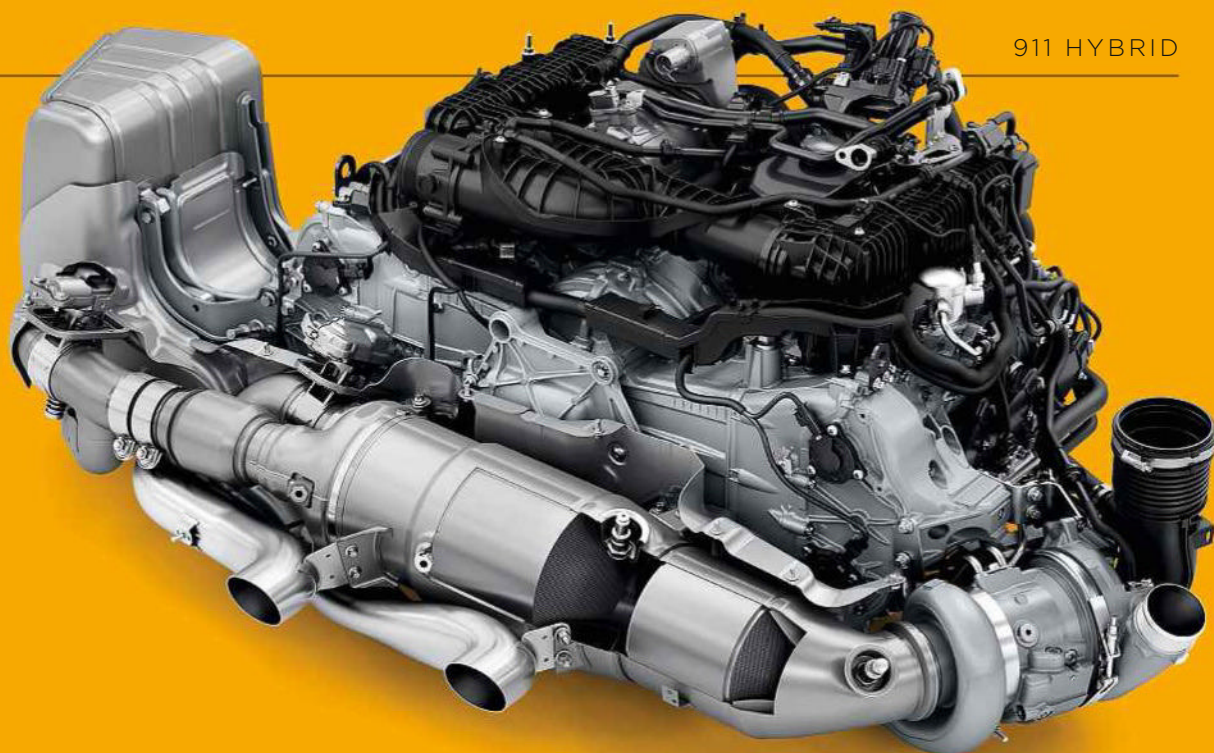


Hybrid power, Porsche-style

Porsche has made a whole raft of changes for the revamped, 992.2-gen 911 Carrera, including hybrid power with a twist for the new GTS



Left: nose of new GTS features five active cooling flaps on each side that open or close depending on cooling requirements. **Right:** brand-new 3.6-litre flat-six supplemented by two e-motors, one incorporated in the new single turbo (below)



PORSCHE HAS BEEN OPEN ABOUT THE 992-generation 911 receiving some form of electrified powertrain as far back as 2018, when we drove a prototype 992 with the then vice president of 911 and 718, Frank-Steffen Walliser. Its body-in-white design had been future-proofed to accommodate a battery that would provide its flat-six motor with an electrified boost and a few miles of silent running.

The new 'T-Hybrid' GTS, however, is not the hybrid 911 you were expecting, primarily because its extremely compact 1.9kWh battery – located in the front of the car where a traditional 12-volt battery is normally installed in a 911 – provides zero miles of electric driving. Its role, instead, is to deliver more performance at no cost to efficiency and emissions.

It achieves this partly through the incorporation of an e-motor into the latest PDK transmission that delivers up to 56bhp of additional power (64bhp on overboost) and an extra 111lb ft of torque to accompany the already swollen outputs of the all-new 3.6-litre flat-six (the GTS's outgoing 3-litre twin-turbo motor will now live on in the Carrera, albeit detuned to 389bhp).

The decision to develop an all-new engine was made to provide the 911 with the cleanest, most efficient powertrain possible. Swept volume aside, the biggest change is the return to a single turbocharger, something last seen on the 964 Turbo. This new turbocharger has no wastegate and features its own integrated electric motor, positioned between the compressor and turbine wheel. It builds boost pressure far quicker than a conventional turbo, eradicating lag and providing the sort of throttle response you'd expect from a large-capacity naturally aspirated engine, says Porsche. This second e-motor also acts as a small generator, extracting energy from the exhaust gas flow and feeding it back to the battery.

According to Porsche, at 2000rpm the new, single-turbo 3.6-litre engine takes 0.8sec to reach maximum boost of up to 1.8 bar compared with the 3sec it takes the 3-litre twin-turbo flat-six. Launch the T-Hybrid GTS against its predecessor and after 2.5sec the electrified 911 will have covered an additional 21.5 metres, putting it level with a Taycan GTS and 3.5 metres ahead of a 911 Turbo. Apparently it has lapped the Ring in 7:16.93, more than 8sec quicker than a rear-drive 992 Carrera GTS. Incidentally, the T-Hybrid powertrain will be offered with both rear- and four-wheel drive, and in coupe, Cabriolet and Targa bodies.

The new engine is a clean-sheet design and has been subjected to more than five million miles of development driving. Its high-voltage system allows the air-con compressor to be driven electrically, enabling the belt drive to be omitted and making the engine much more compact as a result. The water pump is connected to the same mechanical drive that runs the oil pump, there's a new exhaust system and engine mounts, and the engine sits 110mm lower in the bay than its 3-litre predecessor. The electric turbo weighs the same as the old biturbo set-up, and overall the new GTS is only 50kg heavier than the outgoing PDK-equipped car at

1595kg (although 10kg of that is saved by offering the rear seats as a no-cost option).

The new GTS will be available only with the eight-speed PDK dual-clutch transmission; with the e-motor being sandwiched between the engine and gearbox a manual isn't feasible, though one could still be offered on a non-hybrid 3-litre Carrera model further down the line.

The new 911 Carrera GTS range starts from £132,600. That's a £10,600 premium over the outgoing model, but alongside the new powertrain there is also more standard equipment, including rear-axle steering. There's also the mildest of exterior redesigns – chiefly new bumpers and headlights, plus distinctive active cooling flaps in the nose of the GTS – while the interior gains a new instrument layout. Porsche also includes its active anti-roll bar hardware, and the GTS's 20- and 21-inch wheels (front and rear respectively) are fitted with wider 245/35 and 315/30 ZR tyres (Goodyear Eagle F1 on the rear-drive car, Pirelli's new P Zero with four-wheel drive).

While Porsche claims we can expect 991 GT3 levels of performance from its new Carrera GTS, the clincher will be if it drives like one, too. We will find out next month. **X**

SPECIFICATION 911 Carrera GTS (992.2)

Engine	Flat-six, 3591cc, single turbo plus 41kW e-motor
Max power	534bhp combined (478bhp @ 6500rpm plus 56bhp e-power)
Max torque	450lb ft combined (420lb ft @ 2000-5500rpm plus 111lb ft e-torque)
Weight	1595kg (340bhp/ton)
0-62mph	3.0sec
Top speed	194mph
Basic price	£132,600





Mark Higgins

Rally and stunt driver

The three-time British Rally Champion, TT course record holder and James Bond stunt driver talks about his biggest moments at the wheel

by ADAM TOWLER

MY MUM DID AUTOCROSS AND ALSO rallied on the Isle of Man. At the time the Mini was the car to have: it was your road car, your night-rally car, your stage-rally car – it did everything. So a Cooper S was quite a cool thing. My dad was a mechanic and ran the workshop for the Volvo dealership on the island. I was born in 1971, and I remember driving some of the company cars while sitting on his lap when I was five years old. We got up to 80mph at Jurby airfield!

With formative years such as those, it's almost inevitable that rallying would become Mark Higgins' calling. In fact, it seemed as if the necessary skills were already coursing through his veins: 'It was my mum who really got my dad into rallying. He had an orange Mk1 Escort Mexico and was doing an airfield event. I was eight, and he sat me on his knee and I was drifting the car left and right. He looked across at the co-driver and said, "How was he doing that?"

As soon as he possibly could, Higgins got properly behind the wheel. 'On the Isle of Man you can pass your full licence when you're 16,' he explains. 'So at one minute past midnight on my 16th birthday I was out with my dad. And I remember driving back from the test in my auntie's Mk1 Fiesta – I was flat out the wrong way on the TT course...

'My first road car was a part-ex at my dad's garage, a 1256cc Opel Cadet, rear-wheel drive. It was a great little car. The roads were a lot quieter then; we'd go out at night... You'd work just to put petrol in the car, and then go out over all the rally roads and think you were Ari Vatanen.'

Higgins' first rally car was 'an old shed' of an Opel Manta. 'My dad said, "We can't really afford to do this," but he'd help me all the time with spannering

on the car, and I'd be down working at his garage until two in the morning trying to get it going. I did my first stage rally, still aged 16, and I was third quickest on my first stage – and then crashed on the next one. Hero to zero!

'Then I sold everything, took a bank loan out – I told them it was a "business opportunity" – and bought a Golf GTI 16v when I was 17. I did the Manx National Rally and later in the year we did the Manx International, and won the Star of the Rally award.'

By the early '90s Higgins was beginning to get noticed, which led to a place in the Shell Scholarship final for 1992 that featured the 'Brat Pack' of British rallying: Richard Burns, Robbie Head, Dom Buckley, Alister McRae, Jonny Milner... and Mark. It wasn't to be a good experience for Higgins and his Peugeot 309 GTI, however: 'I wrote the car off at Silverstone during the assessment. I ran out of talent, hit a tree, and broke Bertie Fisher's ribs, which didn't really go down well with Peugeot...' Presumably it didn't go down that well with Fisher, either.

Nevertheless, Higgins had a deal in the bag. 'I'd already signed for Vauxhall for 1992 in the British Junior Championship, alongside [lead driver] Dave Metcalfe. I have that Nova GTE in my garage today. It's my first factory car.

'Metcalfe was the main man at Vauxhall at the time and he helped me a lot. I was with them for all of '92, but tragically Dave was killed in a road accident at the end of the year. There was talk of getting a drive in the Group A Calibra, but I'd had a bit of an up-and-down year; I'd made a few mistakes, and at the end of the season they brought in Dai Llewellyn to drive the new Astra and supported me with a semi-works drive in 1993. We





had a lot of problems with the car, and I made a couple of mistakes – I had speed, but crashes were never far away. We were all like that back in day, the cars were a bit of a handful then.'

Asquith Autosport boss Richard Asquith could clearly see the potential, as he offered Mark a drive in the Castrol Honda Civic VTEC for '94. 'I have that car in the garage too,' grins Higgins. 'It was probably one of the best years I've ever had. Richard helped so many young drivers – a great guy, he did it for the love of it. We did 11 rallies that season and it was just incredible. We nearly won the British Group N championship.'

Meanwhile, between rallies Higgins had been working at the Forest Experience Rally School in Wales. 'One night the owner said he was thinking of selling up. So I said, 'Would you take my mum and dad's house in part exchange...?''

It's a measure of his father's belief in Mark that rather than fly off the handle, he saw the positives: 'Fair play to him: we sold everything on the Isle of Man and moved across. We ran that school for the best part of 20 years.'

As Mark began progressing towards bigger teams, one of his early outings in a Nissan Sunny GTi in 1996 led to catastrophe. 'I broke my back in Kiedler, which nearly set me back massively. I was so worried about losing my drive that the hospital made a cradle for me and I actually got back in a car three weeks later, to see if I could move with a full cast around me.'

Then came Higgins' year: 1997, and the British Rally Championship at its peak. 'We were the underdogs as we didn't have a full Kit Car like the Renault and Ford, but Nissan did develop a Kit Car version and we had a bit more power and 18-inch wheels, and that was really competitive against the full Kit Cars. It was a great car: not the quickest, but a lovely car to drive.'

After last-minute drama on the Manx that prevented Higgins from winning the rally, the championship title was nevertheless his. As British champion, he was surely on his way to going stage-to-stage against the likes of Colin McRae in the World Championship, but somehow it didn't happen. Why? 'The Hellmera,' says Higgins, with audible exasperation in his voice.

He means the Nissan Almera F2 Kit Car that replaced the Sunny and proved to be a complete disaster. It was a 'fork in the road' moment, and Higgins chose, on reflection, the wrong path.

'At the end of 1997 I had three contracts on the table to continue in the British Championship. But Nissan had the carrot of going to the World Championship to do five rallies, which was obviously where I wanted to get to. The Almera, though, was just a nightmare. That car really kicked me. Nissan got rid of me at the end of the year – and in a not really nice way in San Remo, despite having had not a bad run.'

Higgins was back in the BRC in '99 with

'It all started going wrong at 155mph, and I was just throwing lock at it'

Volkswagen, and returned to Vauxhall for 2000, missing out on the championship by one point. Then his career arrived at a fork in the road once again. It was the famous 'Battle of Britain' Rally GB at the end of 2001, where McRae, Burns, Mäkinen and Sainz were all fighting for the championship. Higgins was given the third works Ford entry in place of François Delecour and was running brilliantly in the top five, before disaster struck the rally and the Ford team.

'Carlos had a crash, hit a spectator. Colin had already had his big crash, and Ford decided to withdraw me because of the potential of a young driver crashing. Malcolm [Wilson] was in tears when he told me. Even the spectator who'd been hit wrote in to say don't pull out, but it was a Ford decision.' Once again, fate was not on Higgins' side.

Over the next few years he rallied all over the world, winning and trying to work his way back into the WRC full-time, but to no avail. Nevertheless, he was back on the top step of the podium in 2005 when he won the British Championship at the wheel of the Stobart-sponsored Focus WRC, before the championship switched to Group N for 2006 and Higgins took his third and final title in a Subaru. 'I did a few years of the Group N World Championship, worked as Pirelli's test driver, and had the best part of ten years rallying in China,' he says. His rallying career finished in 2017, but his talents would still be in demand...

'The film work came about totally by accident,' he recalls. 'I'd been doing a bit of TV work for *Top Gear* and *Fifth Gear*, but I was at the Autosport Awards and Ben Collins asked if I would be up for working on a Bond film. Later, I was on holiday and I got a phone call saying, "What are you doing next week? We need you in Italy for three months." They wanted a rally driver because it was *Quantum of Solace*, the scene in the quarry...

'It was quiet for a year and a half after that, but then I did *Fast & Furious* and got into the other Bonds: *Skyfall* and the last two. I've also been Batman, and in the latest *Fast & Furious*.'

He picks out the one-off Aston Martin DB10 from *Spectre* and the E46 M3-based DB5 from *No Time to Die* as being the most fun cars to drive for the movies. 'There was a scene when we were on a

coastal road with a helicopter and a sunset – it was a bit of a surreal moment really. I remember going to watch the films with my dad when I was a kid!'

Yet one event on his home island has brought Higgins global fame on YouTube arguably beyond all his other exploits. In 2011 Higgins took on the TT course during a break in race week. 'It was Subaru America's idea. Originally it was going to be my brother David [also a multiple championship-winning rally driver], as he was contracted to them, but then I got a call two weeks beforehand.

'It's something I'd wanted to do all my life since watching Tony Pond going round in the Rover Vitesse. We broke the record on the first lap.' And then came perhaps the greatest 'save' ever caught on video camera...

'I'd always watched the bikes go flat through the bottom of Bray Hill, so I thought it's got to be flat in the car, and it was – just about – on my own. But when we put a passenger in, the whole dynamics of the car changed and the rest is history!

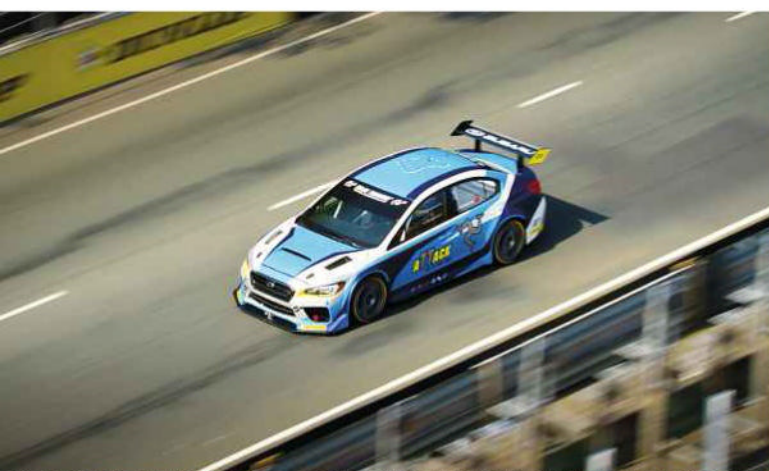
'It all started going wrong at 155mph, and I was just throwing lock at it – on the lock stops at one point. If it hadn't come back from there it wasn't coming back, but when you're doing it you're just thinking about looking forward and not giving up, because as soon as you give up you're done. I was dabbing the brakes, playing around with stuff – there was a lot going on. The journalist [the poor guy in the passenger seat] was really calm. I think he'd been watching rally videos and thought that was going to happen at every corner!'

Higgins returned in 2014 with a new-shape car, and went faster still, before returning in 2016 with a car built specially for the job by Prodrive. With 600bhp – effectively a derestricted WRC car with a different body on top – he achieved an incredible average lap of 128.7mph.

When it comes to road cars his history is a little more sparse, and despite competing on gravel he's never owned an Impreza, Evo, or Cosworth. 'I had a 200SX as a company car when I was at Nissan, which was great fun as it was rear-wheel drive and went sideways. In my years of motorsport I had company cars, but I wasn't driving for manufacturers who had particularly fancy cars at the time. The first fast car I actually bought was a BMW 535d – we put an LSD in it and it was remapped. Now I've got a 435d – I've always gone back to that diesel engine, even though I've had M3s. I really enjoy motorbikes too, both enduro and trackdays.'

Today, Higgins is an established professional in the film industry, but his passion is clear: 'Film work's been interesting, but I have to say, I do miss my rallying. If a rallying thing came along I'd be straight on it. I'll have to get out in a car before I'm too old – I've got a few years left!' ❧

Opposite page, from top left: setting the four-wheeled Isle of Man TT course record in a Prodrive Impreza in 2016 – and celebrating afterwards; Castrol-liveried Honda Civic VTEC was Higgins' car for '94 and holds fond memories; E46-based Aston Martin DB5 and bespoke DB10 are among his favourite cars that he's driven during his film work



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On the right track

What a brilliant read Track Car of the Year 2024 was (*evo* 322). With such tests I often turn to the winner first and then rewind and read the rest (apologies), but not this time. There were so many competitors one was almost salivating at the prospect.

The two I'd like to drive most are the Radical and the Caterham, but I doubt I'd be able to get close to the entry speed into Coppice and Charlie's that Mr Meaden achieved in the Radical. Still wouldn't mind the opportunity to try...

Great work, and it's so reassuring to see that there is still so much of interest out there, even if it is somewhat out of reach.

Julian Spender

Track attack

Latest issue delivered and to my dismay a third of the magazine is dedicated to a lifestyle few of us are interested in or can afford: trackday cars. My guess is that you hit 50 per cent of your readership with that one, at the most.

It actually made me want to put the issue straight in the recycling bin, only my collection would be an issue short if I did. So it'll be put in the bookshelf immediately and never looked at again.

Speaking to like-minded and similar-aged people (mid-fifties), we're all considering three-year-old high-performance cars on PCP rather than looking at the ridiculously expensive and boring new car market for the same monthly payment.

A £5000 deposit and a maximum of £900 per month gets you: BMW M3, M4 or M5; Audi RS4, RS5 or at a stretch RS6; Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio, and others.



Instead of TCoty, why not give us 50 pages of insights into 'this one is best for grand touring', 'this one is best for a B-road blast', 'this one is best for a one-car garage', etc?

Marc Ridett

Crestfallen

There is a quality control crisis at Porsche – the evidence is plain to see in *evo* 322. The problem begins on page 19 with the new Taycan Turbo GT, specifically the close-up shot of its wheel. As any self-respecting Porscheophile ought to know, the point of the crest on the centre cap is meant to line up with the valve stem on the rim. Legend has it this practice began on Porsche race cars of old to help pit crews find the valve quickly – a fact used by me to gently chastise anyone with a non-conforming centre cap when my fiancée and I ran our local region of Porsche Club GB (it's not militant, honest).

It could be a simple accident, I reasoned, and turned to the new Macan on the next page. You can imagine my horror at the discovery of yet another non-aligned cap on the close-up of that car's wheel.

The final hammer blow arrived in Fast Fleet, with the test between two 911 GTSS, neither of which had correctly aligned centre caps either.

At this stage, now in a full-blown cold sweat, I looked at Aston Parrott's Fast Fleet 993 on page 127, and a wave of relief washed over me when the picture was too small to check the caps and valves. Aston, you've been spared the noose.

I can only hope that Porsche can fix this dangerous fault, else what quality defect might be next? Total engine failures? If help is required, my 175,000-mile 986 Boxster S is



LETTER OF THE MONTH

86 appeal

I'D LIKE TO SAY THANKS TO EVO, AS I'VE JUST CHANGED my car again. This was in no small part down to eCoty 2022 – OK, plus a thousand hours of video 'research' – all of which was used to justify the change to my partner.

A BMW 128ti in 2021 lasted as long as your own positive thoughts about that particular car (a Greatest Misses candidate?), so that became a Giulia Quadrifoglio in early 2022 ('if Ferrari made saloons' indeed!). Over the next couple of years I grew tired of the problems with the troublesome Alfa (in their defence, I think I was unlucky) but not its sheer theatre, performance and handling. It was brilliant. Instead, I started tuning in to the back-to-basics driving themes surrounding the Toyota GR86. So to everyone's bemusement ('QV to GR, eh?'), and my partner's raised eyebrows of 'again!?', I traded one in for the other.

Only a month in, a barely used example (of the very few available), in subtle Magnetite Grey, and I am hooked! Stalling occasionally, but slowly getting my manual muscles working again, with nothing to think about but the road ahead.

I can't put it better than you all did at the end of 2022: 'After spending all those years banging on about wanting an affordable, front-engined rear-drive car, we've finally got it. And Toyota and Gazoo Racing really have nailed the brief.'

So thanks, *evo*. (I mean it!)

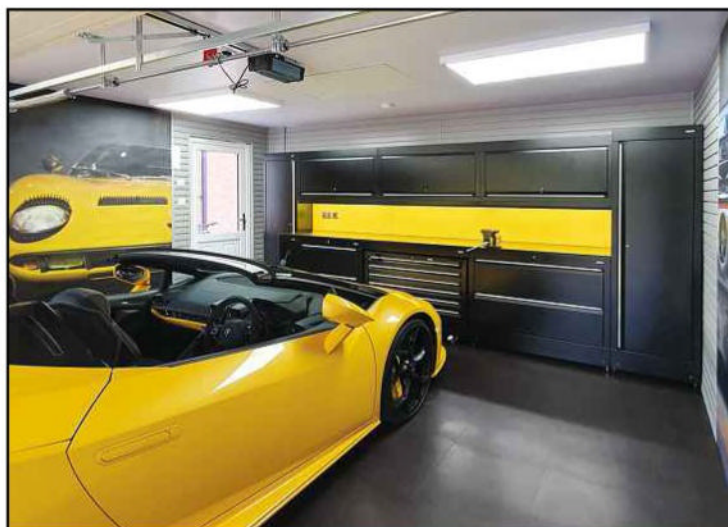
Chris Barker

The Letter of the Month wins a Straton watch

The writer of this month's star letter receives a Straton Sprint worth £280. Also known as the 'Cuffbuster', this vintage-inspired watch has a daring design that ensures the time will never be obscured by your sleeve. Six different colour schemes are available.

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INBOX



standing by with perfectly aligned centre caps to remind them how to do it – before Ferdinand Piëch returns from beyond the grave to sack one last director of quality.

George Mayson, Kirriemuir, Scotland

RS2 x 2

Reading the Audi RS 'Best Buys' in *evo* 322, I couldn't help but notice the comment suggesting that you're 'lucky if you've ever seen an RS2 in the metal'. I recall being at our local Asda supermarket when two Nogaró Blue RS2s were parked together. I have to assume they had both been to the nearby Kendal Porsche dealer for a service.

Long time before camera phones, so no photos. Darn it.

Paul Harrison, Ulverston

Tech? No.

Amen and hallelujah! Colin Goodwin's piece on the astonishingly stupid rise of distracting technology (issue 321) is possibly *the* most important thing ever stated in *evo* and he's spot on for raising the issue.

My 2017 3-series isn't afflicted by this trend and my 996 is thankfully the total opposite to the cars he describes, and there is absolutely no chance that I would replace either with a modern car with this type of tech. I really hope that manufacturers take heed and change their approach.

Carlos Hughes, Manchester

Attwood and autos

Having just read Mathew Harris's letter (*evo* 321) about his encounter with Richard Attwood, it brought back memories of my own experience at the Porsche Experience Centre.

I had been driving a 911 Turbo with a manual short-shift gearbox and it

was truly brilliant in every respect. However, as it piled on the miles it was eventually time to consider replacing it. Porsche no longer offered a manual gearbox in the Turbo and I truly didn't want to contemplate one of those old, inefficient auto gearboxes. However, I was persuaded to visit the Porsche Centre to try the new car, and this is where I met Richard [pictured above].

I suggested that as I would drive the car daily, I would rather test it on the highway, so after a lap on the track that's where we headed. I will never forget how, as I got to know the car and its new, much-improved auto 'box, Richard suggested that instead of using the paddles to change gear, I should just let the 'box do the work itself. It was so very clever and judged gearchanges to perfection. Richard was correct and, indeed, I bought a Turbo with an automatic gearbox!

Not once did he mention his previous years racing for Porsche (it was only over lunch that someone pointed out to me exactly who he was). Instead he was focused purely and professionally on the job at hand.

Many thanks for a wonderful day, Richard.

Peter Robinson

63 is the magic number

In his latest GR Yaris Fast Fleet report (*evo* 322), John Barker asks why 63 is the maximum volume of the car's sound system.

My theory: the unit uses a 6-bit value to represent volume and this is converted to decimal for the display.

With six binary digits the largest number that can be represented is 111111 (binary). Those 1s represent 32, 16, 8, 4, 2 and 1 respectively, so add that all together and you get 63 in human-friendly decimal.

Andrew Tempest

Watches

Three stealthy newcomers bring the black magic



Namica Okami Neo Tokyo

\$500 namicawatches.com

Tokyo-based Namica was founded in 2022 and enjoyed immediate success with its initial release, the Shirahama dive watch. Its follow-up is the Okami (meaning 'wolf'), a keenly priced, titanium-bodied 'urban sports watch'. It's available in a number of configurations, ranging from the can't-miss-it colourful to the none-more-black variant pictured here.



Bell & Ross BR 05 Black Ceramic

From £6800 bellross.com

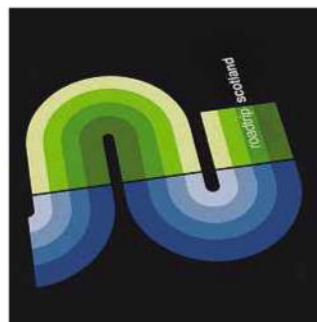
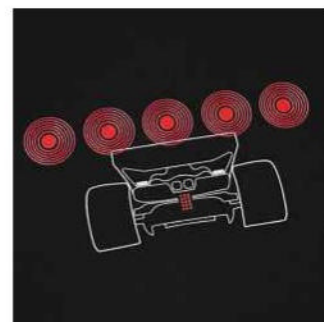
Bell & Ross is expanding its BR 05 range with a trio of options in lighter-and-tougher-than-steel ceramic, all of them black. You can choose between a regular dial or a skeletonised version that allows you to see the rhodium-plated movement behind, while the limited-edition 'Black Lum' model (pictured) goes for maximum blackness with a sandblasted rather than brushed finish.



Chanel Monsieur Superleggera Edition

£39,500 chanel.com

Chanel has also turned to ceramic to create a 'super light' version of its Monsieur watch. Its speedometer-inspired dial features a retrograde minutes hand at the top (which sweeps from 0 to 60 before jumping back to 0), an hour indicator in a window at the bottom, and a small seconds counter in the middle – all surrounded by an elaborate 'guilloché' engraved finish.



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RICHARD MEADEN

Has Lamborghini stolen a march on its oldest adversary, wonders Meaden

NEXT MONTH YOU'LL BE ABLE TO READ ALL about our first road drive of the Lamborghini Revuelto. As the first electrified Lambo to enter series production, the Revuelto could have confirmed our concerns over supercars being ruinously compromised and corrupted by hybridisation. Instead, it has proved to be brilliant.

Not only does this somewhat inconvenient truth confound our teeth-gnashing and hand-wringing histrionics, but it also bodes extremely well for the electrified Huracán replacement due to land later this year (see story on page 32). Perhaps most significantly, it points to Lamborghini usurping arch-rival Ferrari for the first time since the Miura and Countach caught Maranello napping.

These are momentous times for sports and supercar makers, with strategies hatched in the face of looming environmental legislation now manifesting themselves in new model lines. Those who went all-in on electrification stole headlines and tickled financial analysts looking for the next Tesla, but as time has passed it's those who hedged their bets and kept the internal combustion faith that are best placed to satisfy a market that apparently has little appetite for fully electrified supercars.

Of most interest to me is the growing battle between Ferrari and Lamborghini. Thanks to its legendary racing success and many decades of financial stability, Ferrari has always had an air of superiority. But since Audi's takeover in 1998, Lamborghini has developed into one of the few top-tier car brands fit to be mentioned in the same breath is its oldest adversary.

The ebb and flow of product cycles and the rise of the super-SUV has had a fascinating and transformative effect on both marques. Ferrari's prodigious output has seen it progress from 458 to 488, F8 Tributo and 296 in the time Lamborghini has been building the Huracán. On the flipside, more Urus SUVs have been sold since it was launched than Lamborghini's entire output for the first 50 years of its existence.

Both brands now sell in excess of 10,000 cars per year and generate huge profits. Ferrari's flotation on the stock market has seen the company achieve a monumental valuation, inspiring others – most notably Aston Martin and Porsche – to follow with mixed success. Lamborghini is reportedly poised for its own IPO.

It's hard to see any automotive brand matching Ferrari's performance in the financial markets, but on the evidence of my recent drive in the Revuelto and details of the Huracán replacement there's every chance Lamborghini will have the more compelling core product range by the end of the year.

Much like the stock markets, supercars are a numbers game. Power and torque, performance and lap times, pricing and production volumes. All are key to the matrix of success, but when you're sitting in the driver's seat – or simply reading the spec sheet – something as basic as the number of cylinders still carries the most clout. And this bodes extremely well for Lamborghini, who have not only stuck by the magnificent naturally aspirated V12 for the Revuelto, but have committed to a bespoke 10,000rpm twin-

turbocharged V8 (plus a trio of electric motors) for its Huracán replacement. Each makes Ferrari's SF90 and 296 appear to put efficiency before emotion, their hybrid-assisted V8 and V6 engines effortlessly outpointed by Lamborghini's refusal to let sustainability get in the way of old-school supercar drama.

No, I haven't overlooked Ferrari's 12Cilindri, which as its oddly prosaic name suggests, packs a glorious V12 engine. One without turbos or battery assistance, just as God (and Enzo) would have it. I have no doubt it will be a spectacular machine, and that Ferrari will sell out years of production almost instantly. What seems odd to

me is that the *do-di-chi chillin-dri* immediately highlights what's missing in the SF90 – a car that would be immeasurably more desirable if it featured this purportedly all-new V12.

You can't blame Ferrari for following the legislators' lead, and you certainly wouldn't know it from the company's sales numbers and financial performance, but it appears the oft-lauded theory of first-mover advantage is now a clear disadvantage. At least when you're in the business of building supercars in an age when the wider automotive industry is being pushed into building cars people are increasingly resistant to buying.

We've been saying the internal combustion engine is on borrowed time for years now. Jaguar and Lotus have bet their futures on it. Yet on the evidence of Ferrari and Lamborghini's latest efforts, not to mention Aston Martin's recently announced DBS-replacing twin-turbo V12 non-hybrid Vanquish, those reports of its death appear to be greatly exaggerated.

'Ferrari's SF90 would be immeasurably more desirable if it featured a V12 engine'

✉ @DickieMeaden

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

"M2 performance with newfound precision and control."

