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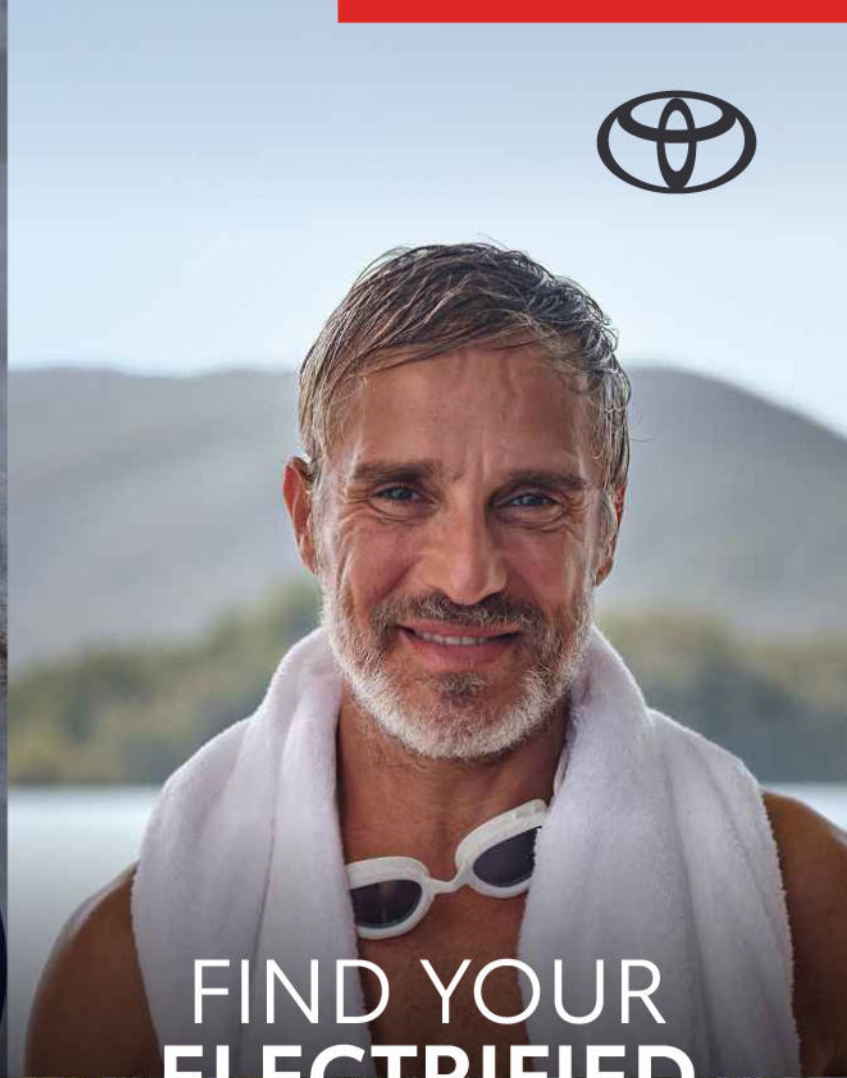
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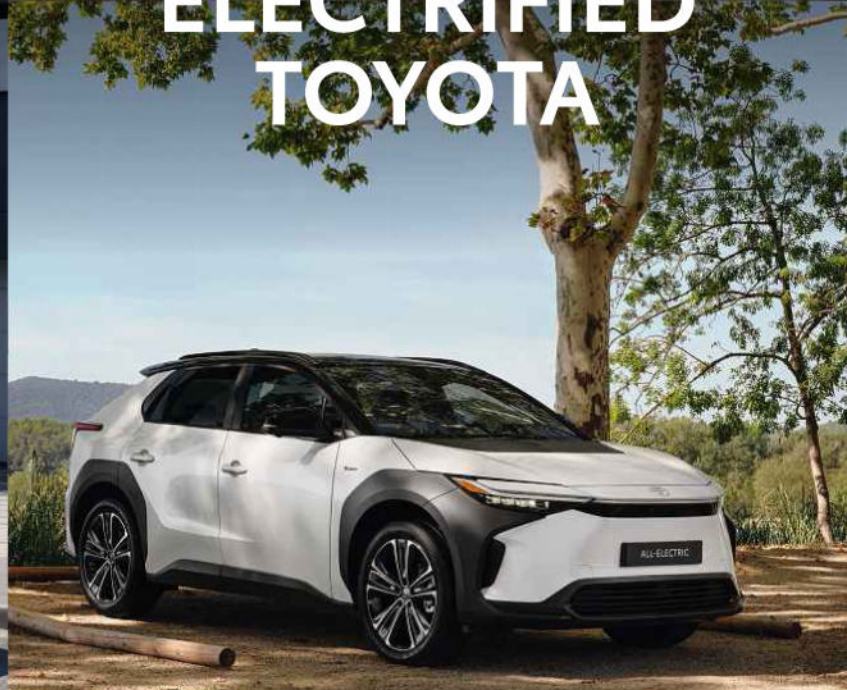
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Ed speak



I FIRST MET PAUL RIPLEY IN 1998 as **evo** was finding its feet in the automotive world. It wasn't for a story but because, quite rightly, then-editor John Barker wasn't prepared to just throw the keys to the latest high-performance cars to someone who drove a Mk3 Fiesta RS1800i. So it was off to Leeds for me in a manual E39 540i for a day of having my driving ripped apart. It was exactly

what I needed. To this day, I still seek out as much training and advice as I can – and even that's probably still not enough.

Too often, driver training is left to the passionate individuals, the professionals and those forced to attend a course because their work insists on it; or rather the employers' insurance premium is reduced if staff are forced to sit through a banal training course that does nothing to improve their driving standards. But they've ticked a box, so that's okay.

Obviously it's very far from okay, and as a new political era begins, it is surely time that issues around driving standards, safety and training were addressed.

As Ripley (above) remarks in his interview with Barker starting on page 40, performance driver coaching isn't about making you quicker, it's about extracting a higher level of performance from you as a driver. Challenging and changing your own mindset to make you – and our roads – safer through clearer understanding and continuous improvement.

Obviously plenty has been done to improve road safety. Lower speed limits in urban areas, average speed cameras breeding like rabbits, campaigns telling us that speed is the only thing that kills people, and the police having to rely on dashcam footage to do their job for them as resources continue to be pulled... But at no point has anyone in authority asked if there's a holistic, preventative approach to road safety rather than a reactive one.

If you passed your driving test on your 17th birthday you could go 53 years before anyone checks if you're fit to still be behind the wheel. It's time we invested in making everyone perform to a higher – and safer – standard of driving.

Stuart Gallagher, Editor-in-Chief @stuartg917

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020 3900 1901

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

EDITORIAL

eds@evo.co.uk

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Stuart Gallagher	MANAGING EDITOR Ian Eveleigh
DEPUTY EDITOR James Taylor	ART EDITOR Rich Browne
SENIOR PHOTOGRAPHER Aston Parrott	STAFF WRITER Yousuf Ashraf
STAFF WRITER Sam Jenkins	HEAD OF DIGITAL CONTENT Steve Walker

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

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

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Colin Goodwin, Antony Ingram

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS

James Cheadle, Stan Papior, Dean Smith

IT WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT

Peter Allen, Jonathan Baker, Alan Strachan, Peter Tomalin,
CNC Motorsport, First Choice Bodyshop

DIRECTOR OF CONTENT & PUBLISHING

Sarah Perks

COMMERCIAL

ads.evo@autovia.co.uk

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR Ciaran Scarry	AGENCY ACCOUNT MANAGER Demi Meredith demi_davies@autovia.co.uk
CLIENT SALES MANAGER Pierre Clements pierre_clements@autovia.co.uk	CLIENT SALES MANAGER Miles Taylor miles_taylor@autovia.co.uk
SENIOR OPERATIONS MANAGER Kerry Lambird	HEAD OF SUBSCRIPTIONS MARKETING & CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE Hannah Charlton
SENIOR PRODUCTION MANAGER Daniel Stark	HEAD OF CREATIVE DELIVERY Avril Donnelly
PUBLISHING EXECUTIVE Nicole Creasey	
DIRECTOR OF AUDIENCE GROWTH & ENGAGEMENT Amrit Baidwan	

AUTOVIA LIMITED

DIRECTOR John Veichmanis

DIRECTOR David Santoro

EVO WORLDWIDE

Australia Matthew O'Malley	France Patrick Garcia
India Sirish Chandran	Middle East Bassam Kronfli
Poland Lukasz Kamiński	Turkey Bahadır Bektas

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by JAMES TAYLOR PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

Toyota GR Yaris

A new, improved GR Yaris is ample cause to jump for joy.
The only downside will be trying to secure one

WE'VE DRIVEN THE NEW, UPDATED GR Yaris in prototype form on a Spanish racetrack (see [evo 318](#)) and in pre-production form on a Finnish frozen lake (see [evo.co.uk](#)). Now this is our first chance to drive the finished product.

A couple of bits to get out of the way early-doors. The Gen 2 GR Yaris costs more than £44,000, compared with £30,000 for the original. Perhaps we shouldn't be surprised in a world where a Civic Type R costs £50k and an AMG A45 S is £63k, but it's not the sweetest of pills to swallow. The bitterest one, however, is that only an 'exceptionally limited' number of cars will find their way to the UK in 2024.

That low volume is likely also a contributory factor to the high list price. A further UK allocation is planned for 2025, although the number of cars isn't confirmed. Toyota GB isn't in a position to disclose the reason for the low numbers coming to the UK, but an educated guess would link the issue to fleet-average emissions regulations rather than right-hand-drive production limitations or shipping issues. Existing GR Yaris owners and customers who were on the waiting list but missed out last time around have been contacted, and sales will initially be based on a ballot system.

It's a shame some customers will miss out, because the refreshed GR Yaris is a brilliant



car to drive. Everything that makes the original a modern classic is still there, but for Gen 2 it's been honed to a sharper edge, polished to a brighter shine. There's a greater sense of eagerness to its engine, a greater degree of precision to its handling, and a better driving position to put you more in touch with it all.

You sit 25mm lower than previously and look out across a 50mm lower dashboard. The main mirror, which previously sat slap-bang in your line of sight, has been moved too. Instant improvement all round. There's a little more reach adjustment in the steering column as well.

It would be a stretch to describe the new dash as attractive, with a blocky fascia that's functional to the point of utilitarianism. When I first saw photos of the prototype's interior, I thought the fascia was cladding, disguising the final dashboard design. As it turns out, it is the final dashboard design. It works well, though. Everything is angled toward the driver just-so, and in easy reach. In fact, in an *evo* office straw poll, most of the team loved the fascia's no-nonsense, motorsport-style

function-over-form approach. And it's not like the old Yaris dash was a thing of beauty.

There still aren't many places to put things in the interior, bar a couple of cupholders, tight door pockets and an awkwardly shaped oddment bin behind the handbrake (still a proper, manual lever, which still decouples the transmission's connection to the rear driveshafts when pulled hard, to facilitate handbrake turns). There is now satnav as standard as part of a more modern touchscreen in the dash; it's not the slickest system but it does the job. And this isn't the sort of car you buy for its ergonomics and infotainment, after all.

Toyota has liberated an extra 19bhp and 23lb ft from the triple-cylinder turbo engine, for 276bhp and 288lb ft. A lot of power from 1.6 litres. The performance increase comes from upgrades that include a stronger valvetrain, new exhaust valve material and other exhaust revisions, increased fuel injection pressure and new pistons, all tested in the Japan Rally Championship. All European cars also get a cooling pack as standard, with an

additional sub-radiator and a water spray system for the intercooler, triggered by a button on the dash. Remember those, Evo and Impreza fans?

The revised engine feels noticeably more urgent, with a boostier feel. You can hear the turbo whooshing, on- and off-throttle, and see its response visually on the new digital instrument panel, where a neat graphic shows the turbo's pressure and response in real time. Overall, the new digital dash display looks great: it's clear, easy to read and, in Sport mode, changes the traditional rev-counter to a rally-style bar across the top of the screen, all the more rally-esque if you snag the rev limiter, which is a mildly thrilling *rat-tat-tat* hard stop rather than a soft limit.

There's an extra keenness to the suspension, too. The Gen 2 car has stiffer spring rates, by 28 per cent at the front, 11 per cent at the rear, and an uprated front anti-roll bar and extra bolts fastening the front dampers to the body, which is also intended to improve steering response and feel. That's aided and abetted by a stiffer bodyshell than before, with a 15 per cent increase



'Get on the power early and feel this muscular little car squat and spring from a tight corner'



in the number of spot welds and amount of adhesive applied to the structure.

The old Yaris had notably smooth-riding damping but this new variant is a little more tense. It doesn't spoil the car on British B-roads but you do feel it moving with a slightly stiffer gait. It's a worthwhile trade-off for the more responsive handling. You're very much in touch with what's going on at all times, not only through the steering and pedals (brake feel is excellent, incidentally; it's easy to feel the moment at which ABS begins to cut in, and you sense this car would be fun to move around on the brakes on track, or on a stage) but also through the chassis itself. And you're more keyed in to it all, thanks to the lower-set seat. The GR Yaris still deals with undulations brilliantly, too, particularly over crests.

There are three settings for the permanent all-wheel-drive system, which splits torque front to rear via an electronically controlled coupling. (Toyota brands the system GR-Four, and its logo is printed prominently on the new sub-radiator

at the front, making the Yaris look a little like a tuner car straight out of the box, which is fine by me.) The torque splits have been revised: Normal mode divvies torque 60:40 front:rear, but in Track mode the balance shifts actively between 60:40 and 30:70, apportioning more to the rear on corner exit. There's also a Gravel mode, which nominally splits torque at 53:47. In Normal mode, the GR Yaris's natural balance is toward understeer, but in Track mode it's a positive, pointy thing. Get on the power early and you feel the torque balance helping this muscular little car squat and spring from a tight corner. You can also feel the Torsen limited-slip differentials at each end doing their thing.

On the original GR Yaris the Torsen diffs were part of the optional Circuit Pack, which also included forged wheels, Michelin Pilot Sport 4 S tyres and upgraded brakes, and added £3.5k to the price. Since most of the 20,000 cars sold in

Above: visual changes aren't immediately obvious but include repositioned rear lights and reshaped bumper

Europe were Circuit Pack versions, that's the only spec available here this time around.

There's a further set of driving modes – Eco, Normal, Sport and Custom – which tweak the powertrain map, steering weight and air-con level via a new switch on the centre console. Sport brings a welcome increase in throttle response.

Were this an automatic car, no doubt the transmission mapping would be changed too, but we chose to test the manual GR Yaris first for a more direct comparison with our memories of the old model, without the brand-new auto option to muddy the waters. The six-speeder feels even better than before; GR's engineers have obviously been hard at work because somehow the shift is swifter, sweeter and less baulky – and it's not like it was bad before. There's still a switchable rev-match function to blip the throttle automatically on downshifts (something it does neatly, and without unnecessary theatre – just the right amount of revs, no more, no less) but it's still possible, and fun, to do it yourself if you prefer. The auto option

Driven



is an eight-speed torque converter with shorter ratios; we'll be testing it separately soon.

The auto model costs £45,750 to the manual's £44,250. There will also be two limited special editions, named after Toyota WRC drivers Sébastien Ogier and Kalle Rovanperä. Both will be manual but priced at £60,000, with the Gravel and Track AWD modes replaced with special settings personally tuned by the respective drivers.

From the outside, the changes from Gen 1 to Gen 2 GR Yaris aren't immediately obvious. Keen eyes can spot the extra cooling measures at the front and the apertures to feed them, and at the rear the fog, reversing and high-mounted brake lights have all been repositioned, the latter partly to make it easier for tuners to fit aftermarket spoilers. There's also an extra opening in the rear bumper, partly for cooling the exhaust and partly to reduce drag. But the changes beneath the surface run much deeper than simple facelift fare and add up to a car that feels a step on from an already brilliant modern performance car.

'Gen 2 feels a step on from an already brilliant modern performance car'

Toyota didn't *need* to do a lot to change the Yaris: it was already a runaway success. But it says a lot about Gazoo Racing's internal philosophy that it has applied such a fine-tooth comb to the Yaris and created a better car than ever. Whereas the old model sometimes felt as if you needed to be driving it hard before it came to life, the new one feels more alive, more eager at all road speeds, while also – slightly firmer ride apart – feeling more useable day to day, with less

road noise and (mostly) better ergonomics.

GR company insiders freely admit that they never expected the car to be the smash hit it has become. Initially, 25,000 cars were planned to be built to meet rally homologation requirements. So far more than 40,000 GR Yaris have been sold worldwide since launch in 2020, with around half of those sales in Europe. Reportedly, around 10,000 customers were on the waiting list for the old car in the UK alone. So we can expect the Gen 2 car to be thoroughly oversubscribed.

One of the very best hot hatches just got even better. Just a shame there won't be a few more of them coming to these shores. **X**

Engine In-line 3-cyl, 1618cc, turbocharged

Power 276bhp @ 6500rpm **Torque** 288lb ft @ 3250-4600rpm

Weight 1280kg (219bhp/ton) **Tyres** Michelin Pilot Sport 4 S

0-62mph 5.2sec **Top speed** 143mph **Basic price** £44,250

+ Slightly better than the original in almost every way

- Tougher ride, tougher price, tougher to get hold of one

evo rating ★★★★★

Left: revamped dashboard puts function before form and is none the worse for that; in Sport mode the rev-counter changes to a rally-style strip (below left)



by ADAM TOWLER

Maserati GranCabrio Trofeo

The latest, V6-powered GranTurismo is now available in open-top form. Is its combination of performance, comfort and style a winning one?

HOW APPROPRIATE FOR A CAR THAT includes a variant called 'Folgore' ('Lightning' in Italian) in its line-up that giant forks of the stuff are straddling the road ahead. It's almost as if Maserati has a direct line to the big man upstairs. Then again, giant hailstones are clattering against the fabric roof as well, and then turn to a deluge of water so heavy that to top 15mph feels reckless. Possibly not the environment the Italian firm had in mind when they chose to launch the new GranCabrio

Trofeo around the Italian Lakes. Still, if nothing else it's a stern test of the canvas above my head and one that it passes with ease: there are no puddles forming inside, as you would expect of a £169,585 convertible, and it feels as quiet and snug as if I was driving the GranTurismo coupe.

Talking of which, we've been fans of the big Italian coupe since we first drove it last year. So much so that it received an invite to eCoty 2023, where despite finishing in the final spot it still impressed us with its rather unique blend

of pace, grace and practicality. The convertible version, in both ICE 'Trofeo' and EV 'Folgore' forms, was developed alongside the coupe from the beginning, the platform designed to offer the flexibility to support all variants while sharing as much in common as possible, including passing down the same production line. For example, both hard- and soft-top use the same castings at the base of the A-pillar, but the Cabrio's windscreen surround is stronger to withstand roll-over accidents and provide additional bracing.





The chassis is of a hybrid construction that consists of 65 per cent aluminium, but with additional bracing underneath to claw back rigidity lost due to the application of a tin-opener to the roof. Maserati's engineers describe the Cabrio as having structural rigidity that's comparable with the coupe's, although there is a 100kg weight penalty once strengthening and roof mechanisms have been taken into consideration. Incidentally, that difference narrows to 80kg on the all-electric version as the battery pack mounted underneath the car has a bracing effect all of its own. Then again, the weight penalty overall to go EV is considerable, the Folgore version of the GranCabrio tipping the scales at a hefty 2340kg to the Trofeo's 1895

Pop the bonnet – or the 'cofango' as Maserati refers to it, a sprawling panel that combines the bonnet with the front wings – and it's immediately apparent that the long nose is by no means necessary to contain the engine, because the Nettuno twin-turbo V6 is entirely behind

the front axle line, contributing to a 51:49 weight distribution (the Folgore is 50:50). The 3-litre motor features Maserati's twin combustion tech (MTC) as seen first in the MC20, but unlike in the supercar is in wet-sump form here, producing 542bhp and 479lb ft of torque.

It may be well over 100bhp down on the Aston Martin DB12 Volante's twin-turbocharged V8, but no one seems to have explained that to the little V6, and once into Sport or Corsa mode it absolutely lets rip from low revs, holding that frenzied momentum to the red line and the next gear in the eight-speed ZF auto 'box. Aided by four-wheel drive, it launches the GranCabrio to 62mph from rest in just 3.6 seconds, a tenth ahead of the rear-drive Aston; it also trails its top speed by just 6mph (196 versus 202mph).

Such fireworks are not what makes the greatest impression initially, however. While beauty is in the eye of the beholder, it's hard to deny that the GranCabrio has quite some presence, particularly with the roof stowed. It

is extravagantly proportioned, but pleasingly free from visual clutter, and as you walk up to it the sheer impressive scale of the car becomes readily apparent. It takes just 14 seconds to lower the roof (16 to raise it, both possible up to 31mph), and given the sun is now shining I swipe my finger across the touchscreen and hold to operate the mechanism. It's a modish but slightly overwrought exercise in place of a normal button that would do perfectly well, but then the Maser's interior is very touchscreen-heavy, which brings the usual frustrations. Nevertheless, this one seems to react a bit faster than the last one we tried, but there's no word on whether there's been a software update in the interim.

Other than that, the interior is much like the coupe's, with an excellent driving position and a general air of quality. It's just a shame it slightly lacks the wow factor of its (more expensive) rivals, although there's no doubting it's a comfortable place to be, and while I'd struggle for head and knee room to sit 'behind myself',



Above: rear seats are more than just token 'plus two' affairs; six standard paint colours are offered – this is Nero Assoluto – plus 26 more adventurous 'Fuoriserie' shades, with prices ranging from £16,200 to £29,160

those are a genuine pair of seats in the back, not just an excuse for additional storage.

The GranCabrio is particularly adept at relaxing progress, and wind buffeting with the roof lowered is especially well contained. A neck warmer (hot air blown out through the top of the seat) does away with any nasty drafts in cooler climes. Like the coupe, the convertible uses air suspension and is genuinely pliant in GT mode. The steering is quick but not nervously so, with an oily accuracy that suits the soft-edged ride. Like all air-suspended cars, it can feel a little flat-footed at speed on awkward surfaces, which occasionally catch it out with a wobble, but you'd think nothing of doing many hundreds of miles a day in this car; it really does make very few demands on the driver.

Up the ante to Sport mode and the suspension firms up, but it's still a pleasingly fluid car to drive quickly, with loads of traction but never feeling obviously four-wheel drive. It's capable, secure and rather satisfying, but this is the GranCabrio at its best. Corsa drops the ride height as well as stiffening the suspension further, and this is a little less successful: ultimately the GranCabrio is a big, heavy car – not the type you feel inclined to push overly hard when raw physics start to come into play.

What of the Folgore? Well, as someone who's always seen a charismatic Italian internal combustion engine as a key part of the Maserati recipe, particularly in those models of the past that were often a bit flaky in other areas, I have to say the idea didn't exactly thrill me. But in all honesty it does work well, as long as you're buying this car principally as comfortable, stylish transport. With 750bhp it's searingly fast in a straight line too (0-62mph takes just 2.8sec), and there's a real novelty factor in being able to hear

nature as you pass through it. However, there's no hiding the weight when you start to press on, and without that sense of mechanical interaction the experience leaves me cold. I'd never take one over the Trofeo. It's more expensive, too (£185,610).

Overall, the GranCabrio's biggest strength is its unique blend of characteristics. More GT than a DB12, more sports car than a Bentley Continental GTC, it considerably undercuts that pair of £200,000-ish rivals on price. Maserati likes to point out that it's been making cars like this for decades, and it has to be said that with the new GranCabrio, that experience seems to count for plenty. ✕

Engine V6, 2992cc, twin-turbo **Power** 542bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 479lb ft @ 3000rpm **Weight** 1895kg (291bhp/ton)
Tyres Pirelli P Zero **0-62mph** 3.6sec
Top speed 196mph **Basic price** £169,585

🟢 Firecracker of a V6, soothing ride quality, interior space
 🟠 Cabin lacks the wow factor; not really a sports car

evo rating ★★★★★

Driven



by YOUSUF ASHRAF

Mini Cooper SE

An all-new Mini is here, and this time it's all electric. Can the 215bhp Cooper SE capture the unmistakable Mini magic of its combustion-engined forebears?

MINI IS UNDERGOING ITS BIGGEST transformation since the turn of the millennium. Its future will be electric, and heavy investment is being pumped into new-gen models that will see the entire Mini range revamped by the end of this year. There's a buzz around the brand and it all sounds promising – until you read the spec sheet of the new Cooper SE hatchback. 215bhp, 243lb ft, 250 miles of range, 1605kg... sorry, what? A three-door supermini that weighs almost

as much as an Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio? That must be a typo.

It isn't. Despite being built on a brand-new EV platform, the Cooper SE has piled on 240kg over its Mini Electric predecessor, giving it what must be one of the worst size-to-weight ratios of any new car. The flip side is that some of that mass comes from a substantially larger, 49.2kWh battery pack, which makes the new model (quite literally) miles more useable than the old one ever

was with its puny 145-mile WLTP range. That's now been extended to 250 miles, while 95kW charging capability means a 10-80 per cent top-up takes half an hour.

There's more power than before too. The SE still has a single electric motor mounted at the front, but its outputs have increased by 34bhp and 44lb ft. The resulting totals are on a par with those of Alpine's A290, which is shaping up to be a real contender in the electric hot hatch





space judging by our early drive in a prototype (evo 320). However, being 126kg lighter the Alpine is the quicker of the pair, beating the Mini's 6.7sec 0-62mph time by three tenths.

That said, we're glad the SE isn't a numbers freak. This isn't an EV that commands your attention through its performance alone, which should bring other elements – the ones we most enjoy in traditional hot hatches – into sharper focus. Weight aside, the fundamentals look good too, with the battery pack mounted within the floor for a low centre of gravity and the wheels pushed out to the extremities of the car, leaving short overhangs front and back.

Mini describes the new car's design language as 'Charismatic Simplicity'. For everyone else, that means the body is stripped of chrome and unnecessary detailing to make it look less fussy and more modern, which it does. In base-level Classic trim, the result is perhaps a bit too minimalist, missing some of the visual charm of this car's predecessors. Stepping up to the mid-level Exclusive trim, as pictured here, adds a silver grille surround, bigger wheels and fancier seats, among other details, for an extra £2200. Meanwhile Sport trim – a further £1300 – restores even more visual punch with JCW styling add-ons and aero paraphernalia. The only thing missing is a pair of central exhaust cannons.

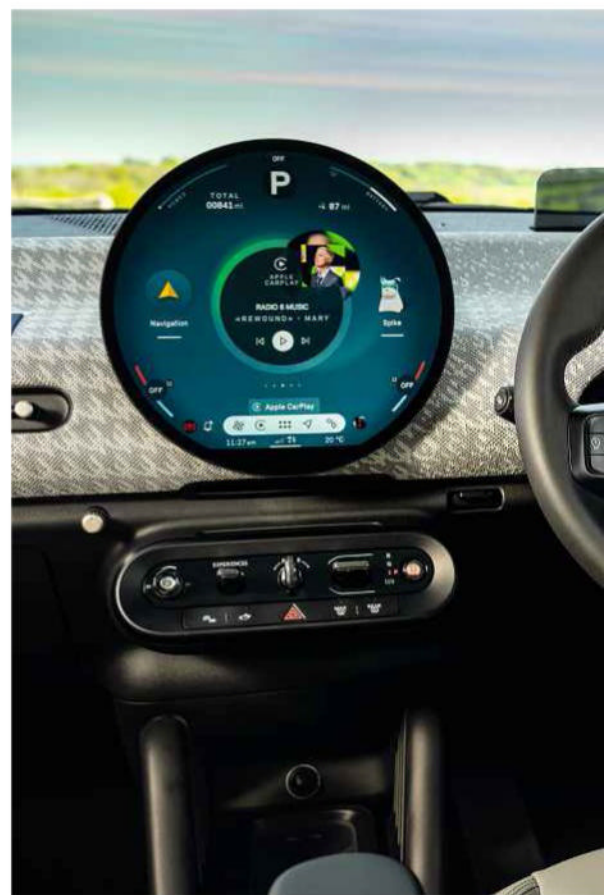
From the inside, the outgoing Mini's letterbox windscreen and mass of dashboard made it feel bigger than it actually was, and while the new car

Right: dials behind the steering wheel have been dropped to mimic the classic Mini dash layout of the '60s and '70s; speed is shown in the new 'floating' central infotainment screen and the head-up display

has a familiar architecture, it feels a touch more airy, more welcoming and less enclosed. A large volume has been scooped out of the dash and there's less clutter, with a simplified HMI system installed in the centre. This is both good and bad. Good in that the new, circular OLED screen is crisp and responsive, but bad in that some functions force you to take your eyes off the road to delve deeper into the submenus. The quality of the cabin is excellent for the most part though, and a cut above that of other superminis.

Twist the start/stop switch on the dash, click the gear selector down to drive and you set off in silence – or to the odd whooshing and warbling of the synthetic driving noise if you haven't turned it off yet (we did after a few miles). Familiar Mini traits come through all the touchpoints straight away, and there's a sharp, excitable energy to the driving experience. The SE is a hot hatch, and it wants you to know that through its quick steering, agitated ride and eager reactions. It's clearly been dialled up to deliver an immediate sense of fun, whereas something like Hyundai's admittedly more focused i20 N has more depth and does so through more authentic means.

The floor-mounted battery means you sit higher than you would in a petrol Cooper S, but





there isn't much roll to amplify the effect of this. That's in part due to the low centre of gravity, but also because the chassis is tightly wound to control the mass. The springing is firm and the body bobs and jostles over imperfections, which can be tiring, but there's just enough cushioning through big impacts to take most of the harshness away.

The dampers are passive, but cycling through the drive modes amplifies other elements of the car's character. 'Go Kart' mode sharpens the throttle and adds weight to the steering, but you can configure these parameters yourself (and switch between DSC modes) in the settings menu. The steering is best left in Comfort mode for lighter efforts and to amplify the car's sense of agility, and with Sport for the powertrain and traction control disengaged, you need a degree of sensitivity in your right foot to drive cleanly out of corners. The Mini's planted cornering attitude can come undone very quickly if you demand all the torque at once, both front tyres lighting up as they might in a traditional front-drive hatch with a locking diff in the wet. It can feel scrappy, but managing power to the front axle gives you something to focus on, forcing you to adjust your lines and driving style to get the best from the SE.

Carry more speed, hustle the car through direction changes and it's the rear that starts to break away, pivoting the nose in if you suddenly release the throttle. You need to be aggressive to work through the SE's inherent stability and

you're conscious of the high loads going through the tyres, but there's progression in the transition to slip and it helps you set up for a smooth, straight release away from corners. Just make sure to leave some margin at the exit to account for a flicker of wheelspin and torque steer pulling you off line.

This window of adjustability is smaller and harder to access than in our favourite hot hatches, but it is there. And though the Cooper SE has the immediate pick-up and initial burst of acceleration we're used to from EVs, you don't arrive at corners with a worrying sense that a lot of speed needs to be scrubbed off very quickly. It's one of the reasons why, unless you're driving well outside of the car's comfort zone, it doesn't feel as heavy as it actually is.

That's not to say Mini has completely nailed the formula for an electric hot hatch. In some ways, it feels like the SE is trying a little too hard to deliver an instant sense of fun, and while it does back this up to an extent, it's still missing the authentic feel of the very best, an absorbing depth of character to learn, exploit and enjoy. But as a calling card for what the new era of electric hot hatches could offer, it's a positive first step. **x**

Motor 1 x 160kW **Power** 215bhp **Torque** 243lb ft
Weight 1605kg (136bhp/ton) **Tyres** Maxxis Premia 5
0-62mph 6.7sec **Top speed** 106mph **Basic price** £34,500

+ A fast, well-built and agile electric hatch
- Lumpy ride; heavier than it ought to be

evo rating ★★★★★

by JAMES TAYLOR

Mercedes-AMG E53 Hybrid 4Matic+

There's no new E63 for now, but there is a new E-class range-topper, and it's AMG's first long-distance PHEV

MERCEDES-AMG IS NOT PLANNING TO build a new E63. So, for the foreseeable future, this is the most potent E-class you can get: the new E53 Hybrid 4Matic+. Available as either a saloon or estate, it's AMG's first 'long-range' hybrid, a plug-in with a 59-mile all-electric potential.

