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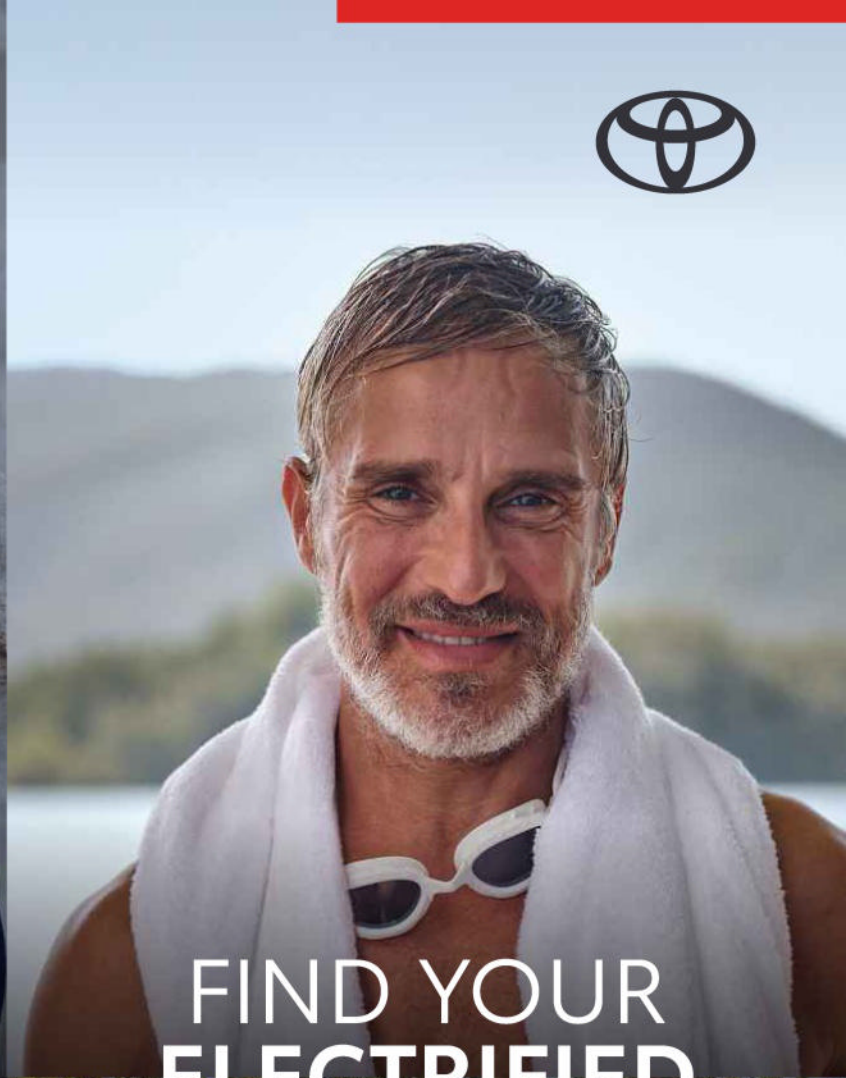
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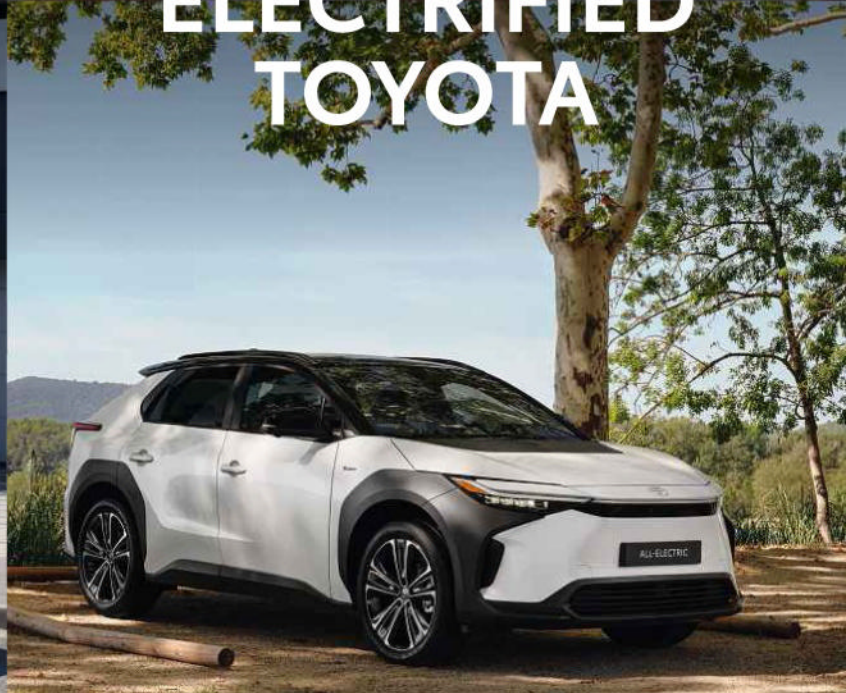
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Ed speak



IT'S NO LITTLE UNDERSTATEMENT to say that it's been quite the year for **evo**. Not only have we continued to mark our 25th anniversary but there was also the small matter of us being acquired by the Carwow Group back in the spring.

The good news about the acquisition is that nothing changes for **evo** as a result – or rather the only changes are ones for the better,

meaning you will see improvements for the brand that you invest so much of your time and money in, for which I remain ridiculously grateful. Without you we literally wouldn't be able to do what we do.

And what we are doing is growing the brand and improving upon everything we have established over the last quarter of a century. You will have seen this year that we have produced four special issues, with more editorial pages and content, and this will continue into 2025 and beyond. We relaunched Track Car of the Year this summer, too, and this will once again be on the editorial agenda next year, along with a number of other special content series we've had on the back burner for a

while. And as I type, deputy editor James Taylor and I are pulling eCoty together, which will publish in December.

This month we will also be filming the first in a series of more regular editorial films for our YouTube channel. This will air later this month, and if you are a podcast consumer you'll be interested to hear that we have launched *The evo Podcast*. You'll find episode one across all the usual podcast hosting platforms now, with founder editors John Barker and Dickie Meaden, along with **evo**'s founding father Harry Metcalfe, discussing the birth of an icon: **evo**. We'll be publishing a 'pod' every two weeks, so please join us as we talk about, well, everything that's important to your **evo** world from the past, present and future.

Finally, please welcome to the team **evo**'s new website editor, Ethan Jupp. He writes for petrol tokens, which helps with the biscuit budget, worked previously for the fine folk at Goodwood Road & Racing and owns a Lexus IS F that, and I quote, 'is probably the least reliable Lexus in the world'. Welcome aboard, Ethan.

Stuart Gallagher, Editor-in-Chief @stuartg917

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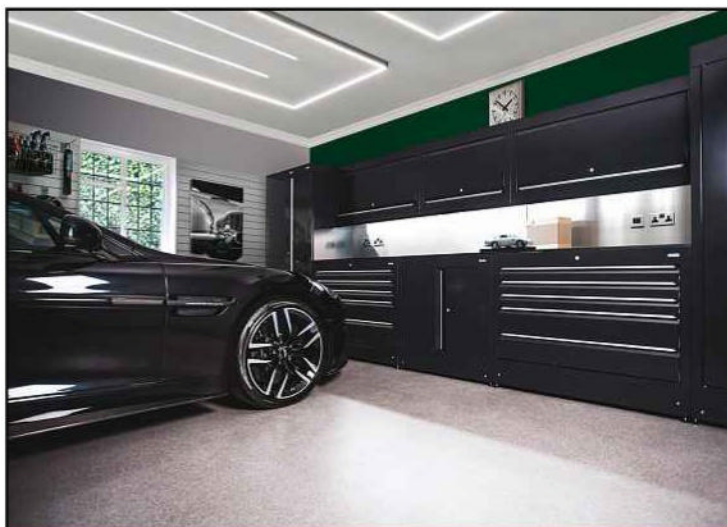
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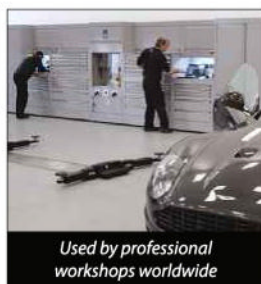
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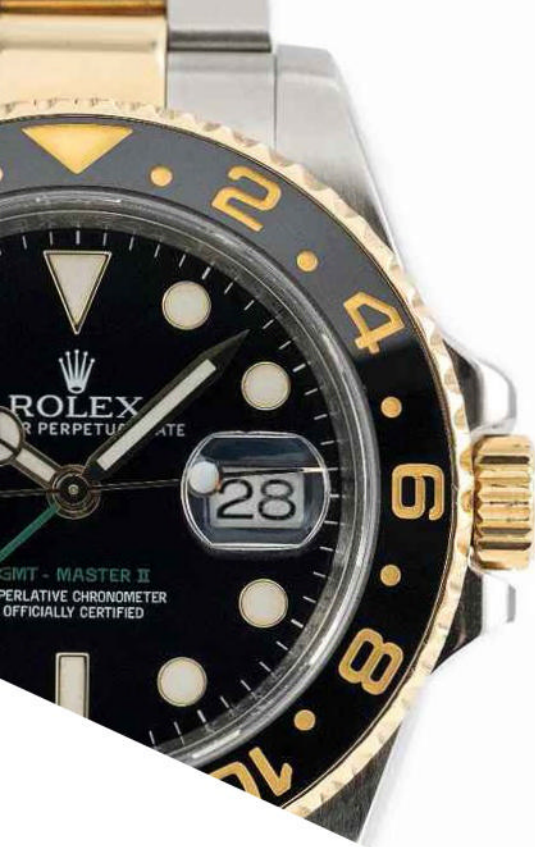
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by YOUSUF ASHRAF PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

Volkswagen Golf GTI

The underachieving Mk8 GTI gets a shot at redemption with the new, revised Mk8.5 version. Is it the leap forward it needs to be?

LIFE HASN'T BEEN EASY FOR THE MK8 Golf GTI. After the heights of the Mk7, which was superbly rounded and one of the best GTIs there's ever been, things came tumbling down when Volkswagen decided that the Golf needed more digitisation and more screens to move forward into the current decade. We won't beat what is a very dead horse here, but if you've ever tried to tap, poke and stroke your way around the eighth-gen Golf's interface, you'll know just how much of a blunder that was.

But it wasn't just the HMI system. When it launched in 2019, the Mk8 Golf no longer felt like the class benchmark for quality, while as a hot hatch there was a sense that it had lost some

of the polish and slickness of its predecessor. Yes it was more powerful and could carry immense speed down a road, but it somehow wasn't as satisfying to own, live with and drive as the Mk7.

Perhaps we would've looked at the Mk8 GTI more fondly if Hyundai hadn't come out of nowhere to produce the outstanding i30 N a year earlier. In many ways Hyundai's first hot hatch felt like a modern reincarnation of the Mk5 Golf GTI, with an addictive, pugnacious attitude and all the sensibilities you need in an everyday car. An archetypal hot hatch, in other words, and so much more exciting (and significantly cheaper) than the Golf. Shame you can't order a new one anymore.



Now Volkswagen is having another go at reclaiming the market it has traditionally been at or near the top of by launching an updated Mk8.5 GTI. Or, more accurately, one last go. An electric Mk9 Golf arrives later in the decade, which makes this the final combustion-engined GTI and one with enormous weight on its shoulders. No doubt there will be a number of run-out specials at some point to join this and the more powerful Clubsport, but for the GTI to go out on a high, the base car needs to be good.

It'd be nice to build up to how Volkswagen has gone back to the drawing board and completely reworked the Mk8.5 into the car it should have been all along, but the truth is,

not a great deal has changed. Visually, the new car is a bit more square-jawed thanks to a new front bumper; the LED front and rear light units are new, and there are now GTI badges on the front doors, which seems an odd choice. The 19-inch horseshoe alloys are new, too, and have probably ruffled a few feathers at Alfa Romeo.

Climbing into the Mk8.5 feels familiar. Perhaps too familiar. The layout hasn't actually changed much – the dash is still dominated by a touchscreen and a bank of haptic controls beneath, only this time everything is bigger (the screen measures 12.9 inches) and the touch sliders for the volume and temperature controls are (finally) illuminated. The steering wheel now

has physical buttons rather than haptics, too, and Volkswagen has made an effort to improve the speed and functionality of the touchscreen with more processing power and a new UI. It's definitely quicker to react than before, but accessing some functions is still more complicated than it needs to be.

The driving position is good though, and the flashes of red graphics, carbon-effect trim and tartan cloth are enough to remind you that you aren't in a 1.5 TSI. Push the starter button and the EA888 engine fires up with a familiar grumble, but you'll want to fiddle with the GTI's drive modes before setting off. Tap the shortcut button on the dash and you're presented

**'Really lean on the
tyres and subtle
messages begin to
come through'**





with a rather daunting 15-step scale to adjust the (£720) DCC adaptive dampers, as well as settings for the powertrain, engine noise and steering feel.

Ramping up the sound and powertrain to Sport while leaving the dampers and steering in Comfort is a good place to start. With these settings the GTI is painless to drive, with a good level of compliance and light steering efforts to work with. The engine is flexible, pulling well below 3000rpm, and really hard beyond that. You really don't need to put much effort into driving it quickly, something the GTI has always been good at. It would be nice to have a manual (or at least the option of one – it was discontinued near the end of the Mk8's life), but the DSG 'box does suit the character of the car and swaps gears smoothly in the background.

What the GTI doesn't deliver are the 'wow' moments you get during your first few miles in a Civic Type R or i30 N. It's calmer and less communicative than either of those, but if you take manual control of the gears, use

more revs and go up three or four notches on the dampers, you might be in for a surprise. The GTI has really, really high limits. The way the front holds a line when charging at an apex is impressive, and you don't need to be aggressively trailing it in on the brakes for it to bite. We suspect some of this is due to the Bridgestone Potenza S005 tyres; they aren't an especially aggressive compound but seem to bring out the positivity in the chassis without sacrificing progression. Great in the wet, too.

In Comfort mode the steering is light and a little indistinct, especially around the straight-ahead, and Sport adds extra weight without necessarily improving the sense of connection. Volkswagen says it has fine-tuned the Mk8.5's steering, but it can feel remote unless you're really leaning on the tyres, at which point subtle messages begin to come through. As you feed in the power the wheel can lighten in your

hands as the diff pulls you through corners, and it shuffles around slightly when putting down maximum torque on a bumpy road.

The diff is an electronically controlled XDS+ unit with a multi-plate clutch. It's managed by the GTI's 'Vehicle Dynamics Manager' and the locking factor seems less aggressive than in some hatches, including the technically related Skoda Octavia vRS. You don't feel it fighting to pull the nose tighter under power, and while this means it blends in with the natural cornering process, driving to the strengths of the diff is part of what makes the best front-drive cars so much fun. Perhaps the GTI Clubsport will dial in some extra aggression in this respect.

The calibration of the DCC dampers has been reworked for the Mk8.5, too, and the 15-stage adjustment gives you an enormous range to work with. Fully stiff is far too reactive and almost unusable on the road (it may be helpful on a dry track), but swiping all the way down to the softest setting allows the GTI to eat pretty much anything you throw at it. Bumps roll

Above: an even bigger screen and (hoorah!) physical buttons on the steering wheel among changes inside



**'The latest version
of the 2-litre
engine is the most
powerful ever fitted
to a base GTI'**



under the wheels without jostling the body around and you can carry impressive speed, but there's a laziness in the way it reacts that doesn't feel very GTI-like. Comfort strikes a good balance between absorption and control, but when the surface allows, somewhere near the middle between Comfort and Sport feels best. The extra support gives the GTI more precision and agility without taking the ride to pieces. You could argue that these settings are another thing to distract you from the job of driving, but once you've figured them out, optimising the car for the road and conditions can be quite rewarding.

It feels like everything is powered by an EA888 engine these days. The 2-litre lump first appeared in a GTI for the Mk6, and this latest evo4 unit is the most powerful ever fitted to a base GTI. Now producing 261bhp to the old car's 242, it punches harder yet retains the slightly flat and one-dimensional character it's always had. To be fair there's only so much you can do with four cylinders and a turbo, but Honda, Mercedes-AMG and Hyundai have managed to squeeze more character out of theirs.

There's nothing offensive about the GTI's motor, though, and its linear delivery and effortless flexibility suit the package. At no point do you wish for extra urge, and it revs out cleanly to the 6500rpm red line. Pull for the next gear and the shifts are swift, but they can be laggy when going down the 'box – annoying when you're relying on engine

Left and below: revised front bumper, new lights front and rear, and Alfa-esque alloys are the main external changes, along with 'GTI' door badges

braking to slow into corners. Sometimes this is because there aren't enough spare revs available to slot into a lower gear, even though it might feel like there are.

Put these pieces together and the GTI is really quite handy for covering ground quickly. Not especially memorable or interactive, but impressive in how it digs in, finds grip and strolls on to the next corner with very little drama. You can brake late into turns and pitch the car in on the nose without it feeling nervous or unstable, the rear taking on a slight angle but never requiring much correction. Once the car is straight, bleed the throttle in earlier than normal to build boost pressure before the engine hits its stride and pulls you away. It's very effective, and quite satisfying when you get it right. Lightly trimming the brakes into faster corners isn't quite so easy (the pedal is light and grabby on initial application), but a gentle lift has the same effect of subtly energising the rear and setting you up for the exit.

Then there's the normal stuff that the Golf does well. When you're not in the mood you can calm everything down in the drive mode menu, visibility is good and, outstanding ergonomic niggles aside, it's a pleasant thing to drive day-to-day. Spacious, too, although there is a surprising

amount of road noise and resonance that filters into the cabin on poor surfaces. Big imperfections can sometimes upset the ride, too, particularly with the dampers set beyond Comfort. Generally, though, the GTI is a solid all-rounder and it's one that you warm to as the miles roll by.

Is this redemption for the GTI, then? The 8.5 is certainly stronger than the 8 in some key areas, but it isn't a car transformed. Perhaps it doesn't need to be, given the state of the dwindling petrol hot hatch market. At the GTI's price point of £38,900 it sits in a different category to our favourite hot hatch, the £50,050 Civic Type R, while the likes of the Mercedes-AMG A35 (£46,000) and BMW M135i (£43,000) are a closer match for the Golf R and GTI Clubsport respectively.

Of what rivals remain, the Focus ST and updated Cupra Leon are probably the GTI's nearest challengers, but as more makers succumb to emissions regulations and shift funding towards EVs, the competition pool will only shrink. Fitting, then, that the first hot hatch in the traditional sense will also be one of the last ones standing. ✕

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1984cc, turbocharged
Power 261bhp @ 6500rpm **Torque** 273lb ft @ 1600-4590rpm
Weight 1454kg (180bhp/ton) **Tyres** Bridgestone Potenza S005
0-62mph 5.9sec **Top speed** 155mph **Basic price** £38,900

➕ A quick, capable and useable GTI

➖ Changes haven't made it the very best

evo rating ★★★★★



A silver Cupra Formentor Abt is shown from the rear, driving on a winding asphalt road. The car is in motion, with a blurred background of trees and a cloudy sky. The road has white lane markings. The overall scene is dynamic and scenic.

Driven

by JAMES TAYLOR PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

Cupra Formentor Abt

It's farewell to the original Cupra Formentor with an Abt-tuned run-out package. It's a quietly excellent car; just a shame about the price...



T HIS IS NOT THE NEW FACELIFTED Cupra Formentor, which lands in the UK around the same time as this issue of *evo*. Rather, it's the last of the old Formentors, a run-out model limited to 160 cars in the UK. As the Abt badging inside and out suggests, its upgrades have been selected and tested by Abt Sportsline, the German motorsport and tuning specialist that has partnered with SEAT and Cupra on various projects over the years, including the current Cupra Formula E team.

A run-out model can be a very good thing indeed, and we rather liked the last Abt-badged Cupra, the all-wheel-drive, estate-bodied SEAT Leon Cupra R ST Abt of 2020 (see *evo* 271). While this Abt Formentor is a limited-run offering, there are still a handful of slots available to purchase one through UK dealers.

Technically, this car's specification is an aftermarket option: the Abt pack is supplied and fitted to VZ3-spec Formentors at dealers post-registration. Said pack includes lowered

suspension, a 59bhp power bump and different wheels among other Abt-fettled upgrades, plus a number of cherry-picked Cupra options. Hence all 160 UK cars allocated to be fitted with an Abt pack also have an Akrapovič exhaust system, carbon-backed Sabelt bucket seats and uprated Brembo brakes.

Open the bonnet and you can see a second, Abt-labelled ECU sitting on top of the battery. Together with the freer-flowing exhaust, it takes power from the VW Group's long-lived four-



cylinder turbo EA888 engine to 365bhp, which is a lot from 2 litres. Since it's a manufacturer-approved upgrade package, it's covered by a five-year warranty.

Despite the quad exhaust exits' alluring perforated finish, the Formentor is still not a particularly sonorous car on the move. It's quick enough, though, and the seven-speed dual-clutch transmission is responsive. In the Abt edition, extension mouldings like plastic elephant ears are grafted onto the back of the shift paddles, which makes them easier to reach if you're adjusting your grip on the wheel mid-corner.

And the Abt Formentor is an easy car to get in a flow with. There's plenty of front-end grip, and the all-wheel-drive system can be set to be a little more rear-biased in Sport mode. If you're really pressing on, or begin to take liberties, the ultimate handling balance is toward safe understeer, but it's a car with very positive responses overall. The power steering is a little overly light in its standard setting but gains more

weight – although not much more feel, sadly – in Sport and Cupra modes.

It feels more akin to a hot hatch to drive than a high-riding crossover. Speaking of which, the Abt edition rides 35mm lower than the standard Formentor on bespoke suspension springs. These give it a relatively firm ride. As with the regular car (and other VW Group performance models such as the Golf GTI/R and Cupra Leon), you can choose from no fewer than 15(!) levels for the adaptive dampers, by dragging or tapping your finger along a sliding scale on the touchscreen. It's possible to soften the dampers considerably for bumpier back-roads, but because the springs are stiff it feels like there's a slight mismatch between the soft damping and firm springs if you do. It feels more cohesive if you increase the stiffness of the dampers to match the springs, but that gives the Formentor a ride quality that's a little too tough for many British B-roads. The driver's sun visor visibly tremors and vibrates as the suspension patters

'It feels more akin to a hot hatch than a high-riding crossover'

its way over lumpy surfaces. Perhaps the Abt springs' settings have been determined on smooth German roads.

Despite this particular misgiving, I find the Abt Formentor a really enjoyable car to drive, with a positive but predictable overall balance. It's a car you can get into a rhythm with, enabling you to cover ground quickly and calmly.

When you're not being infuriated by some of the original Formentor's known bugbears, that is: the laggy touchscreen (which froze at one point during our test, and frequently lost connection with my phone – this has been improved for the post-facelift model); the lack of back-lighting for



Clockwise from above left: quad exhausts look terrific, as do the carbon-shelled Sabelt bucket seats; 20-inch Abt wheels nicely show off the Brembo brake set-up behind; design is cohesive and appealing

the volume and air-con controls at night (also solved for the facelift); the wireless charging pad's proclivity to make your phone alarmingly hot, and the weirdly shaped cupholders that get in the way of the centre armrest.

It's a reasonably practical car, though, with plenty of room in the rear cabin, and although its design is now starting to age (and has been superseded by the facelifted Formentor), it's still one of the few truly attractive coupe-style crossovers; arguably the only one, to these eyes. From the driver's seat, the view out over the bonnet and its ridge lines is distinctive, and the continuous line from dash into doors is illuminated with ambient lighting, which doubles as a blind-spot warning system, turning yellow when there's an unseen car on your shoulder. The

configurable ambient lighting changes colour with the drive modes: angry red in Sport and Cupra, brightening and dimming in the latter mode as you accelerate and decelerate (which is frankly a little distracting at night).

The lovely Sabelt 'Cup' seats, with their satin-finish carbonfibre shell-backs and leather trim, look great and are comfier than their racer-ish appearance suggests, with decent support over a long journey. Abt badging on the starter button is a reminder you're in a non-standard Cupra, and the logo is repeated on the bootlid and the bespoke 20-inch alloys, fitted with 245/35 Hankooks. The wheels' slim spokes show off the brakes, which look the part with ventilated and drilled front discs and big Brembo calipers, and stop the Formentor nicely. Lighter-colour trim for the wheelarch extensions is a slightly odd choice but overall it's a cohesive-looking car: clearly breathed-on but still an OEM product rather than an aftermarket special.

One might even go so far as to say the

Formentor Abt is a bit of a hidden gem – or it would be if it were more affordable. A Formentor VZ3 fitted with the £7200 Abt Performance pack is officially listed at a very stiff £67,185: a price point at which a quietly appealing car quickly loses a great deal of its attraction. A used M3 Touring is now £70,000, incidentally.

It's certainly the best iteration of the original Formentor, but so it should be at that price. Cupra retailers may be willing to strike a deal, however, and leaving price out of the equation, this is a genuinely enjoyable, practical performance car with convincing appeal. ✖

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1984cc, turbocharged
Power 365bhp @ 5450-6600rpm **Torque** 332lb ft @ 2000-4450rpm **Weight** 1551kg (239bhp/ton)
Tyres Hankook Ventus S1 Evo **0-62mph** 4.6sec
Top speed 155mph **Basic price** £67,185

➕ Well resolved package; enjoyable to drive; rarity value
 ➖ Tough ride quality; it's a lot to pay for rarity value

evo rating ★★★★★



by JOHN BARKER

Mercedes-AMG GT63 S E Performance

With extraordinary, electrically boosted outputs of 805bhp and 1047lb ft, the latest AMG GT is monstrously fast. But can it also deliver the finesse and engagement that people like us crave?

THIS IS THE FASTEST ROAD CAR AMG HAS ever built. How fast? Well, it takes as long to read its name out loud – Mercedes-AMG GT63 S E Performance – as it does to launch and hit 62mph: a mere 2.8sec. That's faster even than the AMG One supercar. Find yourself a stretch of straight, dry asphalt (it doesn't have to be very long), engage launch control, hold the brake, pin the throttle, feel the seat belt automatically tension, hear the V8 *blat-blat-blat* at the optimum

revs and release the brake. *BLAM!* With not even a hint of tyre slip, the AMG GT is gone, into second gear, then third and still hauling in the horizon like you're in a dolly zoom scene in a movie.

Very impressive, although the question I can't get out of my head (which has just spent three or four seconds pressed firmly into the headrest) is why did the seat belt tighten? Other, more vital questions crowd in as we back off to a cruise, the main one being, does a GT need to be

almost uncomfortably quick? Of course, as with an EV, standing-start performance is largely an unintended consequence. The nature of electric motors is that they produce maximum torque at zero revs, so when you add battery capacity for range you also add performance. However, AMG describes the hybridisation of the GT as an addition in pursuit of performance, adding 200bhp to the V8's 600bhp. It also gives a pure electric range of 8 miles (13km). The penalty is





**‘It’s almost Tesla/
Taycan instantaneous,
though the sound is
classic, heavy beat V8’**

that all that hybrid hardware adds 225kg to a car that already weighed 1895kg, and just shy of £16k to the list price: it costs £180,745.

The electrical hardware is all at the rear; in place of the rear diff is a unit combining the electric motor, a limited-slip differential and a two-speed gearbox, with the 6.1kWh battery pack the size of a small but very heavy suitcase (89kg) above, eating into the luggage space. The familiar M177 twin-turbo V8 and the electric motor are permanently joined by the prop shaft, except for the moment the diff changes gear.

Calculating the total amount of torque is tricky because the V8 is driving through a nine-speed gearbox and the electric motor through two speeds. Think of it as a train with an engine at either end. Their combined output is a massive 805bhp and between 796 and 1047lb ft of torque. Plenty, then.

It’s a handsome car, sleek and aggressive, neatly evolved and enlarged from the previous model to incorporate +2 seating, all the better to take the fight to the Porsche 911 Turbo, which it resembles more than ever, especially around the window line and rear haunches. It sits well on lightweight, web-like 21-inch alloys, which are generously shod with 305/30 rears and just one size smaller 295/30 fronts. They frame massive carbon-ceramic brakes, which help reduce unsprung mass, yet a fixed glass sunroof

Above: perfect for clearing the autobahn outside lane... **Above right:** tail and side-glass look more than ever like 911’s; biturbo V8 responsible for c600bhp. **Right:** cockpit is definitely not for technophobes

is standard. You can option a carbonfibre pack that adds a lightweight splitter, sills, rear apron and fixed rear wing. The positioning of the electrical hardware resets the weight distribution, giving a slight rearward bias. Can the hybrid GT add fine, all-round dynamics to incredible performance?

Drop into the comfortable and supportive driver’s seat, press the start button, and the instruments that come up in the digital dash take some moments to decipher and digest. As road cars go, this has to be one of the most complex. There are the numerous switches on the four horizontal spars of the steering wheel and two mode switches hanging from the wheel’s centre, one for the drive mode, the other for quick access to damper settings and AMG presets. Then there’s the massive flat screen that looks like a home computer monitor turned on end and leant up against the centre console. This is packed with all the functions they couldn’t fit elsewhere, of which there are many. If you struggle to know which drawer the detergent goes into in your washing machine, this car will give you the heebie-jeebies.





There are various options for the digital instrument display, one of which brings up a set of traditional instruments – simple round speedo and tachometer with needles. All you have to do is find the right menu, then sub-menu and scroll through the options. There are multiple drive modes, too. Left to its own devices, the GT starts in EV mode, a short, rich and meaningful boot-up sound announcing it's ready to go. It has adequate in-town pace in this mode, accelerating and decelerating with an appealing electrical whine, and once the battery has drained, the V8 kicks in with its classic off-beat rumble. At lower speeds, the slightly ethereal sounds of the hybrid drivetrain interplay with the woofle of the V8, giving an intriguing and appealing soundscape.

The ride seems good. The GT is equipped with AMG's semi-active roll control, which dispenses with anti-roll bars and should allow the wheels to articulate more freely over bumps in a straight line, improving comfort. Road noise seems well suppressed too, though this first drive is in Germany, which generally has some of the finest road surfaces, so it's hard to be definitive about either aspect.

Of course, what you're itching to do is pin the throttle, and when the opportunity arises, it doesn't disappoint. At anything less than 100mph the kick is savage, the electrical well

delivering first, eliminating what little turbo lag the twin-turbocharged V8 has, and then the two pair up to deliver a double whammy. Your unsuspecting passenger's head will impact the headrest and stay there for as long as you keep the throttle pinned.

It's almost Tesla/Taycan instantaneous, though the sound is classic, heavy-beat V8, its volume dependent on the drive mode. The right-hand rotary hanging from the steering wheel cycles through the options while the central screen offers further tuning choices for drivetrain, damping and the like in each mode, plus some AMG presets. Via the rotary you can also set the regen level and, apparently, access a scalable slip control (like the similar system that works brilliantly on BMW's M3/M4) that would be useful in drift mode, which is also tucked away somewhere in the system.

On the road, drifting isn't something you find yourself contemplating, despite the amount of potential under your right foot. The GT SE is rear-drive until its rear Michelins can't cope, and then drive is sent to the fronts, though in the dry not once do I get the feeling that the rear tyres are struggling (it might be different in the wet). Another reason why drifting isn't uppermost in your thoughts is the sense that this is a wide, heavy car, a feeling that never fades, even when it's bolting for the horizon.

When you add mass you add inertia, which is the enemy of agility. As with the new BMW M5, to mitigate the increased kerb weight, AMG has given the hybrid GT rear-wheel steering as standard. It gives counter-steer for added agility at lower speeds and parallel-steer for stability at higher speeds. Occasionally you can detect the rear steer helping to turn the car, the chassis beneath you feeling surreally responsive for a moment, but there's only so much performance you can use when the road gets twisty because the GT's width means you still have little road to play with.

Press on, getting into the throttle early in the corners, and those fat front tyres protest, pushing wide with an indignant squeal of understeer. Such is the scope of the set-up options that if you can navigate the menus you can work around that by selecting the sportiest dynamic settings to make the car as agile as possible and relax slip control, so the throttle is helping to steer the rear a little too.

The car still feels heavy and wide, just surprisingly willing. However, there are two basic issues that sap your enthusiasm and

'The most potent AMG GT yet created leaves me conflicted'

interrupt your efforts to establish a flow and a rhythm. The first is the steering, which is woolly and lacking feel on-centre, and heavy and resistant moving away from centre. The second is the brake pedal feel, which is initially rather dead, so you end up chasing the bite point when you simply wanted to check your speed.

That said, the steering is absolutely spot-on later in our drive, on a derestricted autobahn, where the acceleration is still staggering. The way the GT piles on speed well into three figures is unreal. I imagine it hits its top speed of 199mph (320kph) like most cars hit the rev-limiter in second gear. At monster speeds it feels rock-solid, relaxed almost, and the sight of its aggressive front end in the mirror clears the

outside lane effectively too. This feels very much like the hybrid GT's natural habitat.

The fastest, most potent and also the heaviest AMG GT yet created leaves me conflicted. It's an impressive performance car but not a great driver's car. Thing is, both the steering and the brakes feel like tuning issues that you imagine could be resolved relatively easily. They wouldn't transform the GT into a compelling and tactile driver's car, but they would certainly help it feel a little less bulky and a bit more wieldy.

Ultimately, the mass of this hybrid AMG GT is inescapable and affects the car's appeal but, as with the new BMW M5, if we want to keep enjoying big-capacity V8s like this, hybrid looks like the best option. ✕

Engine V8, 3982cc, twin-turbo, plus 150kW e-motor
Power 805bhp **Torque** 1047lb ft **Weight** 2120kg (386bhp/ton)
Tyres Michelin Pilot Sport S 5 **0-62mph** 2.8sec
Top speed 199mph **Basic price** £180,745

✚ Staggering performance, impressive tech

✖ Hefty kerb weight, hefty price tag

evo rating ★★★★★



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by YOUSUF ASHRAF

Abarth 695 75 Anniversario

Abarth's 75th anniversary is all the excuse needed to celebrate the traditional petrol-powered supermini

IT FEELS LIKE THE ABARTH 695 HAS BEEN around forever. It may have gained a new name, a subtly different face and a few other trinkets since the Abarth 500 first appeared in 2008, but climbing into one in 2024 feels very much like stepping into the not-so-distant past. To put things into context, the original Abarth 500 went up against the Mk1 Suzuki Swift Sport at launch, and we've been through three generations of Swift since then. Yes, three.

So at a time when traditional hot superminis are dying out in favour of battery-powered ones – not least Abarth's own 500e – is the 695 the ultimate refresher of what a small hot hatch should be, or does it feel hopelessly out of date? A spell in the new limited-run 75 Anniversario edition should provide the answer.