- EVO Magazine ★★★★★

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

- BMWCar Magazine ★★★★★

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

- Autocar ★★★★★



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RICHARD PORTER

Youngsters not into cars any more? The remedy's obvious, reckons Porter

IT'S SOMETIMES SAID THAT YOUNG PEOPLE aren't interested in cars any more. In the last few years respectable publications from *Forbes* to *The Economist* have run lengthy articles about folk under 25 and their apparent disinterest in driving. *The Daily Telegraph* thrives on this sort of coverage, as it would since its strange transformation into a Home Counties clickbait machine. One of the big signifiers of young people feeling no love for cars is that they're seemingly unhurried to get a driving licence. Previous generations were practically banging on the door of the local test centre within weeks of their 17th birthdays whereas, according to stats that show a fall in licence holders under 25, today's late teens aren't so fussed.

A Covid-caused backlog in theory and practical test appointments hasn't helped, but there are other factors too. Learning to drive is expensive, and that's before you get to the cost of owning a car, what with the price of fuel and a spike in insurance prices so violent even those of us over 25 now have to go compare what life was like when we still had two kidneys. Add in a young person's faith in the app-based economy, where your phone can be used to summon up a cab or a ride share or, for licence holders, by-the-hour car rental, and you can see why the idea of saddling yourself with the ongoing cost of car ownership doesn't appeal.

If you're older, and you're into cars, you could also claim that young people aren't smitten with cars because cars aren't exciting any more. 'It's all just EVs and SUVs,' moans the most boring man in any given pub, as if when he were a lad he was absolutely thrilled by the Renault 9 and Datsun Stanza. Today there are still plenty of cars that aren't electric or SUVs and which are saucy and exciting, so how do we get young people interested in those and, by extension, in cars generally? I think the answer is obvious: posters.

When I was a kid, which I'm still pretending wasn't that long ago even though I can vaguely remember the Falklands War, car posters were a big deal. A red Testarossa, a white Countach, perhaps for some leftfield appeal something really nutty like a Vector W8 or Cizeta V16T. And this wasn't just for small boys in the UK. My wife grew up 5000 miles away in the US and even she had a car poster on her wall. It was of a Porsche 911, since you ask.

Car posters gave you not only something striking to look at, but also something to dream of. And once you were dreaming of a car, you were on the glide slope to dreaming of getting a licence so that one day, maybe, you might get to drive that exotically slotty Ferrari or extravagantly winged Lambo. But my kids don't have car posters on their walls. They have things in frames and carefully curated pin-boards, not ragged pages from *Performance Car* excitedly Blu Tack-ed to woodchip.

What's changed here? Well, one thing to blame is supercars themselves. Once upon a time supercars really were rare, not least because getting one was hard work, possibly necessitating multiple trips to what our parents used to call 'the continent' to carry out delicate and direct negotiations with the factory. Or at the very least a journey to visit a retired army man with a lone

showroom at the other end of the country who had, for no readily explicable reason, become the sole UK concessionaire for an entire car company. As a result, there just weren't that many supercars on the streets. Whereas now in any major city in Britain there's a strong chance that you'll see at least one wedgy exotic kerbside by dint of the companies that make them now being slick and professional operations with multiple outlets.

The wages now paid to professional footballers might have something to do with this. In the '60s the average pro player would have been happy with a Cortina and a few extra shillings for endorsing a company that made pipe tobacco.

Now some players have a one-McLaren-a-week habit to feed. And all of this has made supercars, the top flight of the car kingdom, a tiny bit less special. But that shouldn't prevent the return of the poster. After all, you could argue that we're in a real golden patch for good-looking supercars. The McLaren 750S is a mighty striking thing. The Artura's not half bad either, nor the gorgeous Ferrari 296 GTB. And as for that fabulous new 12 Cilindri, well it's just crying out for some soft '80s studio lighting playing across its gorgeous shape, immortalised on shiny A3 and gummed inspiringly above one of those three-quarter-scale kid desks.

If, as it's sometimes claimed, young people aren't fussed about cars, we need to get them interested again and nothing does that like having a fabulous car in daily sight on a poster in the room where you sleep. Honestly, where's Athena when you need it?

'When I was a kid, car posters were a big deal. A red Testarossa, a white Countach...'

✉ @sniffpetrol

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



A LEGEND REBORN FOR AN ELECTRIFIED AGE



A NEW KIND OF ROADSTER

A legendary roadster returns, electrified for our times. With the new Cyberster, MG has incorporated all the family genes from a century of building sports cars and remixed that soul for a new generation. From its show-stopping scissor doors to its advanced electric powertrain, the Cyberster breaks convention, offering up to 536bhp with as much as 310 miles* of range on a single charge of its battery. Read on to find out why once again, MG has redefined the roadster.

A STATE OF THE ART DRIVE

The Cyberster is powered by a choice of two new electric powertrains. For the Trophy model, a single electric motor is placed on the rear axle, providing 335bhp and 475Nm of torque in a rear-wheel drive configuration. Power for the motor is drawn from a 77kW lithium ion battery, which can be recharged in just 38 mins when using a public rapid charger.**

The GT model uses the same electric motor on the rear axle as the Trophy, but combines it with another on the front axle to provide four-wheel drive. It develops as much as 536bhp, with a staggering 725Nm of torque. Both models offer sensational performance, with the 0-62mph sprint being dispatched in 5.0- and 3.2-seconds respectively, promising an exhilarating drive. There are four individual driver modes - Comfort, Custom, Sport and Track - allowing the driver to tailor the Cyberster to their mood, and the road they're driving on. Paddles mounted behind the steering wheel provide the opportunity to select from three different levels of regenerative braking via the electric motors, and as you would expect, the Cyberster features a powerful braking setup designed in conjunction with brake specialists Brembo.

MG's London-based design team played its part in the initial stages of shaping the car, while the chassis of the Cyberster has been honed during an 18-month performance and handling development programme run from MG's UK engineering centre in Longbridge, Birmingham, with particular emphasis on

achieving the perfect setup for UK roads. This integrated approach has helped to maintain the heritage of the MG brand as well as creating a new generation of engineers and associated specialists here in the UK.

A DESIGN THAT MAKES THE RIGHT STATEMENT

The new MG Cyberster embodies the spirit of performance that has been woven through a century of MG car making history. Sleek, dynamic and overtly sporting, it's given a spectacular edge by the inclusion of 'scissor' doors that open out and upwards in the style of a genuine supercar. The fabric roof is electrically powered, and can be opened and closed in just 15 seconds, and at speeds up to 30mph.

On the inside, the wraparound cockpit is dominated by a central 10.25-inch driver display, flanked by twin seven-inch screens for further information, while at the centre of the fascia, set lower down, is a colour touchscreen that allows you to operate the dual zone climate control system. Both the driver and passenger sit on supremely comfortable and supportive six-way, electrically adjustable heated sports seats, with a memory function and powered lumbar adjustment. As you would expect of a premium product, an extensive range of infotainment features are included as standard, with Apple CarPlay, Android Auto, an eight-speaker Bose sound system, DAB and voice recognition, a 360-degree parking camera and twin USB ports on the equipment list. Moreover, an extensive suite of driver assistance features is provided via MG Pilot, with additional active safety systems that seek to help manage the prevailing traffic conditions.

CONFIGURE YOUR OWN CYBERSTER

The configurator for the new MG Cyberster is now live, with first deliveries due this summer. So why not head to the MG website (mgcyberster.co.uk) and start designing your ultimate roadster: there are five colours to choose from, and two shades for the fabric roof, too. Create your Cyberster today, and make a real statement about who you are.



mgcyberster.co.uk



* Range figures are comparative estimates under test conditions and may vary with accessories, weather, driving style, and load

**When charging from 10-80% using a 150kW rapid public charger



FAMILY



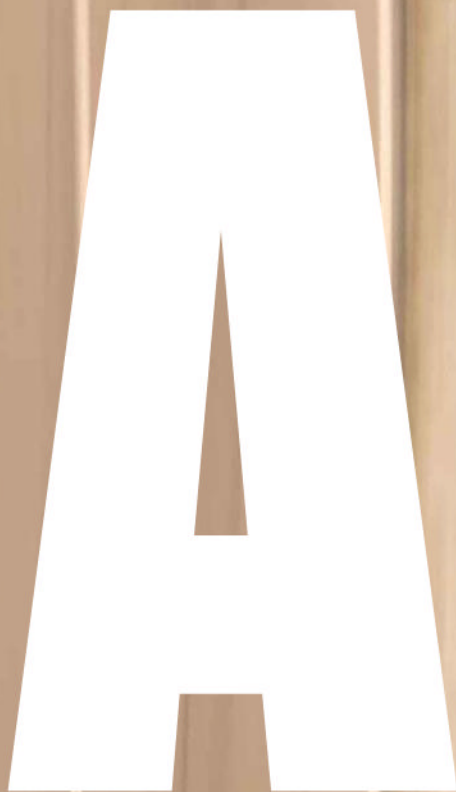
Thirty years ago, the McLaren F1 set new benchmarks with its speed and purity; now Gordon

ALFA



by HENRY CATCHPOLE PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH

Murray's latest supercar, the GMA T.50, promises to do the same. We drive them back to back



T THE SUMMIT I CALL MY SON. IT'S NEARLY bedtime back home, but I have to share this. Outside, the sky is a wash of pinks and purples set over a cloud inversion that is filling the valley below like Chantilly cream on a sundae. There is nobody around. My hands are still shaking slightly.

'Hi Daddy!'

'Hi dude, listen to this...' and I blip the throttle, once, twice. *YEEOW! YEEOW!* The cockpit and surrounding mountains are filled with furious five-digit revs. A V12 with the response of a superbike engine.

'Wowww! That is *sooo* cool!' That is not a generic reaction. He might be only seven, but he knows his cars.

'I've just had the most *amazing* drive,' I say. 'This car is unbelievable! I'm about to head back down the mountain, but I just wanted you to hear that.'

'Thank you, Daddy.'

'Love you! Sleep well.'

As the screen goes black I press the tiny, covered button behind the gearlever to still the titanium valves for a minute or two. Take a few breaths, enjoy the moment, be present... all that stuff we're meant to do every day but never have the time for. Because I need to mentally bottle this, tuck it away in the old hippocampus for rainy days years from now. Even in this job, drives like that don't come along very often. I've been lucky enough to have a few in the McLaren F1 and now I've got one in the T.50 to add to the mental scrapbook.

A beautiful, deserted road and a car that requires every bit of your attention but rewards with sensations and sounds that are the stuff of dreams. A car that feels worth its sky-high price tag, yet immerses you in the driving experience so deeply that you forget any such figures and drive it with the joy and abandon of a hot hatch.

And the best bit is that I've still got the return journey ahead of me...

Rewind just over a week and I'm sitting in the new Gordon Murray Automotive HQ in Windlesham, the man himself the other side of a glass coffee table. Typical of a room in a building with his name on it, there is also an old jukebox in here. I'm aware that you want to hear more about Spain, so we won't dally, but I think the conversation provides essential context and is worth a synopsis.

The story of the T.50 is one of time and money. Or rather, timing and money. Murray tells me that he felt that there was no point doing a successor to the F1 before now because things hadn't moved on enough to make a sufficiently big leap. In his view, fabulous though things such as the F50, Zonda and Carrera GT were, nothing in the next couple of decades really exceeded the F1 and moved the game on in terms of a pure, analogue, naturally aspirated, lightweight supercar. But the 50th anniversary of the start of Murray's career and some urging from people around him, combined with advances in materials and technologies, made him think that the time was right for another go.

Just as importantly, the money was there. Where the F1's development budget was just £8million, the T.50's could be considerably more, even allowing for a quarter-century of

Right: T.50 has echoes of F1 in its design, but most of all in its engineering purity and ruthless pursuit of lightness: it weighs just 997kg without fluids



**‘EVEN IN THIS
JOB, DRIVES LIKE
THIS DON’T COME
ALONG VERY
OFTEN’**



inflation. No corners had to be cut. If they wanted to invest a few million in developing lights rather than taking them off a shelf also frequented by coach manufacturers, they could. The folding on the other side of the equation has clearly changed over the years as well. Where McLaren famously struggled to sell 60 F1 road cars for £634,500 each in the mid-'90s, there is now a much hungrier market for the ultra-expensive.

So, just as the likes of Peter Stevens, Barry Lett and Steve Randle had gathered to develop the F1, so a new team assembled for the T.50. But what to do with the opportunity that time and money presented? Well, first there were the things that the F1 didn't get quite right for one reason or another, chief among them being the brakes. Murray wanted to have carbon stoppers on the McLaren, but the technology just wasn't there at the time. The eventual cast-iron items needed very hard pads to cope with stops from the high speeds the F1 is capable of, but these squeal like a litter of Gloucestershire Old Spots.

The air-con also isn't up to snuff, the headlights are weak, the unassisted steering is heavy at parking speeds, the bespoke tyres have caused supply problems, the luggage compartments are a bit awkward and the motorsport bag-tank has a relatively short shelf-life and is an engine-out job to replace. Mostly these are not things that really affect its performance as a driver's car (even the brakes work well enough if you ignore the noise), but as Murray says, they're things that are a pain if you're an owner and actually use the car.

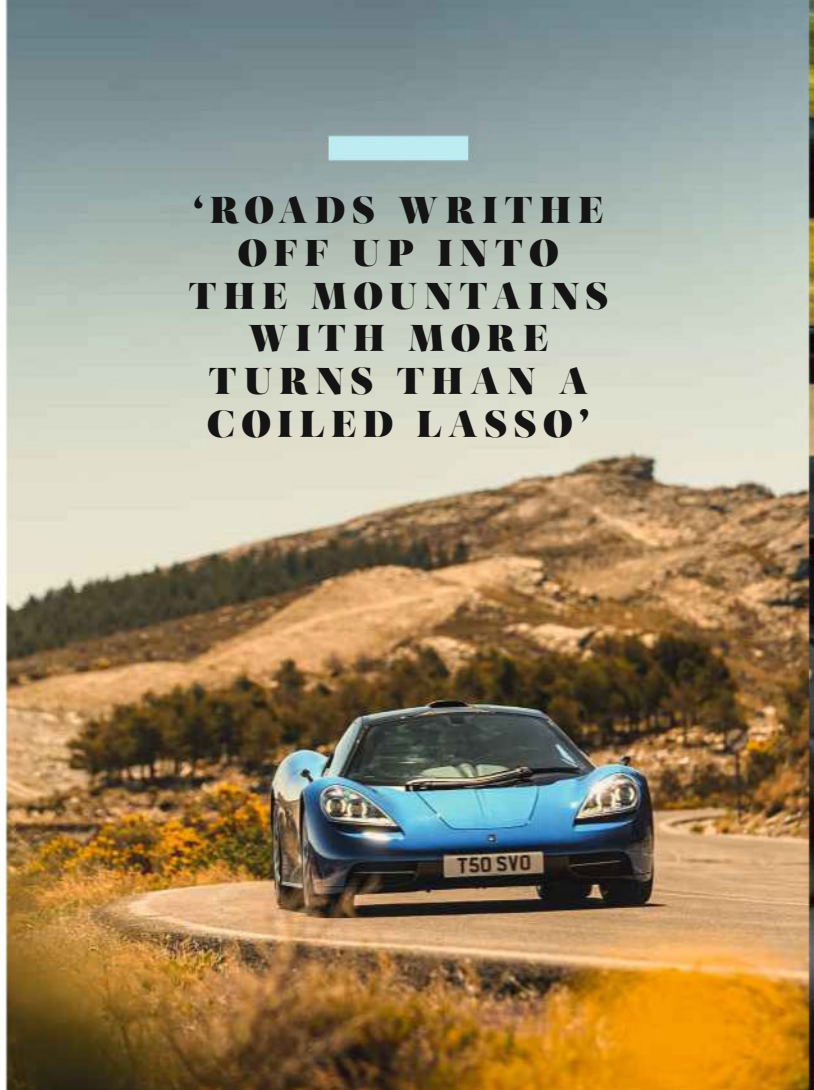
Then we have the areas that Murray simply wanted to try to take to the next level, facilitated by the aforementioned advancements of technology (such as 3D printing and better knowledge of carbonfibre) and a bigger budget. Trifling things like the engine, the weight-saving, the aero and what Murray describes as the engineering art...

Fast forward a week and the two three-seaters are side-by-side in Spain, warming in the morning sun: chassis #46 (the same F1 that appeared in issue 205) fresh from a service and PS4 (Pre Series 4), the final T.50 prototype before the customer cars.

We're in Spaghetti Western country, mainland Europe's only desert. The amazing roads that writhe off up into the mountains with more turns than a coiled lasso might as well have tumbleweed on them for all the traffic they see. And having both cars here feels like something from Hollywood, a blockbuster shoot-out if ever there was one, but also a little unreal. It's akin to John Wayne and Clint Eastwood finally meeting: a generational showdown.

Just like in the films, the heroes are surprisingly closely matched. The T.50 has just 34bhp more (661bhp plays 627), but the F1 packs a punch that is 126lb ft more torque (479lb ft versus 353). The

**'ROADS WRITHE
OFF UP INTO
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younger car is trimmer, with an astonishing 997kg dry weight besting the F1's dry value by 21kg. But how noticeable will that be? And while the F1's figures of 3.2 seconds to 60mph and a V-max north of 240mph are the stuff of legend, GMA has revealed only a top speed figure for the T.50: 226mph.

It's a genuinely intriguing match-up and, in my mind at least, certainly not a foregone conclusion. Perhaps they shouldn't even be viewed as adversaries at all, more like Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid. Only one way to find out...

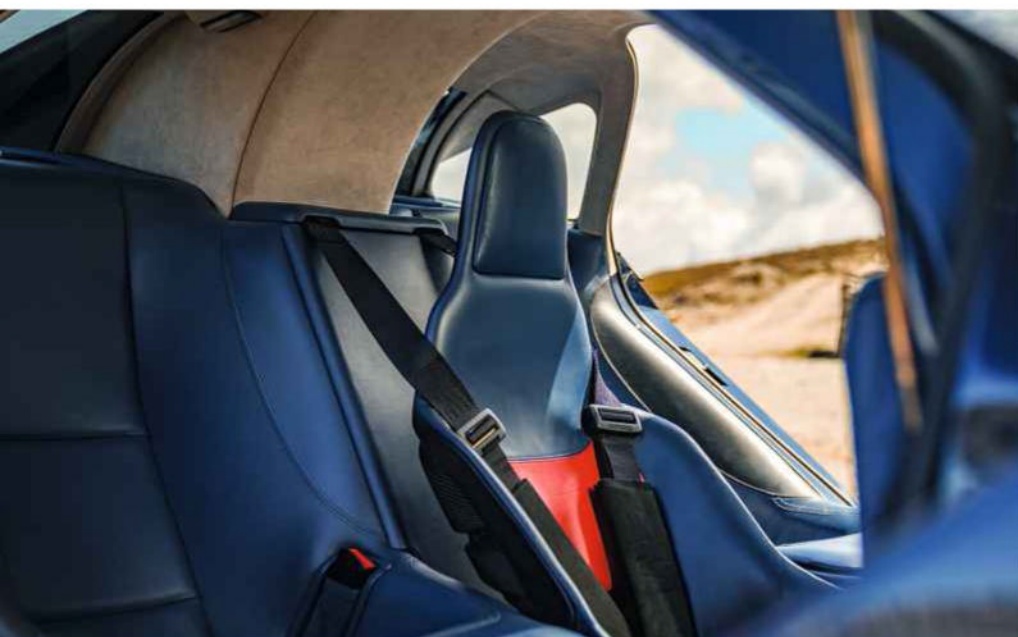
Sitting in an F1 is always special. Time hasn't dimmed the excitement of clambering, shuffling and swivelling (there is no really elegant way) into the centre, resting your feet on the beautiful pedals and drinking in

the fabulously clear black-on-white dials. The way the slim bucket is set ahead of the flanking passenger pews gives a single-seater feeling of priority to the driver. And once you've adjusted to the idea that you're in the middle, you also realise just how far forward in the car you are.

Twist the key, wait for the small, digital display to run through the system checks and then press the red starter hiding under a cover in front of the gearlever to wake Paul Rosche's 60-degree masterpiece into a slightly lumpy initial cold idle. Select first gear and you notice both the narrowness of the gate and the resistance that you know will dissolve as the fluids warm over the first few miles.

I take it nice and steady to the petrol station and then on along the main road, enjoying






novelties like the four mirrors and the sight of a T.50 reflected in them, Nik Hoyle, GMA's quietly spoken but enthusiastic and talented chief engineer (vehicle product) at the wheel. Then we turn inland and as we make our way across the flatlands, the range of mountains rising ahead like ramparts protecting a kingdom beyond, it's finally time to stretch the F1's legs.

A long straight cuts through a rocky outcrop and, with a clear view ahead, tarmac shimmering slightly like water in the heat, I leave the gearlever top-right in fifth and just press the throttle all the way into its travel. Digging into the torque from low revs in a high gear like this gives the best opportunity to really immerse yourself in the intoxicating induction bark, to extend that angry, animalistic growl for as long as possible as the speed builds. The fact that the F1 is relatively quiet at low revs and small throttle openings makes this sudden plunge into the auditory deep end even more gratifying. Even in full cry, however, the BMW S70/2 isn't loud enough to obscure the higher-pitched voice of the other car in the convoy as it gives chase. It's like a tenor and soprano duetting.

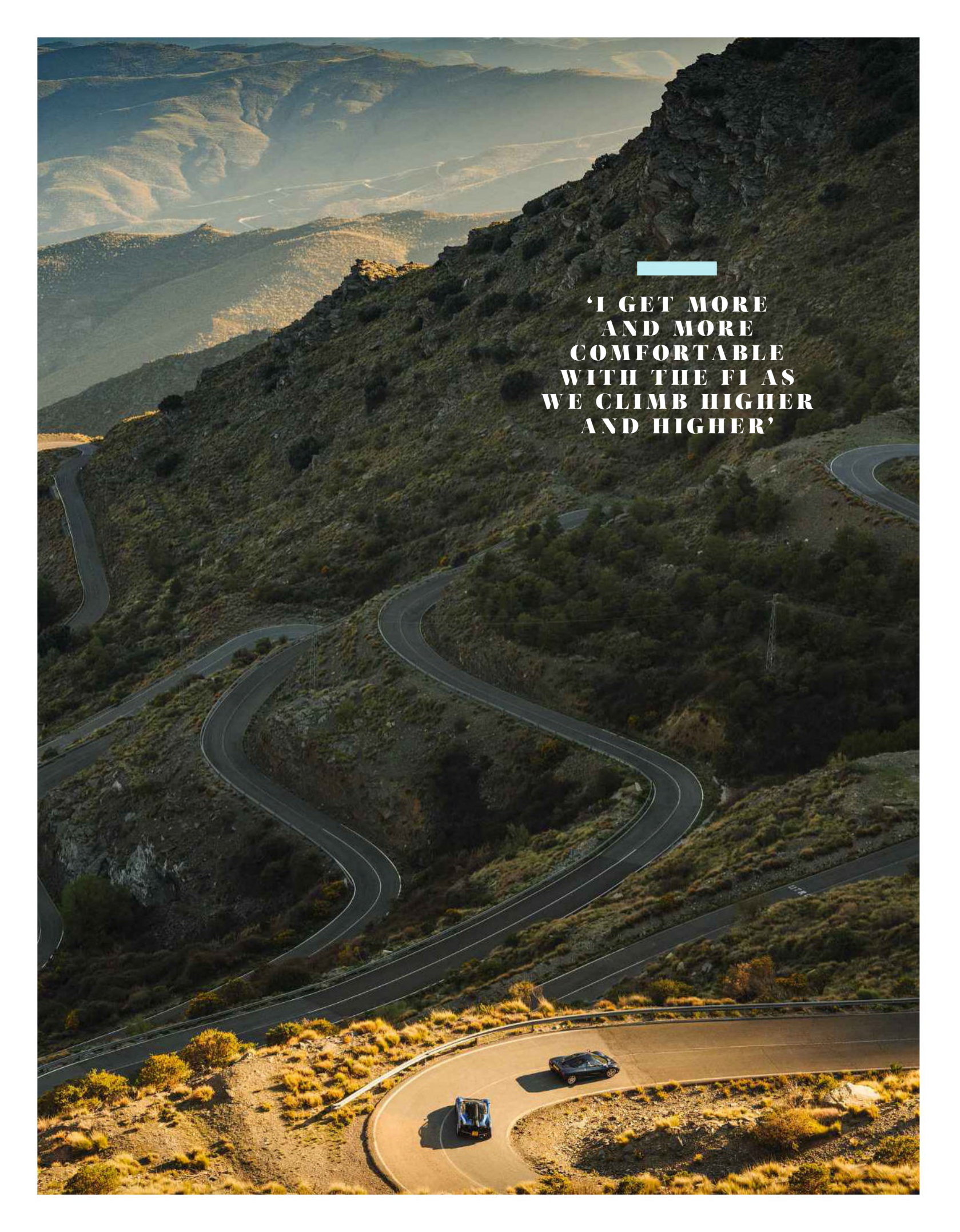
At the end of the straight we're into some medium-speed sweepers and I'm careful to lean on the brakes early and get the F1 settled because I know from experience that this is not a car in which you want to be trailing the brakes hard towards an apex. With soft suspension, the resultant dive and roll means you will feel the momentum of the V12 behind you start to build like a big rucksack with the straps not done quite tightly enough. Combine this with heavy steering and it's a recipe for unruliness. Like a spilt pint in the wrong pub, things can get out of hand quite quickly.

Except this car has been to finishing school since I last drove it. I think I must be imagining it at first, but a few corners in I'm sure something is different. The fundamental traits I've just mentioned are still there and there is still no rear anti-roll bar, but there is a touch more support in the suspension, a smidge less lean and squat and dive. I find out from Murray later that it's a set-up that has been offered to customers who didn't like the standard softness. It doesn't go as far as the firmer LM in dialling out the GT side of the F1's character, but it definitely instils more control and confidence.



A dark sports car is driving on a winding road that curves through a lush, forested landscape. The sun is low in the sky, creating a warm, golden glow and long shadows. The road is bordered by a metal guardrail, and the surrounding area is filled with dense trees and foliage. The overall scene conveys a sense of adventure and immersion in nature.

**‘TIME TO STRETCH
THE FI’S LEGS
AND IMMERSE
YOURSELF IN THE
INTOXICATING
INDUCTION BARK’**

An aerial photograph of a winding asphalt road on a steep, rocky mountain. The road curves through the landscape, with two cars visible in the foreground. The terrain is rugged and covered with sparse vegetation. In the background, a valley with a river is visible under a hazy sky. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

**'I GET MORE
AND MORE
COMFORTABLE
WITH THE F1 AS
WE CLIMB HIGHER
AND HIGHER'**

This is even more evident as we begin to climb. Up into the clear cyan sky where the straights are shorter and the stabs of acceleration briefer but the hairpins also let you load the substantial sidewalls of the F1 more and more. The heavy helm requires real upper-body effort through the tight 180s, but as I get into a rhythm and feel happier in the balance I can't help but use the throttle to do some of the steering.

Turn in, feel the slight push of the nose as the wheel goes a fraction lighter in your hands, a little lift of your right foot to transfer the weight and then back down for a quick bark of throttle to unstick the big 315-section rears. They'll spin up quickly and the tail swings fast, but the steering knows what to do and you can let the perfect circle run through your hands into opposite lock as the car arcs round behind you. If you've got it right you're now sliding an F1 and happier than Larry. Keep the throttle judiciously applied, let the grip bleed back in, wind the lock off and accelerate away, heart beating that bit faster.

I'm not going to lie, with no ESP and so much torque to trigger, you need to pick your corner and tread with the sort of care and consideration you would on a tightrope if you don't want things getting worryingly wayward. But there is more to the F1 than just the straights. It's a car that I don't think you would ever get bored of because the weight transfers require constant attention and you need to concentrate on how you mix positivity with precision and delicacy in the way that you interact with the sometimes heavy controls.

But the rewards for all this focus and effort are absolutely worth it and I get more and more comfortable as we climb higher and higher, sometimes blurring through tunnels of dark pine trees, other times driving right out onto exposed hairpins with elevated views away to the Mediterranean in the south. One last straight, one more hit of that giddy sensation of almost falling down the road as the 6.1 litres make a mockery of the carbon car they're attached to, then we're as high as we can go. Time to park up, take in the view, take stock, take some photos.

Getting into the T.50 for the first time requires either a blip of the key (NB: press the button for the left-hand door – if you press the open padlock button you'll open both doors and both top-loading luggage compartments, which is fabulously dramatic but will also require you to go round and shut them all) or a press of a tiny button behind the wing camera, suggesting that Murray's brief dalliance with TVR might have rubbed off a little. Access is slightly easier here thanks to the absence of the F1's central carbon beams, but it's still a bit of a clamber-shuffle-swivel.

Once you're in, it all feels almost spookily familiar even though everything has changed. It's a bit like reading the first chapter of a new book in a series you like. Even if the location is new or the characters have changed, something about the words, the phrasing, the underlying tone brings it all flooding back. You can tell the author is the same.

Here the seat is the same svelte shape but with the padding pared back to just the pressure points. Likewise



Left and right: near-deserted Spanish mountain roads the perfect playground for two Murray-minted supercars, separated by three decades but united by so much more; F1's simple outline has aged brilliantly

the steering wheel – still three-spoke and simple – feels a little slimmer. Two little paddles for the horn (right) and main beam headlights (left) are located behind the cross spar, just as on the F1. And there are now buttons for the indicators, but they're flush so there's no chance of knocking them. Behind the wheel is a big, brushed-metal rev-counter. It's uncluttered and beautifully legible like a pilot's watch. But unlike a watch the numbers go up to 13.

The rotary switches are grooved rather than smooth like the F1's, tactile as you twist, but in a light, almost delicate way. There's a little red metal (nothing is plastic) cover behind the gearlever, as light as a tiddlywink. Flip it up, give the surprisingly small starter button beneath a short push and this wakes the screens that are set slightly back like passenger seats either side of the central rev-counter. Dip the clutch (the pedals are a prime example of the 'engineering art'), another short push

on the button and you'll hear noise behind you. A disappointing noise. You'll be 3.5 seconds through thinking that a V12 really should sound better than this when... *brRAWrrrrrrrr!* Cosworth's creation erupts into life and startles anyone in the locality not expecting it (driver included!). The prelude was merely the integrated starter-generator doing its thing. Think of it as GMA's version of the traditional, theatrical, Lamborghini long starter-motor spin. Just don't stall it if you've got a queue of traffic waiting behind...

If there's a small orange light illuminated like a drop of lava in the centre of the rev-counter then you know that the engine oil still needs warming. However, after a first exploratory blip of the throttle pedal I know it's going to take me at least a few miles to recalibrate to the response of this engine. I've always thought the F1's 6.1-litre V12 felt sharp, but this 4-litre V12 appears to have no inertia at all; 50,000rpm per

**'I THOUGHT THE
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AT ALL'**





second is the astonishing rate at which the revs will flash and evaporate. Odds-on it will be ready for the red line before I am.

The clutch isn't grabby, but care is needed. The steering has power assistance below 10mph, so manoeuvring is much more manageable than in the F1. I'm not convinced about having screens instead of mirrors, but I suspect that familiarity might make them feel more natural. And overall there is an even greater sense of visibility as you set off down the road, the glass panels in the roof giving a Zonda-like feeling of airiness to the cockpit.

Just as in the F1, the gearbox clearly needs warming as much as the engine, but the simple sphere on a slender

stick falls perfectly to hand. It's a reassuringly positive shift, but it's not slick and smooth. You don't fingertip-flick it around the gate, nor do you slide it fluidly like the six-speeder in a Cayman. There is real resistance. It reminds me a little of the six-speed in the 997.2 GT3 – a tough, businesslike shift, albeit with an even tighter, shorter throw in the T.50.

Explore the menus and you'll find a rev-match function that you can turn on; it's actually incredibly helpful in the first few miles because it's like a training aid, helping you get your ear in and attune to the way the engine note rises and falls. There is also a slightly softer GT throttle setting, which is a boon to begin with, but you soon find

‘THE T.50’S RAPIER THROTTLE RESPONSE REQUIRES



you actually want the accuracy of Sport, which gives you a perfectly predictable linear map.

Nonetheless, such is the rapier response that a new level of sensitivity is required in your right foot; there are probably scalded cats that are slower to react. In the first few miles, as I head down the other side of the mountain, I'm uncertain if I'll ever be able to blip accurately enough to heel-and-toe. In fact it reminds me of my first time left-foot braking. But the sensitivity in your sole is there, you do find new accuracy in your ankle articulation, and when you first nail a three-pedal downshift it feels all the more rewarding. It unlocks another layer, your connection with the car tightens

and it gives you the confidence to go a bit faster, to delve deeper into the dynamics.

The steering has weight to it – much more than most – but doesn't require effort like the F1's. And it's weight that really ebbs and flows with load. At moderate pace, not pushing hard, there's a little lightness to the nose on initial turn-in to corners, a moment before it really leans and loads. It's a front end that feels like it wants to be primed with some braking. Overall the ride supplied by the passive R53 dampers is more connected than the F1's. There's still travel and compliance in the bigger primary movements but more detail over the smaller bumps, adding to the sense of a more focused car.