A 120kW electric motor is integrated into the transmission between the engine (a 443bhp 3-litre straight-six) and gearbox (a nine-speed auto). Total system output is 577bhp and 553lb ft, although Race Start mode – included in the optional AMG Dynamic Plus package – gives you a 604bhp total output, albeit only momentarily

from a standing start. The 400V, 28.6kWh battery lives under the boot floor, meaning a slightly smaller boot than in other E-class variants, though still a reasonably roomy one.

It's not the same powertrain as that found in the similarly named Mercedes-AMG CLE 53 hybrid (see Driven, **evo** 322): the engine is virtually the same but the hybrid side of the equation is rather different, as the CLE 53 isn't a plug-in.

The E53 can travel at 87mph powered by its electric motor alone. As a default, unless you change the drive mode before setting off, the car pulls away in electric 'EL' mode, using its electric motor only. (After all, it can deliver its 354lb ft

from effectively 0rpm.) If you need more power, or the battery's running low, it automatically – and smoothly, it must be said – brings the engine into play and switches to Comfort mode.

Other drive modes are selected via the little rotary switch on the steering wheel: Sport, Sport+ and Battery Hold to retain the current level of charge. In EL mode, you can also toggle three different regenerative braking levels.

The brake pedal blends regular friction braking and motor regen, with a vacuum-independent electromechanical booster. The hydraulic braking system's power is varied on the fly, the aim being consistent brake pedal pressure for the driver.





Pedal feel is certainly less vague than in some hybrids and the E53 stops well during our test, but subjectively you don't *quite* have the total consistency and feedback you get from a traditional pure friction brake system.

The straight-six's delivery is nice and smooth, and the E53 is a pleasantly, if undramatically, swift car to drive. There's no frantic rush to the engine's top end but it is flexible and refined. You can artificially enhance the sound in the option menus, but it's at its best – and most like a classical straight-six – when left to its natural note. It's a refined car at a cruise, with a little road noise from the wide tyres but impressively little wind and powertrain noise.

Both the engine and e-motor power all four wheels, and in theory the E53 features a 'fully variable' torque split via an electromechanical clutch. In practice, a certain amount of torque is always sent to the front wheels for torque vectoring and a certain amount of charge in the battery is always set aside by the powertrain

Above: E53 Hybrid is available in saloon and estate bodies, and combines a 3-litre straight-six with an e-motor for 577bhp; despite the wagon weighing 45kg more, both versions are almost identical to drive

management software to be ready for this in an extreme cornering situation. An electronically controlled limited-slip diff is fitted at the rear with the optional AMG Dynamic Plus package, while the front diff is open but assisted by torque vectoring.

The E53 is broader than a normal E-class, with wider tracks, wider wheels, different suspension and increased stiffening measures throughout. Suspension is by steel springs and Bilstein adaptive two-valve dampers, with three selectable modes. The damping is firm, as you'd expect from a performance car, but it's high-quality in the way it controls the body's movements, and even in the firmest Sport+ setting this is a comfortable car, although we should add that the roads on our German and Austrian test route are mostly very much on the smooth side. The E53 copes

well with diagonal inputs at higher speeds, for example crossing a ridge in the road surface during loaded cornering.

In terms of stability, on the autobahn you can feel a bit of lift at the front (we reach 160mph in the saloon), but that's not unusual for a car like this and it's confidence-inspiring overall. Less so the chunky steering wheel, which is difficult to fit your hands around perfectly (just as in the C63 and AMG GT, with frustrating touch-sensitive surfaces on the spokes). That exacerbates the slightly numb-feeling steering, which is not particularly communicative. It is well insulated from kickback and cambers, however, and very accurate. It's a fast steering set-up, and you don't need much lock for tight corners, particularly at low speeds, with the standard-fit rear-wheel steering in action. That can feel a bit odd at first, but you quickly get used to it, and the E53 is keen to change direction, despite its heavy kerb weight.

It feels lighter than it really is: the saloon weighs 2315kg and the estate 2360kg. Despite



all that mass, the saloon takes just 3.8sec to get from 0 to 62mph with the optional Race Start system, or 4.0sec without. Add a tenth to both figures for the estate. Top speed is electronically limited to 155mph, or can be lifted to 174mph for the saloon, 171mph for the estate, with the optional AMG Driver's Package.

Despite the 45kg weight difference between saloon and estate, they feel practically identical to drive. And they are effectively identical mechanically, with just a few very minor changes to spring rates and damper calibration for the estate version.

I enjoyed driving the E53. It has a show-stopping interior, with better fit and finish than we've encountered in other recent Mercedes, impressive damping and a level of nimbleness that belies its weight. Its electric range means many users could conceivably commute without waking the engine, but still enjoy its performance further afield. It's also a superb long-distance car and practical enough for many families. It is not cheap



Above and top left: cockpit is one of the best we've seen in recent Mercedes, with an impressive finish; its main flaw is the steering wheel's overly chunky rim

at £90,860 for the saloon and £93,110 for the estate. Nor is it necessarily a car with which you'd plan a driving adventure. A BMW M3 saloon or Touring is similarly priced yet much more exciting and involving to drive (albeit a smaller car; the upcoming M5 will be a more comparable rival in terms of size, if perhaps not price or performance).

The E53's comparative lack of drama could be a strength for some buyers, however. If you want a refined, comfortable, swift and posh-feeling performance saloon or estate – albeit with fewer thrills than an E63 – you may find plenty to enjoy. ☒

Engine In-line 6-cyl, 2999cc, turbocharged, plus 120kW e-motor **Power** 577bhp **Torque** 553lb ft **Weight** 2360kg (estate) (248bhp/ton) **0-62mph** 3.9sec (with optional Race Start) **Top speed** 171mph (optional) **Basic price** £93,110

➤ Refinement, performance, long-distance comfort
 ➤ Weight, price, not the most memorable of cars

evo rating ★★★★★

by STUART GALLAGHER PHOTOGRAPHY by STAN PAPIOR for McLaren

McLaren Artura Spider

The launch of the Spider has given McLaren the opportunity to take the Artura to a new level of brilliance

TO SAY THAT McLaren's ARTURA HAD a troubled birth would be something of an understatement. Delayed media drives, when they did take place, ended in failed HVAC systems, split oil-lines and fires. This naturally resulted in delayed deliveries of customer cars, which in turn meant the P&L statement took a hit.

Despite this, 2000 Artura coupes have been delivered since the end of 2022 – and now they are effectively obsolete. Sorry existing Artura owners, but McLaren's 'facelifted' Artura, which now includes the open-top Spider variant, is such a comprehensive makeover delivering such strong results in terms of how it drives that if you stepped from the original to the new you'd be forgiven for thinking they were two different cars. It's nearly on a par with when Porsche claimed the Gen 2 997-series 911 was merely a facelift despite its new engine, gearbox and interior.

With the roof panel tucked away (requiring eight e-motors to manipulate the 15kg section of reinforced composite plastic) the new glass buttresses sparkle as the sun catches them, while the revised engine cover features new cooling intakes for the hybrid V6 now that there's no room for the coupe's 'cooling stacks'. But the Spider still looks very much like every other McLaren. Hopefully new head of design Tobias Sühlmann has been given plenty of blank sheets of paper to sketch what comes next. Beating the engine cooling upgrades for subtlety are the pair of teeny, tiny Gurneys on the leading edge of the windscreen header rail. They're so subtle they require a McLaren tech to point them out to you, the equivalent of an F1 car's new front wing element that only Ted Kravitz can spot.

There's no intrusion to the cockpit to accommodate the opening roof mechanism,



‘The way the remap allows the V6 to rev out with more vigour is very noticeable as you hunt down every rpm’



and the carbon-composite tub – the McLaren Carbon Lightweight Architecture (MCLA) that was introduced with the Artura coupe – loses none of its structural rigidity. Ergonomics remain hard to fault in terms of how your torso aligns with the instrument stack (fixed to the steering column so that both move as one) and your line of sight. The wheelarch intrusion into the footwell does require a twist of the hips to get your feet where you want them to be on the pedals, however, so try before you buy.

With the roof open there's noticeable turbulence around the top of the pillar behind your outer shoulder, and if you drop the glass screen that sits between the buttresses you're simply adding to the air ingress. Best to leave it in place until you raise the roof again, then you can drop it to savour the V6's soundtrack, although with the roof closed and even with the optional sports exhaust fitted, it's still piped into the cabin through a Bowers & Wilkins speaker positioned between the two seats.

As a Spider, the Artura delivers those sensations that only open-top cars can, providing the stronger connection between you and the elements that makes a closed-roof car feel sterile by comparison. Although blatting around the Route Napoléon helps; I'm not sure Birmingham's Bullring would deliver quite the same sensations.

Despite the Artura losing its head being the headline news, the significant changes that raise its game above the original are mostly unseen. Chief amongst these are those made to the 3-litre twin-turbo V6, which receives a 20bhp boost to give a 597bhp peak. There's no change to the hybrid system (94bhp, 166lb ft of torque, 130kg of weight), with its axial-flux radial motor located within the bellhousing and the 8kWh battery mounted towards the rear of the monocoque floor. The e-motor still provides reverse gear, leaving the eight-speed dual-clutch transmission that was introduced on the coupe to focus on forward propulsion. Of which

Above and above right: conversion to Spider adds 62kg, but you'd hardly know; engine cover gains new vents in place of the coupe's 'cooling stacks'

there is now rather a lot, the powertrain producing a combined 691bhp and 531lb ft.

That additional 20bhp might not read like much – it is, after all, less than a four per cent increase – but the remapping of the power delivery and the way it allows the V6 to rev out with more vigour is very noticeable. Where previously it would tail off as you approached its peak, giving the feeling that you were holding out for higher rpm for the sake of it, the speed the motor now maintains as you stretch it for as long as you dare keeps you hooked in and totally absorbed as you hunt down every last rev.

At its quickest it will reach 62mph in 3.0sec, 124mph in 8.4sec and 186mph in 21.6sec. Top speed is an academic but impressive (for internet bragging rights) 205mph. And not a single one of these



matters when you're in full flow, riding the torque wave or hanging on to the power curve. It's an engine with the performance efficiency you expect today blended with some old-school, hardcore character – and it's all the better for it.

Twenty-five per cent faster gearshifts add to the increased adrenaline flowing through the car, and while the hybrid system remains unchanged, the recalibration of the Artura's electronics results in it having a stronger impact on how the Spider gets down the road, specifically out of slower corners and when you're leaning on its sizeable mid-range. If you don't want to get busy with the top end, there's more than enough meat in the mid-range to gorge on. Few do raw performance as well as McLaren.

Few do dynamics as well either, and the opportunity to enhance the Artura's chassis with the introduction of the Spider wasn't passed up. New engine mounts allow the V6 and the MCLA tub to react to inputs as one, rather than generating

different movements at different rates as was the case previously. There's also an updated domain controller for the Proactive Damping Control, the dampers themselves have new valves, and the adaptive software has been recalibrated too. Of larger significance are the new damper shim stacks and, where previously McLaren used an off-the-shelf nut to secure the damper to the suspension arms, there's now a bespoke item machined to its own spec to improve how the two components are located together.

The results are tangible, specifically in terms of how the Artura steers rather than how it rides and manages its body control, which remains at the same high McLaren standard: the compliant way it breathes with the surface remains at odds with what your eyes are telling you should be happening beneath you. Yet it's the new-found calmness in the Artura's steering that strikes you most.

McLaren has stuck with its electro-hydraulic set-up, remaining unconvinced by full EPAS systems, and it's still sharp and crisp in its responses, confidence-inspiring and rich in detail and feel when you start to eat away at a corner's radius. The new dimension is that it has eradicated all but the most extreme kickback through the wheel that previously told you the front axle was being given a workover but not to worry because everything was still heading in the expected direction. Now you still have great feel and feedback, accuracy and linearity, but gone are the higher forces working your hands on the wheel, making for a much more precise and rewarding car to build a flow and rhythm with. On rubbish UK roads it could be transformative: the hyperactivity calmed but at no expense to clarity.

Weighing in 62kg heavier than the coupe, there's no dynamic price to pay for opening the Artura's roof. It still entertains and rewards and showcases its motorsport DNA at every opportunity, delivering a supercar experience regardless of your speed. Enhanced brake cooling has improved both the pedal consistency and the stopping performance; any lengthening of the pedal during repeated high-temperature, high-speed braking is consistent and allows you to compensate with the pressure you apply. Some will still find the pedal set-up for left-foot braking an unnecessary detail in a road car, though.

McLaren believes the updates it has introduced with the Artura Spider and also applied to the coupe are as significant as the ones that took the 720S to the 750S, and on this evidence it is hard to argue. The Artura impressed in 2022, so much so that we couldn't split it from Ferrari's 296 GTB in that year's **evo** Car of the Year, the two sharing third spot on the podium. The dynamic improvements and more exciting performance delivery potentially lift the McLaren above the Ferrari in that pecking order. A rematch will be fascinating.

There is, however, a fly in the ointment for those 2000 existing Artura owners, because while they will be able to benefit free of charge from the updated model's engine upgrade, the hardware changes required to upgrade the chassis – revised engine mounts, new suspension mountings – are too complex a job to be carried out on a car that's already been built. Which is a pity for those early customers who waited so long for their Artura. For those who have been waiting for either a Spider or a 2025 model year coupe, the good news is that the Artura is finally over its growing pains. **X**

'The dynamic improvements could lift the Artura above the 296 GTB'

Engine V6, 2993cc, twin-turbo, plus e-motor
Power 691bhp @ 7600rpm **Torque** 531lb ft @ 2250-7000rpm
Weight 1560kg (450bhp/ton) **Tyres** Pirelli P Zero Corsa
0-62mph 3.0sec **Top speed** 205mph **Basic price** £221,500

+ Engine and chassis revisions take Artura to new heights

- Generic looks don't quite live up to the dynamics

evo rating ★★★★★





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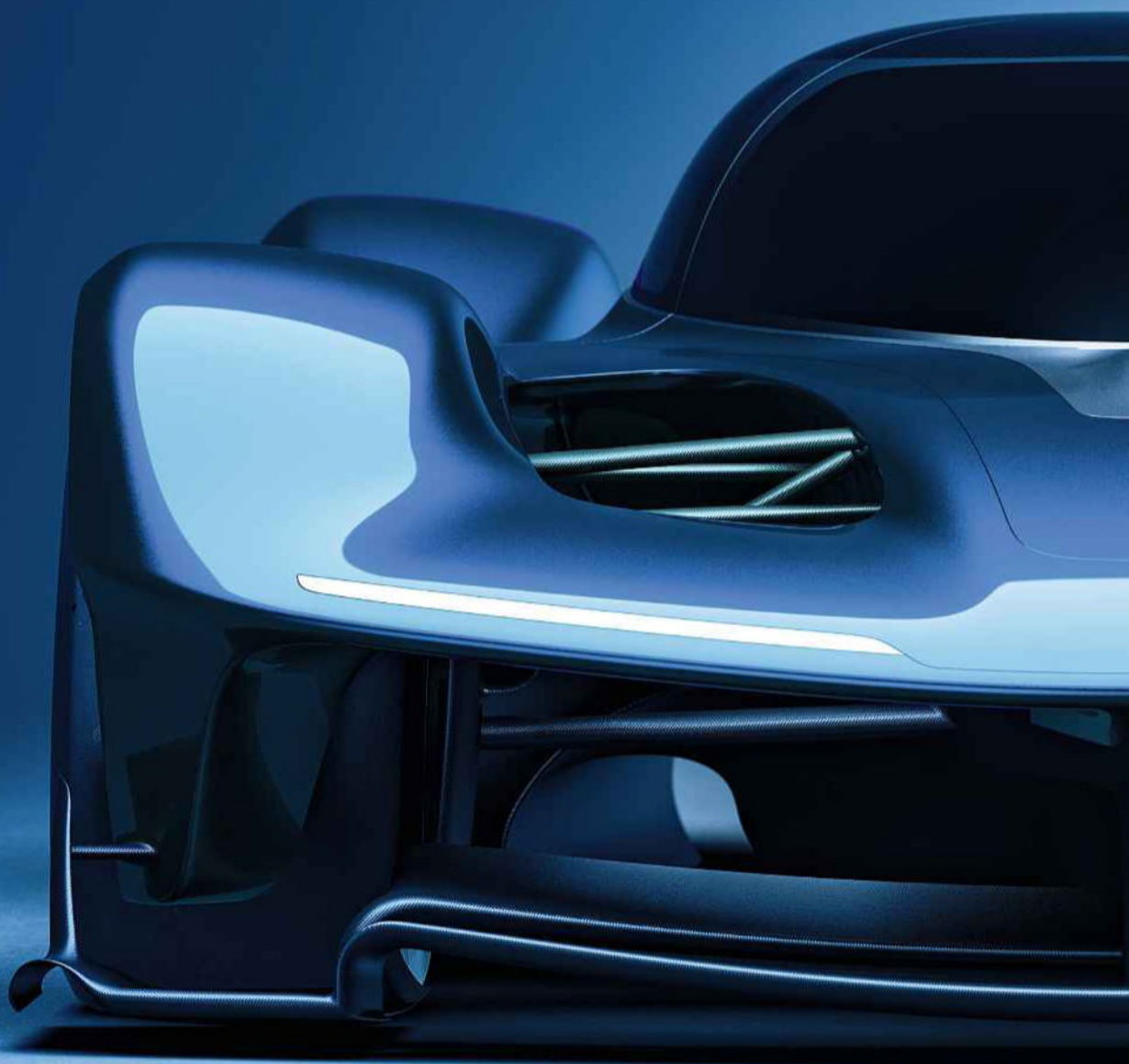
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FAST AS F1

Red Bull has revealed its first 'car', the 1184bhp, V10-hybrid, track-only RB17 - and it's faster than the team's own F1 machine



THIS IS ADRIAN NEWHEY UNLEASHED. The result of not having to follow those pesky FIA rules and regulations. The learnings from the mistakes made with the Aston Martin Valkyrie...

The RB17 is twenty years of Red Bull condensed into a single car, one that, according to the company's simulations, would have beaten George Russell's pole position time at the 2024 British Grand Prix (although presumably with a current F1 driver at the wheel and no one in the passenger seat). The track-only hypercar is also proof that Milton Keynes' answer to Ferrari can build more than world championship-winning single-seaters.

It is a project that started on Newey's drawing board in December 2020, although it wasn't until January 2024 that the concept stage was completed. 'The Valkyrie was a very compressed timeframe from when we had to have the first concept drawings to when we had to release detailed drawings,' explains Newey, the outgoing chief technical officer of Red Bull. 'In hindsight it was a bit too compressed.'

The timeframe adopted by Red Bull Advanced Technologies, the division responsible for the project, allowed Newey and technical director Rob Gray to evaluate three different powertrain configurations – a V6 or V8 turbocharged hybrid,

and the Cosworth 4.4-litre V10 hybrid eventually settled on – and to explore whether the electric motor should be located on the front or rear axle. 'There's been a lot of evolution between our first design and what you see today,' continues Newey, speaking after the car's unveiling at Goodwood. 'There's been a lot of checking and double-checking that we had the correct packaging so the car will be relatively easy to work on. These were all lessons learned from the Valkyrie.'

If the RB17's timeframe is equated to F1, where a new car is designed every 12 months, the RB17 is on its third season: 'The car we've revealed today is a year old, and it's our second evolution. The third,





final model will be smaller – shorter and narrower – as we continue to develop the design.’ The production RB17 delivered to customers will have the same footprint as an Aston Martin DBX (the SUV has a 3060mm wheelbase and its body is 1998mm wide). It has been designed to be enjoyed by drivers of differing levels of experience, from those with some track driving experience ready to take their next step (after some time on Red Bull’s simulator) to experienced Pro-Am and Pro drivers. Being a two-seater (the cockpit features a staggered seat layout) there will be the option to take partners and friends for the ride of their life – or your driving coach to provide live input.

Active suspension will underpin the car while active aero will squeeze it into the ground. Downforce will peak at 1700kg, more than today’s F1 cars have, although above 150mph the aero has been designed to allow the downforce to bleed off so that the bespoke Michelin tyres – one treaded compound and two slicks will be available – don’t collapse under the loads.

Low weight was a priority objective for the project. At under 900kg the RB17 is on a par with GMA’s T.50, and the lengths that have been taken to keep weight to a minimum without compromising useability are equally impressive. The V10 weighs 150kg, but 15kg was sacrificed by using rubber engine mounts to reduce cabin noise, thus preventing the need for ear defenders when driving, another Valkyrie learning.


The weight can increase depending on the final spec each of the 50 customers opts for. No HVAC system and a straight-through exhaust is the lightest configuration, but the car has been designed so these components can be bolted in and out depending on where the customer intends to drive the car and the regs in force.

Newey (left) describes the RB17 as a turn-key car, but team principal Christian Horner suggests

most owners will call upon Red Bull to run their RB17s for them. ‘We’ll offer a support package to customers: deliver the cars to any circuit, prepare them and run them through the day with a team on hand to make sure they get the best from the car.’

Fully funded by Red Bull – ‘We didn’t need depositors to fund the project; the Red Bull shareholders have supported us from the start,’ explains Horner – the carbon-chassis RB17 will arrive in late 2025 with the 50 examples taking two to three years to build at the firm’s Milton Keynes campus. Its Cosworth V10 engine will rev to 15,000rpm and, combined with the 197bhp electric motor, peak power is rated at 1184bhp.

Drive will be to the rear wheels via a six-speed gearbox. Hydraulic power steering, adjustable traction control and ABS for the carbon-ceramic brakes will all be standard equipment – and designed and developed in-house by Red Bull. And if Red Bull can’t design or manufacture a component or system, it will call upon the same suppliers it uses for its F1 cars.

The V10 has been designed to run for 24 hours without pause: ‘It would be great to see it run at Le Mans,’ says Horner when asked if Red Bull has any desire to expand into endurance racing. Service intervals will be 5000 miles and the RB17 can run on pump fuel. And the cost? £5.75m plus local taxes. Or roughly a tenth of Max’s yearly pay. 

‘IT WOULD BE GREAT TO SEE IT RUN AT LE MANS, SAYS CHRISTIAN HORNER’





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Paul Ripley

High performance driving guru

Serial 911 buyer Ripley has dedicated his life to making himself the best driver he can be – and passing his wisdom and experience on to a new generation of drivers

by JOHN BARKER

I'M A COMMITTED GUY. BORN GRAFTER. If I set my mind to something, it will happen,' says Paul Ripley, celebrated high performance driving guru. He grew up in a deprived part of Leeds in the '50s, 'in a one-up, one-down with a toilet at the end of the street'. His family was musical and he took up the drums at the age of five. 'My uncle was a drummer in the army and it got a hold of me. I hated school with a vengeance and music was the way out. I'd come home and practise four hours a night in the outhouse, really regimented and disciplined.

'I became quite a prolific player. I could sight-read just about anything and left school at 15 and became a professional musician. I worked with just about everybody – Tom Jones, Cilla Black, Brotherhood of Man – went around the world three times on cruise ships before I was 19, did cabaret, session recordings, big bands, jazz quintets... I earned a lot of money. There was a lot of drunks, a lot of druggies in the business but I was teetotal, focused. I didn't have a drink until I was 50.'

Ripley had a weakness for cars though. 'My dad had a Morris Minor and I learned to drive and skid in the field directly opposite. I eventually got that Minor off him. Then I bought a Mini and we put a 1071 Cooper S engine in it. It was ridiculous; great little car.' Then came a Lotus Cortina. 'The finance for the insurance was more than my mortgage at the time but I had to have it... and then I wrote it off.

'It was a big shunt. Nearly killed myself. I was knocked out and trapped in the car. I got interviewed by the police in hospital. The copper said: "What speed were you doing around that corner, Paul?" I said: "What's the speed limit on

that road?" He said 40. I said: "Probably about 40, then." He said: "Young man, Lotus Cortina... what's the link?" I said I was just a driving fanatic. He said: "When you get out of hospital, do you want to come to the police skidpan at Crofton, Wakefield? We have an open evening every second Tuesday of the month." So I went along. Wow. That's what kicked it off. I thought, I want to do this. I can do this. That's basically where it all started.'

On a trip to the 1976 German Grand Prix at Hockenheim in a borrowed van, Ripley bought a copy of *Motor* to read on the ferry and in the back pages he spotted an advert for The High Performance Course. 'I thought: I can do that.' He set about learning everything he could about driving. He'd earned so much as a drummer he didn't have to work. 'I gave up being a professional musician and studied for two years. I read everything I could. In the morning I'd do theory and in the afternoon I'd practise on the road. Utopia.'

He travelled the world for the next five years, trying everything. 'I went drag racing, to skid control circuits, rally driving on loose surfaces and to race schools: Skip Barber's, Jim Russell's, Bob Bondurant's... I think I went to 37 circuits in the States, Europe and Canada.' He was also amassing qualifications but realised fairly early on that the learning was going to be an endless, ongoing process because perfection was unobtainable.

'I remember getting this RoSPA [Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents] diploma and all these fancy abbreviations behind it. The chief inspector said: "Really good drive that, lad." Fantastic, thanks so much. They stood us all in a line and I was the last guy, the only civilian. He handed me





my certificate and said: "There you are son, you've arrived," and I said: "Where do I go now?" He said: "For what?" I said: "On a scale of one to ten, on a good day I'm on five, maybe five and a half. I'm not interested in a five and a half. Where do I go now to get to nine and a half?" He shook his head and said: "This is the highest form of driving competence in civilian life in Europe. Understand what I'm saying?" I said: "I don't think you understand what I'm saying." He said: "We beg to differ, you've arrived, well done." I said: "I haven't even started yet."

In 1978 Ripley set up his first company, the Road and Track Performance Driving School. 'In those days with no mobile phones, no internet, you were advertising in the back of magazines, half a page at £500 a shot. Took me a long time to get established, a long time.'

Ripley's dedication led him to continue to seek out great drivers to learn from. The best, the ones that influenced him, developed his skills or gave him the impetus to develop his own skills, were Mike Franey and Jim Brown. Franey, an accomplished racer, was well known in driver development circles. They'd meet at Bruntingthorpe, the Leicestershire airfield turned test track.

'I had an M5 at the time, first-model M5, and I used to turn up with two sets of tyres. I'd book it for two hours and we'd go through both sets in that time, learning how to powerslide at 120mph. While I was doing that, he'd make me do things like steer with one hand and put a flat cap on with the other. One time he brought this Rolls-Royce down that was an absolute animal, but it just wouldn't go into oversteer. I'd tip it in at 100mph, I'm braking into it, nothing. He showed me how to do it. Unbelievable. His road driving wasn't very good so we'd spend the morning on the track and in the afternoon I'd take him road driving, so it was completely free.'

A great influence on Ripley's road driving was Jim Brown, a high performance course guy up in Scotland. 'Total legend. Just a building construction engineer. I used to spend days with him at a time. He was into road driving in an incredible way, a total master at his art. I used to watch his feet and think, what the flip is going on down there? I remember one time he was driving my car [a Sapphire Cosworth, chipped to just shy of 500bhp] and he's going seriously quickly and there's like six "sharp deviation of route" signs and double unbroken whites leading into a completely blind left-hander. We're in fourth, his hand goes down to the gearlever and I think he's going to slide it into third. No. Up to fifth, back on the power. I'm thinking, holy shit, and as soon as he put his hand back on the wheel I could feel that brake retardation. Next thing he's in second, spot-on speed for this blind bend. It was poetry in motion. I'm thinking, compared to this guy I'm a complete beginner.'

'He was the first guy that ever moulded track techniques into a road drive. He used to do sustained-rev gearchanging. No heel and toe. He

‘There have been tasty cars, many of them 911s – 37 at the last count’

used to brake and then be on the throttle from fifth to second or whatever it was, let his foot off the brake, you couldn't feel it, and he'd be back on the power again. Meeting Franey, Brown and all these great people, I'd come away with a load of stuff in my head that I wanted to develop. I used to practise, practise, practise until I got their skill.'

There were some tasty cars along the way, many of them 911s – 37 at the last count – but Ripley's had a few Ferraris too. 'I bought a 246 Dino for four grand. Never knew if it was going to start though. Had it six months and a guy gave me £10k for it. He said, "Do you want to part-ex it for a 308 GTS in white?" which is very unusual. So I did. Had that car for six months, sold it for £21k. Then I bought a 328 GTS, then a 355 GTS – I absolutely loved that car. I love cars that say "I will bite your fricking arse", which is probably why I like old 911s so much.'

By 1990, Ripley's driver training business was starting to gain traction. Then he got a call from Lotus. 'That changed everything. It was Alistair McQueen: "We need a driver trainer who knows his beans." God, that guy, what a driver.'

After a four-day 'audition', Ripley got the job. 'I used to go over there three weeks out of four and do driver training five days a week, four drivers a day, then write an assessment and give them a score. What graft that was. I did that for three or four years. Then I went to South Korea with Alistair and we trained all the Hyundai drivers.'

As his reputation grew, Ripley changed his company name to Paul Ripley Driving Courses and he was approached by *The Telegraph* newspaper to write a column for its motoring section. It was the start of a remarkable relationship that raised Ripley's profile ever higher and spanned nine years. It started as 'Safer Driving with Paul Ripley', eventually becoming 'Ask Ripley', where he would answer three questions a week. He then wrote the acclaimed high performance driving book aptly titled *Expert Driving*.

There was clearly a thirst for driving knowledge and insight, though not all who came for personal training shared it. 'You used to get a lot of them: "I know what I'm doing; I don't really know why I'm here." We'd come out of the house into a 30 limit, then a 40 limit and downhill into another 30 limit.

With this one guy, we went into this 30 limit at 85mph. I said to him: "What's the last traffic sign you saw?" He said: "I'm going that fricking fast I don't know!" I said, if you start braking now there's a lay-by two and a half miles up the road. We might just slow down enough to pull in and have a chat.

'I asked him, "What does high performance driving mean to you?" His answer: "Stick it in gear, give it a bootful?" I said, "Could it mean another level of performance from you, the driver?" He looked at me like, where's this going? I said, "What you'll learn about high performance driving, you'll be driving slower than probably you've ever driven in built-up zones; 75 per cent of traffic crashes happen in 30 zones, you need to be driving at 30. And it'll be great for you and brilliant for your discipline." By the end of the day, he's completely converted.

'It's almost a behavioural change they go through. You're driving slower? That's right. It's a high performance course, a higher level of performance from you the driver. They eventually get it. Great, come back in six months' time. They do and a completely different guy turns up. He's got a faster car but he drives it so well. And I love it.

'It's self-discipline. You can't just be a master of going fast. You want to be a master of everything, and that includes discipline. I've driven 57, 58 years with a completely clean licence. Never had a crash [since the Cortina]. I'm often asked "What's the most difficult skill to get right?" It's road driving, every day, because you'll never get the same drive, you never get the same equations to deal with.'

In 2000 Ripley sold the business to Brands Hatch. 'They bought the name, the brand. I couldn't fart without them knowing. So we buggered off to Vancouver because my wife's Canadian. I got into muscle cars big time: pickups, Stingrays, Camaros, big-block Chevilles... I had 11 cars at one time and a house with a centrally heated, five-car garage. I was buying and selling cars and houses to make some money because I wasn't allowed to earn any from driver training. We stayed for a few years.'

This year, at the age of 75, Ripley's back in the business of elite driver training. He's recruited what he thinks are the 20 or so best high performance/advanced driving instructors in the UK to deliver training for his new venture, Driving Masters. 'I'll write blogs and articles on mindset, skills and techniques and talk to customers.

'I get up at 5.30 every day and work for three hours before the missus gets up. She thinks I'm a nutcase but that's me: I'm disciplined, I want to produce, I want to do shit. And I want to get better at everything I do. I may just need another 911 too!