Fiat has been known to chuck out special editions based on tenuous links (remember the Italian Formula 4-inspired Abarth F595 edition? Of

course you don't), but Abarth's 75th anniversary is an occasion worth commemorating. The Anniversario doesn't bring anything new to the table in terms of its mechanical makeup, but it does get Abarth's Record Monza exhaust and a bold black-and-gold colour scheme, including a giant gold scorpion on the roof.

Even the most cynical observer would have to admit that the Abarth is a charming thing to look at, full of attitude. The interior feels cheap in places but pretty racy, too. When was the last time you saw a supermini with carbon-backed buckets? There's Alcantara covering the dash and flashes of carbon on the wheel too. The ergonomics are a struggle, though – you'll search for a seat height adjuster in vain, and there's no reach adjustment on the wheel. The pedal box is awkwardly close and on a long drive you'll lose feeling in your left leg after a while. That's if the choppy ride hasn't got to you first.

The 695 is firm. Really firm. On bumpy surfaces it hops and skips along on its Koni Frequency Selective Dampers, following every contour of the road. If you're in the mood it's tolerable and can suit the lively nature of the car, but it lacks fluidity and never fully settles.

That's not to say there isn't any fun to be had in ping-pong the Anniversario along the road. Its size and four-square stance give it a sense of agility and plenty of room to play with in your lane, and the engine is a constant source of parping, whooshing noises that you can summon with the throttle. It's the same 1.4-litre unit you get in the standard 695, boosted by a Garrett turbo to 178bhp and 184lb ft, and it's the torque that dominates. This isn't a lag-free turbo motor but one that builds to a rush in the mid range, and you need to anticipate your throttle inputs to hit boost at the right moment out of corners. Further up the tachometer it starts to sound breathy before



Left: carbon-backed bucket seats and lashings of Alcantara strike the right note inside; lack of seat height adjustment and reach adjustment for the wheel take off some of the shine. **Below:** Abarth feels rapid, keen and agile, though when pushed hard it is doggedly nose-led



‘Keep it in the sweet zone and the 695 is a genuinely fast little car’

butting into a soft limiter at just over 6000rpm, a little earlier than you naturally expect.

The shift action of the five-speed 'box isn't the sweetest, but the light throw means you can flick it quickly around the gate to keep the motor in its sweet zone. Do so and the 695 is a genuinely fast little car, punching up the road with the wheel tugging at your hands. It feels livelier again if you press the Sport button, which sharpens the engine response considerably and seems to





'This lovable character is hard to find anywhere else these days'

condense the throttle curve to the first half of the pedal's travel. There's more progression in normal mode, making it easier to modulate around the boost and work against the traction control, which can't be fully switched off.

As consolation, the Abarth gets a TTC (Torque Transfer Control) system which brakes the inside wheel to control wheelspin, rather than just cutting the power. If you drive to the limits of the front end you can feel it working subtly as you apply the power mid-corner, holding the car a little tighter through to the exit. Be more aggressive and the Abarth defaults to a nose-led balance, and an aggressive lift or trailing brake does nothing to



Above: black-and-gold colour scheme, with Abarth side-script, huge scorpion roof sticker and 17-inch gold alloy wheels, mark out the Anniversario edition

change that. Given how energetic the rest of the car feels, it's a shame that there isn't the ability to influence the balance through a corner.

Instead, the Abarth responds best to a calmer driving style. With more measured inputs the traction control intervenes more subtly and you focus on carrying momentum and smoothly bleeding on and off the brakes (which are by Brembo and have solid feel and progression). The

Fiesta ST and Hyundai i20 N have much more depth and ultimate ability, but you can't buy either of those brand new anymore.

Whereas if you have £32,930 you can buy the Anniversario. In total, 1368 will be built (referencing the capacity of the engine), but it also marks the end of the line, as the 500 in all its forms will then go off sale, the baton being passed to the electric 500e. £33k for a 500-based car is a tough pill to swallow, but as we found out after running one on our Fast Fleet, the 695 has a uniquely honest and lovable character that's hard to find anywhere else these days. Although it's difficult to justify as a rational purchase, we'd understand if the Abarth's emotional pull is enough to put one on your driveway. ✕

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1368cc, turbo **Power** 178bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque 184lb ft @ 3000rpm **Weight** 1035kg (175bhp/ton)

Tyres Michelin Pilot Sport 3 **0-62mph** 6.7sec

Top speed 140mph **Basic price** £32,930

✚ Bags of character and attitude; feels fast

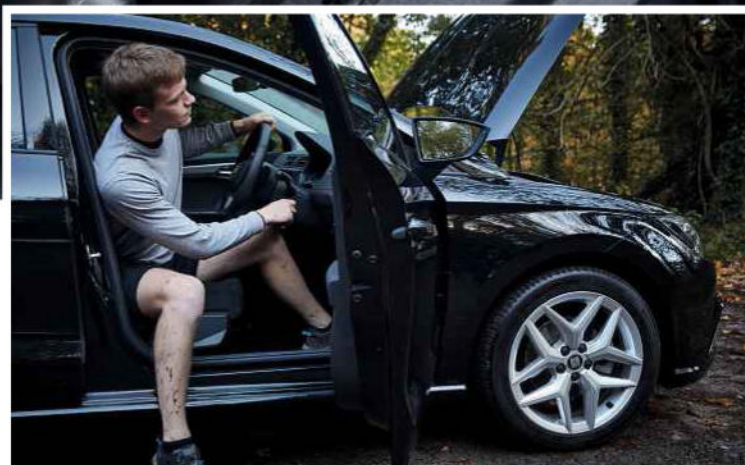
✖ Choppy ride, flawed ergonomics

evo rating ★★★★★



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IGNITION

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REBIRTH OF AN ICON

The Kalmar 9X9 is a modern-day reinterpretation of Porsche's game-changing 959 supercar, with a carbon body and up to 917bhp. And **evo** is helping to develop it





CUTTING-EDGE CHASSIS TECH, ADAPTIVE ALL-WHEEL DRIVE and a record-breaking top speed helped the Porsche 959 earn instant icon status. Designed to form the basis of a Group B rally car, it was the epitome of automotive engineering excellence in its day. Now, just shy of four decades since the 959 made its debut at the 1985 Frankfurt motor show, Estonian firm Kalmar Automotive has unveiled its own, modern take on Porsche's ground-breaking supercar.

Named the 9X9, it will be offered in three distinct forms, with just nine examples of each being built. Ranging from the 'standard' 9X9 to Sport and Leichtbau (lightweight) variants, the line-up is intended to offer something for almost every use case. The product of a three-year development programme, the 9X9 is said to blend the charm and attention to detail of contemporary coachbuilding with the benefits and performance of the very latest powertrain and chassis tech.

While you might therefore assume the 9X9 is based on the latest 992-generation 911, it in fact uses the 993 of the mid to late '90s as its starting point. Kalmar says this choice is primarily to make the homologation process easier, particularly in the US. While a near three-decade-old platform doesn't seem to go hand-in-hand with a cutting-

edge, modern 959 alternative, the 9X9 is a long way from a 993 under the skin. A new spaceframe is added in order to improve rigidity, with subframes taken from the 992 to allow for considerably more flexibility when it comes to mounting the car's high-tech suspension. The entire electronically assisted steering system (column included), front-axle lift and even rear-wheel steering are taken from the 992, too.

That's not all the 9X9 will adopt from the 992 either, as the running gear will come from different 911s of that generation too, allowing each version to closely match the requirements of the buyer. While a bespoke prop shaft is used to integrate it all, everything from the engine to the transmission is borrowed from today's 911, ensuring thoroughly up-to-date performance. The entire fuelling system comes wholesale from the 992 donors, as does the primary electrical system, retaining the standard ECU, ABS system and PSM set-up.

So what are the options? The 'entry-level' Kalmar 9X9 is designed to perform at its best on the road, combining a 992 Turbo S-derived 3.8-litre twin-turbocharged flat-six with Porsche's PDK transmission and all-wheel-drive system. Unsurprisingly, given the 9X9 is intended as a spiritual successor to the mighty 959, its output is far from ordinary. A figure of 917bhp puts it 276bhp up on the current Turbo S and some



409bhp ahead of even the 959 S. Much like that most potent 959, this power comes from the use of bespoke turbochargers, with a new intake and exhaust system also developed to match.

While its power output, assisted by the PDK gearbox and four-wheel drive, makes this 9X9 ludicrously quick – a 0-62mph time of 2.0sec is claimed – Kalmar says the car possesses outstanding grand touring capabilities, with active engine mounts and optimised intake and cooling systems. Top speed is limited to 211mph, neatly matching that of the 959 S.

Opt for the middling 9X9 Sport and you get the 3-litre twin-turbocharged flat-six from the 992.1 Carrera GTS, paired with a seven-speed manual transmission (PDK is an option) and with drive going to all four wheels. There's an uplift in power over the engine in its standard form of course, by 168bhp to be precise, giving a total of 641bhp. The Sport model also benefits from an 85kg reduction in weight – taking it down to 1345kg from the standard 9X9's 1430kg – while buyers can choose to delete airbags to save even more kilograms. A different tune for the chassis is said to make the Sport an even more engaging steer.

Perhaps the most intriguing version of all, however, is the

Leichtbau. As the name suggests, this is the most focused of the lot, with another 95kg culled for a claimed total of 1250kg. Some of the weight loss comes from the use of the 992 GT3's naturally aspirated 4-litre flat-six – so there are no turbos and associated components adding weight. A six-speed manual gearbox is standard, although PDK is again an option, while drive is sent to the rear axle only. Further weight savings come from the removal of 'comfort equipment', which includes the airbags.

Contributing to the 9X9's light weight in all its forms is the entirely new, 959-inspired carbonfibre bodywork, which weighs just 100kg in total. The car is said to generate 157kg of downforce at 81mph and a mind-boggling 1450kg at its peak – 590kg more than the current GT3 RS. You'd be forgiven for questioning these numbers looking at the car's modest visible aero – most notably a recreation of the 959's distinctive integrated rear spoiler – but Kalmar says most of the work happens underneath the car, thanks to a combination of a ground-effect floor and an adaptive ride height. This not only helps make that huge downforce figure possible, but has provided the flexibility to create exterior bodywork that better reflects the design of the 959. Kalmar





says simulations indicate the 9X9 should achieve a 7-minute Nürburgring lap time, which puts it on a par with Porsche's 992 GT3 (7min 4sec).

Elsewhere, bespoke double-wishbone pushrod front suspension has been developed by Italian firm Danisi Engineering. This is compatible with both rear- and all-wheel-drive applications and works with adaptive TracTive dampers. The wheels are bespoke magnesium items wrapped in Michelin rubber, with 3D-printed titanium brake calipers from CarboBrake paired with carbon-ceramic discs to keep unsprung mass as low as possible.

The cabin is based on that of the 992.1-generation 911 and combines digital displays with analogue dials for a 'best of both worlds' result. The navigation system and radio have been removed for more focus, but Bluetooth remains to allow for phone calls and media playback. The sound system has been designed with mass in mind and as such employs numerous lightweight components, but it also promises to provide a standard of sound quality often absent from similarly focused driver's cars. A hidden integrated roll-cage enhances safety and rigidity, while lightweight, custom-trimmed Recaro Podium seats are tailor made to fit each customer.

As development on the 9X9 continues, **evo** will play a part, joining Kalmar Automotive founder Jan Kalmar and his engineering team at key stages of the car's testing programme across Europe.

Production will be limited to just 27 units in total and orders can be placed now, with each UK example being sold through Chorleywood-based Ferrari specialist DK Engineering. Expect prices to start well into seven figures. ✕



By STUART GALLAGHER

TOUR OF DUTY

The forthcoming M5 will include a Touring version for the first time since the E61 generation, and we've driven a prototype

IT'S BEEN A WHILE, 14 YEARS IN FACT, since a 5-litre V10 was shoehorned under the bonnet of an E61 5-series Touring and an M5 badge affixed to its tailgate. Now the BMW M5 Touring is back and we've driven it – in prototype form at least.

Far from a finished production car, 'our' G91 M5 Touring's development hadn't reached the same near sign-off stage as the prototype M5 saloon we drove in issue 323, with work still to be done on its chassis tune. Its 4.4-litre twin-turbo V8 hybrid powertrain, on the other hand, was very much as we experienced it in the saloon, which meant mighty levels of performance across the board. The V8 revs with abandon and is supplemented to the tune of 197bhp and 206lb ft by the electric motor, resulting in combined peaks of 727bhp and 738lb ft of torque. Which will be very handy with 2475kg to haul around.

On the evidence of our road drive, there's little difference in feel between Touring and saloon. The estate's drive mode sweet-spot is Sport, with the powertrain energised, the V8 building relentless momentum, and the eight-speed auto slipping seamlessly between ratios. The Touring feels as easy to place as its saloon counterpart (we drove both back-to-back) and, cliché alert, shrinks around you when you start to push on.

Its steering is calm, allowing for easy road positioning, and the rear-axle steering – 1.5 degrees of counter-steer up to 43mph and the same angle but in the same direction as the front axle above that speed – results in keener than expected agility. It's no M2 but, despite its near Mercedes S-class proportions and bulk, it's far from a fish out of water either. Its near 50:50 weight distribution plays a crucial role here.

Wider front and rear tracks (by 75mm front, 48mm rear) over a regular 5-series provide a purposeful stance, enhanced by 20-inch front and 21-inch rear wheels. A Hankook tyre is standard fitment, with Michelin Pilot Sport 5 Ss and Pirelli's P Zero Corsas as options. On the Michelins there's consistent (dry) grip across the board and a level of detail that we weren't expecting; BMW put this down to running the pressures as low as possible to allow the tyres to work to their optimum.

We won't pass judgement until we drive a finished production car in October – M is still taking the saloon's suspension settings, applying them to the Touring to tweak, reapplying those changes to the saloon to check for any significant performance changes and repeating the exercise until everyone is happy. The technology that we've experienced so far in the M5 has impressed; we're hoping that the finished article does too. ✉



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Watches

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Casio Edifice TOM'S 50th Anniversary

£290 casio.com

TOM'S – or Tachi Oiwa Motor Sport – was founded in Tokyo in 1974 and became Toyota's official tuning shop very soon after. To mark the company's half century, this Casio takes inspiration from one of the earliest TOM'S projects, a triple-championship-winning Toyota Starlet touring car, with flashes of the racer's colour scheme and subdials that echo its wheel design.



Nivada Grenchen Chronosport

£2035

nivadagrenchenofficial.com

No more than 20 Chronosports were made back in the 1970s, making it a highly sought-after watch today – and ripe for a reissue. This one remains particularly faithful, right down to its modest 38mm diameter and period-correct dial designed by Singer. No, not that Singer, but the outfit behind the look of the legendary 'Paul Newman' Rolex Daytona.



Norqain Freedom 60 GMT

£3380 norqain.com

If summer is still hanging around when you read this, Norqain's new ice blue sunray dial for its Freedom 60 GMT model might just make sense. The inner 24-hour ring and fourth hand allow the wearer to track a second time zone, and you can choose between a steel bracelet, a black rubber strap, or grey or ivory 'Nortide' straps that are woven from recycled plastic pulled from the ocean.

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Nathalie McGloin

Racing driver and Spinal Track co-founder

The world's only female tetraplegic racing driver, McGloin shares her passion for circuit driving via charity trackdays for people with spinal injuries and her FIA position promoting accessibility in motorsport

by JOHN BARKER PORTRAIT by MATT HOWELL

I 'VE NO FAMILY HISTORY OF CARS OR motorsport,' says Nathalie McGloin. That hasn't stopped her creating quite a legacy, though. She's the world's only female tetraplegic racing driver, she's the FIA Disability and Accessibility Commission president, promoting access for all to all aspects of motorsport, and in 2016, with her husband, rally champion Andrew Bayliss, she co-founded Spinal Track, a charity giving track and rally driving experiences to people with spinal injuries.

'I've always been competitive, the firstborn,' says McGloin. 'I always had to be top dog. I didn't use it in a productive way before my injury but definitely have since.' She was 16 and had just started her A-levels when she had the accident that left her paralysed from the chest down. 'Growing up in Bridlington, there wasn't a lot to do,' she says. 'So I hung around with an older crowd who were into cars. I didn't really like the cars, I just liked the danger; I was a bit of a tearaway teenager.'

'The accident was no one's fault, just wrong place, wrong time. We had a free period at school, so I went to the next village with a friend who'd recently passed his test. On the way back, people were turning into a hidden driveway just as we were coming over the hill. We weren't speeding, we just lost control as we tried to avoid them and hit a tree, and I broke my neck. I can't remember the accident although I was fully conscious through it. Sometimes the brain just blocks it out.'

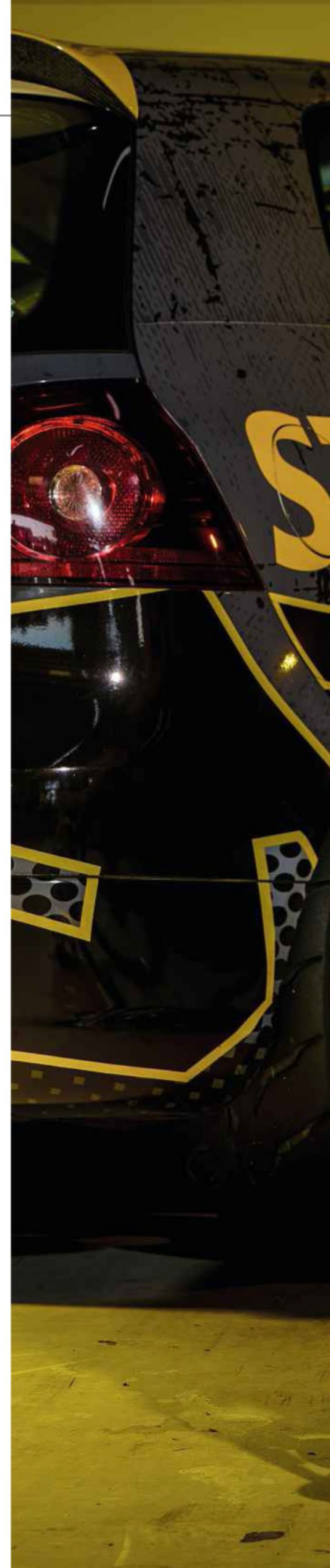
'There was no moment that I can remember that anyone said, "You're never going to walk again." I don't remember that conversation. It was just – excuse the pun – put one foot in front of the other: let's get out of intensive care, get off the

tracheostomy, get to spinal rehab and then go back to school and get my A-levels.

'I made a promise to myself quite early on that I wouldn't let my disability stop me from doing what I'd always planned to do. Before my accident I wanted to go to university and, well, that was just not going to happen.' She went to Nottingham even though she was barely independent. 'I couldn't really get in and out of a car. I didn't have anyone there helping me. I just decided it was sink or swim. And then I found wheelchair rugby and that was really the making of me. It introduced me to a family of people like me, with my injury, who really showed me how I could get the best out of myself.'

'When I first started driving, cars for me were independence, because I could go anywhere I wanted without help. I also loved the fact that, when I was in a car, no one could see my wheelchair.' McGloin's first car was an adapted Peugeot 206, later supplemented by a Saab 9-5 estate to carry her special rugby wheelchair. Then along came a Mini. 'The Mini was the first car that I kind of got noticed in, and I liked the attention. I progressed to a 911 – a 997 Cabriolet Tiptronic – and that ignited something. I was 22 in a 911. No one expected to see a wheelchair come out the door when I parked up. I loved the noise and the speed but it was more the fact that it disguised that I was disabled, which is a very different perspective because I'm proud of being disabled now. If I wasn't disabled, I wouldn't be doing any of the things that I am doing because my life, post breaking my neck, took me on a path.'

Circuit driving came along almost by chance. A rugby friend told McGloin he'd ordered a new M3 and that it was faster than her 911. She didn't believe





him so he invited her to a trackday to settle it. 'I was instantly addicted to the speed, but the fact I could do it at the same time and in the same way as able-bodied people was a freedom. People were interested in the controls of my car. I hadn't had that before. I was there as an equal, I fitted into an able-bodied world – something I hadn't experienced before.'

Rugby was pretty much McGloin's full-time job, but she slotted in as many trackdays as she could. Then in 2013 she decided to see if she could get a race licence, 'maybe just to hang on the wall with my university degree'. Within weeks she'd bought a 987 Cayman S and was turning it into a race car... At the time, disabled people had to do four hill climb or sprint events to validate their licence and she entered her first sprint in 2014 in both cars she owned: an Audi A4 Avant diesel and a 997 Turbo. 'Not really a fitting car for a novice!' she laughs. 'I won my class in the Turbo and they said, "You've won first in class, fastest novice and fastest woman, but you're only allowed one trophy. Which one do you want?" I was like, is that even a question? I won first in class, why wouldn't I want that?'

She qualified for her licence in 2015 and entered the Porsche Club Championship with the Cayman in Class 1. It nearly all went wrong the first time out testing at Brands Hatch: 'I lifted partway through Paddock Hill, drifted out into the gravel and the car went on two wheels. I don't know how it didn't go over.' She qualified second from last, in front of a 944 on treaded tyres. 'I thought, I'm going to finish last in my first ever race; people are gonna think I'm not good enough and I don't belong. I just wanted to go home. But when the lights went out it was different. I finished 14th out of 21 drivers.'

The next round, Silverstone, was wet. McGloin had scared herself when the back end of the Turbo had stepped out on a trackday, but when the same happened in the Cayman at Copse, it was different. 'I got a huge snap of oversteer, caught it and I was like: that was really natural. From then on, rain was something that I loved.'

'I've never driven a car with my feet, so the hand controls are very natural for me. I drive with my left hand on the wheel. I have my steering lightened in the Cayman so I don't use any grip on the wheel, I just hold on to it. My left hand isn't fully functional but it's got enough to do what it needs on the wheel. And then I've got my right hand on the accelerator and the brake, which is a simultaneous lever: you push down to accelerate and push forward to brake, so you can effectively left-foot brake. Normal hand controls are push-pull – pull backwards to accelerate and push forwards to brake – but there's a big gap between both things, so when going from accelerate to brake the car's doing nothing for a period of time, which would not be useful in a mid-engined Cayman.'

McGloin's inaugural season was about to sour somewhat, though. At Snetterton, race suspension was finally fitted to the Cayman and she qualified at the back of Class 1, ahead of the Class 2 drivers

"I went from "I need to hang up my race gloves" to getting a race win"

fighting for the championship. 'Then something happened that completely destroyed my confidence. A couple of them came up to me and said, pretty much, "Don't get in our way." I locked myself in my car and cried. It was my worst fear realised: they don't think I belong here; they don't think I'm any good. The race was awful. I got hit by one of the other drivers, because he couldn't get past. I just wanted to pack it in, and I carried that through to the rest of the season and into the next season a little bit.'

'I spoke to my husband about it afterwards but I'd never spoken about it publicly until I spoke at an International Women's Day event last year. Someone in the audience asked me how I would have felt if a woman had said that. I said I didn't know but I think it would have really pissed me off, and it would have riled me up, like, I'll show you! But because it was a man it just destroyed my confidence. And I'm not someone who's intimidated by men and I actually love an argument, but it just reinforced my own fears, my own insecurities. So it wasn't ideal. And then I had a big crash on the first test day of 2017, at Paddock Hill: ABS failure, so I hit the wall at about 70 and that destroyed my confidence for the whole of 2017.'

McGloin switched to the CSCC (Classic Sports Car Club) series and things picked up. In November of 2017 she got her first podium, a third in class. 'I then got a second in class the following year, and then I won my first race. So I went from "I could never do this again, I need to hang up my race gloves because I don't enjoy this," to getting a race win.'

Simultaneously, something equally special and rewarding had come out of her racing. 'When I started I got a lot of messages from fellow spinal injuries disabled people, saying, "I didn't know that we could do this. Can I have a go in your race car?"' McGloin and her husband had bought a full track-spec Golf GTI from another paraplegic who was a trackday enthusiast, and in 2016 they decided to use it to start a trackday charity called Spinal Track. They ran it out of their own pocket, with free trackdays from Silverstone, but it got to the stage where they couldn't continue to fund it. And then Stanley Black & Decker got in touch and sponsored Spinal Track and McGloin's racing. Just before Covid they started a rally programme as well. 'Bill Gwynne and his guys built us two GT86s with funding from

the Richard Burns Foundation. Unfortunately, Bill passed away before we got the programme running, which I still get really upset about because he never saw me in a car. He became like family to us.'

'We have 100 disabled people through the programmes every year, at ten trackdays and ten rally days. We've met some incredible people, people that will be friends for life. We had one guy – I always cry when I tell this story – who was injured at a similar age to me. He'd done all of the road driving courses, so a proper enthusiast, and his dad was on the pit wall at Silverstone and Andrew was standing with him. He saw his son driving down and started crying. He said to Andrew, "I never thought I'd see my son do anything like this." It's moments like that when we realise what we do. It's far more than just the driving. It's freedom and it's parity and we love it. We don't take any money out of it, we do it for reactions like that; that's our payment.'

In 2017, McGloin was offered the role of Disability and Accessibility Commission president of the FIA, which led to her presenting the third-place trophy at the British GP in 2018. 'I was hoping it would be Kimi or Max,' she says. 'I saw Kimi in the paddock, went over and said, "Hi Kimi. I'm Disability and Accessibility Commission president and I'm presenting the third-place trophy after the race." I felt he kind of looked at me like some crazy woman in a wheelchair but he posed for a photo with me.'

'On the Sunday I was really nervous. It was a huge crowd. When they announced third place, the guy gave me the trophy and I went round the corner to the podium. Kimi saw me and his face completely lit up. He jumped down and he said, "Oh, you said you'd be here." And I said, "Yes, I wasn't lying!" He was fantastic. He could see that my hands didn't work properly and used both of his hands to shake mine and helped me give the trophy to him. He made it so special for me because I felt his reaction was genuine. It was the best day of my motorsport life. Kimi, "Ice Man", was the warmest person ever and absolutely made the day for me.'

'I'm still the only female tetraplegic racing driver in the world. There is a female tetraplegic who recently started hill climbing in Turkey and plans to go rallying next. She messaged and asked for some advice. Hopefully, she saw what I was doing and thought, "Well, I can do it too." So that's pretty cool.'

Ambitions for the future? 'I'd like to do a 24-hour race. I'd hate it because I hate sleep deprivation but I think it would be something amazing, really challenging. I'm not talking about Le Mans – that's for professionals. I'd want to do it somewhere warm, so maybe the Dubai 24 Hours.' ❧

Spinal Track is looking for sponsors. Message Nathalie at nathalie@nathaliemcgloin.com

Right, clockwise from top: Nathalie with her hand-control Porsche Club Championship 987 Cayman; savouring her first race win in 2018; with the crew from the Spinal Track charity and their converted GT86 rally cars; presenting Kimi Räikkönen with his trophy at the 2018 British GP; Nathalie at 22 with her first performance car, a Porsche 997 Cabriolet





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 mourns a kindred spirit in artist Frank Stella of BMW Art Car fame

IT WAS WITH SADNESS THAT I LEARNED OF THE death of the celebrated American artist Frank Stella, who passed away in May, aged 87. The chances are that, like me, you know his name thanks to BMW's remarkable Art Car project, in which the most celebrated artists of the age used a variety of BMWs – often race cars – as their three-dimensional canvases.

Of the many obituaries written in Stella's memory, few mentioned the work that blew my young mind: his spectacular 'Graph Paper' 3.0 CSL Turbo. I couldn't tell you exactly when I first saw a picture of it, but I'm pretty sure it was the early '80s. I loved the car, of course, but the design seemed so clever to me. Endlessly intriguing and unexpectedly impactful, it confounded the convention of racing cars needing to wear colourful liveries to stand out. If you don't believe me, search online for archive images of it racing at Le Mans in 1976.

There are now 20 Art Cars. Stella's CSL was the second, commissioned by art auctioneer and racer Hervé Poulain, the man who originally hatched the Art Car concept and approached BMW to see if it wished to collaborate. He raced the first commission (also a CSL and featuring a design by his friend, sculptor Alexander Calder) at Le Mans in 1975. Pop artist Roy Lichtenstein followed Stella in '77 with a typically vibrant design for his 320i Turbo. Then came Andy Warhol's M1 Procar – the most famous of all Art Cars and now quite possibly the most valuable car in the world – which finished sixth overall at Le Mans in '79.

BMW's Art Cars provided a relatable access point for me, but the art world in general remains strange and intimidating. Deliberately so, it seems. Closed. Bewildering. Sometimes profound but mostly pretentious. Lots of coral-coloured trousers and cygnet-ringed pinky fingers. You know the drill. Then again, I could easily be describing Monterey Car Week, so certainly art doesn't have the monopoly on off-putting elitism.

Perhaps because of this, Stella's most famous quote – 'What you see is what you see' – resonated with me almost as much as his work. Such straight talking shouldn't have been a surprise coming from a young man who exploded onto the New York art scene aged just 23, with his series of austere debut artworks – the simply named Black Paintings – immediately establishing

him as a founding father of 1960s minimalism. His quest was to reduce the painted canvas to an object in and of itself, free from figurative expression and in defiance of conventional interpretation. All I know is I find them endlessly fascinating.

He began these large-scale pieces by drawing evenly spaced pencil lines on huge blank canvases, before going over them freehand using a broad decorator's brush and black enamel paint. The unpretentious nature of his materials and techniques made its own statement. But the fact that it wasn't the thick black stripes that formed the mesmerising geometric patterns but the thin, waney-edged lines of bare, unpainted canvas he left between them was absolute genius; reductive to the point of all-but removing the artist from the equation.

For some time – too long, ultimately – I harboured the notion of attempting to arrange to interview Stella in his upstate New York studio. What held me back? That whole intimidating art scene vibe. Stupid I know. Not least because we would have found common ground in cars and racing. Apparently, he would regularly borrow cars from BMW – a legacy of his Art Car collaboration – and enjoyed driving them at ill-advised speed. No stranger to the New York State Highway Patrol, in the 1980s he once faced 30 days in jail for doing 105mph in his Ferrari, but instead agreed to hold a series of art lectures as community service. His extensive

collection of speeding tickets now resides in the Archives of American Art, which tickles me no end.

Motorsport left an indelible impression on Stella. Initially attending races in order to inspire and inform his Art Car commission, he would go on to develop a real appreciation for racing. He formed great friendships with some of the drivers, most notably Ronnie Peterson, to whom he dedicated a series of abstract works in the wake of Peterson's tragic death after a fiery accident at the 1978 Italian Grand Prix. Latterly he even had a Ferrari F1 car in his studio. He was a car guy, no doubt.

Sadly, I'll never meet Frank Stella. I'm not sure I would have plucked up the courage to tell him his Black Paintings inspired my crash helmet design, but I would have found a way to tell him that his 'Graph Paper' CSL was the first piece of art I felt rather than simply observed.

What you see is what you see. What I saw blew my mind.

'His extensive collection of speeding tickets now resides in the Archives of American Art'

✉ @DickieMeaden

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



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RICHARD PORTER

Porter finds much cause for optimism at the Festival of the Unexceptional



THE OTHER MONTH ON THIS PAGE I WAS dropping a load of drivel about how young people aren't fussed about driving. Taking your driving test is expensive, buying and running a car is even more expensive, they have Uber now, net result is that young people aren't interested in cars. But I was wrong. Because I wrote that before I'd been to the Festival of the Unexceptional.

You might have heard of this one. Marking its 10th birthday this year, FotU is a celebration of the deeply ordinary, the average, the stuff that used to line our kerbs but has now largely disappeared from view. Officially the age range of cars on display is 1969 to 1999, but I'd say it skews heavily (and, if you're of a certain age, wonderfully) towards '80s and '90s stuff.

My mate Jonny Smith and I were invited to record an episode of our Smith and Sniff podcast in front of the audience at this year's Festival so, nice and early on a sunny Saturday morning, we headed to the venue, Grimsthorpe Castle in Lincolnshire, in the stupid stretched Vauxhall Senator limousine that we bought as the punchline to a running podcast joke.

I've been to a lot of car shows in my time but never have I been getting close to where one is being held and found myself squinting at a shape on the road ahead and yelping slightly too urgently, 'Look Jonny! A Peugeot 309!' Mind you, I've never driven to a car show in a stretched Vauxhall Senator limousine and if I had I suspect most places would have looked aghast at its funereal appearance and invited us to park it behind the bins. Despite concerns that it wasn't technically unexceptional enough, FotU very decently let us park it right by the main stage.

As other Festival goers started to arrive, it became clear that the 309, and our daft limo, were just the tip of a very obscure iceberg. There were Montegos, BXs, early Mondeos, a Talbot Alpine, and a whole Little Chef car park's worth of other retro repmobiles, wonderfully offset by a strong showing from the Mk1 Twingo and a mint early Metro. Someone brought a Daihatsu Applause only to be out-observed by the guy in the Fiat Argenta, a car so forgotten even Fiat salespeople from the '80s might struggle to remember it. That's what you get when you launch a car just before the Falklands conflict and realise with dismay its

name sounds like the country we're at war with. If you've ever wanted to stand in front of a stately home looking at a VW Polo Harlequin, a Triumph Acclaim and an immaculate Nissan Laurel, this was the show for you. I couldn't have been happier.

In many ways, the Festival of the Unexceptional is a very un-**evo** event because sportiness and dynamism are actively discouraged. If you fetched up in an immaculate Mk2 Golf GTI 16v you'd be politely directed to the far reaches of the display lawn, whereas an improbably tidy 1.3 CL of the same era would be the belle of the ball. A crustless 1984 Sierra 1.6L would be catnip for FotU goers where a flawless RS Cosworth might be seen as not in the spirit of the day. And yet, actually, the Festival is very **evo** because it's a shameless celebration of the car.

There's something especially joyful about this event, and a lot of that comes from the crowd because I've never attended such an interesting and diverse car show in my life. Nor, to lurch like a Nissan Cherry with an iffy clutch back to my point, have I been to a car event with such a young and involved audience. In a way, it makes total sense. The trad classic car world has long been an expensive place to enter. I was looking at some of the guide prices at a recent auction of classics in the US and wondering if they'd been picked by spinning the Wheel of Fortune and then adding two zeroes.

So the usual poster fodder from the '60s and '70s is available only to ruddy faced millionaires in chinos and those terrible rich-man-summer-car-show hats. But with the energetic resourcefulness of youth, younger folk have looked to more recent stuff to get their classic kicks. Because while a creaky-kneed old knacker like me can well remember the launch of the second-generation Rover 200 in 1989, if you were born ten years after that then the Rover is an old car, it's sort of interesting because you don't see them around any more, and it might come with an extra tang of nostalgia because your dad or neighbour had one. Find a really tidy one going cheap and you've got your affordable classic. Then rock up to Festival of the Unexceptional and you've found your tribe.

It was heartening to see. Not just because I'm unnaturally excited by seeing a Hyundai Stellar parked next to a Mk2 Granada, but because it turns out young people are still interested in cars. You just have to know where to look.

