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– Ferrari and McLaren  
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**On road and track in the new F-type**

### F-type V8 S v

Aston Martin V8 Vantage

### F-type V6 S v

Porsche 911

### Plus

What about the bargain **Boxster**?

### Also inside

New Audi RS6

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JUNE 2013

# Ed Speak

‘That we had a Boxster, a 911 and an Aston along for comparison made it an even more significant occasion’



**IT'S BEEN AN INCREDIBLE MONTH. AFTER BEING** bombarded with information from Jaguar telling us just how good the F-type is, it was time to find out for ourselves. It's fair to say that when Dickie, Harry, Henry, Mike and I descended on the Bedford Autodrome to greet the V6 S and the V8 S and take our first drives, we were feeling properly excited.

That we had a Boxster, a 911 and an Aston Martin along for comparison made it an even more significant occasion – we knew that if the F-type performed well against these cars, then it truly would be worth the hype. I won't deliver the verdict here, but I hope you enjoy the feature: it's the only verdict you'll read that puts **evo's** central tenet of 'the thrill of driving' at the core of the review.

After this, it was time to nervously hand over my McLaren 12C long-termer to Dickie, who was about to find out if Audi's new R8 V10 Plus could realistically take on the might of Woking and the flair of Maranello. The 458 is the established champ in the mid-engined supercar stakes, a car with an impossibly effervescent character. The 12C is an absolute weapon of speed, significantly faster in a straight line and with chassis tech that makes the Audi look ancient. An unfair test? I think you'd better turn to page 80 to find out...

Late in the schedule, I went to France to try the new Golf GTI. It was an unusual trip in that VW had arranged a full day, five cars, three engineers, a spare set of tyres and an empty race track – for me and one other journo. I appreciate that this sounds like I'm the jammiest sod on the planet, but the best bit was being able to spend decent time with the architects of the car – real professionals with a deep understanding of vehicle dynamics. If I'm honest, it was a little humbling; while it's rewarding to be able to interpret car dynamics for you, the reader, there must be real satisfaction in actually engineering a car. I always love speaking to vehicle engineers – so if that's you, feel free to drop me an email at [nickt@evo.co.uk](mailto:nickt@evo.co.uk) for a chat.

Lastly, we've got a great prize on offer this month. We're offering you the chance to join us on the 'evo Triangle' in North Wales, with two days and two nights at a spa hotel. Find out more at [win.evo.co.uk](http://win.evo.co.uk).

**ck Trott** Editor



## Across the evo universe this month

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### EVO TOURS

evo has joined forces with Petrolhead Nirvana to offer some fantastic driving tour deals. See p127 for more details

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# evo

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*'There's something wonderful about the way the R8 summons such monstrous pace'*



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**Innovation  
that excites**



\*Only available on models equipped with 4WD 1.6 DIG-T. Model shown is a Juke n-tec 1.6 petrol priced at £16,295 On The Road with optional metallic paint at £500. Models subject to availability. Google™ Send-to-car and Google™ Places roaming charges and/or data usage may apply. Nissan is not responsible for any equipment replacement or upgrades, or associated costs that may be required for continued operation due to service changes. Google™ wordmark and Fuel consumption figures for Juke range are: URBAN 28.8-48.7mpg (9.8-5.8L/100km), EXTRA URBAN 47.1-67.3mpg (6.0-4.2L/100km),





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# Veyron breaks another record

**Supercar focus** Behind the scenes of the world's fastest cars

Why Bugatti is determined to stay at the top of the speed tree – and how its quest for power will benefit the Veyron's successor

Words: Harry Metcalfe



**B**UGATTI HAS REVEALED more details about the model it will launch when production of the Veyron Grand Sport ends in 2015. And the good news for the world's thrill-seeking billionaires is that the next car will raise the bar on power and performance even higher.

**evo** caught up with Bugatti boss Wolfgang Schreiber as the company set another world speed record, itself an eloquent riposte to some recent criticism of its previous efforts. The Guinness Book of Records recently briefly withdrew recognition of the 267mph that Bugatti's chief test

driver Pierre-Henri Raphanel clocked in 2010 – then acknowledged as the outright production car speed record – because the Veyron Super Sport used had had its speed limiter removed, modifying it from the 'standard specification' that Guinness insists on. However, Guinness later reinstated the record, agreeing that the limiter removal did not 'alter the fundamental design of the car or its engine'.

Bugatti invited **evo** along to witness Chinese racing driver (and supercar collector) Anthony Liu set a new record on April 6, this time for an open-topped car. He drove a Veyron Grand Sport Vitesse at a heady 254.04mph

on VW's Ehra-Lessien test track in northern Germany, creating a record verified by the German TÜV. Bugatti is marking the event by producing eight identical 'WRC' versions of the Veyron Grand Sport Vitesse, priced at €1.99million (£1.69million) plus local taxes. Six had already been sold as we closed for press.

Only 68 of the total production of 150 Grand Sports now remain unsold. Once they're built, Veyron production will end. After the celebratory champagne had been sprayed at Ehra, we took the opportunity to ask Dr Schreiber how Bugatti is planning to replace its seminal hypercar.

'We are continuing to develop a completely different car to the Veyron, along the lines of the Galibier four-door concept we first showed in 2009,' Schreiber told **evo**. 'We now have several options to consider, but we've not decided on the final one.'

One thing that is certain is that there are no plans to overlap Veyron production or to create more than one new model: 'Bugatti will continue to be a one-model company,' Schreiber told us emphatically. What is clear is that Bugatti is determined to keep its 'world's fastest' bragging rights, whatever the Guinness Book of Records might say. Although Schreiber





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XKR-S GT revealed – and more hardcore Jags in the pipeline



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New WRX STI gets bespoke design – but UK could miss out



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## PEUGEOT HEADS FOR THE PEAK

Loeb to drive a 208 T16 on Pikes Peak hill climb this summer



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## TIFF TALKS TEAM ORDERS

Needell's views on the team-mate rows that have shaken FI



wise from

**left:** Anthony Liu and Wolfgang Schreiber with their record certificate; next Bugatti will be a development of the Galibier concept; our man Metcalfe tries the record-breaking car; open-topped Veyron reached 254mph; quad-turbo W16 could be tuned to 1500bhp

### 'Work is continuing on an even more powerful version of the W16 engine'



wouldn't discuss it, other sources within the company told **evo** that work is continuing on an even more powerful version of the W16 engine, with an output of up to 1500bhp being mooted (for reference, the Grand Sport Vitesse puts out 1183bhp).

The new engine is expected to be used to power an ultimate, final version of the Veyron, as well as its successor. The final Veyron will be both lighter and quicker-accelerating than any of its forebears, although it's unlikely to go faster because current tyre technology doesn't allow it. Early speculation that this very special Veyron would be at this year's

Frankfurt show looks wide of the mark, but we can expect to see it next year.

Back on the record, Schreiber was happy to acknowledge a future for the remarkable 8-litre, quad-turbo W16 engine, and said Bugatti is unaffected by the move towards cutting CO2 that is now a factor in engine planning, even for the likes of Ferrari. 'Currently there are no plans to develop a smaller engine for future Bugatti models,' he said. 'CO2 reduction is not a major target for us, it's all about our cars being the ultimate. We operate under the umbrella of the VW Group when it comes to "fleet average" CO2 anyway, which helps us a lot.'

He was also happy to confirm that Bugatti won't join the growing trend for making performance SUVs, saying it's 'not right' for the Bugatti brand. The new car could well be a hybrid, though – not to reduce emissions, but because of forthcoming legislation.

'This is an area we are looking into,' Schreiber admitted, 'because our cars are often driven in city centres. In the future, I expect to see legislation introduced in some major cities which only allows cars using electric power to drive in their central areas, so it's important for us to look for ways to allow our customers to do this.'

And Schreiber remains adamant

that Bugatti will remain on top of the pile in terms of both performance and exclusivity.

'I want to make the engineering even more beautiful on our next car, just as we see on Bugattis from the past,' he said. 'The most important factor for me is our next car must be seen as the ultimate, something we achieved with the Veyron. That's what people expect from Bugatti, and that's what we will continue to deliver to our customers.' ❌



**VIDEO**

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Visit [youtube.com/evotv](http://youtube.com/evotv)



# Maserati targets BMW with Ghibli

V6 four-door with up to 406bhp. Sub-£50k diesel version also confirmed **Words:** Mike Duff



**M**ASERATI REVEALED an all-new Ghibli saloon at the Shanghai motor show in China, the first model to carry the name since 1997.

The Ghibli is based on a shortened version of the platform that underpins the new Quattroporte, and will be powered by a range of turbocharged V6 engines, including a diesel – a first for Maserati. It's being pitched as a rival to top-spec versions of the BMW 5-series and Mercedes E-class, with prices set to start from under £50,000 when it goes on sale later this year.

The design bears a strong similarity to that of the Quattroporte – hardly surprising given the two cars were designed alongside each other by a team led by both Maser's own styling boss, Marco Tencone, and Fiat Group's head of design, Lorenzo Ramaciotti. Maserati styling cues are all in place, including triple vents set into the front wings and a trident badge on each C-pillar. At 4.9 metres in length,

the Ghibli is just smaller than the old Quattroporte, but over 30cm shorter than the new, bigger QP.

Three V6 engines will be available. The new 3-litre V6 diesel is a developed version of the VM-sourced engine already in use by Chrysler and Jeep, and although final specs haven't been announced, we're told that it will produce 'around 270bhp'.

Unsurprisingly, the bulk of its sales are expected to be in Europe and the UK. The new turbocharged petrol V6 also displaces 3 litres, and will come in 327bhp and 406bhp states of tune.

An eight-speed ZF automatic gearbox is standard, and all UK cars will be rear-drive. Other markets will get the option of a four-wheel-drive version of the most powerful V6 but, as with the 4wd Quattroporte, Maserati says it's too expensive to produce a right-hand-drive version.

Pricing hasn't been confirmed yet, but company insiders promise that the diesel version will come in under



£50k – putting it into direct contention with cars like the £48,000 BMW 535d M Sport. The 327bhp petrol version will cost around £55k and the 406bhp model will be 'in the low sixties'. The car can be ordered from July, with first UK deliveries expected in the autumn.

The Ghibli is the spearhead of Maserati's plans to dramatically increase sales. The brand has set itself the ambitious target of selling 50,000 cars worldwide a year, and Maserati UK reckons it will be able to shift 1000 Ghiblis here in 2014. Anything near those numbers will constitute a huge turnaround – the firm sold just 400 cars in Britain last year.

Despite the diesel engine, the Ghibli looks like a Maserati, and the company promises it will drive like one too. Its next new model is the Levante SUV, which will likely take Maserati loyalists a bit more time to get used to. ☒

## Ghibli history



MASERATI HAS USED the Ghibli name twice before, but this is the first time it's been applied to a saloon. The original 1967 Ghibli was a V8-powered coupe and roadster, which lasted until 1973. The second iteration, more relevant to **evo** readers, was a boxy 1990s four-seat coupe (pictured) powered by a twin-turbo V6 with up to 330bhp. Our own Harry Metcalfe once owned one...







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# Jaguar takes XKR-S to the max

Hardcore GT version of 542bhp coupe. Extreme F-type also being considered

Words: Mike Duff



## BRAKES

Carbon-ceramic discs come as standard – a Jaguar first



## AERO

Rear wing helps GT generate up to 145kg of downforce



## EXTERIOR

Bonnet louvres eliminate a low pressure point just in front of the windscreen



**T**HE NEW RANGE Rover Sport might have scored the most attention at the recent New York motor show (although getting Daniel Craig to drive it onto the stage can't have been cheap), but it was Jaguar Land Rover's other offering at the show, the Jaguar XKR-S GT, that's likely to win the attention of *evo* readers.

The idea of an even harder-cored version of the already steely XKR-S might not make immediate sense, but the GT is being pitched as a showcase of the lengths Jaguar will go to in developing ultra-performance models, and also of the increasing role that the company's in-house tuning division, ETO (Engineered To Order), is set to play in engineering future über-cars.

The GT uses the same 5-litre supercharged V8 as the existing R-S,

in identical 542bhp tune, but other changes have been comprehensive. The most obvious is the aggressive aero kit, which includes 'strakes' at the front corners, louvres on the bonnet, a rear diffuser and a vast GT3-style wing on the bootlid. All these tweaks work together to produce up to 145kg of downforce. Carbon-ceramic brakes are standard – a first for a Jaguar – with a combination of 398mm front discs gripped by six-piston calipers and 380mm rear rotors with four-pot calipers. Standard 20in alloys are shod with 255/35 Pirelli Corsas up front and 305/30s at the back.

Suspension changes have drawn heavily on the work Jaguar did for the F-type, with arms, wheel bearings, bushes and the rear subframe all developed from F-type parts. The GT also uses the F-type's quicker-gear

steering rack (turn to page 63 to find out what we think of it on the new roadster) and gets a motorsport-style twin-spring set-up, with spring rates claimed to be increased by 68 per cent at the front and 25 per cent at the rear compared to the R-S.

Jaguar claims a 40kg weight saving compared to the R-S and says the identically powered GT is 0.3sec quicker over the 0-62mph dash, taking 3.9sec, a difference that we're told is down to the suspension and traction control revisions. Although theoretically capable of 'over 200mph', the GT sticks with the R-S's 186mph limiter, but the number that Jaguar has really been chasing is the car's Nürburgring lap time; the company claims that the GT will be able to lap the Nordschleife in 'under 7:40'.

The official line at New York was that only 30 GTs would be built, all left-hand drive, with 25 destined for the US and five for Canada. Yet within 24 hours we were being told that another 20 might be produced, suggesting a reasonable amount of interest despite the car's \$174,000 (£130,000) price tag. A right-hand drive version might also be a possibility.

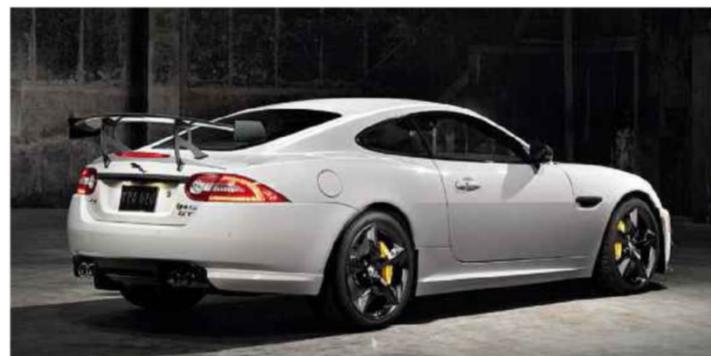
The GT is the latest product of ETO, which JLR insiders have said will be tasked with the production of high-performance variants rather

than projects like the Victoria Beckham Evoque it previously created. As we reported in *evo* 175, Jaguar is seriously considering making a range-topping R-S version of the F-type, with ETO certain to lead the charge if it gets the green light. More controversially, the company is also understood to be debating whether to sanction 'hot' ETO versions of Land Rover products. ☒

## New RR Sport



THE SECOND-GENERATION Range Rover Sport promises to be far better than its predecessor. Sharing its platform with the recently launched Range Rover, it's up to 400kg lighter than the old model. Engine choice in the UK will consist of two V6 diesels (254bhp and 288bhp) and a 334bhp V8 diesel. JLR's familiar 5-litre supercharged V8 will also be offered, with 503bhp giving a 0-62mph time under 5sec.







**Above:** rear end has hints of the BRZ. **Left:** carbonfibre roof would be a Subaru first if it made production

# Subaru plots bold new STI

Bespoke design may get hybrid drivetrain. UK release in doubt **Words:** Stephen Dobie

**T**HE RECENT NEW York motor show yielded some welcome excitement from Subaru, with this WRX STI concept hinting at bold – and, for once, bespoke – styling for the next version of the Japanese brand’s sports saloon.

There are nods to fast Imprezas of old – the hawk-eye headlights, large

bonnet scoop and familiar (though mildly updated) WR Blue paint. There are also hints of a more modern approach to performance, such as a carbonfibre roof to drop the car’s centre of gravity, while the air intakes and a large rear diffuser should offer tangible aerodynamic benefits.

Where Subaru remains frustratingly tight-lipped is on the next WRX STI’s

drivetrain. There have been rumours of a hybrid powerplant as well as a traditional, turbocharged boxer four-cylinder with around 300bhp. But what isn’t in doubt is the use of an all-wheel-drive chassis and a honed focus on grip and cornering ability.

We suspect that the WRX STI concept’s unveil at New York was a symbolic move, and that the next Subaru sports saloon will be sold in US and Japanese markets but will skip the UK. The current Impreza-based STI has already been withdrawn from Britain as the firm concentrates on its SUV range, and reintroducing its most iconic nameplate would represent a major U-turn. If the new STI goes as good as it looks, that’d be a real shame for British Subaru enthusiasts. ☒



**Above:** bright brake calipers stand out; lighting details designed especially for concept

# Camaro bucks eco trend

500bhp from 7 litres of American muscle

**Words:** Stephen Dobie

THE NEW CHEVROLET Camaro Z28’s debut at New York proves not all motor shows are drowning in talk of hybrids and zero emissions. The Corvette Z06’s naturally aspirated 7-litre V8 engine

has been transplanted into the 2+2 coupe to create a good old-fashioned muscle car, yet rather than parading a 0-60mph time, Chevy is boasting of up to 1.05G of cornering grip. Outputs

of 500bhp and 470lb ft combine with a 136kg diet over the ZL1 (air-con, stereo and boot carpet have gone) to produce the most track-focused Camaro yet. US sales begin later this year. ☒



## News in brief



### Special edition Viper ready for the track

The SRT Viper’s 640bhp 8.4-litre V10 engine may be untouched for this ‘Time Attack’ special, but the suspension and brakes are suitably beefed up and there’s a 38kg cut in weight. Apparently it also has the largest tyre contact patch on a production car. Just 33 will be made, sales starting this summer.



### Mercedes CLA45 AMG unveiled

A month after showing the A45 AMG hot hatch, Mercedes revealed the CLA45 AMG saloon at New York. It clothes the same all-wheel-drive, 355bhp 2-litre turbo four drivetrain in a curvier, four-door coupe body. Its 4.6sec 0-62mph time is identical to the A45’s, while its expected £40,000 price is £5k higher.



### Hennessey Venom claims speed record

Hennessey says its Venom GT is the quickest production car in the world available to buy. The 1244bhp supercar achieved 265.7mph – short of the Veyron SS’s 267.8mph, but production Bugattis are limited to 258mph. Hennessey promises the Venom will go on to top 275mph on a longer stretch of tarmac...



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News in brief



**Porsche Panamera gets concept looks**

Four years after its launch, the Porsche Panamera has been given its first major update. The styling has been tidied up, with hints of 2012's Sport Turismo concept, while Eastern markets get a long-wheelbase option. The new 410bhp, 167mph Panamera S E-hybrid is claimed to return 91mpg.



**BMW X4 mimics its big brother**

One of BMW's least surprising new models is the X4, a downsized version of the X6 crossover. Revealed at April's Shanghai motor show as an almost production-ready concept, it's based on X3 underpinnings, with a £3k price premium expected when sales begin in 2014.



**New electric Elise revealed**

The 106-year-old Detroit Electric name has been revived for a new Lotus-based sports car. The SP:01 follows a similar recipe to the Tesla Roadster – electrifying an Elise. A 201bhp electric motor combines a 3.7sec 0-62mph time with a 180-mile range. 999 will be made, priced at around £90,000 apiece.



**Loeb to run 208 at Pikes Peak**

Rally legend gets T16-badged Peugeot for famous hill climb contest **Words:** Stephen Dobie

**P**EUGET IS RETURNING to Pikes Peak this year, and it's taking two headline names there to support its bid for overall victory.

The first is the legendary 'T16' badge, which returns on a suitably pumped up 208. The four-wheel-drive 208 T16 – which will replace the 207 S2000 in rallying next year – complies with the new R5 class and runs a highly tuned 1.6-litre turbocharged engine developing 280bhp and 295lb ft. Technical details of the Pikes Peak T16 hadn't been confirmed as we went to press, but as the car will run in the hill

climb's 'Unlimited' class, it may well pack something even punchier.

The other familiar name in tow is Sébastien Loeb. The nine-time World Rally champion sidesteps across the Peugeot-Citroën group (PSA) aiming to replicate Ari Vatanen's record run in a 405 T16 25 years ago.

'Our objective is to win, so we needed to stack up as many cards as possible in our favour,' said Peugeot brand managing director Maxime Picat. 'I would like to take this opportunity to thank Citroën for this one-off loan of its exceptional champion.'

It's a big effort on Peugeot's part,

and it's already led to suggestions of the 208 elbowing the Citroën DS3 out of PSA's WRC slot. The 2013 Pikes Peak Hill Climb – which runs in Colorado on June 30 – is certainly a high-profile launch pad. **x**



**Above:** Peugeot 405 T16 won Pikes Peak in 1988 in the hands of Ari Vatanen

**First Porsche 991 GT racer hits the track**

454bhp and paddle-shift for factory World Endurance effort **Words:** Stephen Dobie

PORSCHE MAKES ITS full Le Mans comeback in the top LMP1 class in 2014, but this year two factory-backed 911 RSRs will fight Vipers, Corvettes and 458s in the World Endurance Championship's GTE Pro class.

The first 991-based RSR packs a 454bhp 4-litre flat-six and a six-speed sequential 'box, which runs paddle-shift for the first time. Former Le Mans winners Timo Bernhard and Romain Dumas are among the drivers. **x**







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Left: old friends Rosberg and Hamilton have equal status at Mercedes



# TEAM ORDERS CURB RACING SPIRITS



evo's F1 expert says pit wall edicts are ruining what should be a thrilling F1 campaign

Words: Tiff Needell

**W**HILE SEBASTIAN Vettel had to spend three weeks apologising to everyone for being a racing driver at the Malaysian Grand Prix (winning himself and his team acres of coverage as he did so), it was another story at Sepang that was more revealing of the way Formula 1 is going. And Mercedes team principal Ross Brawn must have been delighted that the headlines were all about the Red Bull shenanigans rather than his team's.

As long as the teams continue to insist on regulations that lead them to build cars not naturally suited to the once-admired art of overtaking, there will have to be artificial methods employed to prevent races turning into processions – like DRS, and Pirelli tyres designed not to last.

The fact Pirelli has designed such tyres is to its credit; it's what the company was asked to do, and wear is a major determining factor in the outcome of a modern Grand Prix. Seven winners from five different teams in the first seven races of last year demonstrated the flatness of

that particular playing field.

But there is a downside, too. We've now got a grid of drivers all terrified to push in case their tyres fall apart and they are forced into an extra pit stop or end up trundling around four seconds a lap off the pace. So, of

Vettel couldn't accept, having qualified on pole and having only lost the lead by pitting too early for his swap from intermediate tyres to slicks. The fact that his team-mate Mark Webber then backed him into the two Mercedes behind, hoping



## 'WHILE LEWIS PUSHED AND PRESSED, ROSBERG WAS TAKING A WATCHING BRIEF'

course, the team managers do their best to control that pace.

As most teams insist they have no 'number one' driver, the accepted method of control seems to be that whoever is ahead after the final pit stop gets to stay ahead. Something

it would help him maintain his own lead, only added to Vettel's sense of injustice, and the rest is history.

But it was the formation driving of the two Mercs that interested me more. Why had Lewis Hamilton's Mercedes been so lightly fuelled

in the first place? Engineers are obsessed with saving every kilo, but Hamilton has a reputation for using more than most, and if you can't use the rear tyres fully then you should at least be able to use the engine.

While Lewis pushed and pressed the Red Bulls, his team-mate Nico Rosberg was sitting back and taking a watching brief. Yes, he was behind when they emerged from their final stops, but he had fuel and tyres to spare. Surely if Lewis isn't number one – as Mercedes insists – you'd send Nico to chase the Red Bulls and pressure them into going a bit faster and possibly push them over the 'cliff' where grip disappears. Instead the steady litany on the team radio was 'negative, Nico, negative, Nico.'

So now we know that most of the pack is just cruising around after the final round of pit stops, what do we do? My solution is to make every team nominate a number one driver before the start of each race. Then at least we'd know what was supposed to happen, even if those awkward racing instincts rose to the fore again! ❌





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# Meet the man training the next star car designers

Morgan design chief Matt Humphries is only 29, but he's already tutoring the next generation

Words: Mike Duff



**Above right:** Humphries designed the Morgan AeroMax when he was just 21. **Right:** designs for a modern Volvo P1800 – just one of Humphries' challenges for his Royal College of Art students



**S**O WHERE DOES your career take you after becoming a successful car designer by the age of 25? If you're Matt Humphries, the man who became Morgan's head of design straight out of college, the next step is to teach other people how to create their own stellar cars, as a newly recruited tutor on the Royal College of Art's prestigious Vehicle Design postgraduate course.

The RCA is widely recognised as being one of the best design colleges in the world and has been producing car designers since the course was set up four decades ago. Alumni include the current styling bosses of Aston Martin, Audi, Bentley, Ford, Jaguar, Kia, Nissan and Volvo, among others. People come from all over the world to study there – there are 14 nationalities on the books at the moment – and the course boasts a 98 per cent employment record for its graduates. So popular is the course that capacity has recently been doubled, hence the need for

some new teaching talent.

Humphries will be tutoring at the RCA's Kensington campus two days a week while running his own design consultancy on the side. 'It was time to do something different,' he explains. 'I went for the challenge. I like being here with the type of people who are attracted here. And in a selfish way I

it once was. When I graduated, the car of the year was the Talbot Horizon, and that must have been about an afternoon's work compared to what you see today. Just think of the amount of work that's gone into creating the headlight of an Audi.'

Humphries certainly brings plenty of hands-on experience to his new role.

## 'TO JUDGE FROM THE SPORTY-LOOKING COUPES ON SCREENS, THE FUTURE OF CAR DESIGN IS IN GOOD HANDS'

think I'm getting as much out of this as they are.'

Dale Harrow, dean of the RCA's school of design and the head of the programme, is unequivocal when asked why he selected Humphries as a tutor: 'The RCA's reputation has always been that the staff practise design. We want people who have experienced the world we're preparing the students for. The amount of design in a car these days is enormous compared to what

Having joined Morgan straight from studying vehicle design at Coventry, he was responsible for the AeroMax, Aero SuperSports and 3 Wheeler. He's still only 29, younger than several of the students he's now teaching.

On the day we visit, the afternoon session consists of first-years discussing the assignment Humphries gave them last week – sketching a modern interpretation of the Volvo P1800 coupe. The standard of work

is intimidatingly high, all of it being displayed on either laptops or iPads, with some of these hastily sketched renderings looking like they could be turned straight into production cars. But tutors and students alike are merciless when asked to give feedback: 'the back end is too tall', 'I don't think you've got the stance right', 'it looks more like a Honda to me'.

Some of the designs are predictably mad – I particularly like the idea of a car covered with LEDs that illuminate like a graph to represent speed and deceleration. But to judge from the number of sporty-looking coupes on screens and bits of paper, the future of car design is in good hands.

Humphries is keeping his hand in with various projects via his consultancy, with more in the pipeline. 'It's brilliant,' he says. 'Being here you're right on the pulse. I can bring them some experience from what happens out there, but I'm getting to see what the next generation is thinking. This is the future, right here.' ❧



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## This month

### VOLKSWAGEN GOLF GTI

p28



Seventh generation of German hot hatch legend

### MERCEDES-BENZ SL65 AMG

p34



V12 convertible is big on power (and price)

### AUDI RS6 AVANT

p36



552bhp super-estate, now with only eight cylinders

### AUDI S3

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M135i's four-ringed rival is sampled in Munich

### KTM X-BOW GT

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Austrian track warrior is tweaked for touring

### ARIEL ATOM CUP

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Somerset giant-killer gets full race-spec version

### PORSCHE CAYMAN

p47



New base model is tested on British roads

### SEAT IBIZA CUPRA

p48



Visual tweaks improve sporty Spanish hatch

## The test team

*evo*'s road testers have experienced a real variety of cars over the years, but what are the cheapest and most expensive cars they've ever tested?



### HARRY METCALFE

Editorial director

'My cheapest was a Fiat Punto Sporting at £11,500. The Veyron Vitesse WRC in this issue is the most expensive – £2.09m.'



### NICK TROTT

Editor

'Cheapest? Daihatsu Charade back in '97, around £6k new. Most expensive? Bugatti Grand Sport Vitesse at £1.86million.'



### MIKE DUFF

Motoring editor

'From the sublime – the £925,000 Bugatti Veyron – to the completely ridiculous – the £4,999 Perodua Nippa.'



### HENRY CATCHPOLE

Features editor

'Veyron Grand Sport – value: c£1.4million – and the £7145 Chevrolet Matiz from our Hire Car Challenge.'



### JETHRO BOVINGDON

Contributing editor

'Cheapest was a £7520 Fiat Seicento Sporting. Most expensive was the Veyron Grand Sport at £1.4million.'



### DAVID VIVIAN

Contributing road tester

'Eight £925k Veyrons are worth more than all the 17,000 Sinclair C5s – at £399 each – that were ever made.'

# Driven



Test location: Circuit du Grand Sambuc, France GPS: 43.58129, 5.60186

## Volkswagen Golf GTI

With nearly four decades of history to uphold, and packed with modern technology, can the seventh-generation Golf deliver the ultimate hot hatch thrill?





**T**

**THE GOLF GTI SHOULD**

be the undisputed hot hatch champion of the world. Now in its seventh iteration and 37th year, I'd wager no other car of its genre has ever benefitted from more engineering man-hours, development miles or intellectual effort. As I arrive at the magnificent Circuit du Grand Sambuc near Aix-en-Provence, I'm half expecting it to fly, exceed the speed of

sound and discover a cure for the common cold.

The truth is a little less exaggerated, but tantalising nonetheless. The mk7 GTI offers a variety of new driver-focused technologies: an electrically controlled mechanical diff, a revised engine with variable valve timing, and a chassis with configurable dynamics. Talking to the engineers, a philosophy of improved body control, more immediate responses and increased performance emerges.

'The car should do what you want it to do,' explains Karsten Schebsdat, manager of passenger car chassis tuning. 'It's a car you should feel familiar with after just a few kilometres,' concurs driving dynamics engineer Lars Frömmig. I'm then shown a number of slides that demonstrate increased lateral G, better acceleration, less slip angle (or 'Schwimmwinkel' – great word) and, of course, better lap times.





## 'The speed carried through the faster corners is eye-opening – even acting

Time to find out if the reality lives up to the promise. Its 9am, we have until 6pm and 'a spare set of tyres should you require them'. Blimey. We have a manual Performance Pack version of the car, which costs £980 more than the standard GTI and gives you ten extra horses (taking the total to 227bhp), the trick diff and larger front brakes – up from 312/25mm (diameter/thickness) to 340/30. Both the Performance Pack and the standard GTI models have vented discs on the front, of course, but the PP gets vented discs on the rear too. We also have Adaptive Chassis Control (another £795), while Driver Profile Selection – which allows you to configure the ACC settings, amongst other things (see box, right) – is standard.