'I'll get into the Macan and just go out for an hour on B-roads. I'm just a really keen enthusiast; that's never left me. I don't want it to ever leave me. ❧

Opposite, from top left: Morris Minor in which the young Ripley learned to drive; his first two Ferraris, Dino and 308; Chevy pickups; Morgan Plus 8 on which he did a total rebuild in '77; the Plus 4 that he rebuilt and sold to buy the Plus 8; 911 2.7 RS Carrera with his mum and dad; 993 Carrera 2, and receiving the Prince Michael Road Safety Award in 2000





1948 – 1989 Air cooled Porsche Tyres

Porsche 356 Tyres

Porsche 356 (1948-'56) - 500/525X16 Stella Bianca
Porsche 356 A (1956-'59) - 165HR15 Pirelli Cinturato CA67
Porsche 356 B (1960-'63) - 165HR15 Pirelli Cinturato CA67
Porsche 356 C (1964-'65) - 165HR15 Pirelli Cinturato CA67

Porsche 912 Tyres

Porsche 912 (1965-'68) - 165HR15 Pirelli Cinturato CA67 or 165VR15 Michelin XAS
Porsche 912 (1968-'76) - 165HR15 Pirelli Cinturato CN36 or 165VR15 Michelin XAS

Porsche 911 Tyres

Porsche 901 (1964) - 165HR15 Pirelli Cinturato CA67
Porsche 911S (1965-'68) - 165HR15 Pirelli Cinturato CA67 or 165VR15 Michelin XAS
Porsche 911T (1968-'71) - 165HR15 Pirelli Cinturato CN36 or 165VR15 Michelin XAS or 185HR14 Michelin MXV-P
Porsche 911L (1968) - 165HR15 Pirelli Cinturato CN36 or 165VR15 Michelin XAS
Porsche 911E (1969) - 185HR14 Michelin MXV-P
Porsche 911S (1969-'75) - 185/70VR15 Pirelli Cinturato CN36 or 185/70VR15 Michelin XWX
Porsche 911E (1970-'73) - 185/70VR15 Pirelli Cinturato CN36 or 185/70VR15 Michelin XWX
Porsche 911T (1972-'73) - 185/70VR15 Pirelli Cinturato CN36 or 185/70VR15 Michelin XWX
Porsche 911 Carrera RS 2.7 (1973) - 185/70VR15 Pirelli Cinturato CN36 front. 215/60WR15 Pirelli Cinturato CN36 Rear
Porsche 911 2.7 (1974-'77) - 185/70VR15 Pirelli Cinturato CN36 front. 215/60WR15 Michelin XWX
Porsche 911 Carrera (1974-'75) - 185/70VR15 Pirelli Cinturato CN36 front. 215/60WR15 Pirelli Cinturato CN36 Rear
Porsche 911 Carrera (1976-'77) - 205/50YR15 Pirelli Cinturato P7 & 225/50YR15 Pirelli Cinturato P7

Porsche 914 Tyres

Porsche 914 (1970-'73) - 155HR15 Pirelli Cinturato CA67 or 155HR15 Michelin XAS
Porsche 914 (1974-'76) - 155HR15 Pirelli Cinturato CN36 or 155HR15 Michelin XAS

Porsche 930 tyres

Porsche 930 Turbo Carrera (1975-'77) - 205/50YR15 Pirelli Cinturato P7 & 225/50YR15 Pirelli Cinturato P7
Porsche 930 Turbo (1975-'77) - 205/50YR15 Pirelli Cinturato P7 & 225/50YR15 Pirelli Cinturato P7
Porsche 930 Turbo (1978-'85) - 205/55YR16 Pirelli Cinturato P7 & 225/50YR16 Pirelli Cinturato P7
Porsche 930 Turbo (1985-'89) - 205/55YR16 Pirelli Cinturato P7 & 245/45YR16 Pirelli Cinturato P7

Porsche 911SC Tyres

Porsche 911 SC (1978-'83) - 185/70VR15 Pirelli Cinturato CN36 & 215/60VR15 Pirelli Cinturato CN36. Optional 205/55YR16 Pirelli P7 N4 & 225/50YR16 Pirelli P7 N4
Porsche 911 Carrera (1984-'89) - 205/55YR16 Pirelli Cinturato P7 & 225/50YR16 Pirelli Cinturato P7
Porsche 911 Carrera Super Sport (1985-'89) - 205/55YR16 Pirelli Cinturato P7 & 245/45YR16 Pirelli Cinturato P7

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RICHARD MEADEN

Meaden recalls the highs – and lows – of a lifelong love affair with F1



ET IN THERE, LEWIS! IT'S BEEN A WHILE since we've heard that. For a hardwired winner like Hamilton, the drought since his last victory must have been agonising: weeks stretching into months and – inconceivably – into years. Then, just as we, and possibly he, had begun to think the unthinkable, Hamilton reminded us he's made of different stuff, holding his nerve to take a record ninth (NINTH!) British Grand Prix win.

It's a mark of a scintillating 2024 F1 season that this is just one of countless unforgettable moments. As I write, on the eve of the Belgian GP, no fewer than seven different drivers have stood on the top step of the podium in the first 12 races of the season, including first-time winners George Russell, Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri. Ferrari drivers Sainz and Leclerc also have one apiece, with the Spaniard – dropped by the Scuderia for next season, don't forget – currently outdriving his favoured teammate. With no fewer than seven wins, Max Verstappen leads the championship by a healthy margin, but he's clearly under pressure and increasingly frustrated at having to wrangle a reluctant Red Bull into contention.

I've followed F1 all my life, but I've never seen anything quite like this. The margins in qualifying are ridiculously tight. In Canada, Russell and Verstappen set identical times, with Norris taking 3rd just two-hundredths behind them. Pit-stops are equally tight, strategy decisions are on a knife-edge and the drivers are racing out of their skins. The cars are hard to love but the competition is golden.

It's about bloody time, true. But even in the periods of Williams, Ferrari, McLaren, Mercedes and Red Bull dominance I always found sufficient flashes of brilliance, tetchy rivalries and divisive team orders to spice things up.

My earliest F1 memories are of weekends at my grandparents' house, sleeping in a spare room that happened to have a small portable TV set; something I didn't have in my room at home. It had a loop aerial and gave a very scratchy black & white picture (yes, I'm that old) but with a bit of finagling it would hold just enough signal for me to watch the BBC's Grand Prix highlights programme when I ought to have been asleep. It was magic.

Since then, I've tried to watch every race. With mixed success it must be said, and yes, some epic Sunday afternoon snoozes,

but missing a race has always made me itchy. More recently during Covid the race weekends were a welcome escape back to some semblance of normality. Since then I've not missed a race.

Like most young British lads, I caught Mansell Mania during his epic Williams years. My mum worked for a computer-aided design company called Calma, who were a supplier to Williams and had small sponsor logos on the leading edge of the Williams-Hondas' sidepods. Consequently I used to get tons of posters and stickers, which got pinned and slapped all over my bedroom.

I still remember eagerly setting my alarm for the early hours of the morning to watch Mansell (hopefully) win the World Championship in the 1986 Australian Grand Prix. Just thinking about that race rekindles the heartbreak when his tyre blew in a

shower of sparks and Prost took the title. Five years later I was at Silverstone, on the packed embankment at Copse, roaring Mansell to victory. When he stopped on his victory lap to pick up Senna, who had retired his McLaren only moments before, the place went absolutely nuts and the track got invaded.

There have been dark days, too. Imola '94 was one of the bleakest weekends of my life. In the numbness that followed it was hard to feel joy for the sport that had killed one of my heroes, but in the end I couldn't stay away. And when you're treated to something like this year's Silverstone race, there's nothing to touch it.

Why the eulogy to F1? Well, apart from being a precious unbroken thread that I can trace back to early childhood at a time where I'm becoming increasingly jaded about the direction of road cars, I'm taking great pleasure from feeling enthused by Formula 1. The racing is the heart of it, of course, but I'm also gaining a greater understanding of the drivers and teams thanks to Liberty Media's transformative approach to opening up the previously clandestine inner workings of the sport.

The only blot on the horizon seems to be Brad Pitt's much-hyped movie, *F1*. I like Pitt and I was blown away by director Joseph Kosinski's commitment to extraordinary action sequences in *Top Gun: Maverick*. Sadly, if the trailer is anything to go by, no amount of wheel-to-wheel action is going to compensate for cringey dialogue and a plot as predictable as a Checo Perez spin. Not that it matters, for right now if you want to be entertained by an F1 blockbuster you only need watch the next race.

'During Covid, race weekends were a welcome escape back to some semblance of normality'

📧 @DickieMeaden

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

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RICHARD PORTER

Outraged by the new Capri? A quick reality check is required, reckons Porter



YOU MIGHT HAVE NOTICED THAT THE FORD Capri is back. Except it isn't, not as we remember. The Capri most people recall was a no-nonsense coupe powered by a slogging great V6, its manners as hairy as the driver's chest, its whole bearing the metallic manifestation of steak 'n' chips with a chaser of cheap Scotch. If ever a car had a smell, the Capri's was fags and Brut and petrol with extra lead in it. But the new Capri is... not that at all. It's an electric SUV in the inexplicably fashionable slant-backed 'coupe' style and sister to the new Euro-market Explorer, itself a Ford adaptation of the underdone underparts from the Volkswagen ID family.

When Ford announced the new Capri, world events in the same week – minor stuff like England reaching the Euro 2024 final and the attempted assassination of a former US president – took a back seat as car people thundered across the internet to express their fury at the decision to use such a sacred name on such an inappropriate car. But I'm not so sure.

The big beef seems to be that the new Capri isn't a coupe, but there's a very simple reason for this: no one wants coupes any more. Remember when car showrooms were crawling with two- and three-door cars built to a sleek and sporty brief? Calibra, Celica, Cougar, Corrado, Civic coupe... and that's just the ones that started with a C. They're all dead now. Coupés were fashion items and fashion has moved on, largely to SUVs. Which is why the new Capri is one.

You can wail at Ford but ask yourself this: if the new Capri had been a petrol-powered coupe, would you have bought one? The mythical modern Capri coupe is like the Church of England and opera; a lot of people like the idea that it exists without wanting to put any of their own money into it. And for a car maker, that's not good business.

Outside of posho German companies, only the Japanese car makers persist with coupes, but the latest Z-car doesn't come to Europe, the GR86 is brought here a handful at a time to ensure supply doesn't outstrip demand, and rumour has it the British debut of the forthcoming Prelude at the recent Goodwood Festival of Speed was a last-minute surprise to everyone, including Honda UK. Europe has fallen out of love with the

coupe and Ford isn't going to spend hundreds of millions tooling up for a car of a type that no one buys any more.

Let's not get carried away with this sacred status that's been suddenly conferred on the old Capri either, because for much of its life the Capri was, frankly, crap. We remember it now as a barrel-chested 2.8 injection or 3.0S, but throughout its three-generation lifespan a great many more Capris ran grumbly fours in 2.0, 1.6 and, worst of all, 1.3-litre capacities. And they were fitted to an adapted Cortina chassis with a leaf-sprung rear axle.

For a time the Capri offset its path-of-least-expense engineering by looking groovy, but this power wore off and by the 1980s it was increasingly seen as an embarrassment. In fact, by late 1984 left-hand-drive production had ceased and for the last two years of its life the sad, unfashionable coupe was made only as

a right-hooker, exclusively for a shrinking band of buyers in the UK and Ireland. The runout 280 model was meant to be called the Capri 500 after the total production number, but Ford misread the room, built over 1000, and found itself still trying to get rid of the damn things at a discount over a year after production ended. Don't get me wrong, I find a late model Brooklands Green 2.8i an appealing thing, but let's not pretend the Capri in its day triggered raw lust and admiration.

Thing is, questionable image or not, people do recognise and remember the Capri name. Which means, whatever the car it's stuck to in 2024, Ford can get a ton of free publicity for it.

And if you think it's all bad publicity, look outside of the car-o-sphere and see how the real world treated this news. Oh wow, it said without rancour, the Ford Capri is back. Companies pay millions for that kind of cut-through. Ford got it for nowt with some clever recycling of a badge from its history.

And history is the best weapon the Euro car makers have to fend off the growing might of the Chinese companies. BYD does not have a back catalogue of recognisable names and shapes stretching back to the 1960s. Renault does, which is why the 4 and 5 are coming back. BMW does, which is why its next-generation model range is called the Neue Klasse, just as it was 60 years ago. And Ford does, starting with an easily recognisable household name like Capri. Besides, it's their badge and they can do with it as they damn well please.

'Let's not get carried away with this sacred status. For much of its life the Capri was, frankly, crap'

✉ @sniffpetrol

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

PUTTING IN





A SHIFT

Can the addition of a manual gearbox and a raft of chassis mods transform BMW's Z4? And does it have the measure of its manual Toyota Supra cousin?

by JOHN BARKER PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

FITTING A MANUAL GEARBOX TO A LONG-established model makes little sense in the context of car makers' efforts to improve efficiency and lower their corporate CO2 levels. Today's automatic 'boxes deliver better economy and performance, essentially because they have a couple more ratios than a manual and can offer a more efficient use of power and torque. Shift speeds are faster than ever too, and if it's a DCT (dual-clutch transmission) the connection feel between the throttle and the driven wheels is as good as that of a manual gearbox.

Logically, then, a manual is regressive, a backward step, and yet, at the eleventh hour, after five years in production, BMW has decided to put a six-speed manual and three pedals in the six-cylinder Z4. Rather than saying 'why?', we say 'what took you so long?' because the Z4 isn't meant to be a practical, sensible choice, and a manual might give it some much-needed driver engagement and appeal.

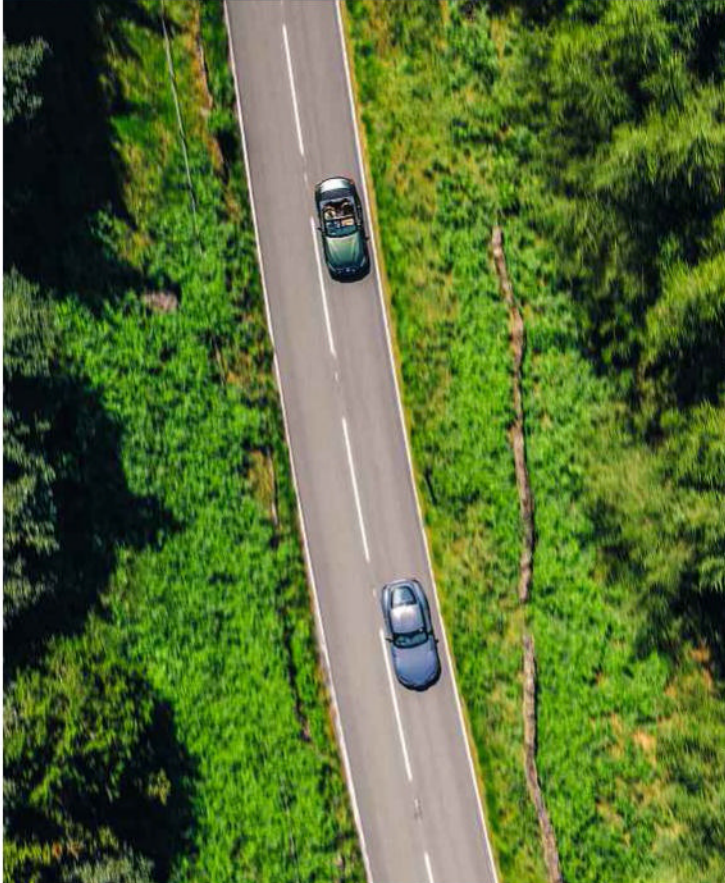
Until now, you could only have the Z4 with an eight-speed ZF auto and, to be honest, it seemed to fit the aspirations of the model and its customers down to the ground. Why the change of heart? Probably

not market pressure because the Z4 has consistently been the biggest seller in this roadster segment. It finds a big market in Germany, the UK and the US, and while we think of America as auto-dominated, it's a market that also believes that your sports car doesn't earn the title unless it's available with a stick shift – and then, when you've gone to the effort of making one, doesn't buy it. Witness the E60 M5 having a manual 'box in the US only (the rest of us didn't miss much; it wasn't a slick shift), where it accounted for less than seven per cent of sales.

The lack of a manual hasn't held the Z4 back in any market, so perhaps the reason for fitting one now is more prosaic. BMW and Toyota collaborated to create the Z4 and Supra, and Toyota has already done the leg work, employing ZF to fashion a six-speeder to mate up with the 3-litre straight-six. The manual launched in 2022 and it works well, lending the Supra another layer of appeal and engagement, something the Z4 could certainly benefit from.

BMW calls the new model the Z4 M40i Handschalter, or hand shift. It says that the gearbox 'uses M-specific components for the gear-set and





shafts, along with a custom-made shift lever and linkage', which is pretty close to Toyota's description of the work that went into creating the Supra gearbox. And a look at the technical specs reveals that the gear ratios and final drive of the Z4 and Supra are identical. In both, the manual saves 15kg over the auto, although despite that – and a lower final drive – they are each slower than their auto counterparts, if only by a tenth or two. But that's not the point.

There's more to the Handschalter Pack than just three pedals and a gearlever, though. The model also gets a revised chassis with new, mixed-size wheels – 19s at the

front, 20s at the rear – stiffer front anti-roll-bar mounts and revised tuning of the steering, rear dampers and adaptive M differential. The distinct colour you see here is 'Frozen Deep Green', a unique colour for the model that is paired with 'Cognac' leather interior trim. Coincidentally, when Toyota launched the manual Supra it did so with a special edition with matt paint and Cognac leather...

It's a curious, late mirroring from a joint enterprise that has so far seen so little. The two marques have avoided direct sales conflict by dint of the BMW being available only as a convertible and the Toyota only as a coupe, but



underneath they share the same basic platform, suspension and drivetrains and are built at the same Magna Steyr factory in Graz, Austria.

Get the two cars side-by-side and it's hard to believe they share so much because they look so different. The Z4 looks bigger, wider especially, an impression reinforced by those big, shiny-rimmed wheels, which stand out compared with the Supra's smaller-looking, gunmetal grey, forged wheels. The Z4 is a rather lumpy-looking car though, somewhat unresolved, while the Supra has taken a bit of heritage and blended it with echoes of Dodge Viper at the

rear to create something compact and sporty. It too is in an optional metallic colour here – which went unnoticed as it looked flat grey until the sun came out and its curves and sculpting were accentuated.

Having already spent a couple of days in the Supra, the Z4 is as different to be in as to look at, feeling wider across the cabin. A quick game of 'spot the shared parts' throws up similar seats, a number of the same switch panels but in different locations, and the still-excellent BMW rotary controller for the HMI. As in the Supra, the first and most vital use for this, which will have you pulled over at the





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side of the road within a few miles, is to seek out how to disable the intensely annoying and overly sensitive lane keep assist of both cars.

Push the start button and the classy beat of the BMW-sourced, 335bhp, single-turbo in-line six sounds louder than in the Toyota, and not just because there's only a fabric roof between you and the tailpipes. The Supra seems to have become more muted, perhaps due to the need for gas particulate filters in the exhaust, but the Z4 shows that you can get more voice. The delivery in the Z4 seems slightly different too, taking a few more revs to get going but then building to a bit more of a crescendo, which makes it a touch more exciting.

Much focus, though, is on the gearshift, and it should come as little surprise to discover that the shift actions of the two cars are probably their most similar characteristics. The lever in the Z4 is topped by the time-served, almost teardrop-shaped BMW knob, and this gives a very slightly different shift feel. It's fairly light but well defined, as BMW shifts have tended to be, but it's usefully more robust, not as elastic or knuckly as earlier BMW manuals. In both cars a slick shift is combined with a reasonably weighty, easily modulated clutch, though some credit for ease of use needs to be given to the outstanding engine mapping of the straight-six in both cars. There's rev-matching in both, too; you can switch it off, but it's so subtle that you barely notice it, assuming instead that you're aceing every heel-and-toe downshift.

So far, so good for the Handschalter, then, and there's more good news on the dynamics front, too. The bespoke chassis mods have created a Z4 that feels quite different and works off a surprisingly robust platform for a convertible. Pop the bonnet and you'll see aluminium braces that run from the strut tops to the slam panel (European Supras don't have them) but there must be plenty of hidden strengthening too to compensate for the open cockpit because it quickly becomes obvious that the Z4 has remarkable structural integrity. There's the odd faint twitter, but hood-down there's a total absence of shimmy and shake (and very little wind buffeting). Building on this solidity, the handling of the Z4 feels well balanced and composed, even on some of the gnarliest roads West Yorkshire has to offer.

It has an abundance of grip too, being shod with Michelin Pilot Super Sports, 265/35s at the front and massive 295/30s at the rear, so you can carry speed with confidence. The disappointment is the steering. The feel through the fat-rimmed wheel is a bit soft and lacks the detail that would allow you to place it with real precision, so while you can admire the handling and exploit the strong grip and traction out of tight corners, you don't feel as involved and in charge as you should be.

The Toyota is even more different than you might expect. You get the same high scuttle that makes judging the extremities a challenge, and then on top of that, literally, you have the coupe roof, which makes the cockpit darker and more confined in feel. The straight-six is more muted and different in character, too. In the BMW its delivery



Right: both have a BMW-developed 3-litre turbocharged straight-six, but there are differences in delivery and sonics; Z4 now also shares the Supra's ZF-developed six-speed manual (far left), with a few subtle modifications

is pretty conventional, taking a little while to get into its turbocharged stride, but the Toyota pulls astonishingly well virtually from tickover and just gets stronger and stronger, as if it has a chunk less kerb weight to haul. That's not the case – there's only around 50kg between the two, the Supra being lighter, but it feels thrillingly faster.

In the Supra there's a different, more tactile connection with the car too. The steering wheel is quite big and leather-clad like the BMW's but much thinner-rimmed, and while the feedback and linearity of the steering itself aren't brilliant, the wheel rim gives a firmer and finer point of contact. We also marginally prefer the round-topped Supra gear shifter, which is like a leather-trimmed Chupa Chups lolly and sits nicely in your hand. Easing it around the gate, short-shifting and letting the willing straight-six

dig deep is wonderfully satisfying and ramps up the appeal of the Supra. The eight-speed auto would be shuffling the gears to match the torque to the throttle demand, but this is such a flexible and tractable engine and so linear in its delivery that it feels as if maximum torque is available almost everywhere. You can revel in high-gear/low-rev combinations that would make an auto gearbox software engineer's teeth itch.

Both companies talk up the 50:50 weight distribution of their cars and the Z4 does feel like the two ends share the load equally. In the Supra, not so much. You feel as though you're sitting almost *on* the rear axle, and while the ride is more supple initially, on these fast and occasionally lumpy roads, it can feel a bit free. A press of the Sport button tightens things up nicely and adds weight to the steering,

BMW Z4 M40i

Engine In-line 6-cyl, 2998cc, turbocharged **Power** 335bhp @ 5000-6500rpm

Torque 369lb ft @ 1600-4500rpm **Weight** 1550kg

Power-to-weight 220bhp/ton **Tyres** Michelin Pilot Super Sport

0-62mph 4.6sec **Top speed** 155mph (limited) **Basic price** £55,350

evo rating ★★★★★




but the sense that the rear axle is under pressure and a little short of answers persists. On stretches where the Z4 is confident, the Supra runs short of poise. It's the same driving out of corners: the Z4 hooks up and goes with little fuss while the Supra (also shod with decent-sized Michelin Pilot Super Sports), seems to struggle, rolling and running out of traction and composure but also sharp, almost like it's hitting the bump-stops.

Dynamically, the BMW has the better composure then, even though it's a convertible, yet despite them both being powerful, rear-drive sports cars with direct throttle connection, you don't feel encouraged to go looking for oversteer in either. In the Z4 it's because there's little feedback through the steering to tell you how hard you're pushing. It's a lack of connection familiar from previous

Z4s, so although it's the best Z4 in Handschalter trim, with a slick, positive and easy shift, it's still not quite there, still more of a cruiser than a scratcher.

The Supra is a car that feels more comfortable at seven or eight tenths too, or simply loping along in a high gear, riding the torque curve. It's the more appealing car of the pair, better looking and with more exciting performance. And while the handling is imperfect, we know from longer exposure that you learn how to get the best from it.

The irony is that there's a potentially great sports car here if you were able to combine the best bits of both cars – the unruffled chassis of the Z4 and the tactility of the Supra, the engine note of the Z4 and the brilliant flexibility, temperament and pace of the Supra. And the manual shift? Either will do the job beautifully. 

Toyota GR Supra 3.0

Engine In-line 6-cyl, 2998cc, turbocharged **Power** 335bhp @ 5000-6500rpm

Torque 369lb ft @ 1600-4500rpm **Weight** 1502kg

Power-to-weight 227bhp/ton **Tyres** Michelin Pilot Super Sport

0-62mph 4.6sec **Top speed** 155mph (limited) **Basic price** £57,130

evo rating ★★★★★



A high-angle, rear-quarter view of a red MG Cyberster GT driving on a dirt road. The car is moving away from the viewer, and the background shows rolling hills and a blue sky with clouds. The car's interior, including the seats and dashboard, is visible through the open top.

CYBERSTER

With exotic looks, 496bhp and 0-62mph in 3.2sec, the all-electric MG Cyberster GT has the on-paper firepower to take the fight to the ICE opposition. But does all of this result in a new age for the sports car?



ATTACK

by YOUSUF ASHRAF

I

F YOU BUY AN MG CYBERSTER, prepare for every journey to take a little longer than usual. Not because the Cyberster is slow (it's anything but), but because people will stop you to talk about it. Everywhere. All the time.

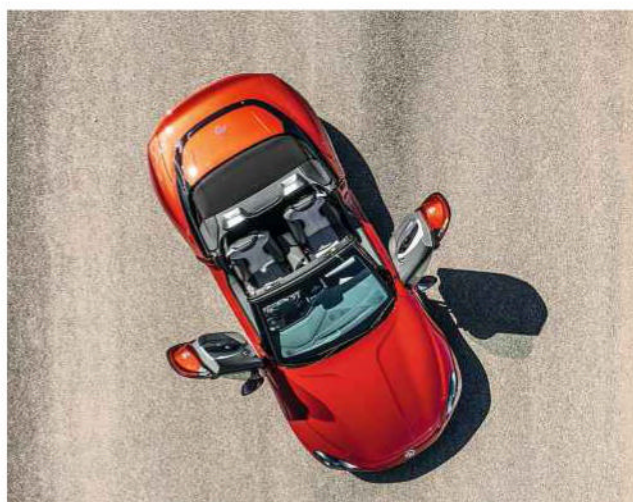
Parked up in a layby during our test, bikers ride past at walking pace to drink in the new electric roadster, and drivers squeeze their cars in behind it for a good look around and a chat. 'Is it a Lamborghini?' asks one, presumably because the MG's scissor doors are hanging in the air. Another wonders whether it costs £150,000, and his brain struggles to compute that you could almost buy three Cybersters for that amount. As a halo product to create a buzz around MG, it absolutely nails the brief – but what about as a sports GT?

This is a really important car for a number of reasons. For one, it marks MG's return to building roadsters, picking up a lineage that stretches back to the original Midgets of the 1930s, followed by the MGA, MGB and most recently the MGF and TF. It's also one of the first two-seater electric sports cars that sensible money can buy, hinting at the kind of thrills and sensations we can expect when the likes of Porsche and Lotus join the party later on.

The Cyberster has been a long time coming, too. MG first teased the prospect of a new electric roadster with a show car back in 2017, that car steadily evolving into the Cyberster concept shown at Shanghai in 2021. From that, a production version was green-lit by MG bosses, riding on the same architecture as the MG4 hatchback and clothed in toned-down, road-ready bodywork. The final car went on sale earlier this year, costing from £54,995 for the rear-drive Trophy or £59,995 for the dual-motor GT – within a few grand of a BMW Z4 M40i.

Even in production form, the Cyberster has more than a hint of concept car about it. It's similar in size to the aforementioned Z4 but draws the eye like something much more exotic and expensive, to the point where you can (almost) forgive the cheesy, arrow-shaped light clusters at the rear. The doors are electrically powered and swing open with the touch of a button on the window trim or the key – it's a cool party trick, but the speed at which they rise is just slow enough to make you wish for a normal hydraulic strut after a while.

Climb inside and the wraparound dash is reminiscent of a C8 Corvette's, so too the seemingly random layout of some of the controls. You close the door with a rocker switch on the centre console, and above that you'll find a bank of gear selector controls next to a touchscreen where you switch between drive modes. There are a further three screens behind the steering wheel, with a combined speedo and rev counter in the centre, navigation and media on the left and more settings and trip information on the right. The Cyberster isn't a car you just jump into and drive – familiarising yourself with the







**'IT FEELS EASILY
GOOD ENOUGH
FOR ITS QUOTED
3.2SEC 0-62MPH'**



Above: cockpit layout is a little random, but it feels like a quality item; red button on the wheel unleashes GT's full 496bhp

HMI takes time, and is best done sitting still. Build quality is solid across the board though, with few nasty surprises when you push and prod the surfaces and materials.

Once you finally lift your eyes from the screens, you'll notice that the driving position is surprisingly high. The Cyberster GT's 77kWh battery is beneath your backside, raising the seat and meaning that tall drivers may find their hair peeking above the windscreen – good for a quick blow-dry, but not for the nestled-in feel you want in a sports car. The wheel (a good size but a little too thick) extends out of the dash far enough to get comfortable, though, and there's an exciting sense that you're in something new, unique and really rather special. The silence of the powertrain amplifies the environment

around you, whether it be the rustling of leaves or chatter from bystanders (usually 'Is that an MG?!'), putting you in close touch with your surroundings.

But there's a big red button on the steering wheel begging you to push it. It's marked Super Sport and unleashes everything the powertrain has to offer – in the case of the GT, that's 496bhp and 535lb ft of torque. Sink into the throttle and the Cyberster pings between corners with massive thrust, ripping up to motorway speeds and feeling easily good enough for its quoted 3.2sec 0-62mph time. Seamless, instant EV acceleration is a familiar sensation by now, but being exposed to the elements gives it added intensity – if not of the 'wailing straight-six' kind.

If there's anything to stop you from using the massive potential of the powertrain, it's that the Cyberster has a lack of suspension control that can be alarming when the road gets challenging, and breaks trust between driver and car. It's just about tolerable at normal speeds, but the faster you go, the more the body feels out of sync with the road, bouncing across the surface and struggling to keep all four tyres in firm contact with it. The heavily undulating tarmac of our test route pushes the Cyberster's composure to the limit, its tyres catching air and its belly grazing the ground more than once.


MG stresses that the Cyberster is a GT rather than a pure sports car but, even considered as such, it lacks composure and the ability to entertain as the best GTs do when the moment allows. Carry speed on an uneven surface and the Cyberster is hard to read, finding bite but then releasing grip as the suspension loads and unloads over bumps, making every one of its 1985kg felt. The brake pedal is solid underfoot but it needs a firm push

to rein in the mass, too. Driving quickly is an exercise in management rather than fun.

The same is true in the rear-drive Trophy. The single-motor Cyberster has 335bhp and 350lb ft, giving it a slower (but still brisk-feeling) 5.0sec 0-62mph time. Removing the front motor sheds 100kg and improves range (316 miles compared to 276 in the GT, with both charging from 10 to 80 per cent in 38 minutes), and the Trophy does feel keener to turn but also a little more jittery in its ride quality. There isn't an exploitable rear-drive balance to be enjoyed, either – the inside rear spins up out of low-speed corners (and sometimes through bumpy high-speed ones) and the transition to oversteer feels scrappy. The GT's front motor dragging you forward does mask this to an extent.

It doesn't take long for you to back off and drive around the limitations of the chassis, carrying less speed and guiding the car with a lighter touch. In these moments you can find a better flow with the Cyberster, particularly on smooth roads. There is some vibration through the structure and steering rack but the relaxed rate of response

allows you to place the car accurately, the torque from the motors gives you effortless flexibility, and you go back to enjoying the silence and your surroundings. The ride is compliant and fades into the background, and miles are ticked off in style and relative comfort.

Does this let the Cyberster off the hook? Not quite. We can't help feeling that a new MG roadster – the first for decades – should do more than make you feel good while cruising, and there's very little incentive to use the massive performance it offers. It feels like more time needs to be spent on tuning the chassis to deliver better control and fluidity, which would ultimately support its GT credentials and perhaps unlock more rewarding elements in the driving experience. That it falls short in this respect is a shame, since the Cyberster has a real sense of occasion – probably more than any other car at this price – and showcases how the silent electric roadster could be an appealing concept. But it leaves us with more questions than answers, ones that Porsche will also be facing ahead of the launch of its electric Boxster. 