'If you fetched up in an immaculate Mk2 Golf GTI 16v you'd be politely directed to the far reaches of the display lawn'

✉ @sniffpetrol

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

THE WRC YEARS

IT'S A WELL TOLD STORY, BUT NOT WITHOUT GOOD reason. Before the Audi quattro, four-wheel drive was for farmers. After it, to turn up to a rally without four driven wheels was to admit defeat even before the flag had fallen to commence the opening stage. When Audi introduced the quattro for the first round of the 1981 World Rally Championship, at the Monte Carlo rally no less, it not only began a new era for itself as a company, but also for the world of performance cars and the sport of rallying.

A four-wheel-drive Audi road car was originally proposed by engineer Jörg Bensinger in the late 1970s, during development of the Iltis military vehicle for Volkswagen. The idea was enthusiastically championed by newly appointed Audi boss

Ferdinand Piëch as a way of establishing the marque alongside tough German opposition in the market – the original Vorsprung durch Technik. WRC regulations of the time forbade the use of four-wheel drive, but when the other participating manufacturers agreed to relax those rules they had no idea that Audi had been working away behind the scenes on a muscular, turbocharged, four-wheel-drive super-coupe.

The resulting Audi quattro – known as the Ur-quattro, 'Ur' being 'original' in German – was unveiled at the 1980 Geneva motor show, ahead of the model's debut for the 1981 rally season. Originally conceived as a true 'homologation special', demand soon evolved it into a flagship of the Audi range, and it would eventually be on sale for 11 years, selling over 11,000 units.



 THE BIRTH OF QUATTRO

The quattro was unique. It combined the sleek lines of the 80-based GT coupe with 2.1-litre five-cylinder turbo power and the new four-wheel-drive system, all topped off with blistered wheelarches, a deep front air dam and a boxy rear wing. With 197bhp and superb traction, it brought a new level of all-weather performance to road cars. To drive one today, like this very early Helios Blue Metallic 10-valve example from 1982, is a revelation. The engine has that wonderful off-beat signature sound and pulls very lustily in the mid-range, imparting a surprising sense of speed. It's not as understeer-prone as you might fear, instead majoring on traction with surprisingly deft steering. It still feels capable; over 40 years ago it must have felt ballistic.

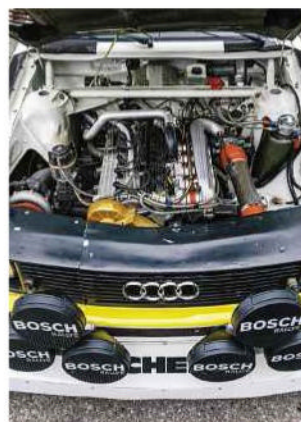
Not only was Audi prepared to push the limits and go its own way on the technical front, it also blazed a trail with its driving squad, not only recruiting established star Hannu Mikkola, but then teaming him with Michèle Mouton and co-driver Fabrizia Pons as an all-female crew for the second entry. Three victories were recorded in that debut season (two for Mikkola, one to Mouton), but it was Mouton who would so nearly capture the championship the following season, just losing out to Opel's Walter Röhrl.

For 1983, Audi homologated into the new Group B formula, renaming the rally car the quattro A1. This was replaced by the A2 later the same season, a marginally smaller engine displacement on the revised road car meaning that Audi could enter the rally version in a lower weight category. The A2 enabled Mikkola to become World Champion after a tense battle with the works Lancia squad. Audi followed up its triumph with another driver's crown in 1984, this time with Stig Blomqvist at the wheel, but by now the A2 was showing its age in a field that consisted of purpose-built supercars. Something new from Ingolstadt was needed.

Revolution came in the form of the Sport quattro, one of the most extreme homologation specials ever created. The aim was to make the quattro more agile on the stages, for Piëch insisted that Audi stick with a production-based entry. Some 32cm was chopped from the wheelbase, producing the truncated, hugely potent-looking beast you see here in Tornado Red. With 302bhp courtesy of a bigger turbo and a new 20-valve engine it was surely one of the quickest vehicles on the road in 1984 – and it still feels mightily rapid now. In rallying trim, the Sport was soon offering 500bhp, but while its power was exceptional, it was always something of a blunt instrument. To unlock its potential, Audi Sport went radical – so radical that it created one of the most unique, terrifying and beloved competition vehicles ever seen: the Sport quattro S1 E2.

No one really knows how much power the E2 made, but even today at Cadwell Park, on its lowest boost setting, it should be 500bhp, which in a car that weighs not much over a ton feels utterly outrageous. By moving some of the weight rearwards, and embracing aerodynamics, Audi Sport moved back to the front of Group B rallying, famously winning the 1985 San Remo round with Walter Röhrl and co-driver Christian Geistdörfer. What an honour even to sit in this driving seat, yet alone to run the engine to 9000rpm, the scream of the five-cylinder engine and urgent surge of acceleration leaving me completely frazzled after just a handful of laps.

There will never be another car like this, but for Audi Sport, one era was closing and another opportunity beckoned: next, it would hit the track. ☒





A rear-view photograph of an Ariel Nomad 2 off-road sports car driving on a narrow, winding asphalt road. The car is black with a prominent orange roll-over protection structure. The license plate is yellow with the text 'NOM4D'. The background features a dramatic landscape with lush green hills on the left, a stone wall on the right, and distant mountains under a heavy, cloudy sky. The image has a motion blur effect, suggesting speed.

NOMAD'S LAND

Ariel's off-road sports car has been reborn. We're first to drive the Nomad 2, on some of the UK's best B-roads

by JAMES TAYLOR
PHOTOGRAPHY by
ASTON PARROTT

IF SOMEONE DESCRIBES A CAR AS A 'TOY', IT CAN BE taken two ways. It can sound a bit pejorative, implying a frippery, an unnecessary indulgence, an ego-driven purchase, perhaps. Or it can be a compliment, recognising a pure-in-purpose recreational vehicle, one that's unashamedly about having fun for fun's sake.

The Ariel Nomad is a toy in the most emphatically positive sense of the word: an open-air two-seater capable of extreme off-road use, yet also uniquely brilliant fun on the road. The original launched in 2015 and captured customers' imaginations in a way that took even Ariel itself by surprise. Nomad owners did all sorts with their cars – extreme off-roading, simple Sunday-drive-to-the-pub motoring, round-the-world expeditions, trackdays, and all points in between. It was the sports car the world never knew it needed.

Now it's time for the follow-up: the ground-up-redesigned

Ariel Nomad 2. We meet it in north Wales, and set about a pre-flight check to see what's new, which is everything bar the steering wheel, pedal box and fuel filler cap.

The evolution from Nomad 1 to Nomad 2 is similar to the step from Atom 3 to Atom 4, explains Ariel MD Henry Siebert-Saunders, which is to say that while it may look very much the same, and is intended to have the same ethos and feel as its predecessor, it is effectively an all-new car. 'It was the same scenario: what do we *want* to change? Nothing. What do we *need* to change? Everything.'

So Nomad 2 is easier to get into, faster and easier to manufacture and service, more reliable, able to carry more things more easily, even more capable off-road, and *much* faster on-road (and off it) than before. 'But we've tried not to lose the Ariel-ness – the simplicity, the fun, the tactility,' Siebert-Saunders emphasises.



As Nomad 2 sits in a light mist of rain under low Snowdonian cloud, it packs much of the same visual impact as its predecessor. Its components are exposed like a cutaway drawing, yet it's still one entity that your eye reads as a cohesive whole.

Whereas the original was based on the Ariel Atom 3, the new Nomad 2 is 'more its own thing,' Siebert-Saunders continues. Its front structure is very different from before, for example, with 2.5 times more radiator surface for improved cooling. Its main tubular frame comprises chassis and roll-cage in one, as before, but it's made from larger-diameter tubes. Torsional stiffness is claimed to be increased by a full 60 per cent.

Overall dimensions are very similar to its predecessor's but within that footprint there's a longer wheelbase by 48mm, which benefits both cockpit space and handling

stability while retaining suitably enormous approach and departure angles. Track, meanwhile, is considerably wider, by 50mm.

Clambering aboard is a much easier process: with a larger opening and the chassis side-rails repositioned and re-angled, you can get in almost as you would a regular car: left leg first, settle on the seat, then bring your right leg in.

The weather-proof seats are shared with the Atom 4, their position manually adjusted via bolts, and the dash layout behind the wheel is familiar too. The colour digital display in the centre is flanked by neat, easily operated waterproof switches and buttons in a carbonfibre housing.

There are more than 100 options available for Nomad 2, and no two cars are likely to be the same. You can still spec it to be an off-road specialist vehicle with, for example, beadlock wheels, spot lights, a hydraulic handbrake, a



winch and the illuminated lightsaber-style aerials that were such a distinctive option on the original Nomad. This car is specced more as a 'B-road brute and trackday fun car' in Siebert-Saunders' words. We're confined to the tarmac today, but we've chosen some of our favourite stretches on which to discover the Nomad 2's unique character.

So let's get going. Press the rubberised starter button and, for the first time since the original K-series-powered Atom, it's not a Honda engine that buzzes to life behind you. Nomad 2 is Ford-powered, by the 2.3-litre turbocharged four used in the Focus ST and various US-market Fords. As per Ariel's philosophy of being a car builder rather than an engine tuner, it doesn't change anything mechanical in the engine but offers the option of a switchable ECU with three maps, ramping up power and torque to a maximum of 305bhp/382lb ft. In a car with a kerb weight of 715kg, it's plenty.

Ariel says the Ford motor is better suited to the Nomad's characteristics than the 2.4-litre Honda unit in the previous Nomad, partly because it develops more torque, the better for off-roading. It drives the rear wheels via a limited-slip differential and a six-speed Ford manual transmission as standard. A Quaife paddleshift is an option, as per Atom 4 and 4R.

Slot the lever across its H-pattern gate to first, release the manual handbrake (the standard one in this car, rather than the optional fly-off hydraulic bar) and head out onto the road. The clutch is light and the unassisted steering – brand-new rack, brand-new geometry, two turns lock-to-lock – likewise as you pull away, the all-terrain tyres easy to manipulate. Ariel offers three choices of tyres in different sizes and levels of knobbliness; this car's 18-inch Yokohama Geolandar tyres are the most road-focused (conventional road tyres were offered on the original, but very few customers took up the option).

Initially, the Nomad 2 feels wide on the road and it's harder at first to get a sense of its width than in the lower Atom, where you can more easily see what the front wheels are up to as you drive. Everything feels a little alien as you acclimatise to the extra tyre and suspension movement compared with a regular car. After a while, though, the sensory overload subsides and you're more easily able to interpret the rich seam of information coming at you through the steering, pedals and the seat of your pants (particularly against the unyielding plastic seats). It's not long before piloting the Nomad 2 is second nature.

And there's the unique perspective of being closer to nature through the open sides, though you don't feel particularly exposed or vulnerable. I've donned full waterproofs for the drive but I'm reasonably sheltered, and the heater keeps things toasty. It's only on open, exposed ground that the wind occasionally whips through the side of the cockpit and gives your torso a bit of a pat-down. No need to wear a helmet since a windscreen is standard (it was an option on Nomad 1), though you might want sunglasses.

The windscreen has been repositioned to be less susceptible to glare than before, and the distinctive baseball-cap-style peak over the top of the screen helps protect your eyes from both bright sun and the optional high-intensity spotlights, if fitted. The cap's blade-like surfaces help marshal airflow into the 'roof' scoop, which feeds the intercooler and the engine itself through two separate channels. Managing the Nomad's airflow is a tough brief given its open chassis, and a lot of CFD work has gone into refining the aerodynamics. The roof scoop blocks a little of your rearward view but all-round vision is superb (although you occasionally

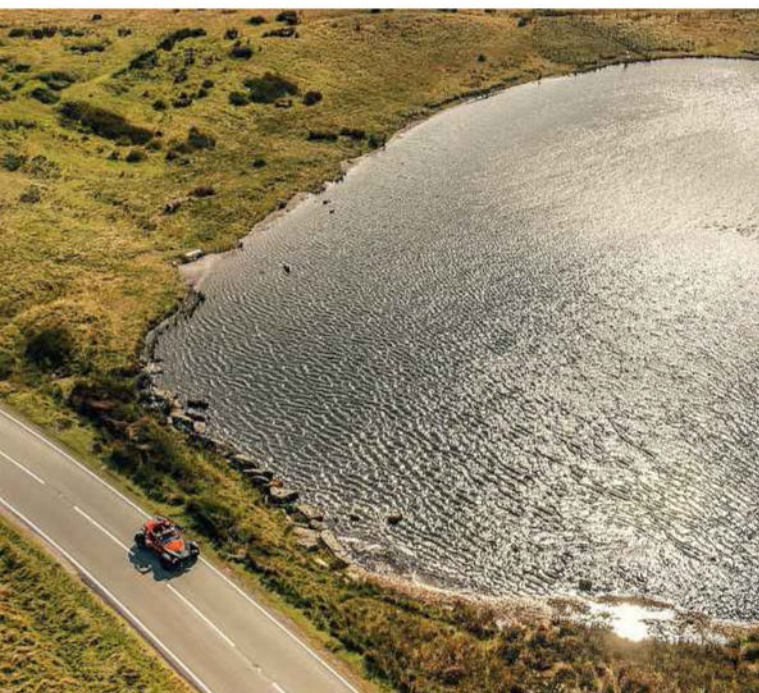




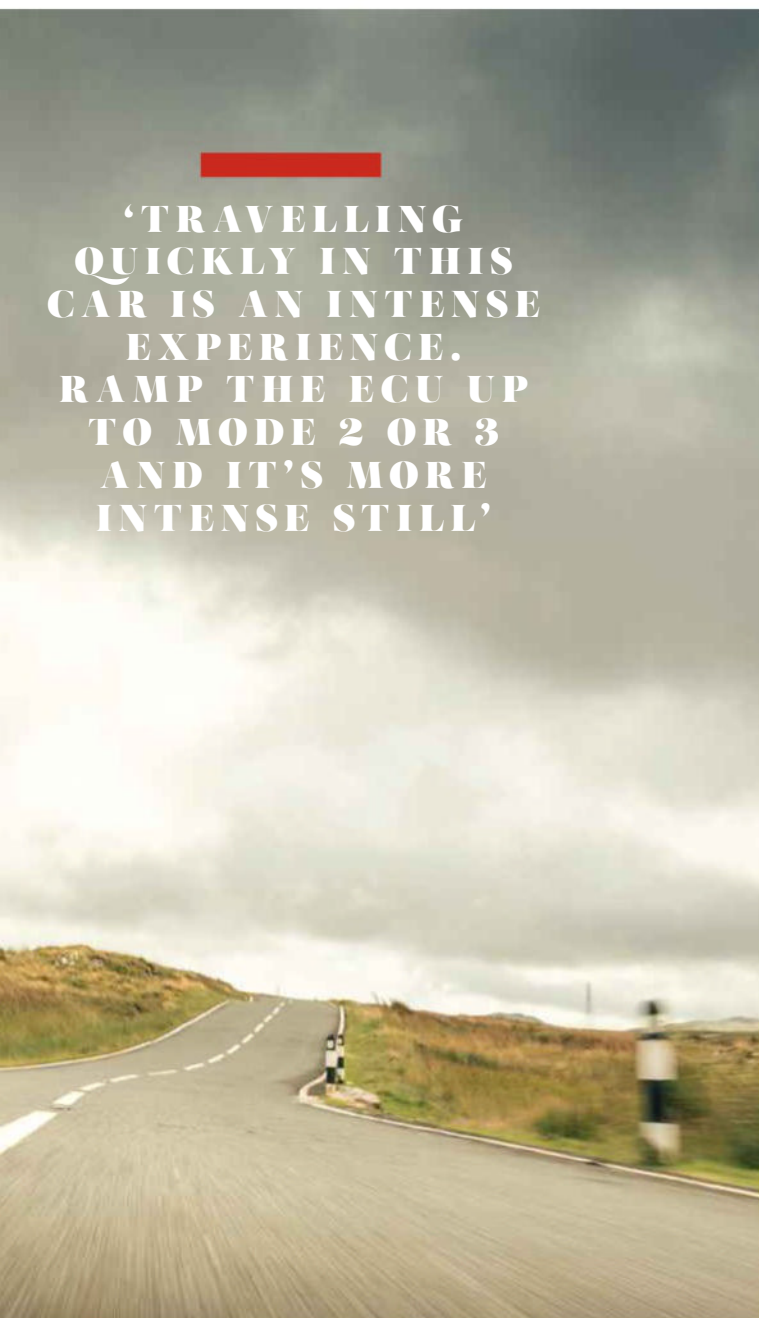
**‘THERE ARE MORE THAN 100 OPTIONS. NO TWO
CARS ARE LIKELY TO BE THE SAME’**







‘TRAVELLING QUICKLY IN THIS CAR IS AN INTENSE EXPERIENCE. RAMP THE ECU UP TO MODE 2 OR 3 AND IT’S MORE INTENSE STILL’



need to loosen the four-point harnesses’ straps at T-junctions to free your shoulders for a good look left and right).

There’s a decent amount of space for two, but you might find yourself brushing your passenger’s leg when you put the gearlever in reverse. And a neater solution for carrying stuff too: on Nomad 1, the spare wheel cover was adapted to carry items. Now there’s a more versatile rack system, enabling you to transport one or two waterproof boxes, up to two bike racks, loose luggage, a spare wheel or various combinations of the above. There’s a roof cover option for extreme weather (rain or sunshine) too.

The front and rear load covers are composite, or carbonfibre as an option, while the rest of the bodywork – all the black bits on this car, although it can be finished in other colours too – is made from toughened polyethylene.

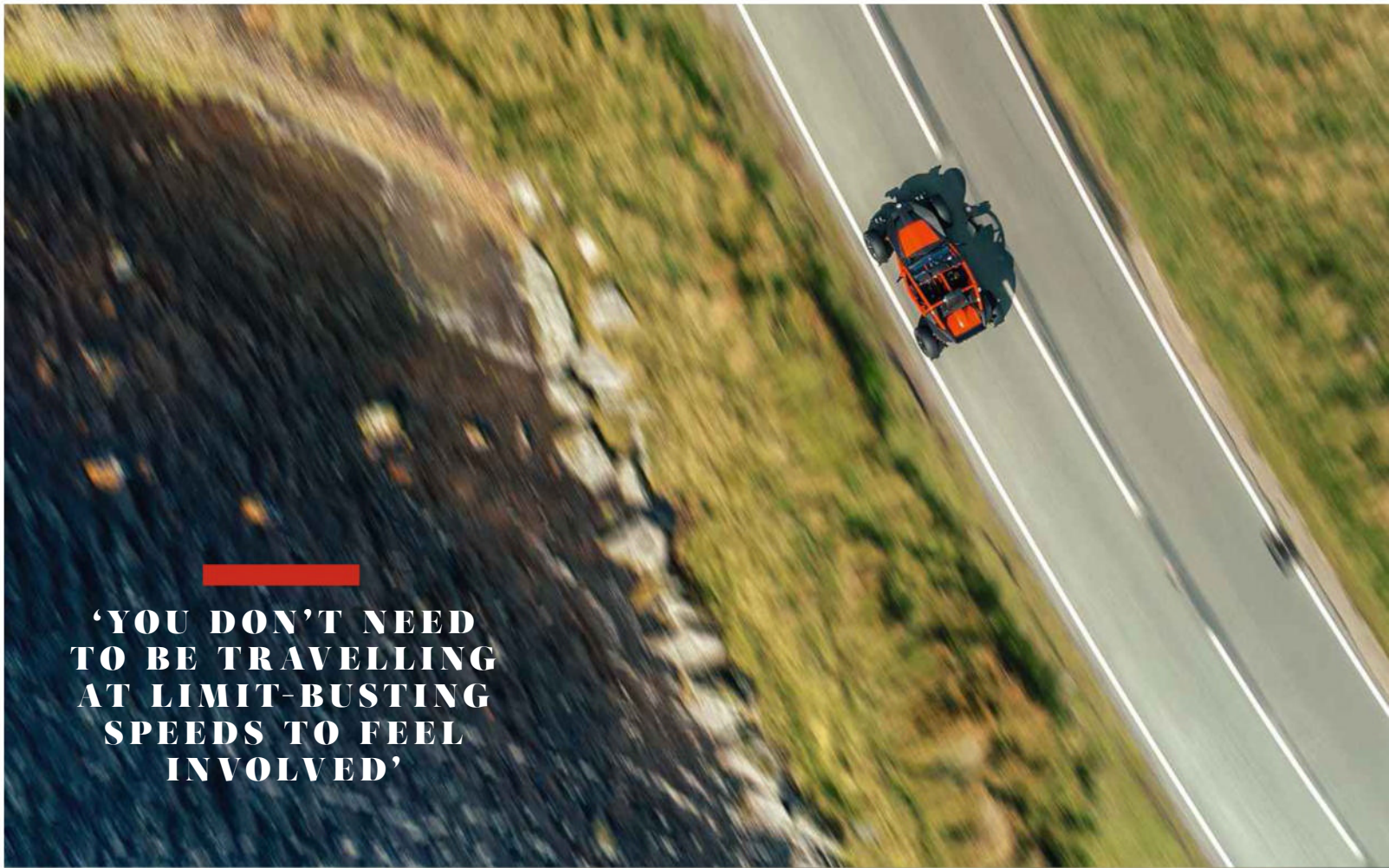
Compared with the Civic Type R engine in the Atom 4, the Ford plant in the Nomad 2 has a less dramatic soundtrack – it doesn’t have the same wastegate flutters and whooshes – but you still hear the twin-spool turbo breathing and gasping. There’s the occasional crack of unburnt fuel in the exhaust on upshifts, too. It’s a flexible, linear engine, without much in the way of peaks or flat-spots. Of course, having only 715kg to haul in the car’s lightest configuration helps, though that’s more than the original. ‘Everything is a bit beefier, so there’s a weight penalty,’ Siebert-Saunders explains.

This car has the optional three-mode ECU, controlled by turning a little toggle switch behind the wheel. In Mode 1, the gentlest, most tractable setting, it develops 260bhp and 284lb ft. It’s a docile, setting that makes the Nomad easy to drive in traffic as well as in low-grip conditions, but it’s still an intense rush at the top end. Start illuminating shift-lights on the dash display and your eyes are likely widening in time with the revs: travelling quickly in this car is an intense experience. Ramp up to Mode 2 (302bhp/333lb ft) or Mode 3 (305bhp/382lb ft) and it’s more intense still. Particularly Mode 3, which spreads torque broadly throughout the entire rev-range and is superbly responsive.

Nomad 2 has a 70-litre fuel tank, 40 per cent bigger than before, for long expeditions. Ariel states that you could travel up to 550 miles between fills. Changing the air filter – previously a 30-minute job – is now a two-minute task, and there’s the option of a WRC-spec filter for seriously dusty work. There’s revised electronic architecture too, with a new Power Distribution Module eliminating the need for multiple fuses and relays. The new pad of buttons mid-dash is configurable depending on what options customers spec and makes for a much faster build time for each car. Better for Ariel, better for customers. On which, Ariel has around 100 Nomad 2s already on order. The first will be built by the end of 2024.

Siebert-Saunders says Ariel has comprehensively reimaged the suspension pick-up points and geometry for Nomad 2. It’s still a double-wishbone, outboard-damper set-up all round and has more suspension travel than before but now incorporates anti-squat and anti-dive (and is fully sealed to better protect from dust and dirt). ‘All the roll and squat stuff that was a characteristic of the original still happens,’ he says, ‘just when you’re going faster. *Much* faster.’

With that in mind, driving the Nomad quickly demands concentration – and respect. It is a mid-engined car with a lot of suspension travel, after all, and even with the anti-squat and dive its weight transfer characteristics can feel a little alien at first. Last time I drove a Nomad was in 2019, so it’s difficult to make direct comparisons, but it takes me a little longer to feel fully in tune with this car. It might simply be that I’m tired, or that my head is still in the Golf GTI that I arrived in, but I spook myself a couple



**‘YOU DON’T NEED
TO BE TRAVELLING
AT LIMIT-BUSTING
SPEEDS TO FEEL
INVOLVED’**



of times. Not in a big, 'oh gosh, I have to catch this' way, but there's a more abrupt sense of yaw than I was expecting the first time I get on the power hard while loaded up in a corner and the weight shifts rearward. It still sits down at the back as you accelerate hard, a little like a speedboat, but it does so at higher speeds than before. And if you commit hard to a corner, you do have to be mindful that there's a fair bit of weight behind you.


But once you've tuned into it, the Nomad 2 is a truly unique, rewarding experience. You anticipate and play with the car's movement on its tyres and suspension, like a musician deliberately playing ahead of or behind the beat. It's not long before you begin to not only trust it but actively play and experiment with it. And, though this is now a faster car than before, you still don't need to be travelling at limit-busting speeds to play with the balance, or to feel involved. Flowing down the road at a brisk but not outrageous pace in Nomad 2 is an exhilarating but weirdly calm, almost meditative experience. And an addictive one. The roll and movement are a key part of its appeal.

There are three damper options. Standard-fit are non-adjustable K-Tech units, then there's an adjustable remote-reservoir Bilstein option – relatively soft and suitable for a 'UK green-lane-style expedition' according to Siebert-Saunders – and finally a three-way adjustable, external-reservoir Öhlins TTX option, as fitted here. Adjustable for high-speed and low-speed compression, and for rebound,

they're the best option for both fast road and fast off-road uses, today set in a relatively soft, comfort-biased, road-suitable setting. Experiencing it off-road will wait for another day: Siebert-Saunders casually mentions that Nomad 2 has been engineered to land jumps sweetly at 100mph-plus...

There's also the option of multi-stage traction control, launch control, ABS and ESP, with different settings for on and off tarmac. It's impressive that Ariel is able to make such systems available, and specifically calibrated, for a low-volume specialist car. You can feel the ABS in action, and it's easy to modulate your braking to suit. Standard brakes are now 40 per cent bigger than Nomad 1's while AP Racing four-piston calipers and 290mm vented discs from Atom 4 are an option, as fitted here, with adjustable bias front to rear.

Those options – and the refining of the Nomad in general – come at a price. The original started in the low £30k bracket (although you had to spend a little more to make it fully road-ready, and it was possible to spend the list price again in options if you didn't exercise self restraint). The new car starts at £68,970 (including VAT, in ready-to-go, road-legal spec). This car, heavily optioned, equates to around £85,000.

So, sadly, the Nomad is a much more expensive toy than before. But there are few more captivating. It's as unique and entertaining a plaything as the original, while also promising to be more useable, more comfortable, more reliable and capable of higher performance both on- and off-road. An unnecessary frippery, maybe. But it's life-affirming fun. 

Ariel Nomad 2

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 2267cc, turbocharged

Power 305bhp @ 5950rpm (with switchable ECU)

Torque 382lb ft @ 2850rpm (with switchable ECU)

Weight 715kg **Power-to-weight** 433bhp/ton

Tyres Yokohama Geolandar A/T **0-62mph** 3.4sec

Top speed 134mph **Basic price** £68,970

evo rating ★★★★★





THE M P E S T

by SAM JENKINS

The Temerario, Lamborghini's replacement for the Huracán, swaps the iconic V10 for a downsized turbocharged V8 and three electric motors. But fear not. With a 10,000rpm red line and 907bhp, it's set to go down a storm



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VEN THOUGH MORE MODERN alternatives muster bigger numbers from lower capacity powerplants, there is no denying the appeal of Lamborghini's Huracán and its 5.2-litre V10. Naturally aspirated and with a soundtrack few can match, the V10's demise is undoubtedly a cause for regret. But now Sant'Agata Bolognese has lifted the covers on the Temerario, an all-new creation that Lamborghini deems a worthy

replacement for its outgoing entry-level supercar. And early indications suggest it should more than live up to that billing.

The current trends for downsizing and electrification are too often associated with an increased focus on efficiency and a corresponding decrease in driver engagement. While the Temerario (Italian for 'fearless') embraces the same trends, it promises to be something of an outlier, its smaller-capacity engine and hybrid assistance meticulously engineered to deliver a driving experience on a par with some of our favourite pure-combustion Lamborghinis of years gone by.

Some manufacturers take an existing internal combustion engine and engineer a hybrid powertrain around it, but the Temerario is different. Mounted at its core is the result of five years of painstaking development: the ground-up all-new L411 V8. And while its cylinder count is inferior to that of its predecessor, its technical specification most certainly is not.

Peak power output of this new, 180-degree 4-litre V8 stands at 789bhp, putting it 158bhp ahead of the most potent Huracán

sold, but raw power isn't where its USP lies. That power peak stretches from 9000 to 9750rpm, with the red line not arriving until 10,000, putting it 500rpm ahead of the Revuelto's wild V12. Such dizzying revs are achieved through the use of a flat-plane crank and titanium con rods to reduce rotating mass, along with 11,000rpm-capable finger followers, parts you'd usually only expect to find beneath the shell of a Le Mans racer. A pair of large, high-pressure turbochargers supply more than 36 psi of boost at peak load, 1.4 psi more than even the McLaren P1 musters. The new V8's astonishing specific output of 197bhp per litre compares with 121bhp per litre for the most powerful Huracán V10.

Given the complexity of the powertrain and the desire to keep the centre of gravity as low in the chassis as possible, packaging had to be carefully considered, with numerous components completely redesigned to fit. Air filter housings with unique tubular cartridges were chosen to save space, while the dual water pumps were arranged in series on the right-hand side of the engine only.

Heat management was another major consideration. With such tight packaging, plus the use of forced induction and hybrid assistance, the Temerario required a significant boost in cooling performance, Lamborghini's engineers developing an entirely new radiator layout to boost cooling efficiency by a claimed 30 per cent.

As if its new V8 wasn't enough, the Temerario boasts a fully fledged hybrid powertrain, though pure electric running wasn't the goal here. While a 3.8kWh battery pack mounted within the central tunnel does allow for zero-emissions running for short distances, the primary objective of the triple-



motor hybrid system was to enhance driving dynamics and mimic the response of a naturally aspirated engine.

Each of the three motors produces 148bhp and 221lb ft of torque, with two mounted on the front axle and the third sandwiched between the engine and transmission, as with the Revuelto flagship. Lamborghini's engineers were given more flexibility than ever to manipulate dynamics through torque vectoring via that pure-electric front axle, with the third motor providing torque-fill to all but eliminate turbo lag, while also acting as a starter motor and giving the ability to regenerate power. Accepting a 7kW charge, the battery is said to take 30 minutes to fill when plugged into a charger, but can also be topped up via regenerative braking or the V8 engine, with the latter taking only six minutes to do the job.

The result of all of this is a combined 907bhp peak output (just 94bhp behind the blistering Revuelto and 4bhp ahead of the McLaren P1) and some predictably brisk performance figures. Standstill to 62mph happens in 2.7sec with top speed being a quoted 213mph, half a second and 12mph ahead of the original LP610-4 Huracán. All of this is even more impressive when you consider that the Temerario's 1690kg dry weight is a whopping 268kg up on the original Huracán's. Its 545bhp/ton power-to-weight figure is impressive nonetheless, putting it 115bhp/ton ahead of its predecessor.

Transferring all this power to the ground is a new seven-speed dual-clutch transmission. Not only does this weigh less and require less room than the old Huracán 'box, but it is also claimed to deliver quicker shift times. There's still a mechanical reverse gear, too, unlike some hybrid vehicles that use the electric motors for this function.

One raging bull-shaped elephant in the room is engine noise. While not quite as sacred as its V12s, the Lamborghini V10 has one of the most recognisable engine notes in the automotive world, both on and off the circuit. Ensuring that a powerplant with a lower displacement, fewer cylinders and forced induction could evoke at least some of the same emotions for the driver – and everyone else within a two-mile radius – was certainly not an easy task. Thankfully, our time with a pre-production prototype suggests the engineers have done a fine job here.

A hybrid starter-generator start-up sound akin to that of a McLaren P1 is somewhat unsettling coming from a Lamborghini, but meticulous tuning of exhaust harmonics has given the new V8 its own unique sonic signature at higher revs, the L411 reaching its 10,000rpm crescendo with incredible speed, in a similar fashion to a sports bike. Our early taste was limited to the confines of a Sant'Agata workshop, but while we're yet to hear it under load and out in the wild, first impressions are positive.

Tuning of the intake and turbo sounds all contribute to the overall effect, with a physical tube pumping real noise into the cabin as opposed to the artificial kind relayed through the speakers in some modern supercars. The engineers remained coy as to why, but our time on a sound development simulator revealed that the engine note changes dramatically from 4500rpm, making reaching for the red line thoroughly addictive.

Even the Temerario's engine mounts were chosen with cabin sound and sensations in mind. Thanks in part to the off-balance nature of a flat-plane-crank engine, occupants are said to feel a noticeable increase in vibration and sound the

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**'THE ENGINE NOTE CHANGES DRAMATICALLY FROM
 4500RPM, MAKING REACHING FOR THE RED LINE
 THOROUGHLY ADDICTIVE'**



Opposite and below: hexagon design details abound inside and out; dash blends screens with physical controls; huge attention paid to both aero and cooling

further up the tachometer they go. A physical exhaust valve and various other elements also alter the sound for occupants depending on the selected drive mode.

Speaking of drive modes, the Temerario has five. Activated via a physical rotary dial on the steering

wheel, Città is for day-to-day driving, Strada for a little more engagement and Corsa for maximum output, with Corsa Plus deactivating various electronic aids. There's also a Drift mode for the first time, with three levels of intervention allowing the driver to dial in the slip angle they'd like to achieve.

Lamborghini turned to long-standing tyre partner Bridgestone for the development of the Temerario's 255-section front and 325 rear rubber, giving buyers a wide range of options depending on their use case. What will likely be the most popular option in the UK is the Bridgestone Potenza Sport, developed with a bespoke compound for a combination of dry and wet handling, with a run-flat option available. The Potenza Race sharpens the focus drastically with a track-honed though still road-legal compound designed specifically for grip in optimum conditions. There's even a Blizzak LM005 winter tyre for use in colder climates.

Styling-wise, the Temerario falls squarely in line with the

design language established by the Revuelto. With concise, aggressive lines, short overhangs and the same hexagonal themes we've seen in Lamborghinis since the 1960s, there's no mistaking it for a product from any other maker.

These design elements are also far from purely aesthetic, with the deep rear diffuser fully functional and the openings beneath the headlights and hexagonal DRLs featuring true pass-throughs for aero and brake cooling purposes. Even the rear lights feature air outlets to improve aero efficiency, and those wild Sesto Elemento-style cutouts behind the rear tyres have an aero function, too. There are also hidden vortex generators on the underside, aero elements on the front suspension arms and NACA ducts at the rear to ensure optimum cooling and aero performance. The result is a 103 per cent increase in rear downforce compared with the Huracán Evo, rising to 158 per cent if buyers select the optional Algeggerita Pack.