A NEW LEVEL OF SENSITIVITY IN YOUR RIGHT FOOT'



The stopping power is certainly a huge step on. The Brembo CCM-R brakes (which we first saw on the McLaren Senna) are mighty and, unlike the F1's, have ABS. They also have the assistance of the fan in the rear, which instantly spools up under heavy braking, energising the diffuser and moving the centre of pressure rearwards so that the car stays flat rather than diving. I'd like a little more resistance right at the top of the pedal travel as I think it would better match the rates and responses of the other controls, but overall it's astonishing and another vivid reminder of the benefits of weight saving.

As with the rev-match function, ESP is also very welcome while you settle in. You notice the little telltale light flashing on the left-hand screen, but it doesn't hinder, just helps. Give the button to your right a push and the ESP Sport setting slackens things just the right amount when you start to feel more at home.

But while you notice all these little things, it's unquestionably the engine that dominates the first drive in a T.50. I remember when the 911 R came out: the first time we'd been treated to that really high-revving flat-six combined with a manual gearbox. Summoning the nerve to actually hold a gear and watch the revs climb all the way to 9000rpm was not something you did lightly. It was thrilling but took a certain amount of pluck. This is like that experience, but squared.

The first time you bury the throttle and don't short-shift at 8 or 9 or 10 or 11 but climb all the way to 12 before taking your hand off the wheel and going for the next gear... well, it's enough to make you feel giddy with the emotional cocktail of exhilaration and focus, with a sprig of elation and a dash of fear. If space permits and you can flash through a change to repeat the process in the next ratio as well, then it's almost transcendental.



**‘THE MORE YOU
GRAB THE T.50 BY
THE SCRUFF, THE
MORE IT SEEMS TO
REWARD YOU’**



I swap seats several times during the afternoon, snatching a few minutes in one car then a few in the other as pixels are captured, each time noticing something new: on the T.50 the delightful reverse lockout switch, the soft close on the doors, the fact you've yet to find a use for the Arcam stereo that weighs just 3.9kg (or about half that of the Kenwood system in the F1). But as evening approaches, the air begins to cool and we decide to head for 'home', I get into the F1 for the run down through the hairpins. Slotting in behind the T.50, it's fascinating following the fan and, as the overhead harshness fades from the light, so I catch glimpses of glowing orange exhausts. Go harder still and they will treat you to the occasional brief stab of blowtorch-blue flame.

Even after the T.50, the F1 still feels special, which is a relief somehow. It needs more care, feels meatier, *sounds* meatier, but also has a bit more comfort. It can play the GT car more than the T.50 and you could imagine using one every day – it has the ability to speak softly (albeit always deeply) while carrying that big, mid-mounted

stick. And as we head back along the flatland straights, two small shapes spearing through the buff, bare landscape, it certainly doesn't feel slow.

Everyone else heads to dinner once we're back, but I still feel I need a longer run in the T.50, away from the requirements of cameras. More miles to finish getting to know it. Food can wait. So I borrow the surprisingly large key and head back out, towards the mountains again.

Twenty minutes later I definitely feel like I know the T.50. No distractions, not a single other car around, just me, that engine and a chassis that is now revealing the true purpose of all the engineering effort that has gone into it. The harder you drive it, the more the car encourages you. Having just 178kg (or only two-thirds of an F1 engine) behind you and mounted incredibly low in the chassis (the centre of mass is 100mm lower than in the F1) means that now there is no fear of things getting unruly unless you want them to. Because of the raft of similarities, your brain says to be careful, but this is not like the McLaren. The more you grab the T.50 by

GMA T.50

Engine V12, 3994cc **Power** 661bhp @ 11,000rpm

Torque 353lb ft @ 8000rpm **Weight** 997kg (dry)

Power-to-weight 674bhp/ton (dry) **Tyres** Michelin Pilot Sport 4 S

0-62mph <3.0sec (est) **Top speed** 226mph

Price new £2.8million (all sold)

evo rating ★★★★★



the scruff of the neck and drive it hard, the more it seems to reward you. The lightness of the whole car becomes ever more evident. The gearshift that was perhaps a little stiff now makes sense because the total lack of slack or slop means you can shift as quickly as possible with utter confidence.

You crave the straights so that you have the chance to hear and feel the engine scream like a Formula 1 car from the era of the F1. I've never known acceleration so addictive. It doesn't have that beautiful, rich induction sound of the McLaren but its frenzied fierceness, like VTEC on fast-forward, makes the hairs stand up on the back of your neck every time you crack the throttle.

But the rest of the car isn't just a vessel for the V12; the chassis is fun and lets you feel you can truly use the engine rather than just experience it. There is a predictability and playfulness in the corners that combines with the razor-sharp response of the engine to let you balance the car with a sort of wide-eyed ease.

As with the F1, the slight softness in the nose lets you

feel the front on turn-in before loading the rear. But here there is real friendliness in the way the T.50's LSD lets you light up the narrower 295-section rear tyres and keep them fizzing as the car almost floats into oversteer, accelerating out of corners with a quarter turn of lock until you need to change up. At one point the generally pristine road becomes riddled with bumps from tree roots, but the rear feels faithful and there's no need to lift even as the revs and rears flare momentarily. It seems to thrive on being up on its toes, agile and alive.

As I keep driving, keep pushing, never relaxing but constantly smiling, I'm struggling for reasons why this isn't the most thrilling road car I've ever driven. Imagine an Alpine A110 with the feedback and control weights of a Caterham Seven and an engine from another planet. Except you're sitting in the middle. And then you realise that being in the middle has become more than just interesting. You really want to be absolutely at the centre like this, in perfect harmony with the car. Balanced.

At the summit I pull over and make the phone call. ☒

McLaren F1

Engine V12, 6064cc **Power** 627bhp @ 7500rpm

Torque 479lb ft @ 4000-7000rpm **Weight** 1018kg (dry)

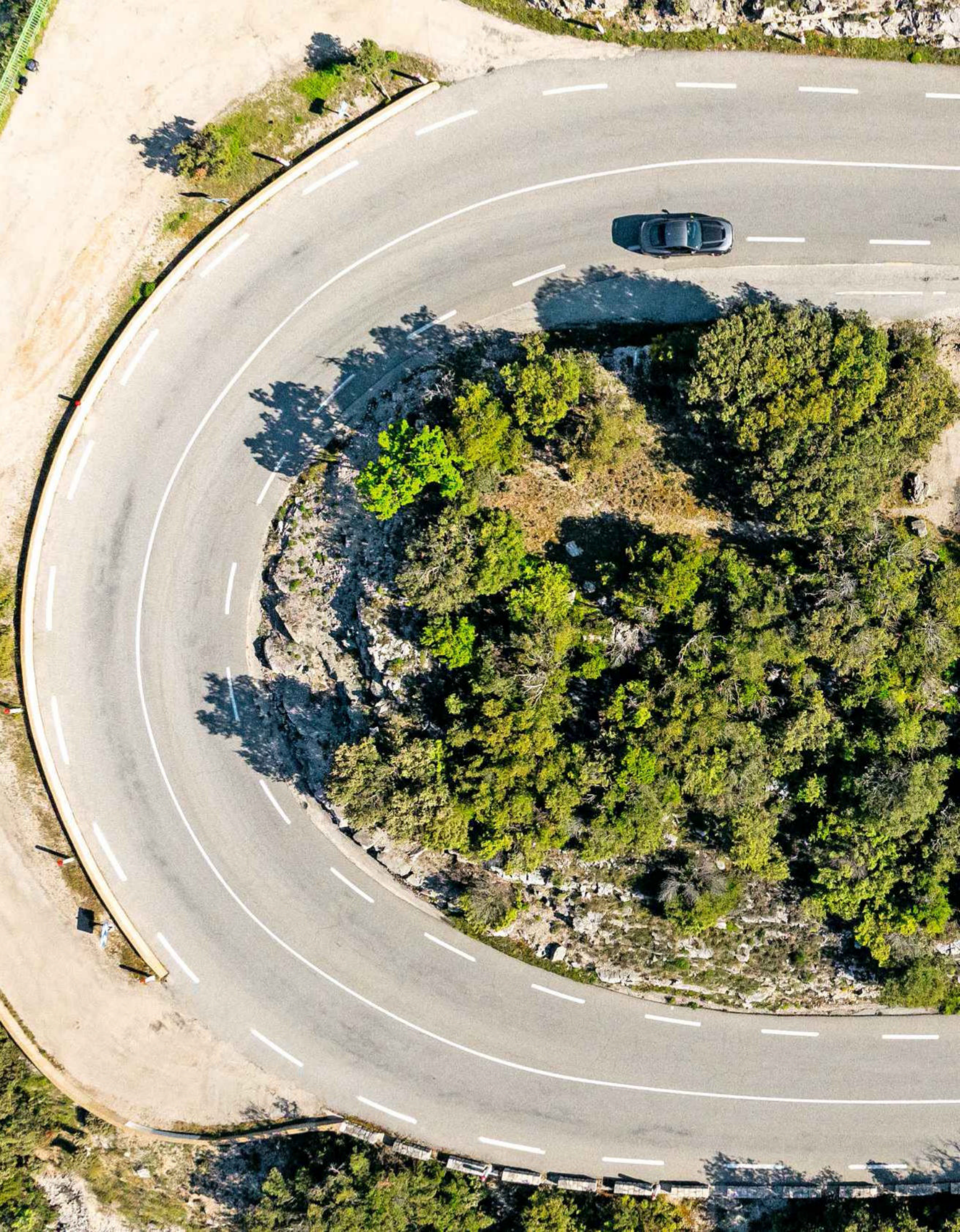
Power-to-weight 626bhp/ton (dry) **Tyres as tested** Michelin Pilot SX

0-60mph 3.2sec **Top speed** 240mph

Price new £634,500 (£1.3m in today's money)

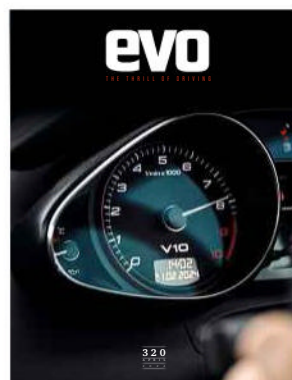
evo rating ★★★★★





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by JOHN
BARKER

BACK ON





TRACK?

After the slightly under-achieving M4 CSL, could the new M4 CS be the sweet-spot in the M3/M4 range?

IF YOU DROP BACK, I WILL SLOW DOWN; IF YOU are close, I will speed up,' says Sven Esch, a driving dynamics engineer at BMW M. I doubt he'll have to speed up. I have driven around the Salzburgring once before but it was literally half a lifetime ago and, looking at the circuit map, I'm sure there's at least one new chicane. So I can't see myself pushing him along after one warm-up and a few flying laps in the new M4 CS.

Sven will be leading in an M3 CS, the saloon with the same 542bhp straight-six as the latest M4 coupe. As we exit the pitlane, I find myself wondering why he isn't also in an M4 CS, although that thought recedes at the sight of him weaving to warm up his Michelin Cup 2 Rs. I feel obliged to do the same.

The idea is that we'll be led round at speed so we can learn about the car rather than trying to remember which way the track goes. As warm-up laps go it's pretty hot, but it shows that the track is quite simple, and that the M4 CS is poised and confidence-inspiring. But I have questions. The main one is why aren't we getting the chance to drive the M4 CS on the road? Perhaps it's the potential to find ourselves on the autobahn in a shower on Cup 2 Rs.

BMW has already delivered quite a few of the many permutations available to it with M3 saloon and Touring,

M4 coupe and Convertible, plus Competition, CS and CSL specs, and rear-drive and M xDrive four-wheel drive. The M4 CS seemingly brings nothing new to the party but may be the most desirable derivative of all.

When the M4 first appeared in 2021 in rear-drive Competition trim (evo 284), we wondered whether its hefty 1725kg kerb weight was compatible with its dynamic ambitions. Yet after half an hour on decent roads it was apparent that the willingness and capability of its chassis and the abundance of its performance rendered that kerb weight almost irrelevant. And on the West Circuit at Bedford, with DSC disabled and 'Drift Analyser' engaged, it proved spectacularly playful and poised, its 503bhp, twin-turbo straight-six offering seemingly endless urge.

How do you improve on that? The limited-edition, 1000-off, rear-wheel-drive CSL should have raised the bar, being 100kg lighter, partly by dint of deleting the rear seats. It also swapped lots of compressible suspension bushes for uniball joints, retuned the suspension with uprated springs, and boosted the straight-six to a more aggressive 542bhp. It looked like being the ultimate in terms of dynamic clarity, yet while we found it compelling, the CSL was somewhat unresolved, a car that was less than the sum of its parts.





Perhaps counter-intuitively, adding another 50kg to the M4 Comp improved the experience. That was the weight of the xDrive four-wheel-drive hardware. Much as we love the combo of smoking rear tyres and a generous armful of opposite lock, it was undeniable that xDrive added to the capability of the M4, especially in less than ideal conditions, yet most of the time it felt just as agile and rear-driven as the original.

The new M4 CS has the potential to be the absolute sweet-spot, marrying xDrive with the CSL's performance and a slug of its aggression. A chunk of its lightweighting, too, including its road wheels (saving 1kg per corner) and numerous carbonfibre parts, among them the bonnet and splitter, plus the dashboard fascia and centre console. In all, it takes 15kg off the weight of the Competition. Honestly, that saving on a 1775kg car is neither here nor there, the same as driving with a half tank rather than a full tank of fuel, but the look is very CSL, apart from the boot, which has a carbon gurney rather than the CSL's unique, moulded, ducktail bootlid.

As well as many of the CSL's carbon bits, the CS gets its rather curious red detailing which, especially in this new colour, 'Frozen Isle of Man Green', makes it look like a car printed slightly out of register, or one that should be viewed through 3D glasses for absolute resolution. Another new colour for the coupe is Riviera Blue (unfortunately remarkably close to

British Gas van blue), while the wheels are either gold or matt black.

In terms of mechanical changes compared to the Competition, the M4 CS's spring rates are stiffer by three per cent at the front and five per cent at the rear (the CSL was 4.5 and 10 per cent stiffer), with the dampers retuned to suit, while the anti-roll-bar drop-links are uniball-jointed, giving crisper roll response. Completing the upgrades, a cast aluminium brace spans the engine bay and there's a titanium back-box and quad tailpipes.

The specification of the M3 CS is identical, right down to the spring rates, so I chose it from the selection of M cars offered for the drive from BMW's press car base in Garching, near Munich, to the circuit just over the Austrian border a couple of hours away. I love a performance saloon but have to say that the CS detailing with patches of exposed carbonfibre sits better on the two-door coupe than on the visually busier M3 CS saloon.

Hit the starter and the straight-six grows into life with an edge, a slight rasp to the tailpipe noise, but hooked up to the eight-speed DCT gearbox it's as docile as you like heading into the first of a number of traffic jams. Apart from the view in the mirror and the script under the lacquer on the fascia, there is

Above: the last time Barker was at the Salzburgring was more than 30 years ago for the launch of the Jaguar XJ220. Scarily, the M4 CS is almost certainly quicker here

no difference in the view from the driving seat, which is the familiar carbon-shelled, leather-trimmed bucket with the odd 'carbon codpiece' between your thighs. The fat-rimmed and quite large steering wheel teems with detail, has decent feel and is calm on centre but bright and quick when you steer away. It also gains useful weight when you select Sport.

Ramp up the engine mode and the previously subtle, quietly menacing note suddenly fills the cabin with loping, angry bass, like turning on a sub-woofer. It also adds a rolling, popping rumble on the overrun. The occasional opportunity to absolutely pin the throttle and keep it there for a good few seconds is a reminder of what a weapon the CS is, piling on the speed to get to an indicated 250kph (155mph) in very short order, the car nonchalant, comfortable with the pace.

The Salzburgring is nothing like its German neighbour, the Nürburgring. As you approach, the surroundings are awesomely mountainous, with jagged, snow-capped peaks all around, yet when you finally find the circuit, it doesn't drape itself over the terrain like the Nordschleife but occupies a narrow, green valley between the crags. In fact, a small river runs beneath the pits complex in the centre.

Laps in the M4 CS will be limited and drifting is strictly verboten so as not to upset the locals, although no houses are visible. Maybe it's actually so that we don't get too carried away. When the M4 Comp was launched, the discovery of the Drift Analyser led some to think it might lead to on-road drifting. In fact, the commitment and space required to score even two stars were well beyond the scope of most road driving. Among *evo* staff and contributors, the stats of our only five-star drift were crazy: it lasted for 9.5sec and covered 347 yards. It also included two transitions and an upshift to fourth...

The two hairpins at either end of the Salzburgring would be fine launch-pads for five-star ambitions but I reckon the grippy Cup 2 Rs would make it much more difficult to initiate and maintain a slide than regular rubber. These Michelins have a slick-tyre compound with light tread, and after the brisk warm-up lap the levels of lateral grip and traction have increased notably. Also, although the peak power of the CS is up to 542bhp, mainly through raising boost pressure, torque is unchanged from the Competition at 479lb ft (all the way from 2750 to 5950rpm), perhaps to protect the transmission.

As we pass the pits for the second time, Sven is on the radio, asking us to press the M1 mode switch on the steering wheel. This ramps up all the settings to Sport and the gearbox to S3 for the shortest shifts but leaves DSC on. Then he nails it. Game on. I'm still feeling out the grip level at the first chicane and bump over the smooth kerbs, but it's easier to feel the level of front-end bite hustling into and through the long, usefully banked hairpin that follows. The nose slices confidently in, you can get on the throttle really early and then keep it pinned, traction total, seemingly without DSC being awakened. It's easy to clip the apex just so, all the while gathering speed hand-over-



**'CRESTING INTO AN
UNSIGHTED LEFT, WE'RE
CLOCKING 260KPH'**

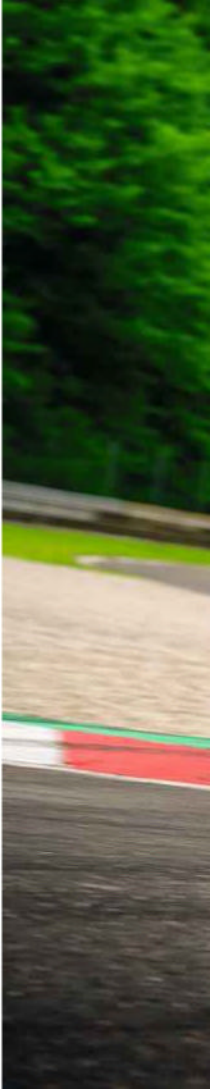
fist until you've unwound the steering and run right to the edge on the exit and onto the back straight. Phew.

I say straight but it's about as straight as the lowest section of the Nürburgring, from Bergwerk to Mutkurve. Like that section, it climbs gently and meanders until it crests into an unsighted left. Confirming the CS's pace, at this point on the third lap we're clocking 260kph (162mph), though the last place you're looking is the instruments because after the apex you're immediately hard on the brakes to lose speed for the suddenly looming, looping right that delivers you to the second hairpin. The optional carbon-ceramic brakes bite hard and the CS sweeps confidently into the right-hander, pressing you hard into the seat bolsters, where you stay for a while.

Going from standing in the pitlane to cornering at c160mph in just three laps is very impressive. I don't recall doing that at the last launch I was here for, even though that was for the Jaguar XJ220. I have only a hazy recollection of the big Jag, recalling weighty steering, intimidating width and a V6 that was uncouth and clattery at idle but mighty on boost. Oh, and a newspaper journalist wrong-slotting a gear and blowing one up.

That was 1992 – over 30 years ago – and what's remarkable is that the power and torque figures of the XJ220, a car that briefly (and controversially) held the production car top speed record, are remarkably close to those of the M4 CS. The Jaguar's 3.5-litre, twin-turbo V6

Right: compared with the M4 Competition, the CS is lighter, has a slug more power and is more stiffly suspended. This car has the optional ceramic brakes and Cup 2 R tyres







Left: massive touchscreen and BMW's now-familiar carbon-shelled bucket seats featuring the 'carbon codpiece'

produced 542bhp and 475lb ft; the BMW's 3-litre, twin-turbo straight-six makes 542bhp and 479lb ft. The all-aluminium Jaguar weighed only 1470kg, giving it a superior power-to-weight ratio, and it was one of the first cars to lap the Nordschleife in under eight minutes, clocking 7min 46sec. However, further illustrating the relentless pace of development, BMW's official Ring lap time for the M4 CS is 7min 22sec (the CSL managed 7min 18sec).

The Cup 2 Rs make a huge difference to the performance of the CS, but the M-tuned xDrive system undoubtedly plays its part too. For the final two laps we press M2, ramping things up again, engine and chassis raised to Sport Plus while stability is handled by MDM (M Dynamic Mode). Although this maintains more drive to the rear, around the faster turns neither the front nor the rear feel about to push wide. Press on even harder, ask more of the chassis and the M4 CS still feels positive, neutral and very grippy. Take even more speed into the looping right, brake even later for the hairpin and you can just feel the rear starting to edge out, but even then the car's behaviour is poised, calm. At the end

of the fifth lap the nose is pushing wide a fraction through the last chicane, but it's been an impressive display.

You could have more challenge if you wanted, switching to pure rear-drive mode, but that doesn't necessarily mean more fun. In the M3 CS at Cadwell Park for last month's Track Car of the Year feature, MDM was the perfect setting. It was only apparent that it was four-wheel drive when powering out of the tighter turns, and not because of an intervention but because had it been in rear-drive mode you'd have been busy catching and balancing oversteer.

The M4 CS is priced from £120,345 with UK deliveries starting this autumn. Is it The One, the Goldilocks model of all the M3/M4 derivatives? It might well be, though to be sure we'd need to drive it on UK roads. And have an M4 Competition xDrive (£90k) along, too, because just a few months ago its output was lifted to 523bhp, so there's now only 19bhp between them.

In the meantime, we can safely say that with optional carbon-ceramic brakes and Cup 2 Rs, the M4 CS is devastatingly quick yet easy to handle and exploit, with well-weighted, responsive steering and terrific balance. If you were looking for a car for the occasional, 911-bothering jaunt around the Nordschleife, it would be a great choice. ☒



BMW M4 CS

Engine In-line 6-cyl, 2993cc, twin-turbo **Power** 542bhp @ 6250rpm

Torque 479lb ft @ 2750-5950rpm **Weight** 1760kg

Power-to-weight 313bhp/ton **Tyres** Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 R

0-62mph 3.4sec **Top speed** 188mph **Basic price** £120,345

evo rating ★★★★★

ADE



FOR L

by STEPHEN DOBIE PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

SIGN



LIFE

As a star of the very first issue of **evo**, Audi's design icon is a car entwined with this magazine's history. But now it's no more. We drive an early Mk1 quattro alongside a late Mk3 RS to find out if it enters retirement with grace





SHOULD WE CONSIDER THE AUDI TT MORE OF AN ICON?

Revisit some of our 'greatest ever...' lists and there's not an example to be found, not even amongst *evo* 135's exhaustive '100 Greatest Driver's Cars'. Flick forward a dozen pages in that 2009 issue and you'll find the freshly launched Mk2 TT RS declared 'a good Audi, but not a great driver's car', hammering the point home somewhat.

Yet the curvaceous Mk1 TT played a significant part in this magazine's history. No, I'm not talking about the occasionally baffling Project Veyrog, but rather the early example that was one of the stars of issue 001 in 1998. It was a key road test of what would prove to be a pivotal car in the regeneration of Audi's brand image; so key that we deemed it vital to pop an H-plate Audi Quattro 20V on expenses to drive down to its newer relation's Umbrian press launch.

Their modest age gap now seems implausible in photographs – how on earth did one company produce both cars within the same decade? 'The TT was inspired by Bauhaus,' says former head of Audi Design Marc Lichte. 'Its universal design philosophy of "less is more" – the omission of everything unnecessary and insignificant – was so radical and so courageous that the TT quickly achieved the highest attribute of good design: to be timeless.'

Dickie Meaden was a little more succinct back in issue one, declaring the TT's curves 'bold and breathtaking'. As I climb inside the example we'll be driving today and shut the door with a satisfying, late-'90s Teutonic *THWUNK*, I feel just as effusive. A quarter of a century on, this pure and simple genesis of TT – sans the infamous spoiler – really does feel timeless.

This 1999 example is particularly clean, even if it's wearing a princely 131,000 miles. You had a choice of two 1.8-litre turbo fours at launch, each boasting 20 valves: the 178bhp tune used a five-speed manual gearbox, while the headline 222bhp version cost a few grand more and gained an extra forward gear. Naturally that's what we've sourced here. Badged 'quattro', both debuted a new Haldex four-wheel-drive system alongside the Mk4 Volkswagen Golf 4Motion. Indeed, 'a Golf in a frock' was one of the more disparaging remarks thrown at a car that was perhaps the most overt demonstration of platform sharing yet. The TT possessed a 90mm shorter wheelbase than its contemporary Audi A3 sibling while gaining wider tracks, overhauled suspension and a bespoke steering rack and brakes.

While the design-led ethos of the Audi TT never changed, its mechanical make-up traversed all manner of terrain in the decades that followed. Front- and four-wheel drive, manual and twin-clutch, four, five and six cylinders, petrol and diesel. But there was only one option for the other car to bookend this test: the most powerful TT RS.

Regular readers won't need too much of an introduction, the RS you see here having retired from the *evo* Fast Fleet at the end of last year. It pairs the 2.5-litre turbo five that's won countless 'International Engine of the Year' awards with the latest, fifth-generation Haldex 4WD and a seven-speed S-tronic twin-clutch transmission, its peak output a whisker short of 400bhp. Nearly twice the power with nary another kilo means almost half the Mk1's 0-62mph time too, and I'd not bet against its claimed 3.7sec being proved a little pessimistic were you to rig up some timing gear and activate launch control. The RS rides 10mm lower than a standard TT, while its Drive Select system not only alters the tautness of its magnetic damping, but the torque split between its axles – though 50:50 is as dynamic as it gets.

Not only are we marking the 25th anniversary of this magazine with this test, but also the end of TT production altogether. We wouldn't

want a bunch of deft two-doors clogging up production resources for all those electric crossovers now, would we? Being less facetious, it's simply a sign of the times and I can't imagine Audi took the decision to euthanise its design beacon lightly. Flick through other chapters of the *evo* back catalogue and you'll find a TT fighting off five competitors in a vast coupe group test. A fantastical comparison today if you're unwilling to stretch the definition of 'coupe' with the same flamboyance as most carmakers' marketing departments.

Back in 1998, Dickie lauded the TT as the first Audi with genuine steering feel in over a decade, and celebrated its supple ride too. Yep, the world of fast Audis has certainly mutated since. 'There's no doubting the TT is a fabulous car,' he concluded, though it couldn't quite escape its mundane underpinnings, instead fully maximising the potential of them.

A subsequent group test in a sopping-wet Wales had Dickie calling out unpredictable on-limit handling, albeit 'nothing a good stability control system wouldn't cure'. Ever the Mystic Meg. Speculation about the dangers of the TT's on-limit high-speed handling began in spring 1999, shortly before UK deliveries of the car kicked off. A handful of deaths were ultimately attributed to the car's high-speed handling, all occurring north of 110mph in the unique environment of derestricted autobahn.

A reported £170m update brought heavier steering and stiffer suspension as well as the subsequent addition of stability control. Audi AG announced a recall in October '99 and a month later Audi UK offered the chassis mods and a dinky rear spoiler on its cars, with ESP retrofitted a few months later, usefully filling a blank button that'd otherwise sit incongruously on an exquisitely crafted dashboard. The tweaks were understandably rushed in but were apparently already planned for the TT's mid-life update, such is the cadence of big OEM engineering teams. The below-the-skin changes were the most crucial and thus some cars – including this example now owned by Audi UK – ducked out of the ducktail in favour of a shape more faithful to the svelte 1995 TT concept.

A comparison between pre- and post-recall TTs in *evo* 019 saw John Barker proclaim the modified TT a more planted and predictable road car. Indeed, the occasionally boisterous agility that Dickie found on those earlier drives appears to be absent today, but traded for a noble cause.

What a striking place to sit, though. From its lovingly crafted aluminium grab handles to its pair of heated seat buttons that pop out satisfyingly and flick through six(!) levels, the



**‘SOME CARS
DUCKED OUT OF
THE DUCKTAIL
IN FAVOUR OF
A SHAPE MORE
FAITHFUL TO
THE CONCEPT’**

detailing is exquisite. Still, the large diameter, thin rim and wholly circular shape of its steering wheel timestamp the cabin long before you've gently pushed open the embossed aluminium cover on its dashboard to reveal a hidden cassette deck. The air con utilises proper physical controls but the breeze coming from the vents is akin to that of a small portable pocket fan. With flattening batteries. Yet it feels a fresh and modern place to be despite its paucity of glaring touchscreens.

The ride really is supple – sometimes too aloof in its reactions over more testing roads – while the steering rack has notable heft and is allied to a gearshift that is tight, short and physical. These are deeply unusual sensations in a fast Audi now. Its weight figure (1465kg) is close enough to the newer car's to ensure its acceleration feels quick, just not shockingly so. The engine exhibits more character than I dared hope, a deep bassline accompanied by cute turbo chuffs and whistles right from the off, particularly with the windows rolled down – via indulgently bespoke switches – to appease the asthmatic vents. It demands to be revved as soon as it's up to temperature, pulling strongly for its considerable mileage, while the manual's precise gate allows you to confidently brush the red line every time, knowing you won't fumble the upshift.

This engine wasn't showered with praise in period, but perhaps the ubiquity of 2-litre



Volkswagen Group four-cylinders since applies a charming sepia filter to this smaller, harder-working unit. Or maybe the increasing novelty of rowing a car like this along with my own gearchanges simply sparks it more obviously into life. What's harder to unshackle is the chassis beneath, which never places 'involvement' high on its agenda. Perhaps understandably given the backstory.

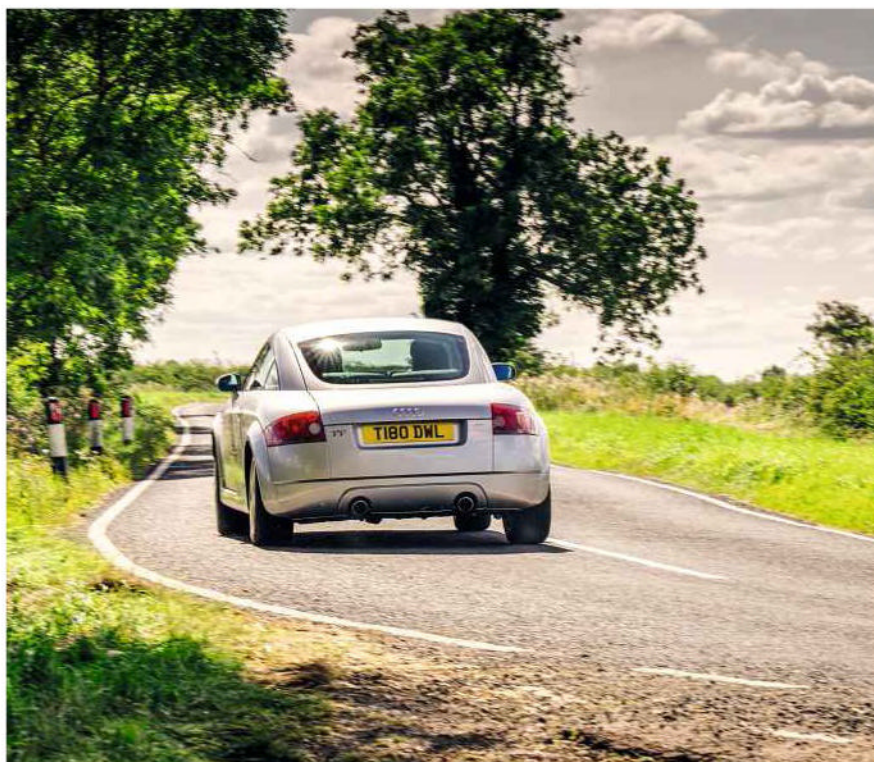
As I switch to the newer car, staff writer Yousuf Ashraf takes a turn in the Mk1. 'It's quite unnerving when you approach the limit,' he'll report later, 'like you're a step behind the car and removed from the action. It's really soft so you can bully it into moving around a bit, but it never feels natural doing so. There's a numb, nose-led feel and you quickly find the limits of the dampers on a bumpy road. I didn't expect the same tight control as the TT RS, but I had hoped the Mk1 would feel more like a sports car.'

The TT RS certainly feels like a different animal. I've skipped the foreplay of trundling through town and along A-roads and I'm having a ball. The steering has shed all the original's weight yet feels quicker and more precise, and despite a poor flow of communication through its flat-bottomed wheel, the front axle snaps keenly into turns and I feel immediately more comfortable leaning right against its grip limits than I did in the Mk1, quickly loosening its stability systems to dig even deeper into its talents.