MG Cyberster GT

Motors Two, 375kW total **Power** 496bhp **Torque** 535lb ft

Weight 1985kg **Power-to-weight** 459bhp/ton

Tyres Pirelli P Zero **0-62mph** 3.2sec

Top speed 125mph **Basic price** £59,995

evo rating ★★☆☆☆







MONSTER MUNCH

by JAMES TAYLOR

PHOTOGRAPHY by
ASTON PARROTT

Inspired by a brake-eating
1970s Le Mans racer
and packing a 705bhp
twin-turbo V12 and a
manual transmission, the
Valour is an Aston Martin
for modern times but with
bags of old-school appeal

IT'S EASY TO DISMISS THIS CAR AS AN IRRELEVANCE. Ultra-rare. Ultra-expensive. Based upon old-generation hardware. And sold out: 110 Aston Martin Valours are being made (to mark 110 years of Aston Martin in 2023), and all are spoken for. Each is being built in a specification unique to its owner and the price will vary accordingly, but assume somewhere in the region of £1.5m depending on spec, including taxes.

Since it exists in the unobtainosphere, perhaps it doesn't really matter what it feels like and drives like. But we're about to find out nevertheless. Today we're kidnapping this particular Valour from the Gaydon factory, and hanging on to the key for as long as possible.

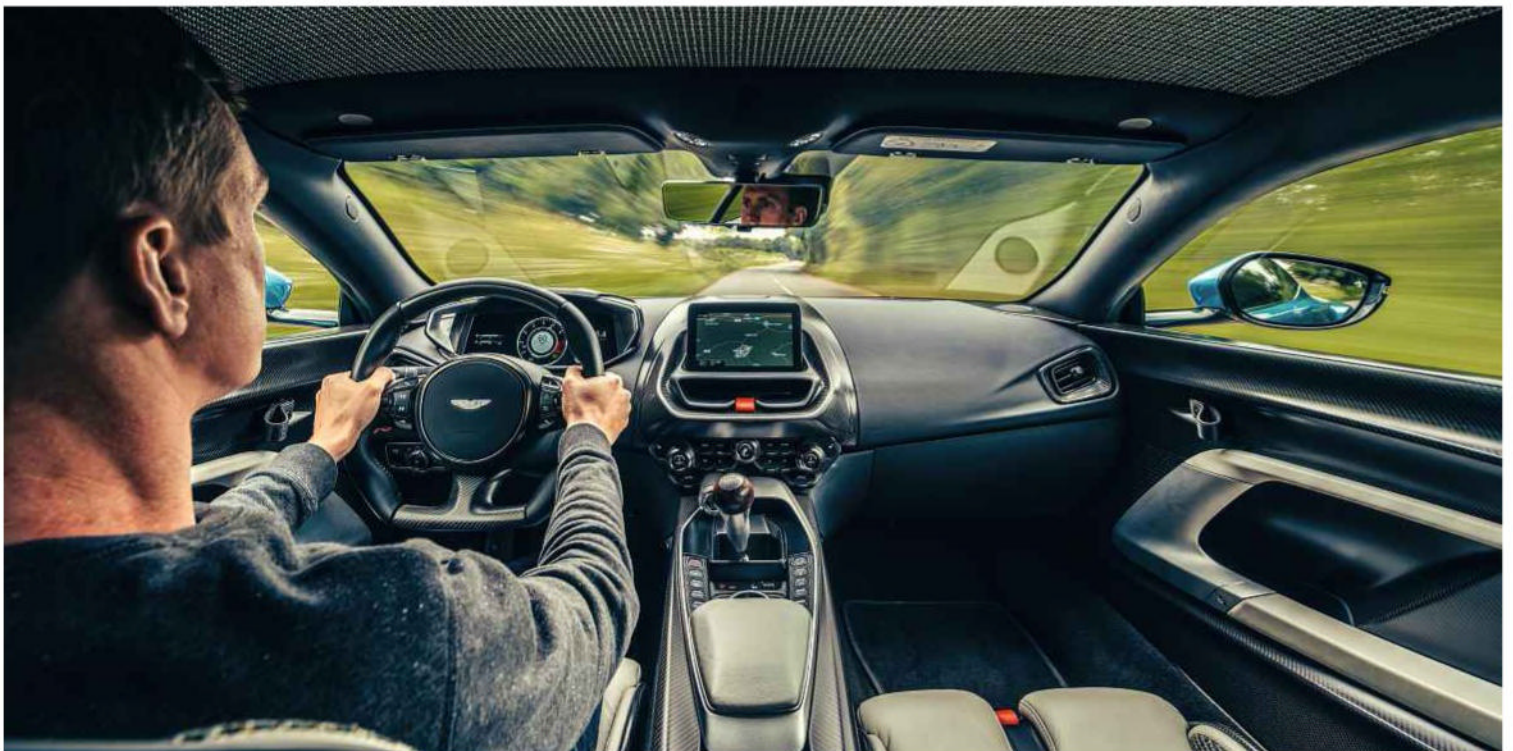
Meeting it for the first time, it's quite a thing to behold. Some cars are different in person from in pictures and the Valour is one of them. It's a more compelling object to behold in three dimensions. Not pretty per se, but that's not the point: this is intended to be a bruiser of a car, taking its cues from the muscular DBS and V8 Vantage models of the '60s, '70s and '80s. And, in particular, RHAM/1, aka 'Muncher', a highly modified DBS V8 that raced at Le Mans twice, and so called for its appetite for munching through components – brakes especially – as well as gobbling up the Mulsanne Straight.

And if the Valour looks a little familiar for more recent reasons, that's because it's also inspired by 2020's Aston Martin Victor: the very special one-off built around a One-77 chassis and Vulcan components, with an 836bhp V12 engine, a manual gearbox and a similar Muncher-inspired design (see *evo* 286 for the drive story). The Valour isn't built on a One-77 donor but rather a development of the Vantage platform, albeit with some parts in common with the most recent DBS to accommodate the V12.

The 110-off Valour is a mass-production car by the standards of the unique, coachbuilt Victor, but its low-volume, high-price remit means Aston Martin's design team have been able to achieve remarkable shapes with its carbonfibre bodywork – and almost limitless customisation options. This car's lustrous deep-blue paint, the red band around its nose and race number roundels have been specced by its owner, along with the woollen tweed upholstery for the rooflining and carbon seats (a nod to the similar fabric used on the DBR1 racer's seats in the 1950s) and the walnut top to the gearlever (buyers can also spec titanium, aluminium or carbonfibre).

Yes, gearlever: as with the Victor, this is a manual. The fact Aston Martin has built a manual-gearbox, V12-engined car in 2024 is something to celebrate, tempered only by the fact that we're in an age where such a car must cost £1.5m and be built in ultra-low numbers to be viable. But, yes, the Valour has three pedals and a lever, slotting six forward gears via an exposed gate to celebrate its mechanical nature. The gearbox has been developed with supplier Graziano, while the 5.2-litre, twin-turbo engine is related to that found in the now-retired Aston Martin V12 Vantage and DBS 770 Ultimate. In this car, its power and torque have been turned up from the Vantage but down from the DBS to a not-exactly-paltry 705bhp and 555lb ft, so as not to overburden the manual transmission, which runs through a





ASTON MARTIN VALOUR



‘THE VALOUR LOOKS SO OUTLANDISH IT’S AS IF

transaxle arrangement with a mechanical limited-slip differential rather than the more sophisticated e-diff fitted to the latest Vantage.

Pulling away, the first thing that strikes you is how light both the clutch pedal and the gearchange are. Given the car's muscular appearance, I was expecting to perhaps need two feet for the clutch pedal and two hands for the gearlever, but it's featherweight in action, and smooth too. This is an easier car to pull away in than many family hatchbacks.

And as it turns out, easy to drive in general, wide dimensions (and left-hand-drive blind spots in this particular car) notwithstanding. Nosing out of the Gaydon gates into Warwickshire traffic, it feels strange seeing regular road furniture and Qashqais and Focuses alongside; the Valour looks so outlandish it's as if it has beamed down from another planet. But it's an easygoing car to cover real-world ground in. The engine is smooth and tractable, the control weights free and easy, forward visibility perfectly decent. Rear visibility less so, since there is no rear screen: the tailgate is an all-carbon, no-glass affair. The main mirror can be toggled to a digital display linked to a rear-view camera, though like many digital mirror displays, it's a little disconcerting at first as the frame rate never quite feels in tempo with real life. The display cuts out a few times during our drive, too. Happily, the door mirrors are perfectly useable, and there's a separate reversing camera display on the infotainment screen, which works nicely and is very welcome when reversing someone else's £1.5m collector's piece.

Negotiating traffic while acclimatising to the Valour is the perfect opportunity to fully drink in its interior. The quality is lovely: the door inners are bespoke with smart, smooth carbonfibre surfaces and cold-to-the-touch metal forms that double as door handles and rests. You tug a neat, smart-looking leather pull to release the door catch, and a similar one to slide the seat forward and back. The carbon-shell seats fitted to this car are the same as those available as an option on the new Vantage (though the tweed trim isn't) but the majority of the interior is from the previous-generation 2018-on Vantage: same dashboard, same squircle-shaped steering wheel and lots of buttons on the centre console. Not that the latter is a bad thing in 2024.

Downsides? Your right elbow (in this left-hand-drive car) naturally rests on a lovely-looking bit of carbon trim that flexes and makes an annoying tapping sound against the console below, and the engine start button is just in front of the gear gate and surrounded by an enormous piece of trim which, if you're not careful, you can painfully trap your fingers against when putting the lever into reverse gear. And being based on the old Vantage cockpit means it incorporates the old, Mercedes-sourced infotainment system, which looks dated and is famously clunky to operate. That said, to quibble about infotainment in a car such as this feels like missing the point slightly.

It's a front-engined, 700bhp-plus V12 supercar with a manual gearbox, so let's find some quiet roads and see what it feels like away from traffic and



IT HAS BEAMED DOWN FROM ANOTHER PLANET'





let off its leash a little. The ride quality at low speeds is very smooth and, happily, that's the case when you up the pace too, even on lumpy, uneven back-roads. Springs, dampers, anti-roll bars and geometry are all unique to the Valour. The adaptive dampers have three modes: Sport, Sport+ and Track, toggled from the steering wheel. As with the rest of the driving experience, the damping is more relaxed than I'd expected given the Valour's extreme appearance. You might feel a bit too much body movement when pressing on in Sport, but Sport+ brings more control without ruining the ride. In fact, even in much firmer Track the ride is rarely overly crashy or unsettled (on these mostly smooth roads, at least). But composure and lateral grip during cornering is impressive: this is a sticky car. With strong traction too, although our test is on an admittedly warm, dry day. The Valour wears the same AML-spec Michelin Pilot Sport S 5 tyres as the latest Vantage, incidentally.

Aston has stiffened the structure taken from the earlier-gen Vantage with a number of additional bracing elements, and on the basis of this drive the work has paid off. 'We learned a lot of lessons from the V12 Vantage, in how to stiffen up the front of the platform for dynamic benefits,' explains Simon Newton, Aston Martin's director of vehicle performance. 'That car was tuned quite aggressively, but the detail and engineering changes to the body also gave us a great platform for refinement.'

The Valour is not a light car at the best part of 1800kg. Nor, despite the lift-cutting spoilers, diffuser and aero surfaces incorporated into its design, is it a track-ready car – that's reserved for the Fernando Alonso co-developed Valiant

version. What it feels like is a smooth, easy-going GT, with a lot of grip and confidence-inspiringly balanced handling.

'Clearly the inspiration for Valour is somewhat retro, and the driving experience in older cars is less over-controlled than in some modern sports cars,' Newton says, 'so it needs to breathe, to roll a little bit, and to be consistent in its control weights.'

The power steering has a similar relatively light, well-damped feel to the clutch pedal and gearshift. The gearchange has quite a broad gate and a relatively long throw, but the spring loading is helpful and it's as user-friendly at speed as it is in traffic. With a light, nicely damped movement and the engine's revs rising and falling smoothly, it's barely any more taxing than driving an auto – and far more enjoyable. It's not a stone-cold-classic, for-the-ages manual shift, but it is beautifully resolved. The length, weight and throw of the milled-from-billet shifter handset have all been painstakingly balanced. There's no autoblip rev-matching function for downshifts, but whether you heel-and-toe or not, smooth downshifts are a cinch. Carbon-ceramic brakes are standard, and although they're occasionally a little abrupt at the first touch of the pedal, they're nice and easy to modulate beyond that.

As per the damping, you can also ramp through three modes for the engine map. Since the transmission's gearing is relatively long, it never quite feels as mind-scramblingly fast as you might expect of a 700bhp-plus car. But it's certainly not slow. It doesn't feel overly turbocharged either. Although there's a little lag below 2000rpm or so, it feels flexible and linear all the way to the red line – if you can find the space.

Aston Martin Valour

Engine V12, 5204cc, twin-turbo Power 705bhp @ 6450rpm
Torque 555lb ft @ 4000-5000rpm Weight 1780kg
Power-to-weight 402bhp/ton Tyres Michelin Pilot Sport S 5
0-60mph <3.5sec (est) Top speed c200mph (est) Typical price £1.5m
evo rating ★★★★★

**'IT'S A CAR WITH
UNEXPECTED DEPTHS,
IN ITS DESIGN, IN ITS
ENGINEERING AND IN
THE WAY IT DRIVES'**

You might wish it were a little bit louder, inside the car at least. Photographer Aston (Parrott) reports that the Aston (Martin) Valour sounds fantastic from the outside, its 12 cylinders borne on the breeze while I'm heading to a turn-around spot between shots. And, to my eternal horror, I'll later discover that its triple-exit exhausts are loud enough on start-up to make a small child burst into tears when I awaken the engine just as a young family are walking past my parking space. But from the inside the V12 isn't quite as vocal; it makes a lovely sound but more of a distant, muted bellow than the living, beating, snarling heart the Valour's appearance suggests. The exhaust is made from stainless steel that's less than 1mm thick, so it's no wonder it packs a punch on the outside. Yet very little road noise makes it through to the cabin; it's a remarkably refined car.

Perhaps the one thing missing from the driving experience is a little more drama in general, to match the sense of theatre and occasion in the Valour's design and spec. It's almost a little too refined for its own good: a little more noise, a little more heft to the controls and a little more feedback through the seat of your pants are the only things, subjectively, that are missing. It's why Aston Martin has created the Valiant, a more track-focused but still road-legal evolution of the Valour, with more aero and a racier suspension set-up, limited to 38 cars. It might seem an odd concept, but having spent the day getting under the skin of the surprisingly easy-going Valour, a more hardcore version actually does make sense.

But an unlikely facet of the Valour's singular appeal is that you really could drive this concept-car-styled, £1.5m creation every day if you wished: the gearbox is easy as pie, refinement is genuinely excellent and it even has a decent-sized boot

similar to that of a regular Vantage beneath the carbon tailgate.

Parking up back at Aston HQ, there's time to walk around the car and take in the design one more time. I particularly love the ducktail rear, the full-width aluminium trim below (milled from a solid billet), the Valkyrie-style LED lights jutting from the aluminium like shards of glass, and the way your eye follows the creases over the rear haunches. Valour looks like a concept car, but has the quality and refinement of a mass production model rather than a 110-off special. Which goes at least some way towards explaining that price. The details have been sweated over, and it's a car with unexpected depths – in its design, in its engineering and in the way it drives.

The only nagging doubt is that I think I'd have had more fun in the new, £165,000 regular Vantage, which is a more eager and responsive car, although I'd have missed out on a manual shift. But to view the Valour as a car to compare with others is to do it a disservice. It is its own entity, and something quite special. It's not where my own (very much hypothetical) £1.5m would go, but that's beside the point: as a demonstration of what Aston Martin's designers and engineers can do, as a celebration of the qualities that make the brand special, and as a great car in its own right, it's a compelling creation.

You can't help but hope that some of its qualities could be applied to a higher-volume, lower-price model in the future. In particular, it would be nice to have the option of the latest Vantage with three pedals and a lever. And if they can't be, then the thought of more ultra-rare specials like this being created in the future is still enticing; it works for Ferrari, after all. Is this car an irrelevance? In the grand scheme of things, maybe. But it's a captivating one. ✕





P A S T



by RICHARD MEADEN
PHOTOGRAPHY by
ASTON PARROTT

F O R W A R D

Singer's latest restomod offering is a unique take on the revered Porsche 930 Turbo. Is it as good to drive as it is to look at?



**‘THE 930 TURBO
HAS REMAINED
SOMEWHAT OFF
LIMITS TO THE
RESTOMOD SCENE.
UNTIL NOW’**



F ALL THE 911'S MANY MODEL DERIVATIVES it's hard to argue against the Turbo being the most evocative. Yes, the RS remains the ultimate blend of race pedigree and road legality, but half a century on since Porsche first shoehorned a forced-induction flat-six into the tail of its rear-engined sports car, and long after the resulting model evolved into an all-wheel-drive, all-weather weapon, the merest mention of the Turbo name still conjures up images of whale

tales, wide arches and an indecent appetite for the horizon.

Yes, Alois Ruf's 'Yellowbird' took the early Turbo to wild extremes as far back as the '80s, but for the continually evolving 21st-century Porsche 911 restomod scene, the 930 Turbo – indeed any generation of Turbo – has remained somewhat off limits. Until now.

It takes a lot – some would say a miracle – to have me set my alarm for 4.30am, especially on a Monday, but a rendezvous with the latest Porsche 911 Reimagined by Singer qualifies as ample motivation. In fact, I'm awake before the chimes of doom kick in, though this could be due to the anticipation of a Sausage & Egg McMuffin breakfast.

Before we get into the ins and outs of this Classic Turbo restoration it's worth recapping the Singer backstory. Founded in 2009, Singer Vehicle Design started small with a big idea. Operating from somewhat ramshackle premises in one of the less salubrious neighbourhoods of Los Angeles, Rob Dickinson and a very small crew created a fastidious and extensive reimagining of the Porsche 911. One that would quickly come to define the restomod scene.

Fifteen years on much has changed, but the essence of what made Singer's fledgling restoration business stand out is clearer than ever. Still inspired by an endless love and fascination for the 911 and driven by a compulsive urge to restore and enhance them to irresistible levels of quality and performance, the beautifully wrought and, yes, awkwardly named Porsche 911 Reimagined by Singer has become a true phenomenon.

Back in the early days, Dickinson's now famous 'everything is important' mantra was rattle-canned freehand onto the block wall of that original Sun Valley workshop. Now it is applied via laser-cut decal – suitably scaled up to fit the size of Singer's huge US and UK facilities – as a mission statement for the 600-plus people who now count themselves as Singer employees.

The company's trajectory seems almost too extraordinary to comprehend. Crucially, many of the original protagonists remain, including Dickinson as creative lead, and long-time business partner Mazen Fawaz, who is now the company's CEO. Significant outside investment has brought serious financial clout. Enough to form a formidable senior management team, recruit skilled fabricators, body and paint specialists, trimmers, designers and engineers, engage leading technical partners including Bosch and Michelin, and operate from world-class facilities.

The monolithic buildings – including a vast new HQ in Torrance (part of LA's South Bay region) and a growing UK campus in Northamptonshire – and the increasingly ambitious scope of the 911 restoration projects are impressive indicators of just how far things have come, but fittingly it is the cars that speak most eloquently.

The car you see here has been restored using what Singer describes as its Classic Turbo services. As for all of its projects, customers provide a 964-generation 911, which is then taken back to the bare bones before being reimagined. Rebodied in carbonfibre, painted to



perfection, retrimmed in fabulous leathers and fabrics, and capability doubled with a finely tuned chassis and extensively optimised twin-turbocharged Mezger powertrain, the Classic Turbo services create a very different offering to what has gone before.

Dickinson and his design team have done a superb job of contemporising the 930 Turbo's sacred signature look. Seen from a distance it has the same unmistakable physique as the original, but up close you appreciate that pretty much everything is different. Some iconic elements, such as the deeply dished Fuchs-style wheels and broad wheelarches, have been judiciously amplified, with ride height, camber angles and tyre stretch agonised over for the perfect stance. Then, just to confound the more-is-more crowd, other areas have been precisely pared back. The result is a design that's both faithful and fresh.

Panel gaps and flushes are one of Dickinson's (many) great obsessions. Rumour has it his right index finger has its own key person insurance, for this delicate digit is able to detect the slightest deviation from a level and uniform 4mm shut-line. There's no arguing with the results of such obsessive detail freakery: the fit of this Palm Green Metallic car's carbon panels is unerringly precise, with a paint finish that's glass smooth and swimming-pool deep.

The black rubber and plastic pieces on the original 930 Turbo are a defining part of its overall look, and Singer's contemporary take is just as effective, with a special soft-touch rubberised paint used to recreate the same look and similar finish on the hard carbonfibre bumpers, sills and aero parts. My favourite details are the serrated sections in the front and rear bumpers, which serve as knowing nods to the rubber bellows found in the 930's impact bumpers. Oh, and the intake built into the 'shark fin' that protects the leading edge of the rear wheelarches.

It's the same story inside. Singer's commissioning process means they can indulge whatever the customer wishes. This particular example – fresh from the company's display stand at Goodwood Festival of Speed – showcases a new vibe, with a far greater emphasis on comfort and the kind of luxe look that is very obviously inspired by 930s of the '80s. The heavily sculpted seats are fabulous focal points, their blocky design affording generous cushioning and perfectly suiting the new woven riff on Porsche's iconic Pascha upholstery. Rich and aromatic Cognac hide and inset fillets of dark, open-grained wood veneer set it off a treat.

It's a fabulous place to find yourself. Mod cons such as hi-fi, satnav and MagSafe phone charging are unobtrusively integrated. The instrument cluster is bespoke, but blends the obvious finesse for which Singer is renowned with a restraint that lends it a period OE look. Touchpoints such as the organ-stop switches are original and unembellished, likewise the stalks and HVAC controls. The steering wheel is new, the Momo Prototipo found in Singer's Classic restorations swapped for a wheel that's redolent of the 930 Turbo's. It's another lovely slice of '70s/'80s style and brings further completeness and maturity to this latest offering.

Twist the ignition key and the heavily reworked Mezger flat-six fires with a menacing flare of revs before settling into

Left and right: exquisite details abound, as we've come to expect from Singer; the exact spec is very much up to the customer, of course

**'UP CLOSE YOU
APPRECIATE THAT
PRETTY MUCH
EVERYTHING IS
DIFFERENT'**



a meaty idle. Enlarged to 3746cc and featuring twin turbochargers with air-water intercooling, the engine has almost twice the power and torque of the original 1974 930 Turbo 3.0-litre unit. To spare you the maths, that's a very healthy 510bhp and 442lb ft.

In line with Singer's previous work, its Classic Turbo restorations are a kind of 'greatest hits' album, incorporating hardware and technology found in the full canon of 911 Turbos, right up to the current 992 Turbo S, plus some innovations of its own. When it comes to the engine this includes the all-important turbos. Supplied by Borg Warner they are the same type as those fitted to the 992 Turbo S, and feature both Variable Turbine Geometry and electric wastegates. Packaged in a bespoke Singer-specified turbine housing they give the Mezger unit unprecedented response at low rpm combined with serious shove at the top end.

The cylinder heads stick to the two-valves-per-cylinder design the company refined for its naturally aspirated Classic restorations, but with fresh attention paid to combustion temperatures in order to create a forced-induction engine that likes to rev yet keeps its cool. The result is a truly breathtaking crescendo at the top of each gear. Thanks to packaging the intercoolers in the engine plenum the rear wing is the slimmer whale tail of the early non-intercooled 930 Turbos as opposed to the bulkier and less visually pleasing 'tea tray' fitted to later intercooled models.

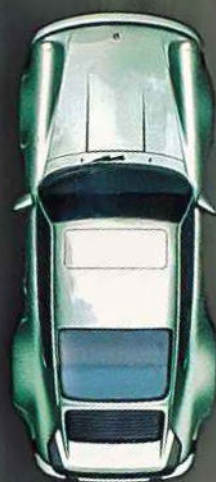
The crankshaft and conrods are manufactured by Austrian supplier Matzinger to Singer's specification, while the pistons and cylinders come in matched engine sets from legendary German maker Mahle, which also handles the management system. To cope with the engine's greater potency a new gearbox with increased torque capacity was also commissioned. The six-speed H-pattern 'box has bespoke ratios chosen to complement the power and torque curves of the turbocharged engine. The gears are wider and of increased diameter to cope with the torque, with meatier triple-cone carbon synchros to give smooth shifts.

There is a choice of cast-iron or carbon-ceramic brakes (this car has been fitted with the former set-up) that sit perfectly within those 18-inch Fuchs-style rims that are of the same dimensions as those made for Singer's DLS restorations. Here they are fitted with Michelin Pilot Sport 4 S tyres – 245/35 front and 295/30 at the rear – rather than Cup 2s, as this is a GT car aimed squarely at road use, albeit with a modicum of track capability.

The first few miles behind the wheel are spent soaking it all in. Those characteristic wide arches mean the car fills more of the road, but still the 964's dimensions and cockpit design bring welcome intimacy and proximity to the action. The shallow dash and upright windscreen frame a timeless driver's-eye view familiar to 911 pilots since the earliest days, the long, barrel-topped front arches providing you with perfect reference points with which to place the inside-front wheel bang on your chosen apex.

The steering is weighty, with the kind of delicious viscosity that only comes with hydraulic power assistance. It's not as clean and filtered as a modern EPAS system, but what you lose in clarity and unerring consistency you gain in texture and being party to the quiet conversation that babbles through the steering wheel as the front tyres interact with the surface. It's a trait lost to modern 911s, but very much present and correct here.

This subtle engagement sets the tone for what is a very grown-up driving experience, one that effortlessly moulds to your mood and works with whatever road you find yourself on. As you'd hope,



Opposite page: it may be biased towards GT-style road use, but laps of Goodwood Circuit reveal that on-limit behaviour has been finely honed too



the turbocharged engine brings a big lift in performance, but it serves to expand the whole experience rather than simply punch you harder down the road.

Initially this manifests as grin-inducing in-gear flex through the low- and mid-range. It's a quality that has defined 911 Turbos throughout the ages and something that makes this car both immensely impressive and completely addictive. Those trick turbochargers mean there's an immediate swell of propulsion when you squeeze into the throttle, so for the most part you can use this early surge to carry you down the road without truly extending the engine.

It's possible to detect aspects from most generations of Turbo in the way this car makes progress. It's more guttural than the earliest Turbos – and *much* faster – but there are clear hints of the 964 and 993 (the first to feature twin turbos and all-wheel drive) in its delivery and demeanour. Overlay with the scope of a 997, the rear-drive balance of a GT2 and the throttle response of a 992 and you've got the picture. It's a heady brew.

Ride-wise, first impressions are of a firmly suspended car, but there's terrific control combined with compliance to take the sting out of the UK's rougher roads. It's certainly less combative than a 992. Credit to those who have tuned the passive two-way adjustable R53 dampers, which bring a feeling of free-flowing support without the stiction that can make sporting suspension set-ups feel jagged and abrupt

when transitioning between bump and rebound strokes.

You might expect an adaptive damper on a car at this price point, but there's something rather nice about a car that strikes a hard-won balance of ride and handling that commits to compromises that feel appropriate to the car. Yes, there are occasions when you might want a bit more low-speed pliancy, but the overall experience is very satisfying – largely because you're not fiddling with different suspension modes, so you learn to understand the car that's beneath you and form a more genuine bond as a result.

On the twistier and more confined sections of West Sussex lanes this 911 is both eminently placeable and brilliantly exploitable. There's lots of grip and traction – far more than you'd expect from a 964-based car – but it has that malleable feel that involves you well before the limit of the chassis or tyre. This is partly down to having such plentiful shove between the corners, but also because the car is light (around 1280kg) and – most importantly – because it feels much more like a 911 than the latest-gen cars, thanks to rear-wheel drive, a manual transmission and a palpable rearward weight bias that brings the whole car to life without it feeling remotely unstable.

If you're new to older-generation 911s it will initially seem a little alien, but the way you can use that unique weight bias to adjust the cornering attitude will soon feel like a revelation. Fine adjustments can be made with small shifts in throttle

Porsche 911 Reimagined by Singer – Classic Turbo

Engine Flat-six, 3746cc, twin-turbo **Power** 510bhp @ 6500rpm


Torque 442lb ft @ 2500-5500rpm **Weight** c1280kg (depends on specification)

Power-to-weight c405bhp/ton **Tyres** Michelin Pilot Sport 4S **0-62mph** n/a

Top speed n/a **Typical price** \$1.1m (c£853,000) plus local taxes and donor car

evo rating ★★★★★





input, a fractional lift as you turn in just enough to inject a little more rotational energy into the car without upsetting it in the slightest. More deliberate lifts have stronger effects (we'll get to the skids in a minute), but such is the underlying grip reserve you find there's always plenty to lean on.

Aiding this exploitability is a suite of electronic driver aids that bring this late '80s/early '90s platform bang up to date. Developed with Bosch, the state-of-the-art, driver-selectable vehicle dynamics control system optimises ABS, stability control and traction control via five drive modes: Weather, Normal, Sport, Track and ESC Off. Sensibly there's no change in engine power or throttle response, so the potency of the car remains consistent throughout, but the level of sensitivity and intervention thresholds for the systems are tailored. Sport is the sweetest setting for general road driving in dry conditions, allowing as much yaw and wheel slip as you would sensibly want on the road while still offering enough support to catch the car before things get too lairy.

Track and ESC Off are where things get serious. The former relaxes the ESC and TC enough that you can really hustle at circuit speeds, and brake hard and deep thanks to an increased ABS threshold. ESC Off maintains ABS at the Track level but removes all TC and ESC intervention, so you are in complete control of your own destiny. Or to blame for any grassy excursions.

On a dry surface it takes a concerted effort to get the car significantly sideways through Goodwood's Lavant corner. Your head might tell you it's a second-gear effort, but such is the torque on tap you can power it all the way through in third if you're prepared to work it hard enough on the way in and then give it enough throttle to overcome the abundant grip to sustain the slide. Not something you'll be doing on the road, granted, but a clear indication that this car has been developed and set up by people who know how a great 911 should feel at and beyond its limit. Most importantly of all it has that Turbo trait of sucking in the road like a strand of spaghetti.

With this latest restoration, Singer has introduced new-found maturity and whole-car sophistication. Adding turbocharging has brought a welcome and highly addictive uplift in performance, along with a seductive shift in character. It's hard not to fall for a manual, rear-drive, air-cooled, 500-plus bhp Porsche 911, yet it's the integrity, completeness and authenticity of the overall transformation that leaves the most lasting impression. Even by Singer standards it truly is the most gorgeous of things.

Of course, we should expect nothing less from a restoration that requires commissioning customers to commit upwards of £850,000 (plus taxes). That's a heap of money to lavish on any car, but the result is a meticulously hand-crafted 911 that honours the Turbo in the best possible way. ✕

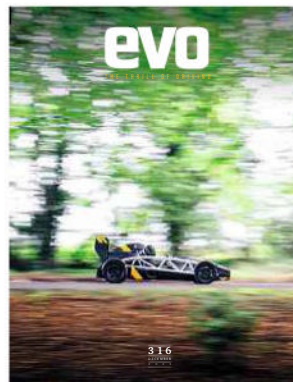
**'EVEN BY
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THE THRILL OF DRIVING

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by COLIN GOODWIN



How
designer and
car nut Craig
Callum found his
dream job as head
designer at Hot
Wheels







E'RE MORE THAN HALFWAY THROUGH THE year so we can assume that Craig Callum has already designed around 30 cars in 2024. Not even the Chinese automotive brands produce this many new cars a year, so where is it that Callum is working? The answer is Mattel, makers of the legendary Hot Wheels model cars that many of us grew up with. But before we get into the fascinating story of a designer whose life and career have followed a very different course to most in his trade, we must deal with his surname.

Much to my surprise, fellow Scots Craig and Ian Callum are not directly related. 'There are two designers in particular who have had an enormous influence on me and who both have become friends,' says Callum. 'One is Ian and the other is Peter Stevens. I'd wanted to be a car designer since I was five years old but nobody in my family did anything remotely similar so I had to find my own way. In my teens I heard about the automotive design course at Coventry University and thought that drawing cars was my sort of university degree.'