Behind the staggered 20-inch front and 21-inch rear wheels (available in three designs in cast, forged and carbonfibre construction) are standard-fit carbon-ceramic brakes: at the front you'll find a monster 410mm disc, ten-piston caliper combination, with 390mm discs and four-piston calipers at the rear. The electric motors also contribute to braking effort, with regenerative braking reducing friction brake wear and handily converting some of that kinetic energy to battery charge.

Underpinning the Temerario is not a development of the







Left and below: 21-inch wheels frame vast carbon-ceramic discs with ten-piston calipers at the front; lower section of rear body is cut away, exposing tyres

Huracán's chassis but an all-new aluminium platform conceived with weight-saving and rigidity in mind. Torsional rigidity is said to have increased by 20 per cent, and there is also an increase in interior space: headroom, legroom and visibility are said to have improved by 34mm, 46mm and 4.8 degrees respectively.

Also, unlike some 900bhp+ plug-in hybrid V8 supercars from northern Italy, there's room for passengers and luggage simultaneously, with space behind the seats and 112 litres of stowage available in the front, too.


Finished in carbonfibre, leather and Corsatex microfibre, the cabin has been designed around a low seating position, with a combination of digital displays and satisfyingly physical buttons, switches and knobs bringing it in line with big brother Revuelto; you'll be pleased to know that the trademark flip-up start/stop button guard also makes a reappearance. The driver is fed all vital driving information via a 12.3-inch digital instrument cluster, with an 8.4-inch display mounted in the centre console for infotainment functions, while the passenger gets their own, slim 9.1-inch display.

The Temerario also comes with the Lamborghini Vision Unit system to combine feeds from three high-definition cameras for everything from everyday dash cam recording to track telemetry. Two cameras are integrated into the roof liner to capture the occupants and the view out of the windscreen, with the third on the firewall to record driver inputs.

The aforementioned Allegerita ('lightweight') Package is a first for a new Lamborghini, bringing more focus to the model from the get-go for those who want it. Combine

the package with lightweight carbonfibre interior options and overall weight is reduced by over 25kg. An uprated carbonfibre splitter, rear bonnet and wing mounting panel all help to reduce weight and improve aero, with new side-skirts and recycled carbonfibre underbody panels also part of the package. Carbonfibre door panels and sports seats, a lightened Gorilla Glass rear window and even fixed polycarbonate side windows are available too. Separately, the rear diffuser, rear-view mirror and intake covers can also be had in carbonfibre to reduce weight by a further 1.82kg.

As with all current Lamborghinis, buyers aren't limited to the standard colour palette and upholstery options that can be found in the online configurator, with the company's Ad Personam programme opening the door to over 400 exterior colours and liveries. Meanwhile, the Temerario has been launched with two of its own dedicated colours: Blu Marinus (as pictured here) and Verde Mercurius.

The switch to electrification raised eyebrows at the launch of the Revuelto, but subsequent drives have proved that Lamborghini can make the hybrid formula work. While the addition of forced induction makes the Temerario arguably a tougher sell, it has many of the same ingredients. When deliveries start in the second half of 2025, Ferrari's 296 GTB will certainly have a battle on its hands. We can't wait to see which will come out on top. 

Lamborghini Temerario

Engine V8, 3995cc, twin-turbo, plus three electric motors

Power 907bhp (ICE plus electric) **Torque** 538lb ft @ 4000-7000rpm (ICE)

Weight 1690kg (dry) **Power-to-weight** 545bhp/ton (dry)

0-62mph 2.7sec **Top speed** 213mph **Basic price** c£260,000 (est)

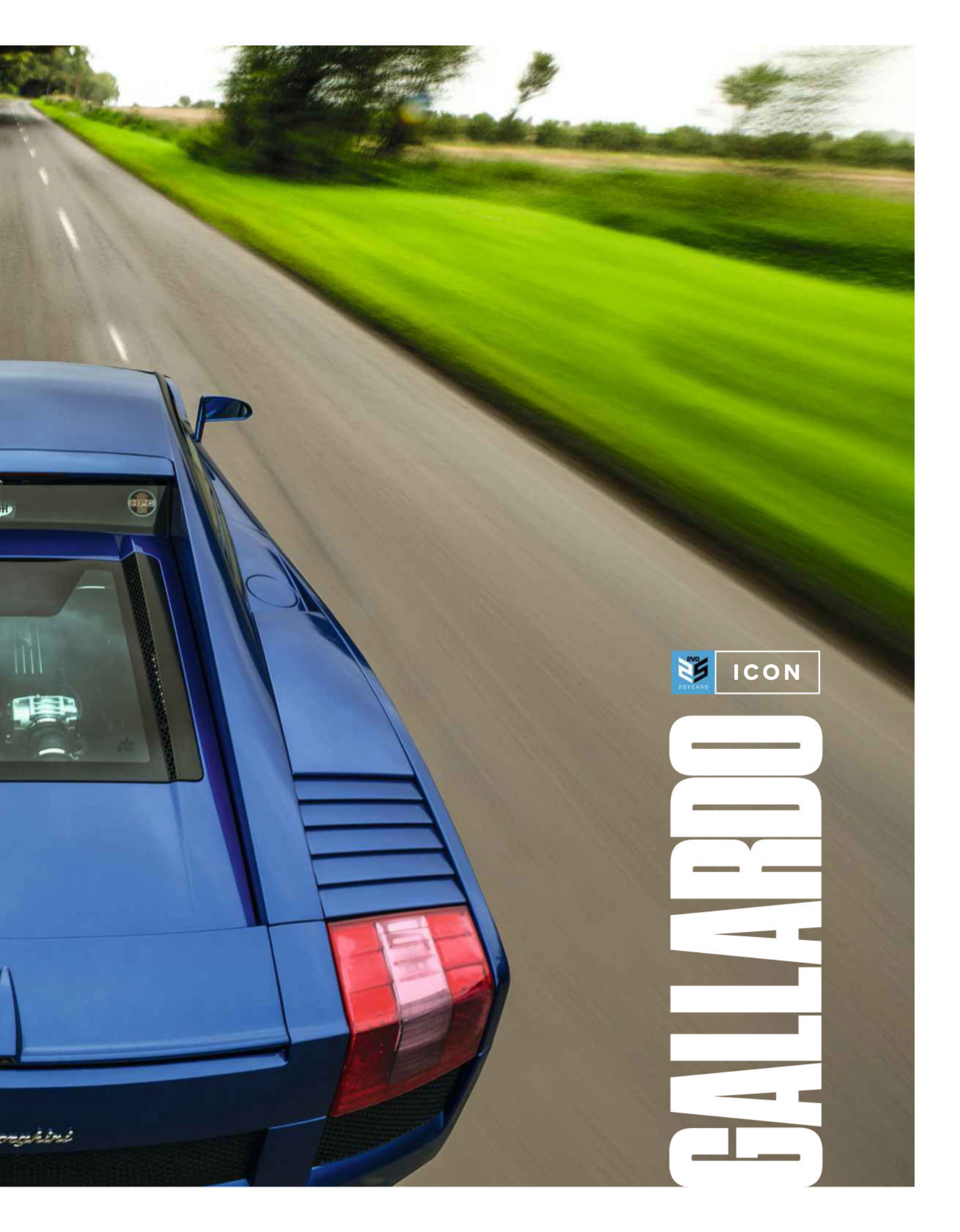


LAMBORGHINI

Granddaddy to the Temerario - and the car that transformed Lamborghini - was the brilliant, V10-engined Gallardo. We get reacquainted with a Lambo legend

by RICHARD MEADEN
PHOTOGRAPHY by
ASTON PARROTT





ICON

GALLARDO

**‘THE GALLARDO
TOUNCED
FERRARI’S 360
MODENA FOR RAW
FIREPOWER’**



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AN IT REALLY BE 21 YEARS SINCE Lamborghini introduced the Gallardo? Looking at this fabulous Caelum Blue example, it's hard to believe. With its successor – the Huracán – now replaced by the V8 hybrid Temerario, what better excuse to revisit the car that transformed Lamborghini's fortunes and took the fight to Ferrari?

Prior to the Gallardo's launch in 2003, there hadn't been a new entry-level model since the Jalpa in 1982.

Given that the Jalpa was a quick-and-dirty rehash of the 1976 Silhouette, which was itself a restyled two-seater evolution of the 2+2 Urraco launched in 1972, it's fair to say Sant'Agata's track record for smaller supercars was one of quirky, eccentric and somewhat makeshift efforts.

Still, it says a lot for the troubled state of the company in the 1980s that the Jalpa was credited with helping to turn its fortunes around, despite selling just 410 units in the space of six years. For context, when the Jalpa went out of production in 1988, Lamborghini was still building the Countach and LM002, cars that seem embedded in the company's formative days. Both those behemoths would soon cease production, leaving Lamborghini surviving on sales of its then-new flagship, the Diablo, from 1990 all the way to 2001.

Given that Audi acquired the keys to Ferruccio's kingdom in 1998 it seems equally surprising that the gnarly old Diablo was still haunting the production halls some three years into Ingolstadt's tenure. Only when the venerable flagship was succeeded by the Murciélago did Lamborghini's trajectory begin to point skywards. The Gallardo was launched a scant 18 months later, lighting an afterburner that powered the marque's relentless rise.

Fast-forward to 2013 and, when the Gallardo's decade-long production run came to an end, some 14,022 cars had been built in 32 different variants. Put another way, Gallardos accounted for approximately 50 per cent of all Lamborghinis built since the company began in 1963.

I can still remember the excitement now. With new ownership, a new millennium and two brand new model lines, Lamborghini was re-energised and clearly gunning for Ferrari. The Gallardo's timing couldn't have been better; the first attainable Lamborghini in a generation, hitting showrooms at a time when low interest rates and cheap car finance fuelled a supercar boom.

Now as then, the Gallardo's specification is mouth-watering. A compact (shorter than a contemporary 911!), all-wheel-drive, mid-engined supercar, built around a new aluminium structure and powered by a bespoke 5-litre naturally aspirated V10 engine. Good for the best part of 500bhp and available with a choice of traditional gated stick-shift manual or single-clutch paddleshift, the Gallardo trounced Ferrari's 360 Modena for raw firepower



Left and above: Gallardo combined exotic supercar architecture with Audi useability (and switchgear). Open-gate manual shift is still the one to have

with an extra two cylinders and 1.4 litres of swept volume for a power and torque advantage of 100bhp and 100lb ft.

It looked better too, thanks to the immaculate efforts of designer Luc Donckerwolke. In his pomp having recently penned the Murciélago, he took Fabrizio Giugiaro's excellent Cala concept and contemporised it to striking effect. Tight, chiselled and uncorrupted by protruding wings or spoilers, the Gallardo's modern, minimalist form was a bold departure from Lambo's unmistakable Gandini-informed tropes. It has always been a stunning-looking car, but there's no question an early Gallardo now qualifies as a definitive piece of design and one of the all-time great Lamborghinis.

Let's talk about the doors. For a while prior to the Gallardo's reveal I remember wondering if it might have a variation on Lambo's trademark upswept scissors, but in keeping with its mission for added useability the doors were conventional. They open onto a spacious cockpit that's surprisingly free from look-at-me drama. There's obvious Audi-sourced switchgear and instrumentation, but the deep dash and almost flat windscreen place you well back from the scuttle in time-honoured supercar fashion. The architecture is dramatic, but the fixtures and fittings are restrained. It's a timeless combination.

It's worth digressing at this point to tell you a little more about this particular car. With more than 120,000 miles on the odometer, it must be one of the highest mileage Gallardos around. Prior to its purchase by the present owner six or so years ago it had covered a little over 40,000 miles, but daily use soon piled on another 65,000.

It is now well-known in Lambo circles that early Gallardos had a habit of ingesting their catalytic converters, which disintegrated with age. If you're unlucky the resulting ceramic fragments can be large enough to cause a catastrophic engine failure. Fortunately for 4321 GO's owner, the cats gradually crumbled into smaller sand-like granules, which slowly but steadily scored the cylinder bores until excessive oil consumption led him to have a voluntary engine rebuild at 106,000 miles.

Entrusted to marque specialist Ricky Elder at REPerformance, 4321 GO was given what is described as OE+ specification. That's to say lightweight Carillo pistons – lighter and roughly a third of the price of the £14,000 Lamborghini charge for a set of ten OE items! – attached to standard rods, plus titanium valvegear, meticulously ported heads to Elder's secret recipe and a gentle remap to compensate for running without catalysts.

While the car was in bits, the gearbox was also inspected, with the decision taken to rebuild it at the same time. The overall result is by far the sweetest and most impressive early Gallardo I've ever driven. The quickest, too. When back-to-backed with a recently serviced standard Gen1 5.2-litre R8 V10 on Elder's MAHA dyno, it was found to produce 50bhp more than the Audi. That must have sweetened the £20k bill a little.

For a car that has covered such high mileage, it has worn extremely well. The interior shows signs of patination, but still looks in very good nick for its age. The seats are comfortable with plenty of support left in the cushioning foam, and there's decent headroom (at least for me, though that isn't saying much), so you can quickly get settled behind the wheel.



**‘AN EARLY
GALLARDO NOW
QUALIFIES AS A
DEFINITIVE PIECE
OF DESIGN’**





Adding to this car's appeal is the manual transmission. The e-gear transmission is only passable these days, plus it has a habit of eating clutches. With an extra pedal in the footwell you notice the offset pedals a little more than perhaps you would in a two-pedal set-up, but the stick-shift 'box was always a good 'un and this one is a peach thanks to Elder's rebuild.

The Gallardo's in-house-developed 5-litre V10 has always been a blockbuster, but reacquaintance serves to remind just how impressive and characterful this original 'pre-LP' spec motor is. There's a bit more fire in its belly somehow, with a grittier quality compared with the creamier Audi-developed 5.2-litre found in later models. This car's de-cat and switch to a Superleggera back box certainly add to the explosive soundtrack, but there's something inherently more interesting about the 5-litre's 7-8-5-2-1-10-9-4-6-3 firing order compared with the 5.2's 1-6-5-10-2-7-3-8-4-9. Such is the weirdness of our obsession with internal combustion.

Start the Gallardo and you're immediately reminded why it was such a hit. It has far more mechanical swagger than the 360 (or indeed the F430), the yowling V10 instantly feeling and sounding larger than life even at idle. A Ferrari V8 sounds thin and brittle by comparison.

Old-school V12 Lambos had a reputation for being unwieldy beasts with excruciating control weights (a reputation not entirely deserved IMO), so effort was clearly made to ensure the Gallardo was more manageable. It certainly feels smaller and more biddable, which is welcome on the kind of roads you'd choose to enjoy a car like this.

There's meat to the controls, but the weight is well measured to balance effort against a feeling of connection. The clutch is far from the calf-busting pedal of 1970s supercar myth and legend. Likewise, the hydraulically assisted steering has satisfying treacly resistance that you just don't get in a modern EPAS system, though it could do with being fractionally quicker-witted and offer a bit more feel.

There's a general ease of operation that's very redolent of that early Millennial era. Cars like Ferrari's F355 with its new-fangled F1 paddleshift had started the move towards more useable 'baby' supercars, but it was the 360 Modena and Gallardo that made the big strides towards everyday useability, and indeed durability. That might have eroded some of the quirks and foibles possessed by their predecessors, but there's something deeply impressive about the way the Gallardo combines stimulating exoticism with temperament-free stoicism.

Our test route takes us on a cross-country blast from REP's workshops (where 4321 GO has just been serviced) to a photo location high on the Ridgeway that runs across the chalk downs of Wiltshire, Berkshire and Oxfordshire. The Gallardo thrives on these quiet country roads, threading accurately through the more confined and twisty sections and blasting along the open swoops and curves that carve their way across the undulating terrain.

You might sit a long way back, but you can place the Gallardo smack on your chosen apex, the base of the endless A-pillar giving you a handy visual reference as to where the front wheel is. The steering isn't ultra-pointy in the contemporary sense, but you still get that delicious feeling of strong grip, tight body control and agility that comes in a compact, mid-engined supercar. It's a completely absorbing process, looking further ahead to pick your line and adjust your speed as you stretch through the gears.

The pre-LP Gallardo just pre-dates the suite of switchable dynamic modes that are now commonplace, so there's very limited scope to meaningfully alter the Gallardo's character. Four-wheel drive from launch, as was Lamborghini's default with all its models back then, it relied on a viscous centre diff with no fancy active electronics: the torque split was 70 per cent rearwards in normal driving, but up to 50 per cent could be directed to the front axle in extreme conditions. The 30:70 split suggests a rear-biased handling balance, but in reality it feels more neutral than that. You have to try unreasonably hard to make the Gallardo lose grip at the rear. When it does it's not particularly happy about it, so best to play to its strengths and revel in the poise and purchase it manages to find.

There is traction control, but it's more satisfying to switch it off in the dry to avoid it nibbling away unnecessarily over bumps during hard acceleration. The suspension is non-switchable, but the Koni shocks passively alter their damping rate according to the frequency of vertical movements. Ride quality is pretty supple, as was the way in the passive damping days when street cars had to strike a ride and handling balance that favoured road over track.

The simple, analogue nature of the Gallardo means it's the driver who injects extra energy into the way it goes down the road. It takes a while to unlearn habits formed in newer supercars, which encourage you to constantly fiddle with settings to find an elusive sweet-spot. By contrast, once you accept the compromises Lamborghini settled upon for ride quality, body control, steering response and powertrain character, you soon find peace and satisfaction from letting the car do its thing. Of course, there are aspects of the Gallardo you would like to tweak in certain moments or on certain surfaces, but across the entirety of a day's driving there's a lot to be said for the deeper bond you form with a car that you have to take at face value and enjoy for what it is.

On proper driving roads, steadfast stability is the order of the day, the mix of all-wheel-drive traction and a handling balance that ultimately bleeds into settling understeer giving the Gallardo a very different feel to its Ferrari rivals. At times it's a little too inert, lacking the flighty agility that increasingly came to define the F430 and 458. What it lacks in more delicate, detailed feel and fleet-footed dexterity it makes up for in poise and pace, so you can carry speed and attack the road.

Left: this 120,000-mile example has stood up to the years and miles remarkably well, though it did undergo a precautionary engine rebuild and de-cat at 106,000 miles (early cars have a reputation for ingesting bits of catalyst)

**'AN EARLY
GALLARDO
HAS RAMPANT
ACCELERATION
AND MORE THAN
ENOUGH POINT-
TO-POINT SPEED'**



The harder you work it, the better the V10 gets. Given that the Gallardo is relatively small, it's easy to forget that its engine displaces 5 litres, especially as it revs so freely. It doesn't quite have the *whoop-whoop* of an LFA or Carrera GT, but the way it works to 8000rpm is never less than mighty. And while there's no doubt this car's rebuild has given it some added zip, the essence of the 'pre-LP' experience remains intact, with this fabulous combination of sharp, naturally aspirated response, big-hearted mid-range flex and ferocious top-end fireworks.

Performance-wise it might pale a little compared with today's turbocharged and turbo-hybrid supercars, but the reality is that an early Gallardo has rampant acceleration and more than enough point-to-point speed. It certainly had the legs on a Ferrari, despite a wet 1520kg kerb weight that's 130kg more than a 360 Modena's.

Torque is the key. With a peak of 376lb ft at 4250rpm, and 80 per cent of that from just 1500rpm, you can be lazy and still romp down the road. In-gear acceleration is as effortless and vivid as you'd imagine, but because the engine is vocal and keen to rev you're just as likely to blip-shift down a gear or two and wind the V10 into a frenzy when the mood takes you. Spend a day in a Gallardo and you find you're always enjoying the engine, whatever your speed, rpm or throttle opening. It'll be fascinating to see how the Temerario's 10,000rpm V8 compares, though of course the very real danger is that with 900bhp, plus the torque of twin turbos and a hybrid system, any moments of full-throttle driving will be so fleeting that

time spent in that stratospheric rev-range will be all too brief. Sometimes less really is more.

If there's one area where the Gallardo falls short it's brake feel. Specifically, the lack of initial bite at the top of the pedal. It's not so much of an issue during sustained stops, where you immediately push through the dead travel and stay in the meat of the braking effort, but it is at its most frustrating when you're on a twisty road that has you on and off the brakes. Blending smoothly in and out of the pedal can be tricky, even when you consciously try to drive around the issue. It's a real shame because the Brembo brakes (cast-iron discs with big eight-pot calipers at the front) certainly don't lack for stopping power. The abrupt tip-in tip-out response is a trait that was inherited by the Huracán. The Temerario needs to kick this habit, which might be a tall order considering the challenge of smoothly blending friction and regen braking.

Historically, Lamborghini's scissor-doored flagships have tended to hog the limelight, but the Gallardo could always hold its own. Sensational looks and a spectacular powertrain gave it the all-important Lambo wow factor, but it was the unique combination of that searing V10 engine and a newfound wieldiness and useability that ultimately transformed Lamborghini from a purveyor of rare and outlandish poster cars to a serious volume-selling supercar brand. Two decades on, the Gallardo's star quality still burns bright. ✕

Thanks to Simon Patel and Ricky Elder (reperformance.co.uk)



Lamborghini Gallardo

Engine V10, 4961cc **Power** 493bhp @ 8000rpm

Torque 376lb ft @ 4250rpm **Weight** 1520kg

Power-to-weight 330bhp/ton **Tyres as tested** Michelin Pilot Sport 4 S

0-62mph 4.2sec **Top speed** 192mph **Price new** £120,000

(£213,000 in today's money) **Value today** c£75,000

evo rating ★★★★★



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BEAST



The Vanquish name is back for Aston Martin's latest series-production flagship, with a stunning new look and simply brutal performance from an 824bhp twin-turbo V12

SOMETIMES, AT THE REVEAL OF A NEW CAR, you feel like pausing the conversations about brand ethos, market positioning and design language and just saying, 'Wow, that thing looks damn cool.' The reveal of the new Vanquish was one of those moments. With the DB12 gaining more DBS-style aggression, we wondered how Aston would build a unique character into its new flagship GT, but, even sitting still, it's clear this is a different animal. Longer in wheelbase, wider in track and with more intricate detailing than the DB12, the Vanquish has all the presence of a crown-jewel Aston Martin. And that's before we get to the fact that it has a V12...

The Lawrence Stroll era of Aston Martins has seen the company shift towards a new brand ethos (yes, that is worth talking about) that brings dynamic ability to the forefront of its priorities. The DB12 was the first new model designed with this in mind, and it's very definitely a car with more bite and anger than the DB11 it replaced. Aston even created a new class for it: super tourer, or super GT. The Vanquish must be a hyper GT, then, because this is an 824bhp Ferrari 12Cilindri rival with attention lavished over its powertrain, platform and chassis to move it into a whole new realm of performance.

'The journey with what we call our new-generation sports cars started four years ago,' explains director of vehicle performance Simon Newton. 'We were looking at all the different technologies that we wanted to add to our sports car platform, to bring the cars up to class-leading levels of dynamics and performance – yet still being true Aston Martins. The DB12 and Vantage have achieved what we wanted, and the Vanquish is even more special because of the V12 powertrain.'

Clearly, double-digit cylinder counts are what buyers at this level (around £333,000, if you're asking) want these days. Ferrari has given the V12 another lease of life with the 12Cilindri, so too Lamborghini with its Revuelto. Further up the food chain there's the GMA T.50, the Bugatti Tourbillon and Aston's own Valkyrie, all of which pull in customers through the sounds and sensations that can only be delivered by an exquisite combustion engine. Fleet emissions regulations mean that production of the Vanquish will be limited to 1000 units per year, but there's a sense that Aston has been able to push more boundaries than it did with the DBS to make the new car feel like a standalone product. And there's perhaps good reason for this, because this car wasn't meant to be the new Vanquish at all. It actually started out as a bespoke commission by executive chairman Stroll, but upon seeing the design he decided it had to become the new Vanquish.

Newton describes the engine as 'literally ballistic'. It's a new-generation 5.2-litre twin-turbo unit that's



This page and right: rear treatment is all-new and a major departure from DB12 and Vantage; twin-turbo V12 another key differentiator, while cabin is strictly for two



a heavy development of what was found in the DBS, with a strengthened block and con rods, new heads, cams and turbochargers, and other changes besides. The combustion charges are now 15 per cent higher than in the DBS's engine (necessitating the stronger componentry), and the result is Aston's most powerful series-production V12 yet – one with a higher specific output than even the Valkyrie's Cosworth-developed motor. Peak power of 824bhp comes in at 6500rpm, with maximum torque of 738lb ft spread between 2500 and 5000rpm. That gives a 0-62mph time of 3.3sec and a top speed of 214mph.

Drivability has been a key focus as well as raw power, so the new turbos have less inertia, reducing lag and allowing them to spin 15 per cent faster. Response is further improved by what Aston calls a 'Boost Reserve' function. Effectively, the system builds up excess boost pressure under part throttle by controlling the throttle flap position

and turbo wastegate, delivering a more immediate hit when you get hard on the power. It's a clean engine too (relatively speaking, of course), with 30 per cent more efficiency in the combustion chamber and more stable spark propagation helping it to reach Euro 6 emissions standards.

Noise regulations are a trickier subject. The Vanquish meets the current standards and should be compliant into the future, but the muffling effect of gas particulate filters means that Aston has been forced to channel some synthesised engine noise through the speakers. The noise is at least designed to sound as authentic as possible and complements the natural tunes from the intake and the exhaust, which is available in either stainless steel or titanium (the latter gives a racier, higher-pitched note and saves 10.5kg).

The engine is linked to a rear-mounted eight-speed ZF automatic gearbox via a carbon prop shaft. In the DBS,



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**‘THERE’S ABSOLUTELY
NO MISTAKING THE
VANQUISH FOR ANOTHER
ASTON MARTIN’**

the rear differential's durability was a limiting factor for the maximum torque output, but the Vanquish has gained a stronger final drive and fine-tuned torque mapping to eliminate the issue. The diff itself is electronically controlled and can go from fully open to locked in 135 milliseconds – at low speeds it's more open to aid agility, and it tightens up at higher speeds to make the car more stable. Also aiding stability and turn-in is the new 'Corner Braking 2.0' set-up, which uses the Vanquish's dynamic control systems to fine-tune the car's balance when trail-braking into a corner.

Compared with the DBS, the Vanquish has much tighter integration between its chassis systems, with the e-diff linked up to the ESP system and adaptive Bilstein DTX dampers. The electronics are hard to get your head around, with an array of systems such as Brake Slip Control, Integrated Vehicle Control, Positive Torque Control and Integrated Vehicle Dynamics Estimation, but

Aston says that they've been designed to work seamlessly in the background to massage more performance and predictability from the car, rather than guiding you with a firm grip. By measuring the car's attitude using a six-axis accelerometer as well as wheel speed, steering and pedal position sensors, the systems can estimate the grip levels at the tyres and make fine adjustments in the background, supposedly without disturbing your inputs.

As a driver, you only need to bother with three drive modes – GT, Sport and Sport+ – and four ESP settings: On, Wet, Track and Off. GT is a do-it-all setting with the lightest steering efforts and most relaxed powertrain calibration and damping rates, with Sport and Sport+ ramping these up. The e-diff and ESP calibrations change as you switch through the modes, too, and there's an Individual setting to mix and match as you prefer. The ESP, meanwhile, has been calibrated to improve both





Left and below: panoramic sunroof makes for a light and airy interior; Aston's own HMI includes digital dial pack; carbon-ceramic brakes are standard equipment

safety and performance – Aston says that even professional drivers are quicker when using Wet mode in the rain.

On top of all this there's adaptive traction control, which allows you to determine the level of wheelspin and rate of oversteer. In the Vantage we found this system to be intuitive and natural-feeling in its subtle catching of slides. What you won't find in the Vanquish's armoury of chassis tech is rear-wheel steering. 'It's a technology that we have evaluated at the start of development and along the way, but we're trying to achieve a direct driver-seat-to-rear-contact-patch connection,' says

Newton. 'In our experience, rear-steering dilutes that slightly. We didn't want the weight penalty, and after getting the car set up right in the first place, there wasn't a need to add it.'

Although these chassis electronics have been designed to make the Vanquish more friendly, it should still have the wild nature that made the DBS so addictive. 'Stepping out of a DBS 770 Ultimate and into this, you'll notice that this is much faster, which is ridiculous because the 770 is very fast,' says Newton. 'The damping is more sophisticated and the Vanquish has more bandwidth, and it's more linear in the way it responds. The old car might have been more excitable at all speeds whereas this is more secure at high speed, but free to yaw at low speed.'

Aston's bonded aluminium structure (as used in the Vantage and DB12) has been adapted for use in the Vanquish, with an 80mm longer wheelbase and extensive strengthening. There's a stiffer engine cross-brace, new undertrays and a revised front cross member, and the chassis is more rigid between the rear suspension towers. The result is a massive 75 per cent increase in lateral stiffness compared with the 770 Ultimate, providing a stronger base from which to tune the new dampers. The steering column is fixed by non-isolated mounts for a more direct feel (as in the last-of-the-line DBS), and the stiffness of the suspension bushes has been optimised to filter out more road harshness without sacrificing precision.

The fine tuning extends to the tyres too: Pirelli P Zeros with a unique compound and construction for the Vanquish. The Vantage and DB12 use Michelins, but Newton says the Pirellis suit the character of the Vanquish better. 'We like the traction from these tyres, and they have a nice amount of inherent damping in the sidewall. They also have an efficient noise reduction system which suits this car.' There's plenty of rubber on the ground with 275-width fronts and 325 rears, wrapped around 21-inch forged alloys (lighter than those fitted to the DBS). The standard carbon-ceramic brakes comprise 410mm discs at the front and 360mm items at the back, saving 27kg in unsprung mass compared with a cast-iron set-up.

All this is wrapped up in a body that's rippling with muscle. The Vanquish has real presence, partly because of its size (at 4.85m long it only just fits on the turntable inside the studio at Aston HQ) but mostly because



there's so much aggression in its proportions. The closer you look, the more intricacies you notice, from the concave front grille that gives a sharknose-style side profile, to the tight folds of carbonfibre that make up the bonnet vents. Move around to the rear and it's radically different to the DB12, the sawn-off Kamm tail featuring a carbonfibre shield panel flanked by a line of blade-like LEDs for the tail lights. They look a little strange up close, almost like a temporary solution from an early-series prototype, but there's absolutely no mistaking the Vanquish for another Aston Martin, which hasn't always been the case with the company's V12 flagships.

'One of the wonderful things about designing this car is the fact that this is the only one with a V12 engine,' says Aston's design director Miles Nurnberger. 'It's allowed us to build a unique product in a way that we perhaps couldn't with the DBS. In some ways, you could say that the DBS was a variant of the DB11. I wouldn't necessarily call this a new design language, but it's a really strong progression that we've had the opportunity to create with an all-new exterior.'

Every body panel aside from the front and rear bumpers is made from carbonfibre, which not only saves weight (the Vanquish comes in at 1774kg without fluids) but allows for more complex shapes than conventional steel pressings. Despite being the fastest series-production Aston ever, the Vanquish isn't a downforce monster, but its bodywork has been formed to reduce lift and stabilise the car at speed. A full-width carbon rear diffuser contributes to this, as does the lip spoiler integrated into the bootlid. Cooling has been improved over the 770 Ultimate, too, with the new grille providing a 13 per cent larger surface area to feed more air to the V12, and outer vents in the bumper directing flow towards the front arches to cool the brakes.

Despite its extra length, the Vanquish is a '2+0' (a two-seater to you and me), doing away with the DB12's emergency rear seats in favour of an area to store fitted luggage. Everything inside is beautifully crafted and, as with the DB12 and Vantage, it feels like Aston has agonised over the details to a much greater extent than it did with the previous generation cars. Even the cup holders are leather-lined.



There are obvious elements taken from the DB12, but with a lower centre console and a panoramic glass roof (a first for a V12 Aston – a carbon roof is optional) the Vanquish has a more open and airy feel from the driver's seat. The dashboard is short and slopes sharply down from the scuttle, while the windscreen has an aggressive angle of attack and you're positioned a long, long way from the nose. Judging where it stops will be guesswork, we imagine.

The HMI is Aston's own system that first appeared on the DB12, developed in-house and featuring 4G connectivity, wireless Apple CarPlay and remote smartphone connectivity via an Aston Martin app. The interface consists of a 10.25-inch digital dial pack behind the steering wheel and a dash-mounted touchscreen of the same size, but there's still an array of physical switchgear for quick access to general controls. 'It was very important for us to allow you to interact with physical buttons,' says Nurnberger. 'You can get to the temperature, volume and seat controls very quickly. There isn't a lag that will distract you from the road.'

Given this emphasis on analogue elements as well as digital, we wondered whether Aston had considered following Bugatti and giving the Vanquish an intricate physical dial pack rather than a screen. 'We did consider it,' admits Nurnberger, 'but we decided that for this car the digital solution offered what we wanted. It's something interesting we're looking at for the next generation. Three or four years ago there was a relentless need for more screens in cars, but I think a lot of people have now discovered that the grass wasn't necessarily greener in this respect.'

Order books are now open, the first examples due to reach customers in the last quarter of the year. At £333,000 the Vanquish is a chunk more expensive than the DBS was near the end of its life (and £19k more than the 770 Ultimate), but you could argue that none of its predecessors since the original Vanquish were created with this level of freedom. In its design, specification and engineering detail, it feels like the 12Cilindri rival Aston Martin wants it to be. We'll soon find out whether the driving experience backs that up. ✕



Aston Martin Vanquish

Engine V12, 5204cc, twin-turbo **Power** 824bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 738lb ft @ 2500-5000rpm **Weight** 1774kg (dry)
Power-to-weight 472bhp/ton (dry) **Tyres** Pirelli P Zero
0-62mph 3.3sec **Top speed** 214mph **Basic price** c£333,000



A silver Mini Cooper is shown from the rear left, driving on a sandy beach. The car is moving towards the ocean, which stretches to the horizon under a clear sky. The background is a vast expanse of blue water and a hazy horizon line.

by RICHARD MEADEN PHOTOGRAPHY *by* ASTON PARROTT

DANCER

You haven't seen a Mini dance like this before, but then you haven't seen a Mini with a 4-litre M Power V8 under the bonnet and rear-wheel drive. Introducing Vini...

W

HETHER IT'S A MANUFACTURER'S FLIGHT OF FANCY or a wild homebuilt special, the notion of slotting an oversized or unlikely engine into an equally unexpected host is a novelty that never fails to capture the imagination.

There have been some spectacular efforts over the years. You'll doubtless recall Renault's remarkable money-no-object V10-engined Espace F1. Likewise, BMW's bonkers McLaren F1 V12-engined X5 Le Mans. Nissan GB's one-off 350Z V6-powered Micra and Aston Martin's more recent V8 Vantage-engined Cygnet are other prime examples, while US pro drifter Ryan Tuerck's Ferrari 458-engined Toyota GT86 and Judd V10-engined Supra are iconoclastic indie outliers.