'The RS feels ordinary at town speeds and needlessly stiff, but there's a huge character change when you up the pace,' Yousuf astutely notes. 'The chassis is keyed in and gives you massive confidence, and the motor sounds epic above 4000rpm. It's still fundamentally a point-and-shoot car, but there's enough drama and communication to keep you engaged.'

Point and shoot it may be, but it demands less aggression from its driver to start loosening its hips than I feared. Coax a small slide out of the Mk1 and it feels like frivolous fun, but here the car doesn't seem to lose its momentum and corrective lock feels optional as the RS bounds forwards with a modest yaw angle. Just imagine if they'd engineered a more rear-biased torque split...

Its suspension is a tightly knurled fist in urban environs, but relaxes *just* enough with speed. It has moments of being caught out and will thump right into rougher surface compressions with little decorum, but its level of control embarrasses the older car and breeds confidence in its driver – quickly. Swapping the optional 20-inch wheels of this 'Vorsprung' spec car for the standard 19s might do wonders for its everyday amenability, but then you'd probably undermine its OTT aesthetic, which I've no doubt drew many TT RS



buyers into the showroom. Beside its neatly tailored ancestor it appears to be wearing shoulder pads, while it's a relief to discover there's at least some aerodynamic work being done by the large fixed spoiler and its improbable winglets, which are ever present in the side mirrors as you drive.

I've not even mentioned the engine, which truly credits how much the rest of the car has impressed me. Such is the proliferation of four-cylinder motors that you'd be forgiven completely for buying a TTRS purely for its exotic heart. Audi didn't rest on its numerous laurels, either. The Mk3 TT RS arrived with a whole 26kg skimmed from its predecessor's engine bay, 18kg by a new aluminium crankcase alone, while a 1-2-4-5-3 firing order produces the offbeat, vintage rally-stage pastiche you rightly crave from a unit like this. Ongoing regulations have dimmed its volume over time, but it still sounds unlike anything else in its class. Goes like it, too, especially with S-tronic feeling this sharp. This is a sensationally quick car and whatever the stretch of road, it's hard to imagine its more serious R8 sibling feeling any more forceful. This is true junior supercar performance.

Reports are mixed inside. The quality and detailing still slap a smug grin on your face, while its 'Virtual Cockpit' digital dials – pioneered by the Mk3 TT – look fantastic but aren't the most intuitive to use with the steering-wheel switches. Having a central touchscreen would look worse

but function better, not least because it would allow the passenger to have some level of input on longer journeys. Ever the designers' baby, the TT. The bells 'n' whistles nature of the range-topping RS means carbon has overtaken aluminium as the interior trimming of choice, too. I doubt 'timeless' is the right descriptor here.

Buy the older car and you'll have to covet its design credentials at least as much as its dynamic abilities, though prices still sit below £5000 for relatively smart examples, bringing it easily into most budgets. The newer car drives with greater focus but boy, does its styling betray that. Early Mk3 RSs command £30k, with the Mk2 – the first generation of TT to get an RS, with 335bhp – available for half that.

'The coupe world will be a poorer place without it,' remarked managing editor Ian Eveleigh as he bid farewell to this Tango Red TT a few months ago, and he's bang on. Safety-first handling (eventually) yet tagged with two of the most dangerous letters in motorsport, something about the TT has always just worked, even if it's never quite elbowed BMWs, Porsches or Alpines from the top of group-test podiums in the years following its dramatic origin story. Perhaps it hasn't truly carved itself a place in the *evo* hall of fame, yet it's been with us since day one. For a quarter of a century its deft design has been printed on the pages of this magazine. But now we must part ways. ✕



'SOMETHING ABOUT THE TT HAS ALWAYS JUST WORKED'

Audi TT quattro (1999-2005)

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1781cc, turbocharged **Power** 225bhp @ 5900rpm
Torque 206lb ft @ 2200-5500rpm **Weight** 1465kg
Power-to-weight 156bhp/ton **Tyres as tested** Pirelli Cinturato P7 **0-62mph** 6.6sec
Top speed 150mph **Price new** £29,650 **Value today** £2000+

evo rating ★★★★★☆

Audi TT RS (2016-2024)

Engine In-line 5-cyl, 2490cc, turbocharged **Power** 394bhp @ 5850-7000rpm
Torque 354lb ft @ 2250-5850rpm **Weight** 1450kg
Power-to-weight 276bhp/ton **Tyres** Pirelli P Zero **0-62mph** 3.7sec
Top speed 155mph **Price new** £59,450 **Value today** £30,000+

evo rating ★★★★★☆

A Bentley Continental is shown in profile, driving from left to right across a multi-lane bridge. The bridge has a metal railing. Below the bridge is a body of water, and the car's reflection is visible. The sky is filled with soft, orange and pink clouds, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is serene and elegant.

T H E L O

After powering Bentleys
for more than 20 years,
the magnificent W12
engine has finally ceased
production. We go for
a farewell drive in the
model where it all began
- and look forward to the
new Crewe generation



by JAMES TAYLOR PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

N G G O O D B Y E

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HANGING TIMES AT BENTLEY. THE FOURTH- generation Continental GT will be revealed imminently – turn to page 98 for the full story – and it adopts a 770bhp-plus plug-in hybrid V8 powertrain: the next step on Bentley's stated mission of a fully electrified line-up at the end of the decade. Meanwhile, it's goodnight from the Crewe firm's famed W12 engine. The big, smooth, distinctive powerplant has been synonymous with big, smooth, distinctive Bentleys since 2003, but production ended in April after more than 100,000 of the four-bank, 6-litre units had been built. (By the time you read this, production of 4-litre V8 Bentley Continentals and Flying Spurs will have stopped too.)

A timely moment, then, to bid farewell to one of the automotive world's most singular powerplants by revisiting the car in which the W12 first found a berth: the original Continental GT. And, as the new Conti GT prepares for launch, a timely moment to acknowledge just what a pivotal car the original has been for Bentley. A real before-and-after car, a watershed moment for the brand, it delivered a new audience and vastly increased sales. The reason Bentley is in rude financial health right now – perhaps, even, in existence at all – can be traced back to this car's launch.

'We sometimes refer to it as the second revolution of Bentley,' says Chris Cole, line director for all models at Bentley today and involved with the Mk1 Continental GT from the outset (to begin with he reflexively refers to the car as '614' from its project number, before calling it the Continental GT). 'The first revolution, really, was the success of the Blower Bentleys. The reason we say that

is because although Bentley made some great cars in the long period between the Blowers and VW acquiring the company in 1998, with the synergies and arrangements with Rolls-Royce and different owners through the decades, we sort of fell to the wayside. Some people thought a Bentley was like a version of a Rolls-Royce rather than a brand in its own right. The Continental GT allowed a complete separation from that and allowed us to breathe as a brand.'

So, let's go for a drive. Cole remembers this green car being built, one of the very first cars off the line. Meeting it today, outside the Crewe factory, its Frank Stephenson-penned shape is instantly recognisable. It's on the cusp between olde worlde Bentley, with its chrome details and design themes referencing the original R-type Continental, and the contemporary rounded volumes of a noughties coupe. Although other body styles were considered, the decision was taken to make the first new-era Bentley a two-door coupe, partly to differentiate the company from Rolls-Royce (then in the process of being acquired by BMW in boardroom-battleground negotiations with VW).

'For the first 12 months into VW ownership we had lots of debates about what [product] we should go with first and how it could help position Bentley's long-term future,' says Cole. 'We did scenario after scenario about what it should be and whether it should be a two-door. In the end we said: "This has got to be an emotional car."'

The Conti GT needed to have the styling and driving dynamics to turn the heads of established grand tourer and supercar owners, but also a sense of luxury and

**'IT'S A TIMELY MOMENT TO
ACKNOWLEDGE WHAT A PIVOTAL
CAR THIS WAS'**





A high-angle, wide shot of a dark green Bentley Continental GT driving on a narrow, winding asphalt road that curves through a misty, forested landscape. The road is flanked by a stone wall on the left and a metal guardrail on the right. The surrounding hills are covered in dense evergreen and deciduous trees, with some areas showing autumnal foliage. The sky is overcast and hazy, creating a moody atmosphere. In the foreground, out-of-focus tree branches frame the bottom of the image.

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**'THERE'S
OODLES OF
TORQUE,
AVAILABLE
READILY FROM
ONLY 1600RPM'**

refinement to give the car something of a USP – and remain true to the established Bentley ethos.

Settling into the cabin, it feels more dated than I'd expected: in my head the Conti GT is still a relatively recent car but, time being the silent thief that it is, it's now 20 years old. It feels it, not in terms of its condition – this particular car is immaculate – but in the shiny, slightly slippery leather seats, the pre-smartphone mobile holders integrated inside the centre armrests, the green 'n' cream two-tone colour scheme, and the TV option for the screen mid-dash, complete with Teletext button. With plenty of wood and chrome adorning the relatively upright dash, but a modern, plunging twin-cowl shape that's still echoed in the current Conti, it too is bridging a gap between ultra-traditional Bentleys of old and the new-era model line-up. A touch dated today it might be, but it's still an evocative environment to sit in, with that ground-level private jet, let's-drive-direct-to-the-Med vibe.

Start the engine and it settles into a smooth idle with a deep note. Rather than a traditional three-bank W12 aero engine, VW's four-bank design is, in essence, two ultra-narrow-angle 15-degree V6s joined at a common crankshaft. It's almost like a very beefy V12, with a 72-degree angle between the two V6 elements. Prior to the Conti GT, it had been used to power a series of Volkswagen supercar concepts (including to a number of speed records at Nardo in 2001), an Audi A8 variant and the over-engineered, under-the-radar VW Phaeton (with which some of the GT's components were shared, though there's less in common between the two cars than popular pub chat suggests). But it was in the Bentley that the twin-turbo W12 found its true calling.

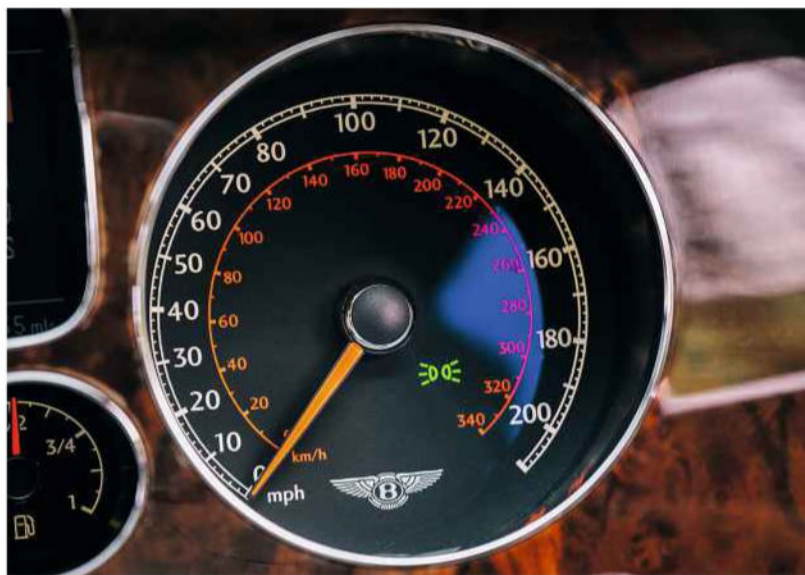
'The W engine concept was very much the brainchild of Dr Ferdinand Piëch,' Cole explains. 'Of course, it had been developed for both the VW Phaeton and the Audi A8, and Bugatti with the W16. VW acquiring Bentley created an opportunity to say, "Right, here's a brand that can really use this new concept of engine." We made some important changes to give it the longevity, power and torque we wanted: we ended up with 550bhp and 480lb ft. We led the way in what ended up being quite a second loop of the engine's design, in particular the conrods so it could be fit for purpose for what Bentley needed.'

'There was not a huge amount of debate actually because it was very clear that we wanted to go for at least an eight- or 12-cylinder, and the W concept was available. When we realised we could get the power we needed, that was it – we went for it. And within two years of launch, we became the sole users for that engine...'

Though not quite as smooth as a V12, the W12 is usefully smaller, occupying around 24 per cent less space than an equivalent-capacity V12. That helps the packaging requirements of all-wheel drive – an attribute it was decided the Conti GT needed from the get-go, along with a target top speed approaching 200mph and a 0-60mph time under five seconds.

Today, it doesn't feel hugely quick by warped modern standards but it can certainly still get a move on. There's oodles of torque, available readily from only 1600rpm, giving the W12 a very tractable feel. A charismatic one, too. Its burly nature gives the Conti GT a little of that heavy-industry feel and suits its muscular character.

Right, from the top: TV screen with Teletext option places original Conti GT firmly in period; lines have aged well, bridging the divide between classic hand-built Bentleys and the modern generation





Above: holders for pre-smartphone mobiles betray Conti GT's age, but W12 still awesome. **Opposite:** flanked by Flying Spur Speed Edition 12 and GT Le Mans Collection

Wending our way north from Crewe into the Peak District, the air suspension – with two ride height settings and four damper modes – gives the GT a smooth ride if a slightly wallowy one, although small bumps still thump through the car. It feels less torsionally rigid than a modern Continental, accentuated by some audible creaking from the door trim while cornering, and it feels less precise than its modern equivalent: you find yourself working away at the (lovely, hydraulic) power steering a fair bit, as if you're Barnato or Birkin. A lot of that steering you're putting in is counteracting the suspension's movement more than dictating the Continental's path around the corner. As the miles tick on, you learn to trust it and work around it, starting the corners early to account for the weight and suspension movement. It's part of the car's character and you can cover ground swiftly. It has an awful lot of grip, both in terms of lateral grip and longitudinal traction. The out-of-shape photo on page 93 took some provocation; this is a car with fundamentally very safe handling.

It does feel a very heavy car, however; after all, the kerb weight is around the 2.4-ton mark. And it still has heavyweight star appeal, 20 years on. When we stop for static photos, a car pulls up and its driver comes over for a chat. He's clearly enamoured with the Bentley and asks

all kinds of questions about it. 'I bet you can hear the clock ticking at 100mph,' he enthuses. (In actuality, the W12 has a rumble, woofly soundtrack that's quite vocal on the move.) This car had A-list appeal at launch too. 'It attracted people that you'd never have expected to see in a Bentley,' Cole recalls. 'For a company that had been selling a few hundred cars a year to get to thousands a year, we had to build an order bank. That was a massive part of the project for the marketing team, led by Adrian Hallmark at the time. He did a great job of capitalising on a completely different demographic worldwide. We had people come to Crewe for special previews of the car about 18 months before launch. People from David Beckham to Mike Tyson, and people that might be called influencers nowadays, but these were people that just wouldn't have been in a Bentley [previously]. We gained an awful lot of, let's say, publicity, but it also spread the word about this new Bentley. It was a fundamental part of the launch of the car.'

The Conti GT took Bentley from hand-built to mass-production – and a whole new world of sales volume. 'I remember when I joined the company in 1998, we only employed about 1200 people,' Cole says. 'We were selling Arnage and the old Conti R – that was it – and we were doing about 700 cars a year. By the time we launched

Continental GT we were employing nearly 3000 people. In our first full year we did about 6000 cars. It was just totally transformative: the product, the people, the business. It was incredible. And we've just grown and grown from that point on.'

Over the years, the W12 has been fettled continually by Bentley, with power increasing by 37 per cent and torque by 54 per cent, and emissions reducing by a quarter. For the Bentayga SUV's launch in 2015 the engine was redesigned from the sump up, with a stronger crankcase, slipperier cylinder surfaces, a revised fuel injection system and cylinder deactivation tech, among many other changes. Bentley has given the W12 a send-off by creating the most powerful version of all for the limited-run, 18-off Batur special model, with 740bhp and nearly 740lb ft.

Before we leave Crewe, we drive two of the very last cars the W12 engine will find a home in: the Continental GT Le Mans Collection and the Flying Spur Speed Edition 12. Each has 650bhp.

The third-generation Continental GT – this time sharing platform components with Porsche's Panamera rather than VW's Phaeton – is a world away from the original for agility and body control, aided by active anti-roll bars. Limited to 24 cars in Europe, the Le Mans Collection celebrates 20 years since Bentley's 2003 Le Mans win (timed within weeks of the original Continental GT's reveal – halcyon days for the reborn Bentley brand) and houses a slice of a valve from the Le Mans-winning Speed 8 in its dashboard. Despite its sporting billing, refinement for both road and engine noise is actually a step up from the original car; comfort has remained a key target for the Continental GT. Especially so in Flying Spur guise. The four-door saloon variant of the Continental was planned from the outset, showing the scope of Bentley's plans for the car. The

W12 suits its air of (mostly) tasteful excessiveness: a vast well of torque to draw on and genuinely epic performance. You sense that 200mph is just a stretch of the right foot away.

The Edition 12 is so called because it's one of the last cars to be fitted with the W12, and features the cylinder firing order displayed on its dashboard. You're very insulated from the engine so you don't really hear it, but you *feel* it – you feel the smoothness, you feel the low-down torque pick up and waft you down the road. Although you could argue that the V8 option is actually the better car – lighter, more frugal, just as quick in the real world – the W12 is kind of the ultimate engine for this car.

These days the Bentayga is the volume seller for Bentley, not the Continental GT, but the Conti is still an image-builder and flag-bearer for the brand. Neither the Bentayga nor the new GT will feature 12 cylinders arranged in four banks – and nor, quite probably, will any other series production car in the future. Bentley says that all 30 of its W12 manufacturing team are being retrained and redeployed within the business, and the W12 engine line has become an expanded area for V8 and V6 hybrid production.

'Although the new PHEV car moves us away from the W12, which pulls at the heartstrings for many people both in Bentley and in the customer base, this is again us looking to the future,' says Cole. 'We would never have done the original Continental GT if we'd only ever looked backwards. We would have ended up with a 6.75-litre V8 pushrod engine, in an iteration of the Continental R, rather than what ended up being an entirely new era.'

If Bentley hadn't changed with the times, who knows what shape it would be in today. And perhaps we're at a similar moment in time, where the company can't afford to stand still. ☒

Bentley Continental GT

Engine W12, 5998cc, twin-turbo Power 552bhp @ 6100rpm
Torque 479lb ft @ 1600rpm Weight 2385kg Power-to-weight 235bhp/ton
Tyres as tested Pirelli P Zero Rosso 0-62mph 4.8sec Top speed 198mph
Price new £110,000 (£195,000 in today's money)

evo rating ★★★★★





WORKING

Bentley's new Continental GT will be its most powerful and most advanced road car to date. A drive of a pre-production example provides our first taste of its new V8 hybrid powertrain

by STUART GALLAGHER

HYBRID





R

REALITY CHECK: THE W12 CONTINENTAL GT wasn't the best Conti GT. That accolade fell to the V8, which hit the sweet spot of effortless go and accomplished handling. Its performance was always just right, the drop in weight significant enough to apply another layer of polish to the big coupe's dynamics. But the W12 will be missed for its presence, its unique soundtrack and keen responses, and its ability to add some vigour and vitality to the process of wafting around in opulence and luxury.

Now it's gone, supplanted by an all-new powertrain that's tasked with replacing not only Bentley's iconic and unique 12-cylinder engine, but the VW Group's ubiquitous 4-litre twin-turbocharged V8 that also served the Continental – and the Flying Spur saloon – so well.

With the Conti GT accounting for one in three Bentleys sold, getting the powertrain right has not been something the company has taken lightly. Its relationship with its customers is on a par with those who car-shop in Maranello, which means it not only knows what they want from their Crewe-made cars, but crucially what they don't. And the requirements come under three core headings: Design, Performance and Technology.

On the first of those, you will need to wait until 25 June to see the new design for what Bentley is calling the fourth generation of Continental GT, but in the meantime we can reveal the technology that underpins it, and give you an impression of the performance it offers. And there's quite a lot of both.

With 771bhp, the new Continental GT is the most powerful road-going Bentley yet. And that power figure is attained by the most advanced powertrain it has ever employed. Internally it's called an 'Ultra Performance Hybrid'; to the

rest of us it's a 4-litre twin-turbo V8 with a battery and sizeable electric motor. Before you start thinking that this must be the same new powertrain just announced by another outpost of the VW empire, think again. While Lamborghini has gone down the all-new route with its own V8 (page 32), Bentley has adapted what it had before, alongside Porsche when developing its updated Panamera Turbo E-Hybrid.

Therefore the 3996cc block remains the same but, as with the Porsche, the Bentley's turbochargers are new mono-scroll items that are boosted by the e-motor to minimise turbo lag to a level you won't notice. They can also run at much higher temperatures, while the fuel injection system runs at 350 bar, up from 200, to provide more efficient combustion cycles and clean up the emissions. There's no traditional vacuum system, and thanks to the e-motor there is no longer a requirement for cylinder deactivation because the engine can be switched off on the move.

On its own the V8 produces 591bhp and 590lb ft of torque and it's supported by a 25.9kWh battery that's mounted behind the rear axle to optimise weight distribution, which is now said to be 50:50 front to rear. This battery, for which 95 per cent of capacity is useable, drives an electric motor

**'771BHP AND 738LB FT
EASILY SURPASS THE
W12, BUT THIS IS NOT
SIMPLY AN ENGINE
UPGRADE'**



positioned within the transmission housing that produces 188bhp and 332lb ft of torque to make a combined 771bhp and 738lb ft, figures that easily surpass those of the W12.

The net results are a 0-60mph time of 3.1 seconds, 0-100mph in 6.9 and a 208mph top speed. Plus there's 50 miles of pure electric range, which can be deployed at up to 100mph and 75 per cent throttle application.

This is not simply an engine upgrade, however, as Bentley has taken the opportunity to get under the car's new skin and update the chassis, too. Out goes the three-chamber air suspension, in its place an all-new twin-chamber air spring system that is accompanied by new two-valve dampers that can go from max rebound to full compression far quicker than before thanks to the dedicated ECU having complete control over the independent compression and rebound damping, resulting in improved body control.

Active all-wheel drive remains, there's a new electronic limited-slip rear differential, new all-wheel steering, and torque vectoring front to rear and across both axles, while Bentley's 'Dynamic Ride' active anti-roll system has been thoroughly overhauled, as has the ESC software. Not only is the new Conti GT the most powerful Bentley yet, it's also the most advanced too.

It's also one of the most impressive from behind the wheel, even if two quick laps of the Montebianco circuit in the shadow of Seville is not the most extensive test. It is enough, however, to demonstrate that the calibration of the electric drive unit backs up the 50 miles/100mph claim: only burying the throttle ignites the V8, unlike others that are too eager to turn to internal combustion support at the slightest whiff of a throttle opening. It's also notable that the engine comes in with a hefty shove rather than a seamless transition, something Bentley says is intentional.

The combined power and torque sources provide the GT (the launch model of which will be in Speed trim) with a considerable uplift in performance. Its responses are a clear step on from those of both the outgoing V8 and the mighty W12. Being on track (no, not a Conti's natural home) allowed us to experience the dialled-up agility, the tighter body control and the calmer reactions of the new chassis. Under heavy braking, often a hybrid's Achilles' heel, the GT's pedal remained consistent with impressive modulation even over less-than-perfect surfaces.

Such short exposure to the new Conti's powertrain and dynamic make-up leaves more questions than meaningful conclusions, but the ingredients feel like they are there to mount a serious challenge to such rivals as the Aston Martin DB12 and Ferrari Roma. We look forward to finding out. **x**

Above and below: despite camouflage, it's clear new Conti GT retains proportions and presence Bentley buyers demand, but extensive changes lie under the skin





by YOUSUF ASHRAF PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

THE ART OF THE ESTATE

Fast estates have always been cool, but today they can take many forms. We pitch Peugeot's updated hybrid 508 PSE against Skoda's more conventional but equally compelling Octavia vRS

I

LIVE 180 MILES FROM THE EVO

office. That means that while I'd love to daily drive the Fast Fleet Toyota GR Yaris or Caterham Seven (if I'm feeling especially bold), I'd be much happier commuting in either of these.

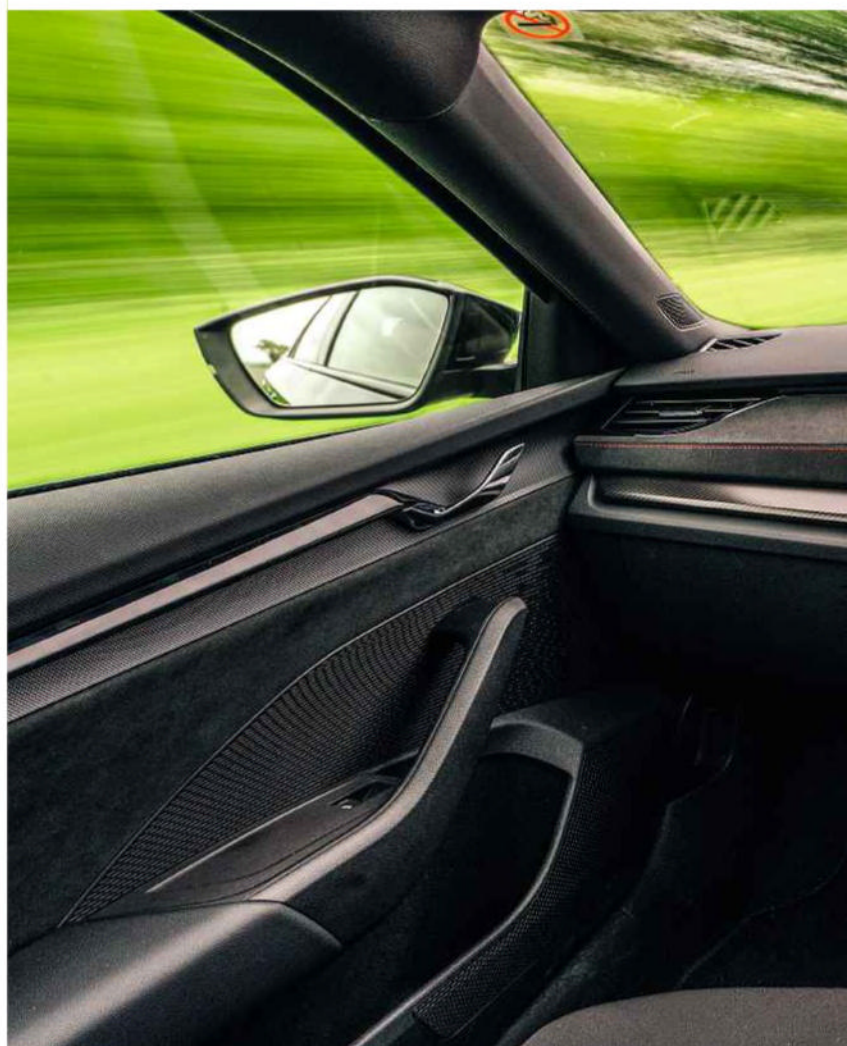
I'm not a mountain biker, a dog owner or frequent IKEA customer, but I am a huge sucker for a stealthy, well-executed fast estate. There's just something about a spacious, plain-clothes wagon with serious performance that's endlessly appealing. For me, it's their ability to surprise. Some of the best moments on **evo** shoots are watching photographer Aston Parrott whipping our long-term Cupra Leon estate along at about Mach 9 between locations, followed by a crackle on the radio to ask why none of us can keep up in our sports cars.

Neither the Skoda Octavia vRS nor the Peugeot 508 PSE is as fast or conspicuous as Aston's Cupra, but they still pack hot hatch speed beneath their hire-car-spec appearances. We know the Octavia well – it's on our Fast Fleet and has already impressed with its ability to soothe on every journey and entertain when the moment allows. Its platform and 242bhp 2-litre turbocharged TSI engine are derived from the Golf GTI, but being a 1.5-ton estate car it's a little slower to 62mph with a time of 6.7sec. These Octavias have a reputation for punching well above their weight, but comparing these specs to the hybrid, four-wheel-drive Peugeot – which costs a massive £17,390 more than the £37,785 Skoda – I worry that this might be a bit of a mismatch.

The 508 PSE is also familiar, from when we pitted it against a Volkswagen Arteon R and BMW M340i in issue 309. It's not a car that screams 'the thrill of driving', but I remember John Barker effusing about its excellent suspension control and cross-country pace. I also remember the powertrain, which was a real disappointment for me – it delivered the numbers, but there was no joy to be had from extending its 1.6-litre engine. At all. The 508 has since been facelifted with a new front fascia and minor design tweaks, but the fundamentals are the same. That means you get a pair of electric motors (one coupled to the eight-speed automatic gearbox, the other driving the rear axle) working with the petrol engine for a combined 355bhp, drawing energy from a 12.4kWh battery. The 508's a bit of a lump at 1892kg, but four-wheel drive helps it spring off the line to post a 0-62mph time of 5.2sec.

Peugeot up first, and a few miles to get used to the tiny, low-set steering wheel in your hands. It gives the 508 a sense of alertness but, as we'll find out later, the Skoda's more conventional ergonomics are easier to get along with. At low speed in Hybrid mode you can tickle the throttle to drive predominantly on electric power (or exclusively for 34 miles in EV mode), and the PSE is as quiet and easy to operate as a standard 508.

To get the most out of the car, though, you need to



**‘BOTH PACK HOT
HATCH SPEED BENEATH
THEIR HIRE-CAR-SPEC
APPEARANCES’**





Above: Peugeot's smallish, low-set steering wheel, angled surfaces and mix of materials make it feel almost concept car-like

ratchet up to Sport – and, ideally, have enough juice in the battery for maximum electric power. In Sport the powertrain response sharpens up noticeably and there's a stronger sense of the e-motors supporting the engine at low revs, with tighter reactions from the adaptive dampers too. There's more eagerness, more tension to the driving experience without sacrificing the 508's sense of flow, although the steering takes on a heavily damped, weightier feel that we'd prefer to do without. The rack is otherwise accurate and well judged for speed, giving you confidence to up the pace and pick clean, precise lines.

It's at this point that the PSE feels at its best. Leave the gearshift paddles alone, use the torque from the powertrain and it's fast and effortless point-to-point, while the damping

really finds its range as the speed climbs. You always feel connected to the surface, but bumps roll under the wheels without disturbing the car's composure and even the most evil, sudden compressions are dealt with in one clean hit. Impressive given how much the PSE weighs.

Deputy editor James Taylor has been following in the Skoda, and we swap keys. 'It's been a long time since I've driven an Octavia vRS, but this feels much more agile to me than the last one I drove,' he notes. 'I only noticed the extra length over a Golf when doing three-point turns'.

The Octavia is smaller than the Peugeot, and even in this rich Royal Green metallic paint it's more discreet too. Look closely at the 508 and you'll notice aero flicks on the lower apron and how its widened tracks (by 24mm front, 12mm rear) push the wheels flush to the bodywork, making the vRS look restrained by comparison. It's the same story inside – the 508 is almost concept car-like with its angled surfaces and mix of materials, but you feel more instantly at home in the Skoda's cabin. The less said about the Golf-derived HMI system the better, but the quality is excellent, the suede and matt carbon trim is tastefully done and it's nice to be holding a proper-sized steering wheel.

You have plenty of modes to play with in the vRS, but setting it up is quite simple. The steering is best left in Comfort mode for the most transparent feel, the drivetrain is perkier in Sport, and then it's a case of switching between the (£1020) DCC damper settings depending on the road and your mood. Oh, and don't forget to switch the lane assist off with the shortcut button on the steering wheel, because it'll drive you up the wall on a tight B-road.

There's a pleasing familiarity about the Skoda that

makes it easy to wring performance from it straight away. Where the Peugeot has two stages to its acceleration – the first hit coming from the electric motors, the second when the gearbox kicks down moments later – the Octavia just does what it's told, and does it really rather well. You need some revs on the board to keep the turbo spooled, but once up to speed the performance gap to the Peugeot is smaller than it appears on paper (the key difference is that initial surge out of corners, where the 508 pulls a couple of car lengths ahead thanks to the electrical assistance). Neither car makes a great sound, but I much prefer the Octavia's industrial rumble over the Peugeot's weedy, strained note at high revs, and naturally start using the paddles more than I did in the 508 to keep the engine fizzing along.

To begin with, and especially with the dampers backed off, the Skoda feels more ordinary, a little lazier and the least reactive of the pair. Perhaps it's the Peugeot's smaller wheel magnifying my inputs, but the Octavia feels fractionally less locked-on at speed and settles into a softer stride. Put some energy into your driving and the body moves around more too, but the Bridgestone S005s dig in and find strong bite at the front, that initial roll bleeding into a suggestion of yaw to help you around corners. If you're in the right gear and the engine is lit (not always the case, as the DSG sometimes

ignores your requests for a downshift), you can feel the front diff pulling you tighter when you get on the throttle, the tyres nibbling at the surface as you power away. You can drive the Skoda like a big hot hatch, and it'll thank you for it.