'Before going to Coventry, when I was 17, I turned up at Peter Stevens' studio in my classic Mini and literally doorstepped him. In his studio, which is a converted barn, there were model cars, books, nick-nacks, bits and pieces of cars and sketches on his desk. I'd grown up in a normal house and hadn't seen this sort of thing. What also struck me about Peter is the variety of his work over the years. From designing one of the most famous supercars of all time, to trams, to racing car liveries. This showed me the breadth of design and how varied a career you could have. He has been an inspiration and mentor over the years and we have stayed friends ever since.'

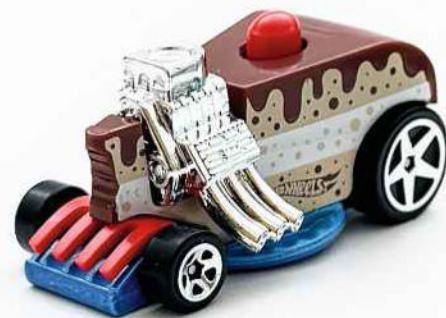
While at Coventry, Callum bagged an internship at Gibbs Automotive, the firm behind the Aquada amphibious car. 'I was one of the lucky ones,' he says, 'because Gibbs offered me a full-time job, so I went straight from university into work. They'd done the Aquada by the time I got there so I was working on something called the Quadski, a quad bike that turned into a jet ski. It was a lot of fun working there and I felt a bit like Q out of James Bond. After Gibbs, I did some consultancy work designing headlights for a Chrysler facelift and a bit on the Bugatti four-door concept. It was a mix of everything so good experience, but ultimately not rewarding.'

More to Callum's liking was a move to Renault Trucks in Lyon. 'With trucks you're really thinking about how the drivers *live* in the vehicle, not just drive it. Function is so important that it has to be incorporated into the aesthetics of the cab. What might look cool might not necessarily be easy for the driver to live with. I worked there for four years and found it a really good learning experience.'

Then came a career crisis. 'I kind of fell out of love with the automotive design world a little bit. It's very competitive and you're always fighting for a project and then to be the lead designer, and that's not really me. I'm competitive with myself, but not necessarily against others. I'm more about celebrating what others are doing.'

'So after Renault I went mountain biking in the French Alps on what was meant to be a three-week break to gather my thoughts. Three weeks somehow turned into three years of biking and snowboarding. I was essentially bumming around and deciding what to do because, you know, when you've wanted to be a car designer since the age of five and then you have doubts about that career, what else are you going to do?'

Callum considered being a snowboard instructor but then a call came from Denmark. 'This guy from Lego phoned and told me one of my friends had shown them my portfolio. He asked if I would be interested in joining the team and helping out with the Mindstorms products. Mindstorms is



**'PRETTY SOON
I REALISED
THAT THE
WORLD OF TOYS
WAS A PLACE I
WANTED TO BE'**



Clockwise from left:
Callum's first design for
Hot Wheels was Mo-Stash;
classic Mini was his first car;
McLaren 720S was one of the
Speed Champions models
he created at Lego; Pontiac
Aztec Custom and 'Birthday
Burner' are recent creations





**‘THERE WAS
ONLY ONE PLACE
TO GO AFTER
LEGO AND
THAT WAS
HOT WHEELS’**



Clockwise from left:
Callum and his team are given free rein to create new models from scratch; his personal collection includes seven motorcycles and a 1931 Ford Model A hot rod, nicknamed Old Red, in which he competes in speed trials



a very techie version of Lego with motors and sensors and a facility for programming them, so you can literally create a robot using it. It sounded really interesting but I wasn't too sure because the snow season was about to start, but the Lego people said I could work from the Alps. So I ended up freelancing for them for a year, living in the Alps, designing Lego.'

It proved to be something of an epiphany for Callum, re-igniting his passion for design. 'Pretty soon I realised that the world of toys was a place I wanted to be. You design something and then a year later you see the finished product in the shops. Also, you're generally in charge of one product, so when that product hits the shelves you know it's the result of your work and that it's having an impact in the world through your design. Then there's the thought that children will grow up with stuff that you designed and it becomes a really big part of their nostalgia package. Lego and Hot Wheels are toys that I played with as a kid.'

Callum applied for a full-time job at Lego, moved to Denmark and spent the next nine years designing a variety of toys. 'Automotive toys were missing from the Lego portfolio so I helped the company develop the Speed Champions series that's still going strong today and includes many well-known supercars and sports cars.

'Towards the end of my time at Lego I felt the work was beginning to repeat itself. I went back to Coventry University as a director of the National Transport Design Centre. It only took six months there to realise that it was at the opposite end of the scale that I was used to. I was running a team researching things for years that may never go anywhere.'

As he pondered his next move, Callum's life was turned upside down by a huge motorcycle accident. 'I was up in Scotland and damned nearly died in this accident. It took two years to fully recover from it and towards the end of that period I was still a bit lost, not sure what to do. So I built a campervan and spent a year on the road, doing a bit of freelancing. Eventually it dawned on me there was only one place you could go after you've worked at Lego and that was to Hot Wheels. If you're a car designer who's into toys it's the company to work for. So I reached out to them, showed them what I'd done so far and they said they'd find a place for me.'

The position that Mattel found for Craig was design manager on die-cast models. 'I'm in charge of all die-cast models, which is everything from the main-line basic models that you see on supermarket shelves for \$1 to the premium adult die-casts.'

The job involved Callum moving to LA where, presumably, he's never short of inspiration. 'Absolutely. It's almost overwhelming here. Every avenue of the automotive world you can imagine is on your doorstep every weekend. You want to see some JDM cars? There'll be a meet on somewhere for them. If you want to see hot rods racing on the dirt, then you can. That's what I did last weekend. I can go into work on a Monday and think, "My mind's a bit empty," then simply go to a breakfast meet somewhere and see everything from a classic Mini to a supercar.'

Around 70 per cent of the models that Callum and his team produce are licensed cars from companies such as Porsche, Lamborghini and Aston Martin. The remaining 30 per cent are original models for which the team can unleash their full creativity. 'We have a huge range of different vehicles, some of which are really fantastical, like our foodie cars where we might have a slice of cake turned into a hot rod. My first design here was called the Mo-Stash. It's like a Bonneville salt speedster-type car with a comb down the middle that flicks out.'

It seems that Callum's footloose life might be behind him though. He's been at Hot Wheels for just over a year and a half and already at his Southern California home he has a collection of seven motorcycles, his classic Mini now shipped over from the UK, a 1928 Ford Roadster and a 1931 Ford Model A coupe. 'I had a Matchbox Ford Model A hot rod when I was a kid,' he says. Further proof that when you design toy cars you're inspiring kids and creating nostalgic reference points for their future. ✕



ZERO T

Great British Sports Cars (GBS to its friends) isn't a household name, but that could change. We visit



by JAMES TAYLOR PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT & JAMES CHEADLE

TO HERO?

its HQ and drive the Zero, its modern take on a Lotus Seven, to find out if it deserves a bigger audience

A CONFESSION, DEAR READER. I KNEW very little about GBS before visiting the company for this story and getting into one of its cars. I vaguely knew the name, and its association with Lotus/Caterham Seven-style kit cars (also offered as fully factory-built cars) – but not much more than that.

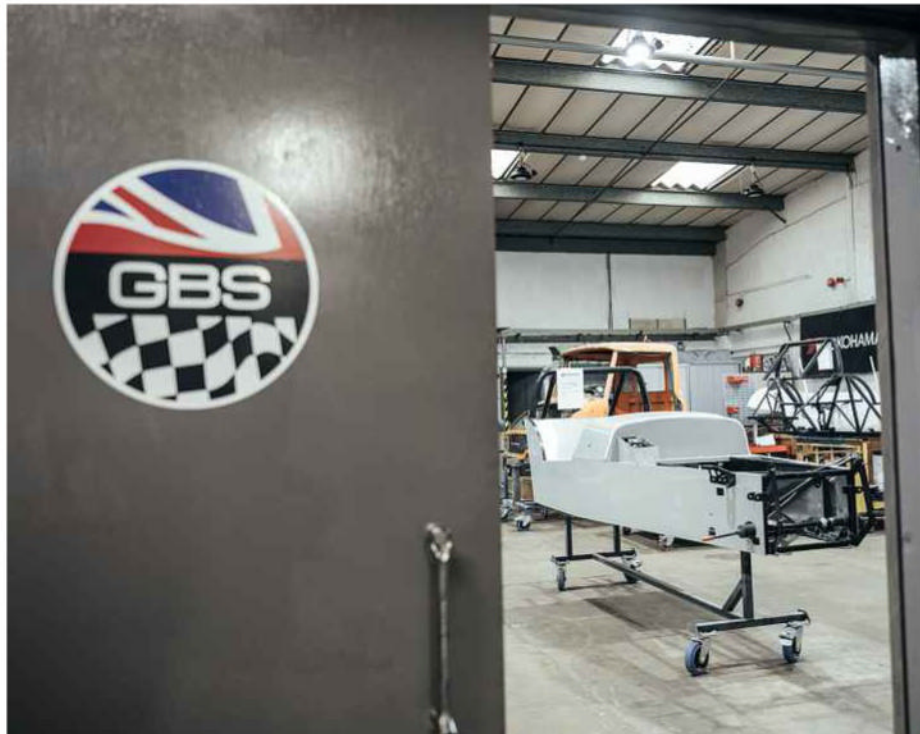
What have I discovered? That it has existed since 2007, since when it has built and sold more than 1000 examples of its Zero sports car. It has dealers in America, Germany, Sweden and Norway and has sold cars as far afield as Australia, New Zealand and Chile. It designs and manufactures the vast majority of the Zero's components in-house, including its own adjustable monotube dampers. And the engineering side of the business is kept busy with consultancy work for aeronautics, motorsport and beyond. A visit to find out more felt like a good idea.

GBS stands for Great British Sports Cars, and its Ollerton factory sits amid pretty, rolling countryside, and some nice roads, in Nottinghamshire. Its story began when it acquired the assets of the Robin Hood kit car company; something of a double-edged sword in that it came with a sizeable customer base and parts business but the cars weren't of the standard GBS wanted to be making. Instead it launched the Zero – still a Seven-alike sports car, but a clean-sheet design – which went on sale in 2007.

'It's about taking the Lotus Seven concept and bringing it right up to date,' says director Richard Hall. The Zero has double-wishbone independent suspension all-round and is longer, wider and roomier than a traditional Seven. It still has a steel tubular spaceframe but with stressed aluminium sections making it akin to a semi-monocoque. Hall says it's more than two-thirds stiffer than an equivalent Caterham.

The Zero is now in its 'Gen 2' evolution. Its shape is instantly recognisable as a Seven, albeit a little more square-cut and broad-shouldered. Drag-fighting aerodynamics are incorporated into its design: there's a fully flat floor with a generous diffuser that starts just behind the seats, a splitter moulded into the nose and aerodynamic surfaces for the front cycle wings, refined in the wind tunnel at MIRA. Customers can choose more traditionally shaped wings if they prefer. 'People say the Seven is like a brick, but you can knock the corners off a brick,' Hall smiles.

Various engines have been placed in the Zero over the years – many have the 2-litre Ford Zetec – but today GBS offers the 2.5-litre Ford Duratec as its primary powerplant, with a five-speed Mazda gearbox. It also offers an



**'HALL SAYS IT'S
MORE THAN
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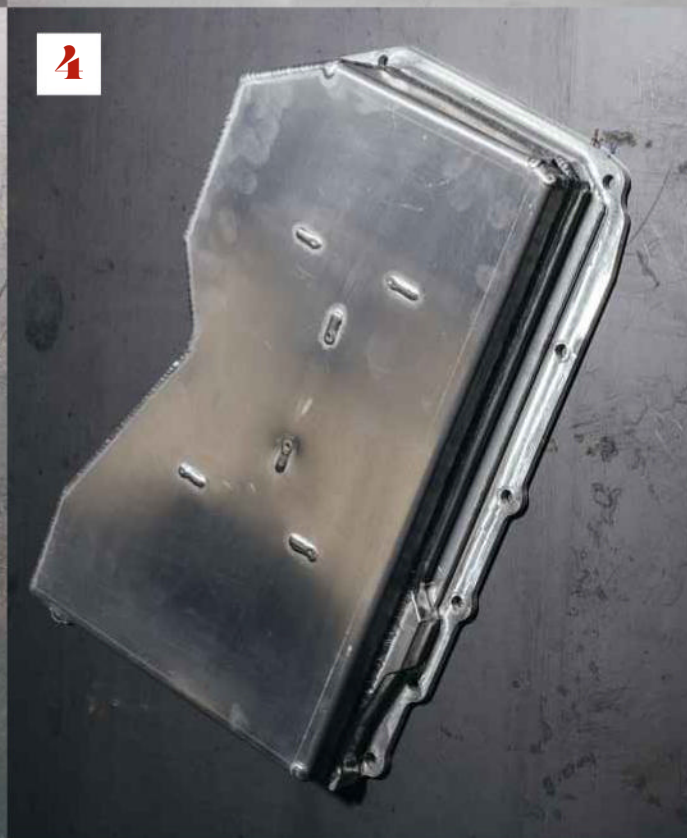
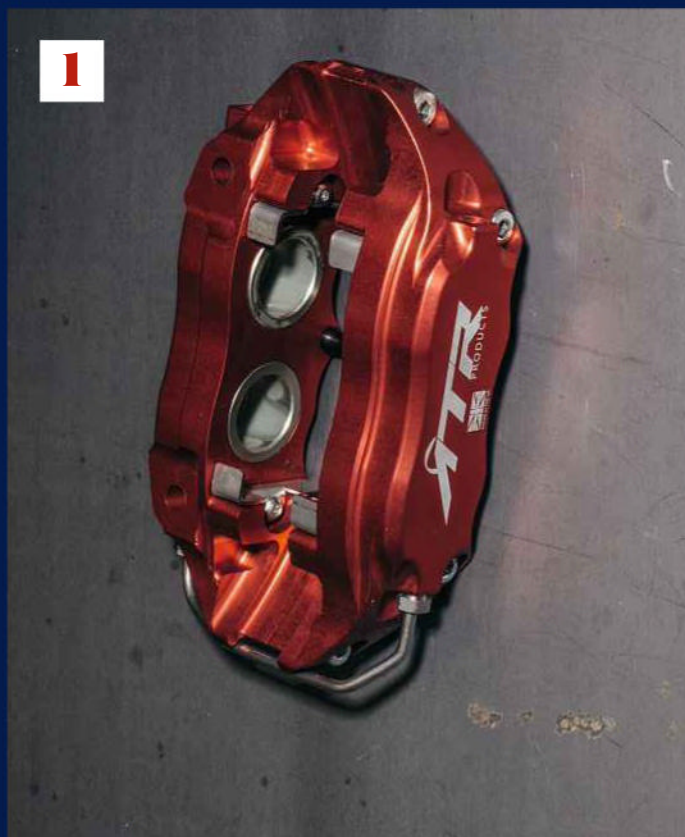
Clockwise from left: director Richard Hall; Zeros in various stages of build at GBS's Ollerton base; 2.5-litre Duratec is primary option for factory-built cars; many components, including brakes, are made in-house

option catering for Mazda MX-5 engines, a popular choice particularly for kit-build cars. Some wackier choices have also found their way into Zeros – bike engines, rotaries, even a 330bhp Honda S2000 engine in a race-car build. But the Duratec is the main option for factory-built cars, modified by GBS with its own throttle bodies, a 3.7kg lighter flywheel and a baffled sump, among other alterations, and governed by a Life Racing ECU. It develops 210bhp, though a 256bhp upgrade is offered too, with forged rods, pistons and cams.

The majority of Zeros produced have been kits, but GBS is concentrating more and more on fully factory-built, turn-key cars. Its most natural competitor is Caterham, and while it doesn't intend to produce cars in the same numbers, it is concentrating on making inroads into a modest but sustainable percentage of the Seven's market share. Its main UK dealer, Central GB in Nottingham, now sells GBS cars alongside Lotus and Morgan operations.

The most basic Zero kit option, with the bare minimum of components for an MX-5 donor car, costs only £4500, and there is a sliding scale upwards from that, topping out at around £30,000 for an all-in, no-donor-





This page: GBS manufactures its own components, and very pretty they are too. Clockwise from top left: **1.** Cast-iron Ford brakes are standard equipment but GBS's own ATR-branded four-pot calipers are lighter and look great. They're a £750 option on their own, or can be integrated into a separate billet-front-hub option. **2.** Engine ancillary carriers are made in-house too. Customers can choose custom anodised colours for many of the optional components, to suit their own spec. **3.** Hubs are machined from alloy billet **4.** GBS designs and manufactures its own sump for the 2.5-litre Duratec engine. **5.** Throttle bodies and one-piece fuel rail are milled from aircraft-grade billet aluminium. GBS also offers throttle bodies for other Ford engines plus MX-5, K-series, Honda, Vauxhall and Peugeot powerplants.



**‘IT FEELS
MUSCULAR, WITH
WEIGHTY STEERING
AND A DEEP
SOUNDTRACK’**

car-required Duratec-engined kit. The price for a factory-built Duratec car is £40,800.

GBS's 14 full-time staff manufacture a remarkable amount of the Zero's components in-house: its own four-piston brakes, uprights, hubs, pulleys, seats, windscreens, sump, throttle bodies, optional carbonfibre wheels (a recent development), the entire exhaust system including the catalytic converters... Very little is outsourced. They're attractive components too: in situ on the car or individually as objects, parts such as the front uprights and hubs, the throttle bodies and the brake units really do look great. They're offered in custom-anodised colours to suit customers' individual specs, too.

The company's own dampers offer 12 clicks of adjustment, and Hall is proud of their performance, particularly the precision of their initial reaction to an input: 'The most important thing,' he stresses. Currently the Zero is offered with proprietary Gaz dampers as standard, with GBS's adjustable dampers a £528 option. It's looking at creating its own non-adjustable units, too, as a more affordable option for customers.

GBS has also produced dampers for stock car championships, historic racing cars and existing road cars such as the Lotus Elise under the ATR brand. The engineering side of the business makes a variety of components for various clients. 'Diversifying into different projects also feeds into our production and development side, making the cars better,' Hall adds.

As does motorsport. Several customers compete in their Zeros, and a track/race version is available from the factory, with a sequential gearbox and a choice of reassuringly strong MSUK or FIA-spec roll-cages.

There are some other interesting vehicles knocking around GBS HQ; a '90s Lotus F1 car and a lesser-seen Dax Kamala are being rebuilt for clients, and the company has worked on various fascinating side projects. It frequently opens its doors to the public to take a look, with monthly 'Friday at the Factory' evenings and occasional 'Cars & Coffee (& Cake)' weekend meets. Currently in-build is a demonstrator car for the new electric version of the Zero, using a Tesla Model S motor at the rear and a 58kWh battery under the bonnet. Hall says the weight distribution is close to 50:50, the same as for the combustion-powered Zero.

So, what does the regular, 2.5-litre petrol-powered Zero feel like to drive? Heading out onto the lanes, it immediately feels like a wide car compared with other Seven-style sports cars. A muscular one too, with weighty steering and a deep soundtrack from its torque-rich 2.5-litre engine. With a kerb weight of just under 600kg, the Duratec's 196lb ft is so easily drawn upon that you're rarely in first and second gear for very long, and the Zero can pull out of villages in fifth gear and accelerate up to the national speed limit without breaking into a sweat.

Ride quality is pliant with the adjustable dampers on close to

their softest setting, and the handling solid: the Zero is a consistent car, stable under braking and with strong traction – a quality aided by the independent rear suspension. An open diff is standard, and there are two limited-slip options: a Quaife ATB unit, or a plated diff as fitted here. On a hot, sunny day and wearing a fresh set of Yokohama A052 tyres (AD08s are standard) it needs provocation to breach its limits, but when it does so it's consistent and controllable, and doesn't spring any nasty surprises. And at all speeds, fast and slow, there's the particular magic that comes with driving a minimalist, roofless, doorless car on a summer's day.

Hall says that road compliance and manners have always been equally important attributes for the Zero, both in terms of chassis and powertrain. 'We've spent as much time tuning the response on a partial throttle input for driving at lower road speeds as we have on getting top-end performance,' he explains.

On a circuit its balance is similarly stable and predictable. Initially there's a little too much body movement on its road-friendly damper settings, but it's a quick, straightforward process to increase the stiffness, and the Zero morphs into a calmer, more stable platform for lapping. As on the road, the most impressive attribute is consistent behaviour in each corner, on each lap.

Fit and finish are smart, with optional carbonfibre trim for the dashboard (with Smiths instruments, soon to be replaced with GBS's own design on future cars) and centre console. The windscreen is heated as an option – 'We did that for Norway,' Hall explains – and heated seats are available in place of a conventional heater.

Another luxurious appointment in the GBS is self-cancelling indicators, something not seen on the Caterham Seven since the all-round double-wishbone CSR model. It's a welcome addition, given the number of times I've accidentally driven a Seven down the road with one indicator coquettishly winking at traffic all around, not hearing the accompanying beeping sound amid the road and wind noise.

Our Bedford Autodrome session also provides an opportunity for a back-to-back with our Caterham Seven long-termers. Lined up side by side, it's immediately clear just how much bigger the GBS is, and how much longer its suspension arms are. Sheer roominess is one of the Zero's USPs; a six-foot-plus driver fits without difficulty. GBS also offers a 40mm-wider GT chassis option, but the standard chassis is likely wide enough for most people. There's enough space in the footwell to drive wearing boots or wide trainers, and heel-and-toeing is much easier than in the Caterham. Out of the way above your right knee, and



GBS Zero

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 2488cc **Power** 210bhp @ 6600rpm
Torque 196lb ft @ 3500rpm **Weight** 595kg **Power-to-weight**
359bhp/ton **Tyres as tested** Yokohama Advan A052
0-60mph 3.5sec **Top speed** c136mph **Basic price** £40,800
(turn-key factory-built Duratec-engined car)

evo rating ★★★★★



your passenger's left, is an extra diagonal cross-brace, something Hall says contributes significantly to chassis stiffness.

The Zero's main rear-view mirror is at dash level and works well, while the exterior mirrors are mounted to the windscreen frame rather than the sidescreens, so they don't disappear when you take the doors off, as per the Seven. GBS is trialling some different mirrors, those on this particular car being from a motorcycle – their odd shape impacts the ultimate field of vision but a different design is being fitted soon.

The Zero's steering is both weightier and slower than the Caterham's – although a quicker rack is available as an option – but its turning circle is usefully smaller at parking speeds. On both road and track, the Caterham feels edgier at the limit than the GBS, with a more rapid transfer between under- and oversteer. There were still clicks available to stiffen the GBS's dampers further, while our Seven evo25's own adjustable dampers were set close to their firmest setting, so the Zero's handling could have been made edgier and vice versa for the Caterham, though you sense the GBS's

broader footprint and larger dimensions ultimately make it a less pointy car.

I must say, I love the Caterham's eager edginess, and even its more cramped, like-a-glove cockpit, though I do wish there was more space in the footwell. I also find its smaller dimensions and aesthetic more beguiling than the larger, more brawny GBS. I have a particular bond with the evo25 car, though. I feel like I know it inside out, having covered so many miles on road and track and made so many memories with it over many months.

That's not to say that you wouldn't build a similar bond with the GBS Zero over time, and it certainly has advantages in terms of practicality and useability as well as thoughtful depth to its engineering and design, and well-resolved dynamics. While the Caterham would still be my choice in terms of ultimate thrills, the Zero can still provide a special kind of sports car magic. And GBS is working on some exciting future projects it can't fully publicise at present. It may be a company that exists on the periphery of many people's knowledge for now, but it's unlikely to remain that way for too much longer. ✕



THE ANATOMY OF A

FORD SIERRA

Group A was a golden era in touring car racing, and nothing captured hearts and minds quite



RA RS500

like the wild, bewinged Sierra. We look under its skin

by ANTONY INGRAM PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

Y

OU WILL FIND NO FEWER THAN 813 CARS THAT WERE homologated for Group A use within the FIA's Historic Database, and among them some real surprises. The Hyundai Pony is a bit of an eyebrow-raiser, and India's Hindustan Ambassador even more so. And despite knowing it's there, you'll search in vain for an Impreza... until you realise it's listed under Fuji, Subaru's parent company.

Then you scroll to Ford, and one car immediately stands out. Whale-tailed, with a ground-scraping splitter, prominent air intakes, a vented bonnet and mesh wheels, the Sierra Cosworth cuts an entirely different form to the prosaic, unadorned shapes used by most manufacturers to ensure their cars were approved for use in sanctioned motorsport. That is, of course, because the Sierra Cosworth was not simply approved for homologation, but a car designed to exploit it: a genuine homologation special.

Group A, introduced by the FIA in 1982 primarily to replace Group 2 touring car regulations, has spawned more homologation specials than most. And while the Nissan Skyline GT-R is revered in Japan and Australia and the BMW M3 and Mercedes 190E Cosworth in Germany, it's the Ford Sierra RS500 Cosworth that is most fondly remembered across most continents.

THE SIERRA IN RACING

Ford's controversial replacement for the Cortina arrived in 1982, but it wouldn't be until 1985 that the Sierra made its factory racing debut – and not, as you might expect, with the Cosworth.

Stuart Turner had been a rallying co-driver at BMC in the 1960s before moving to Ford as competition manager at the end of the decade. He would preside over Ford's motorsport affairs during a rosy period for the Escort (and was the driving force behind the creation of the GT40-powered Supervan), before taking on a new challenge elsewhere in Ford in 1975.

In 1983 he returned to lead the motorsport programme once more and was given the financial resources to put Ford at the top of nearly every major racing discipline, from rallying to Formula 1. Among the more pressing aims was to knock Rover back off its perch in saloon car racing, where the V8-powered SD1 was giving the ageing Capris a drubbing. The new Sierra was chosen for the role.

While Ford Motorsport was working on what would eventually become the Cosworth, a more unusual car was

**'THE ONLY CARS
THAT COULD
REALISTICALLY
COMPETE WERE
BMW'S EVER-
EVOLVING M3s'**



selected in the interim: the Merkur XR4Ti. This US-market variant of the Sierra was powered by a turbocharged, 2.3-litre, single-overhead-cam four-cylinder, which made around 175bhp in road-going form but was coerced to more than 300 horsepower by the time the required 5000 had been built for racing homologation in April 1985.

This was later than intended and meant the Merkurs missed the first race of the 1985 British Saloon Car Championship, but with Andy Rouse at the wheel, Ford owned the rest of the season. Despite this, the car was far from perfect, winning mostly on Rouse's experience and the car's power advantage, but the knowledge gained from the project proved invaluable by the time the all-new Cosworth was signed off for racing use in January 1987. The RS500's homologation would follow in July that year and Rouse's ICS plc team would swap their regular Cosworths for RS500s in rounds 10 and 11, embarking on a full season in 1988.

The RS500 didn't need to wait until 1988 to dominate, however, especially in European racing. Like Rouse, Ruedi Eggenberger's team, with its striking Texaco-liveried cars, had been running the Merkurs almost from day one, and adopted first the Cosworth and then the RS500 as soon as each was ready to race.

The European Touring Car Championship and 1987's short-lived World Touring Car series used rolling starts, which were easier on the sometimes fragile rear axles that had plagued the XR4Ti and early Cosworths, and the new RS500s simply drove away from their closest competition, the E30 M3 BMWs, every time the flag dropped.

With the ink still drying on the homologation papers, the RS500s finished first and second on their debut outing – at Brno in Czechoslovakia on 16 August – and won several more times before the 1987 season was out. Only a dubious disqualification at Australia's Bathurst 1000 prevented Ford's drivers beating BMW's Roberto Ravaglia to the drivers' title, but the Eggenberger team still pipped Schnitzer in the entrants' championship.

From 1988, the Ford's success was far wider-ranging, with driver titles in DTM (Klaus Ludwig, 1988) and Australian Touring Cars (Dick Johnson in 1988 and 1989), plus wins at Bathurst (1988 and 1989), the Spa 24 Hours (the Eggenberger team again, in 1989) and the Japanese Touring Car Championship in 1987 and 1988. Throughout the era, the only cars that could realistically compete with the Fords were BMW's ever-evolving M3s, and the growing might of the 'Godzilla' Nissan Skylines.

Below: an iconic shape and an equally iconic livery, the Labatt's-sponsored Cosworth RS500, as raced in the BTCC by Tim Harvey in 1989 and 1990



**'THEY MADE
550BHP AT
THEIR PEAK,
THOUGH IT'S
SAID AUSTRALIAN
TEAMS HAD UP
TO 600BHP'**





ENGINE AND TRANSMISSION

The 1993cc turbocharged Cosworth 'YB' is probably one of the best-known, most successful and best understood four-cylinder performance engines ever made. It powered not only the Sierra Cosworth road cars but also the RS500 racers, before finding its way into the Escort Cosworth in road and rallying form and the Escort WRC that took over from the Group A cars in Ford's 1990s rallying campaign.

Admittedly, 201bhp from the original Cosworth road cars seems modest today, as does the 224bhp of the RS500 road cars. But in racing form the YB was making around 340bhp from the off, eclipsing the 330-or-so maximum of the 2.3-litre Lima engine in the earlier racers, and the clue to it delivering its full potential could be found in the RS500 name.

The YB comprised a cast-iron block and a 16-valve aluminium cylinder head designed by Mario Illien at Cosworth. Early versions used a small Garrett T3 turbo but Cosworth kept blowing them up on the test bed, so it was replaced by the larger and more durable T4 – a handy side-effect being an ability to flow enough air for more than 500 horsepower. These RS500 engines are known as the YBD, distinguishing them from the YBB of earlier road-going Cosworths. Among other tweaks, they featured an additional fuel-rail and set of injectors – non-functional on the road car, but a few ECU tweaks and the racers could deliver fuel like a fire tender full of four-star.

Alan Strachan, who worked alongside Rouse on both the Sierras and the later 2-litre touring cars and today runs CNC Motorsport – which among other activities is manufacturing a limited run of full race-spec RS500 continuation cars, built to original specification – says that ECU mapping marked the biggest difference between teams running RS500s. There wasn't a huge difference in outright power, and all were pushing the limits of what the engine could do – around 550bhp at its peak, though there are rumours some Australian teams made up to 600bhp – but

mapping allowed for small differences in power delivery and reliability.

ECUs are also the only real difference in how the cars are run today in demonstrations and historic racing, since the unavailability of original units means modern hardware and software are used instead. 'You don't get a huge performance gain though,' explains Strachan. 'The main benefits are being able to look after the car better – keeping temperatures down, shutting the thing off if the oil pressure drops – and an improvement in driveability.'

Opposite: the original Sierra Cosworth's enormous rear wing was combined with a rubber Gurney flap for the RS500, producing approaching 100kg of downforce at 100mph

CHASSIS, BODYWORK AND AERODYNAMICS

The early Merkur racers had used the unusual four-pillar, three-door body of both their road-going counterpart and the XR4i sold in Europe, before moving to the more conventional three-pillar hatchback more familiar from the later Cosworth. Distinctive though the 'jelly mould' Sierra body was, it also generated lift at speed and wasn't great in crosswinds either, as many a 1980s sales rep will confirm. This combination prompted designer Lothar Pinsky at Ford's Special Vehicle Engineering to develop the car's most distinctive feature: an enormous wing standing proud above the rear hatch, supplemented by an XR4i-style spoiler at the trailing edge of the bootlid.

It generated only a modest 20-or-so kilos of downforce at 70mph, but was much more effective at countering the car's natural lift, and when the RS500 hit the roads in 1987, the addition of a prominent rubber Gurney flap took that figure to nearer 100kg at 100mph. Together with a deep front air dam – with cut-outs and the ditching of a pair of running lights in the front bumper to feed air to the intercooler and radiator, engine air intake, and brakes – the Sierra now had a body to match its performance. And, with Group A being a production-based formula, one that was conveniently homologated to work well on track, too.

In many respects there was nothing special about the RS500's running gear. Front suspension was Ford's favoured MacPherson strut arrangement and there were trailing arms at the rear, hanging from a subframe that also housed the rear differential. Where the RS500 differed from the conventional Sierra, and indeed the regular Cosworth, was an additional set of mounting points to give racing outfits the option to relocate the trailing arms, and therefore make larger geometry changes.

Production of the road-going RS500s was handed to Aston Martin Tickford, who received complete Sierra Cosworths before removing and modifying their aerodynamic parts and doing the same with the Cosworth-built YBs, swapping them for the more potent YBDs and their large front-mounted intercoolers, plus extra heat shielding.