The 1984cc engine starts with a button, now a standard feature (adding keyless entry costs £350, though). A distant growl from the twin pipes signals some intent, but your overriding first impression is of calmness and civility. The last three generations of GTI have enjoyed a satisfyingly low seating position, and the mk7

is no different. You notice the signature golf-ball gearknob perched atop a chrome tee and a series of buttons orbiting the base of the lever.

The most exciting button boringly displays 'MODE'. Prod it and you awaken Driver Profile Selection. The central screen reveals swipeable modes – Comfort, Normal, Sport, Eco and Individual. Comfort seems daft with a circuit stretching out ahead, so I try Normal to get a basic understanding of the chassis in a neutral state. In this mode, ESP remains fully active and the clever diff retains a more relaxed character.

First impressions are very good. There's a real linearity to the controls, great weighting and resistance in the pedals, quick steering, and the gearshift throw feels shorter and faster than the mk6 GTI that I have on loan back in the UK for comparison. The Progressive Steering, standard on the GTI, combines an electric motor with a rack-and-pinion set-up. However, the tooth spacing on the rack is variable rather than constant – the aim being a faster response to extreme inputs and fewer turns lock-to-

lock, but without the high-speed instability associated with a conventional 'quick' rack.

There's a very slow, second-gear, right-hand hairpin approaching, so it's time to find out. My brain tells me to place my right hand on the top of the wheel and turn it through 270 degrees. I don't need to. Next lap, I keep my hands at ten-to-three and cross my arms 180 degrees. Simply put, there's no need to shuffle my hands at all during a lap – and, as I find out later, rarely on the road either. Impressive.

Time to up the pace. ACC in Sport means stiffer damping, heavier steering, better throttle response and looser ESP. The chassis tenses noticeably and through a fast chicane, the GTI remains flat and agile. Indeed the speed carried through the quicker corners is eye-opening – even acting the hooligan and suddenly lifting off does nothing but tighten the line. Again, this is deeply impressive – grip across the rear axle is secure and the GTI's stability superb.

On corner exit, the LSD offers impressively strong traction. Once you feel that your apex





## the hooligan and suddenly lifting off does nothing but tighten the line'

speed and exit trajectory are established, you deliver 100 per cent throttle on almost every corner. Indeed, it takes a real leap of faith and a concerted mental effort to bury your right foot in order to experience the full diff effect, but when you do it becomes a natural – if one-dimensional – way to drive. It's a very effective system, but those who have honed their right foot over the years to actually modulate the power delivery will find it rather unchallenging.

The diff pushes power to the wheel that needs it most, rather than reining it in with braking like an electric pseudo-diff. It uses an electric-powered hydraulic pump to apply pressure to a multi-plate coupler (clutch) between the diff gears and the appropriate driveshaft, and an ECU to regulate the power applied to the wheels. 'With this we don't need RevoKnuckle,' says Frömmig, referring to Ford's approach with the Focus RS for controlling torque-steer.

The engineers are reluctant to describe the process as 'torque vectoring' but explain the effect is very similar – it stabilises the front axle,

reduces 'Schwimmwinkel' on the rear axle and, most noticeably, counteracts power understeer. 'For stability in higher-speed corners, this system makes four-wheel drive unnecessary,' explains Manfred Ullrich (responsible for chassis and damper tuning). However, Schebsdat is quick to add that it will be possible to dial in oversteer with a 4wd version. That'll be the 'R' version, then, which is due later this year.

With one set of tyres looking ragged, I take another identical car onto the road. Finding a fantastic stretch on the D3 and D11 near Saint-Paul-lès-Durance, the Golf GTI is faced with a proper test – numerous fourth-gear straights, fast third-gear sweepers and second-gear switchbacks with cambers, hidden dips and virtually no traffic. Here, the accuracy and stable response of the steering displayed on the circuit remains, with acceptable levels of feedback. There's very little kickback, and grip levels are easy to detect both on the way into and out of corners. This allows properly committed driving; you can attack the corners very hard

### Golf GTI 'evo spec'

THE MK7 GOLF GTI comes with a number of options and features. To help you navigate through them, this is how we'd spec the car.

We'd pick the three-door at £25,845 (it looks better) but the five-door is more popular in the UK – worth considering for resale. Same goes for the 'box. We'd go for a manual (and save £1450), but DSG will be more desirable.

The standard car has 217bhp, the Performance Pack 227bhp. We'd option PP (£980), with which you also get the clever electronically controlled LSD. Adaptive Chassis Control is £795 (tick), with Driver Profile Selection (standard) giving you control over ACC, throttle mapping, steering mode and, on PP cars, whether you want the diff in Normal or Sport mode. We'd have the standard 18in alloys rather than the 19s.

The standard 'Jacara' tartan seats are great so we'd stick with those, but we'd spec Oryx White (pearl) at £930. The basic satnav costs £735, so that's another box ticked.

The total? £29,285 – up from £25,845, and approaching BMW M135i money...



## Specification (Performance Pack)

Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 1984cc, turbo
CO2	139g/km
Power	227bhp @ 4700rpm
Torque	258lb ft @ 1500-4600rpm
0-62mph	6.4sec (claimed)
Top speed	155mph (claimed)
Basic price	£26,825

**Right:** Jacara tartan seats give seventh-generation GTI a retro look, and come as standard. **Below:** VW's Progressive Steering system means very little hand movement is required on the wheel



and drive through them without fear of sudden oversteer. 'We have a new type of damper at the rear with better anti-lift properties,' explained Manfred Ullrich.

The mk7 GTI certainly feels much happier over mid-corner bumps than the mk6 GTI. That's not to say the mk7 is better – indeed, the slightly busier rear axle of the mk6 telegraphs useful information to the driver – but it adds to the mk7's more stable, controlled character. The new car can make quite extraordinary progress on the road, the innate sense of solidity encouraging harder and more aggressive driving. The brakes never fade on track or road, the chassis never shudders or shivers over rough tarmac, and the chassis' overall poise is nothing other than settled and contained.

The most notable improvement to the engine is in mid-range torque. The PP GTI delivers 258lb ft – the same as the mk6 Golf R, 51lb ft more than the mk6 GTI and only 22lb ft shy of the impending diesel GTD. While the mk6 GTI accelerated to 62mph in 7.2sec, that speed now arrives in 6.4sec (PP) or 6.5sec (standard).

The revised 'EA888' motor now sports variable valve lift, but without the stepped increase in performance often associated with these systems. The engine, while more efficient, is less engaging than that of the previous model – mostly a result of the mk6's appetite for revs and the power that it delivered higher in the range. The mk6 delivered its 207bhp peak at

6200rpm; the mk7 peaks at 4700rpm. In many ways the mk7 engine's driveability is more like a diesel: you tend to use narrower throttle openings in the mid-range to use the torque, rather than big stabs to stretch the engine to full power. It's a very efficient generator of power, but not one that particularly excites.

I get hopelessly lost on the way back to the track and find myself adding another 30 miles to the journey. Here the car reveals another characteristic – it lives up to the 'GT' element of its title. The 'Jacara' tartan seats are comfy, the driving position relaxed but multi-adjustable, the dials clear and the infotainment excellent. There's little wind or road noise, and the ride in Normal is relaxed. You can imagine yourself driving all the way here from the UK, and finding yourself alert enough for a proper strop on that epic D11.

Back at the track, I take a three-door model – also manual with PP – for a few more laps. The chassis feels the tiniest bit more solid than the five-door I've been driving so far, but there's no reason to think it's the sharper drive. Finally, the track closes and the engineers surround me to get my impressions. I tell the truth, which they take with some pride and – I sense – some disappointment.

Firstly, I congratulate them. The mk7 GTI is better in almost every way than the mk6. The diff and suspension are beautifully resolved and integrated. Balance, grip, poise, agility

– it has it all. The rear axle might not have as much tech as the front, but it's just as impressive – there's a sense of security that allows you to turn in harder and carry greater speed knowing that it won't do anything unexpected.

The main issue is the GTI's ability to excite. The most engaging front-wheel-drive hot hatches take a while to key into. After an hour on track and a couple of hours on the road I felt like the GTI had yielded all of its character. It's not a car I wanted to drive again soon, and indeed the mk6 GTI I drove home from the airport delivered as much, if not more, entertainment.

I appreciate the implication. I'm criticising the car for its near-perfection. But the intangible fun factor that we celebrate at **evo** has been eroded in an evolution that has objectively produced the best hot hatch ever, but one that disappoints under subjective analysis. If you covet driving thrills, but struggle to consider anything other than the badge and kudos of a Golf GTI, park the prejudices and try a Renaultsport Mégane or a Vauxhall Astra VXR. You'll be surprised. ❌

**Nick Trott** (@evoNickTrott)

## Verdict

- ➕ Brilliantly resolved, fine dynamics
  - ➖ Not as adjustable or fun as it should be
- evo rating:** ★★★★★





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**J**

**JUST WHAT IS THE POINT** of the SL65 AMG? And why the hell would you buy one? These are the questions that punch you on the nose when you learn that

this super-SL costs £168,250. That's just £250 less than an SLS and its lovely gullwing doors, or a mere £10,000 less than the SLS Roadster if you like your thrills louder, windier and a bit wobblier. If you insist on a metal retractable roof and slightly gawky looks then there's always the Ferrari California with the Handling Speciale pack at £156k, not to mention the lighter, rortier, V8-powered SL63 – a snip at £110,760. Whichever way you turn there seem to be more exotic, more exciting rivals.

However, none of those rivals has quite got the mumbo of the SL65. The stats go like this: its 6-litre twin-turbocharged V12 develops 621bhp at 4800rpm and an astonishing 737lb ft between 2300 and 4300rpm. So there's its USP – mind-bending torque and the cachet of having 'V12 Biturbo' badges on the side gills. Never mind that it weighs 1950kg to the SL63's 1845kg, and that the V8 car uses the punchy MCT wet-clutch seven-speed automatic gearbox while the 65 has to make do with the more conventional torque-converter 7G-tronic. And don't mention that the SLS weighs 1620kg and uses a dual-clutch transmission...

**Specification**

<b>Engine</b>	V12, 5980cc, twin-turbo
<b>CO2</b>	270g/km
<b>Power</b>	621bhp @ 4800rpm
<b>Torque</b>	737lb ft @ 2300-4300rpm
<b>0-62mph</b>	4.0sec (claimed)
<b>Top speed</b>	155mph (limited)
<b>Basic price</b>	£168,250



Torque, it seems, is outrageously bloody expensive. Now, I won't pretend that a Cerussite matt grey SL65 AMG isn't a very, very lovely thing to spend a few days in. It really is. However, this particular car, with that paint, a carbonfibre exterior package, 'Magic Sky Control' roof and ceramic brakes would retail at £188,775. It needs to be more than lovely, it needs to be spectacular. And when you bumble around town or cruise along A-roads it never hits those heights. The engine is awe-inspiringly powerful but it doesn't have the theatre of an AMG V8 and is almost serenely quiet after the initial start-up bravado (although you do get to hear that quite a lot thanks to stop/start. Well, wouldn't want to emit too much CO2 in your 6-litre biturbo V12...). The ride is quite firm even in Comfort mode and the steering seems a bit too quick for the chassis, so you make jumpy, slightly ragged progress. There seems to be a mismatch between the V12's effortlessness, the quick and feel-free steering and the pretty tough ride quality. It's like the SL65 can't quite cut loose and play the full-on supercar but is savagely wounded as a GT car, too.

However, slowly but surely the SL65 worms its way into your affections. You come to appreciate the complex, expensive engine note and the vast, violent performance that it offers up so seamlessly. It hits hard but it's the weight





📍 Test location: B645, Northamptonshire, UK GPS: 52.32084,-0.49203

## Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG

Twin-turbo V12-engined super-convertible is more powerful than an SLS, but can it really justify having a similar price tag?

Photography: Dean Smith

**Below left:** twin-turbo V12 has 58bhp more than the SLS's V8. **Below and right:** interior has a suitably luxurious finish



of the punch and the way it sustains the force that's addictive. The rear 285/30 ZR19 tyres *j-u-s-t* about cope with the onslaught but you'll want to select the midway 'Sport Handling' ESP mode so you really get to understand and appreciate their plight. Do so and you feel the wheels flare-up at around 2500rpm before being electronically smothered, then spinning up again as you hit peak power at 4800rpm. Turn it off altogether? You can, but I wouldn't recommend it. The engine gets hold of the tyres so quickly, and even when you back off, the momentum built up in the 'box and rear axle keeps the wheels spinning for a sickening

second or so when you just want the world to stop. You could get into a whole lot of trouble very quickly in this car.

Incredibly, despite that almost tidal-like power, the SL65 actually tackles a narrow, frost-ravaged B-road with startling efficiency and at a fearsome pace. The torque (have I mentioned the torque?) papers over the imperfections of the slightly tardy and unresponsive gearbox, the Sport Handling setting is beautifully judged – you can drive right into it and let it set and hold the perfect angle of attack – and the body control with the Sport damper mode selected is superb for a big, heavy car.

The steering is always pretty lifeless but there's good front-end grip, the ceramic brakes have a mushy feel but work superbly, and you find yourself rollicking across the ground at obscene speed, revelling not just in the engine but actually enjoying the chassis, working the brakes hard, really leaning on this wild car. It's not as sharp as an SLS but there is something intoxicating about the way it delivers, like you're (almost) in control of mother nature.

So what is the point of the SL65 AMG? I'm still not sure. I grew to love its sheer might but it doesn't have the sharpness nor the theatre you might expect at this rarefied price point. And it's not exactly a subtle, shrinking violet for those that want monster performance and meek looks. Perhaps the point, then, is that it makes no sense at all. Mercedes and AMG build it because they can. And maybe you buy one just because you can. If I could, I wouldn't. I'd very much like to have a friend with one, though. ❏

**Jethro Bovingdon** (@JethroBovingdon)

### Verdict

- ❏ Chassis just about deals with the power
  - ❏ Price, steering, tough ride, speed limits
- evo rating:** ★★★★★





Test location: Munich, Germany GPS: 48.39102, 11.80615

# Audi RS6 Avant

The big RS is back. But with less power and no V10, does it still have what it needs to take the fight to its AMG and M Power rivals?

**C**ANUTE WILL BE sloshing around in his soggy grave. The tide has turned. This new RS6 is 20bhp less powerful than the previous one. Audi has been the first to call 'enough' in the arms race that we were beginning to think would never end. However, unless you regularly race a Can-Am car or smoke while juggling petrol balloons to unwind after a hard day as Chuck Norris's sparring partner, I can assure you that 552bhp is still plenty. Apart from anything else, torque is now up to 516lb ft compared to 479lb ft in the old car, and this Avant (now the only RS6 offered, although an RS7 'four-door coupe' will be along shortly) has also shed 90kg, so performance is even mightier than before. Perhaps Audi has staged a tactical retreat in the bhp battle in order to outflank Mercedes and BMW in the warp-factor war...

Like the M5, the new RS6 has also lost a couple of cylinders, its engine shrinking to a 4-litre

## Specification

Engine	V8, 3993cc, twin-turbo
CO2	229g/km
Power	552bhp @ 5700rpm
Torque	516lb ft @ 1750rpm
0-62mph	3.9sec (claimed)
Top speed	155mph (limited)
Basic price	£76,985

V8, although it has retained the old V10's two turbos. For much of the time, though, you are actually running around on not just two, but six fewer cylinders than in the previous-generation car, because the new V8 has COD technology. While that might sound rather fishy, the initials actually stand for Cylinder on Demand, which means the engine shuts down the inlet and exhaust valves of cylinders two, three, five and eight when you're driving tamely. This helps the RS6 achieve a creditable 28.8mpg

on the combined cycle. Just as impressively and importantly, the switch from eight to four cylinders and back again is imperceptible.

The other major technical highlight is that this is the first RS model to get adaptive air suspension (which will be standard in the UK). Sadly there isn't a chance for us to try it out on the launch in Germany, as the cars here are all equipped with the optional steel-sprung 'Sports Suspension Plus' set-up with Dynamic Ride Control. Although this has both Comfort and Dynamic modes, only one of these will be in any way useable in the UK because even on the essentially pristine tarmac around Munich, the Dynamic mode is unbearably stiff. It feels like being a small child, sitting on an adult's knee and being constantly jiggled up and down.

Likewise the steering feels artificially heavy in its Dynamic mode, so Comfort is the setting to go for, even when tramping on. Grip is undeniably prodigious, however, and running on massive 21in rims, the RS6 seems to generate





**Below left:** diamond-quilted leather seats are standard, part-Alcantara is an option.  
**Below:** carbon-ceramic brakes also an option



## 'Rock-solid in a straight line, it simply reels in other traffic and then spits it out through the rear diffuser'

so much lateral G that I can only assume the accident you'd have if its 1935kg came unstuck would carry on for weeks. Charging down a flowing piece of German B-road is an adrenalin-filled but also genuinely quite unsettling experience, because although you're in awe of the numbers on the head-up display, you never forget the size of the car that you're piloting. As the speed increases and everything becomes a peripheral blur in the side windows, it's the road that shrinks, not the car.

The RS6 is now fitted with Audi's excellent Sport Differential and you can feel it working and gently pushing the tail round if you get on the power early in a corner (the torque is split 40:60 front to rear), but the rear axle feels a very long way behind you and the effect isn't as pronounced as in smaller models. Largely the RS6 just grips and goes – all the way to 189mph if you spec the Dynamic Plus package.

And to be honest, trying to reach that sort of V-max on the Autobahn is really where the RS6

feels most at home. Rock-solid in a straight line, it simply reels in other traffic and then spits it out through the rear diffuser. It's very impressive and the fact you can do it while transporting enough tools and spares to run Force India for the season makes it somehow even cooler. Fast isn't a synonym for fun, however, and down a B-road I'd rather have the more engaging RS4 and settle for load-lugging for Marussia.

One option that is definitely worth spec'ing is the sports exhaust, because its soundtrack is no more intrusive, it just brings a proper V8 rumble. Without it, the sound is more reminiscent of a large Mégane R26.R under full acceleration, with a violent sucking noise like a hurricane in reverse.

The eight-speed automatic gearbox feels unexpectedly abrupt at times during our drive, as though it's struggling with all the torque, but with its tightly spaced ratios in the lower gears it is undoubtedly a contributing factor in the big Audi's stunning 0-62mph time of 3.9sec.

Worryingly for the RS6, though, that time is not as stunning as the 3.6sec the new Mercedes E63 S 4matic (evo 181) takes for the same sprint. Audi might have emblazoned the front grille of the RS6 with the word 'quattro' in large letters, but it is now not the only manufacturer with four-wheel drive in its performance armoury, and the very real worry for Ingolstadt must be that the Mercedes seems to be deploying it to greater effect and with more involvement.

Perhaps that 20bhp drop in power doesn't signal the beginning of the end of the war, but merely the end of the beginning... ❌

**Henry Catchpole** (@HenryCatchpole)

### Verdict

⊕ A mighty ground-coverer

▣ Is that all you want?

**evo** rating: ★★★★★



# Audi S3

New four-ringed hatchback challenger to BMW's stellar M135i.  
Can it offer a worthy fight?



# H

## HATCHBACKS LIKE THE

new S3 and the BMW M135i (at which the Audi is unequivocally aimed) seem to be just about the most complete cars on sale today. The S3's spec sheet reveals the following numbers: 296bhp and 280lb ft in a car weighing 1395kg mean that 0-62mph is dealt with in 5.2sec (or just 4.8sec if you opt for the six-speed S-tronic DSG), while top speed is limited to 155mph. Allied to this 911 Carrera-rivalling pace is the fact that both 'boxes achieve over 40mpg on the combined cycle. Add in the ability to carry five adults (or two adults and enough stuff to emigrate) and an interior as premium as cars costing double the £30,500 asking price, and you arguably have (along with the similarly fast, frugal, premium and practical BMW) the most well-rounded car available today.

Perhaps one area in which the S3 is a bit of a let-down is the way it looks. It hasn't dropped from the ugly tree, ricocheting off branches on the way down, but it is a bit dull. The four tail pipes are a nice touch and it does sit 25mm lower than the standard A3, but there's not much flair and it looks quite heavy towards the rear in profile, possibly a result of the forthcoming A3 saloon having been designed before the hatchback. The interior is largely an exercise in restrained minimalism, although our test car is equipped with optional sports seats, which have striking (and very Aston Vanquish) diamond leather quilting. The knurled manual gearknob is also quite arresting: it's shaped like a cone with the top sliced off.

## Specification

Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 1984cc, turbo
CO2	162g/km
Power	296bhp @ 5500-6200rpm
Torque	280lb ft @ 1800-5500rpm
0-62mph	5.2sec (claimed)
Top speed	155mph (limited)
Basic price	£30,500

Based on the same MQB platform as the mk7 Golf GTI that editor Trott has driven in this issue (see page 28), albeit here with quattro four-wheel drive, the S3 is extremely polished dynamically. The whole structure of the car feels stiff and agile, and turn-in is almost startlingly quick, even with the steering in its comfort setting. The roads and schedule of the launch aren't the stiffest test of the suspension and handling, but the S3 definitely errs towards quick and secure rather than fun and involving. It slices through longer turns extremely accurately but remains utterly planted, almost egging you on to try and carry more and more speed. Predictably it's the nose that will start to nibble wide first, but if you lift off, the back will come into play quite smartly.

The engine might only be an in-line turbo four, but it is one of the best-sounding that I've heard. There's a lovely hard edge to it and it's deep and cultured. There are also no complaints about the way it develops its power, with a lovely linear delivery that encourages you to use all the revs. The gearshift in the manual



isn't bad, either; although it's a little notchy, it's decently weighted and there's a positivity to the lever moves around the gate. Unfortunately we don't have the time to try the S-tronic 'box, but although it's no doubt efficient and quick, it's probably a safe bet that we'd choose the manual while there's still the option.

The S3 might come alive more on the rough and tumble of British roads, and I sincerely hope it does, because it would be great to have a genuine challenger to the M135i. But for now, all we can conclude is that it is a polished performer just a crucial dash of involvement and an important splash of entertainment away from being the complete package. ☒

**Henry Catchpole** (@HenryCatchpole)

## Verdict

- ☑ Grip, quality, exhaust note
  - ☑ A bit too safe a pair of hands
- evo rating:** ★★★★★



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**Test location:** Massis del Montseny, Spain **GPS:** 41.78420, 2.37788

# *KTM X-Bow GT*

New entry-level X-Bow gets more power and some road-biased tweaks – including a windscreen.  
Can it now finally compete on level terms with Caterhams and Atoms?



‘The eye-popping rate at which the GT sprints between the seemingly endless bends is testament to the car’s raw speed’





**T**HE PAIN DIDN'T KICK in for a day, but my neck's sore now. Serves me right, of course. Every time KTM factory driver Reinhard Kofler gave me the 'You OK?' thumbs-up from the driving seat of his 380bhp X-Bow RR 'Battle'-spec racer, I responded in kind (possibly with a 'Hey, let's go faster' flourish). And so the exit lane was ignored yet again in favour of another one-fifty-four-ish lap of Spain's Circuit de Catalunya as we out-braked/cornered/nerved shoals of inevitably less committed owner-racers preparing for KTM's next 'X-Bow Battle'.

I'm not usually a fan of passenger-seat demos, but here it all came together: a fabulous Catalunya, an impressively on-it Kofler (a young man who kept Lewis Hamilton honest in their earlier racing days) and the most extreme expression of a car that, in road-going form, has only ever given tantalising flashes of its true race-car DNA. Here it was realised by slick tyres, considerable aerodynamic downforce, up to 3G of lateral acceleration and my now-aching neck muscles.

Quite a contrast, this, to *evo's* first UK encounter with the gamble from Graz in 2008. Expectations were sky-high because Austrian motorcycle maker KTM's unique take on the 'extreme sports car' seemed to have it all. A beautifully made F3-style carbon-composite monocoque toting off-the-scale rigidity and safety was mated to a super-reliable (and exploitable) 2.0 TFSI motor and six-speed manual gearbox from Audi. There were high-end development partnerships with Dallara, composites specialists Wethje and chassis tuning ace Loris Biscocchi (Bugatti, Pagani, Koenigsegg). And to cap it all, there was styling that appeared to have been phoned in from another planet. Designer Gerald Kisker took the call. Truly looking like the product of alien

### Specification

<b>Engine</b>	In-line 4-cyl, 1984cc, turbocharger
<b>CO2</b>	189g/km
<b>Power</b>	281bhp @ 6400rpm
<b>Torque</b>	310lb ft @ 3200rpm
<b>0-62mph</b>	4.1sec (claimed)
<b>Top speed</b>	144mph (claimed)
<b>Basic price</b>	£74,000 (estimated)

technology, the X-Bow somehow managed to generate 200kg of downforce at 124mph, despite having very little bodywork in the conventional sense. Its explicit functionality was clearly bike-like, as you'd expect from a company best known for its two-wheeled products, but with everything turned up to 11. That said, the way it concentrated so many angles, slats, separate mouldings, blades of carbon and artfully exposed suspension components into a compact (but wide) four-square form gave it massive, supercar-embarrassing, visual appeal.

Then *evo* associate editor Ollie Marriage and I could hardly wait to pick up the UK's first X-Bow from Chessington and drive it to our usual haunts in north Wales for a showdown with a handful of home-brewed rivals (*evo* 123). Consistent with its extreme, track-focused design, the driver was as exposed to the elements as the formula-style pushrod suspension: no windscreen to protect and deflect, just a tiny pelmet of tinted plastic running along the front edge of the tub. So wearing a lid – something akin to a sensory deprivation chamber on a sunny country road – was a must. Just something you had to endure to enjoy what we thought would be the pure, visceral thrills and excitement served up by such an uncompromising machine.

We took 100-mile stints, alternating between





the X-Bow and the long-term BMW M3 Ollie had brought along as a photo car. What was interesting was that, apart from the tiresome, vision-blurring head buffeting in the KTM, the X-Bow seemed just as comfortable and relaxing to drive as the M3. True, even with the original standard 237bhp engine spec (our car was rumoured to have a little more) and a kerb weight pushing 800 kilos, the X-Bow had the drop on the 414bhp Beemer in a straight line and negotiated empty roundabouts at speeds M3 drivers could only dream about. But it was all accomplished with a supple precision and cool efficiency that was both impressive and, at the same time, slightly disconcerting.

In Wales, the effect was even more glaring. The X-Bow had the pace to live with a Caterham R500, Atom 300 and Lotus 2-Eleven, thanks in part to exceptional brakes and chassis, but it simply refused to get down and dirty, to deliver the drama and excitement people buy this sort of car to experience. In a nutshell, the X-Bow was several shades of wonderful but, by the standards of its class, too anodyne. Costing nearly £50k didn't help.

Interesting problem. The last thing KTM could afford to do was return to the drawing board. And why would it want to when there was clearly so much potential to be tapped and strengths to be exploited? So the evolutionary fixes over the past five years have taken the X-Bow in two directions – one more substantively hardcore with the 296bhp R and its race-ready sibling, the RR. The other is this, the X-Bow GT, the culmination of modifications and tweaks directed at making the four-wheeled KTM a more satisfying, rewarding and focused road car. This has been done through the provision of a frameless wraparound windscreen (heated and equipped with a wash-wipe system), an optional removable soft-top that stows in the cabin and can be used at speeds up to 80mph, and an optional streamlined luggage pod fixed to the engine cover. A UK price has yet to be finalised, but the GT is expected to cost on the dear side of £70k, before options.

The styling has been tweaked, too, with a new, simplified engine cover, narrower headlamp surrounds and revised front bonnet

panels, making the frontal aspect look even more amazingly low and aggressive than it was before. The additional glass perhaps dilutes the race-car purity of the R, but there was no way around that, and you can be sure that the X-Bow GT will still collect more slack-jawed gazes than anything this side of a McLaren P1.

Inside there's been a minor switchgear reshuffle to place more controls on the centre console. Otherwise, once you've unlatched the side screen, which doubles as a door and helpfully eases out and up on a little gas strut, swung your limbs and torso over the tub and slid down onto the Recaro 'seat' – essentially slabs of remarkably comfy moulded foam attached to the tub in a supportive configuration – it's all much the same. The hugely adjustable steering column and pedal box, removable button-festooned steering wheel and rubberised LCD instrument pod that asks you if you're 'Ready to race?' still ramp up the feeling that something special is about to unfold.

The GT gets a slightly retuned version of the R's transversely mid-mounted Audi-sourced 2-litre turbocharged motor with 281bhp





**Top:** GT runs 17in wheels on the front, 18s on the rear. **Above:** side windows double as doors. **Bottom:** exposed suspension



instead of 296, but a mildly pumped-up 310lb ft of torque for better driveability. It's still capable of thumping the X-Bow to 60mph in around four seconds and to 100mph in comfortably under ten. As before, the mildly turbo-cushioned throttle response and linear power delivery conspire to make the acceleration feel less brutal than the figures suggest, but the eye-popping rate at which the GT sprints between the seemingly endless bends of Spain's Massis del Montseny mountain road KTM has chosen as a driving route (Carlos Sainz used to test here, apparently) is testament to the car's raw speed. And the fact that you can now actually hear the engine's somewhat raucous full-throttle rage, admittedly hyped by a sports exhaust, is utterly transformative, immediately giving the X-Bow a sense of drama and character drivers of the screen-less versions are denied. Moreover, the lack of buffeting in the cabin verges on the miraculous. There's less turbulence than you'd experience in a 911 Cabrio or a Merc SL.

This, the enhanced feeling of connection with the outside world, not to mention fresh air, simply puts you in a happier frame of mind.

All the better to enjoy the KTM's properly stuck down and exploitable chassis and wholly analogue dynamic mindset that teams a slick six-speed manual 'box with superb unassisted steering, massively powerful Brembo brakes unfettered by ABS and a tight limited-slip diff with no supporting traction electronics.

Is it as thrilling as a Caterham or Atom? No, they still set the bar – at least until the 450bhp 2.5-litre five-cylinder Audi RS3-engined X-Bow currently under development hits the road. Could you drive the X-Bow GT from Calais to Cannes and get out feeling fresh as a daisy? Absolutely. It doesn't just look like a Transformer – the X-Bow's true dual-purpose personality has finally been revealed. ❏

**David Vivian**

**Verdict**

❏ Extraordinary ability, driving experience

❏ Price

**evo** rating: ★★★★★



📍 Test location: Circuito Guadix, Spain GPS: 37.40036, -3.07445

# Ariel Atom Cup



Lightweight favourite gets a range of tweaks for a new one-make race series. But does the Atom's essence remain?

Photography: Kenny P

**F**EW CARS ARE AS enthralling as an Ariel Atom in full flight. It is intense and demanding but also hugely rewarding. Now imagine that action multiplied by other Atoms millimetres away from yours, each driver juggling the demands of extracting the most from their crazed little car with racecraft. That's exactly what Ariel is hoping for from its new race series, the Atom Cup, which begins on 27 April.

You'll need £42,000 (including VAT) to buy an Atom Cup, which is based on an Atom 245 and features the same 2-litre four-cylinder Honda K20Z engine with 245bhp at 8400rpm and 165lb ft at 6100rpm. Then you can choose between race packages, from the basic Bronze package at £21,834 right up to a full arrive-and-drive Gold package at £41,582. No, this isn't grassroots stuff, but it is relatively competitive in racing circles. And at least you won't be constantly replacing crumpled body panels...