And now there's 'Vini' to add to the Engine Swap Hall of Fame. Brainchild of Powerflex boss David Power, this wild V8 Mini is the result of almost six years' hard graft and testament to the fabrication skills of Eliot Dunmore at EDM, who masterminded the build process.

'It seemed like a good idea at the time,' says Power with a smile when quizzed on what possessed him to embark on the project. Had he known it would take more than half a decade it's doubtful he would have gone through with it, but seeing Vini being unloaded from its trailer in the paddock at Anglesey's Trac Môn circuit we're very glad he did.

The thought of an R56 Mini with a 4-litre V8 stuffed beneath the bonnet is almost too far-fetched to take seriously. Especially when that bonnet is unaltered. No extra bulges. No holes. Just a slightly larger air intake. It was clearly paramount to Power and Dunmore that Vini should give as few clues as possible to the crazy powertrain shoehorned inside. The end result is an extraordinary piece of deception.

Cosmetic modifications are best described as OE+, with just enough added muscle and attitude to pull your gaze while remaining sufficiently restrained that casual observers simply see a nice, dark green Cooper S. Of

course, the clues are there if you know where to look: the fat, custom-made Braid rims, the wide-track suspension and the rear-drive stance that subtly sits the car over its haunches all send discreet signals that all is not as it seems. However, only when Vini's M Power V8 gets fired into life is the explicit message broadcast loud and clear.

Mission creep goes with the territory with projects like this, but the journey to take Vini from concept to reality was unusually arduous. It began in late-2018, with Power approaching Dunmore to build him a fast Mini to enjoy on track. Things escalated quickly when Dunmore floated the righteous notion of rear-wheel drive. Confident he could build such a car, Dunmore suggested squeezing in a flat-four Subaru engine, compact and eminently tuneable, but Power wasn't convinced. Conversation then pivoted to an S54 straight-six from the E46 M3, as it made a satisfying connection to the Mini's BMW roots and promised a more exotic multi-cylinder experience.

It would have fitted (just), but then Power and Dunmore spoke to Iain Litchfield, who egged them on further by suggesting BMW's S65 V8 might be more suitable. Once it was established that the V8 would fit like a hand in a glove the idea of a 400-plus bhp rear-drive M Powered Mini was born.

Then came Covid. Undeterred, Dunmore ploughed on in the splendid isolation of his workshop. Being two cylinders shorter meant the compact V8 actually presented fewer packaging issues than the longer in-line six. Still, Power's insistence that crucial under-bonnet elements such as the cooling system, fluid reservoirs and intake system all had to be executed with the fit, finish and smart packaging of an OE build added to the challenge.

Dunmore had already identified that Subaru Impreza front and rear subframes, suspension arms, steering rack and anti-roll bars would fit a treat. With the BMW engine,









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gearbox and Impreza Spec C limited-slip diff for the rear axle already decided, attention then turned to positioning the fuel tank – a bespoke 90-litre F1-spec unit built by ATL – routing the exhaust system, calculating the space required for wheel travel, deciding on the springs, dampers and braking packages and designing the aforementioned cooling system.

It was here that Power's long-standing connections with the UK's tuning and specialist component manufacturing industries paid dividends. As founder of the Performance Aftermarket Automotive Association (a trade body for the UK aftermarket performance industry), Power's project became something of a collective obsession, with key suppliers such as Forge Motorsport, Bilstein UK, ATL and Alcon all rolling up their sleeves to produce hardware to suit the exacting standards and unique requirements of the build.

For his part, Dunmore attacked Vini's bodysell in readiness for the transplanted powertrain and chassis hardware. The standard sills and chassis rails were kept, but the engine bay and mounts were reworked, along with the front and rear bulkheads, four bespoke strut towers and a large transmission tunnel. There's also a new, braced and insulated two-layer honeycomb floor and a complex eight-point welded-in roll-cage that brings immense rigidity and criss-crosses the whole car. It's an absolute masterpiece and testament to Dunmore's ingenuity and engineering nous.

Everywhere you look there are beautiful CNC-machined parts, neat packaging solutions and clever engineering. For example, the Forge Motorsport radiator is 55 per cent larger than the original yet attaches to the same mountings. The ITG filter that sits atop the engine flows enough air to feed eight hungry combustion chambers yet is slim enough to fit beneath the bonnet. The firewall is sheathed in reflective gold foil and the fabulous custom exhaust system and catalyst sports have a Zircotec coating. It's a proper job.

It's strange to feel intimidated at the prospect of driving a Mini, but it's impossible to second-guess what a 414bhp bhp wide-track, short-wheelbase rear-wheel-drive hatchback built from a blend of Mini, BMW and Subaru components is going to feel like. As ever, there's only one way to find out.

The answer is a somewhat discombobulating mash-up of familiar yet totally out-of-context visual, aural and tactile cues. What you walk up to very definitely roots you in all your previous experience of driving hot Minis, but once settled behind the steering wheel (complete with AIM shift lights and data display) all that goes straight out of the window. The stubby DCT selector and dinky paddleshifters prepare you for an E92 BMW M3. As does the engine, which starts with the unmistakable metallic snarl of M Power's fabulous 4-litre V8. It really is a case of love at first throttle blip.

Much of the interior is bespoke. The neat array of switches creates a race-car vibe, but the beautifully trimmed Cobra seats and unique moulded carbonfibre door cards (made by Dunmore, who taught himself how to work with carbon) bring a welcome and unexpected sense of luxury and craft to the otherwise bare-bones interior. It's a fine showcase for the collective capabilities of the UK tuning scene.

With little in the way of trim, all of Dunmore's fabrication skills are on show. If you appreciate the expertise required to cut, shape and weld metal to immaculate standards, you'll be mesmerised. With so much metal stitched together it could easily have looked like Frankenstein's monster, but no matter what nook or cranny you scrutinise, everything looks absolutely mint.

The V8 fills the cockpit with a truly magnificent noise. It's loud of course, but not race-car raw. It wouldn't be unreasonable to expect such an over-engined one-off special to resonate horribly, but there's a welcome absence of unpleasant NVH. Hats off, then, to Power's



‘IT FEELS EQUALLY HAPPY BEING HUSTLED LIKE A
RACE CAR OR PROVOKED INTO BIG, SMOKY SLIDES’



business, Powerflex, for making all the mounts and bushes for the suspension, engine and transmission.

Thanks to the DCT transmission Vini is a pussycat to operate. Just dab the brake, slot the short selector lever into D, nudge it to select M for manual mode, then pull away. The standard M3 shift-speed adjuster has been carried over, so you can dial-in sharper gearchanges. The overall shift quality isn't quite as sharp as an M3's, but there's still scope to refine the control mapping via the SYVECS programmable ECU.

Even as it stands, Vini is more than slick enough through the gears, though the Subaru Spec C diff and final drive means the gearing is shorter than you might expect. It all adds to the melting pot of sounds, feel and response you get from this unique blend of hardware. Straight-line acceleration is enough to make you catch your breath, the 1300kg Mini propelled by the high-revving V8 with addictive intensity. To fully unlock the driving experience you need to think a gear or two higher for every corner. With seven speeds there are plenty to choose from, and once you've accepted that some of the tighter corners can be taken in third or even fourth, the rewards are rich.

The soundtrack is absolute bliss. A fabulous mix of bellowing induction and musical V8 exhaust howl, it just gets better and better with rpm and load. Later, when *evo* colleague James Taylor has a few laps, I'm treated to the one thing you're denied from the driver's seat. That's to say the surreal experience of *seeing* a Mini but *hearing* a barely silenced E92 M3. The way it punches between the corners looks like speeded-up video footage, which only adds to the amusement and incredulity.

Unsurprisingly you need time to get dialled-in to how Vini drives, accepting the fact that it doesn't react to your inputs like a front-drive hot hatch. It's been years since I've driven an STI Impreza, but Vini's steering takes me right back. It's not darty, in fact the front-end is surprisingly calm on initial turn-in. Probably just as well given the broad track and short wheelbase. I'd like a fraction more feel (it was always thus in Imprezas), but Vini is amazingly stable, with plenty of grip to lean on and a faithful balance to inspire confidence.

The Alcon brakes – huge 343mm diameter discs all-round, clamped by six-piston calipers at the front and four-piston at

the rear – have more than enough stopping power. They also feature programmable Bosch Motorsport ABS, so you can hit them hard and deep into the corners if you need to. The pedal is good and firm too, thanks to Goodridge braided hoses and a rock-solid, beautifully made Tilton pedal box. In this regard Vini's race-car pedigree comes to the fore.

Our first run reveals the suspension is a bit too stiff for Anglesey's tighter corners, but once Dunmore has made some adjustments to the three-way Bilstein dampers Vini really finds its feet, powering cleanly through the twists and turns and getting increasingly playful as my steering and throttle inputs become more attuned to the car's needs.

What's really impressive is that it feels equally happy being hustled like a race car or provoked into big smoky slides. It's also fun and engaging at any stage in between, which makes it just about perfect for trackdays, which was Power's goal right from the beginning, though it is fully road-legal too.

With each run I get more confident with what Vini is going to do. Carry too much speed into a corner and settling understeer calms things down without any nasty lift-off behaviour, but judge things just right and the balance is beautifully neutral, transitioning into readily held oversteer. How much depends on whether you overcome the rear end's traction from apex to exit with increasing throttle opening, or lift just as you turn in to transfer weight onto the nose, then pick up the throttle nice and early for a long (and I mean *l-o-n-g*) drift. The novelty of doing this in a Mini never wears off. Which is more than can be said for the tread on the rear tyres...

Power is understandably coy about revealing just how much he spent realising his vision. Whatever the number is (and let's face it, we all know it's going to be a big one) he's clearly completely smitten and grins from ear-to-ear whenever he talks about Vini, drives it, or sees it being driven.

Given the propensity for projects of this nature to turn into nightmares, it's heartening to see him conquer what most would see as insurmountable engineering challenges. It takes a special kind of madness to embark on an engine swap of this magnitude. Kudos to Power and his cadre of co-conspirators for creating a Mini like no other. Vini, vidi, vici. ✕



Powerflex Mini V8

Engine V8, 3999cc Power 414bhp @ 8300rpm

Torque 295lb ft @ 3900rpm Weight 1300kg

Power-to-weight 324bhp/ton

0-62mph c4.0sec (est) Top speed c150mph

evo rating ★★★★★

THE JOY OF DRIVING

by JOHN BARKER



From mastering the everyday commute to unlocking the full potential of your performance car, our new series will help you become safer, more confident and ultimately more skilled behind the wheel

YOU READ EVO, YOU LOVE CARS, SO YOU PROBABLY LOVE DRIVING

too, recognising that it's a skill to be nurtured and developed on every drive. Sadly, many people treat driving as a chore and it's easy to see why: high levels of traffic, speed cameras ready to punish small transgressions, and new cars crammed with assistance and safety features that risk diminishing the involvement of the person behind the wheel. But there is still a great deal of *real* driving to be done on every journey, and an engaged, skilled driver will not only be safer, they will also make a positive difference and find satisfaction and enjoyment, even on busy roads and on the regular commute.

We get regular enquiries from readers fortunate to own high-performance cars who want to feel confident and safe enjoying their abilities and get more from their vehicles. Many drivers haven't had any training since they passed their test, and while we all hopefully learn through experience, every driver can benefit from driver training and from considering their driving afresh.

Most of us here at **evo** have been coached by well-known experts including Paul Ripley, John Lyon and Hugh Noblett, and that training has stuck with us. We use it every day without thinking and it has served us and the magazine well, with remarkably few 'incidents' these last 25 years.

In this new series we'll look at the fundamentals of good road driving – an approach to driving that can be applied to all journeys. Later on, we'll cover 'core' high-performance skills such as heel and toe downshifting, trail-braking and limit handling – understeer and oversteer – and we'll conclude with a look at trackday driving.

We hope this series will prove informative and encourage you to scrutinise and self-evaluate your driving and consider an advanced driving course as a great step to take.

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF GOOD ROAD DRIVING

As driving guru Paul Ripley described in our interview with him in the last issue (**evo** 325), high-performance driving isn't about being able to control a car at the limit, it's about a higher level of performance from you, the driver. All of the instructors we've worked with aim to raise your standard of driving to the level where you are confident using the performance of your car but are always aware of what the appropriate speed is for any situation. It's not so much about having a skill such as being able to hold an oversteer slide – techniques can be learned through practice – as having an approach to driving that's founded on observation, planning, anticipation and getting the mindset right.

The dream drive scenario is you and the car on a brilliant road – in tune with the car, stroking it along, reading the twists and turns to find the ideal speed, gear and line for each corner so that the car is balanced on the throttle during the corner and neatly and safely positioned on the exit. Get it all right and it's a wonderful, natural flow, making good progress with no surprises. It's controlled, safe and deeply satisfying.

However, most of our driving is in stark contrast to this – the everyday drive on busy roads, which can feel constraining and unengaging. Yet the level of skill required to drive well in these circumstances is even greater, and relies on exactly the same fundamentals: observation, planning, anticipation and attitude. No two journeys are the same and honing your skills here will raise the standard of your driving generally.

OBSERVATION, PLANNING & ANTICIPATION

Using observation, planning and anticipation you can manage the space around you and dictate and control your own drive and your own mindset. Having a good view of what's happening ahead, reading the road and seeing what traffic ahead is doing (and what's going on behind) allows you to anticipate what is going to happen and plan your driving accordingly.

Good positioning of your car on the road is essential whether you're tackling a B-road or in town traffic. In town, if you're too close to the car in front you have to brake when it brakes. Back off a couple of car lengths and you'll have a better view of what's happening ahead and have the space to determine the flow of your drive, to smooth it out. The same applies on an A- or B-road, though here you can also enhance your view with the position of your car on the road, if it's safe to do so. For instance, being closer to the centre white line approaching left-handers allows you to see further around the corner, giving earlier visual clues of hazards or oncoming traffic.

It's easy to switch off and drift along when you're on a busy A-road with a long line of traffic ahead and a near-constant stream coming the other way, with little prospect of making progress. But back off a few car lengths and you can see much further, see what is coming up on the road and what the traffic ahead is doing. You might see distant traffic lights changing to red, or the lead car indicating to turn off, and be able to ease off the throttle to maintain your gap and smooth out your progress. If it's the start of a dual carriageway coming up, you can weigh up and plan for the potential to make progress.

TELL ME ABOUT IT

Many advanced driving courses encourage you to deliver a running commentary as you drive, to say what's going on around you, what junctions and road signs you can see, to describe what you're doing, what you're going to do. You'll probably feel self-conscious but it's a valuable exercise, heightening your awareness of what's going on around you and how you're planning to respond to it. Try it on a familiar drive by stating every traffic sign you see, linking warning signs with a mirror check, then adding the road markings and what they mean. I bet within a few miles you'll spot a sign or turning you haven't noticed before.

As well as a running commentary, another way to hone your observation, planning and anticipation skills is to try to improve the fuel economy of your car. This works best if your car has a trip computer, giving you instant feedback. The challenge isn't to go as slow as you can, it's to stay with the flow of the traffic but to try not to come to a dead stop at roundabouts, traffic lights and junctions with a give way. If you can keep moving even just a little, blending in on roundabouts or anticipating the change of the lights so you're still rolling as the queue starts to pull away, you'll avoid the hit to fuel

economy. You should be fully aware of traffic behind you, of course. This skill creates an enjoyable flow to the drive too, using your throttle to manage the 'ebb and flow' of the speed you drive at, rather than constantly accelerating and braking as many tend to do.

Perhaps it would help imagining you've got a very nervous passenger with you and you're trying to make them feel totally at ease with the drive. No strong braking, no harsh acceleration, maintaining a good pace on a light throttle in a high gear, flowing gently along. There is a certain satisfaction to that. It's not the same satisfaction that you get from stringing all the corners of a great road together with the car perfectly balanced on the power, but it relies on the same level of anticipation and awareness, and a heightened degree of engagement with the process. Great observation, planning and engrossed anticipation too, and the right mindset to not get carried away.

Another training trick is to drive a great road and try to read and respond to the road without using the brakes, just managing your speed by lifting the throttle to get to corners at the correct speed, or slowing for speed limits. This delivers another enthralling and deeply satisfying aspect to driving like the experts do.

ATTITUDE

Given the levels of traffic today, it's often not possible to make as much progress as you might like, and this is the most obvious example of when your attitude matters. It's about managing your expectations and emotions. On busy roads, opportunities to overtake may be minimal, even if you're driving something with huge performance. Before setting out, accept that your journey will take as long as it takes. Traffic may thin out later on, but it may not. We're all so well connected now that we're able to let people know we might be late. If you really can't be late, set off much earlier; you'll be much more relaxed and in fine fettle mentally.

It can be frustrating driving a car with huge potential but not being able to use or feel its performance. I've been lucky enough to drive numerous supercars, but at times I've found myself having to drive them for miles in heavy traffic on great roads and not had a chance to exploit their performance. It happens. Accept it. The challenge of driving well remains – being smooth, well positioned, able to assess risks and manage opportunities – because at some point an opportunity to make progress will probably appear. Keep scanning and planning.

RIPLEY'S TOP TIP: THE RIGHT MINDSET

'One of the greatest challenges for any driver comes from the attitudinal element of their driving,' explains Paul Ripley. 'Your attitude encompasses the way you think and feel and act and react – it includes your core values and

Clockwise from right: hanging back from the car in front can give a better view ahead; Barker advocates a running commentary for drawing your attention to signs and hazards you might otherwise overlook

**'GET IT ALL
RIGHT AND IT'S
A WONDERFUL,
NATURAL FLOW,
MAKING GOOD
PROGRESS WITH
NO SURPRISES'**





Clockwise from left: urban speed limits should be 'non-negotiable'; Viper a real test of driver attitude; skills applied in traffic can work on the open road too; palm position can help guide a gearlever smoothly home

beliefs and personality traits. Basically, it's the mindset you take into your car when you drive, and as your driving skills improve, your mental control over your attitude needs to fully complement this forward progression.

'A driver's attitude significantly impacts their ability to reach peak performance. By mastering key psychological factors such as emotional control, behaviour and mental focus, drivers can achieve a higher level of skill and safety overall. We call this "The Mindset Factor". It's a powerful concept that emphasises the importance of discipline and responsible driving.

'Without it, drivers will never reach their full driving potential and may occasionally revert to challenging others on the road for irrelevant reasons, their behaviour changing from friendliness to total hostility without warning. Allowing aggression and retaliation to rule your actions is not what great driver performance is about.

'My words of wisdom? Never be the aggressor – be the peacemaker. Inject the safety into any situation you meet on the road. Safety plays a significant role in the make-up of a great high performing driver. Believe me, it deeply counts!'

ATTITUDE IN PRACTICE: THE DODGE VIPER

A Dodge Viper GTS, right-hand drive, in France. Here was a car and circumstances where driving attitude really came to the fore. The restraint required felt absurd in such a potent machine. But, as my co-driver had already proved, wanting to feel and hear the 8-litre V10 by snatching at half chances and not driving to what he could see or finessing the awkward and hefty manual shift, made for a scary, slightly out-of-control feeling.

We swapped seats, and using the car's performance only when there was the space and visibility to do so initially felt suffocating, but as the miles racked up, more and better opportunities to use the performance appeared and were taken. Driving this brutish car smoothly and using its performance and grip only when the situation allowed was ultimately very satisfying and much, much more relaxing and enjoyable for both driver and passenger (sitting on the wrong side of course!).

As Ripley says: 'Cars such as this demand total respect and you have to deliver what's necessary to manage and maintain the safety and enjoyment factors.'

CAR SYMPATHY

Before you can drive quickly, you need to be able to use your car's controls with sympathy and finesse. Allow your car to warm up thoroughly before using lots of its performance, but rather than sitting waiting for the engine to come up to temperature, set off as soon as you're able (assuming all windows are clear) because the rest of the drivetrain needs to be up to temperature too.

Steering inputs should be smooth, initial braking should be so gentle your passenger can't detect it, and in

a manual, you shouldn't need to use more than double the idle revs to pull away. Gearchanges in manuals should be seamless and you should position your hand on the gear lever to ensure that it moves across the gate positively to the next gear in a relaxed, flowing style.

In a right-hand-drive car, shifting from first to second your palm should be on the right-hand side of the gear shifter, so there's some pressure keeping the lever to the left as you pull down into second. The shifts that most need this guidance are the diagonals, second to third, fifth to fourth, etc. It might feel like overkill when you're ambling about but, as with a lot of these good habits, the quicker you drive, the more important it becomes that this is instinctive.

SPEED

On all the high-performance driving courses I've taken, there is one significant agreement: that urban speed limits are non-negotiable, be it a 20, 30 or 40mph limit. Speeding in town is high risk, especially for pedestrians and cyclists, and there's virtually no practical benefit; briefly hitting, say, 40 in a 30 zone will shave hardly any time from your journey. What are you going to do with those two seconds you saved?

However, the energy of your car travelling 10mph faster, and the extended stopping distance, makes you a greater hazard to more vulnerable road users. Develop the discipline to stay legal and more in control and be safer as a result. After a while, slowing for town limits is as instinctive as pulling on a seat belt. Speed should always be appropriate, though. Sometimes even 20 in a 30 is too high; in a bustling high street, for instance. Never consider the posted limit as a target speed – it's just the maximum speed allowed. This is about sensibility and discipline and both are fully necessary if you want to improve your driving, mindset and skill set.

A friend runs speed awareness courses that people can take instead of getting points on their licence. She always asks them why they were speeding. Most say because they were late. Her response is: 'If you caused an accident because you were speeding and killed someone, how would you feel about calling the family of the deceased and saying: "I'm sorry your relative is dead, I was late for a meeting about xyz?"'

In short, speeding in town is simply not worth the risk and not what enhancing driver performance is about either. ✕

Next month: Road craft part 2: cornering and positioning.



ABOUT PAUL RIPLEY

Paul is a major force in the world of high-performance driving, sharing his unique expertise through driver coaching, media appearances, talks, and now his invaluable assistance with this **evo** series. For more information visit www.drivingmasters.uk or email paul.ripley@drivingmasters.uk



by JAMES TAYLOR
PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

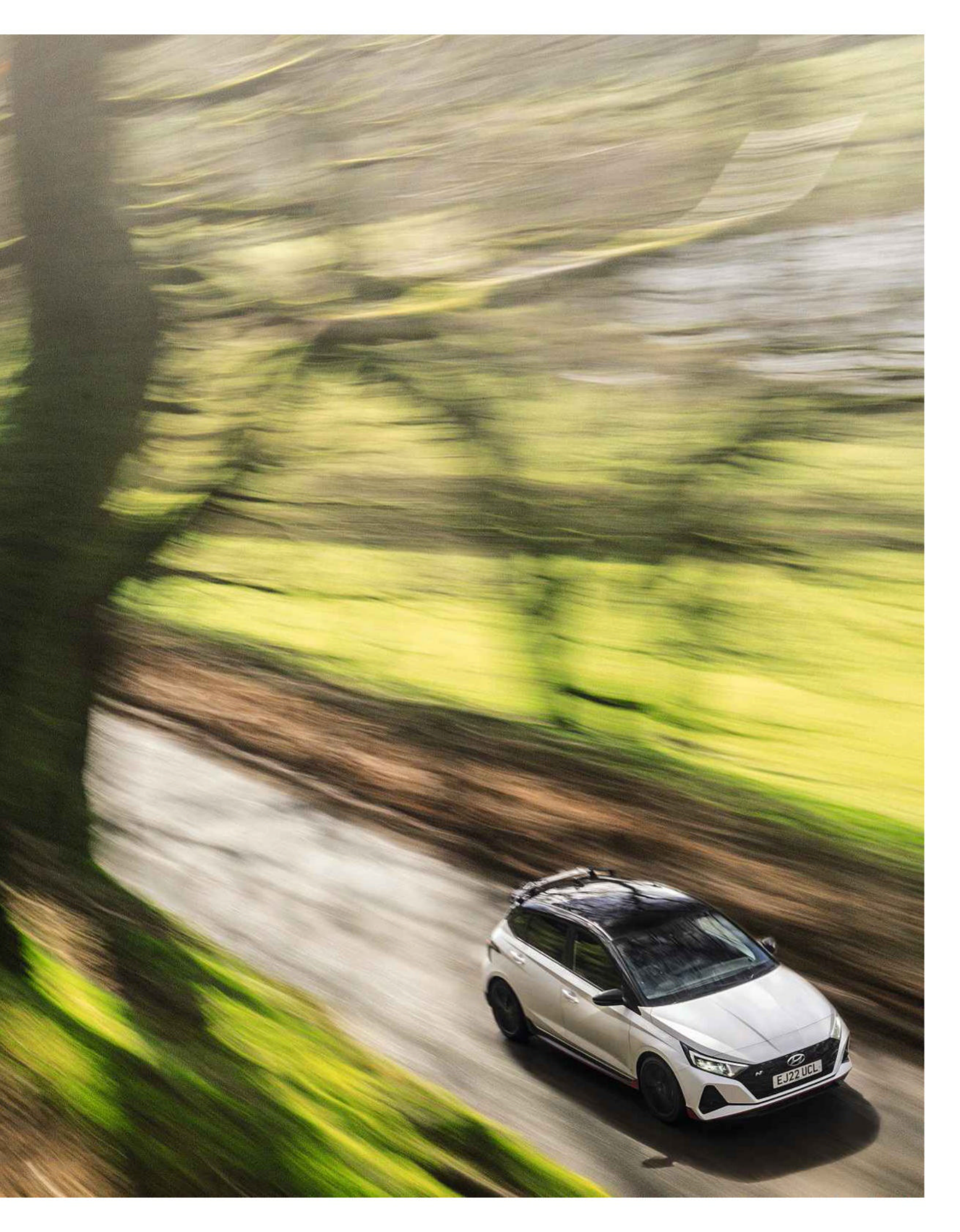
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The switch to electric power means an early exit for Hyundai N's

A N D

brilliant ICE hot hatch duo. We go for a farewell drive in the i20 N

D R Y



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E'RE IN MID-WALES, BUT I'M THINKING ABOUT Western Australia. And not only because it's tipping it down. A couple of years ago on holiday in Cottesloe, Perth, I was in a car travelling down a seafront street at sunset and unexpectedly found myself in the middle of a convoy of N-model Hyundais: i20 N, i30 N, Kona N and Elantra N (sold as the i30 N Sedan down under, and not sold at all in the UK). They were emerging from a park, where an N owners' meet was clearly in full swing, with plenty of other cars and their keepers chatting under the dusk sky.

It was a slightly incongruous scene, not because it was on the other side of the world – Australia has a healthy appetite for hot hatches – but because before 2012 the N brand simply didn't exist. And before 2017, when its first production model, the i30 N, went on sale in Europe, it was in few car enthusiasts' consciousness. In a few short years, Hyundai N has accomplished a launch-control-worthy 0-60 in terms of brand awareness: thanks largely to the stellar i30 N and i20 N hot hatches, N cars have become cult-hero modern classics within their own lifetime. And the halo effect has been transformative for Hyundai's wider image, too. This most beige of brands was suddenly a maker of all-time-great affordable performance cars (and it's been able to leverage that appeal with more profitable N Line trim levels for its mainstream models, too).

Now it's starting again – not from square one, but by turning the page to a hefty new chapter. In the past few months, petrol-powered N cars have ended sales in Europe as the N department pivots to performance EVs, the first of which being the well-received Hyundai Ioniq 5 N.

To mark the changing of the guard, and take stock of Hyundai's brief but bright stint as a master of the established hot hatch universe, we're taking the i20 N on a well-earned adventure. And on these roads it's hard to shake the feeling

it's been cut down in its prime. It feels as brilliant as ever, alive with an infectious sense of enthusiasm. Front-end grip is so keen it feels like the Pirellis' compound is laced with mustard. The manual gearbox is joyously swift and slick. And like a few classic small hot hatches, it's ever-eager to waggle its inside rear wheel in the air.

The limited-slip differential – standard-fit on UK-spec i20 Ns – hooks up nicely but there's impressively little torque-steer. The i20 N's tail can be quite mobile if you want it to be – particularly on track – but on the road, even in these conditions where the wipers are struggling to keep up with the rain, it's largely stable and safe but always a giggle. Maybe it's the psychological link with Hyundai's vaguely i20-based WRC cars, but the i20 N feels like a rally car on these winding Welsh lanes, gravel rattling in the arches and one-corner, one-turn, no-correction steering inputs.

Mind you, it's not *quite* one-corner, one-turn because you frequently find yourself fighting against bumps in the road: the i20 N's MacPherson-front, torsion-beam-rear suspension (with stiffening measures versus a standard i20, to help the N change direction more eagerly) is a little on the unyielding side and it doesn't breathe with the road like some hot hatches. Unlike its bigger, adaptively damped i30 N brother, it's on passive dampers (the better to keep the i20 N affordable) but they *feel* like they get firmer as you ramp through the driving modes, as the steering becomes heavier and transmits more jolts through your arms.

Ah yes, the modes: an N car hallmark. As well as the usual Eco, Normal and Sport, there's a further, more aggressive N Mode and an N Custom mode where you can pick 'n' mix settings for steering weight, engine map, stability control level and exhaust rowdiness. All are easily toggled by quick-flick shortcut buttons on the steering wheel (you can also easily toggle automatic rev-matching at a single button-press) then you preset your favourite combo. Sound familiar? A little like modern-era BMW M cars, in fact.

No coincidence, of course. Shortly after the N subsection of the company had been created, Hyundai poached engineer and manager Albert Biermann from BMW, where he had spent 31 years, including in a pivotal role as chief engineer at BMW M division. It was Biermann who suggested that 'N', which had been chosen for the department's name because it stood for Namyang, Hyundai's R&D centre in Korea, should also stand for Nürburgring. 'I suggested we combine it with Nürburgring because nobody [outside of the company] knows Namyang!' he told me at the 2018 Nürburgring 24 Hour race (in which Hyundai was fielding a two-car i30 team in the TCR class – it would go on to win the WTCR World Touring Car Cup that year). 'And we make a lot of big development decisions here, on the back-roads and on the track,' he added. 'We have tons of wind tunnel data, but final decisions are made here – in corners where you need a big heart, the car must feel planted.' N engineers (try saying that in a hurry) have competed in the N24 race in development versions of the road cars, too, so the circuit really has played a key role in N cars' creation.

The N section of Hyundai isn't officially called N 'division' – one stop in the alphabet from

Left and right: i20 N is remarkable for combining old-school hot hatch levels of fun and engagement with very modern levels of equipment, including multiple driving modes





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**‘IT’S HARD TO
SHAKE THE
FEELING IT’S
BEEN CUT DOWN
IN ITS PRIME’**





M division – but it's hard not to refer to it as such. In 2018, Thomas Schemera, another senior BMW exec, became a further key member of N management. At the launch of the i30 N Fastback – a swoopy three-box quasi-saloon variant – Schemera described the first time he drove the i30 N hatch on which it was based. Multiple configurable modes, raucous exhaust on start-up, torso-hugging seats, purposeful driving position... he recognised Biermann's influence instantly.

The i30 N's attributes set the template for the N cars that followed. Its spicy suspension set-up, Recaro-style seats, weighty power steering and gurgling, gargling exhaust voice are all there in the i20 N too, and it uses the same software for its track-friendly stability control modes – Normal, Sport and Off. The N team were able to get involved in the base car's development earlier than with the i30, however, so they could set their requirements before the regular i20's design was frozen. They didn't have to design a whole new front axle, as they did to transform the standard i30 into the i30 N, for example.

I've been lucky enough to run both i30 N and i20 N as long-term test cars in the past, and loved them both. The i30 N even more so than the i20 N: there's something about the older, bigger car's more muscular character, the extra performance of its brawny 2-litre engine over the 1.6-litre i20 and the sense that it's a bit of a hot rod, a skunkworks-style development of a very ordinary base car into something special. But the i20 N does feel a more complete, cohesive car: you can tell N division got its mitts on the source material from the start.

It's a superb modern performance car with character to match the great small hatches, but, equally impressively, the i20 N is great at being a normal car, too. It's more refined than a small, lightweight car has any right to be (at 1190kg, its kerb weight is impressively scant by modern standards). It's genuinely comfy on a long journey – far more so than a GR Yaris, or a Fiesta ST – and roomy as well. Reasonably frugal too, averaging mid-30s mpg figures, and often close to 40, compared with the thirstier i30 N's mid-20s during my six months running both.

It's positively luxurious in terms of standard equipment: heated seats and steering wheel; parking sensors and reversing camera; *du jour* digital dials and a more user-friendly touchscreen than most – although later models such as this one have frustrating touch-sensitive surfaces in place of buttons next to the screen, meaning more eyes-off-road time than with earlier cars. Big-car kit in a supermini space.

The graphics on the instrument screen are a bit puerile – rendered carbonfibre in Sport mode, and animated fire crackling around the tachometer when you select N Mode – but this is a car with a sense of fun, and goodness knows that's not a bad thing. A host of performance data can be displayed on the main screen and the instrument panel, from throttle opening and brake pressure to individual temperatures for coolant, oil and the engine itself. The latter in particular shows it's been engineered by people who care about driving.

First time I drove an i30 N (and some earlier BMW M cars), I found the modes slightly gimmicky – sometimes it's nice to enjoy the purity of a performance car without any modes at all – but they really do bring an extra dimension to the i20 N. You can save fuel and drive around quite unobtrusively in Normal or Eco mode, yet in Sport or N it feels a dramatically more eager machine. And having those presets – stability control all-off or part-off, rev-matching on or not – toggleable straight away from the wheel; there's a lot to be said for that.

It's not a perfect car, of course. Even in the lightest of its

three weight settings, I find the power steering a little heavy for my tastes; its leaden feel actually makes the i20 N feel less nimble than it really is. And the engine feels a little leaden, too. Although the turbocharged 1.6 four has a 350-bar direct-injection pressure and a special ignition system for the i20 N, it's a little lethargic in nature: a heavy flywheel means that revs take a moment to climb and likewise to die away. Drop out of the powerband and it can take a little while to get back into the turbocharged sweet spot, and sometimes upshifts are a little slurred, like a learner driver accidentally slipping the clutch, because the revs 'hang' a little. It doesn't sound particularly inspiring either, even in the most vocal of the valved exhaust silencer's three settings.

These are the smallest of nits to pick, though. This is a truly great car, and fully deserving of *evo*'s five-star rating. And all for a fiver under £25,000. There's no hot hatch worth the name out there in that bracket now, more's the pity.

And few small hot hatches full stop: no Fiesta ST, no 208 GTi. Only the more grown-up-feeling, less exuberant VW Polo GTI remains, and the upcoming new Mini JCW. If the i20 N is where the 205 GTI dynasty ends, it's a fitting finale – but what a shame it's seemingly at a close.