Finding the same sort of malleability and involvement in the 508 isn't easy. Its extra weight means that the harder you push, the more it feels like you're bullying the car around rather than working with it, and the ESC is quick to shut down any attempt to influence the balance with a sharp lift or a trailing brake. You can lean into the control of the dampers and cover ground quickly, but the handling is more prescriptive and simply not as much fun. 'It feels like the car is being asked to do things it doesn't want to do,' says Taylor. 'I didn't find the powertrain particularly inspiring, and I didn't enjoy driving it as much as the Skoda.'

There's no doubt the 508 would be cracking to live with, particularly taking its electric-only range and running costs into account. It's the faster of the two, the more visually interesting and it has a lovely sense of calmness and control at speed. It also offers more space than its Czech rival, if fewer clever storage solutions. But the Skoda is more enjoyable more of the time and for a whole lot less money, while nailing every base an estate car should. For my 180-mile commute, the Octavia's are the keys I'd want in my hand. **X**

'THE PERFORMANCE GAP BETWEEN THEM IS SMALLER THAN IT APPEARS ON PAPER'



Peugeot 508 SW PSE

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1598cc, turbocharged, plus two e-motors

Power 355bhp **Torque** 383lb ft **Weight** 1892kg

Power-to-weight 191bhp/ton **Tyres** Michelin Pilot Sport 4 S

0-62mph 5.2sec **Top speed** 155mph **Basic price** £55,175

evo rating ★★★★★



Skoda Octavia vRS

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1984cc, turbocharged **Power** 242bhp @ 5000rpm

Torque 273lb ft @ 1600-4300rpm **Weight** 1457kg

Power-to-weight 169bhp/ton **Tyres** Bridgestone Potenza S005

0-62mph 6.7sec **Top speed** 155mph **Basic price** £37,785

evo rating ★★★★★



ICON



RENAULT SPORT MÉGANE

R26R

It's possibly the greatest hot hatch ever made, but it took true dedication and extreme measures to create it. This is the story of how the Mégane R26.R came to be

by ADAM TOWLER PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT



THE RENAULT SPORT MÉGANE R26.R IS ABOUT AS **EVO** as it gets. Sure, out there, in the wider population, with their unfathomable blind spot for great roads, loveable cars and enthusiastic driving, the notion of a two-seat-only hatchback is an absurd one. A chocolate teapot. Expensive when new, the R26.R is an anathema to the masses who view cars as mere transport, with an inevitable dearth of appreciation for ageing, stickered-up French hatchbacks.

You, of course, know differently. You know it's a giant-killer even to this day, some 16 years after its launch, and that it encapsulates everything that made a generation of machinery from its maker the standard bearer for relatively affordable performance cars. What you might not know is how the R26.R came into being, and how unlikely its birth looked at the time.

Although he's too modest to admit it, much of what we love about those Renault Sport cars – and indeed the Alpines that have followed – can be attributed to Jean-Pascal Dauce. The French engineer joined Renault back in 1991 (see *My Life & Cars*, **evo** 274) and Renault Sport in 2000, his first project being the Phase 2 Clio V6. As he explains, Renault Sport tended to have one engineer lead the concept phase of a project, sometimes then switching to another to bring the car to production, followed by

a different engineer to lead the developments over the model's lifecycle. In the case of the RS version of the Mégane II, it was JPD who took over at the lifecycle stage.

'We were not 100 per cent happy with this car at the start,' he recalls, 'because it was a bit of luxury and a bit of sport. Some people were saying, "A Clio RS we know what it is, but a Mégane RS we don't know. What are you standing for?" And two or three topics we were not very comfortable with, especially the electric power steering. So the car as launched was not perfect, let's say.'

It was clear at the time that Renault was expanding the segment's horizons, latching onto the concept of the Mk1 Focus RS (with its front-wheel drive and 200bhp+ turbo motor) but exceeding its power level and offering a greater bandwidth of abilities. Then there was the sheer eccentricity and individualism of the styling inside and out: the 'bustle back', the key card – it was a car that made an immediate impression, in spite of a few flaws. Yet what followed really put Renault Sport on the map, building on the success of the hot Clios that had taken over the smaller hot hatch class from Peugeot/Citroën.

The Mégane evolved rapidly, with Trophy, Cup and 'F1 Team R26' variants that each dialled-up the **evo** factor. It was no accident. JPD and his team were initially afraid to lose the



more luxury-minded customers, but the reality turned out to be different – the Méganes were attracting enthusiasts who were moving up from Clios. ‘The more we were putting sportiness in the car, the more the awards came from the press and customers, so of course it gave us more energy to do the R26, which I was very proud of. It was exactly the car we wanted to do.’ The R26 was indeed a belter, the Mégane II reaching full maturity, but how best to send off this generation of Mégane?

‘After having some Car of the Year success in the sporty world with the R26 we became a bit more... let’s say “happy”,’ Dauce continues. ‘That’s how the R came about – four of the guys in my team, including me – we were a bit enthusiast.’ He chuckles at the glaring understatement. ‘We proposed that rather than do a limited edition, which we usually call “bye-bye” – just do a body colour and two or three small bits – we drafted something a bit crazy. So I went to see my boss and said, “Rather than do this not very interesting bye-bye edition, we could spend that money on a proof of concept. If you don’t care for the concept we do nothing; no one can buy a limited edition but we don’t need it. If you are happy, we have no more money, so you find the money and we can make something a bit exciting...”’

The R project was essentially a big gamble. Dauce took a

small team and shut himself off from the rest of the company, knowing timing was everything. He had three months, and not a day longer, because the factory in Spain where all Mégane II bodysells were being made was switching tooling to the Mégane III in the summer of 2007, and that would wait for nothing, especially not a tiny project of just 450 cars.

The result was a car focused entirely on driving, and at its core one that prioritised increased performance through a reduction in weight. Dauce was told that any power increase was out of the question, because the forthcoming RS250 based on the Mégane III would have its marketing undermined by a run-out model offering similar power. Hence the considerable and radical weight saving – 123kg, achieved by both leaving stuff out and looking for more exotic solutions. As Dauce attests, two of the project’s biggest challenges were the carbonfibre bonnet (saving 7.5kg) and Lexan rear side glass and screen (5.7kg), which entailed working with new materials and ensuring quality was consistent for a production application. There was also the option of a titanium exhaust (£2250) and the fitment of lighter wheels, shod with the other big R performance enhancement: semi-slick Toyo 888 tyres. The R26.R didn’t go through the usual Renault durability programme in various

Opposite: roll-cage was optional, but car remained a two-seater even without it fitted. **Top left:** new wheels had a different offset, increasing the R’s track by 4mm. **Top right:** owner’s pack included a ticket for a Nürburgring lap

climates, because the engineers felt it was close enough to the R26 to not require it, but plenty of work was carried out to ensure the Toyos weren't lethal in the wet, including tests with French journalists.

Out went the rear seats, the front fog lights, the passenger and curtain airbags, and the audio system. The exterior mirrors were now manually operated, not electrically. £700 brought a half cage in the rear and the sticky Toyos, while the Sabelt bucket seats (saving 25kg) were combined with five-point Sabelt harnesses (and the removal of the inertia-reel belts). In fact, the harnesses provided perhaps the biggest headache of all, because the team had to convince Renault's homologation department that a twist motion to release was the same movement as pressing a button. (Fun fact: want to tell a Swiss-market R26.R from all the others? It has a push-button harness made by Schroth instead of the Sabelt set-up, as the extra homologation for the unique Swiss market wasn't pursued.)

When the time came to present the proof of concept to the bosses, Dauce was again unconventional. Instead of a big PowerPoint presentation and numerous stakeholders, he parked the car in a workshop, put a sheet over it, placed six boards up on the wall and stood with his team to deliver a 20-minute presentation with no interruptions. There were questions aplenty at the end, but the green light was given. Some of the more extreme ideas had already been filtered out by this stage of the project, three notable ones that didn't make it being the deletion of air conditioning, which was felt would make the car too uncomfortable in hotter climes, a trio of secondary dials on the centre stack to supplement the Mégane's rather sparse instrumentation, and an Alcantara-covered dashboard.

Gavin Armstrong's R26.R – the car we're driving here – looks fabulously purposeful in white with black rims. There's a certain innocence about it though. In an era where the hot hatch big boys boast over 300bhp and are adorned with a plethora of aerodynamic devices, the R26.R is squat, simple and almost minimalist, in spite of its exposed-carbon bonnet and garish graphics.

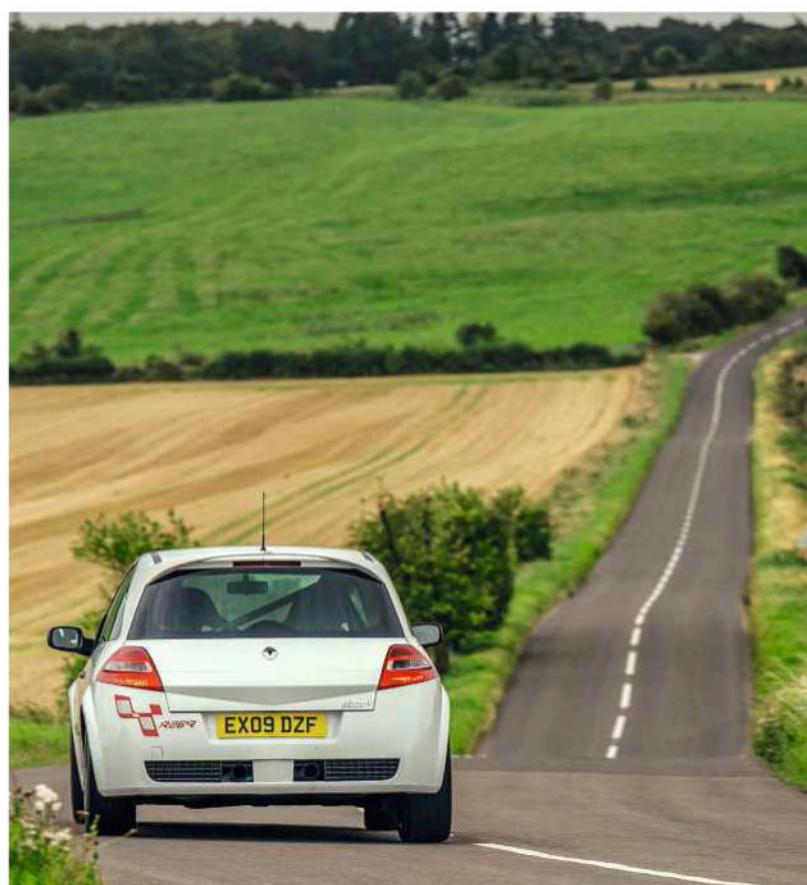
Slide the key card into its slot and press the start button, the electrical system clicks – a sound that instantly takes me back to this era of Renault Sport cars – and the turbocharged 'four' fires up with its characteristically nasally drone.

The Mégane II has always been a car you sit 'on', rather than 'in' (unlike a Mk5 Golf GTI of the same era), but despite feeling a little perched on top of the action, the driving position – for me at least – still works well, the fabulous seats having a snug embrace and the wheel adjusting for reach. Pulling out onto the road with a 90-degree turn there's a small but definite tug at the wheel, a brief 'bonjour' from the limited-slip differential establishing its existence, and then we're up and running, and the sensations are filling my brain almost quicker than it can register them.

If ever there was an advert for saving every last kilogram, the R26.R is it. The way it gains speed, changes direction – does everything, basically – is a legacy of that 1220kg kerb weight. So while its 227bhp power peak might look underwhelming compared to the hot hatches of today, the peak torque of 229lb ft at 3000rpm bequeaths it an effortless way of accruing speed when combined with its limited mass. To put things into perspective, a current Honda Civic Type R weighs 1429kg – over 200kg more.

Right: rear wash/wipe was deleted along with the heated glass rear screen.

Far right: interior lost its stereo, passenger airbag, side curtain airbags and most of its soundproofing; optional titanium exhaust system trimmed 9kg





The classic long-stroke 'Fonte' engine, in F4R form the heart of every great Renault Sport car from Clio Williams to Mégane III 275 Trophy-R, comes on boost early with negligible lag, and while there obviously aren't the top-end fireworks of a modern-day Type R or an AMG A45 S, never do I find myself yearning for more performance. And that's before the car plays its ace card, because what the R26.R is really about is the corners between the straights.

It's no accident that the R26.R works so well on a British B-road, despite ostensibly being a car aimed at the track – and the Nürburgring in particular. As Dauce confirms, Renault UK was 'pushing like hell' on Renault Sport products at the time, and half of the R's production run was slated for this side of the channel. 'I have spent half of my life in the UK,' he adds, a nod to his time working with TWR on the Clio V6 and for Renault F1 at Enstone. So the team knew well what the car would need to work well on our particularly cambered and poorly surfaced roads. The R is more softly sprung than the R26, thanks to the reduction in overall mass, so while the damping is tight and extremely controlled, there's a notable elasticity to the way the car rides, particularly at speed, that makes it far more comfortable than you might expect.

It's also a magic formula when it comes to tackling a road at pace. There is no combination of dip, crest, bump, gully or whatever else you might find beneath the wheels that makes the R lose its composure, or forces you to lower your speed. Gavin's car is running on Dunlop Direzzas these days, a similarly sparsely treaded tyre to the old 888s, and the sheer grip on offer requires a little acclimatisation. With more heat they work better still, to the point that when you're loaded up in a corner it feels as though it would be possible to actually turn more tightly, despite another part of your brain saying you must surely be near the limit of cornering force. That's partly the diff, of course, which works brilliantly, never wasting a single horsepower – at least in the dry – and aiding the R in carving through corners like the proverbial slot-car racer.

For all this potency, however, the best way to drive it is with fingertip pressure. Perhaps in part due to its lower weight than other hot hatches of this size, the R is a surprisingly delicate

machine: the steering is clear and communicative – a miracle given the horribly remote feeling of the EPAS set-up in early Mégane IIs. Meanwhile the gearlever slices through with only the lightest of touches; you don't need to muscle it.

What of that Ring time, then; the 8min 17sec run that began the new sub-niche of front-wheel-drive Nordschleife times and is proudly emblazoned on the R's side glass? 'When I joined the Mégane RS project we were hardly going to the Nürburgring,' recalls Dauce. 'On the Trophy, the first limited edition, we paid for a yearly access to the Ring, so we were going more and more often. We made an assessment and saw we could lead the front-wheel-drive field, so it became a wish.'

As ever, what actually constituted a legitimate record at the Ring was not straightforward. 'The only small drawback: we did a much better time in development than we did on June 20th, 2008, in front of the press. And we didn't dare to say we will print on the car a better time than the one we did in front of them. We'd done 8:12 with cooler air, and for many other reasons.'

History tells us that Renault UK struggled to sell its allocation of R26.Rs. Despite the rave reviews in the press, the market didn't respond in kind, and some 40 cars remained unsold. Its debut was at the British motor show, but Ford presented its 300bhp Mk2 Focus RS at the same time and JDP says Renault knew the R was dead in the water. Nevertheless, it was felt internally that by garnering so much media exposure the car had more than done its job.

I had always believed those unsold cars ended up being sent to Switzerland, but Dauce says Rs were only ever built to order. With unallocated UK chassis to find homes for, the excess UK orders were offered elsewhere in Europe (including the Swiss market) but retained their UK-numbered plaque, despite being built in left-hand drive, to avoid a 'Clio Williams 2' situation.

Now, as is so often the way, it's a very different story. Low-mileage examples such as this one are approaching £50,000. 'In France this car is like a small goddess,' is Dauce's affectionate summary when I say how sought-after they are over here. Drive one and it's not hard to see why, for it's an icon in the truest sense. ✕

Renault Sport Mégane R26.R

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc, turbo **Power** 227bhp @ 5500rpm **Torque** 229lb ft @ 3000rpm **Weight** 1220kg **Power-to-weight** 189bhp/ton **Tyres as tested** Dunlop Direzza **0-62mph** 6.0sec **Top speed** 147mph **Price new** £23,815 (2008-09) **Value today** £30,000+

evo rating ★★★★★



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FAST FLEET

END OF TERM

Aston Martin V8 Vantage

Three years after taking the plunge on the car of his dreams, Peter Tomalin bids it a bittersweet goodbye

LATE LAST SUMMER, FOLLOWING A TOUR OF THE Peak District, I finished the Aston's previous Fast Fleet report on something of a cliffhanger. 'In four days, the Vantage had covered almost 700 miles and performed brilliantly,' I wrote. 'In fact it returned home totally unscathed. Well, almost. More on that next time.'

Well, several months later, this is that next time. And also the last time. The reality of which has only just begun to sink in. And it sucks.

Anyway, back to the cliffhanger. Around a year ago I repainted R100's satin-black grille, and very good it looked too if I say so myself. It looked particularly fine on the Peak Classic – until one evening it didn't. Closer inspection revealed one of the horizontal bars had fallen out en route, and was now presumably lying in a verge somewhere on the Snake Pass. Then, on the final day, we lost another one. The Aston was beginning to look like it had gone five rounds with Tyson Fury.



p119 Mazda CX-60



p120 Caterham Seven evo25



p125 Audi S8



p126 BMW M2



The problem lay with the vertical spars that hold the horizontal slats in position. Over the years, several had snapped their mountings, which meant the slats were loose, even more so after I'd extracted them for painting and slotted them back into place. The only correct solution, I decided, was to source a new grille. Happily Aston Martin Works could supply one; rather less happily it'd cost a hefty £576, but when it arrived it was a reassuringly weighty and really rather beautiful piece of polished metalwork (none of your flimsy modern plastic here), so sculptural that I was almost tempted to hang it on my study wall.

With its gleaming new gnashers fixed firmly in place, the Vantage looked as good as it had ever done and the rest of the summer and early autumn passed agreeably and without further mishap. And then, as autumn moved into winter and the Aston went into hibernation once again, I had some thinking to do.

Buying the Vantage had been a big deal. It had

been a now-or-never 60th-birthday present to myself. It was also tied up with losing my dad and the fact he'd always regretted letting an Aston slip through his fingers many years ago. It was the most special car I'd ever owned, one that brought me a ridiculous amount of pleasure just having it around the place; the fact that it was such an event to drive was almost a bonus.

But after nearly three years I'd begun hankering for something different, something I'd be more relaxed about using every day. I'd also somehow managed to acquire a small motorboat (nothing flash, I promise, but the mooring fees...) and as Mrs T made very clear, we couldn't afford both a boat and an Aston Martin.

So as winter became spring, I placed a speculative ad on Pistonheads at a smidge under £29k, knowing the market was pretty flat and not really expecting much of a response. There was a call from Collecting Cars asking if I'd like to list with them, and a series of texts

'It brought me a ridiculous amount of pleasure just having it around the place'

from an 'Alan' who turned out to be a scammer for an HPI knockoff company. But also a call from an enthusiastic-sounding young chap called Ben, who asked all the right questions before asking if he could view it that evening.

So Ben arrived bang on time, spent an hour going over the car, had a 15-minute passenger ride around the local lanes as dusk fell, and said he wanted to buy it. He made an offer, I countered, and we settled on a smidge under £27k, a price with which we could both be reasonably happy. Not only did he want to buy it, but he wanted to drive



Mazda CX-60

Its straight-six goes against the grain, but does it hit the mark?

A SIDE FROM THE PRACTICAL BENEFITS of having a large(ish) SUV on *evo's* fleet for when photographers want to cram something full of camera equipment, and the fact that many of you tell us you have such vehicles within your household fleet and want to know which model you should buy next, there was another reason why we wanted to run Mazda's CX-60: its new – as in newly designed and developed – 3.3-litre straight-six mild-hybrid turbodiesel engine. Granted, it was no revolutionary Wankel unit, but even we were intrigued by this new motor that sounded as if it had come from a time we all thought was behind us.

Despite its cylinder count and configuration, this is not a straight-six turbodiesel to rival the very best from BMW, rather one to take on small-capacity, four-pot motors, Mazda's reasoning being that a larger-capacity, unstressed six-pot is more efficient than a more highly strung – relatively speaking – four-pot.

To this end it has a hefty torque figure of 406lb ft that arrives at 1500rpm before tailing off from 2400rpm, providing it with an old-school surge followed by a bit of old-school drop-off, too. With only 250bhp (arriving at 1500rpm and all done by 4200rpm) it's not got what you would call a broad operating window, which makes for a rather busy eight-speed auto regardless of how you drive. Slow and smooth has it hunting around for the right gear, while pressing on delivers the same but with more hunting and less success. There isn't even that swell of momentum the best turbodiesel engines had a decade or so ago, leaving you to question why Mazda went to all this effort in the first place.

Stuart Gallagher (@stuartg917)

Date acquired November 2023 **Total mileage** 8255 **Mileage this month** 601 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 41.1

it away that evening. To show his dad.

Thirty minutes later the money was in my account, he'd taxed and insured the car and I was digging out the second key. It was all happening so quickly. I couldn't bear to watch it drive away, pacing the hallway until I could see the lights had gone from the drive. I felt bereft. Not quite as bad as losing a family pet, but close. I'd never felt like this about a car before.

It was my birthday that weekend; three years to the day since I'd brought R100 home. You don't want to spend your birthday moping, I needed something to cheer me up. So I went out and bought a car (more of which next month). Like the Aston, it's front engine/rear-wheel drive with a six-speed manual and only two seats. It is also, as my wife pointed out, virtually the same colour as the Aston. It has only half the cylinders and less than half the power and capacity, but already I love it to bits.

But it doesn't stop me missing the Vantage.

R100 AMV brought me so much pleasure – and so little pain. There was one electrical glitch caused by a damaged lead to a sensor, and the grille issue of course. Otherwise the only outlay was routine stuff: servicing at around a grand a year, a set of new Michelins (£937 fitted) and new brake discs and pads (£1219 fitted). Fuel consumption ranged from high teens to 24mpg on a motorway run; oil consumption was negligible. And I lost a few grand when I sold it, but peanuts compared with any new or nearly new car.

Have fun Ben. If you love R100 half as much as I did, you're going to have a ball.

Peter Tomalin

Date acquired March 2021 **Duration of test** 36 months **Total test mileage** 7200 **Overall mpg** 19.5 **Total costs** £4894.43 **Price when bought** £32,500 **Price when sold** £27,000

Caterham Seven evo25

Experienced in its element, our Seven converts a casual observer into a believer

THE CATERHAM ISN'T THE EASIEST CAR TO drive in traffic, as I discovered when dicing through the early-morning M4 mayhem on the way to a shoot last month. The throttle is jumpy at low speed and the clutch doesn't engage with much progression, so there's a fine line between an embarrassing stall and bouncing it off the limiter like you've just set off at Shelsley Walsh. Which is just as embarrassing, I suppose.

There's only one thing for it, and that's to stop being lazy and be a better driver. Focus on your inputs, time them correctly and the Caterham feels much happier. You quickly build a symbiotic bond with it, and with its tiny footprint and such malleable handling, pretty much any road is a playground.

There's an addictive, frantic intensity to the way it drives (particularly in the wet), but you don't need to be absolutely on it to have fun. I've used it at every possible opportunity since I claimed the keys a few weeks ago: trips to B&Q, visiting the grandparents and even impromptu lunch-stops at the KFC drive-thru. 'Next window, please,' said the cashier, eyes

glazed over as if some extra-terrestrial being had just turned up for a boneless box meal.

Folding yourself into the tiny cockpit can be a pain. Especially if, having strapped into the six-point harness, you find that the ignition key is still in your back pocket, or you've left your earplugs in the house (you really do need those for a long drive). But, once you're in, the seat is comfy, the ride is supple with the Bilstein dampers wound back, and the supernova-spec heater keeps the cabin toasty. Passengers have been surprised by how habitable it is, too.

One drive in particular sticks in my mind. After a hike in the Brecon Beacons, I persuaded my brother-in-law Rahbar – who only has a passing interest in cars – to join me in taking the long way home. The light was fading, the clouds were closing in, but there was just enough time for one clear run through the Cynon Valley.

Soon, the conversation stopped and the Caterham did all the talking for the next few miles. Accompanied by the pulsating backing track of

the Duratec motor, we were completely keyed into the road through every corner, bump and surface change. I wasn't driving particularly hard, but the way the car stopped, steered and built speed with so little effort was mesmerising. We were back on the main road in what felt like a blink, and as I eased off and fumbled for the headlight and wiper switches, an admission from Rahbar: 'Wow, I get it now!'

My time with the Caterham has been a joy, and I'm going to do all I can to keep hold of it for as long as possible. It really is the ultimate refresher of what cars, and this magazine, are all about. My brother-in-law, on the other hand, is now searching the classifieds for a small, lightweight two-seater of his own. Another one catches the bug.

Yousuf Ashraf (@ashrafoncars)

Date acquired August 2023 **Total mileage** 4369 **Mileage this month** 592 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 21.9





Porsche 911 Carrera GTS

A spot of moonlighting for our long-term 911, as it turns pace car for the Porsche Carrera Cup

I 'VE SEEN SOME INCONGRUOUS SIGHTS in my rear-view mirror before but this is a new one: a grid of Porsche Carrera Cup race cars, elevated on their pneumatic stands as teams gamble whether to fit wet or dry tyres beneath angry clouds at Donington Park.

evo's 911 Carrera GTS road car is idling patiently, ready to lead the formation lap for the opening round of the 2024 Carrera Cup championship. It'll be my job to drive a safe distance ahead of the safety car, show our 911 off on camera, and try not to stick it in the gravel trap live on ITV4.

Great Britain's Carrera Cup is the high-pressure proving ground for aspiring young drivers to make their mark and potentially springboard to an illustrious career: many Carrera alumni have gone on to glittering success in endurance racing, GTs, touring cars and beyond.

There are multiple Carrera Cup championships around the world, all using identical 911 GT3 Cup racing cars. As we discovered when we track-tested the GT3 Cup at Estoril in issue 319, it's an incredible bit of kit: savagely fast, capable of serious cornering speeds, and a well-sorted but challenging car to extract the maximum from. It's built around the same bodyshell as our long-term and goes down the same production line



at Stuttgart-Zuffenhausen, although it packs a howling 4-litre naturally aspirated engine related to the 911 GT3 road car's rather than the 3.8-litre twin-turbo unit in the back of our car.

Every two years, Porsche selects a driver aged between 16 and 24 for its hotly contested Junior scholarship programme. The 2024-25 Junior is James Wallis. He's calm and collected when we speak to him ahead of the race. 'About 70 drivers entered their CV; 12 were selected for an interview and four for a shoot-out at Silverstone,' he explains. 'I'm still doing my A-levels, so I used my headmaster for interview practice. This year it's going to be hard to stand out but I want the race to be wet: it was tipping it down on the day of the shoot-out...'

Illustrating just how fiercely competitive the

Cup is, the top 14 drivers in qualifying are covered by only four-tenths of a second. Our 911 GTS gets a head start for the pace lap and feels right at home at Donington with its dampers in Sport mode (and sounds pretty good with the exhaust set to Sport, too). I'm paranoid about getting in the way of the safety car and the 22 angry Cup cars weaving behind it, so I canter around the track at a brisk-ish pace. As I peel off into the pitlane at the end of the lap, the sound of furious flat cylinders screams into action in the background, and I pad back through the paddock in the 911 to Porsche's race village complex to watch the action on the screens. It's as eventful as you'd expect, with battles throughout the field and a couple of scary-looking crashes. The race is won by William Martin, with Wallis 7th from 11th on the grid (he was 0.26sec off pole).

There'll be eight more rounds this season, but only Donington Park will feature evo's 911. There are larger footnotes in motorsport history, but it was a fun one to make.

James Taylor (@JamesTaylorEVO)

Date acquired December 2023 **Total mileage** 5466 **Mileage this month** 584 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 28.3



Toyota GR Yaris

Barker and the Yaris pay a visit to the air ambulance and team that came to our man's rescue

A COUPLE OF AIRPORT RUNS AND QUITE A bit of commuting this month have seen the economy climb to previously only hoped-for heights – over 35mpg – the figure barely dented by the occasional enthusiastic run, which is, of course, irresistible. I adore the mid-range torque of the Yaris's in-line triple, which feels oversized for a 1.6 and comes with an equally oversized and purposeful offbeat growl. It's especially satisfying if you allow boost to build from low revs on full throttle.

The Yaris's other control weights match its beefy delivery, especially the steering and the heft of the six-speed manual. It takes a bit of consideration to finesse the shift from cold, but I wouldn't swap it for the Gen 2 GR's new eight-speed auto because it's such a key part of the car's character. Also, autos are programmed to find the best engine response to the throttle demand, while I want to enjoy the feeling of the motor building up, a slow burn igniting into a controlled explosion of full torque.

I collected the BBR MX-5 from Brackley for last month's TCoty test and was immediately struck by the stark contrast. While the Mazda and Toyota proved remarkably well-matched for outright pace, they couldn't have been more different in feel, the Mazda so much lower, lighter and more delicate. Swapping back a few days and hundreds of miles later, the Yaris felt good right away, proof that I'm definitely conditioned to its lofty driving position, while day-to-day the lack of front and rear locking diffs makes little difference to the enjoyment.

One mild irritation is the tilt-n-slide mechanism for getting into the back seat. I know the GR is a homologation special so Toyota didn't waste money developing a memory mechanism but, boy, it's a faff to use. And even small folk find it a struggle to get through the gap between seat and door frame.

I was pleased to finally meet Keith Rutherford again this month. I last met him on August 28, 2022, after my Sunday-morning mountain-bike

ride went awry. I found a 10ft drop where I expected a slope and landed on my back, breaking quite a few bits, including two vertebrae. The bike was fine. I tried to walk out of the woods but after about 100 yards had to give up. My mate, Nick, called 999 and after initially being told an ambulance would be six hours arriving, he turned and said, 'The air ambulance will be here in 15 minutes.' Wonderful words. Keith (pictured above, on the right, with colleagues Dave Hart and Nick Bould, plus yours truly) was part of the crew that attended and whisked me to the nearest musculoskeletal trauma centre, University Hospital, Coventry & Warwickshire.

Luckily for me, on the day of my visit to the base of the Derbyshire, Leicestershire & Rutland Air Ambulance near Nottingham both Keith and a helicopter were available. Some of his colleagues wondered why I'd turned up in a little Toyota, but Keith, a critical care paramedic, immediately recognised it was a GR.

'Most people assume we just get people to



hospital faster but we have many more specialist skills than regular paramedics,' Keith explained. This means that they can do much more at the scene, including anaesthetising and even amputations. Motorway pile-ups are the most common calls but they rescue people from the hills of the Peak District too and provide a Critical Care Car service when flying is not possible. Each mission costs around £2300, all funded by charitable donations as they are a service which operates to support the NHS and receives no funding from them or the government. For info on their work or to make a donation, visit theairambulanceservice.org.uk
John Barker (@evoJB)

Date acquired December 2024 **Total mileage** 4226 **Mileage this month** 1455
Costs this month £0 **mpg this month** 35.2



Range Rover Sport P530

Why four-wheel steering is a vital part of the Sport's tech armoury

ONCE A QUARTER, THE LATE LJK SETRIGHT would use his column in *Car* to discuss the subject of four-wheel steering.

Specifically the four-wheel steering Honda had developed for the Prelude. Like many, I enjoyed reading Setright's views on the technology finding its way into new cars during the '80s and '90s gold rush of car development. And, like many, I rarely had the intellect to fully comprehend his work. Reading his copy then, and now, is the literary equivalent of trying to keep up with Dickie Meaden when he decides to make some progress behind the wheel.

What does any of this have to do with our Range Rover Sport? It too has four-wheel steering, and it's one of the best systems I've experienced. Art director Rich Browne's Audi S8 has it too, but in the limo, while effective at providing it with impressive low-speed mobility, it's not as impressive as it is in the Sport.

The S8 has 3.1 metres of real estate between its two driven axles, the Sport 2.9 metres, and while the Audi's system works its miracles at low speed, at medium to higher speeds, when the rear wheels turn in the same direction as the fronts, it feels less effective despite the built-in stability its overall length naturally provides.

The Sport would be a kerb-battering, wheel-destroying disaster without its rear wheels being able to turn up to 7.3 degrees in the opposite direction to the fronts. Approaching car park

kerbing that has taken chunks out of previous *evo* Fast Fleet residents (Heathrow T2, level 4, lane 6, I'm looking at you) feels like threading a needle through the open door of St Paul's Cathedral when navigated in NNO.

Its wheel-saving properties in our pothole-ridden urban environments are most welcome, but it's also essential if you do take your £120,000+ Sport into the woods and find yourself hemmed in by trees on a rutted path millimetres wider than the car. Which, let's not forget, is what Land Rover products are created to do, even those with white leather interiors and 23-inch wheels. More of that in the next report.

At higher speeds on more interesting roads, the Sport's rear can become unexpectedly mobile if you're too enthusiastic on turn-in, the rear snapping round sharply and pushing wide before jumping back into line as the rear steer rolls up its sleeves. The tech and mechanical loads to manage such mass becoming mobile doesn't bear thinking about. Although I suspect LJKS would be able to explain it in his uniquely erudite manner. Whether I'd understand is another matter.