There's been lots of detailed development to transform the road-going Atom 3.5 into a race car. The chassis tubing is identical but there's now an MSA-approved roll-cage, a motorsport-spec fuel tank, a fire extinguisher, rain lights and a cut-off switch. The suspension features longer wishbones to allow greater camber adjustment and new Öhlins race dampers are fitted. Despite running the same lightly treaded Yokohama A048 tyres as the road cars (there is a full race wet, too), Ariel claims that the Cup is sharper and more exciting. The near-unburstable drivetrain is sealed in seven places

Specification	
Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc
CO2	n/a
Power	245bhp @ 8400rpm
Torque	165lb ft @ 6100rpm
0-60mph	3.1sec (claimed)
Top speed	145mph (claimed)
Basic price	£42,000 (car only)

to prevent cheating, as are the dampers and ECU. Kerb weight is unchanged at 550kg.

Slide into that uncomfortable fixed plastic seat (Ariel tells me there are people who find this less torturing than I) and the Cup feels pretty familiar. The driving position is laid-back but terrific, the engine sends a strong vibration through the frame and steering wheel and you feel at once exposed and snug. It's an odd and unique experience as you'd expect, and the tiny slivers of 'bodywork' don't unduly change it.

Before you roll away you notice just how much camber the front wheels are running and wonder just how different this little car will feel. The answer hits you before you've rolled out of the pit garage: 'very'. There's so much more accuracy to the way the car responds to steering inputs thanks to the much stiffer and track-optimised suspension. Suddenly the always-playful Atom feels very serious.

Within a lap you're revelling in the new-found turn-in response, the greater resistance to understeer and just how early the rear tyres will take all the torque you can throw at them. Ariel



has really delivered on its promise of higher limits and a more neutral balance. The car feels progressive as it transitions into oversteer and allows you to attack any corner in a variety of ways. The superb drivetrain similarly gives you options – use the abundant torque, or wring it out for every rev. The only weak links for me are a brake pedal that doesn't communicate much about when the wheels are about to lock up and a lack of visibility in the mirrors. Which could be interesting at the first corner...

The Atom Cup could be a compelling series. The car is a real challenge to master even on an empty track, so 20 of them swarming around together should be something very special. ❌

Jethro Bovingdon (@JethroBovingdon)

## Verdict

- 📦 A well-developed race version
  - 📦 Filling grids ain't easy these days
- evo rating: ★★★★★**





# KEEP ON SHINING BRIGHT

*Armor All® Shield's groundbreaking formula delivers unmatched paint protection for your car – lasting for up to 10 washes*

**M**ANY new car valeting products claim to be easier and quicker to use than existing ones, but few manage to combine this with superior performance.

Armor All's Shield paint protection is the exception, as it not only takes less time to apply than conventional waxes, but it also gives better results.

Key to its success is Shield's innovative formula, which forms a tough, molecular bond with your car's paint, and rapidly beads water. Unlike waxes – where even from the first wash, the protection deteriorates – washing reactivates Shield's highly water-repellent surface. This enables it to keep protecting your paint, sheeting away rain and grime.

Tests have shown Shield keeps working for up to 10 washes. Resilience to regular washing is critical for paint-protection durability. It is no accident chemists developing new waxes and sealants

use repeated washes to test longevity. This reflects real-world use – as few of us wax our car each time we wash it.

Mind you, with Armor All Shield, reapplying protection couldn't be easier, as you simply wipe on and wipe off – there's no working in overlapping circles, no waiting for it to dry, no lengthy buffing and no chance of dust sticking to your paintwork. Plus, you're not reliant on the weather either, as it can be used in sunlight or low temperatures. It's quicker, easier, better – what's not to like?

And Armor All is applying this technological breakthrough to other areas of the car in need of protection. Armor All Shield for Wheels brings the patented innovative formula to alloy rims, where the build-up of brake disc dust is a major problem. Shield for Wheels is a rim protector that really

works, providing a tough, water-beading finish that sheets away road grime and brake dust.

As with Shield, applying is easier and quicker than with a conventional wheel wax – you simply spray on and leave to dry for the ultimate protection. Shield for Wheels lasts for up to four weeks, and when it comes to cleaning, the grime will slide off with ease.

And just launched is Shield for Glass – which has the effective water-repellent technology for your windows!

So what are you waiting for? Armor All Shield is £18.99, Shield for Wheels is £8.99 and Shield for Glass is £6.99. If it sounds too good to be true, Armor All's no quibble money back guarantee means there's no reason not to try this great new technology.

See it in action at: [www.armorall.eu](http://www.armorall.eu)



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## Porsche Cayman

The new Cayman S has impressed us hugely, but can the basic model emulate its success with 50bhp less?

**W**HEN WE DROVE THE new Porsche Cayman S two months ago (*evo* 181), we were simply blown away by the depth of its talents. Now Porsche has released the 2.7-litre 'base' version of the new Cayman. With a starting price of £39,694, it's cheaper than its 50bhp-beefier 3.4-litre brother by £9089, which sounds like good value.

The previous Cayman was powered by a 261bhp, 2.9-litre flat-six. For this new version peak power goes up 10bhp to 271bhp, despite the reduced engine capacity. The rev limiter doesn't call time until 7800rpm, but the downside is that peak torque drops 7lb ft to 214lb ft, delivered between 4500 and 6500rpm. Like the 'S', this Cayman has been on a diet: thanks to 44 per cent of the body-in-white now being constructed from aluminium (including the front and rear wings, inner panels, doors, bonnet and rear hatch), kerb weight drops by 20kg to 1310kg, while torsional rigidity improves by an impressive 40 per cent.

Inside it all looks pretty familiar, and pleasingly our test car is fitted with the six-speed manual gearbox (a seven-speed PDK is available for an extra £1922 but increases kerb weight by 30kg). Together with the Sport Chrono package, Porsche Torque Vectoring, PASM, 20in Sport Techno wheels, satnav and red leather, the on-the-road price of our test car comes to a chunky £52,063. Rather less of a bargain, then.

Turn the weirdly shaped 'key' and the flat-

### Specification

Engine	Flat-six, 2706cc
CO2	192g/km
Power	271bhp @ 7400rpm
Torque	214lb ft @ 4500-6500rpm
0-62mph	5.7sec (claimed)
Top speed	165mph (claimed)
Basic price	£39,694

six bursts into life behind you before settling into an engaging thrum. Slot the short-throw gearlever into first and the next task is to release the electronic handbrake, infuriatingly hidden by your right knee. But everything else falls perfectly to hand, making the job of driving this new Cayman so enjoyable.

As you'd expect, the new engine loves revs, and you need plenty of them for it to do its best work, but it sounds good even without the sports exhaust option. The Sport Chrono package now includes a throttle-blipper on downshifts when you've got 'Sport Plus' activated, and it works so perfectly that it could make even the most ham-fisted driver look like a pro.

With a near-perfect 46/54 front/rear weight distribution, it's the balance of the Cayman's chassis that shines through as you push it harder. But breaking the vice-like grip of the 265/35 rear tyres fitted to those optional wheels is next to impossible in the dry, which I find increasingly frustrating. It's not helped by the lack of torque from the smaller engine, or



the ridiculously long gearing (this manual car can hit an indicated 82mph in second gear!).

I come away wishing our test car had been wearing the standard 18in wheels, as hopefully they give the driver a fighting chance of exploiting the brilliant chassis. As it is, you can't help but rag this Cayman hard because it's so capable, but don't expect to match the claimed 34.4mpg combined if you do: I averaged 22mpg.

The truth is that spending that extra £9089 on a Cayman S in the first place is the best nine grand you'll ever spend. That car has the punch to make the most of the chassis, something this basic version doesn't quite deliver. ❌

**Harry Metcalfe** (@harrym\_evo)

### Verdict

- ❑ Entry price looks enticing
  - ❑ Until you drive a Cayman S
- evo rating:** ★★★★★





**Test location:** B526, Northamptonshire, UK **GPS:** 52.16003, -0.80783

# SEAT Ibiza Cupra

Twincharged hatchback gets mid-life refresh, but can it still keep pace with its new French rivals?

**Above:** the Ibiza is nearly as quick as the new Renaultsport Clio, but doesn't command the same attention. **Below:** remodelled rear bumper is part of a range of visual tweaks

**S** **SEAT MUST WONDER** what it takes to get us to notice the quicker versions of its cars. Renault puts a twin-clutch gearbox into the new Clio RS and our bit of the world practically combusts as debate rages over whether this is the best idea ever or the end of the hot hatch as we know it. At the same time, SEAT releases a facelifted version of the Ibiza Cupra, an equally rapid hatchback that's already been on sale for over three years with its own twin-clutch transmission, and you sense tumbleweeds blowing past.

Yet spending time in the revised Cupra is a welcome reminder of what a likeable car it is. You don't climb out of it with whitened knuckles, or feeling that you've had a life-changing experience. But it's fun, unpretentious and a car that would be easy to live with on a daily basis.

The mid-life changes are minimal. There are new bumpers, the arrival of the seemingly mandatory LED daytime running lights and some revised interior trim. The styling is still lacking in hot hatch aggression – it's definitely one of those cars that flies under the radar – but inside it's spacious and sensible.

Mechanical changes are even more limited. The 1.4-litre 'twincharged' engine has been remapped to improve throttle response, although its 178bhp peak power output remains the same – 19bhp shy of the Clio RS and newly launched Peugeot 208 GTI (see page 94). Despite that, the SEAT is very nearly as quick as its brawnier rivals on paper, with a claimed

Specification	
<b>Engine</b>	In-line 4-cyl, 1390cc, twincharger
<b>CO2</b>	139g/km
<b>Power</b>	178bhp @ 6200rpm
<b>Torque</b>	184lb ft @ 2000rpm
<b>0-62mph</b>	6.9sec (claimed)
<b>Top speed</b>	142mph (claimed)
<b>Basic price</b>	£18,570

6.9sec 0-62mph time and a 142mph top speed.

The engine does feel keener than before, revving enthusiastically and happy to push through the 6000rpm mark at which small turbo engines usually throw in the towel. Having both a turbo and a supercharger helps fill most gaps, with the Cupra belying its small capacity with a decent slug of low-down torque. It's effectively lag-free and works with the DSG 'box to provide seamless performance.

And with the rise of the twin-clutch, maybe the Cupra's time has come. The VW Group has been making DSG 'boxes for nearly ten years, and the expertise gained shows. The Ibiza's seven-speeder gives ultra-quick up- and downshifts in manual mode and can also put in a decent impression of an auto when left in Drive. If punters do decide they want flappy paddles, then the Cupra (and the mechanically identical Skoda Fabia vRS and VW Polo GTI) definitely has first-mover advantage.

As before, the chassis can't match the commitment of the razor-sharp transmission. The Ibiza gives off performance hatch vibes



at everyday speeds with a firm ride, weighty steering and a roty exhaust note. It's grippy, too – you can carry plenty of speed through corners. But when you up the pace, the Cupra blinks with a front-biased handling balance that – in extremis – leads to understeer.

One interesting option is the racing brake upgrade, with £1000 buying upgraded AP four-pot calipers and bigger 312mm front discs. On road they seem able to deal with extreme use without fade, meaning they could be a worthwhile upgrade for track use.

The Cupra remains a likeable car with a great powertrain, but one you sense will struggle to get noticed against newer and sexier rivals. ❌

**Mike Duff**

## Verdict

- ⊞ Punchy engine, unflappable DSG
  - ⊞ Lacks engagement, understeer at limit
- evo rating:** ★★★★★



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# Watches

A suitably expensive LaFerrari watch, a fiery red online-only gem and a value-for-money chronograph

**Words:** Simon de Burton

## 1 Hublot Masterpiece MP-05 LaFerrari

**Price:** £225,000 (estimated) **From:** marcuswatches.co.uk

Within minutes of the LaFerrari's unveiling at the Geneva motor show in March, Hublot announced it would release a suitably radical and expensive watch to go with it, and the Masterpiece MP-05 LaFerrari looks almost as far-out as the car. A titanium framework surrounds a complex sapphire crystal top based on the LaFerrari's silhouette, beneath which sits a 637-part movement incorporating 11 spring barrels, enabling the watch to run for 45 days without being re-wound. The hours, minutes, seconds and power reserve are indicated by revolving cylinders. Just 50 examples will be made.

## 2 Christopher Ward C7 IRR Rapide MK II

**Price:** from £399 **From:** christopherward.co.uk

British online-only brand Christopher Ward has developed a strong following by majoring on high quality, intelligent design and exceptional value. Many of its pieces are limited editions, such as this new version of its Rapide driving watch, of which 500 examples will be made with a classic, racing red dial. Key to its affordability is its Ronda quartz movement, but the well-made 42mm case, Super-LumiNova indices and 100-metre water resistance point to a more expensive product. Automotive features include a tachymeter bezel and a steering wheel design on the case back.

## 3 Rotary Aquaspeed Chronograph

**Price:** from £139 **From:** rotarywatches.com

There was a time when virtually every household in Britain had a Rotary watch, as the firm was made the army's official supplier shortly after the outbreak of the Second World War. The brand remains ubiquitous in the UK and has established a reputation for offering a massive range of inexpensive watches for ridiculously little money. This new version of the Aquaspeed features a quartz-powered chronograph with a rotatable bezel, luminous hands and hour markers and a choice of steel or PVD gold finishes. Not strictly a driver's watch, but at £159, who's counting?



### Watch tech

### Dive watches



Rolex is widely regarded as having produced the first professional dive watch when it launched the Submariner in 1954 to coincide with the introduction of the SCUBA system. Since then, numerous brands have developed and produced dive watches, one of the most radical of late being Hublot's Oceanographic 4000 that is guaranteed waterproof to 4000 metres – deeper than the final resting place of the Titanic.

Although electronic dive computers are more accurate, more sophisticated and usually more affordable, many serious divers insist on wearing a mechanical watch as a back-up.

But what actually constitutes a true diver's timepiece? There are some quite specific criteria, including an ISO standard, which determines whether a particular model genuinely cuts the mustard. Essentially, a true diving watch must be water resistant down to at least 100 metres (330 feet). It should have a screw-down case back and winding crown, and an extra-thick sapphire crystal to withstand pressure at depth. Dials should be clear and legible, usually with a dark background and luminous numerals.

You should look for a rotating bezel for recording dive times, which should be uni-directional to avoid the possibility of it being knocked out of place and under-reading. A really serious dive watch, meanwhile, will also be fitted with a helium escape valve, which makes it safe to use in diving bells during decompression stops.

### Now & Then



#### **NOW** Vogard Racing Edition Worn by: Adrian Sutil

Force India F1 driver Adrian Sutil teamed with innovative watch brand Vogard just before the 2013 F1 season kicked off. Sutil now sports the Racing Edition version of the ingenious Vogard time zone watch, which can toggle between time zones by turning the bezel, which is marked with the names of 24 race circuits.



#### **THEN** Omega Speedmaster Worn by: Michael Schumacher

Michael Schumacher was an Omega man during his glory years after becoming its brand ambassador in 1995. At least seven Speedmaster Schumacher special editions were made over ten years, the best being the original red- or yellow-dialed versions; one of the latter that he owned fetched £36,000 at auction in 2007.





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# Insider

by HARRY METCALFE



The next generation of supercars was unveiled at the recent Geneva show. Harry assesses their merits and picks a winner

**T** HIS YEAR'S GENEVA MOTOR SHOW WAS remarkable because it brought Ferrari, Lamborghini and McLaren together under one roof, locking horns in a supercar frenzy the like of which the world had never before witnessed. But who came out on top? That's what I've been trying to work out.

From the outside, it looked like a two-horse race between McLaren and Ferrari for ultimate honours, and like all good punch-ups the sparring started well before the show even opened. McLaren blinked first by revealing its P1 at the Paris show last September. I'd understood this was going to be the full reveal, having been shown round a pre-production P1 (and seen early cars on the assembly line) during a visit to McLaren HQ a few months previously. But just before we packed our bags for Paris, McLaren phoned to say it had decided to black out the P1's windows, fit a solid rear grille and call the car a 'design study' instead. Hence why the P1 revealed at Geneva six months later was identical to said 'design study'. Ferrari, meanwhile, played its cards closer to its chest and even its most respected customers only got to see the finished LaFerrari a few weeks before Geneva.

When it was finally time for the covers to come off, McLaren went first. Standing beside the P1, Ron Dennis proudly announced it would 'set new benchmarks' and be 'the fastest car in the world'. Sorry Ron, but the Bugatti Veyron SS is faster, getting to 186mph 2sec quicker and possessing a top speed 41mph faster than your new baby. It turned out he was referring to lap times, for McLaren is determined the P1 is going to be the fastest 'road' car around both the Nordschleife and the *Top Gear* test track (where McLaren regularly does its testing). By the end of the presentation, I had the distinct impression that the P1's ability to occasionally be driven on public roads was more of an inconvenience than something at the core of its design ethos.

It was a different story over at Ferrari, with Luca di Montezemolo making no wild claims about the LaFerrari's performance, even though it is obviously Ferrari's fastest road car in its 60-year history. But he was keen to emphasise that the LaFerrari represents the ultimate in 'driving emotion' and 'driving ability'. But what exactly did he mean? Ferrari's technical vice-president Roberto Fedeli later explained that it was all to do with Ferrari's love affair with the V12 engine, which it still believes is the only choice of powerplant for the company's ultimate road cars.

Lamborghini believes the same and pitched up at Geneva with its wild-looking Veneno. OK, its mechanical layout is similar to the Aventador's (except for an extra 50bhp from the 6.5-litre V12),

but the Veneno makes up for it by looking like no other car on the planet. Lamborghini has always prided itself on pushing car design to the max and it certainly didn't disappoint here. With all three £3million Venenos sold before the show even opened, Lamborghini must be doing something right. I for one think the car looks terrific and it made me wonder whether Ferrari or McLaren would have bothered fitting hybrid drivetrains in their ultimate cars if they weren't involved in Formula 1.

Porsche didn't bring its 918 to Geneva because the production version is already booked to be revealed at Frankfurt in September, but it was probably glad it didn't. The 918 is starting to look decidedly off the pace, and that's because Porsche made two fundamental mistakes with it: it set the production number way too high, and it wrongly assumed buyers would leap at the

**'I had the distinct impression that the P1's ability to occasionally be driven on public roads was more of an inconvenience'**

chance of buying an eco-friendly supercar. As both Lamborghini and Ferrari can testify, all buyers want are supercars which deliver the ultimate in 'driving emotion', not the lowest CO2 figure or ultimate lap time. That's why the old guard came out on top at Geneva: they understand the supercar game inside-out.

If I had to pick the winner, it would have to be Ferrari. All 499 of its £1.04million LaFerraris will have been sold by the time you read this, which is a mighty effort given Bugatti still hasn't sold 450 Veyrons in seven years. The sound of the Ferrari's screaming V12 closing in on a 9250rpm red line should be amazing, and for many customers, that'll be even more seductive than a record-breaking lap time around Fiorano. 'Emotion' is a concept McLaren still seems to struggle with, and with the 12C often accused of being super-quick but unemotional, a blisteringly fast but one-dimensional P1 could offer a sense of déjà vu. The P1 might be the fastest, Ron, but will it be fun?

@harrym\_evo

Harry is **evo's** editorial director and a serial supercar buyer



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# Petrolhead

by RICHARD PORTER



Porter's discovered that, underneath the superficial glitz, the United Arab Emirates is a car fan's paradise

**S**UNSHINE. A SWIMMING POOL. Someone to bring me cold drinks at regular intervals. This is pretty much all I wanted from my holiday. Oh, and a relatively short flight, since it turns out that accruing squixty bajillion air miles does not, as I hoped, entitle me to fly halfway around the globe atop a massive swan. What it gets you is a damp sandwich and access to a latrine in the hold. So the shorter the flight, the better. And that, along with the requirement for sunshine, seemed to point to only one thing. With a heavy heart, I booked a week in Dubai.

Now, Dubai is one of those places I've always vowed I would never go, largely because from afar it seemed to be utterly vulgar. And I'm from Wilmslow, so I have a high natural tolerance for the sight of fake things, be they pillars, teeth or tits. But even to a chap from the spiritual home of the Onyx table lamp, Dubai sounded ghastly. Not just ghastly, but footballer ghastly.

My suspicions weren't helped when we arrived at the hotel and found the West Ham United manager, Sam Allardyce, splashing about in the pool. There may have been other soccer pros there but I don't really follow football, so I would have missed them. And there were a lot of golden-orange surfaces in the hotel itself, so their tabloid-friendly WAGs would have been chameleonic from most angles.

Everyone else in the hotel was Russian. I know this because they were speaking Russian. Mostly at extremely high volume on their mobile phones whilst smoking a constant stream of cigarettes. This is perfectly understandable. Twenty years ago you were having to queue for food. Now someone gives you access to all the fags and smartphones you can handle. Of course you'll want to use them, just in case a man with preposterous eyebrows and a bad suit somehow becomes leader again and decides to take them away. Anyway, overlooking the shouty Russians and the simply absurd quantities of marble, Dubai seemed alright. And in one respect it was absolutely outstanding: car-spotting.

At times the frontage of the hotel was choked with ultra-flash motors as Rolls-Royce Phantoms and Merc SLs nuzzled up to Bentley Brooklands and McLaren 12Cs until the whole place looked like a slightly dusty R&B video. One evening there were so many Ferrari 458s that the valets stopped parking them right out front, presumably lest they start to look common. Yet actually it wasn't the high-end stuff that truly caught my eye in Dubai, because it turns out it's a melting pot of all the world's manufacturers, with a unique mix of Euro-market standards, North American imports and JDM rare groove. It's like the United Nations of cars.

It's no surprise to take in incongruous sights like a Peugeot 206 getting bullied by a Saleen-tuned Mustang, or a low-slung Wiesmann MF4 skimming past a thunder-piped Dodge Ram. The Aussies are there too, supplying LHD Commodores sporting Chevy badges but that are still as brazenly Australian as wearing shorts with a long-sleeved top. You like G-wagens? They've got G-wagens everywhere: AMG-tuned, of course. In fact, when Merc announced that 2012 was the G's best-ever year for sales it presumably forgot to mention that was entirely down to the people of Dubai, who appear to have bought thousands of them. And slicing wildly thought this mad grab-bag of the world's cars will be something called a Toyota Innova, a rear-drive minivan with a brazenly visible live axle that looks as simple as a pair of scissors and is probably twice as reliable. I'm sure that's why they

**'One evening there were so many Ferrari 458s that the valets stopped parking them right out front, lest they start to look common'**

seem to be used exclusively as taxis. And indeed, why they're driven exclusively in a brave late-braking style.

Sitting in the back of one of these trying not to consider your own mortality, you can at least take your mind off imminent injury and death by watching a vast Nissan Armada SUV lumbering past a slammed Mercedes CL. Or a SEAT Leon Cupra performing a cheeky undertake on a full desert-spec Toyota FJ Cruiser. Or one of the surprisingly handsome new-generation Toyota Previas tailgating a Maserati GranTurismo.

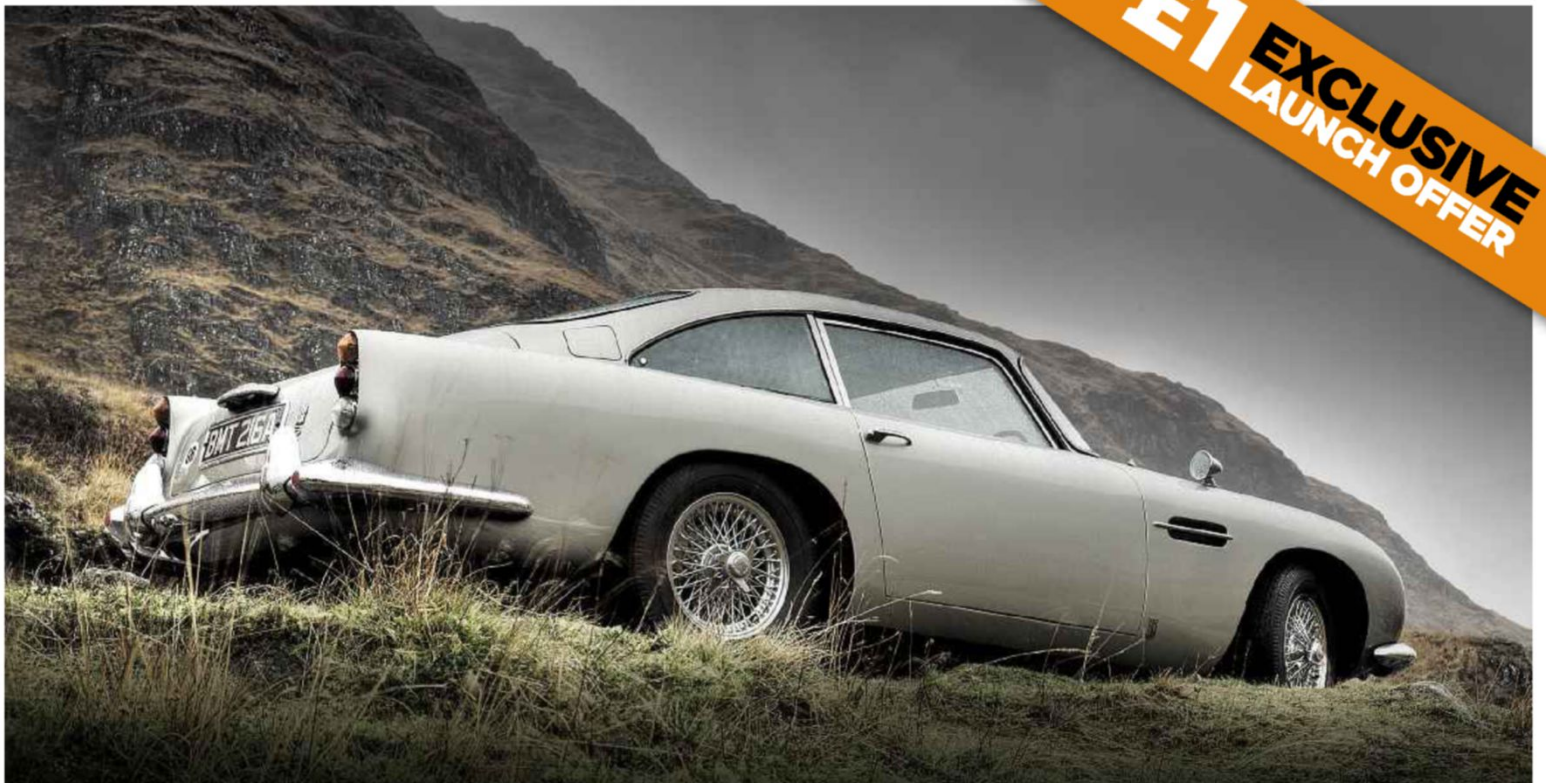
From Cobra replicas to sun-bleached XJSs, and Testarossas to classic Cadillacs, I can heartily recommend a roadside seat in Dubai if you're a proper ultra-nerd. It's the only country I've ever visited where the Skoda Fabia and the Cadillac Escalade are both freely on sale, and for that sort of diversity alone it's worth a trip. Although, if you can tolerate the sound of Rooneyists and Russians, the sunshine and swimming pools aren't bad either.

 @sniffpetrol

Richard is *evo's* longest-serving columnist and the keyboard behind sniffpetrol.com



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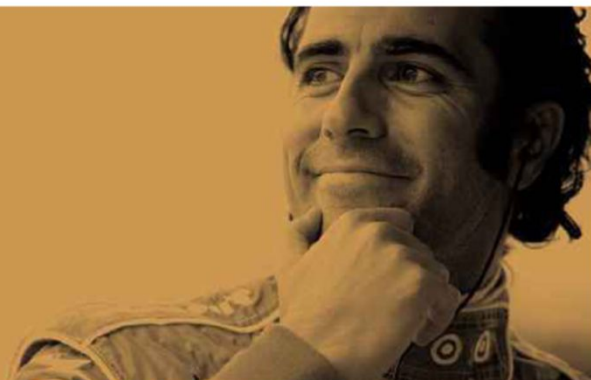
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# Champ

by DARIO FRANCHITTI



## The three-time Indy 500 winner talks Diablos at Knockhill and the addictiveness of downforce

**I**T'S BEEN A FUN COUPLE OF MONTHS outside of racing. I went to the Scottsdale Auction in Arizona, and the Amelia Island concours and the Revs Institute, both in Florida. I also went to Sebring to catch up with Allan McNish and watch my brother Marino win his class in the 12 Hour race.

I managed to avoid spending money, despite being at the auctions – although I was very tempted with the Porsche 908/3 at Amelia. Actually, I lie – I've put a deposit down on a new 991 GT3.

Perhaps the most fun I've had in the last couple of years was hanging out with some friends at Knockhill back in Scotland, a long way from the sun of Florida. But then one thing I've learnt is that regardless of who you are or what you drive, a car guy is a car guy (or girl), wherever you are in the world.

I got to drive some really fun stuff at Knockhill. My mate Carlo brought along a Lamborghini Diablo SV and that was mega. I really didn't expect it to be that much fun; managing the weight with that big engine in the back and feeling the mass coming around as you turn into a corner was an absolute blast.

What struck me driving that Lamborghini was that the challenge of driving the car was as much fun as the outright performance. With that Diablo, the challenge came from trying to master it – making the car do something it didn't want it to do. And the noise! Well, that was just amazing.

Speaking of mastering cars, we also had an Ariel Atom to play with at Knockhill. When I went out of the pits I couldn't tell if it was my mate in the passenger seat or the supercharger screaming. It was a properly quick thing: we were lapping quicker than Formula Fords and completely blew-off a highly modified GT-R. The Atom has an odd layout with the weight distribution, so I started to think about how I could make the car perform better, and how I could get the most out of it. It got to the point where I wanted to start adjusting the dampers and tweaking the chassis, and even at the end of the day I felt like I was still mastering it.

I really get the appeal of tweaking a car – it's a hell of a lot of fun. Saying that, I'm a purist with older cars. When I play around with my stuff, I keep the original bits so I can put them back on.

I love it when you get a real understanding of the measure of performance of a car. The great thing is that there's enjoyment to be had in anything – whether you're driving a 130bhp MX-5 or a 730bhp IndyCar. There's just as much fun to be had in an MX-5 on track, chasing down Porsches and faster cars, as there is being in a Radical and being the fastest thing on track. The thing is, when you're driving an MX-5 you're learning your craft at lower speeds – and that's important because you've got more time to process and

understand the information coming from the car. Ultimately, the same rules apply in any car, though. When you learn how to carry speed and momentum corner-to-corner in an MX-5, those skills will transfer to a Radical or something really quick.

Graduating to something like that before you're ready is risky: everything comes at you at double or triple the speed, and you won't necessarily have the confidence to take the leap of faith required to drive something with downforce. Confidence comes from experience – so you're better taking the racing driver approach and working your way up to something really fast.

Saying that, once you feel in control of a car you tend to want to take things to the next level as soon as you can. Add this to the temptation we all have to buy something properly lunatic and you have a real problem!

Tweaking your car is one way to get the performance, as is

**'Believe me, feeling the tail kick out at the Indy oval at 235mph is a really special feeling...'**

graduating to a faster car. The thing to remember is that the adrenalin effect may increase the speed of the car, or the more grip it has, but the principles of driving remain the same.