Hyundai's official statement when the end of i30 N and i20 N production for Europe was announced read: 'Production of the ICE N models has ceased for the European market starting from February, in line with our commitment to offering a zero-tailpipe-emission line-up to our customers by 2035 and to operating 100 per cent carbon neutrally by 2045. Going forward in Europe, Hyundai is developing Hyundai N as a pioneer of high-performance EVs. Our customers will benefit from technological developments that will make EVs even more attractive in the future.'

The first such model, the Ioniq 5 N, is truly impressive. It combines front and rear electric motors for a 600bhp-plus total output, and in many ways makes a virtue of its powertrain; in other ways it deliberately mimics the behaviour of traditional combustion-engined performance cars, with the option to simulate the sound and response of a petrol engine and 'eight-speed' paddleshift gearbox. The point is not to fool the driver but to assist them: driving quickly in a silent, gearshift-free EV can be a disorienting, even nauseous experience. A sweep of artificial revs – even hitting a false limiter, should you wait too long to change up in manual mode – builds acceleration in what feels like a more natural crescendo. On upshifts, the system temporarily backs off the power, and on downshifts it uses regenerative braking. You can downshift using 'engine' braking to tuck into corners just as you might in an i20N.

It's even been designed to cope with long-ish stints on track (including multiple laps of the Nürburgring, something not necessarily possible in a Porsche Taycan, for example) without overheating. Not easy for an energy-hungry, 2.2-ton EV. (Yes, 2.2 tons.) With regenerative motor braking working together with the friction brakes, Hyundai says the brakes can actually last longer on track than an i30 N's.

You can't totally disguise its weight and bulk, and the



**'THIS IS A
TRULY GREAT
CAR, AND ALL
FOR A FIVER
UNDER £25K'**



Ioniq 5 N is a car that takes time to get to know properly. You need to delve into all the different modes and sub-modes (and if there were plenty of those in the i20 N, there are far, far more in the Ioniq 5 N) to get the best from it in different scenarios. But its bandwidth – from city driving to motorways to mountain passes to racetracks – is seriously impressive. We're still at the beginning of understanding its capabilities, but N division has built a genuinely engaging all-electric driver's car.

It doesn't have the same immediate grin factor as the i20 N, though, and it's a far from inexpensive car at £65,000. Compared with pricing in the mid-£20k bracket for the i20 N and low-30s for the i30 N, that's quite a climb, for admittedly quite a car. And one can imagine, given the complexity of the Ioniq 5 N, that Hyundai may not be reaping an enormous profit from each one; like earlier N cars, it functions as a halo product, after all.

Hot hatches aren't the land of milk and honey they once were for major manufacturers, as hatchback sales in general decrease and margins get tighter. The dearth of hot hatches on the market generally, and the high prices of those that remain – £50k-plus for the Civic Type R, £40k-plus for the

latest GR Yaris and a £38k starting price for the new Mk8.5 VW Golf GTI (see page 12) – are evidence of that. And tightening emissions regs have played a part in hastening the petrol-powered N cars' early exit from this market.

It's well under a decade since the i30 N's launch but it's hard to remember a time when Hyundai N's baby-blue signature colour wasn't a part of the furniture in the hot hatch market. And less than half a decade since the i20 N's introduction. This drive confirms the baby N car is a true great. Those Antipodean petrolheads in Perth knew that already. And coincidentally, on the evening I'm writing this, three 'Hyundai N Yard Meets' are being held concurrently at Caffeine & Machine's venues. From Western Australia to the West Midlands, it's truly remarkable that in a short space of time, from a standing start, an automotive sub-brand could become a cult folk favourite with global appeal. And that's all down to the quality of the cars, and the i20 N and i30 N in particular. If the next generation of electric-powered N cars are as impressive as the Ioniq 5 N, that groundswell of good feeling could well continue. But one can't help but feel a little sad that N division has had to leave the old-school hot hatch party a little early. ☒

Hyundai i20 N

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1591cc, turbo **Power** 201bhp @ 5500rpm

Torque 203lb ft @ 1750-4500rpm **Weight** 1190kg

Power-to-weight 172bhp/ton **0-62mph** 6.2sec

Top speed 143mph **Price when new** £24,995

evo rating ★★★★★



HATCHING A MODERN GREAT



RICHARD MEADEN

Editor-at-large

I LOVED THE i20 N EVEN BEFORE I DROVE IT. Small, honest, modest and developed by a talented team led by a former boss of BMW's M division, Albert Biermann, it promised to be that rarest of things, a truly affordable performance car with a real depth of capability and character.

The first time I drove an i20 N was for an **evo** group test against an ST Edition Fiesta and non-Track Pack GR Yaris. The long cross-country drive from home to the Elan Valley in mid-Wales was a perfect introduction. Weighing just 1190kg and with a little over 200bhp and 200lb ft of torque, it had just about the perfect amount of accessible performance. Combined with a sweet manual gearbox, mechanical Torsen diff and firm passive damping, it delivered a pure and simple hot hatch experience that mixed modern manners with boisterous old-school fun.

I've not driven many hot hatches that are as chuckable and playful, yet also capable of cutting clean lines and digging so hard for traction. It spoke of Hyundai's engineers being our kind of people. As you know, this stuff counts.

Despite it being a small car, the interior felt far from cramped and, unlike most of its rivals, provided a driving position that sat you low in the cockpit. Also, being a Hyundai, it was packed with a generous amount of kit, including a choice of well-pitched dynamic modes that dialled up or wound back the drivetrain according to your mood.

The demise of both the i20 N and its big brother the i30 N is a real blow. Great hot hatches don't come along very often. Especially ones we can afford. Hyundai's intriguing Ioniq 5 N Performance suggests the enthusiast-focused ethos instilled by Biermann remains, but this £65,000, 2235kg EV beast is anathema to the perky little i20 N. It's called progress, apparently.



JOHN BARKER

Editor-at-large

AFTER THE i30 N HAD IMPRESSED US SO much, expectations for the i20 N were high, but it's harder to make a great small hot hatch because you're starting with something much more humble and working to a lower target list price. The i20 N was also up against two quite different but very strong rivals in the Fiesta ST and the Mini Cooper. Oh, and it was also the road-going manifestation of Hyundai's WRC car. No pressure, then.

Every change you make to the base car costs money, so you have to spend wisely. Must-haves in this case were more performance, a reworked chassis, new alloys and some body styling to align it with the i30 N. The magic ingredient was a genius bit of engineering that elevated the i20 N beyond its rivals and which we got to experience when we were invited, pre-launch, to Hyundai's European development centre, alongside the Nürburgring, to drive a late prototype (see Driven, **evo** 280).

That magic ingredient was a mechanical limited-slip differential, the fitment of which doesn't always end well: remember the torque-steering antics of the Mk1 Focus RS? In the i20 N there were glimpses of the LSD's positive effect on the road, but it was a couple of laps of the Nürburgring GP circuit that made clear its brilliance. It hooked up so early in the turns and so smoothly and completely that it left the highly regarded i30 N for dead. You'd think you were on hot slicks. Better still, it worked so unobtrusively, with zero steering corruption, that it would prove foible-free in any road situation too. Genius.

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FAST FLEET



NEW ARRIVAL

Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio

Alfa's rebooted
supersaloon joins the
Fast Fleet, sideways

LAST TIME A GIULIA QUADRIFOGLIO JOINED THE Fast Fleet fold was in 2021. Its keeper, Adam Towler, fell for its charms so wholeheartedly that he didn't want to give it back. A few weeks into life with this Misano Blue example, I know how he felt. This is the newly updated Quadrifoglio, and it's a difficult car to dislike.

Since our last Quadrifoglio – itself a minor facelift of the 2015 original – the model has undergone a moderate update for 2024 onwards. The biggest change is a new mechanical limited-slip differential in place of the old e-diff, which had a tendency to be a little unpredictable in its response on the limit and was prone to overheating on track. Other changes include new headlights and trim, updated software for the adaptive dampers, an extra 10bhp (for a 513bhp total) and an updated instrument cluster that's now fully digital.

As before, that power comes from the remarkable 2.9-litre twin-turbo V6 and is sent to the rear wheels only.



p116 Toyota GR Yaris



p118 BMW X6 M Competition



p120 Cupra Leon Estate 310



p122 Porsche 911 Carrera GTS



Maximum torque remains at 442lb ft. The power increase was first applied to the 100th Anniversario special edition for 2023, and some of that car's other upgrades have been mapped across as part of the facelift too: the '3+3' headlight graphics for one, plus the '3D' open-weave carbonfibre trim liberally applied throughout the interior. I'm not convinced by the latter; to my eyes the old gloss-finish carbon looked smarter and the new rough-to-the-touch version looks a little unfinished (particularly as you can see where it's been cut to fit around the switchgear if you look closely). But it is a reminder that this is a car far from the ordinary, as is the lovely band of exposed carbonfibre that runs around the inside of the carbon bonnet and which is visible from the driver's seat.

In theory you can set-and-forget the new LED matrix lights to full beam at night and let them automatically adapt on the fly, but I can never quite bring myself to trust such systems and I've been keeping to manual control so far.

The new 12.3-inch TFT instrument cluster sits

inside the traditional tunnelled cowlings and includes a new Race mode layout with shift-up lights for when you're in manual mode. As before, an eight-speed automatic transmission is standard – the manual gearbox option isn't offered in the UK – and distinctive large metal blades are mounted to the steering column for paddleshift control.

The rest of the infotainment system and many of the car's functions are controlled through the central screen mid-dash, which as before is a touchscreen but can be controlled by a click-wheel behind the gear selector too. It's not the slickest or most up-to-date system, but it works well enough. Early on in the Alfa's time here, I delved into the screen's menus to disable the comfort entry/exit setting, which automatically motors the driver's seat backwards when the driver's door handle is pulled to leave the car, squashing my bag if I've placed it behind the seat. One thing I can't work out how to switch off is the ear-piercing electronic beep that's emitted

every time I lock and unlock the car, which causes anybody and everybody nearby to jump and stare at me. If you know how, please get in touch.

Performance figures are the same as previously: 0-62mph in 3.9sec and a 191mph top speed. Those are supercar-worthy numbers, let alone supersaloon, and yet it's amazing how tractable, quiet and docile the Giulia can feel when driven gently. Around town and on the motorway it's as easy and comfortable as more or less any regular saloon car. And it's equally amazing what an absolute animal it can become when let off its leash. We snuck onto Anglesey Circuit during the test of the Powerflex V8-engined Mini (see page 88) to grab the cornering shot on the previous pages and found the new diff really does work well: you can place the Giulia with far more precision than before, and it's a more intuitive car at the limit than before too.

As with all cars, the Giulia is a little more expensive post-update, its basic price now £78,195. Ours has two options, one being the Misano Blue paintwork at £700 (solid Alfa Red is the only no-



cost paint option), the other the ADAS Level 2 pack that is new for the 2024 update. Adding to the standard Lane Keep Assist, Driver Attention Alert and Active Blind Spot Assist, ADAS Level 2 includes a more sophisticated adaptive cruise control system which can also stop and pull away autonomously in traffic jams. Frankly it's a £1100 box I would happily leave unticked. The total price of our car as tested is £81,145.

The Giulia Quadrifoglio has long been listed as the top choice in the Saloons/Estates/SUVs section of *evo*'s Knowledge section, with good reason. Let's see if longer exposure to the Giulia in its new, updated form will further cement its place at the top or reveal a few more flaws. Or perhaps both – it is an Alfa, after all.

James Taylor (@JamesTaylorEVO)

Date acquired July 2024 **Total mileage** 7058
Mileage this month 901 **Costs this month** £0
mpg this month 25.7



Peugeot 208 GT

Nice long-distance abilities, shame about the stop-start

I TS 'GT' BADGING CERTAINLY DOESN'T make this 208 a grand tourer in the conventional sense, but over 1000 miles of motorway driving in the last month have well and truly put its long-distance abilities to the test. And regardless of what we've thrown at it, the Fast Fleet supermini has proven to be a trusty companion.

Sitting on cruise control for hundreds of miles on end is something the 208 is perfectly happy to do, and although it sounds rather gruff while accelerating up to motorway speeds, its 134bhp three-pot motor provides more than enough performance for the task. However, what has also become clear while covering this month's many miles is that the 208's flaws go beyond the infamously poor view of its digital dash.

On sunny days, the cabin's satin chrome and piano black trim frequently redirect the sun's glare squarely into the eyes of the driver. In my usual driving position I also find my knees to be a little cramped, interfering with steering inputs in some scenarios, while the central infotainment display is a touch too far away for comfortable operation on the move – a full-body lean towards the screen is required for accurate, quick commands.

These are quirks I've learned to live with, however, along with the way that, despite detecting the key for initial access, our 208 fails

to recognise it for engine start almost every time I enter the car. Yet on a second attempt it will always start without fail.

Less easy to overlook is how the 208 GT takes start/stop frustration to the next level. While most pure combustion-engined cars will automatically stop the engine when rolling to a halt and start it again just before you move off, the mild-hybrid 208 goes through this cycle even at a complete standstill. Foot on the brake and with no command for forward movement, the system repeatedly stops and starts the engine every 30 seconds or so, which becomes particularly tiresome given the three-cylinder's tendency to gently rock the car whenever it fires up.

The Peugeot's outstanding fuel economy is something you really can't argue with, mind. Even though its hybrid system is self-charging and requires no intervention from the user, the GT easily achieves a circa 55mpg average on a longer trip, only dropping to the mid-40s in much less efficient, shorter city runs. Coming from the Fast Fleet C63 with its all-time best of 26mpg, this is something I can appreciate.

Sam Jenkins (@evosamj)

Date acquired April 2024 **Total mileage** 2827
Mileage this month 1204 **Costs this month** £0
mpg this month 52.6



END OF TERM

Toyota GR Yaris

It had neither Circuit nor Convenience Pack, but did our basic GR Yaris prove less can be more?

S COURING THE USED CAR ADS FOR THIS end-of-term report, I failed to find a bum-basic Gen 1 GR Yaris like ours. Almost all were Circuit Pack versions, which we heartily endorse of course, having come to the conclusion early on that with its stiffer suspension, front and rear limited-slip diffs and Michelin-shod, lighter road wheels, it was the spec to have. The question I posed at the start of our five-month loan was this: would extended exposure to a non-Circuit version change our minds? No, it didn't. But perhaps the question should have been: is the base Yaris as enjoyable?

Before we took delivery in December, we had no idea that there was a third derivative of the original GR Yaris, assuming the choice was between Circuit Pack and Convenience Pack. This model is simply a 'GR Yaris' but could also be called an Inconvenience Pack, given that it lacks not only the trick chassis of the Circuit but also the

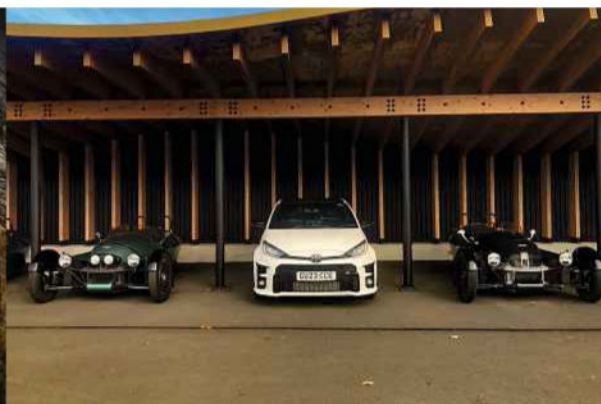
Convenience's satnav, heated seats, head-up display, parking sensors and two extra speakers for the sound system. At just £30,020, it was £2k less and £3.5k less than the Convenience and Circuit pack models respectively.

You do notice the softer suspension, though the ride is no smoother, and the turn-in is less decisive, especially in the wet, but much of the Yaris's character is intact, chiefly the lazy-sounding but wickedly punchy 257bhp turbocharged triple. It could feel a little hesitant at tickover and ran out of puff at 6000rpm, but everywhere in between it was mighty, delivering monster torque through an equally hefty six-speed manual. The thrill of deploying the 1.6-litre's performance never faded, and after an initially alarming 21.7mpg, its economy improved, settling at early- to mid-30s.

Unexpectedly, my objection to its lofty driving position – perhaps the main bugbear of the

Gen 1 GR Yaris – did fade as the miles accumulated. I knew I was totally acclimatised when I got back in the Toyota after many miles in a BBR MX-5 and didn't find myself reaching for the non-existent seat-height adjuster. And I say that after driving the Gen 2 GR Yaris, which has a much-improved driving position.

What of the dynamics? It's natural to acclimatise to the feedback and responses of a car you drive regularly, and I'm sure I adapted my driving style (and expectations) and accommodated our Yaris's softer turn-in, its most obvious difference from the Circuit pack model. Traction control could subtly disguise the lack of diffs on those occasions when there was more torque than traction, most often getting through wet roundabouts, but what about those times you find yourself on a great road and in the mood? That happened when I drove back from north Wales on some favourite roads lashed by Storm Isha. You'd



think that the twisting, turning and undulating wet roads would be the undoing of the basic Yaris, but it was brilliant. It seemed to mould itself to the road, clinging on through the corners, untroubled by standing water. It didn't miss the dips at all and rotated so willingly that I didn't miss the turn-in either. It was remarkably relaxing too, which I put down partly to the unhurried drawl of the engine and unrushed way you use the weighty gearshift.

That drive was the high spot of the loan for me. The least sophisticated Yaris had risen to the challenge and engaged and entertained just as you'd hope and expect a four-wheel-drive homologation special would. Subsequently there were moments when I craved more front-end bite, but they were few.

The mystery of the spec saying it had a 50-litre tank but only managing to squeeze in 40 even with the range in single digits was solved when we drained the tank as part of our sustainable fuel

'It didn't miss the dips at all and rotated so willingly that I didn't miss the sharper turn-in'

test (*evo* 320). It is a 50-litre tank but in a saddle shape, and Litchfield suggested that the pick up of the last 10 litres might be unreliable, and you don't want fuel starvation on full boost. It still felt a little risky, running it for miles after the range had hit zero, but I used it as a reserve a few times.

We ran the car to just over 6000 miles, meaning it needed a first service. It was little more than an oil and filter change and we entrusted this to Steven Eagell in Peterborough. It cost £315, which seemed a bit strong, but it took four hours and

included a 'Health Check': a video walk-around underneath the car that showed little wear of tyres and brakes.

In all other respects, it felt as new, the only gripes being those of all flavours of GR Yaris, namely weak wind-noise suppression and awkward seat-tilt mechanisms. What I had expected to be the key complaints, namely the elevated driving position and lack of sharpness and traction compared to the Circuit Pack model, turned out not to be issues. The bum-basic GR Yaris is still a formidable, engaging and satisfying drive.

John Barker (@evoJB)

Date acquired December 2024 **Duration of test** 5 months **Total test mileage** 5981 **Overall mpg** 32.8 **Total costs** £315 (service) **Price when new** £30,020 **Value today** £27,000

BMW X6 M Competition

The *evo* team's biggest SUV fan samples our X6. What's the verdict?

UNLIKE MANY OF MY INDUSTRY colleagues I've never had that big an issue with fast SUVs. Yes, they're unnecessarily big and often extremely vulgar, but I can't deny enjoying the absurdity of their performance. Not to mention admiring the tech they use and the lengths development engineers go to in an effort to make them stop, steer and handle like sports cars. Call it my guilty pleasure.

Despite my closet liking for the genre, even I have to admit that the X6 M Competition conforms to the worst super-SUV stereotypes. For starters it has decidedly porcine features, its bluff nose, huge nostrils and stout body totally at odds with the raked roofline. To paraphrase the late and much-missed comedian Sean Lock's best punchline, it's a challenging tank.

Quite how M's engineers feel when presented with something like this to hone into a M model is anyone's guess. It's certainly hard to credit it was worked upon by the same team that developed the M5 CS – one of the greatest supersaloons

of all time – but clearly even they can't find a cheat code to circumvent physics. Given the new M5 is famously heavier than Jupiter, the 65kg lighter (!) X6 M's lack of authentic M character and capabilities is a worry, but hopefully its limitations stem from having to contain all that mass combined with a lofty centre of gravity.

Ride quality, or rather the lack of, is the biggest bugbear. On all but the smoothest surfaces it always struggles to settle no matter which mode you try. The jiggle fades with speed, and the trade-off is impressive body control, but it bludgeons the road, shouldering through curves without finding a truly satisfying flow.

Its size makes it feel confined on most roads, too, which limits the lines you can take. On the plus side its high levels of grip and resistance to roll make it accurate enough to work with what space you have. It's a shame M couldn't give it the playful poise, rear-drive balance and hot rod character of Aston Martin's DBX707.

If the brittle ride is a disappointment, the

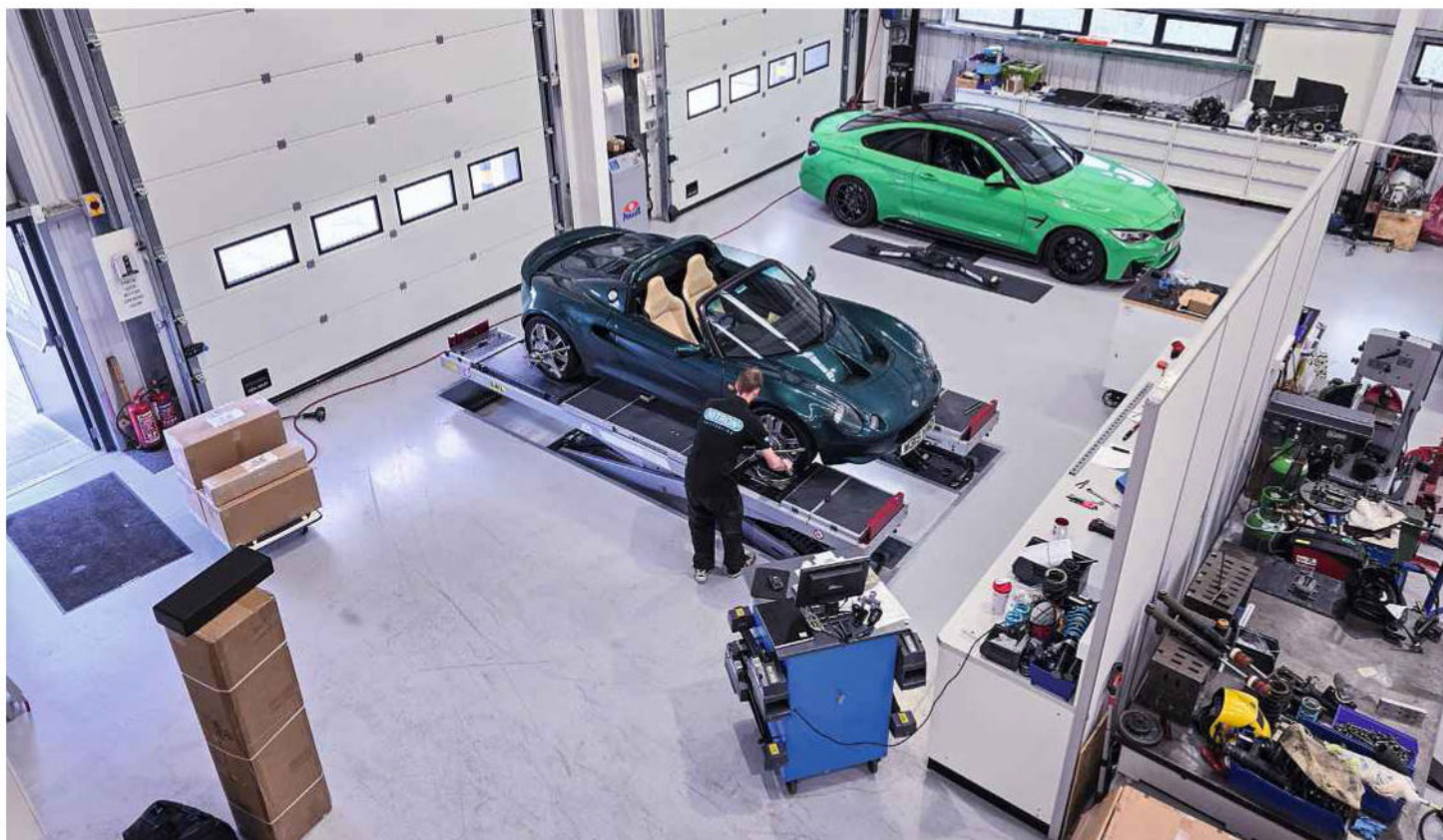
powertrain is a definite highlight. The 616bhp twin-turbo V8 engine is mighty, with big, barrel-chested shove coupled to a slick-shifting transmission that's happy to shuffle ratios with silky discretion or give punchy up and downshifts in the spicier driving modes. In this regard the X6 earns its M designation, though relentlessly sub-20mpg fuel figures make for expensive progress.

None of the above impacted UXJ's more unusual duties last month when it was pressed into service as prom wheels for one of my mates, who needed to transport his teenage daughter and her friends to their big school night. Apparently, a Lamborghini Urus is the teen promster's SUV of choice, but the big Beemer was a more than acceptable substitute.

Richard Meaden (@DickieMeaden)

Date acquired May 2024 **Total mileage** 8918
Mileage this month 801 **Costs this month** £0
mpg this month 19.1





Lotus Elise 111S

A carefully selected suspension upgrade brings newfound finesse to our Elise

I RECENTLY HAD ONE OF MY BEST drives in the Elise for a long time. It wasn't up in Scotland or the Lake District, but on a plain old Oxfordshire A-road in a steady flow of rush-hour traffic. I was on my way home from the HQ of damper specialist Nitron, after having a set of adjustable NTR40 coilovers fitted, and as soon as I had turned out of the workshop and flicked through a few roundabouts, the new suspension had made me fall even more in love with the Elise. I didn't think that would be possible.

Nitron has become synonymous with Lotus over the years, and not just in the aftermarket realm – it supplied the standard-fit dampers for some later Exige models. My first encounter with its hardware was when I drove Analogue Automotive's wonderful Elise SuperSport restomod (see *evo* 311), and I subsequently tried a set of NTR40s on my own car for a few months. It gripped much harder yet somehow gave a smoother ride in some conditions, but I missed being able to work the chassis and shift the balance around at road speeds, which the softly sprung OEM set-up allows you to do.

Combining the damping quality of the Nitrons

with more relaxed spring rates would give me exactly what I wanted, it seemed. Happily, the modularity of the Nitron system allows for exactly that. So I ordered a set of NTR40s with softer valving and similar spring rates to the Lotus-supplied Bilstein kit I was running before. Once they were ready, I took the Elise to Nitron's workshop to have them fitted, and for a close look at the engineering behind the dampers.

Suspension engineer Curtis Woodman was on hand to show me around. The scale of the place is impressive, with dedicated bays for CAD design and testing, damper dyno testing and machining equipment for prototype parts. Woodman explained that the dampers are designed entirely in-house, and built to a standard that isn't possible with OEM budget and manufacturing constraints: 'One of the most fundamental parts of a car is the shock absorber, and you can't scrimp on it. Our system is a gas-pressurised monotube shock. We have lots of different pistons to use inside the damper, but we try to stick to 40mm and 46mm; with these we can achieve exactly what we want.' The quality of the components – some of which you'll never see – is top tier, with precision machining

and anodised finishes everywhere you look.

But the true test is out on the road, and on my 111S the results are exactly what I'd hoped for. The essential character of the Elise is completely intact – the way it treads lightly across the ground, pivoting into corners with a gradual onset of roll – but there's a deeper layer of polish to the driving experience. The new dampers filter out more surface roughness than the original Bilsteins while keeping the body calmer over bumps, and there's more finesse in the way both ends of the car break away. There's more grip to lean on too, but the car still feels completely alive and readily adjustable using the throttle or brakes.

In other words it feels like my Elise with the edges smoothed over and refined, and while it isn't a cheap upgrade at £1786 plus fitting, I'm thrilled with the kit so far. Over the coming weeks I'll be experimenting with the dampers' 24 clicks of adjustment to fine-tune them further.

Yousuf Ashraf (@ashrafoncars)

Date acquired August 2021 **Total mileage** 60,763
Mileage this month 256 **Costs this month** £2236
 (coilovers and fitting) **mpg this month** 40.2



END OF TERM

Cupra Leon Estate 310 4Drive

From daily driver to trackday hero, our latest Leon was the fast estate that did it all

AFTER SEVEN HARD-WORKING MONTHS on the **evo** fleet, our Cupra Leon Estate 310 4Drive has left us. It's certainly not the first fast Leon we've run, and it likely won't be the last, but the 7000 miles we covered in this example highlighted why it's a model we keep returning to as it steadily evolves – and why this particular version might be one of the best we've lived with yet.

KY73 VNS came in VZ3 Design Edition trim – the top level Cupra offers. This cost an additional £2720 over the VZ2 spec, but added matrix LED headlights on the outside and nappa leather to the inside – in Petrol Blue in this case, although you can choose regular black if you're feeling less adventurous. Also optional on our car was the Graphene Grey metallic paint, at £930, taking the grand total up to £48,640.

I instantly warmed to the Leon's design, with its sharp lines the likes of which you don't find elsewhere in the VW Group, and those copper

accents that have become Cupra's trademark. The latter in particular might not be to all tastes, but they helped mark this car out as something away from the ordinary, emphasising its sporting nature.

Under the bonnet was – of course – a 2-litre TSI engine, here delivering a robust 306bhp and 295lb ft of torque. Coupled to a seven-speed dual-clutch transmission and four-wheel drive, it was capable of propelling the car from 0 to 62mph in just 4.9 seconds, and on to a limited top speed of 155mph.

The four-wheel-drive system and slick VAQ front differential played a crucial role in the Leon's impeccable handling. On track shoots, when we sometimes need to take car-to-car photographs at around 80mph while cornering, the Cupra's planted, predictable nature was invaluable. Its agility and stability, enhanced by adaptive dampers and speed-sensitive steering, allowed for confident and smooth driving.

The interior played a strong hand too. It wasn't the poshest out there, but it stood out for a car in its segment, feeling modern and performance-orientated, and just a bit different from the norm. Highlights included the Supersport bucket seats, which were both supportive and brilliantly comfortable, that blue leather covering the seats, door panels and dash, and the sports steering wheel, with its copper detailing and stitching and tactile, physical buttons. Less successful was the 12-inch infotainment touchscreen, which occasionally froze or shut down unexpectedly.

Although far from essential, the full-length glass sunroof was nice to have for the extra light it threw around the cabin, while the 620-litre boot (up from the hatchback's 380 litres, and extending to 1500 litres with the rear seats down) ensured this Leon was every bit as practical as you'd hope. The inclusion of a space-saver spare wheel was also very welcome, particularly when our Leon suffered a puncture and I was spared having to wait all



evening for a recovery truck.

Despite its sporty credentials, the Cupra maintained reasonable fuel economy during our test, edging towards mid-30s mpg overall, and only dipping below 30 on more enthusiastic outings with minimal steady-state running. This balance of power and efficiency proved to be one of the Leon 310's great strengths.

But this car definitely wasn't all about being practical, as deputy editor James Taylor demonstrated when he took it to one of *evo*'s Bedford Autodrome track evenings to test its circuit prowess. During its laps the car impressed with its front-end response, eager direction changes and minimal body roll. Even with all driver aids off it boasted excellent grip and traction. It handled kerbs with aplomb, too, and the 306bhp engine pulled strongly to ensure the Leon was in no danger of being embarrassed by the other cars on track. While the brakes and tyres endured a tough time, the Cupra

maintained its composure and performance throughout. Impressive stuff.

It's such widespread and well-rounded capabilities that have made the Leon 310 a favourite during its time with us; it's a car that delivers in both daily life and weekend drives. While rivals such as the Skoda Octavia Estate vRS can match or even exceed the Cupra's levels of practicality and comfort, the Spanish car offers a more engaging and rewarding driving experience. Paired with competitive pricing and extensive standard features, this makes it a compelling choice for those seeking a versatile, dynamic family car. Kudos to Cupra.

Aston Parrott (@AstonParrott)

Date acquired December 2023 **Duration of test** 7 months **Total test mileage** 6963 **Overall mpg** 33.6 **Total costs** £160 (tyre) **Price when new** £48,640 **Value today** £39,995



Audi S8

A cautious oil top-up and a brief break for our V8 saloon

THE BROWNE FAMILY PLANNER ON THE kitchen wall informed me that I would be spending a series of weekends in the S8. I won't bore you with details of each journey, but it started with Liverpool and ended with Stansted, the latter leading to some time on a poolside sunbed rather than in some M6 services (not that they're bad, especially Sandbach).

As mentioned in previous reports, KY73 OTZ has been pretty much unbeatable as a car for crunching miles, and so it continued to be throughout those busy weekends. But with its first service on the horizon, it wasn't a huge surprise when the dashboard popped up a yellow warning about low oil level while simultaneously assuring me that 'you can continue driving'.

Yeah, cheers S8, but I think I'll give you a drink all the same, mate. Manual consulted, correct oil ordered and delivered, we were good to go. However, the computer's demand for 2 litres seemed a bit extreme to say the least. It's at times like these when I find it odd not having an old-fashioned dipstick to check the situation with my own eyes; I also miss that ritual of wiping oil away with an old pair of pants from the shed...

I decided to ignore the Audi's thirsty request and added just a single litre at first, then waited for the instruments to deliver their verdict. I half expected a firm *Family Fortunes* 'duh-duh' no, but was instead told the level was now perfect. And I've not heard anything to the contrary since.

Upon returning from holiday there was the usual coating of jet fuel muck coating the S8's vast body after its own (rubbish) break in a mid-stay car park. A car wash beckoned, but not before another motorway and another slog, but there's no other car I'd rather have for the job.

Richard Browne (@washlander)

Date acquired September 2023 **Total mileage** 9866 **Mileage this month** 1145 **Costs this month** £40 (oil) **mpg this month** 24



END OF TERM

Porsche 911 Carrera GTS

Did our GTS with lightweight options prove to be the perfect recipe for a 992-generation Carrera?

I'VE BEEN VERY LUCKY TO RUN SOME pretty special long-term test cars in the past but I'm not sure I've ever run a car so many people have asked me about. Readers at **evo** trackdays, people from various car companies, other journalists: all of them wanted to know more about the Carrera GTS. 'You're running that 911 aren't you? Great spec! What's it like?'

It really was a great spec. Coupe body, manual gearbox, rear-wheel drive and the £6834 Lightweight Package: deleted rear seats, less sound insulation, thinner glass, lightweight battery and carbon bucket front seats (which can be swapped for thicker, more adjustable Comfort seats), plus altered underbody aero and rear-wheel steering too.

As for the 992.1 Carrera GTS variant itself, it's separated from lesser Carreras by more power and torque (473bhp and 420lb ft, from just three litres), bigger brakes, darker trim for the headlights and elsewhere, a specific sports exhaust and its

own bespoke suspension set-up, with some components from the 911 Turbo and a 10mm lower ride height than standard.