The RS500s then went just about everywhere to be turned into full racing machines with cages and seam-welded shells. The best-known in the UK was Andy Rouse Engineering (ARE), but when Robb Gravett took his BTCC title in 1990 it was with cars built by Australia's Dick Johnson Racing and engines developed by Mountune, while Eggenberger was the big player in the European scene. Tyre choice too was wide-ranging: in the BTCC, cars ran everything from Yokohama (Gravett) to Pirelli (Rouse) to Dunlop (the ARE car in our photos).

DRIVING THE RS500

The whale tail is only part of the Group A RS500's visual appeal; for those who grew up watching 1980s touring car racing, the liveries

are just as iconic. Black and red Texaco cars, Bastos red and white, the white and blue of Kaliber, and the Labatt's 'Don't Drink and Drive' blue and white of Tim Harvey's 1989 and 1990 ARE-prepared cars.

Harvey, who would win the 1992 BTCC title for BMW in that dramatic Silverstone finale involving a clash between Steve Soper and John Cleland, took a pair of race wins in the Labatt's car in 1989, and secured a pair of Class A third-place season finishes in '89 and '90 in an era when the fastest car outright – typically a Sierra – wasn't necessarily guaranteed an overall title.

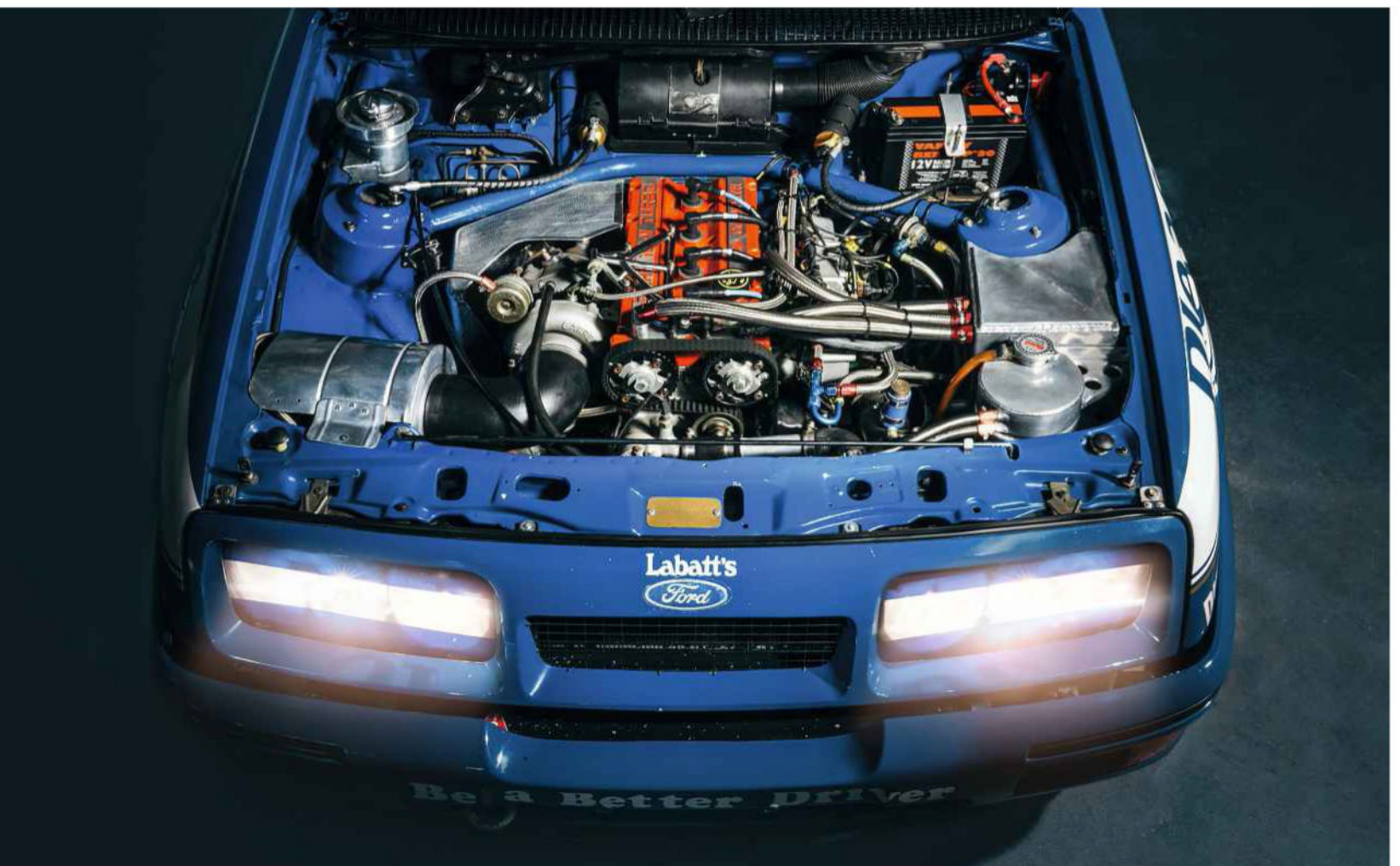
As Rouse himself noted when we covered Group A's successor, the 2-Litre Formula, back in *evo* 246, that sometimes made for a confusing spectacle, and Harvey admits that the Sierra's near-singlehanded command of the races, if not the championship points, probably helped hasten its demise. 'For those of us that drove them, though, we absolutely loved them,' he says.

Harvey first stepped into the car in 1988, having come from a season in the Rover Vitesse in 1987. 'It was a bit like getting a computer with a faster processor,' he says. 'We'd been racing against Andy [Rouse] in the Merkur, so we had an idea of what the car was going to be like, but it was still a different beast. The Vitesse was a lovely, cuddly bear of a car, more of an endurance car than a sprint car – it was quite heavy, and had that V8 engine making around 350 horsepower. Then bosh, straight out of nowhere comes the Cosworth. It was lighter, more agile, and was making well over 500 horsepower even to start with.'

The RS500 has developed a reputation for being a bit of a monster, something Harvey does little to dispel: 'It was certainly an upgrade –

Above right:
turbocharged 2-litre 'YB' in-line four made 224bhp in road spec but well over 500bhp in its racing guise, mods including an additional fuel rail and set of injectors





monster, something Harvey does little to dispel: 'It was certainly an upgrade – as a driver you always want more power and more grip. The car had developed fairly quickly into the beast it was, and at the time they just couldn't make the tyres last, so you always had more power than grip and were then trying to control it on rapidly degrading tyres. It took a lot of manhandling, a lot of controlling as the tyres went off.'

The tyres improved over time, but only as the power itself grew, so this balancing act was something RS500 drivers always had to contend with. The benefit was that little could touch the Sierra on the faster circuits, though despite its traction limitations out of slower corners it was hardly a one-trick pony, and in the hands of Harvey, Rouse, Gravett and others, took wins almost everywhere, including endurance races that prioritised durability as well as speed.

'It was a pretty good handling car. There was always fine-tuning to do, geometry, dampers, roll bars, the usual things, but the experience

was really dominated by the engine performance. It was always about exit speed – you're vee-ing the corner, in terms of stopping the car, turning, and powering out again, compared to the E30 M3 which was all about maximising your minimum corner speed.'

Harvey moved to the E30 in 1990 in the first year that 2-litre cars ran alongside Group A, something that, to begin with at least, felt like a bit of a comedown. 'In the DTM they'd been running 2.5-litre screamers, but the British regs limited the cars to 2 litres. After 560 horsepower, they felt pretty underpowered...'

Getting back behind the wheel at the Super Touring Power event at Brands Hatch in 2023, familiar sensations came flooding back: 'It's funny when you get back into a car you've not sat in for years – you were so familiar with it back in the day, the sound of the starter motor, the smell, the mechanical engagement and the sounds, that driving it again is completely instinctive, like you've never been away. It's so emotive and evocative – and it's still an absolute beast.'



THE DEMISE OF GROUP A TOURING CARS

The Sierra's success, and that of the Skyline GT-R in Australia, ultimately spelled the end of Group A touring car racing. The likes of Rouse and Prodrive's David Richards drafted the 2-Litre Touring Car Formula with the idea of making it accessible to as many manufacturers as possible, and after a year alongside Group A in 1990 – the year an RS500 finally won the series outright, with Robb Gravett at the wheel – the BTCC switched exclusively to 2-litre cars from 1991.

The rest is history, and as even Harvey says: '2 litres was probably the way to go – it proved to be absolutely the correct decision.' The 2-litre touring cars, which evolved into the formula we know today as Super Touring, created some of the most action-packed racing the sport has ever seen and has gone down in history

as one of the golden eras of the BTCC, maybe even eclipsing Group A as a fan favourite.




But while British racing turned its back on Group A, there was still life left in the category elsewhere. DTM carried on with the regulations until the end of 1992, and its final years witnessed some incredible machines, such as the Audi V8 Quattro and the bewinged Mercedes-Benz 190E Evolution II. The Japanese Touring Car Championship, one of the precursors to today's Super GT series, and Australian Touring Cars, which predated V8 Supercars, also hung on until 1992.

Group A is undoubtedly one of the greatest racing classes in history, and, valiant efforts from the Hyundai Pony and Hindustan Ambassador aside, the Sierra RS500 remains one of its biggest stars.

Thanks to Alan Strachan at CNC Motorsport, Tim Harvey, and First Choice Bodyshop for providing the photography location.

**'LITTLE COULD TOUCH
THE SIERRA ON THE
FASTER CIRCUITS'**



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FAST FLEET



NEW ARRIVAL

BMW X6 M Competition

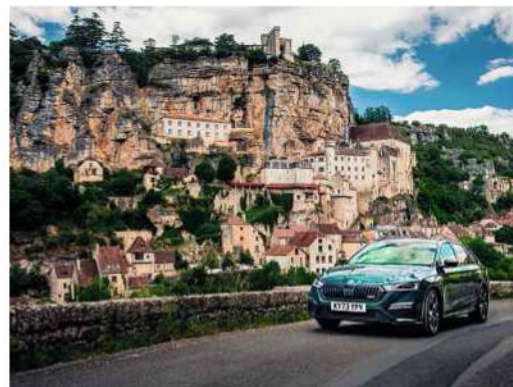
M division's controversial
coupe SUV joins the **evo**
fleet. Can we find some
beauty in the beast?



YOU COULD NEVER ACCUSE EVO OF NOT BEING thorough. After the flurry of M2s, 3s, 4s and 5s that have been through the Fast Fleet garage over the last half a decade, the time has come to sample one of BMW M's more controversial creations, the X6 M Competition. An M2 CS it is not. But is it a true M car? Unlikely, but we have six months to find out.

evo's exposure to the X6 M has been limited to, well, very little. We've spent time sprinting across Europe in its 'sensible' cousin, the X5 M Competition (189mph three-up and with a boot full of photography gear was impressive), but next to no time with its coupe relative beyond this exact example stopping by at the beginning of 2024 for an evo.co.uk review following the model's mid-term facelift. We thought it was broken, and returned it to BMW suggesting such; they took a look and gave it a clean bill of health.

Our concern? The ride quality and body control. We didn't



p114 Skoda Octavia Estate vRS



p118 Porsche 911 Carrera GTS



p119 Peugeot 208 GT



p120 BMW M2



expect 7-series levels of pillowness, but the X6 M demonstrated a level of jarring ride some of us hadn't experienced since our days of cutting the springs on a Mk4 Escort with an angle grinder. But this was the factory set-up. Some experiments with tyre pressures and a trip to a wheel alignment specialist are first on the to-do list to see if improvements can be found.

The improvements BMW M made to the X6 during its facelift were substantial to say the least. Out went the old S63 4.4-litre hot-vee turbocharged V8 and in came the S68, which looks suspiciously like its predecessor: 4.4 litres, hot-vee configuration for the pair of turbochargers, same 616bhp and 553lb ft of torque. Now, however, there's a 12bhp, 147lb ft mild-hybrid electric motor within the gearbox. This is not a performance enhancement, rather it's been developed to smooth out the X6's powertrain (assisting the stop/start and providing some torque assistance when pulling away in a higher gear, for example). There's also a higher compression ratio (up from 10:1 to 10.5:1), a stronger crankshaft and

improvements to the oil sump baffling to prevent oil starvation, and there's a new electronically controlled blow-off valve and new cats, too.

In terms of the gearbox, that too has had some hardware changes, most noticeably shorter second- and third-gear ratios (there are eight in total), presumably to help the 2370kg beast get off the line more swiftly. It's certainly going to be intriguing to get to know and understand any benefits this updated powertrain delivers.

Along with its new exterior design, with a front end inspired by, or rather in line with, the XM's, providing the X6 M Comp with an over-the-top level of aggression, the interior received the full 2024 BMW makeover. This includes the fitment of two screens: one for the instruments, the other for the HMI controls. The former means there are no traditional round instrument dials and nor is there any option to configure them as such, which still feels like a huge oversight with technology that's perfect for such applications. Not that I'm advocating an X6 M should be able

to replicate the instrument cluster of a 2002 Turbo; that would be on a par with Renault allowing your Clio to sound like Prost's turbo F1 car.

Under the X6's body is a further adaptation of BMW's CLAR platform, albeit based on a rather earlier iteration, resulting in what many today consider an old-school chassis approach. There are double wishbones at the front, a multi-link set-up at the rear, with coil springs, active dampers and active anti-roll bars. Air suspension, while available on other X6 models, isn't offered on the M. There is also no rear-axle steering available, although the rear suspension has gained some toe-in over its predecessor for improved high-speed stability, and there's further chassis strengthening throughout. This would normally allow for the spring and damper rates to be wound back, but it doesn't feel like that has happened in this case.

Carbon-ceramics aren't an option, which could leave the cast-iron rotors getting quite a workout. If the amount of brake dust that appears to be a permanent fixture on the 21-inch front wheels (22s



are fitted to the rear) is anything to go by, they are already feeling the pressure.

The first few thousand miles have highlighted that the X6 M Competition, all £131,405 of it(!), is no subtle device. In some respects it's more hardcore than an M5 CS, with a powertrain that feels permanently on edge and a chassis that's permanently locked down. For a powertrain with such high levels of torque available it does enjoy changing down two, sometimes three gears at motorway speeds when you just want to add 5mph to your cruise. Which isn't infuriating at all.

So far it drives like it looks. Hopefully there are some hidden depths to be found when we get more exposure to what lies beneath.

Stuart Gallagher (@stuartg917)

Date acquired May 2024 **Total mileage** 8117
Mileage since arrival 4840 **Costs this month** £0
mpg this month 23.0



Abarth 695C Turismo

As our supermini departs, Meaden faces up to life after Abarth

S TOP ALL THE CLOCKS, CUT OFF THE telephone, prevent the dog from barking with a juicy bone. The man from Stellantis has been to collect the Abarth and life is considerably duller as a result.

I knew the day of reckoning was approaching but didn't dare put in a pre-emptive call to Abarth HQ. Somewhat embarrassingly I then missed a call from the logistics team (honest) and was in Derby – some 85 miles from Meaden Towers – when a nice man called to say he was on his way to my house.

Sadly, he was only too happy to reschedule for the following morning, so the stay of execution was brief. Needless to say my drive home was somewhat maudlin. To make things worse the following morning was gloriously sunny – perfect for enjoying the 695C's natty retractable roof.

The only upside, at least so far as editor-in-chief Gallagher's budget goes, was the departure of RE23 TGX meant I never had time to obey the 695's recently illuminated service message and test the Abarth dealer network. With nothing amiss there's little to suggest we'd have been paying for anything more than the regular 12-month service (three-year service bundles start at £349), but it would have been interesting to experience how good my nearest dealer, Rockingham Cars in Corby, is.

Aside from the obvious trauma, my last month with the 695 was business as usual,

with pretty much every journey bringing a smile to my face. I had hoped to meet with Richard Porter and his Panda 100HP, not least because I was intrigued to see whether my memories of running an early example of the boxier and much less powerful Fiat hot hatch were rose-tinted, but said Panda's recent engine woes (see *evo* 323) put paid to that idea.

I'm certain the Fiat wouldn't have lived with the Abarth point-to-point, but I seem to recall it had an equally crashy ride but a better driving position, snappier gearshift and pointier steering, and was a bit more chuckable, even if, as with the 695, you couldn't fully disable the stability control. It didn't have a *parrp* button, though, which could swing things either way depending upon how juvenile you are.

As you can probably tell, I've grown rather fond of the little orange Abarth. Like all good long-termers it has wormed its way into my affections and become part of my daily routine. In short, despite initial misgivings and open admission of its flaws, I miss it. Badly.

Tune-in next time to find out how such a small car could leave such a large hole in my life.

Richard Meaden (@DickieMeaden)

Date acquired December 2023 **Total mileage** 9882
Mileage this month 928 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 36.2



Skoda Octavia Estate vRS

Our understated estate aces a grand touring test

DISCUSS GT CARS IN THE EVO OFFICE and it's guaranteed that within the first 60 seconds someone will say, 'Of course, today the real grand tourers are SUVs.' So why then, with our new BMW X6 M long-term parked outside my house and a big drive through France on the cards, did I seek out the key to our Octavia vRS instead?

Fuel economy? Partly. Over 650 miles each way at twin-turbo-V8 mpg is not a thought you'd want to dwell on for too long, but I might have attempted to ignore the resultant numbers had said powertrain been fitted to something more likely to earn stares of admiration rather than glares of condemnation. But a ginormous, rumbling, bright-red SUV is just conspicuous in all the wrong ways.

Whereas our Skoda estate is most definitely not. Yet while it may be relatively understated, it is by no means invisible – especially not in our example's classy Royal Green Metallic shade. Before we'd even left the UK the vRS was receiving compliments.

A fellow traveller in the Le Shuttle car park came over to ask if it was a new version of the Octavia (it's not, but the colour was new for 2023) and to confess that he was 'incredibly envious'. Shortly afterwards a Border Force officer professed his liking for the hue, suggesting that 'all Skodas should be this colour.' Then when passing the first petrol station in France, a group of young men leaning against a well-used Citroën all nudged each other to take note as the Skoda drove by. What a difference a paint colour can make.

In an earlier report (*evo* 322), Henry praised KY73 YPV for being a comfortable and relaxing car to get around in, and so it proved on the long drive south. With the optional DCC suspension left in Comfort, the ride was forgiving but not wallowy, while the 242bhp engine felt unstressed at a 130kph (81mph) cruise and wasn't short of urge whenever you wanted to get back up to that pace from a stretch with a lower speed limit. After a 13-hour day of travelling, admittedly

shared between two drivers but with me tackling the bulk of it, I genuinely couldn't believe how fresh I felt. Getting back into the car for more miles the next day held no dread at all.

It'd been a while since I'd been in an Octavia, and the interiors have moved on in recent times. There's still a wonderful simplicity about it, with a general absence of fuss and clutter, but it's not basic, just neatly, tastefully designed. However, the understatedness perhaps goes a little too far when it comes to the digital instruments. The gear indicator, for example, is a tiny bit of small-print tucked away in the bottom-left corner, the same size as the outside temperature display on the opposite side. Not very vRS. Equally bafflingly, although you can configure all kinds of different bits of data to appear in the centre of the two digital dials (charge pressure anyone?), there's no option to put a nice big gear number in there. Another glaring omission from the instruments is the current speed limit – the car knows it, but you have to call up the satnav on the central screen to



see it, which also means looking across for it.

But these are minor gripes. During a week of exploring the Dordogne and Lot départements the vRS became a trusty companion – never disappointing to return to, never falling short on anything it was asked to do. And it averaged a highly impressive 42mpg across eight days and 1700 miles, at one point nudging 48mpg on the motorway stretches. Take that, X6.

Simply put, it is a brilliant means of getting from A to B quickly, comfortably, effortlessly and discreetly. It may not raise your pulse too often, but it's also never a chore to drive. Which I'd imagine is exactly how all those Octavia vRS owners out there like it.

Ian Eveleigh

Date acquired December 2023 **Total mileage** 8611 **Mileage this month** 2244
Costs this month £0 **mpg this month** 41.0



Cupra Leon Estate 310 4Drive

Leon meets Octavia for an in-group hot estate head-to-head

WITH TWO VW GROUP ESTATES ON THE **evo** fleet, a comparison was only a matter of time. They share a platform, so how much do the Cupra Leon 310 and Skoda Octavia vRS actually differ from each other?

The Skoda is the more affordable of the two, at £37,785 basic versus £45,465 for the Cupra (or £43,285 and £48,640 respectively as tested). That price difference may not be too obvious on the outside, but it is as soon as you open a door. The Leon's cabin has a more premium feel, thanks in large part to its blue nappa leather (part of the top-level VZ3 Design Edition trim) that's far nicer in both look and feel than the rather scratchy black fabric in the Octavia.

The Cupra works harder to set a more sporting tone, too. The Skoda may have Alcantara covering its dash, but its rival ups the ante with brushed metal and faux carbon elements, plus drive mode and engine start satellite buttons dangling from the steering wheel's spokes. Its seats also offer more lateral support – the Octavia's vRS logo'd chairs may have prominent bolsters, but they're surprisingly bendy affairs.

Set off in the Cupra and, as long as you've put it into at least Sport mode to reduce the default sluggishness, you'll find a more eager response to throttle inputs than you get from the more measured Skoda. There's more power and torque on tap too, of course – 306bhp and 295lb ft versus 242bhp and 273lb ft – and it's generated

more effortlessly, so the Leon always feels less strained for any given rate of acceleration.

Perhaps surprisingly, it also feels a touch more remote: four-wheel drive ensures the Leon's outputs are delivered with little drama, whereas the Octavia's less powerful version of the EA888 engine troubles the front tyres only, so they are often working harder to get torque to tarmac, as is the VAQ diff (which the Leon has too).

The four-wheel-drive system also contributes to the Cupra feeling a touch heavier on the road – it weighs 1549kg to the Skoda's 1458kg. The Leon's 15-stage adaptive suspension can be locked down to a much firmer level than the Octavia's similar system, however, offering greater control when conditions suit. But wind it back to its softest setting and the Cupra is no harder to live with day-to-day than the Skoda.

There's plenty to differentiate these two cars, then. The Cupra Leon has a greater bandwidth; it's a very rapid, practical car that you can also imagine driving simply for the sake of driving. The Skoda Octavia, meanwhile, is the more grown-up machine, with a greater focus on the everyday and value for money. Each has its place.

Ian Eveleigh

Date acquired December 2023 **Total mileage** 8259 **Mileage this month** 214
Costs this month £0 **mpg this month** 27.4



END OF TERM

Range Rover Sport P530

Both on and off road, this luxury SUV proved it is a master of its domains

IT WAS DUE TO STAY FOR THREE MONTHS. Now, four months after that deadline passed, the Range Rover Sport P530 First Edition has finally bid **evo** farewell. In all that time it did not prove itself to be a car to replace an M5, RS6 or E63, nor a dynamic alternative to the more expensive Aston Martin DBX707 or the cheaper, more focused Porsche Cayenne. It was big, thirsty (19mpg over the course of our test) and as far from a car you would consider driving for the sake of it as you'd expect from something with a kerb weight nudging 2.5 tons.

So why cover nearly 15,000 miles in a car we know is an impediment to the Thrill of Driving? Two reasons. First, there are a great number of people who own and get their thrills from eCoty winners, TCoty heroes and modern classics and have cars such as the Sport for the daily duties, and if you're going to own such a machine you ask us which is best. Second, as we have written many times over the years, driving thrills can come in the most unexpected form, and in our Range Rover's case at unexpected speeds. Such as

when you point it at a mud bath. Which is what I did 48 hours before the Sport departed.

Eastnor Castle is one of nine Land Rover Experience centres in the UK. Nestled in the heart of Herefordshire it's considered the home of Land Rover off-road driving, its many tracks, obstacles and hazards having evolved over the decades to test the latest products to come out of Solihull. It's run by Land Rover test drivers, who expertly deliver detailed, calming instructions with a clarity identical to that of circuit pros who guide you and your new Porsche 911 GT3 around a racetrack. A day at Eastnor in the right vehicle never fails to leave you in awe of its capability – and relieved you weren't required to get out and dig for freedom.

There was an inquisitive eyebrow raised at our Sport's 23-inch wheel and tyre combo on arrival (the demo fleet is equipped with smaller, less extravagant rims and tyres with taller sidewalls), but not a single thing was changed or adjusted before we headed into the very wet woods.

The course that wraps around Eastnor is more of a challenge for the driver than the car. Technology has transformed off-road driving, and while hill-descent control, wading modes and the ability to lock diffs by touching a screen removes much of the thought process, it still takes several kilos of flesh and bone to be behind the wheel to carve a path. Trust in the systems, your judgement and the instructions being delivered from the passenger seat, and soon you're tipping a six-figure Range Rover over a blind edge with absolute confidence. Although Land Rover's 'see-through' camera technology, which shows you the view around and ahead of the front wheels on the central display, helps here too.

It couldn't be more different to all those months the Sport spent gliding around the United Kingdom. It smoothed commutes, covered thousands of motorway miles, survived the worst potholes we've ever fallen into, and was the perfect companion when landing at an airport after a 26-hour flight with the M25 still to tackle. This is why such cars are so popular.



Space, luxury and a sense of unbreakable on-road security (stop laughing, I'll come onto the 'S' word) are far bigger priorities for far more people than granular steering feel and on-the-limit tyre grip.

One area of technology that Land Rover was very keen for us to utilise was the security features. This meant not using the InControl Remote App or the keyless system to lock the car, but instead double-pressing the key fob and waiting for the audible beep. This kills the signal from the car to the key, preventing it from being intercepted and someone helping themselves when you've walked away. To date Land Rover has spent north of £15million on security updates to its vehicles, and as a result the latest line-up is proving far less vulnerable to those who prefer to secure their car by nefarious means.

Being an early First Edition meant our car's interior still had some physical buttons – I'm not sure why Land Rover has decided to remove them on later models. It also meant poor levels of wind noise around the header rail, and for some

reason the HVAC system would blow cold air for prolonged periods at random moments for no fathomable reason. All have been cured on later examples we have driven.

Truth be told, a D300 Sport makes far more sense as a daily driver than the P530, doubling the fuel efficiency for no real drop off in performance, but the 523bhp BMW-sourced V8 has a delicious mid-range surge the diesel can never match. Either way, there's no denying why cars such as the Range Rover Sport have such strong appeal to so many. They may be a blight on our roads for some, but their appeal isn't waning anytime soon. After 15,000 miles I can understand why.

Stuart Gallagher (@stuartg917)

Date acquired November 2023 **Duration of test** 7 months **Total test mileage** 14,901 **Overall mpg** 19.1 **Total costs** £0 **Price when new** £119,675 **Value today** £91,000



Toyota GR Yaris

Service time – and an insight into how others do it

WITH A MONTH LEFT ON OUR TIME with the Yaris, its 6000-mile service became due, so I booked it in with my closest Toyota dealer, Steven Eagell in Peterborough. A few days before, as I was parking elsewhere, I noticed another Yaris had drawn up alongside. It was on a 21 plate, just washed and looked immaculate. Turns out its owner had it serviced by Steven Eagell too but was very particular and supplied his own oils for the engine, diffs and gearbox. His car also had only 6000 miles on it and so only an engine oil change was due, but he'd had them all done, which is an insight into how some owners cherish their GR Yaris.

There was an online check-in to complete a day or two before the service and, as it sounds, it was a lot like Ryanair, with added cost options offered, such as an air-conditioning servicing, fitting of extras and the like. The service took four hours and included changing the cabin filter and engine oil and filter, a short road test and a bunch of checks. I was asked if I'd like the car washed, the service receptionist explaining that some owners specifically asked them not to because their cars had specialist paint finishes.

The service included a video walk-through under the car, describing brake pad and tyre condition (8mm and 6mm left all round, respectively) and cost £315. I really feel I should have used up more of the tyres; at this rate they'll last 20,000 miles...

John Barker (@evoJB)

Date acquired December 2024 **Total mileage** 5813 **Mileage this month** 1587 **Costs this month** £315 (service) **mpg this month** 34.9



Porsche 911 Carrera GTS

What's more 'lifestyle' than a 911 GTS? A 911 GTS with a roof rack, of course

EVERY NEW PORSCHE 911 COMES WITH the option of 'preparation for roof transport system', i.e. mounting points for roof bars neatly concealed under the rubber mouldings in the roof. As Porsche options go it's an unusually cheap one, at £48. Our 911 has the roof prep option box ticked, so it would have been remiss not to stick some headgear on it at some point during its time on the fleet. And 911s look good with stuff on their roof, after all; if you've spotted a Carrera 4 on winter tyres carrying a set of skis in the mountains, you'll know what I mean.

The Porsche 'Tequipment' roof bars cost £365 and there are various further attachments available: ski/snowboard holders, racing bike carriers and – as temporarily fitted to our car here – universal bicycle racks (£255 each).

They look as smart as you'd hope of a Porsche-branded design, and it's a relatively straightforward set-up: a hinged armature clamps to the bike frame's downtube, and each wheel is held by a separate carrier with a built-in ratchet strap. I found the rear wheel tricky to fit to the carrier initially and it took a few goes, particularly when one of the metal clips pinged off and took some scrabbling around on the ground to recover. I even resorted to reading the



instructions, which run to many pages and aren't entirely straightforward to follow.

On the move for the first time with the bike in place, I wished for the first and only time that the 911 was specced with softer suspension and a sunroof. I was extra conscious of the GTS spec's firm suspension for the first few miles, picturing the bike wobbling away above and craving a sunroof to keep an eye on it, but every time I pulled over to check, it was still secure and hadn't budged, so eventually I stopped worrying.

A few days after being out on the bike, all three days or so of British summer 2024 arrived and my neighbours and I celebrated by putting their kayak on the roof and heading to the nearby river. Rather than take the bike carriers off, we slid them to the

centre of the bars and the kayak fitted neatly over them, secured by ratchet straps.

It turned even more heads than the bike, and cars coming the other way slowed down early and gave the 911 a little more space than usual. Perhaps a plastic boat on the roof marks an unlikely step forward in road safety.

One downside of the roof gear, aside from an impact on fuel economy, is an insistent whistling sound the bars make above 50mph or so. The roof gear was still in place when I took the 911 to *evo*'s track evening at Bedford Autodrome and gave some passenger rides to readers. We can report that the whistling sound continues to intensify at 150mph.

Funny the effect sticking on a set of roof bars has on a car. On an SUV or crossover it can make it look dowdy; on a sports car, somehow, it makes it look more adventurous; rebellious, almost. Fitting a roof box would make the already surprisingly practical 911 even more useable still. Every month its versatility surprises a little more.

James Taylor (@JamesTaylorEVO)

Date acquired December 2023 **Total mileage** 7143 **Mileage this month** 839 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 28.3



Peugeot 208 GT

Maybe it can't cut it on a circuit, but our little Peugeot is a motorway marvel

A COUPLE OF MONTHS AND 1600 MILES in, the Fast Fleet 208 has proven its worth through use as both a short-distance daily driver and long-distance motorway tool. There's no doubt it's better suited to some tasks than others, but impressions remain largely positive for our French supermini.

The initials of Peugeot Sport Engineering can only be found on a single road car at present (the 508 PSE) and sadly the division won't be laying its hands on the 208 anytime soon, if ever, so there's no confusing our GT with its hot hatch relatives of old. However, that didn't stop deputy editor James Taylor from venturing onto Bedford Autodrome's South West Circuit during one of our recent **evo** trackdays to find out how it fares on the limit. The verdict was perhaps as you'd expect from a 134bhp mild-hybrid supermini, with ESC frustratingly restrictive and its three-cylinder engine feeling gutless on the open circuit. Of course, the 208 GT never claimed to be a track weapon and buyers are highly unlikely to book circuit time with one, but it's all in the name of science...

One thing that feels particularly right about the 208 is its kerb weight. Quoted at 1228kg, it's only

40kg more than the recently discontinued Ford Fiesta ST. While this might not seem significant, the new BMW M5 (see Driven, **evo** 324) has provided a stark reminder of just how much mass hybrid componentry can add, yet the (mild) hybrid 208 GT has achieved a figure you'd usually associate with a pure-combustion car. Granted, a 0.89kWh battery pack will never lead to huge weight gain (or pure electric range for that matter), but the result should still be applauded.