Stuart Gallagher (@stuartg917)

Date acquired November 2023 **Total mileage** 19,041 **Mileage this month** 1212
Costs this month £0 **mpg this month** 20.1



Fiat Panda 100HP

Fears of a head gasket failure are confirmed. Is this the end for our bargain supermini?

WHEN WE LAST SAW THE PANDA IN THESE pages many months ago, its clonking and wonky suspension had been mended, only for sudden plumes of white exhaust smoke and a dollop of Hellman's under the oil filler to herald the apparent failure of the head gasket. A nice man with a flatbed recovered the car and took it to Paul, the cheery bloke at Genuine Car Services in Odd Down, who whipped the head off and then gave me one of those ominous phone calls that starts and ends with, 'Rich, mate, you'd better come over...'

You'd like Genuine Car Services, it's one of those back-street places in a gravelly yard that's permanently got a puddle in it, they're always cheery and they're always busy. But, frankly, when Paul invited me up there to see the Panda it felt less like going for a friendly chat and more like a tragic trip to identify a body. Or, in this case, to peer into the number four cylinder where a suspiciously shiny piston confirmed that, yes, the head had failed and

unwanted things had invited themselves into the combustion process.

'Run your finger down that,' said Paul, grimly. The bore scoring was palpable and the damage to the engine terminal. Or at least so expensive to fix, once you'd factored in getting the head skimmed as well, that it made a replacement engine the cheaper option.

A lovely chap called Laurence from Fettle & Finesse, a Leicestershire-based garage that specialises in fixing up Panda 100HPs, was able to connect me with a man who had an engine going spare, and all for a refreshingly unpalatable £100. Fitting it, however, became five times more expensive because it turned out the donor engine had oil in the cylinders, possibly on account of having been upside-down at some point, and even when that was cleared up the motor wouldn't turn over, a problem traced to a tiny nick in the wiring loom probably caused by a strap

'The bore scoring was palpable and the damage to the engine terminal'

being lashed over it when it was being transported.

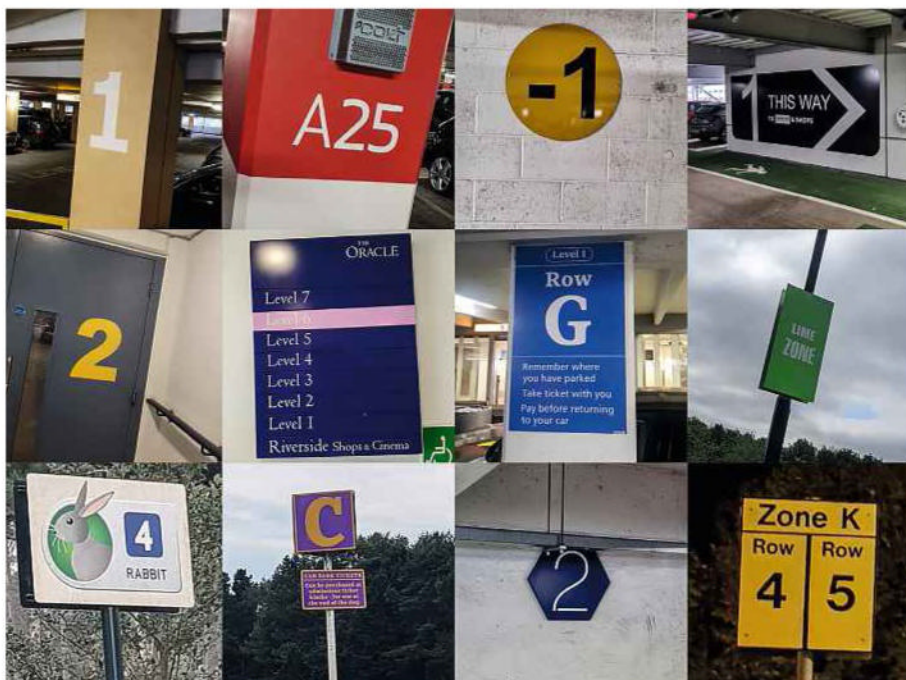
Weeks elapsed, pounds went into Paul's pocket, then eventually the Panda was ready. To celebrate I set off on a nice cross-country run – until the clutch pedal sank to the floor and refused to come back without a hook of the toe. This made smooth getaways from junctions quite dramatic. Since the clutch had been replaced when the new engine went in, I suspected the problem lay with the slave cylinder, so I ordered a new one online and slipped Paul another 40 quid to fit it.



So now, finally, and for the first time in many months, the Panda is working and working well. Which is why I'm going to sell it. I know this seems perverse but I think car relationships, just like human relationships, can fall apart once trust is lost and the characteristics that annoy you overwhelm the reasons that made you fall in love. That's where I am with the Panda. It was a fun fling while it lasted but not quite the torrid romance I was hoping for and, awful though it sounds, I'm now at the stage where I need it to be over.

Richard Porter (@sniffpetrol)

Date acquired September 2022 **Total mileage** 105,996 **Mileage this month** 12 **Costs this month** See text **mpg this month** 27.6 (according to the computer but maybe that's broken too)



Audi S8

A parking pariah? How our big Audi is tackling the city squeeze

MY PHONE IS FULL OF SEEMINGLY random pictures of large signs containing the words 'ROW' or 'ZONE', or just odd letters or numbers on their own. No, I'm not obsessed with post-modern 1980s concrete multi-storey car parks, I just have a terrible habit of forgetting where I park. Indeed, a few years ago in Norwich I 'lost' a Golf R for about an hour. Never again, I vowed, so now I take pictures of landmarks, signs and so on to remind me, just in case. (Worryingly I've started to do the same in the gym locker room now too, so a collection of wooden doors with padlocks and numbers has joined the party. Um, everyone does this right?) Actually, seeing a few together looks like a cool design for an album cover. Or maybe one of those internet security grids asking for the squares without bikes in.

Since taking the key to KY73 OTZ, however, remembering where I parked has not been so much of a problem. At a whopping 5179mm in length, it tends to stick out in any row and is easily spotted, standing out from the crowd – literally.

There's lots I love about the S8, but due to its length, parking it is not one of them. In fact it can be a worry, to the point where if I'm going somewhere new, I'll research car park options in advance – with good reason. It was reported recently that five local councils (Wokingham, South Hams, Broadland, South Norfolk and West Devon) have banned cars over 5m from using their car parks, issuing fines if ignored. This rule certainly affects the S8 (and A8), along with the

BMW 7-series, Range Rover, Tesla Models S and X and Mercedes S-class, to name just a few.

Yet cars are getting bigger both in length and width (averaging 1cm wider every two years, it's said), and with 91 per cent of councils saying they have no plans to increase parking bay sizes, there could be trouble ahead, or at least a good reason to think about your choice of car in the future.

That said, with cameras covering all angles, rear-axle steering and even a self-parking feature (if you like that sort of thing), parking the S8 in even the trickiest of spaces is a breeze. Although normally you'll find me about two miles away from anyone else anyway, to avoid dinks and scuffs, and in this case another car clipping whichever end of the S8 is protruding from the space.

Elsewhere, our S8 continues to be the centre of attention wherever it goes. From the look on people's faces when dropping off my daughter at train stations and airports (fully expecting Beyoncé to step out of the back and not a scruffy law student) to the excited shift worker who followed me into Sainsbury's to pick my brains about the Audi's V8 engine, it never gets boring. With plans for some big summer journeys ahead, I'll have plenty more opportunities to flex said V8's muscles too. Can't wait. Now, where did I park again?

Richard Browne (@washlander)

Date acquired September 2023 **Total mileage** 7645 **Mileage this month** 1125 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 22.1



BMW M2

It's an M2 showdown as our latest-generation model meets its Competition ancestor. Which is better?

BACK IN 2018-19, I SPENT EIGHT MONTHS with a previous-generation M2 in Competition form. It still ranks among my favourite long-termers that I've run, which begs the question: how does the latest M2 measure up? To find out – and rather than relying on potentially rose-tinted memories of that older car – this month we got an F87-generation Competition together with our current G87 M2 long-termer for a back-to-back drive.

The Hockenheim Silver F87 you see here was kindly brought along by owner Stuart Dott. Standard right down to its Michelin Pilot Super Sports and with just 15,000 miles on the clock, it's an example of the model in its prime, so is perfect for our comparison.

There's no avoiding the inevitable first impression upon clapping eyes on an F87 again, namely how compact it looks. Not small necessarily, but just *right*. And perfectly, purposefully muscular too. Parked alongside, the newer car lacks the same tautness of form and appears to show every one of its additional

150kg. Longer, wider, chunkier, it's almost as if you're looking at a car two generations further down the line rather than just one.

It's a similar story inside. Everything in the F87's cabin is smaller and nearer, and often simpler too. The classic BMW instruments behind the wheel are the most striking case in point: round physical dials in plain black with simple white markings. The new, squarer M font may have snuck onto their faces for the Competition, but they remain superbly legible, unlike the chevron-shaped digital bars that represent revs and speed in the current car (which will no doubt age terribly). If only M offered a setting to call up a digital recreation of its traditional instruments in its latest clusters...

Press the red start button to bring the needles to life and the older straight-six sounds a little thin compared with the deeper, more gurgly voice of the new car, which always starts with its exhaust in its Sport setting (there's no such

trickery in the old car). Once on the move and with the engine up to temperature, however, the F87's engine gains a harder, grittier edge to its note as it reaches into the upper part of its rev range. Much like in the latest car, it's not a noise that dominates the experience, and I can appreciate why so many Comps have aftermarket exhausts fitted, but it provides all the encouragement you need to chase the red line.

As does the performance. Although on paper the 404bhp F87 and 454bhp G87 have similar torque highs – 406lb ft from 2350rpm versus 406lb ft from 2650rpm – the newer car feels more forceful low-down, even despite its weight penalty. Perhaps the rest of the torque curve, away from the peak, tells a fuller story. Once up and running, however, the performance gap closes, although in this case that's partly because the older car is equipped with the optional, snappy-shifting seven-speed DCT 'box, while our long-termer has the slightly ponderous six-speed manual. With the eager eight-speed auto instead (as tested in Driven,



evo 319) I've no doubt it'd be pulling out a gap again. That said, I'd still lean towards the manual option for both – particularly in the F87, which has a more pleasing shift action than the G87's rubbery offering.

It's funny how just a few years can give you a new perspective on how a car rides and handles. I remember thinking my old Competition long-termer felt pretty darned firm on its passive dampers. Yet after the current M2, with its adaptive dampers set to their middle Sport setting (which you'll need for a tough B-road), the older car feels much lighter on its feet, almost as if it's gliding along the road where the G87 thumps its way over the same surface.

I also remember thinking how keenly the Comp used to turn into a corner, but at first it feels less determined than the G87 with its massive front tyres (275 section versus 245 on the Comp). It's not understeery as such, but there's more incentive to balance front and rear through a turn, rather than letting the front-end grip do all the work. No bad

thing, as it's a more rewarding way to make progress.

At the other end of the chassis, the latest M2 displays one of its strongest leaps forward. Where the F87 Comp used a reduction in low-end torque to tame the spikiness the same engine displayed in the contemporary M3/M4, supported by an effective but not exactly subtle traction control system, the G87 deftly trims whatever is being thrown at its rear tyres thanks to a new TC system that's claimed to be six to eight times more precise in its torque management. The result is that it mostly feels like it's helping you go forward rather than holding you back, and if you still want more freedom, there's also now the ten-stage M Traction Control system you can play with to fine-tune how much help (or otherwise) you'd like.

In theory the new car is the better everyday option: more tech, more space, a more flexible engine. Yet in reality the older one has everything you really need, while its smaller size makes it more wieldy in urban environments. And a better fit for many a

B-road, where it's less intense than the new car, but arguably more satisfying overall. It feels like it sits on a sweet spot in the transition from the analogue to the more digital era of cars – asking a little more of the driver, and giving a little more back in return.

It perhaps explains why this is the *fourth* F87 that Stuart Dott has owned. They've been interspersed with some other modern-day performance heroes, but it's the F87 he keeps coming back to, with no hankering to upgrade to the latest version. That a new G87 starts at £65,830, while a car like Stuart's can be picked up from around £35k, only strengthens the case. As Stuart says: 'What else offers so much for that kind of money?'

Ian Eveleigh

Date acquired January 2024 **Total mileage** 9273 **Mileage this month** 964 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 24.4

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Once you've agreed everything with our team your car will be entered into one of our day-long auctions, held Monday to Saturday. Here it will be put in front of over 4,500 trusted dealers, who will bid their best price for your car. By 3:30pm the same day you'll be hearing from our team with notification of the winning bid, and within 48 hours the winning dealer will be in touch to arrange his inspection, collection and the quick and easy payment of your vehicle. You don't need to take your car anywhere, or make any arrangements: just make sure you have all your necessary documents handy and let us do the rest.

PREPARATION IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS

Making your car as attractive as it can be is the key to realising the best sale price for it. Firstly, it stands to reason that any obvious faults will have an impact on the money you get for your car. While no trader will expect a used car to be as it left the factory, if there is a glaringly obvious fault that can be put right for sensible money, then it may well be

worth your while in spending the money to do so. If it's too expensive an issue to tackle, you'll have to price your car accordingly.

The same goes for any minor damage or defects on the exterior and interior. Many small dents and minor paint damage can be rectified relatively easily by a bodyshop or mobile dent repair company, and can transform the look and feel of your car. Neither should you underestimate the importance of giving your car a good clean, and if detailing is simply not your thing, consider getting a professional to give the car a once over. A little money spent here can do wonders at sale time.

Finally, your marketing of the car is also crucial. Don't be shy with your camera phone - the results might not be *evo* magazine quality, but showing your car from every angle and its main details, inside and out, will give any prospective bidder confidence that they really understand what they're looking at. Quite simply, imagine that you're trying to buy your own car: what would you like to see?

The same approach goes to your written sales pitch. Selling a car doesn't require an *evo* feature story, but there are obvious points that a buyer will want to know, such as service history, mileage, and specification, and it's those little details that will show you're an enthusiast owner - and someone much more likely to have cared for their car.

TIME TO CASH IN - AND THINK AHEAD TO YOUR NEXT CAR

If for whatever reason your car fails to sell at auction, then it'll be showcased for an additional two days to try and make a sale. Once you've agreed on a sale price, it's time to gather all the necessary documents. That means the V5C registration document, the vehicle's handbook, its service record, a copy of your driving license (for identity purposes), any finance settlement letter (if appropriate), all keys (including spares) and the locking wheel nut. Either the buyer or Sell My Car will be in touch within 48 hours to arrange the collection of the vehicle. On the day of collection the buyer will probably want to inspect the vehicle, and maybe take it for a short test drive, but all being as described they will then pay the agreed sum to you. It's as simple as that.

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2024/24 BMW Alpina B5 GT Touring.

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2024/73 Porsche 992 GT3 Manual.

Arctic Grey with an Exclusive Manufaktur Houndstooth interior. Clubsport Package, Front Axle Lift System, Porsche Ceramic Brakes, BOSE Sound System +++. 354 Miles. **£204,850**



2023/73 Porsche 992 GT3.

PTS Black Olive with a Black Leather and Race-Tex interior. 102 Miles. **£194,850**



2018/18 Porsche 991.2 GT3 RS.

White with a Black Leather and Race-Tex interior. 27,624 Miles. **£159,850**



2013/13 Mercedes-Benz SLS Roadster.

Imola Grey over a Black Leather interior. 16,030 Miles. **£129,850**



2015/15 Ferrari 458 Speciale.

Grigio Silverstone over a Charcoal and Nero Alcantara interior. 1 Owner From New. 4,560 Miles. **£379,850**



2019/69 Ferrari 812 Superfast.

Verde Abetone over a Cuoio Leather interior. 5,303 Miles. **£239,850**



2006/06 Ferrari F430 Spider Manual.

Giallo Modena over a Nero Leather interior. 27,750 Miles. **£134,850**

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MERCEDES BENZ 380SL 54,234 miles £34,950

2013 AUDI R8 V10 SPYDER S-TRONIC 41,236 miles £55,950

1998 TVR CHIMAERA 500 76,430 miles £19,950

LANCIA FULVIA ZAGATO 80,436 miles £35,950

2019 LOTUS ELISE SPORT 220 7,478 miles £41,950

2006 CATERHAM 7 CSR 260 15,414 miles £39,950

2018 PLUS 4 15,703 miles £41,950

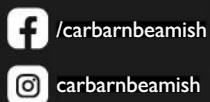


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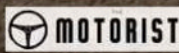
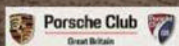
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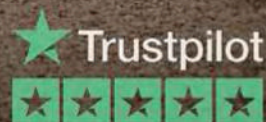


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f x @ d y

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, and costs considerably less than the Civic Type R to boot. The **Mercedes-AMG A45 S** matches a ludicrously potent in-line four with a genuinely involving four-wheel-drive chassis, or if it's affordable supermini fun you want, look no further than the **Hyundai i20 N**.

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE ON TESTS ON SALE	ENGINE CYL / CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT (CLAIMED)	WEIGHT (TESTED)	BHP/TON (CLAIMED)	0-62MPH (CLAIMED)	0-60MPH (TESTED)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING
Abarth 695C	318 F	£28,375	4/1368	178/5500	184/3000	1090kg	1153kg	166	6.7	-	140	★★★★★
Abarth 695 Biposto	205 F	2014-18	4/1369	187/5500	184/3000	997kg*	-	191	5.9	-	143	★★★★★
Abarth 500e Turismo	314 D	£38,795	113kW	152	173	1410kg	-	110	7.0	-	96	★★★★★
Alfa Romeo 147 GTA	187 F	2003-06	6/3179	247/6200	221/4800	1360kg	-	185	6.3	6.0	153	★★★★★
Audi A1 40 TFSI	256 D	2019-22	4/1984	197/6000	236/1500	1260kg	-	159	6.5	-	155	★★★★★
Audi S1	316 F	2014-18	4/1984	228/6000	273/1600	1315kg	-	176	5.8	-	155	★★★★★
Audi A1 quattro	264 F	2013	4/1984	253/6000	258/2500	1420kg	-	181	5.7	-	152	★★★★★
Audi S3 Sportback	279 D	£44,175	4/1984	306/5450	295/2000	1500kg	-	207	4.8	-	155	★★★★★
Audi S3	188 F	2013-20	4/1984	296/5500	280/1800	1395kg	-	216	5.2	5.4	155	★★★★★
Audi RS3 Sportback	292 D	£56,675	5/2480	394/5600	369/2250	1570kg	-	255	3.8	-	155	★★★★★
Audi RS3 Sportback	256 F	2017-21	5/2480	394/5850	354/1700	1510kg	-	265	4.1	-	155	★★★★★
Audi RS3 Sportback	221 F	2015-16	5/2480	362/5500	343/1625	1520kg	-	242	4.3	3.6	155	★★★★★
BMW 128ti	318 F	£37,375	4/1998	261/4750	295/1750	1445kg	1481kg	184	6.1	-	155	★★★★★
BMW M135i xDrive	318 F	£41,845	4/1998	302/5000	332/1750	1525kg	1584kg	201	4.8	-	155	★★★★★
BMW M135i	212 F	2012-15	6/2979	321/5800	332/1300	1430kg	-	228	5.1	5.2	155	★★★★★
Citroën DS3 1.6 THP	142 F	2010-15	4/1598	154/6000	177/1400	1240kg	-	126	7.3	-	133	★★★★★
Citroën DS3 Racing	153 D	2011-12	4/1598	204/6000	203/2000	1240kg	-	167	6.5	-	146	★★★★★
Citroën AX GT	195 F	1987-92	4/1360	85/6400	86/4000	722kg	-	120	9.2	-	110	★★★★★
Cupra Born 230 (77kWh)	-	£41,975	170kW	228	229	1875kg	-	124	7.0	-	99	★★★★★
Cupra Leon e-Hybrid	280 D	£40,160	4/1395	242	295	1596kg	-	154	6.7	-	140	★★★★★
Cupra Leon 300	318 F	£40,680	4/1984	296/5300	295/2000	1429kg	1505kg	210	5.7	-	155	★★★★★
DS 3 Performance	222 D	2016-18	4/1598	205/6000	221/3000	1175kg	-	177	6.5	-	143	★★★★★
Fiat Panda 100HP	273 F	2006-11	4/1368	99/6000	97/4250	975kg	1028kg	103	9.5	-	115	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST (Mk8)	259 F	2018-23	3/1497	197/6000	214/1600	1187kg	-	169	6.5	-	144	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST Edition / Performance Edition	292 F	2021-23	3/1497	197/6000	214/1600	1187kg	-	169	6.5	-	144	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST (Mk7)	207 F	2013-17	4/1596	197/5700	214/2500	1088kg	1193kg	184	6.9	7.4	137	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST200 (Mk7)	309 F	2016-17	4/1596	212/6000	236/2500	1088kg	-	198	6.7	-	143	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST (Mk6)	075 D	2005-08	4/1999	148/6000	140/4500	1137kg	-	132	7.9	-	129	★★★★★
Ford Focus ST Performance (Mk4)	318 F	£37,650	4/2261	276/5500	310/3000	1433kg	1424kg	196	5.7	-	155	★★★★★
Ford Focus ST Edition (Mk4)	294 D	2021-21	4/2261	276/5500	310/3000	1433kg	-	196	5.7	-	155	★★★★★
Ford Focus ST (Mk3)	207 F	2015-18	4/1999	247/5500	265/2000	1362kg	-	184	6.5	-	154	★★★★★
Ford Focus ST (Mk2)	119 F	2005-10	5/2522	222/6000	236/1600	1392kg	-	162	6.8	6.7	150	★★★★★
Ford Focus RS (Mk3)	246 F	2015-18	4/2261	345/6000	347/2000	1547kg	1569kg	227	4.7	4.9	166	★★★★★
Ford Focus RS Edition (Mk3)	246 D	2018	4/2261	345/6000	347/2000	1547kg	-	227	4.7	-	166	★★★★★
Ford Focus RS (Mk2)	195 F	2009-11	5/2522	300/6500	324/2300	1467kg	-	208	5.9	5.9	163	★★★★★
Ford Focus RS500 (Mk2)	256 F	2010-11	5/2522	345/6000	339/2500	1467kg	-	239	5.6	5.6	165	★★★★★
Ford Focus RS (Mk1)	312 F	2002-03	4/1998	212/5500	229/3500	1278kg	-	169	6.7	5.9	143	★★★★★
Ford Escort RS Cosworth	271 F	1992-96	4/1993	224/6250	224/3500	1275kg	-	179	6.2	-	137	★★★★★
Ford Puma 1.7	095 F	1997-2002	4/1679	123/6300	116/4500	1041kg	-	120	9.2	8.6	122	★★★★★
Ford Racing Puma	262 F	2000-01	4/1679	153/7000	119/4500	1174kg	-	132	7.9	7.8	137	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (FL5)	322 F	£49,995	4/1996	324/6500	310/2500	1429kg	1439kg	230	5.4	-	171	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (FK8)	288 F	2017-21	4/1996	316/6500	295/2500	1380kg	1409kg	233	5.8	5.9	168	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R Limited Edition (FK8)	293 F	2021	4/1996	316/6500	295/2500	1333kg	-	241	5.8	-	168	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (FK2)	227 F	2015-17	4/1996	306/6500	295/2500	1378kg	-	226	5.7	5.4	167	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (FN2)	102 F	2007-11	4/1998	198/7800	142/5600	1267kg	-	158	6.6	6.8	146	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R Mugen (FN2)	248 F	2009-11	4/1998	237/8300	157/6250	1233kg	-	195	5.9	-	155	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (EP3)	287 F	2001-05	4/1998	197/7400	145/5900	1204kg	-	166	6.8	6.8	146	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (EK9)	210 F	1997-2000	4/1595	182/8200	118/7500	1040kg	-	178	6.8	-	135	★★★★★
Hyundai i20 N	318 F	£26,565	4/1591	201/5500	203/1750	1190kg	1238kg	172	6.2	-	143	★★★★★
Hyundai i30 N	318 F	£35,765	4/1998	276/6000	289/1950	1419kg	1458kg	198	5.9	-	155	★★★★★
Hyundai Ioniq 5 N	317 D	£65,000	448kW	641	546	2235kg	-	291	3.4	-	161	★★★★★
Hyundai Kona N	291 D	2021-23	4/1998	276/5500	289/2100	1510kg	-	186	5.5	-	149	★★★★★
Kia Ceed GT	267 F	2017-20	4/1591	201/6000	195/1500	1386kg	-	147	7.2	-	143	★★★★★
Kia ProCeed GT	259 D	£28,135	4/1591	201/6000	195/1500	1438kg	-	142	7.2	-	140	★★★★★

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE OR YEARS ON SALE	ENGINE CVL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT (CURED)	WEIGHT (EMPTY)	BHP/TON (CURED)	0-62MPH (CURED)	0-60MPH (EMPTY)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
Lancia Delta HF Integrale Evoluzione II	271 F	1993-94	4/1995	212/5750	232/2500	1340kg	-	161	5.7	-	137	+ One of the finest cars ever built - Demands love, LHD only	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG A35	318 F	£45,915	4/1991	302/5800	295/3000	1480kg	1620kg	207	4.7	-	155	+ Swift point-to-point; more engaging than a Golf R - Some front-drive rivals are more fun	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG A45 S	320 F	£63,285	4/1991	415/6750	369/5000	1560kg	1622kg	270	3.9	-	168	+ A 21st-century reincarnation of late-'90s Imprezas and Evos - It isn't cheap	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG A45	221 F	2015-18	4/1991	376/6000	350/2250	1480kg	-	258	4.2	3.9	155	+ Tremendously fast - But not a true great	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz A45 AMG	194 F	2012-15	4/1991	355/6000	332/2250	1480kg	-	244	4.6	4.3	155	+ Blisteringly quick everywhere - Not as rewarding as some slower rivals	★★★★★
Mini Cooper (F56)	254 D	£22,935	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	£26,490	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)	318 F	£32,755	4/1998	228/5200	236/1450	1245kg	1327kg	186	6.3	-	153	+ Fast, agile, nimble - Chassis lacks sparkle found in previous JCWs	★★★★★
Mini John Cooper Works GP (F56)	280 F	2020-21	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	★★★★★
MG4 XPower	319 D	£36,495	320kW	429	443	1800kg	-	242	3.8	-	124	+ Power-to-price ratio - Does its best work in a straight line	★★★★★
Nissan Juke Nismo RS	208 D	2015-17	4/1618	215/6000	206/3600	1315kg	-	166	7.0	-	137	+ Quirky character and bold styling - Not a match for a pukka hot hatch	★★★★★
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 2)	273 F	1997-98	4/1587	103/6200	97/3500	865kg	889kg	121	8.8	-	121	+ Bargain no-frills thrills - Not as much fizz as original 1.3	★★★★★
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 1)	095 F	1994-96	4/1294	100/7200	80/5400	826kg	-	123	10.6	-	118	+ Frantic, thrashy fun - Needs caning to extract full potential	★★★★★
Peugeot 106 GTi 16v	034 F	1997-2004	4/1587	120/6600	107/5200	950kg	-	128	7.4	-	127	+ Fine handling supermini - Looks its age	★★★★★
Peugeot 208 GTi by Peugeot Sport	254 F	2015-18	4/1598	205/6000	221/3000	1160kg	1195kg	180	6.5	-	143	+ A brilliantly focused small hatch - Obscured dials	★★★★★
Peugeot 208 GTi	184 F	2012-16	4/1598	197/5800	203/1700	1160kg	1210kg	173	6.8	6.8	143	+ Agile chassis works well on tough roads - Could be more involving	★★★★★
Peugeot 205 GTi 1.9	195 F	1988-91	4/1905	130/6000	119/4750	910kg	-	145	7.6	-	124	+ Still scintillating after all these years - Brittle build quality	★★★★★
Peugeot 308 GTi by Peugeot Sport	245 F	2015-18	4/1598	256/6000	251/2100	1205kg	1316kg	224	6.0	6.0	155	+ A great entertainer with a cracker of an engine - Tiny steering wheel	★★★★★
Peugeot 306 GTi 6	020 F	1993-2001	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1214kg	-	140	7.9	7.2	140	+ One of the great GTIs - They don't make them like this any more	★★★★★
Peugeot 306 Rallye	095 F	1998-99	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1163kg	-	146	7.8	6.9	137	+ Essentially a GTi 6 for less dosh - Limited choice of colours	★★★★★
Renault Sport Twingo 133	175 F	2008-13	4/1598	131/6750	118/4400	1050kg	-	127	8.7	-	125	+ Renault Sport experience for pocket money - Optional Cup chassis gives bouncy ride	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 200 Auto	184 F	2013-18	4/1618	197/6000	177/1750	1204kg	1294kg	166	6.7	6.9	143	+ Faster, more refined, easier to drive - We miss the revvy NA engine and manual 'box	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 220 Trophy	229 D	2016-18	4/1618	217/6050	206/2000	1204kg	-	183	6.6	-	146	+ Willing chassis - Awful paddleshift gearbox	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 200 Cup	247 F	2009-13	4/1998	197/7100	159/5400	1204kg	-	166	6.9	6.6	141	+ The hot Clio at its best - They don't make 'em like this anymore	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 197 Cup	115 F	2007-09	4/1998	194/7250	158/5550	1240kg	-	161	6.9	-	134	+ Quick, polished and capable - Not as much sheer fun as 182 Cup	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 182	066 F	2004-05	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1110kg	-	165	7.1	6.6	139	+ Took hot hatches to a new level - Flawed driving position	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 182 Cup	187 F	2004-05	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	-	168	6.9	-	139	+ Full of beans, fantastic value - Sunday-market upholstery	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane 265 Cup	262 F	2005-06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	-	168	6.9	6.6	140	+ The most fun you can have on three (sometimes two) wheels - Only 500 were built	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 172 (Phase 2)	034 F	2001-03	4/1998	170/6250	147/5400	1110kg	-	156	7.2	7.1	138	+ Poised, predictable, fast - Lacks aggressive edge	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 172 Cup	048 F	2002-03	4/1998	170/6250	147/5400	1011kg	-	171	6.9	6.5	138	+ Bargain old-school hot hatch - Nervous in the wet, no ABS	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 172 (Phase 1)	146 F	2000-01	4/1998	170/6250	147/5400	1035kg	-	167	7.2	6.6	138	+ Brilliantly accomplished - Imperfect driving position	★★★★★
Renault Clio Williams	233 F	1993-96	4/1988	148/6100	126/4500	981kg	-	153	7.8	7.6	134	+ One of the best hot hatches ever - Can be fragile	★★★★★
Renault 5 GT Turbo	255 F	1987-91	4/1397	118/5750	122/3000	855kg	-	140	7.3	-	120	+ Clio Williams' granddaddy - Few unmodified ones left	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio V6 255	294 F	2003-05	6/2946	251/7150	221/4650	1400kg	-	182	5.8	-	153	+ Supercar drama without the original's edgy handling - Uninspired interior	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio V6	029 F	1999-2002	6/2946	227/6000	221/3750	1410kg	-	164	6.6	5.8	145	+ Pocket supercar - Mid-engined handling can be tricky	★★★★★
Renault Mégane RS (280)	267 F	2018-20	4/1798	276/6000	288/2400	1407kg	1464kg	199	5.8	6.3	158	+ Outrageous grip and agility - Cup chassis option doesn't do its composure any favours	★★★★★
Renault Mégane RS 300 / 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 FI Team R26	195 F	2007-09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1345kg	-	171	6.5	6.2	147	+ The car the R26.R is based on - FI Team stickers in dubious taste	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane R26.R	315 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	-	146	+ Punchy engine, unflappable DSG - Lacks engagement, DSG only	★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra 290	267 F	2016-20	4/1984	286/5400	280/1950	1356kg	-	214	6.0	-	155	+ Agile, transparent and easily exploited - Can feel rather plain	★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra R	244 D	2018	4/1984	306/5800	280/1800	1378kg	-	226	5.8	-	155	+ Sharper handling and better body control - High price and limited availability	★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra	105 F	2007-11	4/1984	237/5700	221/2200	1375kg	-	175	6.4	-	153	+ Great engine, composure - Doesn't have the adjustability of the old Cupra R	★★★★★
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk4)	281 D	£34,875	4/1984	242/5000	273/1600	1445kg	-	170	6.7	-	155	+ A capable Q-car for the masses - Engine lacks character	★★★★★
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk3)	187 D	2013-17	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1345kg	-	164	6.8	-	154	+ Quick, agile, roomier than a Golf - Ride is harsh for what could be a family car	★★★★★
Skoda Octavia vRS 245 (Mk3)	250 F	2017-20	4/1984	242/5000	258/1600	1370kg	-	179	6.6	-	155	+ A credible, entertaining performer - You won't get out of bed at 4am to drive it	★★★★★
Suzuki Swift Sport (Mk3)	318 F	£24,270	4/1373	127/5000	173/2000	1025kg	1019kg	126	9.1	-	130	+ Light, lively, honest and engaging - Warm rather than hot, and a bit basic inside	★★★★★
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	318 F	2020-22	3/1618	257/6500	265/3000	1280kg	1280kg	204	5.5	-	143	+ 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 want the Performance Pack upgrade	★★★★★
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	318 F	£41,450	4/1598	222	265	1703kg	1657kg	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	-	152	+ 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	155	+ Fast and furious - Lacks a little composure and precision	★★★★★
Volkswagen Up GTI	273 F	2018-23	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	£29,945	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)	318 F	£39,575	4/1984	242/5300	273/1600	1458kg	1460kg	169	6.2	-	155	+ Makes light work of most roads; easy to live with - The competition is stiffer than ever	★★★★★
Volkswagen Golf GTI Clubsport (Mk8)	310 F	£42,030	4/1984	296/5000	295/2000	1461kg	-	206	5.6	-	155	+ Super-effective - But not as exciting as you might hope	★★★★★
Volkswagen Golf R (Mk8)	318 F	£44,310	4/1984	316/5600	310/2100	1553kg	1506kg	207	4.7	-	155	+ 316bhp, four-wheel drive, understated flair - Not a particularly charismatic steer	★★★★★
Volkswagen Golf R '20 Years' (Mk8)	307 F	£49,875	4/1984										