Top-end performance from the GTS-spec twin-turbo flat-six is mighty: this is a seriously quick car. It seems to take on a second wind at higher revs, and its on-paper 193mph top speed and 4.1sec 0-62mph time feel entirely believable. At no point did I ever feel this car needed to be any faster. It's going to be very interesting to drive its even quicker, hybrid-boosted, 534bhp replacement (see **evo** 324).

And with peak torque spread all the way from 2300 to 5000rpm, this GTS is lovely and flexible in higher gears and lower revs, too. All the more so for having a manual lever and seven speeds to conduct proceedings with. The GTS has a slightly shorter lever for a snappier shift than other manual 992 Carreras (the S and T were also offered with a manual), and though it has seven

speeds it rarely feels like one too many; more like a six-speed with a handy overdrive for the motorway.

It's not perfect, of course. I found the fixed-shell seats a bit upright at first (and you can't fold them, which reduces the practicality of the space behind them) but I soon got used to them and eventually wondered how they ever felt uncomfortable. Maybe my back just moulded itself to their shape over time but I found them brilliantly supportive on long journeys. Less comfy on a long stint is the sheer amount of road noise. The 992-gen 911 is already a fairly noisy car in that regard, and the thinner glass, deleted rear seats and binned sound deadening only make it noisier. Conversation with a passenger had to be held at the kind of volume you'd normally use talking outside on a windy day, rather than inside a car.

And the GTS-spec suspension is very, very firm. There are two modes for the adaptive dampers, and I rarely used the firmer Sport setting. The regular



mode was more than firm enough for most British roads. But when Sport was in play, it made an already responsive car feel all the more so. The GTS often settles into a kind of subtle bouncing motion on its springs when it's loaded up in a corner (a little like the Carrera T variant), before hunkering down as you get on the power. It's an unusual feeling but one I found addictive once I'd come to know the car well.

The rear-wheel steering is noticeable in operation, and can feel odd at first but, again, after some more seat-time you come to know it and enjoy the extra layer of agility it brings. This car's front-end grip is remarkable, even on the standard Pirelli P Zero tyres, which are perfectly adequate (and deal very well with standing water) but don't offer quite as much traction and lateral grip as some other tyres I've encountered. When the GTS does lose lateral grip, it regains it very quickly, and I found it one of the most

'It's one of the most involving modern 911s I've driven, short of a GT-division model'

confidence-inspiring 911s I've ever driven.

Communicative, too. I would suggest buyers should think very carefully about whether they really want to spec a 911 with the Lightweight Pack and this grade of suspension, because it does make it less comfortable, less of a GT and more hardcore, more of a sports car. But it does make it a great sports car. The first time I drove a 992-generation 911, a 2019 Carrera S, I was a bit disappointed; I thought it felt almost more like a luxury car than a sports car. But this car, in this

spec, is one of the most involving modern 911s I've driven, short of a GT-division model.

There was one moment that summed the 911 up best for me: I got home from my 45-mile commute at the end of a long day and realised I'd left my bag at the office. I'd have to go back. It was fairly dismal weather. The evening had already turned into night. I didn't mind. Because I'd get to drive the 911 some more. This sports car is surprisingly brilliant at doing the normal, everyday stuff. But never stopped being special.

To answer the question, 'What's it like?' Honestly, it's probably the best long-term I've ever run.

James Taylor (@JamesTaylorEVO)

Date acquired December 2023 **Duration of test** 6 months **Total test mileage** 6671 **Overall mpg** 26.1 **Total costs** £0 **Price when new** £139,333 **Value today** £119,800

BY STUART GALLAGHER

by SAM JENKINS

BEST BUYS

F A S T F O R D S

FROM THE CORTINA TO THE ESCORT AND THE FIESTA, Ford is responsible for some of the most popular cars in British history. But alongside these everyday machines it has also produced a stream of desirable driver's cars.

Many would argue the first Ford performance car outside of the USA was 1963's Lotus Cortina. Some stellar non-Lotus-fettled models followed, not least rally-proven Escort derivatives, and the '80s and '90s brought some classic collabs with Cosworth.

These days the phrase 'fast Ford' is synonymous with hot hatches, and a stream of ST and RS-badged hatchbacks have graced *evo*'s pages in recent years. But it's worth acknowledging Ford has real supercar pedigree too, with the Ferrari-beating GT40 supercar of the '60s and its two reimagined GT successors.

We could fill every page in this issue with Ford's finest, then, but here we've singled out four top used picks that represent the brand's modern-era performance offerings at their very best.



FORD FOCUS RS500

The ultimate incarnation of a hyperhatch trailblazer

ALL THREE GENERATIONS OF THE FOCUS RS HAVE THEIR own unique character, but the Mk2 was arguably the most impressive of them all. When launched in 2009 it was one of the very first hyperhatches, with a power figure to rival those of some much more costly sports cars and an exterior design that wore its fast Ford credentials on its wing tips.

The standard Mk2 RS took the then Focus ST's 2.5-litre five-cylinder and added entirely new pistons, conrods and camshafts, an uprated BorgWarner K16 turbocharger, a larger intercooler, a less restrictive air intake and an ECU remap to bring peak outputs to 300bhp and 324lb ft of torque. But Ford hadn't finished yet...

In mid-2010 the Focus RS500 was launched as a limited-run special with a satin black exterior (courtesy of a 3M wrap) and black wheels. But the big news was under the bonnet, where further upgrades to the intercooler, air filter, fuel pump, downpipe and ECU saw outputs rise to 345bhp and 339lb ft – figures that wouldn't look out of place on a new hot hatch today.

As with the regular RS, the RS500 delivered its goods to the front wheels alone via a six-speed manual transmission and a torque-biasing Quaife limited-slip differential, with Ford's patented RevoKnuckle front suspension helping tame some of the inevitable torque steer. The 500's extra power trimmed the claimed 0-62mph time by three-tenths of a second to just 5.6sec.

Darth Vader aesthetic aside, the engine upgrades are the car's party piece. Its chassis is identical to the standard RS's but this isn't to its detriment: the RS shook off the Mk2 ST's sense of heft and unwanted body roll, gaining a much more confidence-inspiring front end and considerably more grip and overall composure on tough tarmac.

Limited to 500 cars worldwide, a mere 101 RS500s were allocated to the UK, and every one was snapped up within a week. In 2024 there are a mere 17 actively registered, while almost 80 are SORNed, which says a lot about where owners feel values are going. The RS500 cost £35,750 in 2010, but 14 years on you won't find one for much less than £60,000. That's more than double the price of a standard Mk2 RS with modest miles, but limited supply means values of the special edition are holding strong.

If you do take the plunge, the RS500 is a largely reliable machine. Its engine and transmission have both proven to be very strong even when dealing with more power than Ford intended. That said, beware of an uneven idle, which may take some trial and error to resolve (spark plug, coil or mass air-flow sensor failure are among the possible causes). Also check closely for rusty bodywork, which has affected some Mk2 RSs. But beyond these issues, an RS500 should be a very reliable and useable hot hatch – and one that deserves to be driven.

Specification

Engine In-line 5-cyl, 2522cc, turbocharged

Power 345bhp @ 6000rpm **Torque** 339lb ft @ 2500-4500rpm

Weight 1467kg **Power-to-weight** 239bhp/ton

0-62mph 5.6sec **Top speed** 165mph

Price new £35,750 (2010-11) **Value today** From c.£60,000



FORD FOCUS ST EDITION

When the Mk4 Focus found its groove

THE ST EDITION OF 2021 TAKES A DIFFERENT APPROACH to the hot Focus formula than the RS500 of a decade earlier, with fewer cylinders, a more restrained look and more sophisticated dynamics. We were left a little disappointed with the ordinary Mk4 Focus ST when it was launched in 2018, but three years later a handful of chassis and design tweaks helped bring the Edition version up to speed with its hot hatch contemporaries.

Like the excellent Fiesta ST Edition that had arrived the year before, the fettled Focus received new KW coilover springs and two-way adjustable dampers at all four corners – with 12 settings for bump, 16 for rebound – alongside lighter flow-formed multispoke wheels (19 inches here, an inch bigger than the Fiesta's), reducing unsprung mass and improving visual appeal. From the factory the Edition sat 10mm lower than the standard ST, with a further 20mm of manual adjustment also available. Offered only as a manual hatchback in bold Azura Blue and with black contrasting trim and a black roof, it's hard to miss.

One thing holding the Edition back is its lack of powertrain changes. Like the standard car, its 2.3-litre turbocharged four-cylinder engine produces peaks of 276bhp and 310lb ft of torque, all sent to the front axle through a six-speed manual transmission and an electronically controlled limited-slip differential. Respectable numbers, but it's the delivery that leaves us a little cold, with torque provided early and very little happening after

5500rpm. Nevertheless, the Edition is a strong performer from point to point, and all but matches the wild RS500 on paper, with a 5.7sec 0-62mph time and 155mph top speed.

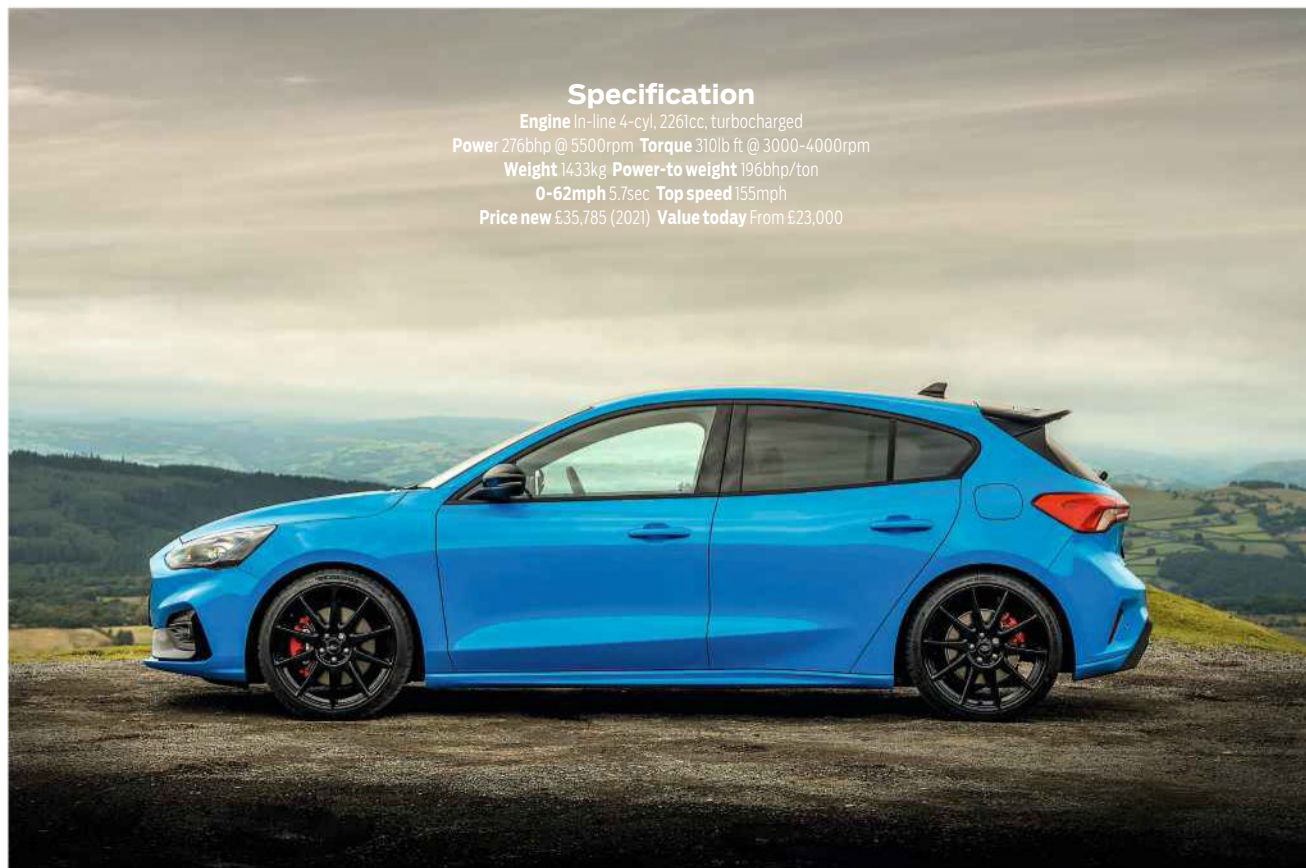
Its chassis tweaks make it less refined and compliant for everyday driving than you might expect from a Focus, but if you're willing to compromise on this front, the ST Edition is an incredibly capable car on Britain's roads. The improved damping quality gives the chassis a new lease of life and unlocks truly impressive grip in the right conditions. The steering lacks the clarity you'd hope for from a car with such a tight chassis, but there's no knocking the performance on offer overall.

The Mk4 Focus ST hasn't been on the road long enough for significant long-term reliability issues to rear their heads yet, but there are a few items to be aware of when buying one used. While the ST avoids the expensive head gasket failure issue of the related engine in the Mk3 Focus RS, some owners have reported issues with wiring looms on early cars, with loose oil filler caps and wonky fuel filler doors also a problem for some. Build quality is strong on the whole, but listen out for squeaks and rattles.

For 2024, Ford revived the ST Edition as part of the Focus facelift, but if you'd like much the same car for less than the new model's £42,905 asking price, the original is a great alternative. Scan the classifieds and you'll find numerous examples with reasonable mileages for just over £23,000.

Specification

Engine In-line 4-cyl. 2261cc, turbocharged
Power 276bhp @ 5500rpm **Torque** 310lb ft @ 3000-4000rpm
Weight 1433kg **Power-to weight** 196bhp/ton
0-62mph 5.7sec **Top speed** 155mph
Price new £35,785 (2021) **Value today** From £23,000



FORD GT

The Blue Oval's second supercar was nothing short of remarkable

CROWNED EVO CAR OF THE YEAR IN 2005 AND MORE recently selected by us as one of the most significant driver's cars of the last 25 years (evo 314), the first Ford GT is one of the greatest analogue supercars of its time – and of *all time*, in fact.

Everything from its chassis and steering to its snickety Ricardo six-speed manual and supercharged 5.4-litre V8 immediately placed it among the top players in the supercar game. The combination of a mid-mounted V8, 550bhp driving the rear axle and no driver assistance might sound like a recipe for a handful, but the Ford GT proved to be one of the most approachable cars of its kind. Its high levels of performance are truly accessible thanks to precise controls, an expertly honed chassis and smooth power delivery. With tactile steering and excellent ride quality too, we even described it as a 550bhp Elise.

Designed by Camilo Pardo under J Mays as both a modern interpretation of the iconic GT40 and a celebration of 100 years of Ford, the GT's classical looks have stood the test of time well. Like the original, the doors incorporate sections of the roof in an attempt to ease ingress and egress, and while they do precisely the opposite in situations where you can't swing the door fully open, they certainly add to the sense of occasion.

The retro theme continues inside, with faux eyelets on the seat faces and analogue dials that make a refreshing departure from today's screen-centric layouts. Some of the materials may fall

short of expectations – there's a lot of plastic to be found in there – but the driving experience more than compensates for any of its shortcomings. A more likely snagging point is that the GT was only made in left-hand drive, although a few examples have been converted to right-hand drive, typically for the Australian market where RHD is a legal requirement in certain states.

Most owners complain more about poor fuel economy than reliability issues, with the later V6-powered, Multimatic-built GT considered to be much more problem-prone. Early cars did have issues with faulty suspension control arms, although these should have been fixed under a recall. There were also numerous reports of temperamental immobiliser systems and some of the gauges are prone to failure, but it's a solid car overall. Even when something does go wrong, its relatively simple underpinnings mean it's often not as ruinously expensive to fix as modern equivalents.

A total of 4038 GTs were produced during the model's two years on sale, but only 100 were sold to Europe and just 28 of those made it to the UK. They're worth considerably more than they were when new, too, with several examples currently listed in the classifieds for in excess of £400,000. Bide your time and watch the auctions, however, and you should be able to land a car with less than 20,000 miles for under £300k. Consider the value of some other mid-noughties analogue supercars such as the Pagani Zonda, though, and it doesn't seem so bad...

Specification

Engine V8, 5409cc, supercharged Power 550bhp @ 6500rpm

Torque 500lb ft @ 3750rpm Weight 1583kg

Power-to-weight 353bhp/ton 0-62mph 3.9sec Top speed 205mph

Price new £120,900 (2004-06) Value today From £280,000



FORD RACING PUMA

An oft-underappreciated gem with a growing following

LAUNCHED IN AN ERA OF OUTSTANDING FRONT-WHEEL-drive machines such as the Renault Sport Clio 172 and Honda Integra Type R, the Racing Puma had some tough competition. But despite its modest stats and a questionable price tag when new, those who drove one discovered a chassis that bristled with balance and fluidity, elevating this coupe of humble origins to a place among Ford's best-ever front-drivers.

There's no mistaking a Racing Puma for its ordinary counterpart, as the vast majority of its Ford Racing Blue bodywork is entirely bespoke. Its aluminium wheelarches are 100mm wider at the front and rear to accommodate sizable 70mm and 90mm increases in track respectively. Within these new arches are the Racing Puma's trademark 17-inch multispoke Speedline alloys, two inches larger in diameter than the wheels on the standard car. The Alcon-designed, 295mm, four-piston front brake set-up was new too (the 253mm rear discs were from the Mk1 Focus), as was the Eibach/Sachs suspension. Inside, the door cards and Sparco seats were trimmed in blue Alcantara.

The efforts made with the chassis and bodywork made the Racing Puma's lack of power all the more puzzling at its reveal. Its 153bhp seemed modest even back in 1999, and was just 30bhp up on the most powerful standard Puma (which was 135kg lighter). Thankfully, the way in which it delivered that power made it not so much of an issue. The Yamaha-tuned 1.7-litre naturally aspirated four-cylinder gained a new inlet manifold, new camshafts and a less restrictive exhaust system, and was

paired with shorter gearing to create a quick-revving powertrain that worked in perfect harmony with the uprated chassis.

That bulging bodywork is the Racing Puma's real Achilles' heel. Assembled by Tickford, its steel rear arches were essentially glued onto the existing wings, leaving a convenient gap for water to work its way into and rot the bodywork. It is something that can be rectified, but will cost in the region of £5000 depending on the severity. Keep an eye out for cracking on the unique fibreglass bumpers too, as genuine items are almost impossible to find.

The Racing Puma is mechanically robust, however. Its engine is known to run well into six-figure mileage without an issue and if you do experience one, the ordinary 1.7-litre Puma engine can be converted to Racing spec without too much outlay. The gearbox is also a modified standard item and can be replaced or easily fixed should you suffer a rare failure. Check the Alcon front brake calipers have been well looked after, though – they're race-spec items and require careful servicing every 3000 miles or so to avoid costly repairs. Also ensure the suspension is in tip-top condition, as original parts are no longer available to purchase.

Prices once dropped to as low as £5000, but in 2024 you'll struggle to find a Racing Puma for much less than £25,000. While all 500 examples were sold in the UK, there are thought to be far fewer left on the road today due to a combination of increasing values, numerous write-offs and the aforementioned corrosion issues. Nevertheless, find a good one and you'll discover plenty to enjoy in this rare and rewarding Ford. ✕

Specification

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1679cc Power 153bhp @ 7000rpm
Torque 119lb ft @ 4500rpm Weight 1174kg
Power-to-weight 132bhp/ton 0-62mph 7.9sec Top speed 137mph
Price new £22,750 (1999-2001) Value today From £24,000



"M2 performance with newfound precision and control."

- EVO Magazine ★★★★★

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

- BMWCar Magazine ★★★★★

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

- Autocar ★★★★★



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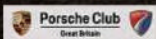
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THE KNOWLEDGE

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 **Toyota GR Yaris** success story continues with the updated Gen 2 version (left), which makes the waiting list all the more painful. 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 OR 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	
Abarth 695C	318 F	£28,375	4/1368	178/5500	184/3000	1090kg	1153kg	166	6.7	-	140	+ A bundle of fun if you're in the mood for it - Dire driving position, busy ride	★★★★☆
Abarth 695 Biposto	205 F	2014-18	4/1369	187/5500	184/3000	997kg*	-	191	5.9	-	143	+ Engineered like a true Abarth product - Expensive for a city car	★★★★★
Abarth 500e Turismo	314 D	£38,795	113kW	152	173	1410kg	-	110	7.0	-	96	+ Plays the electric supermini role well - It's as expensive as a full-blown hot hatch	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo 147 GTA	187 F	2003-06	6/3179	247/6200	221/4800	1360kg	-	185	6.3	6.0	153	+ Mk1 Focus RS pace without the histrionics - Slightly nose-heavy	★★★★★
Audi A1 40 TFSI	256 D	2019-22	4/1984	197/6000	236/1500	1260kg	-	159	6.5	-	155	+ Capable - It's no SI replacement	★★★★★
Audi S1	316 F	2014-18	4/1984	228/6000	273/1600	1315kg	-	176	5.8	-	155	+ Compliant and engaging chassis; quick, too - Looks dull without options	★★★★★
Audi A1 quattro	264 F	2013	4/1984	253/6000	258/2500	1420kg	-	181	5.7	-	152	+ Polished 253bhp 4WD A1 - Just 19 came to the UK, with a Porsche Cayman price	★★★★★
Audi S3 Sportback	279 D	£44,175	4/1984	306/5450	295/2000	1500kg	-	207	4.8	-	155	+ Less one-dimensional than its predecessor - Breaks little new ground	★★★★★
Audi S3	188 F	2013-20	4/1984	296/5500	280/1800	1395kg	-	216	5.2	5.4	155	+ Lots of grip and one of the best-sounding four-pot turbos - Still a little too clinical	★★★★★
Audi RS3 Sportback	292 D	£56,675	5/2480	394/5600	369/2250	1570kg	-	255	3.8	-	155	+ Improved chassis makes the RS3 a contender at last - Engine and gearbox hold it back	★★★★★
Audi RS3 Sportback	256 F	2017-21	5/2480	394/5850	354/1700	1510kg	-	265	4.1	-	155	+ Hugely quick point-to-point - Sometimes speed isn't the be-all and end-all	★★★★★
Audi RS3 Sportback	221 F	2015-16	5/2480	362/5500	343/1625	1520kg	-	242	4.3	3.6	155	+ Addictive five-cylinder noise; monster pace - Chassis not exactly playful	★★★★★
BMW 128ti	318 F	£37,375	4/1998	261/4750	295/1750	1445kg	1481kg	184	6.1	-	155	+ More character than the M135i; more affordable too - Can feel disjointed on the road	★★★★★
BMW M135i xDrive	318 F	£41,845	4/1998	302/5000	332/1750	1525kg	1584kg	201	4.8	-	155	+ Strong performance, monster traction - Not hugely involving; engine lacks character	★★★★★
BMW M135i	212 F	2012-15	6/2979	321/5800	332/1300	1430kg	-	228	5.1	5.2	155	+ Powertrain, noise, chassis - M235i looks nicer, and has an LSD option	★★★★★
Citroën DS3 1.6 THP	142 F	2010-15	4/1598	154/6000	177/1400	1240kg	-	126	7.3	-	133	+ A proper French hot hatch - Petrolheads might find it too 'designed'	★★★★★
Citroën DS3 Racing	153 D	2011-12	4/1598	204/6000	203/2000	1240kg	-	167	6.5	-	146	+ A faster, feistier DS3 - Not as hardcore as its 'Racing' tag suggests	★★★★★
Citroën AX GT	195 F	1987-92	4/1360	85/6400	86/4000	722kg	-	120	9.2	-	110	+ Makes terrific use of 85bhp - Feels like it's made from paper	★★★★★
Cupra Born 230 (77kWh)	-	£41,975	170kW	228	229	1875kg	-	124	7.0	-	99	+ A good everyday EV - Not as exciting as you'd hope	★★★★★
Cupra Leon 300	318 F	£40,680	4/1984	296/5300	295/2000	1429kg	1505kg	210	5.7	-	155	+ More engaging than a Mk8 Golf GTI - Inconsistent brake feel; forgettable looks	★★★★★
Cupra Leon Estate 333 4Drive	324 D	£45,190	4/1984	328/5600	310/2100	1576kg	-	211	4.8	-	155	+ A compelling fast estate option - Steering feedback and engine character lacking	★★★★★
DS 3 Performance	222 D	2016-18	4/1598	205/6000	221/3000	1175kg	-	177	6.5	-	143	+ All the right ingredients - Undercooked	★★★★★
Fiat Panda 100HP	273 F	2006-11	4/1368	99/6000	97/4250	975kg	1028kg	103	9.5	-	115	+ About as fun as small cars get - Optional ESP can't be turned off	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST (Mk8)	259 F	2018-23	3/1497	197/6000	214/1600	1187kg	-	169	6.5	-	144	+ Highly talented, with real depth to its character - Can get wrong-footed on bad tarmac	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST Edition / Performance Edition	292 F	2021-23	3/1497	197/6000	214/1600	1187kg	-	169	6.5	-	144	+ Like the regular Fiesta ST, but with added composure - How much?!	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST (Mk7)	207 F	2013-17	4/1596	197/5700	214/2500	1088kg	1193kg	184	6.9	7.4	137	+ Chassis, price, punchy performance - Have you heard of Mountune?	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST200 (Mk7)	309 F	2016-17	4/1596	212/6000	236/2500	1088kg	-	198	6.7	-	143	+ Massive fun - Wasn't around for long	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST (Mk6)	075 D	2005-08	4/1999	148/6000	140/4500	1137kg	-	132	7.9	-	129	+ Great looks, decent brakes - Disappointing chassis, gutless engine	★★★★★
Ford Focus ST Performance (Mk4)	318 F	£37,650	4/2261	276/5500	310/3000	1433kg	1424kg	196	5.7	-	155	+ Vibrant and characterful - Lacks the poise and precision of the very best	★★★★★
Ford Focus ST Edition (Mk4)	294 D	2021	4/2261	276/5500	310/3000	1433kg	-	196	5.7	-	155	+ Elevates the Focus ST from its underdog status - Needs a better engine and steering	★★★★★
Ford Focus ST (Mk3)	207 F	2015-18	4/1999	247/5500	265/2000	1362kg	-	184	6.5	-	154	+ Excellent engine - Scrappy when pushed	★★★★★
Ford Focus ST (Mk2)	119 F	2005-10	5/2522	222/6000	236/1600	1392kg	-	162	6.8	6.7	150	+ Value, performance, integrity - Big engine compromises handling	★★★★★
Ford Focus RS (Mk3)	246 F	2015-18	4/2261	345/6000	347/2000	1547kg	1569kg	227	4.7	4.9	166	+ Torque-vectoring 4WD brought new sensations to a hot hatch - Needs to be driven hard	★★★★★
Ford Focus RS Edition (Mk3)	246 D	2018	4/2261	345/6000	347/2000	1547kg	-	227	4.7	-	166	+ Front limited-slip differential brings more precise handling - Pricey and still heavy	★★★★★
Ford Focus RS (Mk2)	195 F	2009-11	5/2522	300/6500	324/2300	1467kg	-	208	5.9	5.9	163	+ Huge performance, highly capable FWD chassis - Body control is occasionally clumsy	★★★★★
Ford Focus RS500 (Mk2)	256 F	2010-11	5/2522	345/6000	339/2500	1467kg	-	239	5.6	5.6	165	+ More power and presence than regular Mk2 RS - Pricey	★★★★★
Ford Focus RS (Mk1)	312 F	2002-03	4/1998	212/5500	229/3500	1278kg	-	169	6.7	5.9	143	+ Some are great - Some are awful (so make sure you drive plenty)	★★★★★
Ford Escort RS Cosworth	271 F	1992-96	4/1993	224/6250	224/3500	1275kg	-	179	6.2	-	137	+ The ultimate Essex hot hatch - Unmodified ones are rare, and pricey	★★★★★
Ford Puma 1.7	095 F	1997-2002	4/1679	123/6300	116/4500	1041kg	-	120	9.2	8.6	122	+ Revvy engine, sparkling chassis, bargain used prices - Rusty rear arches	★★★★★
Ford Racing Puma	262 F	1999-2001	4/1679	153/7000	119/4500	1174kg	-	132	7.9	7.8	137	+ An affordable exotic - Corroding rear arches	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (FL5)	322 F	£49,995	4/1996	324/6500	310/2500	1429kg	1439kg	230	5.4	-	171	+ Still at the top of its game - Has lost a little intimacy with the growth in size and maturity	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (FK8)	288 F	2017-21	4/1996	316/6500	295/2500	1380kg	1409kg	233	5.8	5.9	168	+ One of the greatest hot hatches ever - Its looks are challenging for some	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R Limited Edition (FK8)	293 F	2021	4/1996	316/6500	295/2500	1333kg	-	241	5.8	-	168	+ Terrifically capable, blisteringly quick, still practical - Standard FK8 is a better road car	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (FK2)	227 F	2015-17	4/1996	306/6500	295/2500	1378kg	-	226	5.7	5.4	167	+ Great on smooth roads - Can be punishing on less-than-smooth roads	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (FN2)	102 F	2007-11	4/1998	198/7800	142/5600	1267kg	-	158	6.6	6.8	146	+ Looks great, VTEC more accessible - Steering lacks feel, inert balance	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R Mugen (FN2)	248 F	2009-11	4/1998	237/8300	157/6250	1233kg	-	195	5.9	-	155	+ Fantastic on road and track - Only 20 were made, and they're a tad pricey...	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (EP3)	287 F	2001-05	4/1998	197/7400	145/5900	1204kg	-	166	6.8	6.8	146	+ Potent and great value - Duff steering	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (EK9)	210 F	1997-2000	4/1595	182/8200	118/7500	1040kg	-	178	6.8	-	135	+ Sublime early incarnation of the Type R recipe - Good ones are thin on the ground	★★★★★
Hyundai i20 N	318 F	£26,565	4/1591	201/5500	203/1750	1190kg	1238kg	172	6.2	-	143	+ Compact, considered and brilliantly executed - Cabin feels built to a price in places	★★★★★
Hyundai i30 N	318 F	£35,765	4/1998	276/6000	289/1950	1419kg	1458kg	198	5.9	-	155	+ A brilliant, thoroughly developed hot hatch - Its engine isn't the most charismatic	★★★★★
Hyundai Ioniq 5 N	317 D	£65,000	448kW	641	546	2235kg	-	291	3.4	-	161	+ A genuinely rewarding EV - That's also a 2.2-ton hatchback	★★★★★
Hyundai Kona N	291 D	2021-23	4/1998	276/5500	289/2100	1510kg	-	186	5.5	-	149	+ Unexpectedly tight chassis - Worthy of a better engine	★★★★★
Kia Ceed GT	267 F	2017-20	4/1591	201/6000	195/1500	1386kg	-	147	7.2	-	143	+ Feels like a detuned i30 N - Lacks personality	★★★★★
Kia ProCeed GT	259 D	£28,135	4/1591	201/6000	195/1500	1438kg	-	142	7.2	-	140	+ Flexible engine, handsome shooting brake body - It's warm rather than hot	★★★★★

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 SE (J01)	325 D	£34,500	160kW	215	243	1605kg	-	136	6.7	-	106	+ A fast, agile and well-built electric hot hatch - Lumpy ride; heavy for a Mini	★★★★★
Mini Cooper S (F56)	268 F	2014-24	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	2015-24	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	202/3000	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 Turbo	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	267 F	2016-20	4/1984	286/5400	280/1950	1356kg	-	214	6.0	-	155	+ Agile, transparent and easily exploited - Can feel rather plain	★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra R	244 D	2018	4/1984	306/5800	280/1800	1378kg	-	226	5.8	-	155	+ Sharper handling and better body control - High price and limited availability	★★★★★
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	134/6000	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 (Gen 1)	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 GR Yaris (Gen 2)	325 D	£44,250	3/1618	276/6500	288/3250	1280kg	-	219	5.2	-	143	+ Slightly better than the original in almost every way - Even harder to get hold of one	★★★★★
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	+ Begg 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. If you want an estate that's a size larger, or just want to bag a four-seater with a V8 while you still can, then it has to be the **Audi RS6 Avant**. Or if it's a performance SUV you're after, the **Aston Martin DBX707** is our pick of the bunch.