Many of the 208's journeys this month have been 100-mile-plus airport runs, and it's tackled them without fuss. Its 170lb ft of torque is plenty for the task at hand, rarely leaving you wanting more in normal driving, even at motorway speeds, while there's nothing to complain about in terms of refinement or comfort either. Despite a measly 44-litre fuel tank, range is also excellent under these circumstances; with c50mpg easily achievable on a long drive, there's the potential for well over 400 miles between fill-ups.

There is room for improvement in the infotainment department though. The 208's central touchscreen not only lacks visual polish but also the response and logical layout you really need

from such a system. Finding trip stats at the end of a journey has proven virtually impossible once they've disappeared from the digital dashboard, and the majority of the menus occupy only a very small percentage of the display, with the rest entirely unused. This is a Peugeot-wide issue and not something limited to the 208, but it's definitely something we'd like to see improved. Thankfully, wireless Apple CarPlay has worked seamlessly for us so far, meaning the Peugeot-designed UI isn't something we need to interact with often.

One journey I didn't use the Peugeot for recently was a 300-mile run back from Le Mans. Well, a Ferrari SF90 Spider was an offer for that trip, and was every bit as epic as you'd expect. Swapping back into the Peugeot afterwards was as sobering as you'd imagine too, but in the real world, stacked against true rivals, there's no doubt the 208 is meeting its brief well.

Sam Jenkins (@evosamj)

Date acquired April 2024 **Total mileage** 1623
Mileage this month 523 **Costs this month** £0
mpg this month 47.0



END OF TERM

BMW M2

It was divisive in its concept and its delivery, but our M2 played a strong long-term game

A

ND AS ONE TORONTO RED BMW LONG-termers arrives (see page 110), another must depart...

Our G87 M2 joined the **evo** fleet in January 2024 with 6066 miles on the clock. Spec-wise it had the manual gearbox (a £1200 option), a Comfort Package (£730 for keyless access, a heated steering wheel and a wireless charging tray) and the M Race Track Package (£9095 for M Carbon bucket seats, a top speed increase to 180mph and – should you buy your car from a BMW dealer rather than borrow it from the press office – a voucher for an M driver training experience). This took the price up to £76,855 from £65,830 basic.

Looks-wise, I had no complaints, even after Dickie Meaden rather astutely suggested the car's nose resembled one created for an insurance advert. I'm a fan of the unique styling nonetheless, as it clearly separates the M2 from other cars in the 2-series and M families. I suspect M division's stylists worked extra

hard in the latter case to create as much visual distance as possible between the M2 and the M3 and 4 with which it shares so much hardware.

It's this, of course, that has resulted in the latest M2 being a bit of a big 'un: exactly the same width as the not-insubstantial M4, but 214mm shorter in length, 110mm of that from the wheelbase. On narrower roads – the kind its F87 predecessor fitted so well – this did sometimes feel like a limiting factor, but I still found myself enjoying the G87 on such routes more than I did the M4 xDrive long-termers we ran last year. Perhaps this was because the shorter wheelbase gave it more agility, possibly because of the weight saving from being shorter and not having four-wheel drive (75kg), or maybe because with 49bhp and 73lb ft less (454bhp and 406lb ft in total) it didn't feel like it needed bigger roads to play on.

Others in the **evo** team were a little less keen on the M2, variously reporting a delay in front-end

response at lower speeds, a reluctance to turn at higher speeds and a slight vagueness when pushing on along undulating roads. Honestly, I can't say I found any of this a concern. No, the G87's front end isn't the last word in sharp reactions, pin-point accuracy or feel-laden feedback, but I found it unwaveringly predictable and reliable. I tended to just trust in the prodigious grip on offer from the 275-section Michelin Pilot Sport 4 S front tyres and didn't give it much thought beyond that.

What I did frequently give thought to was how much a quality seat can enhance a driving experience. Expensive though they were, the optional buckets and their enveloping grip gave a great sense of what was happening below, somewhat compensating for the inert steering. I loved the low seating position they afforded too, although in such a wide car I did find that this sometimes made it difficult to get a feel for where the nearside-rear wheel was when exiting left from tight junctions. A reassuring glance



in the passenger mirror was often required.

Incidentally, you may have seen it suggested that the infamous carbonfibre seat-base hump is not particularly compatible with a clutch pedal and therefore the manual gearbox. This is certainly the impression you get during the first few days in a car equipped with this combination, but after a while this feeling fades. It's mainly a matter of finding a more precise fore-aft seating position than usual, and while you can still feel the hump brushing against your leg, you soon don't notice it's happening.

As for that manual gearbox, it's not one you'd write home about, lacking the snickety of, say, the manual in our 911 Carrera GTS long-term. I'd still tick that option box, though, because how many more chances will there be to do so? Then again, I spent a few weeks with an auto M2 prior to our manual's arrival and found plenty to like about it – nicely judged auto shifts, decent paddles, swift responses. If you did go down the auto route, you

'I stopped thinking of it as an M2 at all, but rather as a cut-price, rear-drive M4 Lite'

probably wouldn't feel like you were missing out.

In day-to-day use, the M2 proved painless to live with – easy around town (the auto version was easier still, of course) and happy chomping up longer journeys. Only the jiggly low-speed ride occasionally elicited a mild grumble from occupants. I soon came to appreciate the M2's giant twin-screen set-up, too. If physical controls are becoming a thing of the past, the next best thing is to have a supersized touchscreen that means your finger has bigger targets to aim for while you're on the move and being bounced around.

That said, for most things you can still whizz around the menus using the iDrive controller, which is even easier to operate on the move, making for less distraction. Please, please never remove this, BMW.

Perhaps the biggest hurdle our M2 faced was the inevitable comparisons with its esteemed F87 Competition predecessor. But after five months living with our G87, I found I'd stopped thinking of it as an M2 at all, but rather as a cut-price, rear-drive M4 Lite. Viewed that way – embracing the strengths the model has gained rather than focusing on those it has lost – it could be enjoyed simply for what it was, and I enjoyed it immensely.

Ian Eveleigh

Date acquired January 2024 **Duration of test** 5 months **Total test mileage** 5629 **Overall mpg** 25.4 **Total costs** £136.50 (wheel alignment) **Price when new** £76,855 **Value today** £56,950

BY STEVE WALLISHER

by YOUSUF ASHRAF

BEST BUYS

RENAULT SPORT

OF ALL THE MANUFACTURERS THAT HAVE PULLED OUT OF the hot hatch game recently, Renault is the one we'll probably miss the most. Its Renault Sport division churned out a stunning run of performance cars over the past three decades, more often than not setting the benchmark by which others were judged.

Its hot Clios and Méganes brought accessible fun to the masses, while the brand's series of daring specials have redefined what a hot hatch can be – all in the pursuit of maximum thrills.

Though its traditional hot hatches have been put to rest in favour of performance EVs built under the Alpine brand, there's still a vast selection of Renault Sport models waiting to be enjoyed on the used market – some world-beating, some truly mad and others offering exceptional value for money. All are meticulously engineered to put the driver at the centre of the experience, to a degree that puts some purpose-built sports cars to shame. Read on to discover how to bag a slice of this magic for as little as £3500.



RENAULT SPORT CLIO TROPHY

A supermini superhero that remains a driver's dream 20 years on

THE CLIO TROPHY WAS THE PEOPLE'S CHAMPION OF eCoty 2005. 'There's absolutely nothing you could improve about that car,' said Harry Metcalfe after it placed third, dusting up a Lamborghini Gallardo SE, E46 BMW M3 CS and Porsche Cayman S, among others. It made such an impression that Harry went on to buy the very example from that test, and nearly two decades later the Trophy is still a fantastic buy.

This ultimate Clio 182 is what you get when an already brilliant car is tweaked, honed and developed to an even higher level. The standard Renault Sport Clio was already a gem, its diddly proportions disguising a heavyweight blow from a naturally aspirated 2-litre engine and a chassis that could maximise every drop of available power. It was affordable, fast and hugely entertaining, but as the model entered its final phase of production, Renault decided to create the ultimate run-out special.

The Trophy doesn't look much different to a regular 182 (or a base Clio, in fact), but that's all part of the charm. The Capsicum Red paint is unique, as are the Recaro seats that position you lower in the cabin. The defining upgrade, however, was a set of motorsport-style Sachs dampers, complete with remote reservoirs and thicker damper rods for better control, allowing the Trophy to skim across the ground with even more finesse and composure. According to Renault, the Sachs units cost ten times more than

regular dampers. Hydraulic bump-stops made it possible to lower the front ride height by 10mm without compromising travel, while Speedline Turini wheels were fitted too, saving 1.3kg per corner.

Just 500 Trophys were built for the UK market, priced at £15,500 a pop. These days, expect to pay around £12k for a sub-70k mile example, with well-preserved low-owner cars costing upwards of £15k. The most desirable Trophys are those that remain closest to the original spec, particularly with regards to the suspension. Those Sachs dampers are specialist items and replacements are hard to come by, meaning that you've a choice of a rebuild or aftermarket coilovers when they wear out. We'd recommend the former, but depending on the work required, refurbishing all four can cost over £1000.

The four-pot engine – unchanged from the unit in the standard 182 – is fundamentally robust, but be mindful of cambelt changes (recommended every 72,000 miles or six years) and listen out for a rattling inlet cam timing variator; replacing it is best done at the same time as the cambelt change. Worn gearbox synchros are a sign that the car has been driven hard, and you might notice the gearlever jiggling around when coming on and off the throttle. Stronger gearbox stabiliser mounts are available to minimise this.

Find a cared-for example, however, and the Trophy will deliver a classic, archetypal hot hatch driving experience that's hard to beat.

Specification

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc **Power** 180bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 148lb ft @ 5250rpm **Weight** 1090kg
Power-to-weight 168bhp/ton **0-62mph** 6.9sec
Top speed 140mph **Price new** £15,500 (2005-06)
Value today From £12,000



RENAULT SPORT MÉGANE 275 TROPHY-R

The rare gem that shines brightly in the R26.R's shadow

FOLLOWING UP THE R26.R WAS NEVER GOING TO BE EASY. Renault Sport's first ultra-light two-seat Mégane was an instant icon, a hot hatch hall of famer that arguably hasn't been bettered to this day. But the 275 Trophy-R that replaced it in 2014 was a great car too. So great, in fact, that we think it'd be rightly recognised as one of the best hot hatches of its generation if the world wasn't still completely besotted with the R26.R.

The recipe was typical Renault Sport, with a singular focus on reducing weight and cherry-picking upgraded components from the very best suppliers for ultimate track performance. All unnecessary frippery came under the knife to trim kilos, including 18kg of sound deadening, the air conditioning and the radio. The rear seats were removed too, with a strut bar and netting in their place and creating a space to carry a spare set of trackday wheels and tyres. Serious measures for a very serious car. The result is a kerb weight around 80kg less than the normal Renault Sport Mégane 275 Trophy, with which it shares its 271bhp turbocharged 2-litre four-cylinder motor and titanium Akrapovic exhaust.

A mechanical limited-slip differential apports power to the front wheels, which are kept in contact with the ground thanks to a set of adjustable Öhlins dampers. These feature a sliding cartridge for improved control, as well as hydraulic bumpstops for more progression under high suspension loads. The lightweight composite springs are made by Allevard and trim 2kg, with aluminium-belled brake discs saving an additional 3kg.

The attention to detail isn't far off what you might find on a Porsche GT product, and that shows in the driving experience. When the Michelin Cup 2 tyres are warm, the Trophy-R delivers devastating grip, poise and agility, all while demanding absolute focus and commitment from the driver to get the best from it. It's not as playful as the R26.R, but it's certainly quicker, posting a 7:54 lap time at the Nürburgring to claim the front-wheel-drive production car record in period.


What does all this cost today? Well-maintained Trophy-Rs currently change hands for around £25,000, rising above £35,000 for ultra-low-mileage examples. That sounds like a lot, until you consider that only 250 were built, with just 30 of those destined for the UK. This, plus the fact that the Trophy-R is a highly specialised and richly rewarding analogue hot hatch, the kind that is a rarity these days, means they're unlikely to drop in value anytime soon.

With that said, it's important that the mechanicals are in good health – and original spec – for the full Trophy-R experience. Worn suspension bushes and ball joints erode the car's precision and compliance, and OE components such as the Öhlins dampers and lightweight springs are a must to retain the car's essential character. Different tyres can improve year-round usability, though, with Michelin Pilot Sport 4s offering better cold and wet-weather performance than the standard Cup 2s – at the expense of ultimate grip (and lap times) in the dry, of course.



Specification

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc **Power** 271bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque 265lb ft @ 3000rpm **Weight** 1297kg
Power-to-weight 212bhp/ton **0-62mph** 5.8sec
Top speed 158mph **Price new** £36,430 (2014-15)
Value today From £25,000

A yellow Renault Sport Clio V6 is shown from a front-three-quarter perspective, driving on a paved road that curves to the right. The car is in motion, with a blurred background of green grass and trees. The license plate is HN05 VHX.

Specification (Phase 2)

Engine V6, 2946cc **Power** 251bhp @ 7150rpm
Torque 221lb ft @ 4650rpm **Weight** 1400kg
Power-to-weight 182bhp/ton **0-62mph** 5.8sec
Top speed 153mph **Price new** £27,000 (2003-05)
Value today From £34,000

RENAULT SPORT CLIO V6

The mid-engined hatchback with a supercar spirit

ONLY RENAULT COULD HAVE PRODUCED SOMETHING AS wonderfully insane as the Clio V6. It had built a mid-engined hot hatch before, of course – the 5 Turbo in the early 1980s – but that was out of necessity to homologate a rally car. The Clio V6 wasn't a homologation special, and you sense that it was created in a moment of madness and without the supervision of senior bosses and accountants. How else could a highly bespoke, wide-body supermini with an engine in place of the rear seats be signed off? (To find out, see *evo* 294 for the full story.)

When it launched in 2000, the Clio V6 captured the imagination of enthusiasts like few other cars. The initial demand was such that if you wanted one in right-hand drive, you'd need to join the back of a two-year waiting list before taking delivery of the TWR-developed hot hatch-cum-sports car.

To this day, there's nothing quite like it. Production began with the Phase 1 model, inspired by a concept car shown at the 1998 Paris motor show. A Laguna-derived 227bhp 3-litre V6 was installed in a unique rear structure, along with bespoke suspension with significantly wider tracks (110mm front and 138mm rear) covered by swollen bodywork. The result was a hot hatch like no other, one with a heavily rearward weight balance, a tiny wheelbase and a propensity to punish those who didn't treat it with utmost care and respect. 'There's a sting in that absurdly broad tail,' is how our own Richard Meaden put it.

The Phase 2 '255' version (pictured) was equally charismatic but faster and better to drive, and would be our choice today. Built by Renault itself rather than TWR, it has a 251bhp V6, closer gear ratios and extensive modifications to its chassis to make it more forgiving. The wheelbase was extended by 33mm, the front track widened a further 23mm and the subframes were stiffer, as was the suspension. The changes resulted in a rewarding and unique driving experience that saw off the likes of the Ferrari 360 Challenge Stradale and BMW M3 CSL at eCoty 2003, where the Clio placed third.

Just under 3000 V6s were built in total, with 256 Phase 1s and 354 Phase 2s being delivered to the UK. Values vary massively depending on mileage, condition and colour (Liquid Yellow paint is particularly sought-after), but £28,000-38,000 will get you into a Phase 1, while the cheapest Phase 2s start at around £34,000. Meticulously maintained, low-mileage V6 255s in rare colours have been known to fetch as much as £90,000.

The engine is a little tricky to work on given its location but the unit is robust thanks to its mild tune. The transmission can stand hard use too, although it's worth listening for crunches during fast shifts – a sign that the synchromesh has taken too much punishment. Given that the V6 can be spiteful at the limit, it's worth examining the bodywork and structure beneath for signs of accident damage and poor repairs, and investing in modern tyres to tame its handling.

RENAULT SPORT TWINGO 133

This entry-level RS option packs big fun in a modest package

READ THROUGH THE SPEC SHEET OF THE TWINGO 133 AND you might wonder if it's deserving of the Renault Sport moniker at all. Its 1.6-litre four-pot generates a modest 131bhp and 118lb ft of torque, it covers 0-62mph in a leisurely 8.7 seconds and there are no fancy dampers or extensive weight-saving measures. Instead, however, the 133 is an example of how expert engineering can turn a basic supermini into a highly entertaining, affordable driver's car that is permeated with true Renault Sport DNA.

The 133 was launched as the entry point to the Renault Sport line-up in 2008, designed to attract younger buyers who would subsequently trade up to a Clio 197 or Mégane RS. It cost just £11,550 (around £18k in today's money) and packed a host of upgrades designed to make it steer, stop and go like a true hot hatch, as well as look like one. At the front you'll notice a larger intake to feed more cooling air to the engine, and the 133's wheels are pushed out beyond the Twingo's regular bodywork thanks to widened tracks (by 60mm and 59mm front and rear respectively), necessitating some chunky wheelarch extensions.

To instil the Twingo with the kind of sharpness and agility of its larger siblings, Renault Sport fitted a stiffer rear anti-roll bar to improve turn-in, and the 133 sits 10mm lower on stiffer springs than the Twingo GT, with revised dampers to suit. Customers had the option to go a step further with a £650 Cup chassis option, which drops the ride height by a further 4mm and brings a 10 per cent increase in spring rate, as well as larger, 17-inch alloys. Unless you plan on using your Twingo on track, we'd suggest looking for

a car with the standard chassis – the extra compliance is welcome on the kind of tight, ragged B-roads that suit the Twingo.

For outright thrills you'll be better off in a Clio 172 or 182, but the Twingo has the kind of willing, eager personality that makes hot superminis so appealing. Driving it is a lesson in conserving momentum, leaning on the grip from the generously wide 195-section tyres and timing your gearchanges to keep the engine hovering near the 7000rpm red line. It's not a car that constantly feeds you information, but the Twingo's responses are consistent and it gives you confidence to flick it into corners and through direction changes in classic hot hatch style.

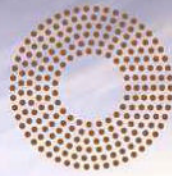
The 133 wasn't quite the sales hit that Renault was hoping for, meaning that there are far fewer used examples on the market than there are hot Clios. Still, there are plenty of pre-facelift cars (as pictured) to be found dipping below the £4000 mark, with the best low-mileage ones commanding up to £5k. Facelifted models (from 2012/13) are available around £5k too, but given that the changes were largely cosmetic we'd be just as happy opting for the original.

The 1.6-litre engine is reliable if the maintenance schedule has been followed (a service is needed every year or 12,000 miles, with a cambelt change at 72,000), but suspension components are prone to wear – particularly the lower-arm ball joints, which require a new front suspension arm to replace them. That aside, a 133 is unlikely to throw up expensive mechanical issues and should be happy buzzing at 7000rpm for many miles to come. ☒

Specification

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1598cc **Power** 131bhp @ 6750rpm
Torque 118lb ft @ 4400rpm **Weight** 1050kg
Power-to-weight 127bhp/ton **0-62mph** 8.7sec **Top speed** 125mph
Price new £11,550 **Value today** From £3500





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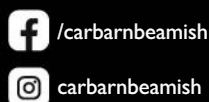


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THE KNOWLEDGE

RATINGS

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

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

SUPERMINIS / HOT HATCHES



OUR CHOICE

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 £/TENS 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
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 AX3	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 300	318 F	£40,680	4/1984	296/5300	295/2000	1429kg	1505kg	210	5.7	-	155
⬆ Cupra Leon Estate 333 4Drive	324 D	£45,190	4/1984	328/5600	310/2100	1576kg	-	211	4.8	-	155
DS 3 Performance	222 D	2016-18	4/1998	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

EVO RATING

+ A bundle of fun if you're in the mood for it - Dire driving position, busy ride
+ Engineered like a true Abarth product - Expensive for a city car
+ Plays the electric supermini role well - It's as expensive as a full-blown hot hatch
+ Mk1 Focus RS pace without the histrionics - Slightly nose-heavy
+ Capable - It's no SI replacement
+ Compliant and engaging chassis; quick, too - Looks dull without options
+ Polished 253bhp 4WD A1 - Just 19 came to the UK, with a Porsche Cayman price
+ Less one-dimensional than its predecessor - Breaks little new ground
+ Lots of grip and one of the best-sounding four-pot turbos - Still a little too clinical
+ Improved chassis makes the RS3 a contender at last - Engine and gearbox hold it back
+ Hugely quick point-to-point - Sometimes speed isn't the be-all and end-all
+ Addictive five-cylinder noise; monster pace - Chassis not exactly playful
+ More character than the M135i; more affordable too - Can feel disjointed on the road
+ Strong performance, monster traction - Not hugely involving; engine lacks character
+ Powertrain, noise, chassis - M235i looks nicer, and has an LSD option
+ A proper French hot hatch - Petrolheads might find it too 'designed'
+ A faster, feistier DS3 - Not as hardcore as its 'Racing' tag suggests
+ Makes terrific use of 85bhp - Feels like it's made from paper
+ A good everyday EV - Not as exciting as you'd hope
+ More engaging than a Mk8 Golf GTI - Inconsistent brake feel; forgettable looks
+ A compelling fast estate option - Steering feedback and engine character lacking
+ All the right ingredients - Undercooked
+ About as fun as small cars get - Optional ESP can't be turned off
+ Highly talented, with real depth to its character - Can get wrong-footed on bad tarmac
+ Like the regular Fiesta ST, but with added composure - How much?!!
+ Chassis, price, punchy performance - Have you heard of Mountune?
+ Massive fun - Wasn't around for long
+ Great looks, decent brakes - Disappointing chassis, gutless engine
+ Vibrant and characterful - Lacks the poise and precision of the very best
+ Elevates the Focus ST from its underdog status - Needs a better engine and steering
+ Excellent engine - Scrappy when pushed
+ Value, performance, integrity - Big engine compromises handling
+ Torque-vectoring 4WD brought new sensations to a hot hatch - Needs to be driven hard
+ Front limited-slip differential brings more precise handling - Pricey and still heavy
+ Huge performance, highly capable FWD chassis - Body control is occasionally clumsy
+ More power and presence than regular Mk2 RS - Pricey
+ Some are great - Some are awful (so make sure you drive plenty)
+ The ultimate Essex hot hatch - Unmodified ones are rare, and pricey
+ Revvy engine, sparkling chassis, bargain used prices - Rusty rear arches
+ An affordable exotic - Corroding rear arches
+ Still at the top of its game - Has lost a little intimacy with the growth in size and maturity
+ One of the greatest hot hatches ever - Its looks are challenging for some
+ Terrifically capable, blisteringly quick, still practical - Standard FK8 is a better road car
+ Great on smooth roads - Can be punishing on less-than-smooth roads
+ Looks great, VTEC more accessible - Steering lacks feel, inert balance
+ Fantastic on road and track - Only 20 were made, and they're a tad pricey...
+ Potent and great value - Duff steering
+ Sublime early incarnation of the Type R recipe - Good ones are thin on the ground
+ Compact, considered and brilliantly executed - Cabin feels built to a price in places
+ A brilliant, thoroughly developed hot hatch - Its engine isn't the most charismatic
+ A genuinely rewarding EV - That's also a 2.2-ton hatchback
+ Unexpectedly tight chassis - Worthy of a better engine
+ Feels like a detuned i30 N - Lacks personality
+ Flexible engine, handsome shooting brake body - It's warm rather than hot

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE ON YEARS ON SALE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT (CLAIMED)	WEIGHT (TESTED)	BHP/TON (CLAIMED)	0-62MPH (CLAIMED)	0-60MPH (TESTED)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
Lancia Delta HF Integrale Evoluzione II	271 F	1993-94	4/1995	212/5750	232/2500	1340kg	-	161	5.7	-	137	+ One of the finest cars ever built - Demands love, LHD only	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG A35	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 GT	-	£21,710	3/1199	134/5500	170/1750	1228kg	-	111	8.1	-	127	+ One of the few superminis left - It's definitely not a GTI	★★★★★
Peugeot 208 GTi by Peugeot Sport	254 F	2015-18	4/1598	205/6000	221/3000	1160kg	1195kg	180	6.5	-	143	+ A brilliantly focused small hatch - Obscured dials	★★★★★
Peugeot 208 GTi	184 F	2012-16	4/1598	197/5800	203/1700	1160kg	1210kg	173	6.8	6.8	143	+ Agile chassis works well on tough roads - Could be more involving	★★★★★
Peugeot 205 GTi 1.9	195 F	1988-91	4/1905	130/6000	119/4750	910kg	-	145	7.6	-	124	+ Still scintillating after all these years - Brittle build quality	★★★★★
Peugeot 308 GTi by Peugeot Sport	245 F	2015-18	4/1598	256/6000	251/2100	1205kg	1316kg	224	6.0	6.0	155	+ A great entertainer with a cracker of an engine - Tiny steering wheel	★★★★★
Peugeot 306 GTi 16	020 F	1993-2001	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1214kg	-	140	7.9	7.2	140	+ One of the great GTIs - They don't make them like this any more	★★★★★
Peugeot 306 Rallye	095 F	1998-99	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1163kg	-	146	7.8	6.9	137	+ Essentially a GTi 16 for less dosh - Limited choice of colours	★★★★★
Renault Sport Twingo 133	175 F	2008-13	4/1598	131/6750	118/4400	1050kg	-	127	8.7	-	125	+ Renault Sport experience for pocket money - Optional Cup chassis gives bouncy ride	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 200 Auto	184 F	2013-18	4/1618	197/6000	177/1750	1204kg	1294kg	166	6.7	6.9	143	+ Faster, more refined, easier to drive - We miss the revvy NA engine and manual 'box	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 220 Trophy	229 D	2016-18	4/1618	217/6050	206/2000	1204kg	-	183	6.6	-	146	+ Willing chassis - Awful paddleshift gearbox	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 200 Cup	247 F	2009-13	4/1998	197/7100	159/5400	1204kg	-	166	6.9	6.6	141	+ The hot Clio at its best - They don't make 'em like this anymore	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 197 Cup	115 F	2007-09	4/1998	194/7250	158/5550	1240kg	-	161	6.9	-	134	+ Quick, polished and capable - Not as much sheer fun as 182 Cup	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 182	066 F	2004-05	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1110kg	-	165	7.1	6.6	139	+ Took hot hatches to a new level - Flawed driving position	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 182 Cup	187 F	2004-05	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	-	168	6.9	-	139	+ Full of beans, fantastic value - Sunday-market upholstery	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio Trophy	262 F	2005-06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	-	168	6.9	6.6	140	+ The most fun you can have on three (sometimes two) wheels - Only 500 were built	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 172 (Phase 2)	034 F	2001-03	4/1998	170/6250	147/5400	1110kg	-	156	7.2	7.1	138	+ Poised, predictable, fast - Lacks aggressive edge	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 172 Cup	048 F	2002-03	4/1998	170/6250	147/5400	1011kg	-	171	6.9	6.5	138	+ Bargain old-school hot hatch - Nervous in the wet, no ABS	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 172 (Phase 1)	146 F	2000-01	4/1998	170/6250	147/5400	1035kg	-	167	7.2	6.6	138	+ Brilliantly accomplished - Imperfect driving position	★★★★★
Renault Clio Williams	233 F	1993-96	4/1988	148/6100	126/4500	981kg	-	153	7.8	7.6	134	+ One of the best hot hatches ever - Can be fragile	★★★★★
Renault 5 GT Turbo	255 F	1987-91	4/1397	118/5750	122/3000	855kg	-	140	7.3	-	120	+ Clio Williams' granddaddy - Few unmodified ones left	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio V6 255	294 F	2003-05	6/2946	251/7150	221/4650	1400kg	-	182	5.8	-	153	+ Supercar drama without the original's edgy handling - Uninspired interior	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio V6	029 F	2000-02	6/2946	227/6000	221/3750	1410kg	-	164	6.6	5.8	145	+ Pocket supercar - Mid-engined handling can be tricky	★★★★★
Renault Mégane RS (280)	267 F	2018-20	4/1798	276/6000	288/2400	1407kg	1464kg	199	5.8	6.3	158	+ Outrageous grip and agility - Cup chassis option doesn't do its composure any favours	★★★★★
Renault Mégane RS 300 / RS Trophy	298 F	2018-21	4/1798	296/6000	310/4000	1443kg	-	209	5.7	-	158	+ More potent and capable than ever - Auto only; Trophy's ride can be unforgiving	★★★★★
Renault Mégane RS Trophy-R	280 F	2019-21	4/1798	296/6000	295/2400	1306kg	-	230	5.4	-	163	+ An absolute beast on track - Too much of a beast on the road	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane 275 Cup-S/Nav 275	223 D	2016	4/1998	271/5500	265/3000	1394kg	-	198	5.8	-	158	+ The same engine as the Trophy-R - They don't make it anymore	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane 265 Cup	195 F	2012-15	4/1998	261/5500	265/3000	1387kg	-	191	6.0	6.4	158	+ A hot hatch benchmark - Cupholder could be better positioned	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane 275 Trophy	212 F	2014-15	4/1998	271/5500	265/3000	1376kg	-	200	5.8	-	159	+ Another cracking Trophy model - Stripped-out Trophy-R is even more thrilling	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane 275 Trophy-R	231 F	2014-15	4/1998	271/5500	265/3000	1297kg	-	212	5.8	-	158	+ As absorbing as a 911 GT3 RS on the right road - Too uncompromising for some; pricey	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane 250 Cup	139 F	2009-12	4/1998	247/5500	251/3000	1387kg	-	181	6.1	6.1	156	+ Fantastic chassis... - partially obscured by new-found maturity	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane dCi 175 Cup	119 F	2007-09	4/1995	173/3750	265/2000	1470kg	-	119	8.3	8.3	137	+ A diesel with a genuinely sporty chassis - Could take more power	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane 230 F1 Team R26	195 F	2007-09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1345kg	-	171	6.5	6.2	147	+ The car the R26.R is based on - F1 Team stickers in dubious taste	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane R26.R	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 Leon Cupra 290	247 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)	323 F	£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	127/5500	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	-	155	+ Loony turbo pace - Hasn't got the precision of a Renault Sport Mégane	★★★★★
Vauxhall Astra VXR (Mk1)	102 F	2005-11	4/1998	237/5600	236/2400	1393kg	-	173	6.4	6.7	152	+ Fast and furious - Lacks a little composure and precision	★★★★★
Volkswagen Up GTI	273 F	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									

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
SALEENGINE
CV/L/CC

BHP/RPM

LB FT/RPM

WEIGHT
(CLAIMED)WEIGHT
(TESTED)BHP/TON
(CLAIMED)0-62MPH
(CLAIMED)0-60MPH
(TESTED)

MAX MPH

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 car a big improvement - It's cosy in the back	★★★★★
Aston Martin DBX	277 D	2020-24	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	323 D	£205,000	8/3982	697/6000	663/2750	2245kg	-	315	3.3	-	193	+ One of the best of its kind - 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	2505kg	-	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	2475kg	-	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	2021-24	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	2023-24	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	★★★★★
For Dancer 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	324 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 ON YEARS ON SALE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT (CLAIMED)	WEIGHT (TESTED)	BHP/TON (CLAIMED)	0-62MPH (CLAIMED)	0-60MPH (TESTED)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
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	372/5200	1714kg	-	247	5.2	4.7	173	+ Shockingly good Lexus - The M3's available as a four-door too	★★★★★
Lotus Emeya R	324 F	£165,053	675kW	905	726	2590kg	-	355	2.8	-	156	+ Serious competition for Porsche's Taycan - Limited range if you use all the performance	★★★★★
Lotus Carlton	292 F	1990-93	6/3615	377/5200	419/4200	1658kg	-	231	5.4	4.8	177	+ The Millennium Falcon of saloon cars - Every drive is a work-out	★★★★★
Lucid Air Dream Edition P	298 D	\$170,500	1000kW	1111	1025	2360kg	-	478	2.5	-	168	+ An EV that engages the driver - Sacrifices ultimate handling for a longer range	★★★★★
Maserati Ghibli Trofeo	290 D	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	£102,600	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	472/2500	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 Sport	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 45 S 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	367/5250	376/4000	1635kg	-	228	5.2	-	155	+ Furiously fast, commendably discreet - Overshadowed by M3 and RS4	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz 190E 2.5-16	185 F	1989-92	4/2498	204/6750	177/5500	1300kg	-	159	7.5	-	146	+ M-B's M3 alternative - Not as nimble as the Beemer	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG E63 (W213)	242 D	2018-20	8/3982	563/5750	553/2250	1875kg	-	305	3.5	-	155	+ More rounded than the E63 S - Could be a little too discreet for some tastes	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG E63 S (W213)	286 F	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	+ M5-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-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. Lots of	★★★★★
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	323 F	£55,175	4/1598	355	383	1892kg	-	191	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	1180kg	-	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	3												