I've been thinking a lot about the experience at Knockhill. It was unlike most trackdays in that we had the stopwatches out, and this changes your approach. The competitive instinct takes over and you want to be the fastest thing on the track – there is something massively addictive about power, grip and ultimately speed, and on a trackday you can exploit it more fully. The downside is that when it does go wrong the consequences to your body (and wallet) are larger!

It's hard to explain, but a lot of it comes back to the fun you can have learning the measure of performance of the car.

Saying that, while you can have huge fun threading an MX-5 around Oulton, there's something massively addictive about slicks and downforce. Believe me, feeling the tail kick out at 235mph on the Indy oval is a really special feeling, as is pulling 4.5G trying to go flat through Turn 1 at Mid-Ohio. Once you've experienced that kind of power and grip on a track, you become addicted and it's all you ever want.

 @dariofranchitti

Dario Franchitti is a three-time Indy 500 winner and four-time IndyCar champ



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# Inbox

What's got you ready to rumble this month?



## Letter of the Month

### Hypercar hyperbores

I could not agree more with Richard Meaden's column (evo 182) about modern performance cars becoming too complex, too capable and too fast. I now tend to flick through the pages on anything to do with hypercars more and more.

When I read that the new McLaren has DRS, I had to laugh. They think a P1 driver's wet dream is to be behind a LaFerrari: 'I think I can get him before the corner shop. I'll flick the DRS button and show him who the real man is.'

My personal hell would be to be stuck at a dinner party with the owners of either of these cars while they discuss the specifications on something that will sit in the garage all year. Or even worse, while they discuss what Luca di Montezemolo had to eat at their invite to purchase.

Here's a better way to spend your £1million: buy a GT3, hire a hot-shot pro to share the drive and race it. Same money, but at least you've lived a little.

**James Thorpe**

### The star letter wins a Road Angel Gem safety camera & blackspot alert device worth £129.99



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### Rocking with the oldies

Richard Meaden's excellent column on the astonishingly depressing state of the modern motor car stirred me to write in. My views on this matter were perfectly highlighted by issue 182 of *evo* as a whole. 'Hypercars and hybrid engines' – blah, blah. 'Clever gearboxes' – I don't care. 'Clever gearbox on the new GT3' – should I give up?

Then, thank the Lord, along comes a glorious E28 M5! Finally a car I (desperately) want and admire. But it's strange that a 30-year-old car worth about £20k should be the most desirable thing in the issue.

I wonder whether it's a generational issue, but I find the current technological revolution distressing. It may just be that I grew up lusting after cars like the M5, and perhaps that's why their simplicity and mechanical nature appeals so much more than their PDK-equipped offspring. But I suspect it has more to do with characterful engines, feelsome steering and being able to sense the road through skinny tyres and 16in wheels. Most importantly, I enjoy changing gear myself!

The trouble is, cars like this are getting on a bit and make for a risky proposition. What to do?

**Alexander Firmin**

### Don't take me to the pilot

I was horrified to read Nick Trott's Ed Speak in *evo* 182. Give him a holiday: the man is clearly overworked and not thinking straight!

Far from embracing so-called 'piloted drive', you should be using all your influence to steer the industry

away from this doomsday scenario. Nick said that 'by the time this technology is available to the public, there's little doubt it will be failsafe.' Once it is failsafe, every road safety lobby will call for mandatory use, and then Brussels will impose it. Insurance for non-piloted cars would be impossible to get and if not for the fact my new car would not be allowed to exceed 83mph, I would feel like programming it to hit a wall at 150mph!

You have the ear of the car industry. Kill this before it kills our free spirits.

**Brian Pearce**

### Fruits of manual labour

Nick Trott's Ed Speak suggesting that piloted drive is a good thing has given me some cause for concern. What nonsense.

Thank goodness for redress in the form of Dickie Meaden's praise in the same issue for the art and excitement of driving a manual car. Paddle-shift creates a pathetically one-dimensional experience, reducing the driver's role to little beyond choice of corner entry speed. No well-timed shift mid-transition, no need to smoothly heel-and-toe as you balance the car under braking into a downhill bend, no satisfaction from a cleanly executed full-bore second-to-third upshift. But I guess Nick will be pleased as he'll be able to take his feet off the pedals and hands off the wheel whilst relying on the software to vector him in and full-throttle him out while he 'checks out' the latest app on the pointless dashboard monitor.

It is, of course, too late. The number of hardcore drivers is too small to change the course of our motoring future, but at least we have a rich



**Above left:** of all the cars in *evo* 182, the BMW E28 M5 wowed Alexander Firmin the most. **Above right:** Martin Bloxham says paddle-shift removes more interaction from drivers





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**Above left:** rear wings are prevalent on performance cars today, to Chris Tindall's disgust.

**Above right:** Ian Neal feels the Mini GP should have won our extreme hot hatch shootout

seam of older cars to keep us amused. I sincerely hope **evo** doesn't bow to manufacturer claptrap and stays true to the Thrill of Driving.

**Martin Bloxham**

## Transmissions and emissions

In David Vivian's article about the demise of manual transmissions (**evo** 182), it is stated that the manual Lamborghini Gallardo LP550-2 emits 341g/km of CO<sub>2</sub>, whereas the automatic version emits 315g/km.

Of course the manual can do the same 315g/km as the auto version, but officially doesn't as the EU test prescribes at what revs manual transmissions should be shifted, and these are probably not the most economical shift points. An automatic can decide for itself what to do, and can therefore be programmed to run through the test efficiently. Although the manual could do it just as well, it isn't allowed to and is punished with higher consumption/CO<sub>2</sub> figures, and higher related taxes.

A manual gearbox gives people the interaction they like when wanting to enjoy driving, but when you're moving from A to B, an automatic is a nice solution. I have several cars with manual, CVT and traditional automatic gearboxes. Each has its purpose. But it gets bad when a car that should have a manual 'box with interaction in mind is only available with a transmission aimed at EU test protocols.

**Frank Visser**

## Flawed Ferraris

Whilst I'm often opinionated, I'm usually happy for the other readers to write in. But after seeing LaFerrari and reading the F12 feature in **evo** 182, I could sit on my hands no longer!

Ferrari rightfully has a reputation for world-beating engineering and achingly good-looking cars. However, I'm sure I'm not alone in thinking the last truly good-looking Ferrari was the 360.

I know that for quick laps around Fiorano, function comes before form, but Lamborghini has proved with the Aventador and now the Veneno that a modern supercar can be both fast and good-looking.

I now make a plea to any of 'the special ones' who were invited to view LaFerrari: stand up to Luca di Montezemolo and tell him his car looks like a dog's left testicle! You're the ones paying him, after all!

**Richard Edwards**

## Wing worries

I've noticed a worrying trend of bad taste from both manufacturers and the motoring press regarding the rear wings that end up bolted to the bootlids of modern cars.

Look at the Aston Martin V12 Zagato. Reading **evo** 181, I should have been in awe of the beautiful machine, scenery and journalism; instead I could do nothing but stare in absolute horror at the rear wing Aston had fitted. Aston is not alone in this; BMW should be shut down for the horrendous example nailed to the M3 GTS, whilst Jaguar should know better than the tacky effort on the rear of the XKR-S.

I understand the need for a functional rear wing in some applications. But is it a mark of general bad taste or laziness on the part of some makers that a large number of cars must be inflicted with these juvenile appendages? Whatever happened to stylish design and integrating a rear wing with the lines and styling of a car, rather than taking the easy and ugly way out?

**Chris Tindall**

## Mini makes its mark

Two points about the hot hatch test (**evo** 181). Firstly, the Mini GP should have won because the R26.R is hopeless as a road car: compromised, noisy, impractical and uncomfortable. The Renault has 25 per cent more engine capacity than the Mini and yet, incredibly, it's slower round a track, the one place it should be way ahead of the others. That the Mini is faster says it all, as it is a nicer road car by far, too.

Secondly, a buyer would be better spending a fraction of the price of any of the four cars featured to get a mk1 Mini Cooper S Works GP: great sound, great looks, and 218bhp that can be upgraded to 240 with a belt and pulley swap. It's a gem of a car that can be found for £10,000 in top condition.

**Ian Neal**



From the forums: [community.evo.co.uk](http://community.evo.co.uk)

## Thread of the Month

BRANNEN

### 'LaFerrari reaction'

Looks good, but name's pants.

**WOLAND**

Cringeworthy name. Looks ace, though.

**DR J. ZOIDBERG**

Looks absolutely magnificent, something the Enzo never quite managed.

**INTEGRALE\_EVO**

I thought Lambo had put a copyright on stupid pointy noses.

**JOHNMC2000**

Yes it looks good, but I can't help but feel they didn't really push the boundaries too hard. It's just like an F12 and a 458 mixed with Enzo doors. As for the name, again, they really didn't try that hard.

**MITO MAN**

There's a lovely picture around of Ron Dennis checking out LaFerrari and looking smug.

**LOGANMOTOR**

I think you'd have to be drunk to think this is better-looking than the McLaren, and the McLaren has a better name to boot. Also, all these reports of it being 'under 1300kg' are rubbish. If McLaren released a car that looked anything like

this, everyone would hate it and say it looked like a drunk fat man.

**EUGENUX**

Something is missing. Put this and the old Enzo side by side and I'll pick the Enzo every time. That car was special: it was angry, tense and in attack mode. By comparison, this looks bland and boring.

**P7ULG**

These cars will always fall into the hands of the speculators, even though Ferrari has a 'guest list' for buyers (although I'm not sure if this is not just part of the marketing pizzazz). I remember Jay Kay telling the story of how he was 'invited' to buy an Enzo and as they theatrically removed the car cover in the presentation room, how 'privileged' he felt that Ferrari had allowed him to spend £500,000.

**HORACE11**

Out of all the recent limited-edition Ferraris, I've always thought that the 288GTO was by far and away the most desirable. Best looking, most mechanically straightforward, no pseudo-F1 stuff and less of them made than any of the others.



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# f-HYPE?

*As the named successor of one of Britain's greatest sports cars, the Jaguar F-type has a lot to live up to. **evo** pits it against a range of rivals in a comprehensive shootout*

PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH



**T**HOSE OF YOU FAMILIAR WITH your cockney alphabet will know that F for vesence comes after E for Adam. Thirty-nine years after, in this case. Like it or not, the Jaguar name comes with baggage and by gifting its new front-engined, rear-wheel-drive sports car such an alphabetically significant moniker, the car manufacturer from Coventry has shown just what hopes and expectations it has for the new F-type.

We are promised a proper sports car, but we've been promised that before. And while you'll find some jolly patriotic sorts in

the **evo** office, this is not the place for any British bias. We really want the F-type to be good, but there are no free passes.

So over the next 16 pages, we're going to throw everything at it and test its credentials to their very limit. Clearly testing just one variant wouldn't give us a clear enough picture, so first the V6 S and then the V8 S will be pitched against their closest rivals on the most demanding roads we know. Then we will get the stopwatch running and see how they stand up to life on the Bedford Autodrome's West Circuit, again using their rivals for comparison. If the F-type can survive all that, then we'll know it really is a car you can drive L for leather.





# *F-type* **V6 S**

**v PORSCHE 911 CABRIOLET**

*The smaller-engined  
F-type takes on its key  
rival: the entry-level  
drop-top 911*

*by* HENRY CATCHPOLE









**T**HOSE FIRST FEW MILES, when everything is new and vying for your attention, they are some of my favourite miles in any car. The richness of the experience as you try to take it all in is almost overwhelming. The ride that's firmer than you were expecting as you potter through a village. The switches and paddles that are curiously rubbery to the touch as you adjust the heating and play with the gearbox. The blaring exhaust note that has something of the sharp-edged hollowness of a modern Ferrari as you accelerate down onto a dual carriageway. These sensations all come tumbling out at you, filling up the newly created folder marked 'F-type' in the hard-drive of your mind.

Of course, you absorb it all even more greedily when you've been anticipating the moment for as long as this. Remember the first

F-type concept that got everyone salivating, the one with the wraparound windscreen? That was 13 years ago, which is a hell of a gestation period by anyone's reckoning. The only thing likely to be greeted with greater national expectation and curiosity this year is a small bundle of noise that will be christened Windsor (and sadly, I don't mean Ford is bringing out a new small-block V8).

Anyway, as we head across to North Wales, the F-type's cabin definitely feels like a special place to be. You sit higher than you might think, and yet you feel snug thanks to the high shoulder-line of the doors, and the big central tunnel with its flying buttress of a grab handle sweeping out from the dash. I like the small copper-coloured ('Ignis' on the Jag colour chart) highlights too, drawing your eyes magpie-like to the paddles and starter button. I can also confidently say, having tried a wide

range of heated seats, that the Jaguar's buckets are the hottest around – level three is only to be tried by those with an asbestos arse. The sole disappointment in the cabin is that the steering wheel, while a nice size and shape, has a bit of BMW Syndrome about it, with a slightly chunky, padded feel in your hands.

Look in the rear-view mirror as you hit 62mph and you'll see the rear wing rise up out of the bootlid, with the famous silver leaper gleaming in the sunshine. And just beyond that is the distinctive snout of a 911. While the latest generation of rear-engined Porsche might not be our favourite in the 50-year lineage, it is undoubtedly the current dynamic benchmark that the Jaguar must square up to. On price the Jag is the cheaper by some £14,000, although this heavily accessorised V6 S and sparsely sprinkled Carrera Cabriolet are just £5k apart.

In terms of grunt the 911 is also playing





'Whatever either company might say, these two are undoubtedly rivals'

## Route



**Top:** roofs down and seat heaters on, 911 chases F-type across a chilly North Wales

catch up, its 3.4-litre flat-six some 30bhp down on the F-type's 375bhp 3-litre motor, while the V6's supercharger means the gulf between the torque figures is even wider – 339lb ft playing 288lb ft. The 911 does counter these deficits with a healthy 164kg weight advantage, however. Whatever either company might say, these two are undoubtedly rivals.

**WE PULL IN AT THE SERVICES ON THE A5** to fuel up and swap cars, and Metcalfe gets out of the 911 looking strangely like a posh burglar, with a mysterious duffel bag over his shoulder and an unflattering black beanie on his head. Tanks brimmed, we set off again (the Jag coming to life with a little too much theatrical fanfare) and this time I find myself staring at the F-type's two huge exhausts as we continue west, cutting across country towards Bala. Judging by the stares of other road users,

Jaguar has done a very good job with the styling, and I like the hint of XJ13 about the tail. Life is a little dull inside the 911 after the spangly Jag, but the solidity of its construction and the positivity of its controls still feels a notch above, like you've bought a hardback rather than a paperback.

After stopping for some photographs on a dramatic section of road that clings to the side of a snowy valley and then topping up the tanks again in Bala, we head for the B4391, where I manage to turf Metcalfe and his swag out of the Jag again so that I can have a go on a proper piece of road. This is where we get to find out if the F-type really is the sports car we've been promised or if the 911 romps off into the distance. The first thing you notice is the steering, which is quite light but also very quick and direct, just like a 458's or an F12's. This would be suicide if the rest of the car





**'In the F-type you make one initial dart into a corner and then concentrate on driving through with the rear wheels'**

couldn't keep up, but the chassis responds to any inputs with alacrity, feeling taut and agile. The whole car feels very accurate and the result is that you have a huge amount of confidence on turn-in to corners.

There's a clatter of metal as we hammer across a cattle grid but the suspension remains unflustered – there's no wallow, just tight control. This is good. I've pushed the lever across so that the eight-speed ZF auto is locked in manual mode (it felt better using the paddles on the motorway too, as 'Drive' seemed to induce too much hunting up and down the 'box) and begun batting up and down the ratios with the little paddles attached to the wheel.

It feels almost like sprint gearing, so you work the 'box hard, but the response to each flick of a finger is good and there's a lovely parp on every committed upshift, a bit like a louder version of the ones you get with a VW DSG

in similar circumstances. The actual power delivery is incredibly linear and effective, but with little change in the engine note it can feel slightly utilitarian at times. As Harry says later, though, it feels naturally aspirated in its throttle response and the combination of broad torque, an octet of gears and surprising traction means that it punches out of corners almost as keenly as it dives into them. I really hadn't expected the F-type to be this responsive.

After a run up and down the road, we swap driver's seats and set off again. Calm and measured is how the Porsche feels after the Jaguar. In the F-type you seem to make one initial dart into a corner with the steering and then concentrate on driving through with the rear wheels. But the 911 asks you to pour it into corners, applying lock, leaning on the nose and feeling for grip all the way up to the apex, before using the characteristic rear-

engined traction to shove you out the other side, unwinding the steering lock as you go. It's a very different process.

Similarly, the gearboxes are worlds apart. Where the Jaguar never seemed to drop below third, this seven-speed manual 911 has a second gear that will reach 80mph, so you definitely have to change down to second as you approach anything resembling a tight corner if you don't want to bog down. What's more, I frequently found myself shifting up 1500rpm before the limiter in the F-type, while the 911's engine has me hanging on until it's soaring towards its red line in order to extract its performance. Not that this is a chore, however, because as we've said before, the 'base' Carrera's 3.4 really is a stunning collection of valves and pistons. It's almost like a mini-GT3 engine, picking up after 5000rpm and then hardening its note as it ascends all the way towards 8000rpm.





**Above:** Jag's tail is eager to step out on cold tarmac. **Below left:** V6 S wears 19in alloys. **Below right:** 'hidden' doorhandles



### OVERALL, THIS FIRST DUEL HAS

revealed that there is a shade more mechanical feel to the Porsche but you definitely have to work harder for your thrills, and tellingly, there was nothing I could do to shake Harry in the Jaguar behind. It has also shown just what different dynamic characters the two cars have, with the F-type offering a classic front-engine rear-drive balance with added edge and the 911 serving up its own unique and absorbing brand of rear-engined weight transfer. Puzzlingly, it's not entirely clear which of them is more fun at the moment, but the F-type is more than keeping the 911 honest.

'What's impressed me most,' says Harry, 'is that neither of these cars feels compromised by the lack of a roof. We've been belting up and down here and not once have I felt the need for more chassis stiffness.'

He's right. Put the roof up in either car



(something you can do while trickling along at 30mph, which is always fun) and you forget that you're in a drop-top, which is remarkable. The rest of the afternoon and evening is spent with roofs down, though, so Dean and his Nikon can make the most of the beautiful sunlight. Then, just as Snowdon is turning orange, Stephen Dobie turns up to take over from Harry, who mutters something cryptic

about a late-night appointment at the bank and Jags always having made good getaway cars.

That night we decide that there is really only one way to settle the test. So, the following morning we head out of Betws-y-Coed and along the A5 towards the evo Triangle. On cold tyres and with the air temperature only just in positive figures, the Jaguar's tail is happy to step well out of line through the first couple of tight corners, if you've slackened the DSC to its nicely judged 'track mode' or switched it off altogether. It's fun and the quick steering makes it easy to catch and hold, with the car still driving forwards using its mechanical limited-slip differential to good effect, but you need to be on your toes.

The roads of the Triangle are better-sighted and faster than anything else in the area, which is what makes them so brilliant. There's a section quite early on in the westerly leg that



**'The Jaguar is hard to resist on looks alone; there are just so many good angles on it'**



**Below, from left:** F-type's 3-litre V6 reaches 375bhp peak at 6500rpm; space-saver virtually eliminates boot space in the Jag; North Wales is ideal spot to separate the rivals



is open and uphill. From a distance it almost looks like the road sweeps round in one big left-hander, but it's actually two separate corners. Slap-bang in the middle of the second one is an unsettling dip that arrives just when the car is fully loaded. It's top of third gear in the V6 S, and as you turn in with that quick steering, it's hard to judge whether you've got the line just right as it twitches into the bend. Then comes the dip, and your body presses down into the seat as the road drops away then rises up to meet you, but the Jag deals with it with aplomb. The resilience of the suspension keeps it beautifully under control through the compression and as you come up out the other side, with the now-unweighted car still turning, you can keep confidently on the throttle and enjoy the flash of oversteer as the rear wheels spin up.

It's a deeply impressive display of damping and one that the 911 can't quite match when

I go back through the corner 15 minutes later. But what the Porsche does do better is inspire confidence through faster corners. With such alert steering, it takes courage to really lean on the front end of the Jaguar and you find that you need to do a lot of steering with the throttle from quite early in the corner as a result. By comparison, you can work all four tyres on the 911 in a much more progressive way, leaning into the suspension's travel and tackling the road with a greater fluidity than in the F-type. Added to this is the fact that you seem to sit low down in the 911's chassis, whereas you feel perched on top of the Jag's.

Parked up in our usual spot near the top of the Triangle mid-morning, it feels like an age since those first few miles the day before, and in some ways I don't feel any closer to choosing between the two cars. Sitting in the sunlight, roof down, the Jaguar is hard to resist on looks

alone; there are just so many good angles on it. Stephen, Harry and I all agree that we're not entirely comfortable with the image of the 911 Cabrio, although it tends to look better in a darker colour. Conversely, I suspect some people will take one look at the F-type's laughably tiny boot (particularly if you've got a space-saver in there) and instantly plump for the Porsche on useability alone.

I'm sure some of you would love me to scream '911 beaten!', but that would be untrue. The 911 is still marginally more rewarding to drive when you're really going for it, with an intoxicating depth of involvement and a very special engine. But the F-type is arguably, as Harry says, 'more fun to drive more of the time', and any car that can come to the roads of North Wales and have a Porsche looking worriedly over its hunched shoulders is a very fine one indeed.





# F-type V8 S

**v ASTON MARTIN V8  
VANTAGE ROADSTER**

*Now the top-of-  
the-range F-type  
is pitted against a  
very British rival*

by NICK TROTT

**T** **THE ASTON IS THE FIRST TO** arrive and, inevitably, jaws drop. In the simultaneously piercing sun and piercing cold so typical of former

WW2 airfields in central England during spring, the Aston's curves glint and gleam. The shape is as acutely beautiful and essentially *right* as it was back in 2007 when we saw the V8 Vantage Roadster for the first time. Like all great roadsters, its aesthetic works because the range was designed with an open-top in mind: short, taut and with bodywork like silk stretched over muscle. Yep, the Aston Martin V8 Vantage exudes a superstar vibe.

But modern Astons have never had a problem with styling. The issue is older mechanicals – refined, evolved and improved, maybe, but older nonetheless. The Roadster is six years old, and the coupe made its debut in concept form in 2003.

Today the Aston has a new problem. Another V8 arrives. Another short, taut body disguising an

aluminium chassis, and another growly, hollow soundtrack. Not only that, it's also a car designed with an open top in mind. But unlike the Aston, it is being launched as an open-top first. It's the new Jaguar F-type V8 S, and it pulls up alongside the Vantage spitting all manner of acoustic fireworks from its exhaust – like a flyweight boxer throwing insults at the established champion.

At £79,985, the V8 S is the most expensive F-type. List for the Aston Martin V8 Vantage Roadster (non-S) is £98,995 – £19k more. However, sub-1500-mile V8 Roadsters frequently crop up in Aston's pre-owned network for around £85,000, making this head-to-head even more intriguing. It's the kind of battle that Ford shirked when the brands were siblings in the Premier Automotive Group portfolio.

The Jaguar is faster and more powerful. Its 5-litre supercharged V8 – an engine now in its third generation – develops 488bhp at 6500rpm, against 420bhp at 7300rpm from the Aston's 4.7-litre





naturally-aspirated V8. The Aston is also 45kg heavier (1710kg v 1665kg) according to the spec sheets, making the all-important power-to-weight battle an emphatic victory for Jaguar – 298bhp/ton against 250 for the Aston. Although, interestingly, we weighed the F-type V8 S with two-thirds of a tank of fuel but without a driver and saw 1805kg, of which 20kg was the space-saver wheel, tyre and tools (a £255 option we'd ignore – save the weight and carry a can of tyre weld). Time pressures meant we couldn't weigh the Vantage, but we don't doubt that on our scales with a similar amount of fuel, the Aston and Jaguar would show very similar kerb weights.

Bedford Autodrome is open, so we'll get some initial impressions on the circuit before heading on to the road. The Aston's swan-wing door swings out and up, and the roof stows quickly, leaving two neat leather-covered humps. The engine fires with a purposeful growl. Snick it into first (we have a manual – our preferred option)

and find that the clutch and gearshift actions feel slicker and more direct than ever – one of the many benefits of evolution that will make themselves felt during this test.

Having run a manual V8 Roadster on Fast Fleet, the car feels like an old friend. Muscle memory tells me that you need to turn in hard and fast on track, ideally with a touch of trail braking to break through an initial understeer phase, particularly in the faster corners. If you don't, the V8's comparative lack of torque won't allow you to neutralise mid-corner push with a stab of throttle, leaving you to deal with mild understeer all the way through to the corner exit. It's a trait that forces a disciplined method of driving, and when you master it there's real satisfaction in the way you can hustle this car – particularly in the knowledge that when you exceed the limit, the Aston is benign and easy to gather.

Into the Jaguar, and what a difference! At the first corner, the F-type oversteers on the way in,

oversteers on the way out and oversteers in the bit in between. The tyres are cold, but it's a shock after the Aston, a car that only surrenders grip and poise after serious provocation.

The Jaguar needs no such provocation – the steering responds quickly, the rear axle even quicker, and the supercharged engine revs (and sounds) like a NASCAR-engined bandsaw. After driving two or three fast but controlled laps, with some F1-style weaving to generate some heat, the F-type soon gets into its stride. The intensity remains – with the stability systems switched off, traction is broken at will – but real balance and precision emerges from the controls.

This is good news. Initial impressions suggest the F-type V8 S is challenging, fast, enormously fun and has great control feedback. I chuck the keys to Tiff Needell, who has been driving the V6 S for an *evo*TV video, and ten minutes later he hands them back wide-eyed, spluttering and swearing. I think he enjoyed himself.



**Above, from top:** F-type V8 S's quad exhausts produce a stunning soundtrack; 'leaper' on rear spoiler; Jag interior has a feelgood factor; 20in 'Blade' wheels (a £1500 option) feature carbonfibre inserts

**FAMILIARISATION OVER, WE HEAD** onto the road, wondering if the V8 S's hyperactivity will tie it up in knots – and if the Aston's civility will claw it back some points lost on track. Dickie Meaden is up front in the Jaguar and when the road opens out, he's gone – leaving nothing but a mighty bellow from the V8 F-type's quad 'Active' exhausts hanging in the air. Every upshift is accompanied by a giant thunderclap, every downshift by a hollow crackle and a round of artillery fire. If you didn't know better, you'd think this car had just driven straight through a time-tunnel back from Le Mans in the '60s.

Keeping up with the Jaguar demands real commitment from the Aston driver. Ours is a standard Vantage, lacking the firmer springs, firmer dampers and quicker rack of the 'S' version. But its softer responses and horsepower disadvantage actually give it a traction advantage on the road, delivering a feeling of security on corner exits that the Jag can't match. Put simply,

if you can stay with the Jaguar on the way into the corner, you'll be crawling all over it on exit until the F-type can deploy all 488bhp – at which point it disappears.

The Aston's steering is accurate and the relationship between the throttle pedal and steering more synchronised than in the F-type. By this I mean that when you apply the throttle, you simultaneously and intuitively unwind the appropriate amount of lock. Oversteer rarely enters the dynamic envelope unless it is wet and/or you do something really silly.

At road speeds, the Aston's front and back axle combine to deliver a beautifully neutral stance – so much so that you often try to agitate the chassis with exaggerated steering or throttle inputs. The Aston responds well to this on track, but on the road you're better driving to the car's strengths – grip, poise and fluidity – rather than overdriving it to make it behave like something it's not.

The Jaguar couldn't be more different (see

**'Initial impressions suggest that the V8 S is challenging, fast, enormously fun and has great control feedback'**



**'The Jaguar disrespectfully exposes the Aston's age with sharper dynamics and more focused appeal'**



**Below, from left:** Aston's 4.7-litre V8 gives away 68bhp to F-type; Jag's fighter jet-style toggle activates Dynamic mode; 5-litre Jag V8 produces 461lb ft through wide rev range



a trend emerging here?). Its extra 68bhp and more aggressive chassis set-up equates to a busier, more frantic experience for the driver. The damping is abrupt, perhaps too abrupt for England's recently frost-damaged tarmac, which means the 20in wheels often float over the surface like a speedboat skimming across the waves – traction loading and unloading as the dampers try to keep up. Combine this with an (understandably) overprotective stability control system and your progress over fast ground becomes a jumpy, staccato affair.

It sounds counter-intuitive, but the solution is to switch to Dynamic mode. Throttle response is sharpened, steering weight increased, gearshifts quicken, the adaptive dampers firm up and, most importantly, the stability control system loosens its grip on the Pirelli P Zero rear tyres. Here, the extra degree of overspin combined with the direct steering allows for much more engaging and less interrupted progress. You're initially shocked at

just how quickly the rear will step out, or how quickly the revs will flare over a crest, but after applying more discipline to the throttle pedal, and resisting the urge to overcorrect the steering, the V8 S becomes a real joy to push hard – tail-led rather than tail-happy, and superb fun.

A word of warning though – you need to be absolutely on top of your game, and perhaps a little unhinged, to disable the stability systems fully on the road; there's a spikiness to the F-type V8 S that we've not experienced in a Jag before – not even in the XKR-S. The V8's active diff (the V6 S has a mechanical LSD) does a decent job of managing the torque across the axle, but there's a nagging feeling that a conventional LSD would telegraph a little more information to the driver.

The F-type's steering deserves special praise. The rack is direct and fast (the fastest ever fitted to a Jag) and there's real information filtering up from the road. Plus it feels like Jaguar has resisted the urge to overdamp the steering. 'It's consistent

in its behaviour,' says Meaden, 'and thanks to its sense of connection feels transparent.'

Time to stop, take a deep breath, and let photographer Dean Smith complain once again that the light isn't bright/dark/red/orange/pink/blue enough. We park up and Dickie and I swap notes. We soon notice that every passing car jinks as the driver spots the F-type. Its optional Firesand Metallic orange paint undoubtedly steals attention from the black Aston, but so does the detail treatment – those grape-on-scalpel rear lights, the flat, edgy rear deck and the carbon on the optional 'Blade' wheels. The F-type is a confidently resolved, modern roadster design – so modern in fact that few believe it's actually a Jaguar upon first glance. No wonder the car is littered with 'Jaguar' scripts...

Inside, the style continues. The joystick gearlever with its forward for down, back for up (i.e. correct) shift directions is a welcome sight (the JLR rotary selector would've jarred horribly).





The bronze anodised-effect paddles and Dynamic mode toggle enhance the fighter-jet vibe. Some will find the effect a little contrived, especially after the classically tailored Aston, but I like the cabin's sense of fun. Less impressive is the large central air vent binnacle that rises and falls rather awkwardly, depending on cabin temperature and air direction, and the seat position, which I'd personally like a couple of inches lower.