MAKE & MODEL

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 ON ROAD IN UK	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT (CLAMP)	WEIGHT (1800)	BHP/TON (1800)	0-62MPH (CLAMP)	0-60MPH (1800)	MAX MPH
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

+ 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. We'll take ours with four-wheel drive. Want something a size larger, or just want to bag a four-seater with a V8 while you still can? The **Audi RS6 Avant** and **BMW M5 Competition** provide a pair 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	321 F	£78,195	6/2891	513/6500	442/2500	1660kg	-	314	3.9	-	191	+ If Ferrari built a saloon (really) - Lacks the final polish of German rivals	★★★★★
Alfa Romeo Giulia GTAm	316 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	321 D	£87,195	6/2891	513/6500	442/2500	1850kg	-	282	3.8	-	177	+ A genuinely fun SUV to drive - Still less fun than a Giulia	★★★★★
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	£175,500	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	319 F	£198,000	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 S3 Saloon	322 D	£47,490	4/1984	328/5600	310/2100	1535kg	-	217	4.7	-	155	+ Finally some sparkle for the S3's chassis - Engine still lacks personality	★★★★★
Audi RS3 Saloon	307 F	£57,675	5/2480	394/5600	369/2250	1575kg	1597kg	254	3.8	-	155	+ Improved chassis makes the RS3 a contender at last - Engine and gearbox hold it back	★★★★★
Audi RS3 Saloon	243 F	2017-21	5/2480	394/5850	354/1700	1515kg	-	264	4.1	3.6	155	+ Mini RS4 looks; stonking pace - Not the most involving driving experience	★★★★★
Audi S4 Avant (B9, diesel)	266 D	2019-23	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	£71,545	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)	321 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	+ 414bhp at 7800rpm! And there's an estate version too - Busy under braking	★★★★★
Audi RS4 (B5)	192 F	2000-02	6/2671	375/6100	325/2500	1620kg	-	236	4.9	4.8	170	+ Effortless pace - Not the last word in agility; bends wheel rims	★★★★★
Audi RS2	214 F	1994-95	5/2226	315/6500	302/3000	1595kg	-	201	4.8	4.8	162	+ Storming performance (thanks to Porsche) - Try finding one	★★★★★
Audi S5 Sportback	233 D	2017-19	6/2995	349/5400	369/1370	1660kg	-	214	4.7	-	155	+ More capable than you think; strong V6 engine - Gearbox frustrating in auto mode	★★★★★
Audi RS5 Sportback	264 D	£75,970	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	£73,270	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	£114,890	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	£119,950	495kW	637	612	2347kg	-	276	3.3	-	155	+ A fine GT - Range not up to touring	★★★★★
Bentley Flying Spur V8	283 D	£175,100	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	£180,400	6/2894	536	553	2305kg	-	217	4.3	-	177	+ Silent refinement at its best - V6 not as refined as you'd expect	★★★★★
Bentley Flying Spur (W12)	272 D	2020-21	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 a W12 - Car feels its weight; engine sounds dull	★★★★★
Bentley Bentayga S	301 D	£197,300	8/3996	542/6000	568/2000	2415kg	-	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	2019-23	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	£60,700	6/2998	369/5500	369/1900	1795kg	-	209	4.6	-	155	+ As fast as your family wagon needs to go - You still want an M3 Touring, don't you?	★★★★★
BMW i4 M50	296 D	£72,140	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	£82,450	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	£85,325	6/2993	503/6250	479/2750	1780kg	-	287	3.5	-	155	+ Four-wheel drive doesn't spoil the fun - There's a slight weight penalty	★★★★★
BMW M3 Competition Touring xDrive (G81)	314 F	£87,825	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)	322 F	£115,900	6/2993	542/6250	479/2750	1765kg	1780kg	312	3.4	-	188	+ Pure sports car approach to chassis upgrades - Not quite as special as the M5 CS	★★★★★
BMW M3 (F80)	266 F	2014-20	6/2979	425/5500	406/1850	1560kg	-	277	4.3	4.1	155	+ Looks, performance, practicality - Body control on rough roads; engine lacks character	★★★★★
BMW M3 Competition Package (F80)	237 F	2016-19	6/2979	444/7000	406/1850	1560kg	-	289	4.2	-	155	+ The car the F80 M3 should have been from the start - Less refined at low speeds	★★★★★
BMW M3 CS (F80)	250 D	2018-19	6/2979	454/6250	442/4000	1585kg	-	291	3.9	-	174	+ Improved chassis and mid-range urge - Cost over £20k more than an M3 Comp Pack	★★★★★
BMW M3 (F90)	123 F	2008-11	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1605kg	-	262	4.9	4.9	165	+ Every bit as good as the E92 M3 coupe - No carbon roof	★★★★★
BMW i5 M60 xDrive	318 D	£97,745	442kW	593	605	2305kg	-	261	3.8	-	142	+ Immense ability - Doesn't feel special or involving	★★★★★
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	£111,425	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	£116,225	420kW	536	546	2640kg	-	206	6.1	-	149	+ A great EV limo - An S-class is better	★★★★★
BMW XM	309 D	£150,270	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	+ A serious bit of off-roading kit; price includes a season of rallies - Just 139bhp per ton	★★★★★
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	£82,200	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	£144,800	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	★★★★★
Ford Ranger Raptor V6	309 D	£55,560	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	319 F	£313,120	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	★★★★★
Honda Accord Type R	012 F	1998-2003	4/2157	209/7200	158/6700	1306kg	-	163	7.2	6.1	142	+ One of the finest front-drivers of all time - There aren't many good ones left	★★★★★
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	316 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 OR YEAR ON SALE	ENGINE CVL / CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT (CLIMED)	WEIGHT (TESTED)	BHP/TON (CLIMED)	0-62MPH (CLIMED)	0-60MPH (TESTED)	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	£87,090	8/5000	542/6000	501/2500	1995kg	-	276	4.3	-	176	+ A great candidate for SVO's attentions - It's still an SUV	★★★★☆
Jaguar F-Pace HSE	251 D	£77,495	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	£72,625	6/2996	394/5500	406/2000	2388kg	-	168	6.4	-	129	+ A great off-roader - If off-roading is your thing	★★★★☆
Land Rover Defender 130 V8 (P500)	319 D	£117,475	8/5000	493/6000	450/2500	2670kg	-	188	5.7	-	149	+ Full of personality; can still off-road - Enormous weight, emissions and price	★★★★☆
Lamborghini Urus	249 F	2018-23	8/3996	641/6000	627/2250	2200kg	-	296	3.6	-	190	+ A freakish manipulator of physics - But also rather one-dimensional	★★★★☆
Lamborghini Urus S	309 D	£188,000	8/3996	657/6000	627/2300	2197kg	-	305	3.5	-	190	+ Less of a blunt instrument than the original Urus - It's still a 2.2-ton SUV	★★★★☆
Lamborghini Urus Performante	309 D	£209,000	8/3996	657/6000	627/2250	2150kg	-	310	3.3	-	190	+ Dynamically superb on track - Unexpectedly hard work on the road	★★★★☆
Lexus IS F	151 F	2007-12	8/4969	417/6600	372/2200	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	419/2400	1658kg	-	231	5.4	4.8	177	+ The Millennium Falcon of saloon cars - Every drive is a work-out	★★★★☆
Lucid Air Dream Edition P	298 D	£70,500	1000kW	1111	1025	2360kg	-	478	2.5	-	168	+ An EV that engages the driver - Sacrifices ultimate handling for a longer range	★★★★☆
Maserati Ghibli Trofeo	290 D	2021-23	8/3799	572/6750	538/2250	1969kg	2076kg	295	4.3	-	203	+ Subtle performance elegantly delivered - They were quite expensive	★★★★☆
Maserati Grecale Trofeo	310 D	£102,480	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	2021-23	8/3799	572/6750	538/2250	2000kg	-	291	4.5	-	203	+ An alluring alternative to the German defaults - Good luck finding one	★★★★☆
Maserati Quattroporte S	137 F	2008-12	8/4691	425/7000	361/4750	1990kg	-	216	5.4	5.1	174	+ A QP with the bhp it deserves - Grille is a bit Hannibal Lecter	★★★★☆
Maserati Quattroporte Sport GTS	141 F	2008-12	8/4691	433/7000	361/4750	1990kg	-	221	5.1	-	177	+ The most stylish of supersaloons - Slightly wooden brakes, unforgiving ride	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG A35 Saloon	271 F	£46,145	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 35 Coupé	318 D	£49,560	4/1991	302/6100	295/2500	1605kg	-	191	4.9	-	155	+ Impressive all-weather pace, classy looks - Forgettable overall driving experience	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG CLA 45 S Coupé	273 D	£68,175	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	£67,255	4/1991	402/6750	369/5000	1690kg	-	242	4.6	-	155	+ Hugely accessible performance - Sterile steering, some transmission jerkiness	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG C63 S E Performance Estate	306 D	£99,715	4/1991	671/6750	638/5250	2115kg	-	322	3.4	-	168	+ Hybrid tech works brilliantly... - ...but brings excess weight	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG C63 S Estate (S205)	282 F	2015-21	8/3982	503/5500	516/2000	1670kg	-	306	4.1	-	180	+ One of the finest all-round compact performance cars - Baffling array of driver settings	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG (W204)	288 F	2008-14	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1655kg	-	277	4.5	4.4	155	+ Monstrous pace and extremely engaging - Same-era M3 is just a little better...	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz C55 AMG (W203)	088 F	2004-08	8/5439	367/5200	360/4000	1635kg	-	228	5.2	-	155	+ Furiously fast, commendably discreet - Overshadowed by M3 and RS4	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz 190E 2.5-16	185 F	1989-92	4/2498	204/6750	177/5500	1300kg	-	159	7.5	-	146	+ M-B's M3 alternative - Not as nimble as the Beemer	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG C63 (W213)	242 D	2018-20	8/3982	563/5750	553/2250	1875kg	-	305	3.5	-	155	+ More rounded than the E63 S - Could be a little too discreet for some tastes	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG E63 S (W213)	286 F	2017-23	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	2017-23	8/3982	604/5750	627/2500	1995kg	-	308	3.5	-	180	+ As above - It's even heavier than the saloon, and five metres long	★★★★☆
Mercedes-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	+ MS-humbling grunt, cossetting ride - Speed limits	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG GT63 S 4-Door Coupé	269 F	£156,415	8/3982	630/5500	664/2500	2045kg	-	313	3.2	-	196	+ Agile and immensely quick - Lacks the coupe GT's drama	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG GT63 S E Performance	308 D	£179,325	8/3982	831	1084	2305kg	-	366	2.9	-	196	+ Can feel absolutely indomitable - Benefits of more power defeated by added weight	★★★★☆
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	£161,860	484kW	649	700	2605kg	-	253	3.8	-	155	+ Refinement - The non-EV S-class	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG GLC 63 S E Performance	316 D	£108,995	4/1991	671	752	2235kg	-	305	3.5	-	170	+ Hilarious performance and power figures - Performance isn't everything	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG GLE 63 S Coupé	213 D	£144,850	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	£174,665	8/3982	577/6000	627/2500	2485kg	-	236	4.5	-	137	+ Vastly improved chassis, fabulous engine - Dynamic ability still limited	★★★★☆
Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution 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 Lancer Evolution 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 Lancer Evolution 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 Lancer Evolution 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 of loss	★★★★☆
Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution 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 Lancer Evolution 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 Lancer Evolution 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 Lancer Evolution VI Tommi Mäkinen	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	£53,975	4/1598	355	383	1875kg	-	192	5.2	-	155	+ A hybrid worth considering - Especially if someone else is paying	★★★★☆
Polestar 2	280 D	£44,950	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 Turbo E-Hybrid (972)	321 D	£141,400	8/3996	671	686	2360kg	-	289	3.2	-	196	+ Brutally fast - It weighs nearly 2.4 tons!	★★★★☆
Porsche Panamera GTS (971)	279 D	2020-22	8/3996	473/6500	457/1800	2040kg	-	236	3.9	-	181	+ The most engaging Panamera - Still no 911	★★★★☆
Porsche Taycan (Performance Battery Plus)	283 D	£90,954	350kW	375	-	2130kg	-	179	5.4	-	143	+ Half the price of a Taycan Turbo S - Less is less	★★★★☆
Porsche Taycan Turbo Cross Turismo	287 D	£135,200	460kW	616	-	2320kg	-	270	3.3	-	155	+ A convincing and crushingly capable crossover - Needs big roads	★★★★☆
Porsche Taycan Turbo S	267 D	£161,400	460kW	616	-	2295kg	-	273	2.8	-	161	+ Straight-line oomph will leave you in awe - Inadequate EV infrastructure	★★★★☆
Porsche Taycan Turbo GT	322 D	£186,300	580kW	778	-	2220kg	-	356	2.2	-	190	+ Breathtaking performance - Who asked for a 2.2-ton track-ready electric saloon?	★★★★☆
Porsche Macan T	307 D	£59,900	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	£61,500	6/2997	349/5400	354/1360	1865kg	-	190	5.3	-	157	+ Great for an SUV - Every positive still needs to be suffixed with 'for an SUV'	★★★★☆
Porsche Macan Turbo Electric	322 D	£95,000	430kW	576	-	2405kg	-	243	3.3	-	162	+ Rounded and capable - Turbo's extra ability over the Macan 4 EV doesn't come cheap	★★★★☆
Porsche Cayenne S (Mk3)	253 D	£84,400	6/2894	434/5700	406/1800	2020kg	-	218	5.2	-	164	+ Impressive surface-coated brake tech - We'd rather have it on a sports car	★★★★☆
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (Mk3)	243 D	2018-22	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 (Mk3)	263 D	2019-21	8/3996	542/5750	568/2000	2200kg	-	250	3.9	-	177	+ As good to drive as the regular Cayenne - Swooper roof adds to the price	★★★★☆
Porsche Cayenne Turbo GT (Mk3)	290 D	2021-23	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	180kg	-	379	2.8	-	150	+ The ultimate Impreza - Price reflects this	★★★★☆
Range Rover Sport P510e	309 D	2022-23	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	2023-24	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 Sport SV	320 D	£171,460	8/4395	626/6000	553/1800	2485kg	-	256	3.8	-	155	+ Dynamic quality has sports car level of detail - The answer to a question no one asked	★★★★☆
Range Rover Autobiography P530	298 D	£142,400	8/4395	523/5500	551/1800	2585kg	-	206	4.6	-	155	+ Quieter and more capable - Heavier and more expensive	★★★★☆
Rolls-Royce Ghost	280 D	£270,600	12/6749	563/5000	627/1600	2490kg	-	230	4.8	-	155	+ Unrivalled luxury and refinement - Still better to be driven in than to drive	★★★★☆
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 - Thrifty	★★★★☆
Subaru Impreza RB5 WR Sport	319 F	1999	4/1994	237/6000	258/3500								

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 **Ferrari Roma Spider** (left) is the car the California/Portofino always wanted to be, the **Aston Martin Vantage Roadster** bests the 911 Cabriolet for character, the **Porsche 718 Boxster GTS 4.0** is essentially a cut-price 718 Spyder, and the **Caterham Seven** remains an exemplar of sports car purity across the range.

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE BY YEAR ON SALE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT (CLAIMED)	WEIGHT (TESTED)	BHP/TON (CLAIMED)	0-62MPH (CLAIMED)	0-60MPH (TESTED)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
Abarth 124 Spider	256 F	2016-19	4/1368	168/5500	184/2500	1060kg	-	161	6.8	-	143	+ A little car with a big soul - Vague and lifeless front end	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo 8C Spider	161 F	2009-11	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1675kg	-	273	4.4	-	181	+ Beauty meets beast. They hit it off - Boot is useless for touring	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 4	273 F	£47,490	4/1996	320/6500	310/3000	595kg	-	546	2.8	-	162	+ Sensory overload - Turbo engine lacks the old supercharged unit's frantic soundtrack	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 4R	322 F	£77,940	4/1996	400/6300	370/4500	665kg	725kg	611	2.7	-	170	+ None more intense - Cost of the numerous options can soon add up	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3.24S	248 F	2018-12	4/1998	245/8600	177/7200	520kg	-	479	3.1	-	145	+ Even better than its predecessors - Can still be a bit draughty	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3.5 Supercharged	180 D	2013-18	4/1998	310/8400	169/7200	550kg	608kg	573	2.7	-	155	+ As mad as ever - Rain	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3.5R	255 F	2014-18	4/1998	350/8400	243/6100	550kg	-	647	2.6	-	155	+ Remarkable balance, poise and pace - Pricey	★★★★★
Ariel Nomad	294 F	£33,000	4/2354	235/7200	221/4300	670kg*	-	365	3.4	-	134	+ Off-road capabilities make for a super plaything - No Bluetooth	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vantage Roadster	279 D	2020-24	8/3982	503/6000	505/2000	1745kg	-	293	3.8	-	190	+ Builds on the already excellent coupe's attributes - Interior design lags behind exterior	★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage Roadster (4.7)	130 F	2009-16	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1710kg	-	250	4.8	-	180	+ Sportiest, coolest drop-top Aston in years - Feels dated compared with contemporaries	★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage S Roadster	161 F	2011-17	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1690kg	-	258	4.8	-	189	+ Sounds amazing, looks even better - Still not the best drop-top in its class	★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage Roadster	175 F	2012-14	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1760kg	-	294	4.5	-	190	+ As good as the coupe, with amplified V12 rumble - Just a smidgen shakier	★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage S Roadster	212 F	2014-17	12/5935	565/6750	457/5750	1745kg	-	329	4.1	-	201	+ A brilliant two-seat roadster... - let down by a frustrating automated manual gearbox	★★★★★
Aston Martin DB12 Volante	321 D	£199,500	8/3982	671/6000	590/2750	1823kg	-	374	3.7	-	202	+ Achingly elegant - Lacks polish in some departments	★★★★★
Aston Martin DB11 Volante	258 D	2018-23	8/3982	503/6000	498/2000	1870kg	-	273	4.1	-	187	+ Impressively wide range of dynamic personalities - Cabin could be better at this price	★★★★★
Audi TT RS Roadster (Mk3)	207 D	2015-24	4/1984	302/5400	295/2000	1495kg	-	205	4.8	-	155	+ Highly capable - Most will want more than 'capable'	★★★★★
Audi TT RS Roadster (Mk3)	250 D	2016-24	5/2480	394/5850	354/7700	1530kg	-	262	3.9	-	155	+ Terrific engine... - is the best thing about it	★★★★★
BAC Mono 2.5	229 F	£167,940	4/2488	305/8000	227/5500	580kg*	645kg	534	2.8	-	170	+ 3.5sec faster around Anglesey Circuit than a McLaren P1 - A bit less practical than a P1	★★★★★
BAC Mono R	302 D	£218,000	4/2488	342/8800	243	555kg*	-	626	2.5	-	170	+ Astonishing pace and excellent drivability - Only 40 are being made	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GTC Speed	291 D	£230,500	12/5950	650/5000	664/1500	2436kg	-	271	3.7	-	208	+ Very nearly as calm and controlled as the coupe - Heavy W12 impossible to disguise	★★★★★
Bentley Mulliner Bacalar	286 F	£1.5m	12/5950	650/5000	664/1500	2384kg	-	277	<3.8	-	200+	+ A luxury cruiser that's a bit of a rebel roadster - They're only making 12, at £1.5m each	★★★★★
BMW Z4 M40i	256 D	£57,350	6/2998	335/5000	369/1600	1535kg	-	222	4.6	-	155	+ Inherent agility and ability - Undemanding and unengaging	★★★★★
BMW Z8	026 F	2000-03	8/4941	400/6600	369/3800	1585kg	-	256	4.7	4.8	155	+ M5-powered super-sportster - M5's more fun to drive	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 170R	291 F	£33,235	3/660	84/6500	86/4000	540kg*	-	194	6.9	-	105	+ The lightest production Caterham yet - Could do with another 10bhp	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 360	209 F	£41,485	4/1999	180/7300	143/6100	560kg*	-	327	4.8	-	130	+ Extra power is welcome - You'll need the six-speed gearbox to make the most of it	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 420S	223 F	£44,985	4/1999	210/7600	150/6300	560kg*	-	381	3.8	4.0	136	+ It's the one we built for ourselves - Trickier on the limit than lesser-powered Sevens	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 420 Cup	299 F	£56,640	4/1999	210/7600	150/6300	560kg*	578kg	369	3.6	-	136	+ Intense and rewarding - They'll soon be electric	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 620S	220 D	£58,640	4/1999	310/7700	219/7350	610kg*	-	516	3.4	-	155	+ Ludicrous, near-620R pace, with added habitability - Well, 'habitable' for a Seven...	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 620R	255 F	£66,640	4/1999	310/7700	219/7350	572kg*	580kg	551	2.8	-	155	+ Banzi on track, yet still relevant on the road - £50k for a Seven?	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 160	239 F	2013-17	3/660	80/7000	79/3400	490kg*	-	166	6.9	-	100	+ The fabulous Seven formula at its most basic - Gets pricey with options	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Roadsport 125	105 F	2007-14	4/1596	125/6100	120/5350	539kg*	-	235	5.9	-	112	+ Great debut for Ford-engined model - Bigger drivers need SV model	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Supersport	165 F	2011-14	4/1596	140/6900	120/5790	520kg*	-	273	4.9	-	120	+ One of the best Caterhams is also one of the cheapest of its era - It's quite minimalist	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Supersport R	180 D	2013-14	4/1999	180/7300	143/6100	535kg*	-	342	4.8	-	130	+ One of the best road-and-track Sevens - Impractical, noisy, uncomfortable	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Superlight R300	150 F	2009-12	4/1999	175/7000	139/6000	515kg*	-	345	4.5	-	140	+ Possibly all the Caterham you need - They're not cheap	★★★★★
Caterham Seven CSR 260	094 F	2006-17	4/2261	256/7500	200/6200	565kg*	598kg	460	3.1	3.8	155	+ Brilliant for high days, holidays and trackdays - Wet Wednesdays	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Superlight R500	123 F	2008-14	4/1999	263/8500	177/7200	506kg*	-	528	2.9	-	150	+ Better power-to-weight ratio than a Veyron - Until you add the driver	★★★★★
Caterham Seven R500	200 F	1999-2006	4/1796	230/8600	155/7200	460kg*	-	510	3.4	3.6	146	+ The K-series Seven at its very best - No cup holders	★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette Stingray Convertible (C8)	292 D	£98,785	8/6162	475/6450	452/4500	1692kg	-	285	3.5	-	184	+ Strong V8 engine, fine value - Not as quick as we were hoping	★★★★★
Dallara Stradale	267 F	£162,000	4/2300	394/6200	369/3000	855kg*	-	468	3.3	-	174	+ Starting on-road performance - Can leave you feeling detached on track	★★★★★
Elemental Rpl (2.3)	255 F	£139,800	4/2261	320	354	620kg*	-	557	2.6	-	165	+ Captivating, explosive, exploitable - Price will test your level of commitment	★★★★★
Ferrari Roma Spider	315 D	£210,313	8/3855	611/5750	560/3000	1556kg*	-	399	3.4	-	199	+ Feels as good as the coupe Roma - Careful which OE tyre you choose	★★★★★
Honda S2000	243 F	1999-2009	4/1997	237/8300	153/7500	1260kg	-	191	6.2	-	150	+ An alternative and rev-happy roadster - A Boxster's better	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type Convertible P450 RWD	271 D	£84,245	8/5000	444/6000	428/2500	1660kg	-	272	4.6	-	177	+ Strong and flexible supercharged V8 - Steering and chassis feel mismatched	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type Project 7	212 F	2015	8/5000	567/6500	501/2500	1585kg	-	363	3.9	-	186	+ Noise, performance, adjustability - Expensive, and not the GT3 rival we would have liked	★★★★★
KTM X-Bow GT	183 D	2013-22	4/1984	281/6400	310/3200	875kg	-	326	4.1	-	144	+ Extraordinary ability, now in a more road-friendly package - Price	★★★★★
KTM X-Bow R	165 F	2010-22	4/1984	296/6300	295/3300	816kg	-	369	3.9	-	144	+ Sharper handling, more power - Pity it's not even lighter, and cheaper	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Club Racer (S3)	183 F	2011-15	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	852kg	-	160	6.5	-	127	+ Even lighter, even more focused than a standard 1.6 Elise - Are you prepared to go this basic?	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Sport 220 (S3)	244 F	2017-20	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	904kg	-	244	4.6	-	145	+ Perfect power-to-weight ratio - A bit short on creature comforts	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Sprint 220 (S3)	254 F	2018-19	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	878kg	-	251	4.5	-	145	+ Makes the most of its lightness - Heavyweight price	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Sport 240 Final Edition (S3)	285 F	2021	4/1798	237/7200	181/3000	922kg	-	261	4.1	-	147	+ The Elise's swansong - There will never be another Lotus like it	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Cup 250 (S3)	279 F	2016-21	4/1798	245/7200	184/3500	931kg	-	267	3.9	-	154	+ As effective, enjoyable and essential as ever - Prioritises grip over adjustability	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Cup 260 (S3)	243 F	2018-19	4/1798	250/7200	195/5500	902kg	-	282	4.2	-	151	+ Quickest Elise yet - Just 30 were built	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Sport 135 (S2)	040 D	2003	4/1796	135/6200	129/4850	726kg	-	189	5.4	-	129	+ One of our fave S2 Elises - Brakes need more bite and pedal feel	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S (S2)	104 F	2006-10	4/1794	134/6200	127/4200	860kg	-	158	6.1	6.3	127	+ Brilliant entry-level Elise - Precious little	★★★★★
Lotus Elise 111S (S2)	049 F	2002-04	4/1796	156/7000	129/4650	860kg	-	197	5.1	-	131	+ A genuinely useable Elise - As above	★★★★★
Lotus Elise SC (S2)	131 F	2008-11	4/1794	218/8000	156/5000	870kg	-	254	4.6	4.5	145	+ All the usual Elise magic - Supercharged engine lacks sparkle	★★★★★
Lotus Elise (S1)	235 F	1996-2001	4/1796	118/5500	122/3000	725kg	-	165	5.9	6.1	126	+ A modern classic - A tad impractical?	★★★★★
Lotus 3-Eleven	220 F	2016-17	6/3456	410/7000	302/3000	925kg*	-	450	3.4	-	174	+ A fantastically exciting Lotus - If not exactly a groundbreaking one	★★★★★
Lotus 3-Eleven 430	248 F	2017-19	6/3456	430/7000	325/4500	920kg*	-	475	3.2	-	180	+ A fitting send-off for a brilliant Lotus - Just 20 were made	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven	126 F	2007-11	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	720kg	-	267	4.5	-	140	+ Not far off the supercharged 2-Eleven's pace - You want the supercharged one, don't you?	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven Supercharged	123 F	2007-11	4/1796	252/8000	179/7000	745kg	-	344	4.0	-	150	+ Impressive on road and track - Not hardcore enough for some	★★★★★
Lotus 340R	126 F	2000	4/1796	190/7800	146/5000	701kg	-	275	4.5	4.5	126	+ Hardcore road-racer... - ...that looks like a dune buggy from Mars	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.5i (Mk4/ND)	230 F	£28,015	4/1496	129/7000	111/4800	975kg	-	134	8.3	-	127	+ Lightest MX-5 since the Mk1 - Lacks intensity	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 2.0 (Mk4/ND, 184PS)	299 F	£32,435	4/1998	181/7000	151/4000	1052kg	1073kg	175	6.5	-	136	+ At last, a more powerful factory MX-5 - It's still no fireball	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 RF 2.0 (Mk4/ND, 184PS)	256 F	£34,335	4/1998	181/7000	151/4000	1073kg	-	171	6.8	-	137	+ As above, but with a retracting hard-top - Which adds weight	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 2.0 (Mk4/ND)	228 F	2015-18	4/1998	158/6000	147/4600	1000kg	-	161	7.3	-	133	+ Brilliant basic recipe - The desire for stiffer suspension and more power	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 2.0i (Mk3.5/NC)	212 F	2009-15	4/1999	158/7000	139/5000	1098kg	-	146	7.6	-	138	+ Handles brilliantly again; folding hard-top also available - Less-than-macho image	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk3/NC)	091 F	2005-09	4/1798	124/6500	123/4500	1080kg	-	108	9.3	-	122	+ Gearchange, interior - Lost some of the charm of old MX-5s; dubious handling	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk2/NB)	017 F	1998-2005	4/1839	146/7000	124/5000	1065kg	-	140	8.5	-	123	+ Affordable ragtops don't get much better - Cheap cabin	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.6 (Mk1/NA)	268 F	1989-97	4/1597	115/6500	100/3500	971kg	-	120	8.8	-	114	+ The original and still (pretty much) the best - Less than rigid	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG SL55	305 F	£147,855	8/3982	469/5500	516/2250	1875kg	1940kg	254	3.9	-	183	+ Impressive damping and 4WD - Is neither chilled-out cruiser or AMG GT replacement	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG SL63	314 D	£172,105	8/3982	577/5550	5								

MAKE & MODEL

Morgan Aero GT	255 F	2018	8/4799	367/6300	370/3400	1180kg*	-	316	4.5	-	170	+ The ultimate Aero - The last with the naturally aspirated BMW V8	★★★★☆
Porsche 718 Boxster	224 D	£53,800	4/1988	296/6500	280/1950	1335kg	-	225	5.1	-	170	+ Chassis as good as ever - Four-cylinder's tuneless din would be hard to live with	★★★★☆
Porsche 718 Boxster S	222 F	£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	320 F	£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 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)	320 F	2005-12	6/3436	306/6400	266/5500	1355kg	-	229	5.3	-	170	+ Second-gen Boxster's as brilliant as ever - It's a typically Porsche redesign	★★★★☆
Porsche Boxster Spyder (987)	277 F	2010-12	6/3436	316/7200	273/4750	1275kg	-	252	4.9	-	166	+ Lighter, more driver-centric Boxster - Collapsed-broly roof not the most practical	★★★★☆
Porsche Boxster S (986)	070 F	1999-2004	6/3179	256/6200	229/4600	1320kg	-	200	5.7	-	164	+ Added power over the non-S Boxster is seductive - Very little	★★★★☆
Porsche 911 Carrera 4S Cabriolet (992)	262 D	£126,000	6/2981	444/6500	391/2300	1600kg	-	282	4.4	-	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	274 F	£108,000	4/2261	360/6000	360/3500	765kg*	-	478	3.0	-	165	+ Unfiltered and utterly addictive - It's more at home on the track than the road	★★★★☆
Renault Sport Spider	231 F	1996-99	4/1998	148/6000	136/4500	930kg	-	157	6.5	-	131	+ Rarity; unassisted steering - Heavier than you'd hope; disappointing engine	★★★★☆
Toyota MR2 Roadster (Mk3)	320 F	1999-2007	4/1794	138/6400	125/4400	975kg	-	144	8.0	7.2	131	+ Tight lines, taut dynamics - Minimal luggage space	★★★★☆
TVR Tamora	070 F	2001-07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1060kg	-	335	4.2	-	175	+ Well-sorted soft-top TVR - Awkward styling	★★★★☆
TVR Chimaera 5.0	258 F	1993-2003	8/4997	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	-	307	4.4	-	167	+ Gorgeous noise, tarmac-ripping grunt - 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

Alpine A110. Compact, lightweight and agile, the A110 is very much our kind of sports car. The humble 249bhp entry-level version will put a five-star smile on your face, but if you have the means the nearly twice-as-expensive A110 R – eCoty runner-up in 2023 – is a truly phenomenal road and track car.