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	2018-24	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	£133,120	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	479/2250	1900kg	-	280	4.7	-	193	+ Still pretty - Off the pace dynamically	★★★★☆
Maserati Quattroporte Trofeo	287 D	2021-23	8/3799	572/6750	538/2250	2000kg	-	291	4.5	-	203	+ An alluring alternative to the German defaults - Good luck finding one	★★★★☆
Maserati Quattroporte S	137 F	2008-12	8/4691	425/7000	361/4750	1990kg	-	216	5.4	5.1	174	+ A QP with the bhp it deserves - Grille is a bit Hannibal Lecter	★★★★☆
Maserati Quattroporte Sport GTS	141 F	2008-12	8/4691	433/7000	361/4750	1990kg	-	221	5.1	-	177	+ The most stylish of supersaloons - Slightly wooden brakes, unforgiving ride	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG A35 Saloon	271 F	£46,145	4/1991	302/5800	295/3000	1495kg	-	205	4.8	-	155	+ Fun when you want it to be, secure when the heavens open - Others are even more fun	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG CLA 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 E53 Hybrid (W214)	325 D	£90,860	6/2999	577	553	2315kg	-	253	4.0	-	155	+ Refined, comfortable and swift - Not the most memorable of cars	★★★★☆
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 AMG (W213)	286 F	2017-23	8/3982	604/5750	567/2500	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 EQ5 S3	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 GLC 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-360	122 D	2008-14	4/1998	354/6500	363/3500	1560kg	-	231	4.0	-	155	+ Ridiculously rapid Evo - A five-speed gearbox?!	★★★★☆
Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution IX FQ-340	088 F	2005-08	4/1997	345/6800	321/4600	1400kg	-	250	4.2	4.3	157	+ Gives Porsche drivers nightmares - Points of loss	★★★★☆
Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution IX MR FQ-360	181 F	2005-08	4/1997	366/6887	363/3200	1400kg	-	266	4.0	-	157	+ Well-executed engine upgrades - Prison food	★★★★☆
Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution VIII	055 F	2003-05	4/1997	276/6500	289/3500	1410kg	-	199	5.1	-	157	+ The Evo grows up - Brakes need beefing up	★★★★☆
Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution VII	031 F	2002-03	4/1997	276/6500	282/3500	1360kg	-	206	5.1	5.0	140	+ Terrific all-rounder - You tell us	★★★★☆
Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution VI Tommi Mäkinen	271 F	2000-01	4/1997	276/6500	275/2750	1365kg	-	205	4.6	-	150	+ Our favourite Evo - Subtle it is not	★★★★☆
Peugeot 508 SW PSE	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 - Sweeper roof adds to the price	★★★★☆
Porsche Cayenne Turbo GT (Mk3)	290 D	2021-23	8/3996	631/6000	627/2300	2220kg	-	289	3.3	-	186	+ A car this big and heavy shouldn't drive this well - It's still big and heavy	★★★★☆
Porsche Cayenne GTS (Mk2, V6)	211 D	2015-17	6/3604	434/6000	442/1600	2110kg	-	209	5.2	-	163	+ The driver's Cayenne... - ...but why would a driver want an SUV?	★★★★☆
Prodrive P25	313 F	£552,000	4/2457	440/6000	457/3000	180kg	-	379	2.8	-	150	+ The ultimate Impreza - Price reflects this	★★★★☆
Range Rover Sport P510e	309 D	2022-23	6/2996	503	516	2735kg	-	187	5.4	-	150	+ Hybrid powertrain provides a genuine benefit - Feels big and heavy, because it is	★★★★☆
Range Rover Sport P530 First Edition	303 D	2023-24	8/4395	523/5500	553/1800	2430kg	-	219	4.5	-	155	+ Does effortless speed and luxury very well - Not quite so good at the 'sport' bit	★★★★☆
Range Rover Sport SV	320 D	£171,460	8/4395	626/6000	553/1800	2485kg	-	256	3.8	-	155	+ Dynamic quality has sports car level of detail - The answer to a question no one asked	★★★★☆
Range Rover Autobiography P530	298 D	£142,400	8/4395	523/5500	551/1800	2585kg	-	206	4.6	-	155	+ Quieter and more capable - Heavier and more expensive	★★★★☆
Rolls-Royce Ghost	280 D	£270,600	12/6749	563/5000	627/1600	2490kg	-	230	4.8	-	155	+ Unrivaled luxury and refinement - Still better to be driven in than to drive	★★★★☆
Subaru WRX STI S209	272 F	2020	4/2457	341/6400	330/3600	1580kg	-	219	4.9	-	162	+ That old Impreza magic is alive and well - Only 209 were built, and only for America	★★★★☆
Subaru WRX STI	253 F	2014-18	4/2457	296/6000	300/4000	1534kg	-	196	5.2	-	158	+ Still has its moments - Something of an anachronism	★★★★☆
Subaru Impreza STI ('Hawkeye')	090 F	2005-07	4/2457	276/6000	289/4000	1495kg	-	188	5.3	-	158	+ Stunning to drive - Not so stunning to look at	★★★★☆
Subaru Impreza WRX STI PPP ('Blobeye')	073 F	2003-05	4/1994	300/6000	299/4000	1470kg	-	207	5.4	5.2	148	+ A Subaru with real edge - Bit too edgy in the wet	★★★★☆
Subaru Impreza Turbo ('Classic')	011 F	1993-2000	4/1994	215/5600	214/4000	1235kg	-	177	5.8	5.4	144	+ Destined for classic status - Thrifty	★★★★☆
Subaru Impreza RB5 WR Sport	319 F	1999											

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

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	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3.24S	248 F	2018-12	4/1998	245/8600	177/7200	520kg	-	479	3.1	-	145	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3.5 Supercharged	180 D	2013-18	4/1998	310/8400	169/7200	550kg	608kg	573	2.7	-	155	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3.5R	255 F	2014-18	4/1998	350/8400	243/6100	550kg	-	647	2.6	-	155	★★★★★
Ariel Nomad	294 F	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	★★★★★
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	5/128,000	4/2488	342/8800	243	555kg*	-	626	2.5	-	170	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GTC Speed	291 D	2021-22	12/5950	650/5000	664/1500	2436kg	-	271	3.7	-	208	★★★★★
Bentley Mulliner Bacalar	286 F	2021	12/5950	650/5000	664/1500	2384kg	-	277	<3.8	-	200+	★★★★★
BMW Z4 M40i	325 F	5/55,350	6/2998	335/5000	369/1600	1550kg	-	220	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	560kg*	-	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 Superlight R300	150 F	2009-12	4/1999	175/7000	139/6000	515kg*	-	345	4.5	-	140	★★★★★
Caterham Seven CSR 260	094 F	2006-17	4/2261	256/7500	200/6200	565kg*	598kg	460	3.1	3.8	155	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Superlight R500	123 F	2008-14	4/1999	263/8500	177/7200	506kg*	-	528	2.9	-	150	★★★★★
Caterham Seven R500	200 F	1999-2006	4/1796	230/8600	155/7200	460kg*	-	510	3.4	3.6	146	★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette Stingray Convertible (C8)	292 D	5/98,785	8/6162	475/6450	452/4000	1692kg	-	285	3.5	-	184	★★★★★
Dallara Stradale	267 F	5/162,000	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	★★★★★
GBS Zero	325 F	5/40,800	4/2488	210/6600	196/3500	595kg	-	359	3.5	-	136	★★★★★
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 S (S2)	104 F	2006-10	4/1794	134/6200	127/4200	860kg	-	158	6.1	6.3	127	★★★★★
Lotus Elise 111S (S2)	049 F	2002-04	4/1796	156/7000	129/4650	860kg	-	197	5.1	-	131	★★★★★
Lotus Elise SC (S2)	131 F	2008-11	4/1794	218/8000	156/5000	870kg	-	254	4.6	4.5	145	★★★★★
Lotus Elise (S1)	235 F	1996-2001	4/1796	118/5500	122/3000	725kg	-	165	5.9	6.1	126	★★★★★
Lotus 3-Eleven	220 F	2016-17	6/3456	410/7000	302/3000	925kg*	-	450	3.4	-	174	★★★★★
Lotus 3-Eleven 430	248 F	2017-19	6/3456	430/7000	325/4500	920kg*	-	475	3.2	-	180	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven	126 F	2007-11	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	720kg	-	267	4.5	-	140	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven Supercharged	123 F	2007-11	4/1796	252/8000	179/7000	745kg	-	344	4.0	-	150	★★★★★
Lotus 340R	126 F	2000	4/1796	190/7800	146/5000	701kg	-	275	4.5	4.5	126	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio Trofeo	325 D	5/169,585	6/2992	542/6500	479/3000	1895kg	-	291	3.6	-	196	★★★★★
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/ND)	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	97kg	-	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	★★★★★
MG Cyberster GT	325 F	5/59,995	3/75kW	496	535	1985kg	-	254	3.2	-	125	★★★★★
Morgan Sport GT	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 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	★★★★★

EVO RATING

+ A little car with a big soul - Vague and lifeless front end	★★★★★
+ Beauty meets beast. They hit it off - Boot is useless for touring	★★★★★
+ Sensory overload - Turbo engine lacks the old supercharged unit's frantic soundtrack	★★★★★
+ None more intense - Cost of the numerous options can soon add up	★★★★★
+ Even better than its predecessors - Can still be a bit draughty	★★★★★
+ As mad as ever - Rain	★★★★★
+ Remarkable balance, poise and pace - Pricey	★★★★★
+ Off-road capabilities make for a super plaything - No Bluetooth	★★★★★
+ Builds on the already excellent coupe's attributes - Interior design lags behind exterior	★★★★★
+ Sportiest, coolest drop-top Aston in years - Feels dated compared with contemporaries	★★★★★
+ Sounds amazing, looks even better - Still not the best drop-top in its class	★★★★★
+ As good as the coupe, with amplified V12 rumble - Just a smidgen shakier	★★★★★
+ A brilliant two-seat roadster... - let down by a frustrating automated manual gearbox	★★★★★
+ Achingly elegant - Lacks polish in some departments	★★★★★
+ Impressively wide range of dynamic personalities - Cabin could be better at this price	★★★★★
+ 3.5sec faster around Anglesey Circuit than a McLaren P1 - A bit less practical than a P1	★★★★★
+ Astonishing pace and excellent drivability - Only 40 are being made	★★★★★
+ Very nearly as calm and controlled as the coupe - Heavy W12 impossible to disguise	★★★★★
+ A luxury cruiser that's a bit of a rebel roadster - They only made 12, at £1.5m each	★★★★★
+ Well balanced, composed; there's a manual too - It's a cruiser rather than a scratcher	★★★★★
+ M5-powered super-sportster - M5's more fun to drive	★★★★★
+ The lightest production Caterham yet - Could do with another 10bhp	★★★★★
+ Extra power is welcome - You'll need the six-speed gearbox to make the most of it	★★★★★
+ It's the one we built for ourselves - Trickier on the limit than lesser-powered Sevens	★★★★★
+ Intense and rewarding - They'll soon be electric	★★★★★
+ Ludicrous, near-620R pace, with added habitability - Well, 'habitable' for a Seven...	★★★★★
+ Banzai on track, yet still relevant on the road - £50k for a Seven?	★★★★★
+ The fabulous Seven formula at its most basic - Gets pricey with options	★★★★★
+ Great debut for Ford-engined model - Bigger drivers need SV model	★★★★★
+ One of the best Caterhams is also one of the cheapest of its era - It's quite minimalist	★★★★★
+ One of the best road-and-track Sevens - Impractical, noisy, uncomfortable	★★★★★
+ Possibly all the Caterham you need - They're not cheap	★★★★★
+ Brilliant for high days, holidays and trackdays - Wet Wednesdays	★★★★★
+ Better power-to-weight ratio than a Veyron - Until you add the driver	★★★★★
+ The K-series Seven at its very best - No cup holders	★★★★★
+ Strong V8 engine, fine value - Not as quick as we were hoping	★★★★★
+ Startling on-road performance - Can leave you feeling detached on track	★★★★★
+ Captivating, explosive, exploitable - Price will test your level of commitment	★★★★★
+ Feels as good as the coupe Roma - Careful which OE tyre you choose	★★★★★
+ An alternative take on an updated Lotus Seven - Caterhams are hard to resist	★★★★★
+ An alternative and rev-happy roadster - A Boxster's better	★★★★★
+ Strong and flexible supercharged V8 - Steering and chassis feel mismatched	★★★★★
+ Noise, performance, adjustability - Expensive, and not the GT3 rival we would have liked	★★★★★
+ Extraordinary ability, now in a more road-friendly package - Price	★★★★★
+ Sharper handling, more power - Pity it's not even lighter, and cheaper	★★★★★
+ Even lighter, even more focused than a standard 1.6 Elise - Are you prepared to go this basic?	★★★★★
+ Perfect power-to-weight ratio - A bit short on creature comforts	★★★★★
+ Makes the most of its lightness - Heavyweight price	★★★★★
+ The Elise's swansong - There will never be another Lotus like it	★★★★★
+ As effective, enjoyable and essential as ever - Prioritises grip over adjustability	★★★★★
+ Quickest Elise yet - Just 30 were built	★★★★★
+ Brilliant entry-level Elise - Precious little	★★★★★
+ A genuinely useable Elise - As above	★★★★★
+ All the usual Elise magic - Supercharged engine lacks sparkle	★★★★★
+ A modern classic - A tad impractical?	★★★★★
+ A fantastically exciting Lotus - If not exactly a groundbreaking one	★★★★★
+ A fitting send-off for a brilliant Lotus - Just 20 were made	★★★★★
+ Not far off the supercharged 2-Eleven's pace - You want the supercharged one, don't you?	★★★★★
+ Impressive on road and track - Not hardcore enough for some	★★★★★
+ Hardcore road-racer... - that looks like a dune buggy from Mars	★★★★★
+ Firecracker of a V6; soothing ride quality - It's not really a sports car	★★★★★
+ Lightest MX-5 since the Mk1 - Lacks intensity	★★★★★
+ At last, a more powerful factory MX-5 - It's still no fireball	★★★★★
+ As above, but with a retracting hard-top - Which adds weight	★★★★★
+ Brilliant basic recipe - The desire for stiffer suspension and more power	★★★★★
+ Handles brilliantly again; folding hard-top also available - Less-than-macho image	★★★★★
+ Gearchange, interior - Lost some of the charm of old MX-5s; dubious handling	★★★★★
+ Affordable ragtops don't get much better - Cheap cabin	★★★★★
+ The original and still (pretty much) the best - Less than rigid	★★★★★
+ Impressive damping and 4WD - Is neither chilled-out cruiser or AMG GT replacement	★★★★★
+ A welcome performance boost over the SL55 - Not a stellar sports car	★★★★★
+ Looks and feels special for its price - Alarming lack of control on challenging roads	★★★★★
+ The three-wheeler gets modernised - Driving experience is still vintage	★★★★★
+ Quirky, characterful, brilliant - Can become a two-wheeler if you push too hard	★★★★★
+ Compelling and capable blend of old and new - Not the most refined for a long drive	★★★★★
+ Rapid, exciting, and a bit of a hoologan - Interior could feel more special	★★★★★
+ Glorious sound, view over bonnet, dynamics - Awkward-looking rear	★★★★★
+ The ultimate Aero - The last with the naturally aspirated BMW V8	★★★★★

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	299/5500	1060kg	-	335	4.2	-	175	+ Well-sorted soft-top TVR - Awkward styling	★★★★★
TVR Chimaera 5.0	258 F	1993-2003	8/4997	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	-	307	4.4	-	167	+ Gorgeous noise, tarmac-ripping grunt - Details	★★★★★
TVR Griffith 500	314 F	1993-2001	8/4997	340/5500	350/4000	1060kg	-	326	4.1	-	169	+ 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	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	460/2650	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	335/5400	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 anyone specs DCT	★★★★★
BMW M4 CS (F82)	254 F	2017-19	6/2979	454/6250	442/4000	1580kg	1610kg	292	3.9	-	174	+ A further-honed M4 - It ain't cheap	★★★★★
BMW M4 GTS (F82)	237 F	2016	6/2979	493/6250	442/4000	1510kg	-	332	3.8	3.7	190	+ Vast improvement on lesser M4s - So it should be, given its price	★★★★★
BMW M3 (E92)	266 F	2007-13	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1580kg	-	266	4.8	4.3	155	+ 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 Evija S (V6)	209 F	2012-15	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1176kg	-	298	3.8	-	170	+ Breathtaking road-racer; our joint evo Car of the Year 2012 - Gearshift not the sweetest	★★★★★
Lotus 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	457/5200	1635kg	-	317	4.2	-	186	+ The C63 turned up to 11 - Too heavy; not as fiery as Black Series cars of old	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLK G63 AMG Black Series	277 F	2007-09	8/6208	500/6800	464/5250	1760kg	-	289	4.2	-	186	+ AMG goes Porsche-hunting - Dull-witted gearshift spoils the party	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLE 300 4Matic	320 D	£59,750	4/1999	255/5800	295/2000	1855kg	-	140	6.6	-	155	+ Refinement levels, old-school 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	227 D	2016-19	8/3982	469/6000	465/1700	1540kg	-	309	4.0	-	189	+ A true sports coupe that also does luxury - Takes time to reveal its talents	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG GT S	216 F	2015-19	8/3982	515/6250	494/1800	1570kg	-	333	3.8	-	193	+ Fantastic chassis, huge grip - Artificial steering feel; downshifts could be quicker	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG GT C	241 D	2017-19	8/3982	549/5750	501/1900	1625kg	-	343	3.7	-	196	+ As good 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	6/3498	309/6800	264/4800	1532kg	-	205	5.6	5.5	155	+ Huge fun, and great value too - Muscle-car vibe not for everyone	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R (2017MY)	242 F	2017-22	6/3799	562/6800	470/3600	1752kg	-	326	2.7	-	196	+ More refinement, much improved interior, still fast - Feels a touch less alert	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R Track Edition (2017MY)	229 D	2017-22	6/3799	562/6800	470/3600	1745kg	-	327	2.7	-	196	+ Sharper than the standard GT-R - Pricier, too	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R Nismo (2020MY)	315 F	2020-22	6/3799	592/6800	481/3600	1703kg	-	353	2.8	-	196	+ Addictive performance - Track Edition gets 90 per cent there for a lot, lot less	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R (2012MY-2016MY)	238 F	2012-16	6/3799	542/6400	466/3200	1740kg	1783kg	316	2.7	3.2	196	+ Quicker and better than before - Stopping your Porsche-owning friends calling it a Datsun	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R (2010MY)	252 F	2010-12	6/3799	523/6400	451/3200	1740kg	-	305	3.0	-	194	+ More powerful version of the original - They're not worlds apart to drive	★★★★★
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R34)	265 F	1999-2002	6/2568	276/7000	289/4400	1560kg	1653kg	180	4.8	4.7	165	+ Big, brutal, and great fun - Needs more than the standard 276bhp	★★★★★
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R33)	196 F	1997-99	6/2568	276/6800	271/4400	1540kg	-	182	4.9	5.4	155	+ Early proof that Japanese high-tech could work (superbly) - Limited supply	★★★★★
Noble M400	297 F	2004-06	6/2968	425/6500	390/5000	1060kg	-	407	3.5	-	185	+ Devilishly fast - Demon Tweaks interior	★★★★★
Polestar 1	269 D	2019-22	4/1969	592/6000	737	2350kg	-	256	4.2	-	155	+ One of the most appealing hybrids yet - It's left-hand-drive only, and jolly expensive	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Cayman	287 F	£51,800	4/1988	296/6500	280/2150	1335kg	-	225	5.1	-	170	+ Chassis remains a dream - Sounds like a Toyota GT86	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Cayman T	270 F	2020-23	4/1988	296/6500	280/2150	1350kg	-	223	5.1	-	170	+ A further-honed 2-litre Cayman - Flat-four soundtrack still disappoints	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Cayman S	249 F	£61,800	4/2497	345/6500	310/2100	1355kg	1449kg	259	4.6	3.9	177	+ Faster and better to drive than ever - Bring earplugs	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Cayman GTS 4.0	303 F	£73,300	6/3995	394/7000	310/5000	1405kg	-	285	4.5	-	182	+ Ninety per cent of the GT4's magic - Can feel a little too capable and polished at times	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Cayman GT4	312 F	2019-23	6/3995	414/7600	310/5000	1420kg	1460kg	296	4.4	-	188	+ evo Car of the Year 2019 - Long gearing isn't ideal for road driving	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 RS	305 F	£108,370	6/3996	493/8400	332/6750	1415kg	1460kg	354	3.4	-	196	+ Thrilling when the road suits it - Too many great roads don't	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman S (981)	202 F	2013-16	6/3436	321/7400	273/4500	1320kg	1371kg	247	5.0	4.5	175	+ The Cayman comes of age - Err...	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman GTS (981)	219 F	2014-16	6/3436	335/7400	280/4750	1345kg	-	253	4.9	-	177	+ Tweaks improve an already sublime package - Slightly 'aftermarket' looks	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman GT4 (981)	265 F	2015-16	6/3800	380/7400									

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MAKE & MODEL

	ISSUE NO.	PRICE ON YEARS ON SALE	ENGINE 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
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 GT86 always wanted to be - Limited UK supply ★★★★★
Toyota GT86	286 F	2012-20	4/1998	197/7000	151/6400	1240kg	1227kg	161	7.6	6.9	140	+ Puts playfulness ahead of outright performance - Feels strategically hobbled ★★★★★
Toyota GR Supra 2.0	287 F	£50,545	4/1998	254/5000	295/1550	1395kg	-	185	5.2	-	155	+ Avoids the edginess of the 3-litre Supra - Lacks feel, feedback and bite ★★★★★
Toyota GR Supra 3.0	325 F	£57,130	6/2998	335/5000	369/1600	1502kg	-	227	4.6	-	155	+ Better than its BMW Z4 cousin, especially with a manual - Not better than an M240i ★★★★★
Toyota MR2 (Mk1)	237 F	1984-89	4/1587	122/6600	105/5000	977kg	-	127	8.2	-	124	+ Mid-engined fun comes no more affordable - Finding a good one will take time ★★★★★
TVR Sagaris	265 F	2005-07	6/3996	406/7000	349/5000	1078kg	-	383	3.7	-	185	+ Looks outrageous - 406bhp feels a touch optimistic ★★★★★
TVR Tuscan S (Mk2)	076 F	2005-07	6/3996	400/7000	315/5250	1100kg	-	369	4.0	-	185	+ Possibly TVR's best ever car - Aerodynamic 'enhancements' ★★★★★

SUPERCARS / HYPERCARS



OUR CHOICE

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



BEST OF THE REST

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

Aston Martin DBS (Superleggera)	264 F	£238,725	12/5204	715/6500	664/1800	1770kg	-	410	3.4	-	211	+ Broad spread of talents - It's not really 'Superlight' ★★★★★
Aston Martin DBS (Superleggera) Volante	273 F	£257,125	12/5204	715/6500	664/1800	1863kg*	-	390	3.6	-	211	+ Dazzling looks, immense performance - Width and weight bring compromises ★★★★★
Aston Martin DBS 770 Ultimate	311 F	£314,000	12/5204	759/6400	664/1800	1770kg	-	436	3.4	-	211	+ Chassis refinements - We're not sure it needed the extra power... ★★★★★
Aston Martin Vanquish S (Mk2)	260 F	2017-18	12/5935	595/7000	465/5500	1739kg	-	348	3.5	3.9	201	+ Noise, poise, drama and charm - Not as rounded as the DB11 ★★★★★
Aston Martin Vanquish S (Mk1)	110 F	2005-07	12/5935	520/7000	425/5800	1875kg	-	282	4.8	4.9	201	+ Vanquish joins the supercar greats - A tad intimidating at the limit ★★★★★
Aston Martin Valour	325 F	£1.5m	12/5204	705/6450	555/4000	1780kg	-	402	<3.5	-	c200	+ Looks, rarity and a V12 with a manual 'box - You might have more fun in a Vantage ★★★★★
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 (Mk2)	234 F	2015-19	10/5204	533/7900	398/6500	1640kg	-	330	3.5	-	198	+ All the R8 you really need - You can't get a manual gearbox ★★★★★
Audi R8 V8 (Mk1)	284 F	2007-15	8/4163	424/7900	317/4500	1560kg	1624kg	276	4.6	4.1	188	+ A true 911 alternative - The V8 engine got dropped too soon ★★★★★
Audi R8 V10 (Mk1)	320 F	2009-15	10/5204	518/8000	391/6500	1620kg	-	325	4.1	3.9	194	+ Real supercar feel - The V8 is cheaper, and still superb ★★★★★
Bugatti Chiron	244 F	2016-22	16/7993	1479/6700	1180/2000	1995kg	-	753	2.5	-	261	+ Backs up the numbers with feel and emotion - Limited top speed(!) ★★★★★
Bugatti Chiron Super Sport	307 F	2021-22	16/7993	1578/7050	1180/2250	1995kg	-	804	2.4	-	273	+ Hit 304.77mph in pre-production form - Are you Andy Wallace enough to go there? ★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron 16.4	134 F	2005-11	16/7993	987/6000	922/2200	1888kg	-	531	2.5	2.8	253	+ Superbly engineered four-wheel-drive quad-turbo rocket - Er, lacks luggage space? ★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron 16.4 Super Sport	151 F	2010-11	16/7993	1183/6400	1106/3000	1838kg	-	654	2.5	-	258	+ Was once the world's fastest supercar - Limited to 258mph for us mere mortals ★★★★★
Bugatti EB110	078 F	1991-95	12/3500	552/8000	451/3750	1618kg	-	347	3.6	-	213	+ Superbly engineered four-wheel-drive quad-turbo rocket - It just fizzed out ★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette Z06 (C8)	310 F	£135,000	8/5463	670/8400	460/6300	1561kg*	-	436	2.6	-	195	+ Mighty engine; absorbing driving experience - Some steering feel wouldn't go amiss ★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette Z06 (C7)	227 F	2015-19	8/6162	650/6000	650/3600	1598kg	-	413	3.7	-	196	+ Mind-boggling raw speed; surprisingly sophisticated - Edgy when really pushed ★★★★★
Ferrari 296 GTB	305 F	£245,000	6/2992	819/8000	546/6250	1470kg*	1660kg	566	2.9	-	205	+ Intriguingly powerful, responsive, makes a success of hybrid tech - It's rather pricey ★★★★★
Ferrari 296 GTS	304 D	£279,248	6/2992	819/8000	546/6250	1540kg*	-	540	2.9	-	205	+ Magical when you're in its groove - Lacks the last degree of control of the GTB ★★★★★
Ferrari F8 Tributo	281 F	2019-23	8/3902	710/8000	568/3250	1435kg	-	503	2.9	-	211	+ Ferrari's best series-production V8 ever - It's hybrids after this ★★★★★
Ferrari 488 GTB	228 F	2015-19	8/3902	661/6500	561/3000	1475kg	-	455	3.0	-	205+	+ Staggeringly capable - Lacks a little of the 458's heart and excitement ★★★★★
Ferrari 488 Pista	262 F	2018-20	8/3902	710/8000	568/3000	1385kg	-	521	2.9	-	211+	+ Searingly fast and effortlessly capable - Takes a while to fully appreciate it ★★★★★
Ferrari 458 Italia	288 F	2009-15	8/4497	562/9000	398/6000	1485kg	-	384	3.4	3.2	202+	+ An astounding achievement - Paddleshift only ★★★★★
Ferrari 458 Speciale	315 F	2013-15	8/4497	597/9000	398/6000	1395kg	-	435	3.0	-	202+	+ evo Car of the Year 2014 - If you don't own a regular 458, nothing ★★★★★
Ferrari F430	320 F	2004-10	8/4308	483/8000	343/5250	1449kg	-	339	4.0	-	196+	+ Just brilliant - Didn't you read the plus point? ★★★★★
Ferrari 430 Scuderia	274 F	2007-10	8/4308	503/8500	347/5250	1350kg	1374kg	378	3.6	3.5	198	+ Successful F1 technology transplant - Likes to shout about it ★★★★★
Ferrari 360 Modena	163 F	1999-2004	8/3586	394/8500	275/4750	1390kg	-	288	4.5	-	183+	+ Worthy successor to 355 - Not quite as involving as it should be ★★★★★
Ferrari 360 Challenge Stradale	274 F	2003-04	8/3586	420/8500	275/4750	1280kg	-	333	4.1	-	186	+ Totally exhilarating road-racer - Automated single-clutch 'box dates it ★★★★★
Ferrari F355 Berlinetta	231 F	1994-99	8/3496	374/8250	268/6000	1350kg*	-	281	4.7	-	183	+ Looks terrific, sounds even better - Are you kidding? ★★★★★
Ferrari 348 GT Competizione	274 F	1993	8/3404	316/7200	239/5000	1180kg*	-	276	5.0	-	175	+ Utterly absorbing, with exceptional dynamics - Steering a little woolly ★★★★★
Ferrari 812 Superfast	275 F	2017-23	12/6496	789/8500	529/7000	1630kg	-	492	2.9	3.1	211	+ Incredible engine - Finding opportunities to exploit it ★★★★★
Ferrari 812 GTS	280 F	£293,150	12/6496	789/8500	529/7000	1645kg*	-	487	3.0	-	211+	+ A brilliant return for the front-engined V12 Ferrari Spider - There won't be many more ★★★★★
Ferrari 812 Competizione	292 F	£446,970	12/6496	819/9250	510/7000	1487kg*	-	560	2.9	-	211+	+ Phenomenally exciting - Requires plenty of respect at all times ★★★★★
Ferrari F12 Berlinetta	275 F	2012-17	12/6262	730/8250	509/6000	1630kg	-	455	3.1	-	211+	+ 730bhp isn't too much power for the road - Super-quick steering is an acquired taste ★★★★★
Ferrari F12tdf	230 F	2017	12/6262	769/8500	520/6250	1520kg	-	514	2.9	-	211+	+ Alarmingly fast - Doesn't flow like a 458 Speciale ★★★★★
Ferrari SF90 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 SF90 GTD	161 F	2011-12	12/5999	661/8250	593/6250	1605kg	-	418	3.4	-	208+	+ One of the truly great Ferraris - Struggles for traction on poor surfaces ★★★★★
Ferrari SF75 Fiorano Handling Pack	200 F	2002-06	12/5748	508/7250	434/5250	1688kg	-	298	3.7	4.2	205+	+ Fiorano pack makes 575 truly great - It should have been standard ★★★★★
Ferrari 550 Maranello	275 F	1996-2002	12/5474	478/7000	420/5000	1690kg	-	287	4.4	-	199	+ Everything - Nothing ★★★★★
Ferrari GT4 Lusso T	246 D	2017-20	8/3855	602/7500	560/3000	1865kg	-	328	3.5	-	199	+ Effortless, comfortable GT - Misses the richer soundtrack of the V12 ★★★★★
Ferrari GT4 Lusso	264 F	2016-20	12/6262	680/8000	514/5750	1920kg	-	360	3.4	-	208	+ Rear-wheel steering increases agility - Not as engaging as other Ferraris ★★★★★
Ferrari FF	194 F	2011-15	12/6262	651/8000	504/6000	1880kg	-	347	3.7	-	208	+ Four seats and 4WD, but a proper Ferrari - Looks divide opinion ★★★★★
Ferrari 612 Scaglietti	090 F	2004-11	12/5748	533/7250	434/5250	1875kg	-	289	4.0	4.3	199	+ Awesomely capable grand tourer - See above ★★★★★
Ferrari 456 GT	209 F	1992-97	12/5474	436/62500	406/4500	1690kg*	-	262	5.2	-	186	+ A genuine GT supercar - Running costs ★★★★★
Ferrari SF90 Stradale	299 F	£376,048	8/3990	986/7500	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	1650kg	-	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	c£2m	12/6496	828/9250	514/7250	1485kg*	-	566	2.9	-	211	+ Epic naturally aspirated V12; sports prototype looks - We didn't get invited to buy one ★★★★★
Ferrari LaFerrari	203 F	2013-15	12/6262	950/9000	664/6750	1574kg	-	613	3.0	-	217+	+ Perhaps the greatest Ferrari ever - Brakes lack a touch of precision on track ★★★★★
Ferrari Enzo	275 F	2002-04	12/5999	651/7800	485/5500	1365kg	-	485	3.7	3.5	217+	+ Intoxicating, exploitable - Cabin detailing falls short of a Zonda or F1's ★★★★★
Ferrari F50	275 F	1995-97	12/4699	513/8500	347/6500	1230kg*	-	424	3.9	-	202	+ A better driver's Ferrari than the 288, F40 or Enzo - Not better looking, though ★★★★★

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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 LP1 800-4	300 F	£200,000,000	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 LP640	275 F	2006-11	12/6496	801/8000	487/6600	1665kg*	-	385	3.8	-	211	+ Compelling old-school supercar - You'd better be on your toes	★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago LP670-4 SV	200 F	2009-11	12/6496	661/8000	487/6500	1565kg*	-	429	3.3	3.2	212	+ A supercar in its truest, wildest sense - Be prepared for stares	★★★★★
Lamborghini Diablo VT 6.0	275 F	2000-02	12/5992	543/7100	457/5500	1625kg*	-	343	3.9	-	208	+ Best-built, best-looking Diablo of all - People's perceptions	★★★★★
Lexus LFA/LFA 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 Artura Spider	325 D	£221,500	6/2993	691/7600	531/2250	1560kg	-	450	3.0	-	205	+ Engine and chassis revisions take Artura to new heights - Generic looks	★★★★★
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 - Errm...	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.1)	182 F	2007-09	6/3600	409/7600	298/5500	1395kg	1452kg	398	4.3	4.3	192	+ Runner-up at evo Car of the Year 2006 - Ferrari 599 GTBs	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.1)	112 F	2007-09	6/3600	409/7600	298/5500	1375kg	-	302	4.2	-	193	+ evo Car of the Year 2007 - A chunk more money than the already brilliant GT3	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.2)	221 F	2003-05	6/3600	376/7400	284/5000	1380kg	-	277	4.5	4.3	190	+ evo Car of the Year 2003 - Chassis a bit too track-focused for some roads	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (996.2)	068 F	2004-05	6/3600	375/7400	284/5000	1360kg	-	280	4.4	-	190	+ An even more focused version of the superb GT3 - Limited supply	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT2 (996.2)	072 F	2004-06	6/3600	475/5700	472/3500	1420kg	-	338	4.0	-	198	+ Revisions made it even more of a star than the 456bhp 996.1 GT2 - Care still required	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.1)													

GREATEST MISSES



Renault Sport Clio 200 Turbo

This misguided departure from the French brand's hot hatch heritage saw the Clio fall from grace

'T HE TROUBLE WAS,' SAID MY INTERVIEWEE, with a charismatically thick French accent and more than a wry smile, 'we spent all the money on the old car...'

We weren't meant to be chatting about hot Clios, but our man knew about them better than most – I'd just better not drop him in it here – and the conversation had strayed onto one of the most controversial cars ever to wear the now-defunct Renault Sport badge: the final, turbocharged Clio RS of 2013.

I had always wondered what those on the inside really thought of the 200 Turbo. At the time, Renault said the model was aimed at broadening the market appeal of the firm's hot hatches, which seemed a dangerous sentiment. Broadening appeal smacks of trying to have one's cake and eat it, especially so in this case, as the previous Clio RS was a bona fide **evo** icon, a car whose gunslinger-esque shadow still looms large over the hot hatch market to this day.

What he was really saying was that in the increasingly bean-counter-led modern car

industry, the idea of spending a small fortune on a 'cheap' car to make it as bespoke as the earlier Clio 197/200 had been was about as welcome as the notion of unveiling one with a turbodiesel lump in the nose. Whoever signed off on the 197 project was either a passionate enthusiast, brave or crazy – or perhaps all three.

I ran one of the very first 197s as a long-termer and I was besotted with it. Those early cars weren't perfect, but I simply couldn't believe what you got for such an entirely reasonable price tag: a screaming naturally aspirated engine producing just shy of 100bhp per litre, those bespoke wide-arch panels, a working rear diffuser. It felt like a little jewel in your hands; I never felt like that about the 200 Turbo.

Let's be clear: like the subjects of many of these Greatest Misses pieces, the 200 Turbo wasn't a bad car per se. It was fast, well equipped, covered ground ably, and was far better at long journeys than the old car. If you weren't really fussed about driving, or cars, it was – and I cringe to say this – an improvement. But that's not the point, is it?

Although Dickie Meaden was generally positive on the car's European launch (**evo** 182), despite misgivings about the engine and auto 'box (no manual was offered), by the time of the UK group test (issue 184) the car slumped to fourth in a five-car test. To quote David Vivian in the conclusion: 'From hero to zero. It almost makes you want to weep.' Ouch. The Mk7 Fiesta ST won the test, by the way, and you know how many they went on to sell of those.

The turbocharged Clio did get better. In 2016 the 220 Trophy model offered more power and the firmer Cup chassis as standard, but the essential flavour of the car remained. Arguably the stillborn RS16 version, with its 271bhp Mégane RS drivetrain – manual gearbox included – and chunky arch extensions, could have added some much-needed gloss, but it had to step aside for the imminent Alpine A110. They weren't allowed to make both, and they surely made the right decision within those imposed restraints.

That new icon arrived soon after, and I, like most, never gave the 200 Turbo another thought.



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