We head back onto the road, enjoying the manual gearbox in the Aston and conversely wondering if the F-type is a better car for having an eight-speed automatic. There's little doubt that the Jaguar's ZF 'box is a peach – the rev-matching on downshifts is supreme, and the rapid upshifts are accompanied by a mighty *fwlap!* as the ignition is momentarily extinguished. You rarely drop into first gear, and from second upwards there's a direct mechanical link between the engine and the rear axle – a locking clutch decoupling the torque converter. Ultimately it's

not as fast as a twin-clutch unit, but the sensation of rapid-shifting and the manual control via the light-touch paddles are better than expected.

However, out on English roads you tend to overshuffle the gears somewhat unnecessarily. Rather than extend the revs through to their maximum, you find yourself surfing the fattest part of the torque curve with frequent shifts. Ignore the temptation to overshuffle and hold on to a ratio instead, and you discover a satisfying, VTEC-like punch at around 5500rpm accompanied by a faint scream from the supercharger. The V8 S is short geared. Max in 1st is 43mph, 2nd is 64mph, 3rd 95mph, 4th 121mph, 5th 157mph and 6th, 7th and 8th 186mph.

As for the Aston, it's a wee bit simpler than that. You orchestrate the performance in a much finer, more intuitive and more interactive manner via the gearlever, clutch and six ratios. I can practically see the Luddites forming an orderly queue behind us...

## **TWO DAYS LATER, I WATCH THE F-TYPE**

V8 S drive away from the *evo* office. The experience has undoubtedly been worth the wait – although I suspect Jaguar's neighbours at Gaydon would have preferred an indefinite delay. The Vantage, like all Astons we've experienced lately, remains a compelling proposition despite its advanced years. It feels beautifully honed; polished and evolved with a unique personality and real grace and integrity – but it feels like a car that revealed everything about itself a couple of years ago and has nothing left to show us.

The Jaguar disrespectfully exposes the Aston's age with sharper dynamics, more focused appeal and a chassis that allows the driver to be more expressive. It's not perfect by any means, and many will find the V8 S too intense, but the top-of-the-range F-type wins this battle. It is a genuinely thrilling and engaging sports car that will give its rivals a serious headache for several years to come.





# What about the Boxster?

*The 911's cheaper brother is also a rival to the F-type...*

by MIKE DUFF

**A**S JAGUAR COULDN'T lend us a basic, 335bhp, non-'S' V6 F-type, this contest looks more uneven than it should. The 375bhp V6 S is £22,000 more expensive than the £45k, 311bhp Boxster S. Yet despite the Jag's 64bhp advantage, the Porsche is just 0.2sec slower to 62mph with the manual gearbox (as here) – and 0.1sec *quicker* if you spec PDK and Sport Chrono. Blame the fact that, officially, the Jag is nearly 300kg heavier.

Quite where this extra mass is hiding is a mystery at first: the Jag is just 10cm longer. But climbing into each car in turn reveals that the F-type's cockpit feels snugger. And when it comes to luggage space – vital in two cars designed for touring – it's a total victory for the Porsche and its front and rear storage compartments. The F-type's tiny boot is too shallow for anything more than a squashy bag, and only then if you choose not to option the space-saver wheel.

On the road, the Jaguar is more immediately exciting in the way it responds, while the Boxster remains an utterly composed driving tool. There's lots to like about the Jaguar's supercharged V6, especially the no-nonsense way it sets the car off down the road when you put your foot down, but after a while I start wishing it sounded a bit less strident at everyday speeds – it's not like the F-type is short of the ability to win attention. The automatic gearbox is impressively quick-shifting, but left to its own devices in either 'D' or 'S' it spends too much time changing between the transmission's eight speeds.

By contrast, the Boxster's 3.4-litre flat-six lacks the F-type's surging mid-range, but the Porsche's engine is keener to rev and its perfectly proportional throttle pedal means you can pretty much dose performance by the individual horsepower. Drive the F-type by itself and you wouldn't say its throttle response feels slow-witted or boosty; direct comparison

with the Boxster somehow makes it seem so.

I was deeply unsure about the F-type's ultra-quick steering at first, yet within a couple of miles I was convinced. There's proper communication behind the assistance, and you rapidly develop confidence that the chassis will do as you ask. Ordinarily I'd single out the Boxster's steering as about the best implementation yet of electric assistance, but the Jag leaves it feeling a bit slow.

Of course, the balance of the Porsche's chassis is as good as ever, as is the level of grip it can generate through corners. The F-type's frenetic power delivery might give it an advantage on the straights, certainly if you're not going to thrash the Boxster to within an inch of its life. But on a twisting, cresty road the pair are almost perfectly matched for pace.

As a driving proposition, the Boxster S – our favourite open-topped Porsche – remains the better car. But the Jaguar definitely delivers a more visceral and exciting experience.



**Top:** Boxster is a key rival for the V6 F-types. **Left:** the Porsche is slightly shorter, but is also some 294kg lighter than the V6 S



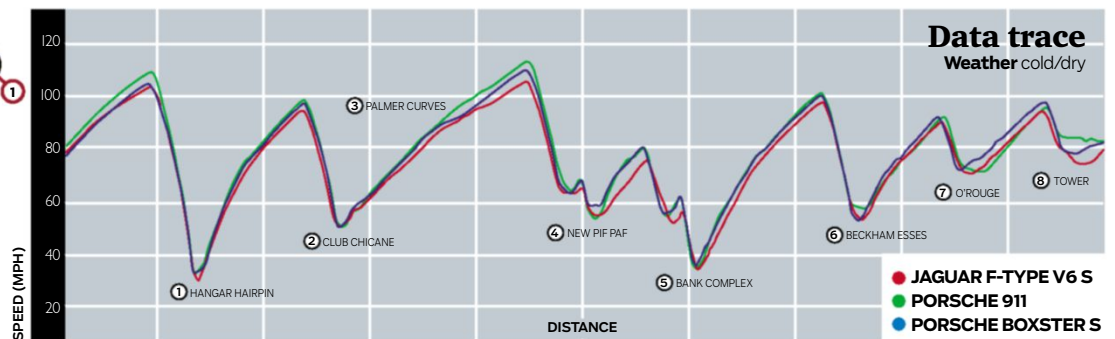
# Lapping the West Circuit

Words: Richard Meaden



'The V8 S can get a bit wild through transitions, but it's anarchic fun'

**West Circuit**  
Bedford Autodrome  
1.8 miles



**JAGUAR F-TYPE V6 S** 1:27.2 (105.03mph peak)\* **PORSCHE 911 CARRERA CABRIOLET** 1:23.9 (112.33mph peak) **PORSCHE BOXSTER S** 1:24.2 (109.34mph peak)  
**JAGUAR F-TYPE V8 S** 1:25.2 (111.24mph peak) **ASTON MARTIN V8 VANTAGE ROADSTER** 1:25.6 (109.09mph peak) \*see text

LAP TIMES NEVER bend our overall group test verdicts out of shape, but *evo's* flat-out laps at the Bedford Autodrome have traditionally been the undoing of sporting Jaguars. To my mind, this makes our track session critical in revealing whether the F-type's set-up marks a genuine shift in Jaguar's dynamic DNA.

The V8 S goes first, and two things immediately strike you about it. The first is that – at last! – this is a Jaguar with quick-witted steering, the second that it has a firm brake pedal with early, well-modulated bite. Both these things truly connect you to the car, which makes you feel better able to exploit the epic, barrel-chested performance.

The eight-speed paddle-shift auto 'box is softer-edged than a DSG, but ups its game successfully on track. Traction – or the lack thereof – is an issue through slow and fast corners, even the fourth-gear 100mph-plus exit of Palmer Curves. It hampers your ability to push for a time, and can get a bit wild through transitions, but it's anarchic fun if you're confident. And not paying for tyres.

Swapping into the Aston V8 Vantage, you're struck by how much more compact

it feels. The steering has a brighter, more analogue feel, but the car isn't as alert or as urgent. Where the F is dominated by power oversteer, the Aston exhibits a neutral-to-understeer balance, which means you can consistently lean on it harder without chasing the tail or waiting for the rear tyres to find some purchase. The Vantage's transaxle layout helps here, but so too (albeit inadvertently) does its naturally aspirated V8's lack of muscle compared to the Jag. Both cars work their brakes to the limit, middle pedals going long towards the end of our five-lap runs. Ultimately just 0.4sec separates them (a gap so small that we omitted both cars from the data trace above), the F-type's raw power outpunching the Aston's tidier but less thrilling efforts.

It's fascinating to try the F-type V6 S. Freed from the task of containing that rampant V8, the chassis feels more settled and poised. It's more controllable, predictable and precise, yet still malleable to your inputs. In short it can do neat and tidy, or fast and loose, whereas the V8 is always a wild ride. The V6 sounds fabulous and has an infectious appetite for high revs, without ever feeling peaky.

Unfortunately our test car decides to default out of Dynamic mode early in our timed runs (but still allows the ESP to be disabled), so it has a little more to come pace-wise. But subjectively, there's no doubt this is the more rounded machine, far more willing to be hustled and with sweeter on-limit handling.

We've ranged two Porsches against the V6 S, largely because of Jaguar's pricing strategy. I jump straight from the F into the 911 Carrera Cabriolet. It's in pretty basic spec. That's to say manual, with no PCCB or PASM. It's a cooler character than the more exuberant Jaguar, with a steely delivery and tightly controlled responses. It's great to continually feel the rearward weight distribution at work in a way you rarely get to experience on the road, and impressive that it only ever seems to work to the 911's advantage, even through the West Circuit's awkward direction changes. It also generates more outright grip, and you can definitely feel the Porsche's weight advantage, which helps its rev-happy 3.4-litre motor deliver its best. The VBOX reveals a significant 1.3sec margin over the V8 Jag's best effort and 3.3sec over the admittedly hobbled V6 S.

But it's important to say that in terms of entertainment, the gap is much closer.

Last to be lapped is the Boxster S, which is fitted with a manual 'box and PASM suspension. Like the Jags, this mid-engined Porsche is warmer in character than the 911, but it shares the rear-engined car's core attributes of athletic build, strong brakes, precise controls and a fabulous motor. What shines through is its poise and its benign-yet-expressive handling balance. No matter how hard you push, there's never any sense of reaching a ragged edge. It's not just the chassis that's perfectly balanced; so too is the grip-to-grunt ratio, the uniformity of control weights and the consistency of response. It's a sublime car. Quick too, with a best lap just 0.3sec shy of the 911's.

On the face of it, Porsche's dominance of the lap times suggests little has changed, but that hides the fact that both F-types are genuinely entertaining to drive on track. They don't have the absolute polish of the Porsches, but they're both quick, exciting cars that encourage you to drive hard and reward you for doing so. That bodes very well for future R and R-S models.



# The conclusion

**I** 'IT'S THE BEST JAG IN my lifetime,' says Dickie, and there isn't anyone in the room, not even Harry 'Old Father Time' Metcalfe, that disagrees.

With the help of tea and chocolate digestives, we've all come together a few days after the various tests to talk through our conclusions. It's still hard to believe just how good and how much fun the F-type is, and the first thing everyone agrees on is that we all want another go, which is a very good sign.

'I love that they've put a lot of thought into the whole experience of being in the F-type,' says Trott. 'From the interior to the way they sound, they're exciting, engaging cars to be in.'

Meaden agrees: 'In emotional and impulsive terms, Jaguar has hit the nail on the head, and the F-type has benefitted from, or capitalised on, the fact that the 911 has lost a bit of that bewitching "magic at any speed" character that it used to have. Both F-types are proper drivers' cars, too'. At this point, Metcalfe chimes in with: 'And importantly, they feel premium.'

So, which F do we prefer – the V6 S or the V8 S? We all concur that the V6 S is the better-damped and more rounded package. But...


'The V8 S just reminds me of a mini Ferrari F12,' enthuses Trott. 'I know that sounds ridiculous, but it's so mental with that fast steering and the feeling of a short wheelbase. Even the McLaren felt relaxed afterwards.' Dickie and Harry agree that for an extra £12k it's hard to ignore the extra thrill, cylinders, performance and hooligan charms of the V8 S.

'I think you'd perhaps buy the V8 S if you wanted a weekend toy and the V6 S if you wanted an everyday car,' opines Harry. I agree, but I add that the V8 might just be a bit too much for what some people are looking for in a sports car. Nick suggests that people should go for a drive in the better-balanced V6 S first and then try the V8 S if left wanting more, because the latter's exuberance would put some people off if it was their first taste of F-type.

And what of the other cars in the test? Everyone is in accord (no, we haven't moved the meeting to a Honda saloon) that at £45k, the

Boxster S is the bargain of the group and also the most complete car.

Trott beams: 'I adore the Boxster and there's a real sense of satisfaction to be had when you drive it from knowing that this is pretty much as good as it gets.' Dickie isn't going to disagree: 'Dynamically it's the best car and it still feels like there's a greater depth of engineering with the Porsche. It has better damping on the road than either of the F-types and yet it's also a better track car.' After a longing look at the digestives and with slight bewilderment, he adds: 'How do they do that?'

Harry isn't entirely sure that an F-type buyer will be looking at Boxsters, though – such is the pricing. And then conversation drifts back to how much fun the V8 S was and how it might do in eCoty. The F-type is that sort of car – it makes you look forward to your next drive in it. Which is exactly what a sports car should do. 



## VIDEO

See the Jaguar F-type put through its paces online

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## Specifications

### JAGUAR F-TYPE V6 S

<b>Engine</b>	V6, 2995cc, supercharged
<b>CO2</b>	213g/km
<b>Power</b>	375bhp @ 6500rpm
<b>Torque</b>	339lb ft @ 3500-5000rpm
<b>Transmission</b>	Eight-speed automatic, rear-wheel drive, mechanical LSD
<b>Front suspension</b>	Double wishbones, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar
<b>Rear suspension</b>	Double wishbones, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar
<b>Brakes</b>	Ventilated discs, 380mm front, 325mm rear, ABS, EBA
<b>Wheels</b>	8.5 x 19in front, 9.5 x 19in rear
<b>Tyres</b>	245/40 R19 front, 275/35 R19 rear
<b>Weight (kerb)</b>	1614kg
<b>Power-to-weight</b>	236bhp/ton
<b>0-62mph</b>	4.9sec (claimed)
<b>Top speed</b>	171mph (claimed)
<b>Basic price</b>	£67,520
<b>On sale</b>	Now
<b>Rating</b>	★★★★★

### PORSCHE 911 CARRERA CABRIOLET

<b>Engine</b>	Flat-six, 3436cc
<b>CO2</b>	217g/km
<b>Power</b>	345bhp @ 7400rpm
<b>Torque</b>	288lb ft @ 5600rpm
<b>Transmission</b>	Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, mechanical LSD
<b>Front suspension</b>	MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
<b>Rear suspension</b>	Multi-link, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
<b>Brakes</b>	Ventilated discs, 330mm front and rear, ABS, EBD
<b>Wheels</b>	8.5 x 19in front, 11 x 19in rear
<b>Tyres</b>	235/40 ZR19 front, 285/35 ZR19 rear
<b>Weight (kerb)</b>	1450kg
<b>Power-to-weight</b>	242bhp/ton
<b>0-62mph</b>	5.0sec (claimed)
<b>Top speed</b>	178mph (claimed)
<b>Basic price</b>	£81,727
<b>On sale</b>	Now
<b>Rating</b>	★★★★★

### PORSCHE BOXSTER S

<b>Engine</b>	Flat-six, 3436cc
<b>CO2</b>	206g/km
<b>Power</b>	311bhp @ 6700rpm
<b>Torque</b>	265lb ft @ 4500-6800rpm
<b>Transmission</b>	Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, mechanical LSD
<b>Front suspension</b>	MacPherson struts, coil springs, PASM dampers, anti-roll bar
<b>Rear suspension</b>	Multi-link, coil springs, PASM dampers, anti-roll bar
<b>Brakes</b>	Ventilated discs, 330mm front, 299mm rear, ABS, EBD
<b>Wheels</b>	8 x 19in front, 9.5 x 19in rear
<b>Tyres</b>	235/40 ZR19 front, 265/40 ZR19 rear
<b>Weight (kerb)</b>	1320kg
<b>Power-to-weight</b>	239bhp/ton
<b>0-62mph</b>	5.1sec (claimed)
<b>Top speed</b>	173mph (claimed)
<b>Basic price</b>	£45,384
<b>On sale</b>	Now
<b>Rating</b>	★★★★★

### JAGUAR F-TYPE V8 S

<b>Engine</b>	V6, 5000cc, supercharged
<b>CO2</b>	259g/km
<b>Power</b>	488bhp @ 6500rpm
<b>Torque</b>	461lb ft @ 2500-5500rpm
<b>Transmission</b>	Eight-speed automatic, rear-wheel drive, active differential
<b>Front suspension</b>	Double wishbones, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar
<b>Rear suspension</b>	Double wishbones, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar
<b>Brakes</b>	Ventilated discs, 380mm front, 376mm rear, ABS, EBA
<b>Wheels</b>	9 x 20in front, 10.5 x 20in rear
<b>Tyres</b>	255/35 R20 front, 295/30 R20 rear
<b>Weight (kerb)</b>	1665kg (1805kg as tested)
<b>Power-to-weight</b>	298bhp/ton
<b>0-62mph</b>	4.3sec (claimed)
<b>Top speed</b>	186mph (claimed)
<b>Basic price</b>	£79,985
<b>On sale</b>	Now
<b>Rating</b>	★★★★★

### ASTON MARTIN V8 VANTAGE ROADSTER

<b>Engine</b>	V8, 4735cc
<b>CO2</b>	299g/km
<b>Power</b>	420bhp @ 7300rpm
<b>Torque</b>	346lb ft @ 5000rpm
<b>Transmission</b>	Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, mechanical LSD
<b>Front suspension</b>	Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
<b>Rear suspension</b>	Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
<b>Brakes</b>	Ventilated discs, 355mm front, 330mm rear, ABS, EBD
<b>Wheels</b>	8.5 x 19in front, 9.5 x 19in rear
<b>Tyres</b>	235/40 ZR19 front, 275/35 ZR19 rear
<b>Weight (kerb)</b>	1710kg
<b>Power-to-weight</b>	250bhp/ton
<b>0-62mph</b>	4.9sec (claimed)
<b>Top speed</b>	180mph (claimed)
<b>Basic price</b>	£98,995
<b>On sale</b>	Now
<b>Rating</b>	★★★★☆



'It's still hard to believe how good and how much fun the F-type is. Everyone agrees that we all want another go'



**R8 V10 Plus v 458 v 12C**





A dynamic, low-angle shot of a blue Audi R8 driving on a road. The car is in the foreground, with its front end and headlights visible. The road curves to the left, and a yellow sports car is visible in the distance. The background is a blurred landscape of rolling hills under a hazy sky. The overall mood is one of speed and performance.

# R8

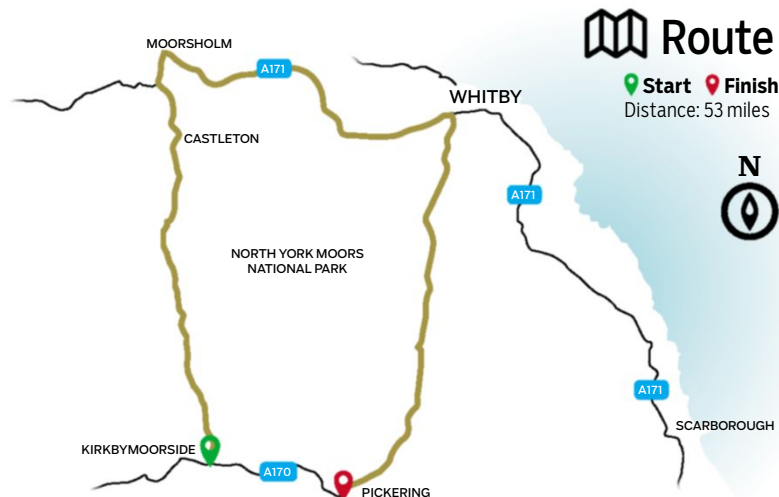
## EXPECTATIONS

*The Audi R8 is aiming to move into true supercar territory with the 542bhp V10 Plus. We find out how it stacks up against the established class leaders*

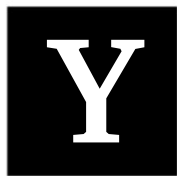
by RICHARD MEADEN

PHOTOGRAPHY by  
DEAN SMITH





'Less than a decade ago you simply couldn't have brought cars like these to roads like this, driven them hard and expected them to come back unscathed'



**YOU KNOW THE** protagonists, so let's cut to the chase. Is Audi's new R8 V10 Plus fit to keep this level of company? It's a big demand, and one we

haven't previously made of Audi's mid-engined flagship, but from the moment we drove the V10 Plus at the international launch (*evo* 177) we knew it had real star quality, with a depth of character and ability that marked it out as a truly great car and the most complete and desirable R8 yet.

So here we are, gathered with three of the most exciting mid-engined cars money can buy on some of England's most challenging roads, high on the fabulous grouse moors of North Yorkshire. Less than a decade ago you simply couldn't have brought cars like these to roads like this, driven them hard and expected them to come back unscathed. Such is the nature of the sustained high-speed sections, savage crests, lung-squeezing compressions and lumpen, frost-riven tarmac that you'd have left a trail of aluminium swarf and front splitters from Pickering all the way to Whitby.

But when you take the time to get to know them intimately, these are uniquely thrilling roads with an epic sense of scale and – if you pick your moments – the kind of sparse traffic that offers golden opportunities in which to stretch the legs of seriously quick cars. And these are three seriously quick cars, as witnessed by the fact the least potent machine (the Audi) has 542bhp and 398lb ft of torque to haul a modest 1570kg, hits 62mph from a standstill in 3.5sec

and runs on to a top speed of 197mph. On days like these my friends, on days like these...

This magical test starts, as they so often do, with a mundane journey on everyday roads. Logistics dictate we're converging on our rendezvous point at different times and from different locations, so we're denied the spectacle of a 26-cylinder, 1720bhp convoy, but it does mean I get an unbroken three-hour journey in which to reacquaint myself with the McLaren MP4-12C.

The eagle-eyed amongst you will have spotted that this is editor Trott's current Fast Fleet loaner, which means it has the recent software upgrades to the engine, along with a softer action for the gearshift paddles. It's also retina-scorchingly orange. Though as much a part of McLaren's identity as Rosso Corsa is to Ferrari, I'm really not sure it sits comfortably with the 12C's inherently understated style, but then I am becoming something of a Grumpy Old Man, so perhaps it's just me. One thing I know I'm right about is the cursed invisible door release mechanism, which always works when you're on your own, but never wastes an opportunity to humiliate you in front of bystanders. Only at the end of the test do I discover that double-clicking the unlock section of the key fob pops the door release, providing a neat solution to an irksome design flaw.

It's a bad start to what should be a blissful experience. Fortunately, when the dihedral door finally *ker-thunks* and hisses skywards, there's no denying it prompts a tingle of excitement. Once you've shimmied yourself round the trailing edge of the awkwardly upswept door and threaded yourself in behind the wheel,

the 12C welcomes you with a fabulous driving environment. The simplicity of the architecture, clarity of the instruments and brilliant visibility afforded by the deep windscreen and rising tops of the front wings immediately sets you at ease. You feel ready to drive.

There's not a great deal of theatre about the start-up procedure, nor the sound of the twin-turbo 3.8-litre V8 at a gentle simmer, but a muted cacophony of hisses and whirs from the suspension and power steering systems adds some exoticism to the mix. Thanks to the Active Dynamics panel, it's possible to tweak the 12C's demeanour to suit the road. For the long haul north, that means Normal for both the handling settings and the powertrain. It's a civilised combination that gives you best access to the 12C's distinctive pliancy, but the overall refinement is dented by noticeable wind and road noise. That wouldn't normally be a consideration in a 200mph supercar, but as McLaren makes bold claims about the 12C's civility as a daily driver, it's a relevant criticism. As is the fact the Bluetooth hands-free system makes you sound like Darth Vader in a dustbin.

Once on the motorway, it soon becomes clear that self-control is paramount in this car, for it has an uncanny knack of masking the sensation of speed. If you let the 12C settle at the pace at which it feels most comfortable, you inadvertently find yourself loping along at 100mph: good for fostering an imperious feeling of making progress, bad for the longevity of your driving licence. In a funny way it makes the car rather tiring to drive too, simply because you have to concentrate on not going fast.

After a 150-mile tickle, up the A1 then across









**Above:** R8 runs 19in wheels all round, an inch smaller than those fitted to the 458 and the rear of the 12C



**Above:** this MP4-12C runs optional carbon-ceramic brakes; 305-section rear tyres are the widest here



**Above:** 458 has carbon-ceramic discs as standard; the 398mm fronts are larger than the R8's and MP4-12C's



to Pickering on the edge of the moors, I meet photographer Dean Smith, who has driven up in the R8. Its recent facelift is hardly radical, but it definitely looks sharper thanks to more expressive DRLs and a slimline carbonfibre splitter. Combined with stark white paint, carbon sideblades and a neater rear-end treatment embellished by funky LED indicators that scroll left or right, it restores the R8's sci-fi drama and concept-car chic. Parked in this timeless market town, it looks like a spacecraft.

Compared to the McLaren, with its MonoCell carbonfibre construction and downsized forced-induction engine, the Audi is rather old-school, employing a thumping 5.2-litre naturally aspirated dry-sump V10 engine slotted into an aluminium chassis structure. Where the 12C features innovative suspension technology and fully integrated systems that control the feel and behaviour of the chassis, aerodynamics, engine and transmission, the R8 uses a simple passive spring/damper set-up that's lower and stiffer

than the regular V10 R8's. As if to underline the simplistic approach, there's nothing more than a Sport button to intensify the dynamics with a sharper throttle, louder exhaust and more lenient ESP system.

Further efforts to enhance the driving experience include weight loss (some 50kg compared with the regular V10 through the use of composite body panels), standard fitment of carbon-ceramic brakes and an increase in power and torque to peaks of 542bhp and 398lb ft, up 24bhp and 7lb ft respectively. A six-speed manual comes as standard, but the adoption of a smoother, faster-shifting seven-speed DSG 'box as an option in place of the abrupt old six-speed R-tronic single-clutch transmission is the single biggest area of improvement. I've gone on record bemoaning the prevalence of paddle-shift gearboxes, but readily concede that when they're good, they're very, very good. Prior experience of this S-tronic transmission from the international launch suggests it is the latter.





For an as-tested price of £130,195, the Audi is a bargain in this company. Just how great a bargain is what we're about to find out...

The final piece of the puzzle arrives under cover of darkness, so it's not until next morning that we see the Ferrari 458 Italia alongside the 12C and R8 for the first time. Compared to the immaculate minimalism of the Audi and the svelte understatement of the McLaren (colour aside) there's a fabulous awkwardness to the Ferrari. Its conflicting surfaces cleverly collide to form a Stealth Fighter-like amalgam of edges and curves that somehow create a harmonious whole. It's not beautiful in the conventional sense, but you can't help but stare in wonder.

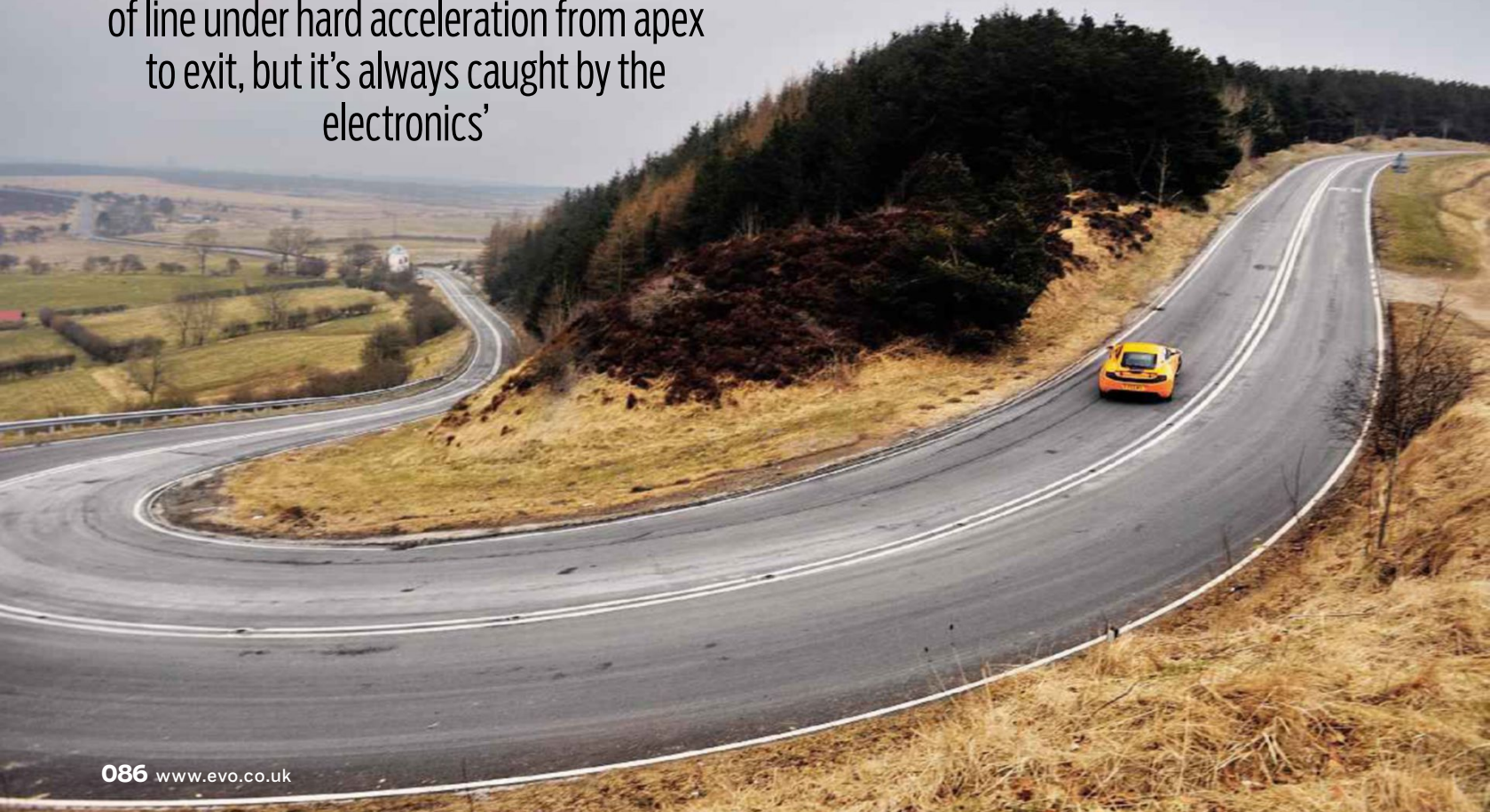
When Harry Metcalfe reveals how much this particular example is, our jaws hit the floor. As will yours when I tell you it's a few quid north of £271,000. In other words that's a mildly staggering £93,000-worth of options, a gobsmacking £41,000 of which is on assorted carbonfibre embellishments.