BEST OF THE REST

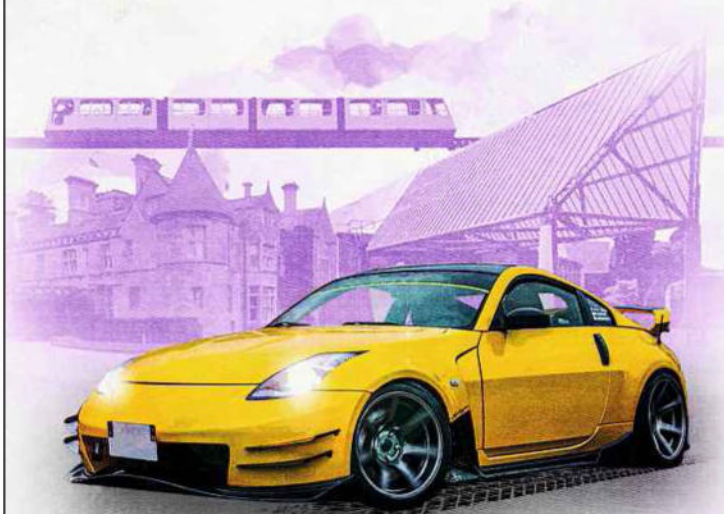
The new **Aston Martin Vantage** (left) feels like a machine that's been lavished with attention to detail, the **Porsche 911 Carrera GTS** is the car we've always wanted the 992-generation Carrera to be, while the **BMW M4 Competition xDrive** offers a responsive and rewarding four-wheel-drive driving experience.

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	322 F	£96,990	4/1798	296/6300	251/2400	1082kg	1094kg	278	3.9	-	177	+ Ultimate A110 works brilliantly on the road - Falls short on track with no power hike	★★★★☆
Aston Martin Vantage	322 F	£155,000	8/3998	656/6000	590/2000	1670kg	-	399	3.5	-	202	+ Fun, desirable and well resolved - Tough low-speed ride; sub-par infotainment	★★★★☆
Aston Martin Vantage	280 F	2018-24	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 V12 Vantage	298 F	2022-23	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	317 F	£185,000	8/3982	671/6000	590/2750	1788kg	-	381	3.6	-	202	+ Has the 'super' part of its 'super tourer' claim covered - 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 TT S (Mk3)	261 D	2015-24	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	2016-24	5/2480	394/5850	354/1700	1450kg	1487kg	276	3.7	3.5	155	+ Soundtrack; tremendous point-to-point pace - A bit one-dimensional in the long run	★★★★☆
Audi TT S (Mk2)	193 F	2008-14	4/1984	268/6000	258/2500	1395kg	-	195	5.4	-	155	+ A usefully quicker TT, with a great drivetrain - Still steers like a computer game	★★★★☆
Audi TT RS (Mk2)	158 F	2009-14	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1450kg	-	235	4.7	4.4	155	+ Sublime five-cylinder turbo engine - Rest of package can't quite match it	★★★★☆
Audi S5	252 F	2017-19	6/2995	349/5400	369/1370	1615kg	-	220	4.7	-	155	+ Chassis rewards commitment... - But doesn't offer a challenge. Plain engine, too	★★★★☆
Audi RS5 (B9)	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	★★★★☆
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)	320 F	£65,885	6/2993	454/6250	400/2650	1700kg	-	271	4.3	-	155	+ Still has that hot-rod feel - Also feels heavy and remote alongside some rivals	★★★★☆
BMW M2 (F87)	243 F	2016-18	6/2979	365/6500	369/1450	1495kg	-	248	4.5	4.9	155	+ More progressive chassis balance than the M4 - Feels unsettled on rough tarmac	★★★★☆
BMW M2 Competition (F87)	265 F	2018-21	6/2979	404/5250	406/2350	1550kg	-	265	4.4	-	155	+ A more capable and involving M2 - More expensive and heavier, too	★★★★☆
BMW M2 CS (F87)	305 F	2020-21	6/2979	444/6250	406/2350	1550kg	-	291	4.2	-	155	+ evo Car of the Year 2020 - Such quality comes at a price	★★★★☆
BMW 1-Series M Coupé	277 F	2011-12	6/2979	335/5900	369/1500	1495kg	-	228	4.9	-	155	+ Character, turbo pace and great looks - Came and went too quick	★★★★☆
BMW M440i xDrive	282 D	£58,330	6/2998	369/5500	369/1900	1740kg	-	215	4.5	-	155	+ Punchy drivetrain with a chassis to match - That grille	★★★★☆
BMW M4 Competition (G82)	292 F	£82,520	6/2993	503/6250	479/2750	1725kg	-	296	3.9	-	155	+ Accomplished and fun - Weight gain and auto gearbox look questionable	★★★★☆
BMW M4 Competition xDrive (G82)	295 F	£85,375	6/2993	503/6250	479/2750	1775kg	-	288	3.5	-	155	+ Preferable to the already excellent rear-drive M4 - 4WD adds another 50kg	★★★★☆
BMW M4 CSL (G82)	305 F	2023	6/2993	542/6250	479/2750	1625kg	1640kg	339	3.7	-	190	+ Ballistic pace, beautiful cornering balance - Whole package doesn't quite gel	★★★★☆
BMW M4 (F82)	218 F	2014-19	6/2979	425/5500	406/1850	1570kg	-	275	4.3	-	155	+ Ferociously fast - Can be a handful on less-than-perfect or less-than-bone-dry roads	★★★★☆
BMW M4 Competition (F82)	262 F	2016-20	6/2979	444/7000	406/1850	1570kg	1645kg	287	4.3	4.4	155	+ The car the M4 always should have been - Shame everyone specs DCT	★★★★☆
BMW M4 CS (F82)	254 F	2017-19	6/2979	454/6250	442/4000	1580kg	1610kg	292	3.9	-	174	+ A further-honed M4 - It ain't cheap	★★★★☆
BMW M4 GTS (F82)	237 F	2016	6/2979	493/6250	442/4000	1510kg	-	332	3.8	3.7	190	+ Vast improvement on lesser M4s - So it should be, given its price	★★★★☆
BMW M3 (F92)	266 F	2007-13	8/3999	444/8300	295/3900	1580kg	-	266	4.8	4.3	155	+ Fends off all of its rivals... - except the cheaper 1-Series M Coupé	★★★★☆

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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE ON YAHN ON SALE	ENGINE CVL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT CARGOED	WEIGHT (TWO)	BHP/TON (CARGOED)	0-62MPH (CLIMB)	0-60MPH (TWO)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
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)	322 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)	393 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 E-Ray (C8)	318 F	\$106,595	8/6162	655	595	1765kg	-	377	c2.7	-	183	+ Who knew a hybrid, 4WD Vette would be so engaging? - The Z06 is more exciting	★★★★★
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	1110kg	-	375	3.4	-	180	+ A first-rate swansong for the V6 Exige - Didn't come cheap	★★★★★
Lotus Exige Cup 430	253 F	2018-21	6/3456	430/7000	325/2600	1093kg	-	400	3.3	-	180	+ The ultimate Exige - With a price tag to match	★★★★★
Lotus Exige S (S2)	253 F	2006-11	4/1796	218/7800	158/5500	930kg	-	238	4.3	-	148	+ Lightweight with a hefty punch - Uninspiring soundtrack	★★★★★
Lotus Exige (S1)	200 F	2000-01	4/1796	192/7800	146/5000	780kg	-	247	4.6	-	136	+ Looks and goes like an Elise racer - A tad lacking in refinement	★★★★★
Lotus Evora	302 F	2009-15	6/3456	276/6400	258/4700	1382kg	-	203	5.1	5.6	162	+ Sublime ride and handling, evo Car of the Year 2009 - The Evora S	★★★★★
Lotus Evora S	168 F	2010-15	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1430kg	-	245	4.8	-	172	+ A faster and better Evora - But one which spars with the Porsche 911	★★★★★
Lotus Evora 400	216 F	2015-18	6/3456	400/7000	302/3500	1395kg	-	291	4.2	-	186	+ Evora excitement levels take a leap - Gearbox still not perfect	★★★★★
Lotus Evora Sport 410	230 F	2017	6/3456	410/7000	310/3500	1325kg	-	314	4.2	-	190	+ Even lighter and sharper Evora - Engine and gearbox behind the best at this price	★★★★★
Lotus Evora GT400	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	400/6800	310/3500	1457kg	1486kg	279	4.3	-	180	+ Supercar looks with a sports car price - Dynamic balance is more planted than playful	★★★★★
Maserati GranTurismo Trofeo	317 F	£163,470	6/2992	542/6500	479/3500	1795kg	-	307	3.5	-	199	+ Impressive dynamic bandwidth - Feels its size and weight when pushing on	★★★★★
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 CLK 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 CLK C63 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-Benz CLE 300 4Matic	320 D	£59,750	4/1999	255/5800	295/2000	1855kg	-	140	6.6	-	155	+ Refinement levels, old-school classiness - Engine lacks distinction, performance is tepid	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG CLE 53	312 D	£73,015	6/2999	465/5800	413/2200	1925kg	-	245	4.2	-	155	+ Looks the part - Doesn't drive the part	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG GT 63	327 F	£164,765	8/3982	571/5500	590/2500	1895kg	-	309	3.2	-	196	+ Rights many of the old GT's shortcomings - Lacks the ultimate engagement of a 911	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG GT	227 D	2016-19	8/3982	469/6000	465/1700	1540kg	-	309	4.0	-	189	+ A true sports coupe that also does luxury - Takes time to reveal its talents	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG GT S	216 F	2015-19	8/3982	515/6250	494/1800	1570kg	-	333	3.8	-	193	+ Fantastic chassis, huge grip - Artificial steering feel; downshifts could be quicker	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG GT C	241 D	2017-19	8/3982	549/5750	501/1900	1625kg	-	343	3.7	-	196	+ As good at being a GT as it is a sports coupe - Difficult to drive fast and smoothly	★★★★★
Mitsubishi 3000GT	-	1990-99	6/2972	282/6000	300/3000	1719kg	-	167	5.8	-	159	+ Looks the business - Doesn't do the business	★★★★★
Nissan 370Z	204 F	2009-20	6/3696	328/7000	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)	315 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 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	4/2968	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 - Erm...	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman GTS (981)	219 F	2014-16											

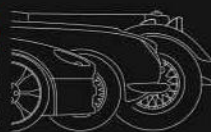
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MAKE & MODEL

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE ON YEAR 0 ON SALE	ENGINE CV/L CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT (KGM)	WEIGHT (LBS)	BHP/TON (CLIMB)	0-62MPH (S)	0-100MPH (S)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING
Porsche 911 Dakar (992)	310 F	£173,000	6/2981	473/6500	420/2300	1605kg	-	299	3.4	-	149	+ An absolute blast in the right circumstances - Do you live near a desert? ★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera (991.2)	218 F	2016-18	6/2981	365/6500	332/1700	1430kg	-	259	4.6	-	183	+ Forced induction didn't ruin the Carrera - Purists won't be happy ★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera T (991.2)	264 F	2017-18	6/2981	365/6500	332/1700	1425kg	-	260	4.5	-	182	+ Lightweight windows, no rear seats, an LSD... Only 5kg lighter than a basic Carrera ★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera S (991.2)	217 F	2016-18	6/2981	414/6500	369/1700	1440kg	-	292	4.3	-	191	+ Blindingly fast - You'll want the sports exhaust ★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera GTS (991.2)	238 F	2017-19	6/2981	444/6500	406/2150	1450kg	-	311	4.1	-	193	+ Everything a 911 Carrera should be - Costs nearly £20k more than a basic Carrera ★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera S (991.1)	201 F	2012-15	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1415kg	-	283	4.5	4.3	188	+ A Carrera with supercar pace - Electric steering robs it of some tactility ★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.2)	121 F	2008-11	6/3800	380/6500	310/4400	1425kg	-	271	4.7	-	188	+ Poise, precision, blinding pace - Feels a bit clinical ★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.1)	249 F	2004-08	6/3824	350/6600	295/4600	1420kg	-	246	4.6	-	182	+evo Car of the Year 2004 - Do your homework on potential engine issues ★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera (996.1)	249 F	1998-2001	6/3387	296/6800	258/4600	1320kg	-	228	5.2	-	174	+ The first evo Car of the Year, and it still stacks up today - Might feel a smidge dated ★★★★★
Rolls-Royce Wraith	205 D	£258,000	12/6592	624/5600	590/1500	2360kg	-	260	4.6	-	155	+ Refinement, chassis, drivetrain - Shared componentry lets cabin down ★★★★★
Subaru BRZ	248 F	2012-20	4/1998	197/7000	151/6400	1230kg	-	163	7.6	-	140	+ Fine chassis, great steering - Weak engine, not the slide-happy car they promised ★★★★★
Toyota GR86	322 F	£32,495	4/2387	231/7000	184/3700	1276kg	1280kg	183	6.3	-	140	+ The car the GR86 always wanted to be - Limited UK supply ★★★★★
Toyota GT86	286 F	2012-20	4/1998	197/7000	151/6400	1240kg	1227kg	161	7.6	6.9	140	+ Puts playfulness ahead of outright performance - Feels strategically hobbled ★★★★★
Toyota GR Supra 2.0	287 F	£50,545	4/1998	254/5000	295/1550	1395kg	-	185	5.2	-	155	+ Avoids the edginess of the 3-litre Supra - Lacks feel, feedback and bite ★★★★★
Toyota GR Supra 3.0	303 F	£58,580	6/2998	335/5000	369/1600	1502kg	-	227	4.6	-	155	+ Better than its BMW Z4 cousin, especially with a manual - Not better than an M240i ★★★★★
Toyota MR2 (Mk1)	237 F	1984-89	4/1587	122/6600	105/5000	977kg	-	127	8.2	-	124	+ Mid-engined fun comes no more affordable - Finding a good one will take time ★★★★★
TVR Sagaris	265 F	2005-07	6/3996	406/7000	349/5000	1078kg	-	383	3.7	-	185	+ Looks outrageous - 406bhp feels a touch optimistic ★★★★★
TVR Tuscan S (Mk2)	076 F	2005-07	6/3996	400/7000	315/5250	1008kg	-	369	4.0	-	185	+ Possibly TVR's best ever car - Aerodynamic 'enhancements' ★★★★★

SUPERCARS / HYPERCARS



OUR CHOICE

Porsche 911 GT3 RS. It's the most extreme GT3 RS yet, with looks that suggest you'd only ever drive it on the road to get it to a trackday, yet in fact it works brilliantly whatever the asphalt passing beneath its wheels – smooth or lumpy, wet or dry – and all without being intimidating. A genuinely special car.



BEST OF THE REST

The **McLaren 750S** (left) improves upon its already mighty 720S predecessor, the **Maserati MC20** delivers old-fashioned supercar excitement in spades, the **Ferrari 296 GTB** and **McLaren Artura** show how rewarding a hybrid supercar can be, and any **Lamborghini Huracán** still has oodles of big-capacity, naturally aspirated appeal.

Aston Martin DBS (Superleggera)	264 F	£238,725	12/5204	715/6500	664/1800	1770kg	-	410	3.4	-	211	+ Broad spread of talents - It's not really 'Superlight' ★★★★★
Aston Martin DBS (Superleggera) Volante	273 F	£257,125	12/5204	715/6500	664/1800	1863kg*	-	390	3.6	-	211	+ Dazzling looks, immense performance - Width and weight bring compromises ★★★★★
Aston Martin DBS 770 Ultimate	311 F	£314,000	12/5204	759/6400	664/1800	1770kg	-	436	3.4	-	211	+ Chassis refinements - We're not sure it needed the extra power... ★★★★★
Aston Martin Vanquish S (Mk2)	260 F	2017-18	12/5935	595/7000	465/5500	1739kg	-	348	3.5	3.9	201	+ Noise, poise, drama and charm - Not as rounded as the DB11 ★★★★★
Aston Martin Vanquish S (Mk1)	110 F	2005-07	12/5935	520/7000	425/5800	1875kg	-	282	4.8	4.9	201	+ Vanquish joins the supercar greats - A tad intimidating at the limit ★★★★★
Aston Martin One-77	179 F	2010-12	12/7312	750/6000	553/7600	1740kg	-	438	3.7	-	220+	+ The engine, the looks, the drama - Gearbox hates manoeuvring; only 77 were made ★★★★★
Aston Martin Valkyrie	308 F	£2.5m	12/6500	1139/10,600	681/7000	1270kg*	-	911	3.0	-	220	+ Unique and uncompromising - Horrendous cockpit noise ★★★★★
Audi R8 V10 RWD	273 F	2020-21	10/5204	533/7900	398/6400	1595kg	-	340	3.7	-	199	+ More affordable than a 4WD R8 - But not more entertaining ★★★★★
Audi R8 V10 Performance RWD	305 F	£131,725	10/5204	562/7800	406/6400	1590kg	1640kg	359	3.7	-	204	+ Poise and polish - Newer mid-engined rivals feel sharper, faster and more capable ★★★★★
Audi R8 V10 quattro	261 F	2020-21	10/5204	562/8100	413/6300	1660kg	-	344	3.4	-	201	+ Beats the 992 Carrera - Could be the last of its kind ★★★★★
Audi R8 V10 Performance quattro	256 D	£151,830	10/5204	611/8250	428/6600	1595kg	-	389	3.1	-	205	+ Stunning V10; approachable performance - Optional Dynamic steering feels unnatural ★★★★★
Audi R8 V10 GT RWD	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)	320 F	2009-15	10/5204	518/8000	391/6500	1620kg	-	325	4.1	3.9	194	+ Real supercar feel - The V8 is cheaper, and still superb ★★★★★
Bugatti Chiron	244 F	2016-22	16/7993	1479/6700	1180/2000	1995kg	-	753	2.5	-	261	+ Backs up the numbers with feel and emotion - Limited top speed(!) ★★★★★
Bugatti Chiron Super Sport	307 F	2021-22	16/7993	1578/7050	1180/2250	1995kg	-	804	2.4	-	273	+ Hit 304.77mph in pre-production form - Are you Andy Wallace enough to go there? ★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron 16.4	134 F	2005-11	16/7993	987/6000	922/2200	1888kg	-	531	2.5	2.8	253	+ Superbly engineered four-wheel-drive quad-turbo rocket - Er, lacks luggage space? ★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron 16.4 Super Sport	151 F	2011-16	16/7993	1183/6400	1106/3000	1838kg	-	654	2.5	-	258	+ Was once the world's fastest supercar - Limited to 258mph for us mere mortals ★★★★★
Bugatti EB110	078 F	1991-95	12/3500	552/8000	451/3750	1618kg	-	347	3.6	-	213	+ Superbly engineered four-wheel-drive quad-turbo rocket - It just fizzled out ★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette Z06 (C8)	310 F	£135,000	8/5463	670/8400	460/6300	1561kg*	-	436	2.6	-	195	+ Mighty engine; absorbing driving experience - Some steering feel wouldn't go amiss ★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette Z06 (C7)	227 F	2015-19	8/6162	650/6000	650/3600	1598kg	-	413	3.7	-	196	+ Mind-boggling raw speed; surprisingly sophisticated - Edgy when really pushed ★★★★★
Ferrari 296 GTB	305 F	£245,000	6/2992	819/8000	546/6250	1470kg*	1660kg	566	2.9	-	205	+ Intriguingly powerful, responsive, makes a success of hybrid tech - It's rather pricey ★★★★★
Ferrari 296 GTS	304 D	£279,248	6/2992	819/8000	546/6250	1540kg*	-	540	2.9	-	205	+ Magical when you're in its groove - Lacks the last degree of control of the GTB ★★★★★
Ferrari F8 Tributo	281 F	2019-23	8/3902	710/8000	568/3250	1435kg	-	503	2.9	-	211	+ Ferrari's best series-production V8 ever - It's hybrids after this ★★★★★
Ferrari 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	315 F	2013-15	8/4497	597/9000	398/6000	1395kg	-	435	3.0	-	202+	+evo Car of the Year 2014 - If you don't own a regular 458, nothing ★★★★★
Ferrari F430	320 F	2004-10	8/4308	483/8000	343/5250	1449kg	-	339	4.0	-	196+	+ Just brilliant - Didn't you read the plus point? ★★★★★
Ferrari 430 Scuderia	274 F	2007-10	8/4308	503/8500	347/5250	1350kg	1374kg	378	3.6	3.5	198	+ Successful F1 technology transplant - Likes to shout about it ★★★★★
Ferrari 360 Modena	163 F	1999-2004	8/3586	394/8500	275/4750	1390kg	-	288	4.5	-	183+	+ Worthy successor to 355 - Not quite as involving as it should be ★★★★★
Ferrari 360 Challenge Stradale	274 F	2003-04	8/3586	420/8500	275/4750	1280kg	-	333	4.1	-	186	+ Totally exhilarating road-racer - Automated single-clutch 'box dates it ★★★★★
Ferrari F355 Berlinetta	231 F	1994-99	8/3496	374/8250	268/6000	1350kg*	-	281	4.7	-	183	+ Looks terrific, sounds even better - Are you kidding? ★★★★★
Ferrari 348 GT Competizione	274 F	1993	8/3404	316/7200	239/5000	1180kg*	-	276	5.0	-	175	+ Utterly absorbing, with exceptional dynamics - Steering a little woolly ★★★★★
Ferrari 812 Superfast	275 F	2017-23	12/6496	789/8500	529/7000	1630kg	-	492	2.9	3.1	211	+ Incredible engine - Finding opportunities to exploit it ★★★★★
Ferrari 812 GTS	280 F	£293,150	12/6496	789/8500	529/7000	1645kg*	-	487	3.0	-	211+	+ A brilliant return for the front-engined V12 Ferrari Spider - There won't be many more ★★★★★
Ferrari 812 Competizione	292 F	£446,970	12/6496	819/9250	510/7000	1487kg*	-	560	2.9	-	211+	+ Phenomenally exciting - Requires plenty of respect at all times ★★★★★
Ferrari F12 Berlinetta	275 F	2012-17	12/6262	730/8250	509/6000	1630kg	-	455	3.1	-	211+	+ 730bhp isn't too much power for the road - Super-quick steering is an acquired taste ★★★★★
Ferrari F12tdf	230 F	2017	12/6262	769/8500	520/6250	1520kg	-	514	2.9	-	211+	+ Alarmingly fast - Doesn't flow like a 458 Speciale ★★★★★
Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano	275 F	2006-12	12/5999	611/7600	448/5600	1690kg	-	368	3.7	3.5	205	+evo Car of the Year 2006 - Banks are getting harder to rob ★★★★★
Ferrari 599 GTO	161 F	2011-12	12/5999	661/8250	507/6500	1605kg	-	418	3.4	-	208+	+ One of the truly great Ferraris - Struggles for traction on poor surfaces ★★★★★
Ferrari 575M Fiorano Handling Pack	200 F	2002-06	12/5748	508/7250	434/5250	1688kg	-	298	3.7	4.2	205+	+ Fiorano pack makes 575 truly great - It should have been standard ★★★★★
Ferrari 550 Maranello	275 F	1996-2002	12/5474	478/7000	420/5000	1690kg	-	287	4.4	-	199	+ Everything - Nothing ★★★★★
Ferrari GT C4 Lusso T	246 D	2017-20	8/3855	602/7500	560/3000	1885kg	-	328	3.5	-	199	+ Effortless, comfortable GT - Misses the richer soundtrack of the V12 ★★★★★
Ferrari GT C4 Lusso	264 F	2016-20	12/6262	680/8000	514/5750	1920kg	-	360	3.4	-	208	+ Rear-wheel steering increases agility - Not as engaging as other Ferraris ★★★★★
Ferrari FF	194 F	2011-15	12/6262	701/7900	593/6250	1660kg	-	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	436/6250	406/4500	1690kg*	-	262	5.2	-	186	+ A genuine GT supercar - Running costs ★★★★★
Ferrari SF90 Stradale	299 F	£376,048	8/3990	986/7500	590/6000	1570kg*	1742kg	638	2.5	-	211	+ Hugely fast hybrid-hypercar - Can feel clumsy when hustled ★★★★★
Ferrari SF90 XX Stradale	318 F	£673,584	8/3990	1016/7900	593/6250	1560kg*	-	661	2.3	-	199	+ Explosive, tactile and street-legal - We haven't driven it on the road yet ★★★★★
Ferrari SF90 XX Spider	322 F	£730,000	8/3990	1016/7900	593/6250	1660kg*	-	622	2.3	-	199	+ Open roof gets you closer to the action - Stradale has greater structural integrity ★★★★★
Ferrari SF90 Spider	302 D	£418,233	8/3990	986/7500	590/6000	1670kg*	-	600	2.5	-	211	+ Mesmerising V8 with expertly integrated hybrid system - You need to pack light ★★★★★
Ferrari Daytona SP3	300 F	£2m	12/6496	828/9250	514/7250	1485kg*	-	566	2.9	-	211	+ Epic naturally aspirated V12; sports prototype looks - We didn't get invited to buy one ★★★★★
Ferrari LaFerrari	203 F	2013-15	12/6262	950/9000	664/6750	1574kg	-	613	3.0	-	217+	+ Perhaps the greatest Ferrari ever - Brakes lack a touch of precision on track ★★★★★
Ferrari Enzo	275 F	2002-04	12/5999	651/7800	485/5500	1365kg	-	485	3.7	3.5	217+	+ Intoxicating, exploitable - Cabin detailing falls short of a Zonda or F1's ★★★★★
Ferrari F50	275 F	1995-97	12/4699	513/8500	347/6500	1230kg*	-	424	3.9	-	202	+ A better driver's Ferrari than the 288, F40 or Enzo - Not better looking, though ★★★★★

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MAKE & MODEL

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE ON YEAR ON SALE	ENGINE CVL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT (KGM)	WEIGHT (LBS)	BHP/TON (KGM)	D-0-20MPH (S)	D-0-60MPH (S)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
Ferrari F40	275 F	1987-92	8/2936	471/7000	426/4000	1100kg*	-	437	4.1	-	201	+ Brutally fast - It's in the dictionary under 'turbo lag'	★★★★★
Ford GT	253 F	\$450,000	6/3497	647/6250	550/5900	1385kg*	-	475	2.8	-	216	+ Everything it does on track - Too many of the things it does on the road	★★★★★
Ford GT	200 F	\$450,000	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 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	317 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	320 F	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 Revuelto	316 D	£450,000	12/6499	1001	535/6750	1772kg*	-	574	2.5	-	217+	+ The old formula, invisibly assisted - Huge even by V12 Lambo standards; heavy too	★★★★★
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 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	479/4000	1650kg*	-	351	4.0	-	206	+ Gorgeous, capable and incredibly friendly - V12 feels stressed	★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago LP640	275 F	2006-11	12/6496	631/8000	487/6000	1665kg*	-	385	3.8	-	211	+ Compelling old-school supercar - You'd better be on your toes	★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago LP670-4 SV	200 F	2009-11	12/6496	661/8000	487/6500	1565kg*	-	429	3.3	3.2	212	+ A supercar in its truest, wildest sense - Be prepared for stares	★★★★★
Lamborghini Diablo VT 6.0	275 F	2000-02	12/5992	543/7100	457/5500	1625kg*	-	343	3.9	-	208	+ Best-built, best-looking Diablo of all - People's perceptions	★★★★★
Lexus LFA/LFA Nürburging	200 F	2010-12	10/4805	552/8700	354/6800	1480kg	-	379	3.7	-	202	+ Absurd and compelling supercar - Badge and price don't quite match	★★★★★
Lotus Esprit Sport 350	171 F	1999-2001	8/3506	349/6500	295/4250	1299kg	-	274	4.3	-	175	+ Lotus's pukka V8-powered supercar - Weight of that V8 makes it more intimidating	★★★★★
Maserati MC20	305 F	£204,520	6/2992	621/7500	538/3000	1475kg*	1700kg	428	2.9	-	203	+ evo Car of the Year 2022 - Lacks the refinement and sophistication of some rivals	★★★★★
Maserati MC20 Cielo	304 D	£231,885	6/2992	621/7500	538/3000	1560kg*	-	404	2.9	-	201	+ Gets you closer to that rip-snorting engine - A tiny bit more ragged than the coupe	★★★★★
McLaren 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 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 750S	317 D	£244,760	8/3994	740/7500	590/6500	1389kg	-	541	2.8	-	206	+ Superbly executed upgrade over the 720S - Interior more functional but less special	★★★★★
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 - Favors 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	320 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	198kg*	-	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 (gulling 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	£195,000	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	198kg*	-	551	3.5	3.8	225	+ Spiritual successor to the Ferrari F40 - Quite a lot rarer	★★★★★
Pagani Huayra	185 F	2011-22	12/5980	720/5800	737/2250	1350kg*	-	542	3.3	-	224	+ Joint evo Car of the Year 2012 - Engine isn't as nape-prickling as the Zonda's	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda S (7.3)	315 F	2002-05	12/7291	547/5900	553/4050	1280kg*	-	434	3.7	-	197	+ evo Car of the Year 2001 (in earlier 7.0 form) - Values have gone up a fair bit since then	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda F	295 F	2005-06	12/7291	594/6150	560/4000	1230kg*	-	491	3.6	-	214+	+ Everything an Italian supercar ought to be - Looks a bit blingy next to a Carrera GT	★★★★★
Pininfarina Battista	313 F	£1,960,000	14/00kW	1874	1726	2063kg	-	923	1.9	-	217	+ Fascinating weight-defying dynamics - Nausea-inducing acceleration	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (992)	299 F	£146,400	6/3996	503/8400	347/6100	1418kg	1472kg	360	3.9	-	199	+ Agile, sharp and hugely desirable - Deciding if you want standard or Touring spec	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (992)	322 F	£192,600	6/3996	518/8500	343/6300	1450kg	1498kg	363	3.2	-	184	+ evo Car of the Year 2023 - A bit showy for road driving, perhaps	★★★★★
Porsche 911 S/T (992)	316 F	£321,600	6/3996	518/8500	343/6300	1380kg	-	381	3.7	-	186	+ GT3 RS engine, manual 'box, lightweight build, road-biased suspension... - Rarity	★★★★★
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	398	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	376/7400	284/5000	1380kg	-	277	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)	315 F	1999-2001	6/360										



Peugeot 206 GTi 180

Late to the party and betraying its heritage, the GTi 180 marked the end of Peugeot's hot hatch highs

IT MAY SEEM UNFAIR TO SINGLE OUT A four-star **evo** car for the Greatest Misses treatment, but that's exactly what I'm about to do with the 206 GTi 180. Or perhaps this is more of a criticism of Peugeot's corporate ethos of the era, rather than its products, for while there were elements to be admired, the fact remains that the 206 GTi is largely a forgotten car.

The GTi 180 was the first performance car I ever wrote a road test of, while starting off my career at a well-known British motoring weekly. As a hardcore Peugeot Sport fan I still recall the feeling of bitter disappointment, verging on a sense of betrayal: 'half-hearted and too late' was the overriding impression.

The 206 GTi came along in 1999 and was born in a time when the Lion could seemingly do no wrong when it came to building small, entertaining driver's cars. Consider that it still had in its range both the 106 GTi and 306 GTi 6 and that it was only five years since the 205 GTi had gone off sale.

Enter the 206. In its standard guise it was hugely successful, its curvy, feline/feminine

form an immediate hit with buyers. But that aesthetic was much less successful when applied to a performance derivative, WRC car aside. The MPV-like front end – creating an almost mono-box overall design – and cartoon features were uncomfortably limp when compared to the sharp, athletic styling of before. But that wasn't the real problem.

An everyman GTi model came first, with a 2-litre 16v engine producing 137bhp and 140lb ft of torque. It was well-specced and possessed a 'wonderfully compliant chassis' according to Mr J Barker in **evo** 010, but he also highlighted its 'slight aloofness' dynamically and commented, damningly, that 'Peugeot could learn a thing or two from what Lotus has done with the Proton GTi's suspension.' Moreover, the driving position was terrible, the seats woeful, and the Ford Puma easily clinched the group test win four issues later.

The 180 was meant to put all that right, but Peugeot delayed far too long, not launching until 2003, by which time cars such as the Renault Sport Clio 172 (soon to be 182) had completely

redefined the potential of the small hot hatch.

The 180 wasn't a bad car. It claimed some feisty numbers (180bhp, sub-7sec to 60mph), but they felt optimistic in reality, despite its newly acquired variable valve timing. It handled tidily, with plenty of grip, but the ride was firm on 17-inch rims that looked aftermarket in the way they bulged unnaturally out of the bodywork, and the heavy steering lacked that vital sense of connection.

Peugeot had deliberately pursued a more grown-up experience. Speaking on the car's launch in France, senior execs seemed determined to distance themselves from their heritage, convinced that's what the market wanted. But history would prove that to be a mistake. Peugeot's hot hatch credentials never truly recovered.

Looking back now, all I really recall about the 180 is its supportive but weirdly squidgy bucket seats. But it was a car that seemed destined to be forgotten from the very start. 'The new 205 GTi is already here,' summarised Jethro Bovingdon at the climax of his 208 GTi 180 versus Clio 172 twin test. 'It just happens to be built by Renault.'



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