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 ON SALE	ENGINE CVL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT (CLAIMED)	WEIGHT (TESTED)	BHP/TON (CLAIMED)	0-62MPH (TESTED)	0-60MPH (TESTED)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING
Abarth 124 Spider	256 F	2016-19	4/1368	168/5500	184/2500	1060kg	-	161	6.8	-	143	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo 8C Spider	161 F	2009-11	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1675kg	-	273	4.4	-	181	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 4	273 F	5/47,490	4/1996	320/6500	310/3000	595kg	-	546	2.8	-	162	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 4R	322 F	5/77,940	4/1996	400/6300	370/4500	665kg	725kg	611	2.7	-	170	★★★★★
Aston Martin 3.24S	248 F	2018-12	4/1998	245/8600	177/7200	520kg	-	479	3.1	-	145	★★★★★
Aston Martin 3.5 Supercharged	180 D	2013-18	4/1998	310/8400	169/7200	550kg	608kg	573	2.7	-	155	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3.5R	255 F	2014-18	4/1998	350/8400	243/6100	550kg	-	647	2.6	-	155	★★★★★
Ariel Nomad	294 F	5/33,000	4/2354	235/7200	221/4300	670kg*	-	365	3.4	-	134	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vantage Roadster	279 D	2020-24	8/3982	503/6000	505/2000	1745kg	-	293	3.8	-	190	★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage Roadster (4.7)	130 F	2009-16	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1710kg	-	250	4.8	-	180	★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage S Roadster	161 F	2011-17	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1690kg	-	258	4.8	-	189	★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage Roadster	175 F	2012-14	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1760kg	-	294	4.5	-	190	★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage S Roadster	212 F	2014-17	12/5935	565/6750	457/5750	1745kg	-	329	4.1	-	201	★★★★★
Aston Martin DB12 Volante	321 D	5/199,500	8/3982	671/6000	590/2750	1823kg	-	374	3.7	-	202	★★★★★
Aston Martin DB11 Volante	258 D	2018-23	8/3982	503/6000	498/2000	1870kg	-	273	4.1	-	187	★★★★★
Audi TT RS Roadster (Mk3)	250 D	2016-24	5/2480	394/5850	354/1700	1530kg	-	262	3.9	-	155	★★★★★
BAC Mono 2.5	229 F	5/167,940	4/2488	305/8000	227/5500	580kg*	645kg	534	2.8	-	170	★★★★★
BAC Mono R	302 D	5/218,000	4/2488	342/8800	243	555kg*	-	626	2.5	-	170	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GTC Speed	291 D	2021-22	12/5950	650/5000	664/1500	2346kg	-	271	3.7	-	208	★★★★★
Bentley Mulliner Bacalar	286 F	2021	12/5950	650/5000	664/1500	2384kg	-	277	<3.8	-	200+	★★★★★
BMW Z4 M40i	256 D	5/57,350	6/2998	335/5000	369/1600	1535kg	-	222	4.6	-	155	★★★★★
BMW Z8	026 F	2000-03	8/4941	400/6600	369/3800	1585kg	-	256	4.7	4.8	155	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 170R	291 F	5/33,235	3/660	84/6500	86/4000	440kg*	-	194	6.9	-	105	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 360	209 F	5/41,485	4/1999	180/7300	143/6100	490kg*	-	327	4.8	-	130	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 420S	223 F	5/44,985	4/1999	210/7600	150/6300	560kg*	-	381	3.8	4.0	136	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 420 Cup	299 F	5/56,640	4/1999	210/7600	150/6300	560kg*	578kg	369	3.6	-	136	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 620S	220 D	5/58,640	4/1999	310/7700	219/7350	610kg*	-	516	3.4	-	155	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 620R	255 F	5/66,640	4/1999	310/7700	219/7350	572kg*	580kg	551	2.8	-	155	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 160	239 F	2013-17	3/660	80/7000	79/3400	490kg*	-	166	6.9	-	100	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Roadsport 125	105 F	2007-14	4/1596	125/6100	120/5350	539kg*	-	235	5.9	-	112	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Supersport	165 F	2011-14	4/1596	140/6900	120/5790	520kg*	-	273	4.9	-	120	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Supersport R	180 D	2013-14	4/1999	180/7300	143/6100	535kg*	-	342	4.8	-	130	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Supersport R300	150 F	2009-12	4/1999	175/7000	139/6000	515kg*	-	345	4.5	-	140	★★★★★
Caterham Seven CSR 260	094 F	2006-17	4/2261	256/7500	200/6200	565kg*	598kg	460	3.1	3.8	155	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Supersport R500	123 F	2008-14	4/1999	263/8500	177/7200	506kg*	-	528	2.9	-	150	★★★★★
Caterham Seven R500	200 F	1999-2006	4/1796	230/8600	155/7200	460kg*	-	510	3.4	3.6	146	★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette Stingray Convertible (C8)	292 D	5/98,785	8/6162	475/6450	452/4500	1692kg	-	285	3.5	-	184	★★★★★
Dallara Stradale	267 F	c.162,000	4/2300	394/6200	369/3000	855kg*	-	468	3.3	-	174	★★★★★
Elemental Rpl (2.3)	255 F	5/139,800	4/2261	320	354	620kg*	-	557	2.6	-	165	★★★★★
Ferrari Roma Spider	315 D	5/210,313	8/3855	611/5750	560/3000	1556kg*	-	399	3.4	-	199	★★★★★
Honda S2000	243 F	1999-2009	4/1997	237/8300	153/7500	1260kg	-	191	6.2	-	150	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type Convertible P450 RWD	271 D	5/84,245	8/5000	444/6000	428/2500	1660kg	-	272	4.6	-	177	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type Project 7	212 F	2015	8/5000	567/6500	501/2500	1585kg	-	363	3.9	-	186	★★★★★
KTM X-Bow GT	183 D	2013-22	4/1984	281/6400	310/3200	875kg	-	326	4.1	-	144	★★★★★
KTM X-Bow R	165 F	2010-22	4/1984	296/6300	295/3300	816kg	-	369	3.9	-	144	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Club Racer (S3)	183 F	2011-15	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	852kg	-	160	6.5	-	127	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Sport 220 (S3)	244 F	2017-20	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	904kg	-	244	4.6	-	145	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Sprint 220 (S3)	254 F	2018-19	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	878kg	-	251	4.5	-	145	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Sport 240 Final Edition (S3)	285 F	2021	4/1798	237/7200	181/3000	922kg	-	261	4.1	-	147	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Cup 250 (S3)	279 F	2016-21	4/1798	245/7200	184/3500	931kg	-	267	3.9	-	154	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Cup 260 (S3)	243 F	2018-19	4/1798	250/7200	195/5500	902kg	-	282	4.2	-	151	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Sport 135 (S2)	040 D	2003	4/1796	135/6200	129/4850	726kg	-	189	5.4	-	129	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S (S2)	104 F	2006-10	4/1794	134/6200	127/4200	860kg	-	158	6.1	6.3	127	★★★★★
Lotus Elise IIIS (S2)	049 F	2002-04	4/1796	156/7000	129/4650	860kg	-	197	5.1	-	131	★★★★★
Lotus Elise SC (S2)	131 F	2008-11	4/1794	218/8000	156/5000	870kg	-	254	4.6	4.5	145	★★★★★
Lotus Elise (SI)	235 F	1996-2001	4/1796	118/5500	122/3000	725kg	-	165	5.9	6.1	126	★★★★★
Lotus 3-Eleven	220 F	2016-17	6/3456	410/7000	302/3000	925kg*	-	450	3.4	-	174	★★★★★
Lotus 3-Eleven 430	248 F	2017-19	6/3456	430/7000	325/4500	920kg*	-	475	3.2	-	180	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven	126 F	2007-11	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	720kg	-	267	4.5	-	140	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven Supercharged	123 F	2007-11	4/1796	252/8000	179/7000	745kg	-	344	4.0	-	150	★★★★★
Lotus 340R	126 F	2000	4/1796	190/7800	146/5000	701kg	-	275	4.5	4.5	126	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.5 (Mk4/ND)	230 F	5/28,015	4/1496	129/7000	111/4800	975kg	-	134	8.3	-	127	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 2.0 (Mk4/ND, 184PS)	299 F	5/32,435	4/1998	181/7000	151/4000	1052kg	1073kg	175	6.5	-	136	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 RF 2.0 (Mk4/ND, 184PS)	256 F	5/34,335	4/1998	181/7000	151/4000	1073kg	-	171	6.8	-	137	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 2.0 (Mk4/ND)	228 F	2015-18	4/1998	158/6000	147/4600	1000kg	-	161	7.3	-	133	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 2.0i (Mk3.5/NC)	212 F	2009-15	4/1999	158/7000	139/5000	1098kg	-	146	7.6	-	138	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk3/NC)	091 F	2005-09	4/1798	124/6500	123/4500	1080kg	-	108	9.3	-	122	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk2/NB)	017 F	1998-2005	4/1839	146/7000	124/5000	1065kg	-	140	8.5	-	123	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.6 (Mk1/NA)	268 F	1989-97	4/1597	115/6500	100/5500	971kg	-	120	8.8	-	114	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG SL55	305 F	5/147,855	8/3982	469/5500	516/2250	1875kg	1940kg	254	3.9	-	183	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG SL63	314 D	5/172,105	8/3982	577/5550	590/2500	1895kg	-	309	3.6	-	196	★★★★★
Morgan Super 3	300 F	5/43,165	3/1432	118/6500	110/4500	635kg*	-	189	7.0	-	130	★★★★★
Morgan 3 Wheeler	198 F	2012-21	2/1976	82/5250	103/3250	525kg*	-	159	6.0	-	115	★★★★★
Morgan Plus Four	324 F	5/74,406	4/1998	255/5500	258/1000	1044kg*	-	248	5.2	-	149	★★★★★
Morgan Plus Four CX-T	294 F	2022	4/1998	255/5500	258/1000	1213kg*	-	214	c6.0	-	c140	★★★★★
Morgan Plus Six	269 F	5/93,603	6/2998	335/6500	369	1075kg*	-	317	4.2	-	166	★★★★★
Morgan Aero 8	105 F	2001-10	8/4799	362/6300	361/3400	1180kg*	-	312	4.5	-	170	★★★★★
Morgan Aero GT	255 F	2018	8/4799	367/6300	370/3400	1180kg*	-	316	4.5	-	170	★★★★★

MAKE & MODEL

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 Chimera 5.0	258 F	1993-2003	8/4997	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	-	307	4.4	-	167	+ Gorgeous noise, tarmac-ripping grunt - Details	★★★★★
TVR Griffith 500	314 F	1993-2001	8/4997	340/5500	350/4000	1060kg	-	326	4.1	-	169	+ Guff 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	£54,490	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	£65,490	4/1798	296/6300	251/2400	1191kg	-	269	4.2	-	155	+ The Goldilocks A110 for road driving - Trackdays	★★★★★
Alpine A110 S	268 D	£67,490	4/1798	296/6300	251/2400	1109kg	-	271	4.2	-	171	+ Firmer and faster - But not necessarily better	★★★★★
Alpine A110 R	322 F	£91,490	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	£165,000	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 V8 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 RS (Mk3)	323 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 TTRS (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	£77,520	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	2019-24	8/3996	542/6000	568/2000	2165kg	-	254	4.0	-	198	+ Pace, quality, polish - A bit one-dimensional	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT S	309 D	2022-27	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	2021-22	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)	323 F	2003-17	12/5998	567/6000	516/1700	2245kg	2360kg	257	4.5	-	198	+ Near 200mph in utter comfort - Weight; W12's thirst	★★★★★
BMW 230i M Sport Coupé	310 F	£41,905	4/1998	242/4500	259/1600	1525kg	-	161	5.9	-	155	+ Satisfying depth of ability - Four-cylinder engine sounds workmanlike under load	★★★★★
BMW M240i xDrive Coupé	303 F	2022-24	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	406/2650	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)	285 F	2020-21	6/2979	444/6250	406/2350	1550kg	-	291	4.2	-	155	+ evo Car of the Year 2020 - Such quality comes at a price	★★★★★
BMW 1-series M Coupé	277 F	2011-12	6/2979	335/5900	369/1500	1495kg	-	228	4.9	-	155	+ Character, turbo pace and great looks - Came and went too quick	★★★★★
BMW M440i xDrive	282 D	£60,725	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	2021-24	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 CS (G82)	323 F	£120,345	6/2993	542/6250	479/2750	1760kg	-	313	3.4	-	188	+ Could be the sweet-spot on the M3/4 range - We need to drive it on the road to be sure	★★★★★
BMW M4 CSL (G82)	305 F	2023	6/2993	542/6250	479/2750	1625kg	1640kg	339	3.7	-	190	+ Ballistic pace, beautiful cornering balance - Whole package doesn't quite gel	★★★★★
BMW M4 (F82)	218 F	2014-19	6/2979	425/5000	406/1850	1570kg	-	275	4.3	-	155	+ Ferociously fast - Can be a handful on less-than-perfect or less-than-bone-dry roads	★★★★★
BMW M4 Competition (F82)	262 F	2016-20	6/2979	444/7000	406/1850	1570kg	1645kg	287	4.3	4.4	155	+ The car the M4 always should have been - Shame everyone specs DCT	★★★★★
BMW M4 CS (F82)	254 F	2017-19	6/2979	454/6250	442/4000	1580kg	1610kg	292	3.9	-	174	+ A further-honed M4 - It ain't cheap	★★★★★
BMW M4 GTS (F82)	237 F	2016	6/2979	493/6250	442/4000	1510kg	-	332	3.8	3.7	190	+ Vast improvement on lesser M4s - So it should be, given its price	★★★★★
BMW M3 (E92)	266 F	2007-13	8/3999	442/8300	295/3900	1580kg	-	266	4.8	4.3	155	+ Fends off all of its rivals... - ...except the 1-series M Coupé	★★★★★
BMW M3 GTS (E92)	313 F	2010-11	8/4361	444/8300	324/3750	1530kg	-	295	4.4	-	190	+ One of the most focused M-cars ever - Good luck finding 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	★★★★★

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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE 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	
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	2019-24	8/4395	616/6000	553/1800	1885kg	-	332	3.2	-	155	+ A fast and fine grand tourer - Lacks that true M-car fizz	★★★★★
BMW M6 (F13)	218 F	2012-18	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1850kg	-	303	4.2	-	155	+ Mighty ability, pace, technology - You'll want the Competition Package upgrade, too	★★★★★
BMW i8	210 F	2014-20	3/1499	369/5800	420/3700	1535kg	1544kg	244	4.4	-	155	+ Brilliantly executed concept; sci-fi looks - Safe dynamic set-up	★★★★★
Chevrolet Camaro Z/28	220 F	2014-16	8/7008	505/6100	481/4800	1732kg	-	296	4.2	-	175	+ Scalpel-sharp engine, great chassis (really) - Feels very stiff on UK roads	★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette Stingray (C8)	303 F	£92,890	8/6162	475/6450	452/5150	1655kg	-	292	3.5	-	184	+ Stunning achievement for the first mid-engined Vette - There's untapped potential	★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette 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	£185,975	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 GT (7th gen)	323 D	£55,725	8/5038	440/7250	398/5100	1761kg	-	254	5.3	-	155	+ Capable and likeable muscle car - Lacks sharpness of best Europeans	★★★★★
Ford Mustang Dark Horse (7th gen)	324 F	£67,995	8/5038	447/7250	398/5100	1762kg	-	258	5.2	-	163	+ Toughens the Mustang GT for track work - It's not an American M4 CSL	★★★★★
Ford Mustang 5.0 V8 GT (6th gen)	266 F	2015-24	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 (6th gen)	295 F	2022-23	8/4951	454/7250	390/4900	1754kg	-	263	4.8	-	166	+ A 'Mustang Plus' for Europe - It's no Shelby GT500	★★★★★
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	£67,855	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	-	£84,430	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	£107,155	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 wider 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	£536,800	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 Evora 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	1101kg	-	343	3.7	-	178	+ Intense, absorbing and brilliantly capable - Perhaps not an everyday car	★★★★★
Lotus Exige Cup 380	240 D	2017	6/3456	375/6700	302/5000	1105kg	-	345	3.6	-	175	+ An absolute riot; feels worth the £83k (new) price tag - Limited build numbers	★★★★★
Lotus Exige Sport 410	283 F	2018-21	6/3456	410/7000	310/3500	1110kg	-	375	3.4	-	180	+ A first-rate swansong for the V6 Exige - Didn't come cheap	★★★★★
Lotus Exige Cup 430	253 F	2018-21	6/3456	430/7000	325/2600	1093kg	-	400	3.3	-	180	+ The ultimate Exige - With a price tag to match	★★★★★
Lotus Exige S (S2)	253 F	2006-11	4/1796	218/7800	158/5500	930kg	-	238	4.3	-	148	+ Lightweight with a hefty punch - Uninspiring soundtrack	★★★★★
Lotus Exige (S1)	200 F	2000-01	4/1796	192/7800	146/5000	780kg	-	247	4.6	-	136	+ Looks and goes like an Elise racer - A tad lacking in refinement	★★★★★
Lotus Evora	302 F	2009-15	6/3456	276/6400	258/4700	1382kg	-	203	5.1	5.6	162	+ Sublime ride and handling, evo Car of the Year 2009 - The Evora S	★★★★★
Lotus Evora S	168 F	2010-15	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1430kg	-	245	4.8	-	172	+ A faster and better Evora - But one which spurs with the Porsche 911	★★★★★
Lotus Evora 400	216 F	2015-18	6/3456	400/7000	302/3500	1395kg	-	291	4.2	-	186	+ Evora excitement levels take a leap - Gearbox still not perfect	★★★★★
Lotus Evora Sport 410	230 F	2017	6/3456	410/7000	310/3500	1325kg	-	314	4.2	-	190	+ Even lighter and sharper Evora - Engine and gearbox behind the best at this price	★★★★★
Lotus Evora GT410	278 F	2020-21	6/3456	410/7000	295/3500	1361kg	-	306	4.2	-	186	+ Fully immersive driving experience - V6 has its limitations	★★★★★
Lotus Evora GT430	246 F	2018	6/3456	430/7000	325/4500	1299kg	-	336	3.8	-	190	+ Genuine race-car feel on the road - It wasn't cheap, and just 60 were made	★★★★★
Lotus Emira i4	324 F	£81,495	4/1991	360/6600	317/3000	1446kg	-	253	4.3	-	171	+ Traditional 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	+ Super car looks with a sports car price - Dynamic balance is more planted than playful	★★★★★
Maserati GranTurismo Trofeo	317 F	£163,590	6/2992	542/6500	479/3000	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 quirks, it's a great drive - Wafer-thin torque output; thirsty	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG C63 S Coupé (W205)	262 F	2015-23	8/3982	503/5500	516/2000	1745kg	1847kg	293	3.9	-	180	+ Mouth-watering mechanical package - Light steering; hefty kerb weight	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupé (W204)	162 F	2011-14	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1655kg	-	277	4.5	4.4	155	+ A proper two-door M3 rival - C63 saloon looks better to most	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Black Series (W204)	171 F	2012-13	8/6208	510/6800	447/5200	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 630 4M 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 calmness - Engine lacks distinction, performance is tepid	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG CLE 53	322 D	£73,015	6/2999	465/5800	413/2200	1925kg	-	245	4.2	-	155	+ Looks the part - Doesn't drive the part	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG GT63	324 F	£164,905	8/3982	577/5500	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	277 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 as being a GT as it is a sports coupe - Difficult to drive fast and smoothly	★★★★★
Mitsubishi 3000GT	-	1990-99	6/2972	282/6000	300/3000	1719kg	-	167	5.8	-	159	+ Looks the business - Doesn't do the business	★★★★★
Nissan 370Z	204 F	2009-20	6/3696	323/7000	268/5200	1496kg	-	219	5.3	-	155	+ Quicker, leaner, keener than 350Z - Not quite a Cayman-killer	★★★★★
Nissan 350Z	107 F	2003-09	6/3696	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	6/2968	425/6500	390/5000	1060kg	-	407	3.5	-	185	+ Devilishly fast - Demon Tweaks interior	★★★★★
Polestar 1	269 D	2019-22	4/1969	592/6000	737	2350kg	-	256	4.2	-	155	+ One of the most appealing hybrids yet - It's left-hand-drive only, and jolly expensive	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Cayman	287 F	£51,820	4/1988	296/6500	280/2150	1335kg	-	225	5.1	-	170	+ Chassis remains a dream - Sounds like a Toyota GT86	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Cayman T	270 F	2020-23	4/1988	296/6500	280/2150	1350kg	-	223	5.1	-	170	+ A further-honed 2-litre Cayman - Flat-four soundtrack still disappoints	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Cayman S	249 F	£61,800	4/2497	345/6500	310/2100	1355kg	1449kg	259	4.6	3.9	177	+ Faster and better to drive than ever - Bring earplugs	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Cayman GTS 4.0	303 F	£73,300	6/3995	394/7000	310/5000	1405kg	-	285	4.5	-	182	+ Ninety per cent of the GT4's magic - Can feel a little too capable and polished at times	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Cayman GT4	312 F	2019-23	6/3995	414/7600	310/5000	1420kg	1460kg	296	4.4	-	188	+ evo Car of the Year 2019 - Long gearing isn't ideal for road driving	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 RS	305 F	£108,370	6/3996	493/8400	332/6750	1415kg	1460kg	354	3.4	-	196	+ Thrilling when the road suits it - Too many great roads don't	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman S (981)	202 F	2013-16	6/3436	321/7400	273/4500	1320kg	1371kg	247	5.0	4.5	175	+ The Cayman comes of age - Err...	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman GTS (981)	219 F	2014-16	6/3436	335/7400	280/4750	1345kg	-	253	4.9	-	177	+ Tweaks improve an already sublime package - Slightly 'aftermarket' looks	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman GT4 (981)	265 F	2015-16	6/3800	380/7400</									

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MAKE & MODEL

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'	★★★★★

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OUR CHOICE

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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 real 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	+ True supercar feel - The V8 is cheaper, and still superb	★★★★★
Bugatti Chiron	244 F	2016-22	16/7993	1479/6700	1180/2000	1995kg	-	753	2.5	-	261	+ Backs up the numbers with feel and emotion - Limited top speed(!)	★★★★★
Bugatti Chiron Super Sport	307 F	2021-22	16/7993	1578/7050	1180/2250	1995kg	-	804	2.4	-	273	+ Hit 304.77mph in pre-production form - Are you Andy Wallace enough to go there?	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron 16.4	134 F	2005-11	16/7993	987/6000	922/2200	1888kg	-	531	2.5	2.8	253	+ Superbly engineered four-wheel-drive quad-turbo rocket - Er, lacks luggage space?	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron 16.4 Super Sport	151 F	2011-15	16/7993	1183/6400	1106/3000	1838kg	-	654	2.5	-	258	+ Was once the world's fastest supercar - Limited to 258mph for us mere mortals	★★★★★
Bugatti EB110	078 F	1991-95	12/3500	552/8000	451/3750	1618kg	-	347	3.6	-	213	+ Superbly engineered four-wheel-drive quad-turbo rocket - It just fizzled out	★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette Z06 (C8)	310 F	£135,000	8/5463	670/8400	460/6300	1561kg*	-	436	2.6	-	195	+ Mighty engine; absorbing driving experience - Some steering feel wouldn't go amiss	★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette Z06 (C7)	227 F	2015-19	8/6162	650/6000	650/3600	1598kg	-	413	3.7	-	196	+ Mind-boggling raw speed; surprisingly sophisticated - Edgy when really pushed	★★★★★
Ferrari 296 GTB	305 F	£245,000	6/2992	819/8000	546/6250	1470kg*	1660kg	566	2.9	-	205	+ Intriguingly powerful, responsive, makes a success of hybrid tech - It's rather pricey	★★★★★
Ferrari 296 GTS	304 D	£279,248	6/2992	819/8000	546/6250	1540kg*	-	540	2.9	-	205	+ Magical when you're in its groove - Lacks the last degree of control of the GTB	★★★★★
Ferrari F8 Tributo	281 F	2019-23	8/3902	710/8000	568/3250	1435kg	-	503	2.9	-	211	+ Ferrari's best series-production V8 ever - It's hybrids after this	★★★★★
Ferrari 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	483/5000	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	504/6000	1605kg	-	418	3.4	-	208+	+ One of the truly great Ferraris - Struggles for traction on poor surfaces	★★★★★
Ferrari 575M Fiorano Handling Pack	200 F	2002-06	12/5748	508/7250	434/5250	1688kg	-	298	3.7	4.2	205+	+ Fiorano pack makes 575 truly great - It should have been standard	★★★★★
Ferrari 550 Maranello	275 F	1996-2002	12/5474	478/7000	420/5000	1690kg	-	287	4.4	-	199	+ Everything - Nothing	★★★★★
Ferrari GT4 Lusso T	246 D	2017-20	8/3855	602/7500	560/3000	1885kg	-	328	3.5	-	199	+ Effortless, comfortable GT - Misses the richer soundtrack of the V12	★★★★★
Ferrari GT4 Lusso	264 F	2016-20	12/6262	680/8000	514/5750	1920kg	-	360	3.4	-	208	+ Rear-wheel steering increases agility - Not as engaging as other Ferraris	★★★★★
Ferrari FF	194 F	2011-15	12/6262	651/8000	504/6000	1880kg	-	347	3.7	-	208	+ Four seats and 4WD, but a proper Ferrari - Looks divide opinion	★★★★★
Ferrari 612 Scaglietti	090 F	2004-11	12/5748	533/7250	434/5250	1875kg	-	289	4.0	4.3	199	+ Awesomely capable grand tourer - See above	★★★★★
Ferrari 456 GT	209 F	1992-97	12/5474	436/6250	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 version has greater structural integrity	★★★★★
Ferrari SF90 Spider	300 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	302 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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Ferrari F40	275 F	1987-92	8/2936	471/7000	426/4000	1100kg*	-	437	4.1	-	201	+ Brutally fast - It's in the dictionary under 'turbo lag'	★★★★★
Ford GT	253 F	\$450,000	6/3497	647/6250	550/5900	1385kg*	-	475	2.8	-	216	+ Everything it does on track - Too many of the things it does on the road	★★★★★
Ford GT	200 F	2004-06	8/5409	550/6500	500/3750	1583kg*	-	353	3.9	-	205	+ evo Car of the Year 2005 - Don't scalp yourself getting in	★★★★★
GMA T.50	323 F	\$2,800,000	12/3994	661/11,000	353/8000	997kg*	-	674	<3.0	-	226	+ One of the most thrilling road cars ever created - Price and availability	★★★★★
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	324 F	£446,742	12/6499	1001	535/6750	1772kg*	-	574	2.5	-	217+	+ Remarkable V12 hybrid powertrain, exceptional dynamics - Bigger, heavier, pricier	★★★★★
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 Countach LP1800-4	300 F	£2,000,000	12/6498	802/8500	531/6750	1595kg*	-	511	2.8	-	221	+ Retro looks, Sian supercapacitor tech - An Ultimae is a sixth of the price	★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago	089 D	2001-06	12/6192	572/7500	409/5400	1650kg*	-	351	4.0	-	206	+ Gorgeous, capable and incredibly friendly - V12 feels stressed	★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago LP640	275 F	2006-11	12/6496	631/8000	487/6000	1665kg*	-	385	3.8	-	211	+ Compelling old-school supercar - You'd better be on your toes	★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago LP670-4 SV	200 F	2009-11	12/6496	661/8000	487/6000	1565kg*	-	429	3.3	3.2	212	+ A supercar in its truest, wildest sense - Be prepared for stares	★★★★★
Lamborghini Diablo VT 6.0	275 F	2000-02	12/5992	543/7100	457/5500	1625kg*	-	343	3.9	-	208	+ Best-built, best-looking Diablo of all - People's perceptions	★★★★★
Lexus LFA/LFA Nürburgring	200 F	2010-12	10/4805	552/8700	354/6800	1480kg	-	379	3.7	-	202	+ Absurd and compelling supercar - Badge and price don't quite match	★★★★★
Lotus Esprit Sport 350	171 F	1999-2001	8/3506	349/6500	295/4250	1299kg	-	274	4.3	-	175	+ Lotus's pukka V8-powered supercar - Weight of that V8 makes it more intimidating	★★★★★
Maserati MC20	305 F	£204,520	6/2992	621/7500	538/3000	1475kg*	1700kg	428	2.9	-	203	+ evo Car of the Year 2022 - Lacks the refinement and sophistication of some rivals	★★★★★
Maserati MC20 Cielo	304 D	£231,885	6/2992	621/7500	538/3000	1560kg*	-	404	2.9	-	201	+ Gets you closer to that rip-snorting engine - A tiny bit more ragged than the coupe	★★★★★
McLaren 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	323 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	£150,000	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	447/3500	1420kg	-	338	4.0	-	198	+ Revisions made it even more of a star than the 456bhp 996.1 GT2 - Care still required	★★★★★
Porsche 9													

GREATEST MISSES



BMW i8

A bold concept with a visionary powertrain, but the i8 was too far ahead of the game for its own good

IS THERE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A great automotive miss and a car that simply arrived ahead of its optimal time slot? Think Audi A2: a compact luxury city car with a badge as desirable as a high-end fashion accessory and innovation at its core, such as its lightweight aluminium structure. It's the car we need today far more than we do an RS Q8. Enough of us didn't buy them at the beginning of the new millennium, but launched today with a well packaged and efficient hybrid powertrain, every suburban area and city centre would be crawling with them. Probably.

Then again, a decade after the A2, BMW had equally poor results with its even more suitable urban mobility solution, the i3. It had a carbon structure, Tardis-esque proportions and an approach to interior design the likes of Polestar pretend to achieve today but in reality are light years away from matching. We didn't buy i3s either; instead you'll find an X6 parked half on the road with its other two 22-inch wheels (kerbed, naturally) on the pavement.

We also didn't buy – well only 20,000 people did – BMW's other carbon-structured hybrid car from the same era: the i8. But was this 2+2 sports car simply another vehicle that was ahead of its time rather than an automotive miss? I think so.

Back in 2014 the concept of a hybrid-powered sports car was all-new. BMW was the first if we ignore the perennial bankruptcy experts Fisker, and it thought its rivals would follow. They didn't. Which made group tests hard when on the other side of the car park you would find a twin-turbocharged six-cylinder 911 Turbo and Nissan GT-R, a turbocharged V8-powered AMG GT and Aston Martin's brilliant N430 Vantage complete with growling naturally aspirated V8. A three-cylinder 1.5-litre motor taken from a Mini and a sub-40-mile battery range wasn't going to cut it.

The biggest issue the i8 faced was that it didn't feel like a supercar to drive, specifically when it came to the performance part. Its combined ICE and battery 369bhp peak and 1544kg kerb weight (on our scales) gave it Cayman-like performance rather than 911, and

combined with skinny yet efficient wheels and tyres (215s on the front, 245s for the rear) and overly light steering it was a car that preferred to flow than be a torrent of feedback and excitement. It did ride beautifully though.

It also looked like a supercar. A striking shape that stood out among the bland designs that occupied our roads then as they do now. Dihedral doors, a low slung, wide sill and an even lower slung driving position created an unbeatable supercar feeling. But this was also its biggest challenge – not having the go to match its show – and for so many that was a barrier too far.

i8 production ended in 2020, with a rumoured i16 in the wings ready to go, but the pandemic saw to its demise. Instead we got the M8 Competition coupe, with a 616bhp twin-turbocharged V8 to haul its 1885kg around. More recently AMG and Porsche have both released hybrid-powered GTs and 911s respectively, while Aston Martin's first hybrid is not far away either. BMW's i8 may have been a sales miss, but only because it was the right car at the wrong time.



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