**Clockwise from above:** S-tronic R8 is the only car of this trio to carry a gearstick, and it moves quickly and intuitively between modes; McLaren's gear modes are selected via neat but more-fiddly-to-use buttons; Ferrari has buttons too





'The 12C's tail will shimmy and step out of line under hard acceleration from apex to exit, but it's always caught by the electronics'





**I RESIST TAKING PROBABLY THE** world's most expensive Ferrari 458 and instead elect to stick with the McLaren for our first collective foray onto the moors. It's remarkable how big a change you can make in the car by twisting the rotary switches of the Active Dynamics panel clockwise a click or two. In its softest mode the suspension – such an integral part of the 12C's unique feel and capabilities – isolates you from the impacts. But somehow it never quite manages to isolate you from what it's having to do to absorb those impacts, instead transmitting a muted but pretty much constant stream of road and suspension noise into the cockpit. As you ramp up the damping to Sport, body control tightens appreciably, and in so doing quickly trades that sense of apparently bottomless wheel travel for a harder, busier ride. As its label suggests, Track mode is too stiff for all but the smoothest roads, and is best left alone up here.

Make the same adjustment to the powertrain switch and the engine note instantly hardens, the throttle and gearshift response gaining a similar level of urgency and purpose. This metaphorical shot of adrenaline is welcome, but the engine noise is borderline industrial and is unpleasant during full-throttle acceleration. In Track mode it's actually painful. When you manage to get beyond the noise issue, click-click-click down the gears and floor the throttle, the ferocity of the acceleration is startling. There's the slightest of pauses as the turbos react, before a monumental amount of power and torque is unleashed on the rear tyres. Traction is exceptional, and once you're beyond second gear only a crest will induce a flare of wheelspin, which is then instantly and precisely quashed by the electronics.

The steering is light, direct and keen. It has a clean, polished rate of response, but not a huge amount of feel immediately each side of straight ahead. The lack of body roll doesn't help you build an internal picture of how close to the limit you are, but with so many dynamic systems to rely upon – in particular Brake Steer – you never have to worry about understeer. The car simply grips and turns. The tail will shimmy and step out of line under hard acceleration from apex to exit, but it too is caught by the electronics. Apply some sensitivity to the process and you soon learn the best way to drive the 12C is to judge the limit as finely as you can and nudge into the driving aids, rather than drive like an oaf and crash into them. It's clever, but a bit cold.

With a bit of jiggery-pokery reminiscent of using a cheat in a console game – 'with the car in such-and-such a mode, push and hold button A, wait for message, then press buttons X and Y to confirm' – you can completely disable the stability control. It's worth doing because you gain a feeling of connection and ownership of the driving experience, partly through the



Above: Audi interior feels spacious, functional and comfortable, but doesn't give the impression of a supercar



Above: MP4-12C's centre console is dominated by IRIS touchscreen, which controls most communication features



Above: 458's patterned sports seats provide a racier look; steering wheel carries FI-style manettino (bottom right)





'Wringing the 458 out across the moors is a heart-pounding experience, not because it's







a ragged handful, but because it is capable of sustaining obscene speeds, mile after mile'

**Above:** seasoned road testers they may be, but they still snap supercars. **Top right:** 12C doors can cause problems in car parks. **Above right:** 458 can be provoked with small inputs. **Far left:** photographer-shaped teapot not included with McLaren. **Left:** 458's fire extinguisher is a £507 extra. **Below left:** evo team goes in search of Fryup. **Right:** R8 is only four-wheel-drive car in the test. **Far right:** 458's F1-style manettino. **Below:** North Yorkshire policemen found it hard to keep up with 1720bhp of supercar...





'Because the 458 and 12C can make a meal of things everyday cars do effortlessly, they inadvertently highlight the user-friendly brilliance of the R8'

increased jeopardy in driving by the seat of your pants, but also because the car is more consistent and transparent in its behaviour. Doubtless it's not as quick, but it's liberating to feel the limit of the car's mechanical grip and then occasionally exceed it without the subtle but discernable nips, tucks and nudges from the electronic systems. It's like you and the car are finally able to connect on a tactile level.

Switching to the Ferrari is quite a culture shock. The interior is fussier, the driving position not quite as perfect. From the moment you fire the raucous V8 into life, the whole car quivers with a tense, hyperactive energy. The steering is light and ultra-responsive, so you have to calm your inputs down to make smooth, measured progress. It feels a bit manufactured

to me, and as we begin to gain some serious speed I really wish the steering wasn't quite so immediate, as it turns the nose in so hard you feel the tail get a little edgy in an effort to keep up. The ESP system thankfully works well, allowing the car to move a little, but not so much to spook you. But you have to trust it. Amongst the countless buttons on the steering wheel, there's one that switches the dampers to their Bumpy Road setting, and that relaxes the tension a little, but the Ferrari's fast-twitch dynamics still demand you work equally hard at measuring your inputs.

In performance terms it wears its heart on its sleeve far more readily than the McLaren. You always feel like you're travelling more quickly, even though in reality the 12C and 458 are

evenly matched across the ground, but you have to be on top of your game more because the Ferrari requires more frequent steering inputs. Work your way around the manettino settings and you'll feel the 458 become progressively more expressive, allowing greater levels of unchecked slip until finally you make that final twist to disable the stability control. The handling balance is more extreme than the 12C's, and takes bigger steering inputs to balance. At first you feel the need to make aggressive throttle inputs to make the tail step out of line in a tight corner, but once you learn the 458's natural inclination towards oversteer, you find smaller inputs will provoke and control slides with greater progression and precision.

The engine and transmission are spectacular,







both for their ferocity and speed of response, but also because they are equally adept when travelling slowly. For a car that thrives on delivering 562bhp at 9000rpm, it's remarkably tractable, certainly more so than a peak torque figure of 398lb ft at 6000rpm might suggest when the 12C's force-fed 442lb ft arrives at half those revs. Both have an immense and instantaneous 'snap' when you crack open the throttle, the 458 shading the 12C for synaptic immediacy but lacking the turbocharged car's tumescent mid-range.

Wringing the 458 out across the moors is a heart-pounding experience, not because it's a ragged handful, but because it is capable of sustaining obscene speed over mile after mile of rollercoaster road. Like the 12C, it's incredible

to experience how much punishment the suspension absorbs without deflecting you from your chosen trajectory. I lose count of the times I wince in readiness for a crunching impact, only for the Ferrari to shrug it off as though nothing happened. It's incredibly impressive and a vivid reminder of how different the Ferrari and McLaren are in character and delivery, yet how similar they are in real road capability.

I've saved the Audi until last because I wanted the clearest idea of what it has to live up to. Swing open the driver's door and first impressions are of a cool, impressively confident car, yet one with more obviously mainstream roots. Both the 458 and 12C offer more instantly impressive driving environments, but because they can make a meal of things everyday cars

do effortlessly, they inadvertently highlight the user-friendly brilliance of the R8. The car's age is betrayed by not having up-to-the-minute Audi satnav, but what's there works intuitively and without bugs or glitches. It lacks an A-list sense of occasion, but it's immediately intuitive.

Twist the ignition key (no starter button here) and the V10 catches with a boom before settling into a subdued but menacing idle. It's a refreshing change after the anti-social look-at-me racket that pukes from the back of the 458. In fact, the R8 is one of the few modern supercars that trades volume for richness of tone. It's also the only car that has any kind of gear selector lever sprouting from its transmission tunnel. It might not look as tidy as a row of small buttons, but it's possible to go from Drive, through Neutral to Reverse and back again in a split-second without the need to look down. Again, it's a small thing, but one that you appreciate every time you need to make a quick three-point turn or shuffle out of a parking space.

The paddles are short, stubby and fixed to the steering wheel. Actually they're a bit too short, but they're still particularly satisfying to use, with less fore and aft travel than the Ferrari's and without the constant *click-click* of the 12C's. The 'box also seems to change gear more decisively than the others, always delivering sharp, precise shifts where the others slur their shifts at low speed. The R8 feels weightier, both



**From left:** Audi V10 engine is the largest of the three by capacity (5204cc), but at 542bhp is the least powerful; Trott's McLaren long-termer carries the latest engine upgrade to 616bhp; Ferrari's 4.5-litre V8 hits 562bhp peak at scorching 9000rpm



## R8 V10 Plus v 458 v 12C



**Above:** Audi's handling is progressive and predictable, making it easy to control. **Right:** V10-powered German doesn't look out of place amongst British and Italian opposition

in terms of vehicle mass and control weights. The hydraulic power-assisted steering is calmer and more instantly feelsome. There's an honesty and cohesion to the match of feel and response rate that fosters a sense of connection and gives a clear sense of grip levels and chassis balance.

The handling set-up is more foursquare than the 12C and 458, both of which are all about front-end response. The R8 doesn't have their aggressive turn-in bite, preferring a less edgy feel that can push into very mild understeer if you simply turn in and get back on the power. However, if you're prepared to play with the turn-in balance with a small (or large) lift of the throttle, you can use the rearward weight bias of the car to bring the tail into play. With Sport mode on and the ESP system engaged, this helps to neutralise the understeer, while with ESP off you can slide the V10 Plus like a rear-drive car, but with a greater sense of progression and stability. It's great fun without the edginess.

The Audi's 5.2-litre V10 lacks the extreme ferocity of the Ferrari and McLaren V8s, but it counters with a deliciously muscular character. It revs too, pulling through to 8500rpm more keenly than you'd think such a big-hearted motor could. Part of you wishes it had the crazy top-end fireworks of a Gallardo unit, but there's something genuinely wonderful about the way the R8 summons such monstrous pace without resorting to shouty histrionics. Better still, in Sport mode it sings a sweeter and more soulful song than either the 12C or the 458, howling exuberantly under load and emitting a roiling barrage of pops and bangs between downshifts.

The fixed-rate suspension is a revelation. It's

a bit knobby at low speed, but not offensively so, and once you're free from the 30mph limits it comes alive. Indeed, the faster you go the better it gets, seemingly never running out of pliancy or body control and keeping all four wheels on the ground more of the time. When you're really going for it on these roads, all three cars feel like pebbles skimming across open water, but it's the Audi that telegraphs its intentions most clearly and is therefore the car you feel most confident in pushing harder into the faster corners. What's more, you're not forever fiddling to find the best dynamic mode for the next few miles of road.

The brakes have a very small amount of dead travel, and then bite with a little too much enthusiasm, but once through that initial phase they're feelsome and easily modulated. They don't have the finessed early response of the Ferrari's Brembos, but they do feel as though they have more outright stopping power and stamina, and they're a hundred times better than the 12C's horrid binary stoppers. They also feel the most natural to use with your left foot. I know that sounds like pretentious bullshit, but with only two pedals to play with there's a lot to be said for using the opportunity to try learning the technique for braking with the 'wrong' foot.

**AS SMITH AND RILEY GET THE LAST** few frames of stills and video, we're free to head back home. I take the Audi. It's the right choice, not least because I get another revealing drive across the moors back to Hutton-le-Hole. It's enough to convince me the V10 Plus offers a greater sense of connection, is less prickly with no loss of enjoyment and summons equally

mind-blowing point-to-point pace without the need to do anything more than press the Sport button. That it then demonstrates supreme duality by effortlessly shrugging off the long homeward journey confirms the R8's brilliance as a true all-rounder.

Still, let's not kid ourselves here. Both the 458 and the 12C are incredible cars. The 458 reigns supreme for pedigree, spectacle and drama, while the 12C basks in McLaren's 'Supercar by NASA' geekery and, dare I say it, for Not Being A Ferrari. Inevitably some of the reasons to buy the 458 or 12C are also vacuous; perhaps most of them if you blow a further £90k on option-list bling. In truth few of those customers will lose much sleep over the fact an Audi can match them for pace on real roads, nor that it delivers a more generous, less contrived driving experience for far less money. Put bluntly, Ferrari or McLaren won't see the V10 Plus as a serious rival outside that critical slice of the marketing department's Venn diagram. Can you lose to a car you're not competing against? Perhaps not, but drive them on the same roads and the folly of that mindset is ruthlessly exposed.

It seems that rather like the Nissan GT-R, the R8's only weakness is its badge. But to me that modesty only serves to make the V10 Plus even more special, for its appeal is built on something deeper and more satisfying than F1-assisted brand image. Ultimately we didn't get these cars together to proclaim a winner; rather to test the Audi's mettle against the established masters of the class. It could have come to this test and taken a brutal kicking. Instead it taught a few lessons of its own. The R8 has come of age. ☑



## Specifications

### AUDI R8 V10 PLUS

<b>Engine</b>	V10, 5204cc
<b>Power</b>	542bhp @ 8000rpm
<b>Torque</b>	398lb ft @ 6500rpm
<b>Transmission</b>	Seven-speed dual-clutch (optional), four-wheel drive, LSD, ESP
<b>Front suspension</b>	Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
<b>Rear suspension</b>	Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
<b>Brakes</b>	Carbon-ceramic discs, 380mm front, 356mm rear, ABS, EBD
<b>Wheels</b>	8.5 x 19in front, 11 x 19in rear
<b>Tyres</b>	235/35 R19 front, 295/30 R19 rear
<b>Weight (kerb)</b>	1570kg
<b>Power-to-weight</b>	351bhp/ton
<b>0-62mph</b>	3.5sec (claimed, S-tronic)
<b>Top speed</b>	197mph (claimed, S-tronic)
<b>Basic price</b>	£124,675 (S-tronic £127,610)
<b>On sale</b>	Now
<b>Rating</b>	★★★★★

### FERRARI 458 ITALIA

<b>Engine</b>	V8, 4499cc
<b>Power</b>	562bhp @ 9000rpm
<b>Torque</b>	398lb ft @ 6000rpm
<b>Transmission</b>	Seven-speed dual-clutch, rear-wheel drive, E-Diff3, F1-Trac
<b>Front suspension</b>	Double wishbones, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar
<b>Rear suspension</b>	Multi-link, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar
<b>Brakes</b>	Carbon-ceramic discs, 398mm front, 360mm rear, ABS, EBD
<b>Wheels</b>	8.5 x 20in front, 10.5 x 20in rear
<b>Tyres</b>	235/35 ZR20 front, 295/35 ZR20 rear
<b>Weight (kerb)</b>	1485kg
<b>Power-to-weight</b>	384bhp/ton
<b>0-62mph</b>	3.2sec (claimed)
<b>Top speed</b>	202mph (claimed)
<b>Basic price</b>	£178,491
<b>On sale</b>	Now
<b>Rating</b>	★★★★★

### McLAREN MP4-12C

<b>Engine</b>	V8, 3799cc, twin-turbo
<b>Power</b>	616bhp @ 7500rpm
<b>Torque</b>	442lb ft @ 3000rpm
<b>Transmission</b>	Seven-speed dual-clutch, rear-wheel drive, Brake Steer, ESC
<b>Front suspension</b>	Double wishbone, coil springs, adaptive dampers, roll control
<b>Rear suspension</b>	Multi-link, coil springs, adaptive dampers, roll control
<b>Brakes</b>	Carbon-ceramic discs, 394mm front, 380mm rear (optional), ABS, EBD
<b>Wheels</b>	8.5 x 19in front, 11 x 20in rear
<b>Tyres</b>	235/35 ZR19 front, 305/30 ZR20 rear
<b>Weight (kerb)</b>	1434kg
<b>Power-to-weight</b>	436bhp/ton
<b>0-62mph</b>	3.0sec (claimed)
<b>Top speed</b>	205mph (claimed)
<b>Basic price</b>	£176,000
<b>On sale</b>	Now
<b>Rating</b>	★★★★★





# THE REAL THING?

by MIKE DUFF

PHOTOGRAPHY by  
DEAN SMITH

*Peugeot would like us to think that its new 208 GTI possesses the same hot hatch magic as its iconic '80s forebear, the 205 GTI. But does it? Here's where we find out...*



## THERE'S A PEUGEOT

205 GTI in the lobby of the hotel. It sits behind a set of sliding glass doors, and with a permanent soundtrack of tinkling muzak playing in the

background. Even this most incongruous of settings can't detract from the fact that, 29 years after it was launched, it's still one of the best-looking hatchbacks ever built, with its purposeful stance, subtle bodykit and those gorgeous dished alloys. The problem is that, after a day driving the new 208 GTI, I've got no idea what its great grandfather is doing here.

I didn't want to bring the 205 into this story, but Peugeot has other ideas. It's never really fair to compare cars that have been built for different eras with different expectations. The 205 was an endlessly amusing driving companion, but even its greatest admirer would have to concede it's not really on the pace when it comes to 21st century expectations of safety or toys. Yet Peugeot seems determined to turn talk to the 205 GTI at every opportunity, from splicing '80s video of one attacking the Col de Vence into far slicker digital footage of the 208 on the same road, to assuring us that the same 'GTI spirit' links the two cars.

Ordinarily we'd put that down as shameless marketing puff. But an early morning pre-drive chat with Gaëtan Demoulin, Peugeot's chassis boss, confirms the senior end of the company really does think the 208 encapsulates the same values as the original.

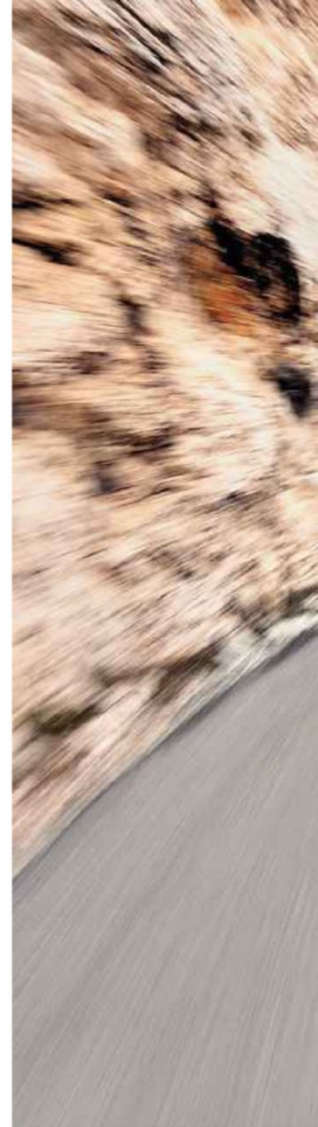
'Like the 205 we want it to be fully balanced,' he says over breakfast, 'to be comfortable in urban areas and to be comfortable on bad roads too – when a sporty car can be too stiff. It is a GTI so it is developed on the open road, not only on tracks as are some rivals. On bad roads it can be very difficult to keep a good trajectory and to







*‘INTO THE MOUNTAINS PROPER,  
AND THE GTI REVEALS ANOTHER  
SIDE OF ITS CHARACTER – SPEED’*



**Above:** 208 GTI generates huge amounts of mechanical grip.

**Right:** steering wheel is unusually small – presumably to give a ‘sporty’ feel, but it mainly succeeds in obscuring the dials. **Below right:** C-pillar badges are a nod to those on the 205 GTI



be precise in your steering inputs if a car is too stiff. It has to be easy to use, that’s GTI spirit.’

I head out to the car park where ‘our’ 208 GTI sits waiting, not entirely certain that Demoulin is remembering the same 205 GTI that I do.

**ALTHOUGH DEMOULIN CLAIMS THAT** no rivals were seen as direct benchmarks, it’s clear from the 208 GTI’s spec sheet that Peugeot had one very clear target. Across the board, it’s pretty much a spot-on match for the third-generation Renaultsport Clio that we drove last month (*evo* 182).

Power comes from the familiar 1.6-litre BMW-PSA turbocharged four, here in the same 197bhp state of tune that Peugeot uses in the top-spec RCZ, meaning it has the same output that Renault claims for the Clio 200 Turbo. The Peugeot has more torque – 203lb ft versus the Clio’s peak of 177lb ft, and with this accessible from just 1700rpm (compared to 1750 for the Clio). But the two cars are within a gnat’s whisker on performance numbers. Peugeot’s claimed 6.8sec 0-62mph time is just one tenth slower than the Clio’s official figure, and the 143mph top speeds are identical.

The big difference between the two cars is ideological as much as it is mechanical. The





208 will only be offered with a conventional six-speed manual, while the Clio comes with an opinion-splitting twin-clutch transmission as standard. Of course, Peugeot doesn't currently have access to a double-clutch 'box that would fit the 208, but the company is still keen to claim the manual transmission as being a part of its driver-focused policy.

In a similar vein, it also does without Sport modes or other 'active' settings; the only driver aid is the fully switchable stability control. The upshot is a car that's slightly lighter than the Clio – 1160kg versus the Renault's 1204kg – although that saving isn't matched with the price tag. In the UK the 208 GTI will be £18,895, only £100 cheaper than the Clio, despite the cost and complexity of the Renault's trick transmission.

**YOU CAN'T FAULT PEUGEOT FOR THE** launch venue it has selected. Bringing us to Nice and throwing us the keys for a day means we're spoiled for choice, with both the short-but-savage Col de Turini and the faster Route Napoleon calling us.

Things start off underwhelmingly. Apart from grippier seats and a sportier finish to the perplexingly small steering wheel (that still

obscures half the instruments, wherever you position it), the GTI is effectively identical to the standard 208. The dynamics are correspondingly familiar, too – a pliant ride, springy clutch pedal and a gearshift that lacks much in the way of mechanical weight. Trundling through morning traffic in search of the road that will take us to the Col, it feels generic Eurohatch, without any of the hurry-up vibe that the 205 gave off. Or, for that matter, most of Renaultsport's recent products.

The BMW-PSA 1.6-litre turbo motor often seems to be the engine of a thousand faces, and so it proves here. In some applications it's a real cracker – zingy, rev-happy and with a palpable enthusiasm for hard use. Both the Mini JCW and Works GP stand out as examples of how good it can be working with a keen ECU and a rorty exhaust. But in other cars the same engine barely musters the character of a food blender, with a flat torque curve and a tight-feeling top end discouraging you from revving it. Sadly, in the 208 GTI it mostly falls into the second category. The engine is certainly effective, and throttle response has been sharpened over that of the less powerful versions, but it also suffers from noticeable turbo lag, plus a slight surge whenever the throttle is opened

(a characteristic it does share with the 205 GTI and its old-fashioned injection system). And despite what Peugeot claims to be a sports exhaust, the soundtrack is bland, revs adding volume rather than any interesting harmonics.

Onwards, upwards, and into the mountains proper, the GTI reveals another side of its character – speed. This is a seriously quick car when asked to cover challenging ground, not just in terms of the respectable urge delivered by the dull-but-effective engine, but also through the sheer mechanical grip of the chassis. Modifications over the regular 208 look modest on paper, but the overall effect has been considerable. At the front there are new, stiffer wishbones, uprated springs (20 per cent firmer than standard), new dampers and revised software to weight up the electrically assisted steering. At the back is a new torsion-beam axle and a stiffer anti-roll bar. Seventeen-inch wheels are standard, shod with 205/45 Michelin Exactos, and the brakes have been uprated with 302mm vented front discs.

On French D-roads it comes together to deliver impressive pace – don't bet against the Peugeot proving itself faster than the RS Clio when we get them (and the Fiesta ST) together. Ride quality is as Demoulin promised, supple



## Peugeot 208 GTI

and well-damped, keeping everything steady on rougher surfaces and making it very easy to select and stick to a chosen line. The electric steering has a solid weight, if little discernable sensation behind it, and the car can be placed accurately and threaded down a challenging road with a high level of confidence.

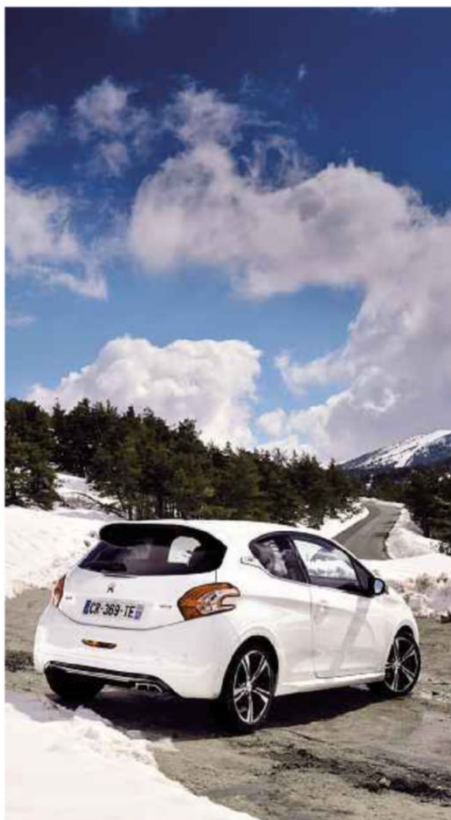
Traction is rarely an issue. In slow corners with the ESP switched off you can get an inside tyre smoking if you're brutal enough, but most of the time it just sticks and goes. Even the gearshift comes good under hard use, with its speed and accuracy trumping its lack of weight – and the throttle and brake pedal are well positioned for heel and toe work, too. You can't do that in the Clio.

There's no shortage of engineering evident in the GTI's chassis – Peugeot can be proud of the changes it has wrought to the shopping-spec 208. But after a few hours in the hills it's hard not to conclude that the GTI has been chasing the wrong numbers – grip and outright speed at the expense of driver involvement. Even on near-frozen tarmac it felt borderline over-tyred, with the chassis lacking throttle adjustability at anything less than extreme provocation. Even getting it to tip its rear wheel into a corner for Dean Smith's camera required a level of commitment that you'd rarely reach on any public road.

I wasn't expecting a car that would snap sideways if you eased the throttle by more than a millimetre, I was hoping for one that would get me properly involved in the process of driving it. Looking in my notes I see 'reminds me of an Audi S3'. I doubt that's what Peugeot was aiming for.

**PEUGEOT STILL VENERATES THE 205**, and in particular the GTI. The boggo versions sold well enough to save the company from an early-'80s slump that threatened to destroy it, and even three decades later the GTI is still regarded as the brand's dynamic crown jewels. Now Peugeot is mired in another crisis as the European car market stagnates, and it's in need of another saviour. Hence, perhaps, the urge to try and make history repeat itself – the company is even signing off a 208 T16 to try and rediscover the glory earned by Ari Vatanen's 405 T16 at Pikes Peak.

Overall, the 208 GTI is a good car, and a far more comprehensive bit of engineering than the underwhelming 206 and 207 GTIs ever were. If anything, it's too competent, too polished. I'd happily sacrifice some of its speed and cruising composure for a bit more excitement. What it's absolutely not is a successor to the 205 GTI, either dynamically or spiritually. And, having driven it, I'm not sure why Peugeot ever suggested that it would be. ❌



### Specification

#### PEUGEOT 208 GTI

**Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1598cc, turbo

**CO2** 139g/km

**Power** 197bhp @ 5800rpm

**Torque** 203lb ft @ 1700-4500rpm

**Transmission** Six-speed manual, front-wheel drive, ESP

**Front suspension** MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar

**Rear suspension** Torsion beam, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar

**Brakes** 302mm ventilated discs front, 250mm solid discs rear, ABS, EBD

**Wheels** 7.5 x 17 front and rear

**Tyres** 205/45 R17 front and rear

**Weight (kerb)** 1160kg

**Power-to-weight** 173bhp/ton

**0-62mph** 6.8sec (claimed)

**Top speed** 143mph (claimed)

**Basic price** £18,895

**On sale** May

**evo rating:** ★★★★★



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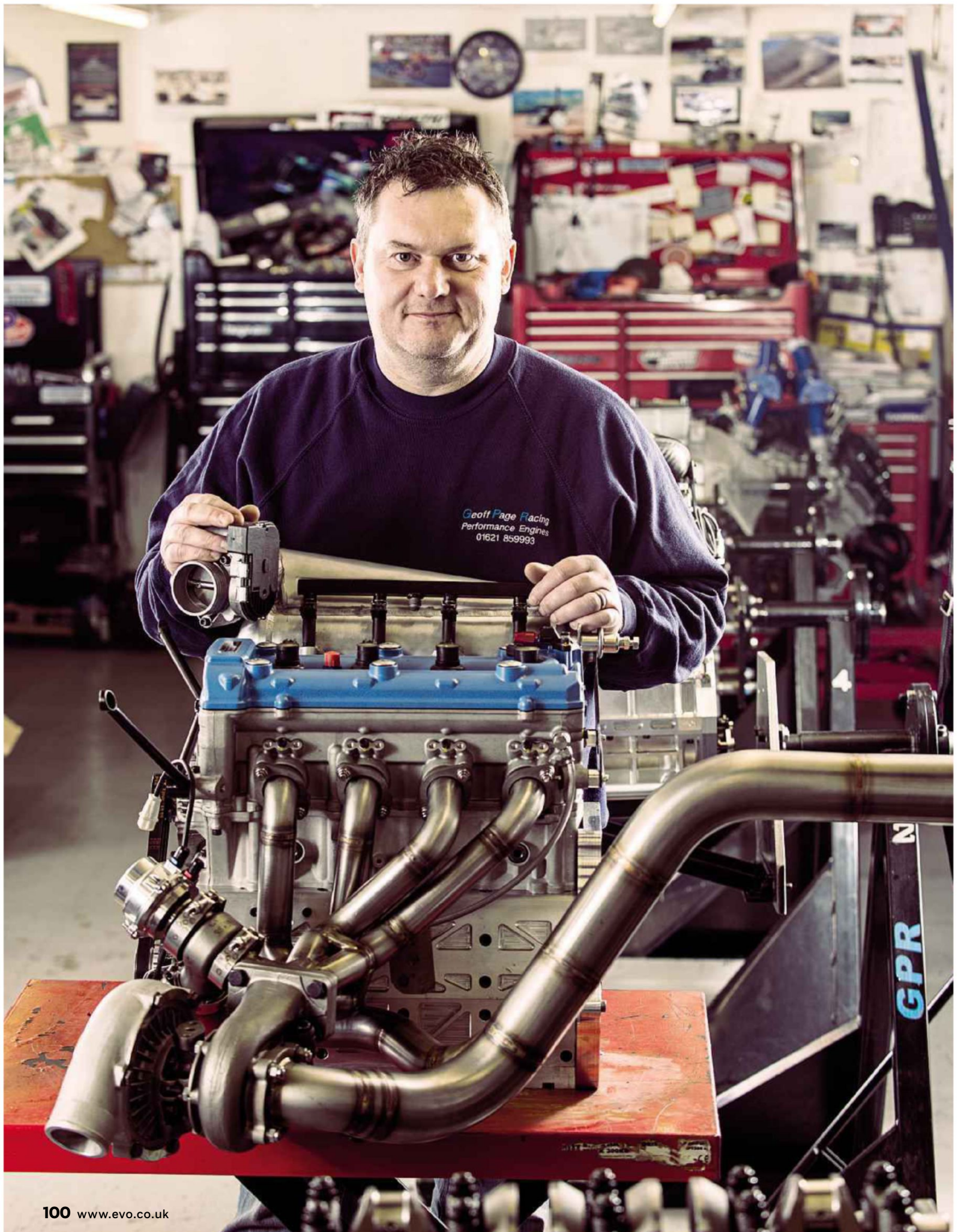


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Official fuel consumption, Lotus Elise S in mpg (l/100km): Urban 27.3 (10.3), Extra Urban 47.6 (5.9), Combined 37.5 (7.5). CO2 emissions: 175 g/km. \*Price shown is the Manufacturer list price including VAT for an Elise S with manual transmission, excluding on the road costs. \*\*The Purchase Fee and Credit Facility Fees are included in the monthly payments and final payment. Applicants must be aged 18 or over. Finance available subject to status. Indemnities may be required. Excludes motability and fleet sales. Available at participating dealers only. Not available in conjunction with any other offers. Offer is only available through Lotus Finance provided by Black Horse Limited, St William House, Tresillian Terrace, Cardiff, CF10 5BH. Please consult your local Lotus dealer for an exact quotation.









# The Power Professor

*From Group B motors to turbo F1 engines, Geoff Page has worked on them all – and got them running better than ever. We take a look inside his workshop*

WORDS by  
HENRY CATCHPOLE

PHOTOGRAPHY by  
DAVE SMITH

**I**

**'I'M USUALLY THE LAST TO LEAVE, AND SOMETIMES I LOOK** back just before I switch the last light off and I think, "How did I end up looking after all this?" It's crazy, really.'

Standing in the doorway now, looking down the length of the small workshop, I can see exactly what Geoff Page means. It's like an Aladdin's cave of '80s exotica. 'People always ask how I got into this,' says Geoff as he leans on a workbench, 'and I have to explain that cars and motorsport are all I've ever known.' His story bears this out. When he was young he had a very successful stint in karts. In his first year he beat Johnny Herbert to the Lincs Kart Club title and he remains the youngest person to ever have raced in the Short Circuit 125cc World Cup at Morecambe (he was just 16). By the end of 1984 he had four offers of works drives in Formula Ford, including one from Van Diemen. 'The trouble was, although they were works drives you still had to bring money,' says Geoff. 'A lot of money.'

By this time his parents had moved down to Essex, where Geoff started working for Jaguar specialist Alan Collins, building and maintaining C-, D- and E-types. That was during the daytime. When he finished at 6pm he would wander over the road and do an evening shift in Terry Hoyle's workshop, where they would regularly have twenty Group 4 Escort engines lined up. Eventually Geoff went to work for Hoyle full-time and it was there that he became fully immersed in Group B engines. Hoyle not only ran the engine programme for the Ford RS200, but also fettled Audi Quattro A1 and A2 engines for the Audi Sport UK team and Metro 6R4 motors for Austin Rover.

It was while he was working for Hoyle that the Formula Ford deals were on the table, but he'll never know where a career in single-seaters might have taken him, because after seeing an advert placed by the Tyrrell team, Geoff decided to follow his dream of becoming a Formula 1 mechanic. He beat 156 other applicants for one of three places on the Tyrrell F1 team and spent 1985 working on the first turbocharged Tyrrell – the 014 driven by Martin Brundle and Stefan Bellof (and then Philippe Streiff after Bellof died racing a Porsche 956 at Spa).





**1** Above: Page knows the Sierra RS500 Cosworth engine well – he built the very first one



**2** Above: IMSA Ford RS200 rear clamshell – complete with near-vertical spoiler – hangs on the workshop wall



**3** Above: button atop the Audi Quattro S1's gearlever automatically dips the clutch on changing gear

Geoff speaks fondly of Tyrrell and the family atmosphere there (he tells me about the factory gatherings after each GP weekend, with a cake baked by Don the janitor), but at the end of the season he returned to Terry Hoyle, where he continued working on the RS200 engine and, amongst other things, built the first-ever RS500 engine. From Hoyle's, Geoff moved on to work for David Mountain of Mountune, where he looked after part of their WRC customer engine programme. He then set up East Coast Racing, which saw him running the RS200 IMSA programme.

A spell with Janspeed building cars for the BTCC was followed by another two years in F1, first with Pacific Grand Prix in 1995, then

working for Brian Hart running the 830 Series 3-litre V8s in the back of the Arrows cars in 1996. After this he returned to building WRC engines for David Mountain, before setting up Geoff Page Racing in 2007, specialising in rebuilding and restoring high-end race machinery – just two doors down from where he used to work for Terry Hoyle!

It's an extraordinary CV by any standards and Geoff's phone book reads like a *Who's Who* of the race engineering world, all the way up to people like Ross Brawn, who is a friend on the internet. But it's the metal in his workshop that we're interested in today, so Geoff gives us a tour, starting with the Audi Sport Quattro S1. 'It was used as a test car so everyone has driven

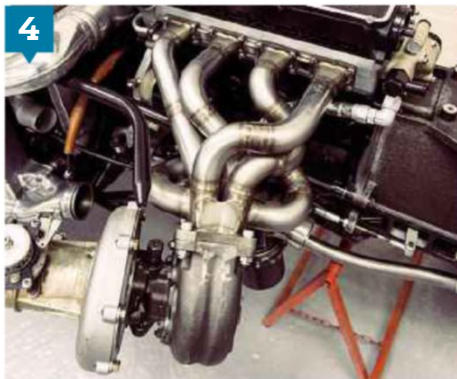
it. Rörhl, obviously, but also Stig, Michèle and Hannu. The owner very kindly let me have a go too,' says Geoff, grinning like a schoolboy. 'I had it on one wheel – left rear I think it must have been – coming out of a corner and it was still driving forwards! Amazing machine. You see the button on the gearstick? Well, it's a six-speed synchro 'box, so you can't crash it through, but push that button and it will automatically dip the clutch as you change gear. It momentarily takes drive off the power-steering pump and puts 2000psi through the pedal – it would take your foot off if you left it under there. This car also has a groundbreaking mechanical system of what we would now call anti-lag.'

I'm allowed to sit in the car – the door is





**‘GEOFF KNOWS AND LOVES ENGINES, TALKING WITH A DEEP KNOWLEDGE AND REAL PASSION’**



**Above:** BMW Megatron engine from a Barclay-sponsored Arrows; not good for 1500bhp, reckons Page



**Above:** 1995 Jordan F1 car, as driven by Rubens Barrichello; engine is a 3-litre Peugeot V10



**Above:** Sauber Mercedes C291, driven by Michael Schumacher in 1991; runs a 3.5-litre flat-12

incredibly light (just like the aluminium roll-cage...) and I love the makeshift box jutting out so that you can brace your knee effectively, presumably added for R rhl's gangly limbs. It feels like a monster even resting quietly inside the workshop.

We walk past a Dax Rush and an RS500 and into the room next door, where I instantly become engrossed in looking at Ari Vatanen's Pikes Peak Peugeot 405. Most of the iconic Pioneer-liveried bodywork with those humungous wings is elsewhere at the moment but it affords us a rare view of what's under the skin. It's astonishing to see how far to the right the turbocharged four-cylinder 'T16' engine sits. Look inside, and between the gearstick and

the driver's seat is a black metal pole running fore and aft. Curious. Then you realise it's a shaft running to the rear steering box – the 405 T16 has four-wheel steering.

Geoff has looked after this car for a number of years, but he's also been closely involved with another Pikes Peak car – an RS200 project, once driven by Stig Blomqvist, now by Mark Rennison. It appeared in *evo* back in 2004 (issue 072), when with 900bhp it ran a 0-60mph time of 3.46sec, and 0-120 in 7.51sec – 1.7sec quicker than a McLaren F1. Geoff is now in the process of reverse-engineering an aluminium-block version of the YB engine to be reliable at 1000bhp...

Beyond the Peugeot is a car so rare that even

Geoff had never seen one before it recently rolled into his workshop – a road-going Lancia Delta S4. It is an ugly thing really – bulbous of bum and thin of snout, but when you lift up the rear clamshell (that's everything behind the B-pillar and it's surprisingly heavy given that it's glassfibre) you can't help but be in awe as you see the twin dampers each side. The bespoke Pirelli P Zero tyres are extraordinary too, appearing to have no tread on the outside shoulders, like the cambers have been all wrong and they've worn unevenly.

Nose-to-nose with the Lancia is the 1991 Sauber Mercedes C291, which was the last sportscar that Schumacher drove before he moved to F1. The C291 is the car that replaced





## 'GEOFF' SEEMS TO CARE, FIRST AND FOREMOST, ABOUT HOW A CAR RUNS'



**Top:** Sport Quattro S1 test car was driven by all the early '80s Audi works drivers. **Clockwise from above left:** just some of the cars GPR has worked on; Musset engine; 500bhp Dax Rush does 0-100mph in 5.4sec; IMSA RS200 chassis



the C11 after the FIA did away with Group C regulations for the 1991 season, and as a result this has a 3.5-litre naturally aspirated flat-12 in it. It is, in my opinion, the most beautiful car of that era, and the delicate, wafer-thin, carbon bucket seat inside is a thing of wonder.

While I've been drooling over the C291, Geoff has been busy with one of the two Arrows A9s in the other corner. He's been attaching the exhaust manifold, complete with a huge snail of a KKK turbo, to the mighty Megatron engine so that I can see it in all its glory. They say the 1500cc, four-cylinder BMW M12 (or Megatron as it was rebadged later) is the most powerful F1 engine ever, but Geoff isn't convinced by the figures. 'I've done quite a few Megatrons and I have my doubts that they actually hold together at the 1500bhp they said they used to make,' he says. 'Who am I to call anyone a liar, but having seen how they are mechanically inside, I can't see that the crank and block could handle that sort of power. I can see it taking 1200bhp, but 1500bhp...? The block is only cast iron – effectively a standard 2002 off-the-shelf item. They did weather them [to reduce the stresses and lessen the risk of cracking] and there's lots of stories about the guys at BMW Motorsport leaving them out the back of the factory to get rained on. They used to go out and have a piss on them, they say! But as for them making 1500bhp and staying in one piece, I don't know... If they did run anywhere over 1200bhp, no wonder they used to blow up!'

The Megatron and its like can be far more reliable today, however. 'Ten years ago people would shy away from turbo F1 engines, saying, "Ah, you don't want to run those, they blow up." But that's not true,' says Geoff. 'We use a Life ECU on the cars, with a mixture of modern and old sensors, to try to keep everything looking as authentic and old-fashioned as possible, and they now produce more power from less boost than they ever did back in period. This Arrows A9, hot or cold, put the starter in the back, press the button and it'll start just like that. No need to touch the throttle. One person could run that car. Drive it down the pitlane like a shopping car and it'll go from 100bhp to 750bhp, quick as you like. And it's reliable.'

He continues: 'Take the Hart 415T engine, which is a low-compression engine. We run that with high-octane fuel, lots and lots of spark advance, 3.3bar of boost and it makes 830bhp reliably. And I've seen that many, many times. Back in the day – and I worked for Hart in '96 – I believe that in truth they never had an 800bhp engine come out of the factory. So that's pretty bloody good bearing in mind that they had the so-called rocket fuel with 150 octane, although it was actually more of a chemical fuel than a gasoline and had a high percentage of toluene, which we don't use today.' He now uses a VP





**Above:** Peugeot 405 T16 Pikes Peak, star of the short movie *Climb Dance*, in which Ari Vatanen drives it to a new record time on the famous hill climb in 1988

**Above:** Lancia Delta S4 Stradale; one of just 200 (allegedly) built for homologation purposes; mid-mounted engine is a 250bhp turbo- and supercharged 1.8 four-cylinder

117- or 118-octane oxygenated dragster fuel. 'We run most of the F1 stuff at between 700 and 800bhp, which is enough to make them exciting with only 520 or 530kg,' says Geoff. 'We run a Beatrice Lola with a Hart 415T engine and it was doing 173mph into Paddock Hill Bend and 165mph up to Druids. And they make the right authentic noise too, which is very important – you have to have the right noise.'

This gets to the heart of Geoff Page. He knows and loves engines, talking with not only a deep

knowledge, but a real passion. While I look at cars and imagine what they are like to drive, Geoff seems to care, first and foremost, about how they run. He talks most excitedly when he's by the workbenches with all the engines lined up. As well as the aluminium YB engine, in the last four years he's reverse-engineered a subtly improved 6R4 engine, and he's currently developing an engine called a Musset MR-1500, which is a 1.5-litre turbocharged motor, based on an in-line four-cylinder Suzuki Hayabusa

unit. Geoff says it will put out over 750bhp in full 'EVO 2' spec. He also looks after the only running V6 Cosworth GBA engine in the world (from an '86 Lola). He talks about them like they're his children.

As we return to the main workshop he goes back to the Audi, gets in and starts it up, warming it lovingly for a few minutes before getting out and standing next to me while it idles. 'Lovely, isn't it?' he says, smiling broadly. 'Smooth as anything.' ❌



*Elises through the ages*







by RICHARD MEADEN

PHOTOGRAPHY by  
MATT HOWELL & MALCOLM GRIFFITHS

*The Lotus Elise punched above its weight in 1996 and still does so today. evo assesses how it's stayed ahead of the game*

# LIGHT BRIGADE





## 'YOU'D THINK THERE WAS NOTHING LEFT TO SAY ABOUT THE ORIGINAL ELISE, BU



**IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO** overstate the significance of the original Lotus Elise, from the buzz that surrounded its gestation to the impact it made when launched. It was a

radical concept in every sense: small, affordable, super-light and built around an aluminium tub that was glued and riveted together using high-tech bonding techniques. It was nothing short of a revolution.

The Elise signalled a return to purist, less-is-more engineering principles that echoed Lotus-founder Colin Chapman's philosophy of 'adding lightness'. It also brought truly extraordinary mid-engined dynamics within the reach of ordinary car enthusiasts, and gave financial stability to the much-loved Lotus brand.

Looking back, it was a truly magical time. I can still recall visiting Hethel in the months immediately prior to the car's launch and being completely seduced by the brilliant minds of those involved in the project and utterly enthralled by the groundbreaking machine they had created. Orchestrated passenger rides are derided nowadays, but back then it was a true privilege as it offered a window on a whole new kind of sports car. It felt like the future.

Seventeen years later, there's still nothing like the Elise. Sadly its asking price has now crept out of the original target buyer's range, but it remains relevant, both as a lesson in dynamic focus and purity, and as a timely reminder that a bold-yet-simple recipe executed perfectly can deliver where grandiose fantasy will invariably flounder. So as Lotus slowly awakens from the surreal nightmare of the Bahar era, it seems like a good time to sample a few of the many high points from the Elise's past and present, and to meet one of the men who played a pivotal role in its creation (see sidebar, right).

You'd think there was nothing left to say about the original Elise, but as this group gathers at a murky Hethel, this delightfully original early Series 1 immediately steals the show. What a bewitching little car! Small, pert and perfectly formed, Julian Thomson's design is as fresh now as the day it left his pen. It's hard to think of another car with styling that communicates its purpose and dynamic feel so perfectly. The lithe body, thin-spoked alloys, narrow tyres and generous ride height suggest delicate precision and a lightness of touch, yet its non-threatening looks and feminine curves hint at accessible performance with no rough edges.

It's the same story inside. The semi-naked structure, high sills and vestigial seat cushioning



underline that the driving experience has been stripped back to the bare essentials. Even now it's breathtaking in its honesty.

It takes a bit of pelvic voodoo to drop yourself over the sill and down into the seat, but once you're in and driving, there's a unique sense of occasion. It's hard to find the right adjective to describe how this S1 Elise feels on the road, but for some reason the word that keeps popping into my head is 'bright'. That might sound daft, but the extraordinary detail that tingles through the steering wheel is so illuminating you feel totally connected, even though the steering weight is much lighter than you'll find in any other drivers' car.

This car still has the featherweight Metal



## Richard Rackham: the Elise's chief engineer



'THE ORIGINAL BRIEF for the Elise was simple: to be a modern successor to the Lotus Seven. That car really was a little race car for the road, but it had major shortcomings in terms of weather protection and safety, both of which we knew we would have to address.

'At around the same time Lotus had been doing some consultancy work on developing a new aluminium frame. That project ultimately came to nothing, but we'd worked closely with Hydro Aluminium and could see huge potential in an aluminium structure.

'Typically, there was no money to do the project! The bill of materials was incredibly low, but I saw this as an opportunity. If we designed the structure in a certain way, the interior could be the structure. It was a technology we wanted to show off, so we made sure the beauty was in the design and materials. Good examples of this are the door hinges and pedals, which truly are sculptural components.

'What you have to remember is the Elise was all about creating a race car experience for the road. Things like refinement were off the agenda, and that's what enabled us to use big, flat, thin aluminium panels. They're noisy as hell, but it is supposed to feel like a racing car. In the concept phase, I went with Julian Thomson to the Donington Collection to have a look at the racing cars. When no one was looking, we jumped in a few. The '60s GT cars with aluminium monocoques were great inspirations; you'd climb over the big side member and drop into the cockpit. They really did feel fantastic to be in, and that was something we wanted to recreate. So those high, awkward sills were all part of that racing aesthetic, and they worked brilliantly from a technical perspective.

'The original business case was for 3000 cars over four years. That's not a lot, so when you're faced with that kind of objective, you think, "We can make something pretty special here." We wanted to keep the car as small and as low as possible, so we thought, "Big guys, this car isn't for you." I'm just under 5ft 11in and I was OK in it, and other significant people on the project weren't any taller. None of the directors were tall either, so we slipped it under the radar! It was an indulgent decision: big people simply didn't fit, and small people struggled with the high sills and lack of height adjustment on the seat. Nowadays cars are designed for 98th-percentile [6ft 5in] males, so you can see where styling, size and weight compromises creep in.

'I think we sold 3000 cars in the first 18 months! I have no doubt that if the brief had been to make a car that would sell 3000 per annum for 16 or 17 years it would have been a very different car. But I doubt the magic would have been there. As it was, our pursuit of low unsprung mass was relentless: we were totally obsessive about it.

'The first time the car ran, it had the correct structure, suspension, steering, etc. but only rudimentary bodywork. It was the last working day before Christmas in 1994. We'd got the car going and went out on track, me in the passenger seat. It was freezing and the engine sprang a water leak after half a lap, but it was a magical moment. Even then we knew we'd created something very special.'



## T THIS EARLY S1 IMMEDIATELY STEALS THE SHOW'

**Left:** this S1 is still running lightweight MMC discs. **Right:** Sport 135 is an S1 favourite. **Above:** S2 Sport 190 traded subtlety for track pace



Matrix Composite (MMC) brakes, which were made by US-based Lanxide Corp from special silicon carbide aluminium. These were another 'first' for the Elise, but sadly later Elises ran conventional brake rotors to reduce costs, and Lanxide went bust. You'd need to try both types back-to-back to feel the difference, but the reduced unsprung and rotational mass offered by the MMC brakes was utterly in-line with the original concept of the Elise, and helped trim the kerb weight to just 723kg.

Can 118bhp and 122lb ft of torque feel impressive in 2013? Damned right they can. The standard Rover K-series engine was a cracking unit, delivering peak torque from just 3000rpm and peak power at 5500rpm, and I'm surprised

by just how accessible the performance is. The engine likes revs, but doesn't need them to deliver decent acceleration, and this emphasises the sense of minimal mass.

On the meandering country roads in this corner of Norfolk, the Elise is an absolute joy, with grip, grunt and rate of response all perfectly matched. Yes, you can sense there's some lift-off oversteer waiting for you, and this tempers your approach to unfamiliar roads as there's no electronics to catch you, but thanks to the S1's transparency you soon feel where those limits are. What's more, it's so precise and feelsome that you can drive close to them without feeling like you're walking a tightrope. It's still a wonderful car.



## Elises through the ages



**Right:** S3 Club Racer is pared-back. **Below:** Sport 135 K-series motor. **Below right:** Toyota-powered S2 Sports Racer. **Far right:** 134bhp S2 Elise S with Sport 190



**'THE CLUB RACER HAS A SUPPLENESS TO ITS CHASSIS THAT MARKS IT OUT AS SOMETHING SPECIAL'**

**IT MAKES SENSE TO JOURNEY** through the various iterations of Elise we have here in chronological order, which means the S1 Sport 135 of 1998 is next. I've got so used to us saying that this is the Elise to have that I'm half expecting it to be a slight disappointment, yet nothing could be further from the truth.

Like many, this particular car has swapped tired original Bilstein dampers for Nitron's popular Fast Road set-up. Matt Becker – one of Lotus's most experienced dynamics dudes, and a man whose career began around the same time as the introduction of the Elise – is riding with me and attests to the increased stiffness versus a standard example, yet by the time we've both driven the car and returned to Hethel, we're still smiling like fools.

The on-paper power and torque gains (17bhp and 8lb ft) may seem modest, but they really do make the Sport 135 feel like a big step-up in performance, with very little penalty in terms of delicacy. There's more grip and a little more weight to the steering, but it's wholly appropriate and – crucially – in harmony. It makes for a properly quick car across the ground, and thanks to the added physical and aural snort, it's a more intense experience.

There's a warmth and sweetness to the character and delivery of this version of the K-series that's really addictive, egging you on to work it harder, but not demanding that you do so. Coupled with greater levels of bite and increased grip, you feel inclined to drive the 135 harder more of the time, yet even with these Nitron dampers it flows with the road surface rather than fights with it. And although it responds to a more exuberant and committed driving style, it will settle quite happily at less than banzai speeds. With so few made (production was limited to 50 units) it's a rare and collectible car. Better still, the driving experience certainly warrants its reputation.

From the sublime Sport 135, I move on to 2002's rabid Sport 190. I'm not sure about you, but when I see a Series 2 Elise I automatically think it has a Toyota engine. This full-on track-tune model is the perfect reminder that the K-series was taken to extremes in the sharper, more aggressively styled S2 before Lotus signed its engine supply deal with the Japanese giant.

When you consider the original S1 had 118bhp, extracting an additional 72bhp from a naturally aspirated 1.8-litre twin-cam four-cylinder is quite a feat. It required the use of

the VHPD (Very High Performance Derivative) motor, first offered in top-spec versions of the outrageous 340R. This particular car – number nine of just 33 produced – has undergone further modification by Lotus Motorsport. This has taken the power output up to 210bhp, the weight down to just 704kg and resulted in the fitment of Öhlins racing suspension amongst a raft of no-expense-spared modifications by the car's first (and so far only) owner.

A wet, cold and foggy day is not ideal for such a highly strung machine, but it's still fascinating to see, hear and feel how angry and urgent it is compared to the original S1. It takes revs and an unwavering right foot to get the engine on-cam, at which point the note hardens to something akin to an Escort BDA and the acceleration becomes vivid.

At this level of development, the Sport 190 is a track toy, pure and simple. The appeal is obvious, the character and delivery raucous, the driving experience dominated by noise and physicality. There's no doubt the Elise responds well to race tuning, but it's also true to say the pursuit of raw pace robs the Sport 190 of the seductive subtlety found in the earlier cars.

I'm a big fan of the K-series engine, but when





you drive the S2 Sports Racer (2006) it's easy to see why Lotus embraced the opportunity to switch to Toyota power. Here was an engine that arrived in a crate, was emissions-compliant, easy to warranty and good for a consistent 190bhp with no race tuning or other expensive, time-consuming jiggery-pokery required.

The Sports Racer is one of the more obscure and consequently sought-after Elise models. Available in blue or red (both with stripes) it certainly looks the part, and with firmer suspension settings taken from the Exige, it feels the part too. It's fascinating to discover how the engine and suspension changes transform the character of the Sports Racer compared to the early cars.

There's a more agitated feel to the ride that means it never quite settles on lumpy backroads, but there's no denying it feels sharper and more immediate as a result. The colder and more clinical delivery of the Toyota engine somehow suits this edgier feel, as does the transition from off-cam torpor to on-cam frenzy. In short, it's a car you'll want to drive hard and fast whenever you get the chance.

The steering has more weight and less detail than the S1 cars', but it's still alive in your hands

compared to any other contemporary car. The gearbox (now a six-speed) has a sharper and more defined gate than the K-series cars' five-speed unit, and gives quick, clean shifts. Only when you really try to rush a cross-gate upshift does it occasionally feel a little snaggly.

Other things you notice are the lowered sills, which make it slightly easier to get into and out of the car, but diminish the sense of occasion you feel dropping into the early S1 models. On the positive side it probably reduces your monthly outgoings on Nurofens and osteopathy.

Of all the assembled Elises, the S2 S (2007) is the easiest to overlook, thanks both to familiarity with its styling and this car's dark colour scheme, but it really delivers. By this stage in the Elise's evolution, Lotus had completed the transition from Rover to Toyota drivetrains. The entry-level Elise S's 1.8-litre engine delivered 134bhp at 6200rpm and 127lb ft of torque at 4200rpm, compared to 189bhp at 7800rpm and 133lb ft at 6800rpm for the full-fat motor, as sampled in the Sports Racer.

The result is a car that's surprisingly close in its delivery to the original S1 K-series cars. The balance of power and torque is more even, and the accessibility of the performance is greater,



## 2013 S3 Elise S

WE HADN'T PLANNED on driving a current Elise because we wanted to concentrate on the highlights of years gone by. But then we were handed a MY13 Elise S, so it seemed rude not to take it for a spin. I'm glad we did, for even in the company of its exalted ancestors, it really does shine.

With the Series 3, the 'S'-badged car is supercharged, rather than an entry-level model (as on the S2). Power is 217bhp at 6800rpm and torque 184lb ft at 4600rpm, giving performance of a magnitude that puts it in very serious company. Memory suggested the S was a hard-edged and physical machine, and perhaps compared to an old S1, or indeed a new Boxster S, it is. That's how we like it too, but thanks to some damping detail revisions it has now found extra control and pliancy, yet trades none of the razor-sharp response we've come to expect from the S3.

What's impressive is the way this new sophistication to the damping brings that final few per cent of cohesion to the overall package, making it easier and more enjoyable to drive quickly *and* slowly. Of course it's a very different animal to the original S1 in many ways, not least because it now requires physicality and commitment to drive to its limits, rather than calm, delicate inputs. It also goes like a greased weasel, yet shares much of the original's honed and harmonious feel. In short, it's a cracker.



## Elises through the ages

so while you don't have the top-end fireworks of the 189bhp motor, you do – crucially – have more torque (and most likely more power) more of the time.

It needs it too, for thanks to crash legislation, improved refinement and the heavier Japanese engines, the Elise's once-anorexic kerb weight has grown to a relatively chunky 860kg here. Of course this isn't catastrophic, but you don't get that ultimate sense of poise, nor is there that magical zero-inertia feel to the way the car stops, steers or controls its mass over crests and into compressions.

That said, of the cars we've driven thus far it's the closest in feel to a basic S1, but with the added pep of the Sport 135. Consequently there's much to love about the S2 S, even if it lacks the S1 cars' historical significance or rarity. Its specification won't win you bragging rights, but it manages that neat Lotus trick of somehow feeling more than the sum of its parts.

The less-is-more philosophy also sits at the core of the 2011 S3 Club Racer's appeal. Lauded as a return to the back-to-basics approach, the

in every other respect the CR is a very special sports car. But it does have to be said you'd needed to be a particular type of person – a true Lotus person – to spend almost £30k on a car with 134bhp, when cars with far greater performance can be had for less.

**SO, WHAT CONCLUSIONS CAN WE** draw from this journey through the evolution of the Elise? Well there's no such thing as a bad one, for starters! Each car here is special in its own right. Different too, with distinct flavours created from a broadly common selection of ingredients.

For sheer brilliance, innovation and a driving experience that remains truly remarkable, the S1 simply can't be beaten. Part sports car, part science experiment, there's nothing to touch it for undiluted genius. And while it's increasingly hard to preach the gospel according to Colin Chapman when most manufacturers are obsessed with feeding you more and more horsepower, what this old Elise achieves with 118bhp is little short of miraculous.

## 'EACH CAR HERE IS SPECIAL IN ITS OWN RIGHT, WITH DISTINCT FLAVOURS CREATED FROM A BROADLY COMMON SELECTION OF INGREDIENTS'

CR marked a concerted effort to trim weight back down – to 852kg compared to the 876kg of the vanilla Elise 1.6 on which it's based, and the 924kg of the supercharged 1.8.

Like many cars that try hard to lose mass, it's perhaps what that effort represents that pushes our buttons, rather than any quantifiable uplift in performance that those lost 24kg will achieve. The CR has a definite aura about it, even though a less romantic sort would simply say it's a de-contented Elise 1.6 with a few funky decals.

But whatever. It has a suppleness to its chassis that marks it out as something special, at least if you appreciate a car that rides well on the road yet still feels happy on track. The inclusion of 21st century electronics means you get a Sport button, which contrives to sharpen the CR's responses, even if all that actually means is a more aggressive map for the fly-by-wire throttle. There's also traction and stability control, although whether you need that in a brilliantly balanced mid-engined sports car with decent tyres and just 134bhp is debatable.

The smaller Toyota engine is smooth and willing, but it feels a bit flat compared to the K-series, or indeed the S2 S's 1.8. The culprit is the gearing, which is too rangy to keep the engine on the boil, even when you rev it to the red line between upshifts. It's a shame because

It's telling that even Lotus found it impossible to resist adding power and grip to the equation. But as long as weight is kept in check and no one element dominates, that's no bad thing, as the sublime S1 Sport 135 proves so irresistibly. And even when that rare equilibrium is skewed – step forward the bonkers Sport 190 and super-sharp Sports Racer – it merely adds seasoning to cater for more extreme tastes.

There's no question Lotus has endured some dark days of late, but the great minds that remain down Potash Lane certainly haven't forgotten how to make brilliant cars. They haven't given up on the brand either, and so, I would contend, nor should we. It might seem hopelessly optimistic, but history tells us the best things happen at Hethel when times have been at their worst. Witness the Elise, which was born of adversity and built on a shoestring. Let's hope lightning can strike twice. ✕

### Thank you...

...to *Barrie Cornes, Jonathan Joseph-Horne, Jonny Pittard, Simon Parry, Ben Speak and Guy Munday* for providing their cars. Also thanks to *Bibs* at *thelotusforums.com* for his invaluable help. The Sport 190 is currently for sale at *Castle Sportscars* ([www.castlesportscars.co.uk](http://www.castlesportscars.co.uk)), the S3 Club Racer at *Stratton Motor Company* ([www.strattonmotorcompany.com](http://www.strattonmotorcompany.com)).









## Elises through the ages



### 1996 S1

**Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1796cc

**Power** 118bhp @ 5500rpm

**Torque** 122lb ft @ 3000rpm

**Transmission** Five-speed manual gearbox, rear-wheel drive

**Front suspension** Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar

**Rear suspension** Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar

**Brakes** Ventilated discs, 282mm front and rear

**Wheels** 5.5 x 15in front, 7 x 16in rear

**Tyres** 185/55 VR15 front, 205/50 VR16 rear

**Weight (kerb)** 723kg

**Power-to-weight** 166bhp/ton

**0-62mph** 6.1sec (claimed)

**Top speed** 126mph (claimed)

**Price new** £18,950 (1996)

**Value today** £7000-10,000

**evo rating:** ★★★★★



### 1998 S1 Sport 135

**Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1796cc

**Power** 135bhp @ 5750rpm

**Torque** 130lb ft @ 5200rpm

**Transmission** Five-speed manual gearbox, rear-wheel drive

**Front suspension** Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar

**Rear suspension** Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar

**Brakes** Ventilated discs, 282mm front and rear

**Wheels** 5.5 x 15in front, 7 x 16in rear

**Tyres** 185/55 VR15 front, 205/50 VR16 rear

**Weight (kerb)** 700kg

**Power-to-weight** 196bhp/ton

**0-62mph** 5.3sec (claimed)

**Top speed** 130mph (claimed)

**Price new** £22,846 (1998)

**Value today** £9000-12,000

**evo rating:** ★★★★★



### 2002 S2 Sport 190

**Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1796cc

**Power** 190bhp @ 7800rpm

**Torque** 128lb ft @ 5000rpm

**Transmission** Five-speed manual gearbox, rear-wheel drive

**Front suspension** Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar

**Rear suspension** Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar

**Brakes** Ventilated discs, 282mm front and rear

**Wheels** 6.5 x 16in front, 7.5 x 17in rear

**Tyres** 205/55 R16 front, 225/45 R17 rear

**Weight (kerb)** 710kg

**Power-to-weight** 272bhp/ton

**0-62mph** 4.4sec (claimed)

**Top speed** 135mph (claimed)

**Price new** £33,582 (2002)

**Value today** £22,000-28,000

**evo rating:** ★★★★★



**Above:** first version of Elise went on sale for just £19k.  
**Below:** seats were simple, with minimal adjustment



**Above:** the extra 17bhp helped boost the Sport 135's top speed to 130mph. **Below:** 282mm brake discs all round



**Above:** removable panels in this 190's B-pillar cover electrical cut-off and button for fire extinguisher







## 2006 S2 Sports Racer

**Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1796cc

**Power** 189bhp @ 7800rpm

**Torque** 133lb ft @ 6800rpm

**Transmission** Six-speed manual gearbox, rear-wheel drive

**Front suspension** Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar

**Rear suspension** Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar

**Brakes** Ventilated discs, 288mm front and rear, ABS

**Wheels** 5.5 x 16in front, 7.5 x 17in rear

**Tyres** 175/55 R16 front, 225/45 R17 rear

**Weight (kerb)** 862kg

**Power-to-weight** 223bhp/ton

**0-62mph** 4.9sec (claimed)

**Top speed** 150mph (claimed)

**Price new** £31,995 (2006)

**Value today** £18,000-22,000

**evo rating:** ★★★★★



**Above:** Sports Racer got six forward gears to transmit 189bhp. **Below:** top speed is 150mph



## 2007 S2 S

**Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1794cc

**Power** 134bhp @ 6200rpm

**Torque** 127lb ft @ 4200rpm

**Transmission** Five-speed manual gearbox, rear-wheel drive

**Front suspension** Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar

**Rear suspension** Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar

**Brakes** Ventilated discs, 282mm front and rear, ABS

**Wheels** 5.5 x 16in front, 7.5 x 17in rear

**Tyres** 175/55 R16 front, 225/45 R17 rear

**Weight (kerb)** 860kg

**Power-to-weight** 158bhp/ton

**0-62mph** 6.3sec (claimed)

**Top speed** 129mph (claimed)

**Price new** £23,995 (2007)

**Value today** £15,000-20,000

**evo rating:** ★★★★★



**Above:** basic S2's front tyres were 10mm narrower than original S1's. **Below:** seats remained simple affairs



## 2011 S3 Club Racer

**Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1598cc

**Power** 134bhp @ 6800rpm

**Torque** 118lb ft @ 4400rpm

**Transmission** Six-speed manual gearbox, rear-wheel drive, ESP

**Front suspension** Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar

**Rear suspension** Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar

**Brakes** Ventilated discs, 288mm front and rear, ABS

**Wheels** 5.5 x 16in front, 7.5 x 17in rear

**Tyres** 175/55 R16 front, 225/45 R17 rear

**Weight (kerb)** 852kg

**Power-to-weight** 160bhp/ton

**0-62mph** 6.5sec (claimed)

**Top speed** 127mph (claimed)

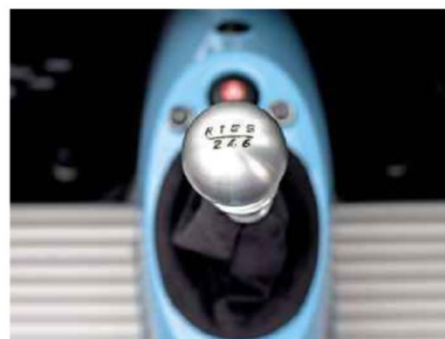
**Basic price** £27,500

**On sale** Now

**evo rating:** ★★★★★



**Above:** minimalist seat padding helps CR's weight loss. **Below:** six-speed 'box mated to smaller engine





# LOTUS EATEN

*In the mid-'90s, Renault's Sport Spider was overshadowed by the also-new and similar-in-concept Elise. But was it deserved? We reacquaint ourselves*

WORDS by  
HENRY CATCHPOLE

PHOTOGRAPHY by  
DEAN SMITH

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**THE MK1 LOTUS ELISE**, exemplified by the burgundy car on the preceding pages, stands before you today on a charge of murder. Lightweight and delicate of steering it may be, but it is a cold-blooded killer

with the engine oil of another small, innocent sports car on its skinny front tyres. The name of its victim is... the Caterham 21. Oh, and it didn't do the Renault Sport Spider much good either...

The Spider, or project W94 as it was codenamed, debuted at the Geneva motor show in 1995 and was launched the year after, when the Williams Renault F1 team was at the height of its powers with its Newey-designed cars. The perfectly sound idea was clearly to capitalise on both this motorsport glory and the sports

car boom of the '90s. But where Lotus sold over 10,000 Series 1 Elises, just 1685 Sport Spiders were built, between 1996 and 1999. What's more, while the Elise garnered the '96 Performance Car of the Year award and won *Car* magazine's handling test, the Spider didn't even make the shortlist of either. Surely, though, if Norfolk's finest hadn't been around, the RSS would have been more popular?

As regular readers will know, I have a soft spot for small, lightweight, impractical sports cars. To me they are triple-filtered thrill of driving, and a Seven or Atom is guaranteed to smother my face with the sort of smile that even a supercar will struggle to replicate. As such, the little beetle-winged Renault really appeals to me, but the only time I've driven one in the past was for about five minutes on the launch of the Mégane 225 F1 Team in 2006, and my abiding memory of the three miles or so





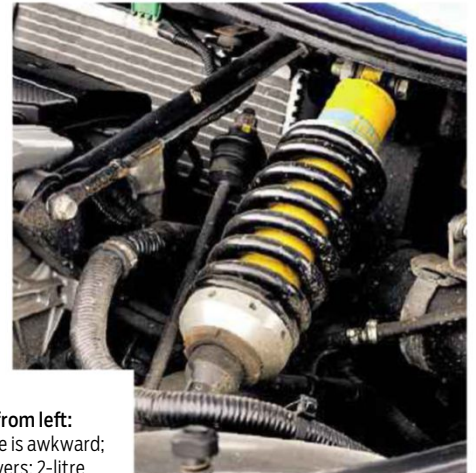


## Renault Sport Spider

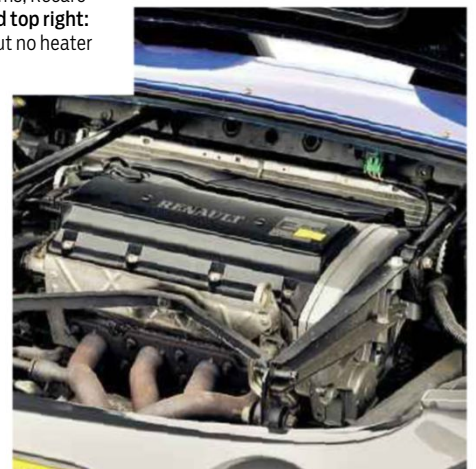
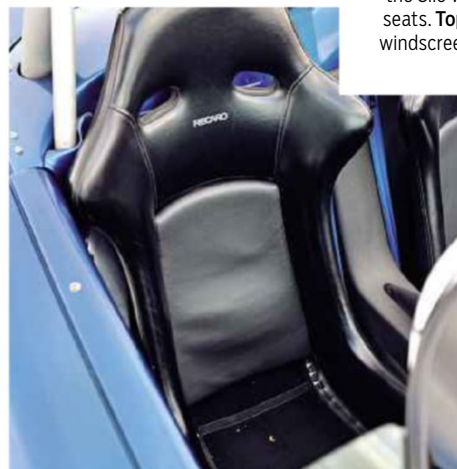


that I covered is of incredibly heavy, unassisted steering that required the shoulders and biceps of a prop forward. (Just in case you are in any doubt, I am not a prop forward. The times when I did play rugby I was the sort of person who stood on the wing and viewed the ball with the same caution you would a live hand grenade). It made for a curious experience, a bit like going to pick up a small, inconsequential-looking box off the floor, only to discover it contains a chunk of lead and threatens to rip your arms out of their sockets. It left me with a nagging desire to drive one again, on proper roads, and delve a bit deeper into what is a very rare, and I think desirable, beast.

Looking at the photos, your first thought about our blue car was probably, 'Why has it got a windscreen? I thought they all had funky, flies-in-your-canines air-deflectors?' The answer is that all 96 UK Spiders were delivered with a windscreen as standard for their £25,950 list price (at £7000 more than the Elise, that seems only fair). This is the original UK press car and it's covered just 4400 miles since new. Despite the addition of a big bit of glass at the front, there are still no sidescreens, there's no heater and the only 'roof' is a glorified piece of emergency camping equipment not to be used at speeds of greater than about 55mph. So, on a day when I had to scrape the ice off the tonneau before reaching inside to open the door (no door handles on the outside) and getting in, the Spider is still a somewhat daunting prospect for a bracing three-hour motorway journey.



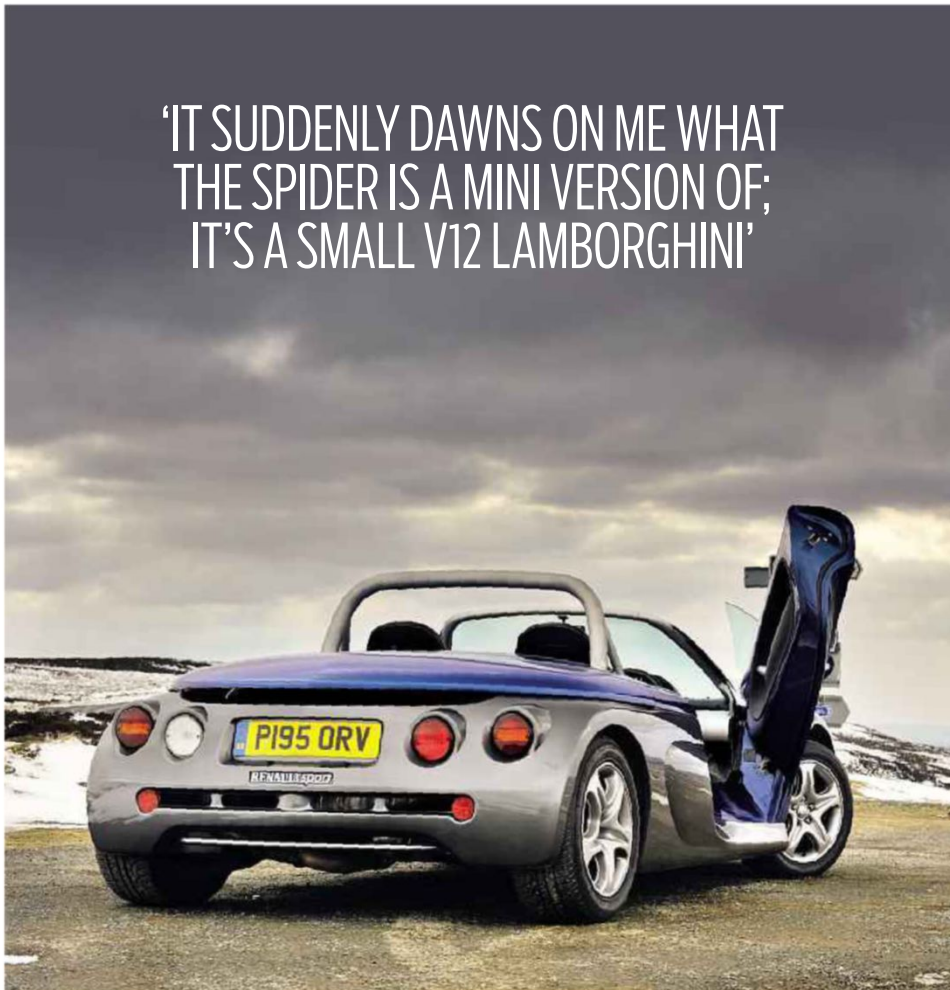
**Clockwise from left:** engaging reverse is awkward; inboard coilovers; 2-litre engine was lifted from the Clio Williams; Recaro seats. **Top and top right:** windscreen, but no heater







'IT SUDDENLY DAWNS ON ME WHAT THE SPIDER IS A MINI VERSION OF; IT'S A SMALL V12 LAMBORGHINI'



I did have to make one adjustment before I could set off – I had to remove the seat cushions from the rubberised Recaro so that I wasn't perched up staring directly at the header rail with my eyebrows in the breeze. To be fair, even Richard 'Hightower' Meaden complained that the Spider had been designed for midgets when he drove one back in 1996. He also penned the immortal description of driving one with a wind-deflector, saying that on the motorway his eyelids were flapping around 'like a pair of pink curtains in a hurricane'.

Wrapped up like a transatlantic sailor in a storm, I'm actually not too cold as I do battle with the M1, except, weirdly, for my feet, which are numb by the time I meet photographer Dean Smith and his RS4 in Pickering. After filling up with fuel and checking the map in the warmth of the Audi for a quarter of an hour (I know where we're going but I struggled to stand up when I got out of the Spider, so I figure that thawing my feet wouldn't be a bad thing) we head off for Blakey Ridge in the heart of the North York Moors. It's a road I fondly remember driving both mk1 and mk2 Elises down for a feature about seven years ago (evo 096).

As we're heading along the A170, it suddenly dawns on me what the Spider is a mini version of; it's a small V12 Lamborghini. Seriously, just imagine a mid-engined car, with doors that rise upwards and seatbelts that you have to reach to the centre of the car for and you have either a big bull from Sant'Agata or the arachnid from Dieppe. Put the Spider amongst everyday traffic



## Renault Sport Spider

and it has almost supercar levels of visual drama, with its wide, flat body that looks a little like it's been squashed in a press. I think there's also more than a hint of Alpine about it, which is appropriate given that it was built in the Alpine factory in Dieppe. It's just a shame that the rollover hoop sticks up quite so starkly and spoils the concept-car aesthetic.

From inside, you have three dials directly in front of you showing oil pressure, revs and water temperature. If you want to know how fast you're going then you need to look at the middle of the dashboard, where you'll find a digital speedo (sourced from the first-gen Twingo) that has an endearing amount of lag to the way the numbers flick up. Look further afield, down into the footwells, and your eyes are instantly drawn to the welded box-section aluminium chassis. It's a big structure, cruder and much more industrial than an Elise's sharp-edged extruded and glued aluminium tub. The story goes that when one expert saw the Renault's naked chassis he was so aghast at its size that he said that it surely couldn't be the chassis itself, but must be the jig to make it.

We trundle through the chocolate-box village of Hutton-le-Hole, then it's uphill, across a cattle

grid and we emerge onto the most wonderfully exposed ridge of heather, with just a single strip of tarmac snaking away into the distance. There are still a few patches of snow dotted about and occasionally one or two of them get up and wander off, which is disconcerting until you realise they're sheep. The surface is as lumpen and pitted as you would expect for a moorland B-road, but the Spider's rose-jointed double wishbones and Bilstein coilovers seem utterly unflustered, tracking across the surface with a control and composure that is quite remarkable. If anything it is shocking just how unflustered it is by the whole experience, feeling almost spookily solid and subdued for such a stripped-out sports car.

Initially the largish three-spoke steering wheel matches the suspension's calmness, with no wriggling or tugging over the busy surface. But as soon as you turn it a fraction the system weights up, floods information back and the car responds instantly, darting left or right without hesitation. You only need to make millimetric movements to thread the car down the road. The lateral grip it generates is truly prodigious and the Spider corners as flat as its wide, low stance suggests it will. Even driving

for the cornering photos through a third-gear left-hander with both inside wheels skipping off the ground over a bump, the car was still digging in and refusing to budge from the line it was carving. Perhaps the only time it feels like shifting out of line is if you trail brake heavily, at which point the weight behind you gathers the sort of momentum that could get quite tricky if you were taking liberties on a track.

The steering is definitely a smidge lighter than on the previous car I drove, particularly at lower speeds, where there's not the heave required that I remember. The reason for this seems to be the tyres, which have been changed from the original Michelin Pilots to slightly less aggressive Michelin Primacy HP rubber. It seems a good swap as the overall grippy character hasn't disappeared but it just brings a bit of subtle life into the steering and means the initial application nudge away from the straight-ahead is much easier.

Also lacking in assistance is the middle pedal. The first time you go for the brakes in anger can be a slightly panicky experience, as there's nothing like the instant switch to full power retardation you get with a servo. Instead you have to get your head around the need for a firm





‘THE LATERAL GRIP IT GENERATES IS TRULY PRODIGIOUS. THE SPIDER CORNERS AS FLAT AS ITS WIDE, LOW STANCE SUGGESTS IT WILL’



shove followed by more and more pressure, squeezing the most from the system a bit like wringing the last drops out of a wet towel. Once you're used to the sensation of leaning on them, you realise that the brakes are actually lovely to use and full of feel.

What definitely isn't a delight to use is the five-speed gearbox. It might be that this press car has had an unusually hard life, but the ball-topped lever feels like it needs all the positivity of a left hook to get it to engage third or fifth, and even when you think it has been rammed home with sufficient violence it occasionally jumps out of gear as soon as you let the clutch up. Then there is the puzzle known as 'reverse'. In front of the gearlever is an unfathomable diagram, which appears to be based on something out of an old Victor Silvester ballroom dance manual. Even once I had worked out that you need to twist the ball on top of the lever a quarter turn anti-clockwise before pushing the lever hard left and forwards, I spent some considerable time trying to execute the manoeuvre. Three-point turns and reverse parking are to be avoided (as anyone in the two-mile tailback in Sainsbury's car park last Tuesday will testify).

The transversely mounted 2-litre four-cylinder was lifted straight from the Clio Williams and produces 148bhp at 6000rpm, which sounds like plenty given that an early Elise only has 118bhp to play with. But the Spider is lugging round a comparatively hefty 930kg (200kg more than the Elise) and

## Specification

### RENAULT SPORT SPIDER

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc

Power 148bhp @ 6000rpm

Torque 136lb ft @ 4500rpm

Transmission Five-speed manual, rear-wheel drive

Front suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar

Rear suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar

Brakes Ventilated discs, 300mm front and rear, ABS

Wheels 8 x 16in front, 9 x 16in rear

Tyres 205/50 R16 front, 225/50 R16 rear

Weight (kerb) 930kg

Power-to-weight 157bhp/ton

0-62mph 6.5sec (claimed)

Top speed 131mph (claimed)

Price new £25,950 (1996)

Value today £15,000-25,000

evo rating: ★★★★★



combined with a chassis that has enough grip to take the lid off a planet-sized jam jar, it doesn't quite feel like enough power to really make the Spider shine to its full potential, which is a shame. Sadly the engine doesn't quite manage to provide a soundtrack to match the scenery either, a guttural rortiness probably being the best you can accuse it of as you thrash it to within an inch of its life.

Nonetheless, skimming low over the ground with sparkingly clear skies above and arctic air whipping round your ears, the Spider is a cracking place to be. Add in the rarity (there are currently only two for sale in the UK, and their owners have lost considerably less than if they'd bought an Elise), not to mention a racing pedigree (the one-make UK championship launched the careers of Messrs Plato and Priaulx), and it seems a shame that this Renault has spent its life in the shadow of a little Lotus.

It might not be a tactile match for the freakishly lithesome Elise, but in isolation the Spider's unassisted steering and brakes still offer more feel and honest interaction than those of most other cars in existence. And some aspects feel truly unique: tensing your body as the chassis hangs on to the road through a long bumpy corner, guiding the car round with almost imperceptible movements of the heavily loaded steering wheel, is like precision wrestling. It offers the sort of immersive experience that so few cars dare to give you, and it's an experience I love. ✕



# RETURN OF THE MAC

*How might the Mercedes SLR McLaren have been if it were more McLaren and a little less Mercedes? The McLaren Edition SLR reveals all*

by RICHARD MEADEN

PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH

**O** **OF ALL THE SUPERCARS TO EMERGE IN** the early part of this century, the Mercedes SLR McLaren is perhaps the most misunderstood. It never really seemed to know what it was trying to be, a fact reflected in its conflicted name and slightly awkward driving experience. So while it possessed otherworldly looks and mighty performance fused with genuine useability and a ton (perhaps literally, judging by the kerb weight) of technology, the motoring press remained lukewarm, preferring the seductive Ferrari 575 or sublime Porsche Carrera GT.

It's worth bearing in mind that although the SLR failed to seduce the media or truly live up to the expectations set by the union of an illustrious Formula 1 team and its engine supplier, those customers who 'got' what it was trying to do did so whole-heartedly. Smart and engaging customer events created a close-knit community feel and the clever evolution of the car resulted in many becoming serial or even multiple SLR owners.

There's an appendix to the SLR story – one I find pretty remarkable – and that's the fact you can readily find examples of early coupes for sale at less than £120,000, and Roadsters for £150k. That seems like remarkable value for an all-carbonfibre, 200-plus mph car, especially one that





combines rocketship styling with the durability of Mercedes-Benz and the kudos of McLaren pedigree. Indeed, now that the SLR in all its guises (see page 126) has long since ceased production, and with that strange process of absolution reserved for less-than-perfect cars slowly working its magic on the enigmatic McMerc, the SLR's fortunes seem poised for a revival. Just to help things on their way, McLaren's MSO (McLaren Special Operations) department has gone all Ridley Scott on us, producing the supercar equivalent of a director's cut in this, the McLaren Edition SLR.

Like all of MSO's creations, this re-working of the SLR centres around the ability to offer bespoke personalisation, but there's the added dimension

of off-the-shelf cosmetic and hardware upgrades. This combination means that no two McLaren Edition cars will look (or cost) the same, but this customer car is an example of what can be achieved. Based on a Roadster 722 S, it has received the full body conversion – that's to say a new nose section (with a much more prominent front splitter), re-styled gills aft of the front wheels, a more aggressively upswept bootlid spoiler and a new rear diffuser. The paintwork has been completely re-done to the customer's wishes, as has the interior upholstery, detailing and the seats themselves, which now offer significantly improved lumbar support.

Mechanically the Edition SLR can't go out on a limb, simply because



## McLaren Edition SLR



McLaren doesn't want to mess with the inherent durability or Type Approval compliance of the regular SLR models. But this doesn't stop MSO from making improvements, either through applying elements of the later models to earlier cars, or by making simple, logical enhancements in areas where it doesn't require a fundamental re-working of the car. Some of these upgrades, such as the rear diffuser and uprated cooling system, have come from 2009's limited-edition Stirling Moss variant, while others, like the changes to the power steering, have been done in-house. Many of the Edition team worked on the build of the original cars, so nobody knows them better.

Though no one would go on record to say as much, you do get the sense that now the official road-car partnership between McLaren and Mercedes has been dissolved, the boys from Woking are keen to put their own stamp on what was originally not so much a meeting of minds as a butting of heads. This extends to the little details and flourishes as much as the bigger statements, so for example, the brake calipers now wear McLaren logos. Likewise the side gills now ape McLaren Automotive's 'Speed Marque'. That's that little Nike-like crescent, in case you were wondering. Coupled with this particular car's retina-sizzling shade of orange inside and out, there's no question the McLaren-ness has been ramped-up, while the Mercedes bit has been pushed into the background.

This car is about to be delivered to its owner, who has kindly allowed us to try his 'new' machine within the safe confines of the Millbrook Proving Ground. It took 'Bones', one of MSO's technicians, half a day to apply protective strips of blue masking tape to the paintwork for our fast driving, and it then took four of us an hour and a half to remove it again for photography, in what must count as the slowest striptease in history. Suffice to say we don't want to take any chances with stonechips, but the anticipation of seeing the naked car is killing me.

To be honest I'm not sure how I was expecting to feel on first







**Above left:** Meaden enjoys the revised steering set-up. **Below left:** supercharged 5.4-litre V8's output is unchanged from the 641bhp of the 722 S base car, but then with a 0-62mph time of 3.7sec, it was never really wanting for performance. **Below right and opposite page:** nose section, side gills, bootlid and diffuser are all new, as is Historic Orange paint job



acquaintance with the Edition. I certainly wouldn't have put myself down as an SLR fanboy, yet there's no denying it has genuine rock-star presence. It also looks strangely petit, but it still has a whiff of *Wacky Races* about it thanks to its extraordinary proboscis, which is now longer, wider and has sharper and more defined edges. Ashamed as I am to admit it, I think the Edition could do with 20 or even 21in rims, rather than the 19in alloys from the 722, but McLaren wanted to stay true to homologated parts, wheels included.

Lift the bonnet and you reveal the SLR's monster 5.4-litre supercharged V8, which is set a metre behind the centreline of the front wheels and remains unchanged from the standard 722 spec, meaning 641bhp and 605lb ft of torque. As I don't recall even the regular 616bhp SLR needing more performance, that's no bad thing. A total SLR nerd might also spot the new carbonfibre structures that house the revised cooling system, likewise the lightweight exhaust system that saves around 20kg and adds a bit more meat to the SLR's seismic, pulsing throb at tickover.

Inside it's very orange – the carbon sections of the dash were painted at the owner's request – and a real event, despite the Mercedes-Benz switches, which are rather ordinary to look at. Still, there's nothing ordinary about the view through the steeply raked windscreen, nor the sense of proximity to the engine. Stretch out your foot and you'd swear you could give one of the cylinders a tickle with your toes.

The revised steering is much heavier than I remember, especially at idle and low speed, but it's also less jumpy and more linear in its response,

so you feel much more connected to this SLR than the standard car. The exhaust note is penetrating and percussive, especially under load, but on part throttle the aural swagger fades into the background so as not to compromise the McLaren Edition's long-range capability. What's clear is that there's a real sense of occasion about this car. Okay, so much of that was present in the regular SLR, but the styling, soundtrack and steering have accentuated the character and addressed one of the major dynamic and tactile failings in the original car. Together these changes make this SLR tangibly more appealing and satisfying to drive.

How does an SLR feel in 2013? Pretty bloody epic, it has to be said. With an abundance of torque and an instant throttle response, it punches forwards with almost shocking violence and a soundtrack straight from a piston-engined fighter plane. You hear (and feel) every cylinder pulse thudding from the stubby side-exit pipes, overlaid with the vibrato whine from the supercharger

so that you feel like you're right amongst the gnashing components. The steering makes it easier to place the SLR through corners and keep it on one neat trajectory, rather than you having to keep nibbling away to try and gauge what the distant front wheels are doing.

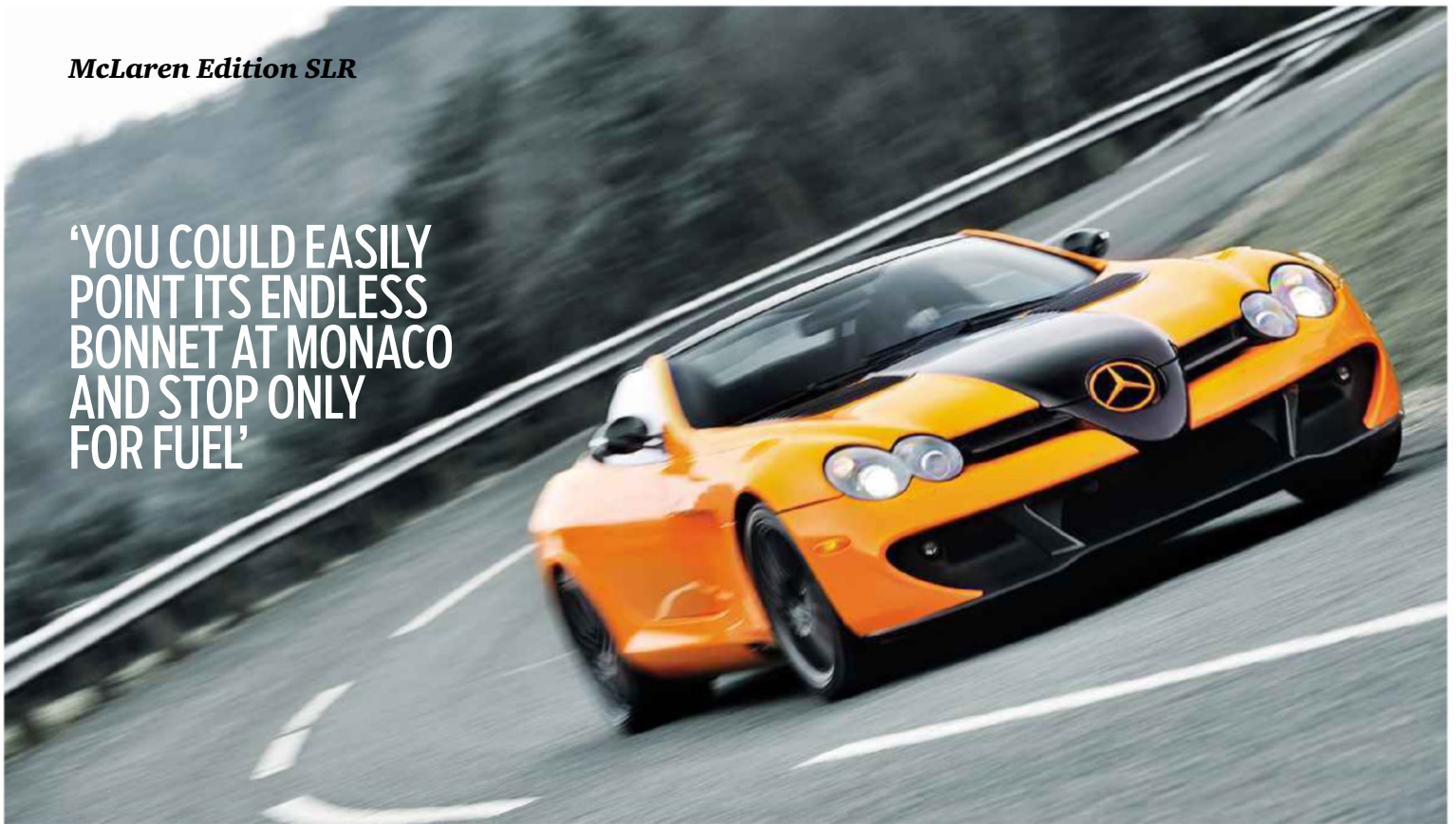
Electronics have come on an awfully long way in the relatively short time since the SLR was state-of-the-art, so you don't have the fine adjustability of the latest traction and stability control systems, nor do you have the raft of steering, throttle and gearshift maps that cars like the Ferrari F12 have. Hell, the SLR has a five-speed torque-converter auto, so it's hardly fizzing with synaptic sparks. What it does possess is a haymaker punch, plenty

**'WITH AN ABUNDANCE OF TORQUE AND AN INSTANT THROTTLE RESPONSE, IT PUNCHES FORWARDS WITH SHOCKING VIOLENCE'**



## McLaren Edition SLR

'YOU COULD EASILY POINT ITS ENDLESS BONNET AT MONACO AND STOP ONLY FOR FUEL'



of grip, strong traction and a duality of character that means you could quite easily point its endless bonnet at Monaco, Munich or Montevideo and make stops only for fuel.

Sadly the one thing the McLaren Edition upgrades don't address are the brakes, which are massively potent when you really need to stand on them, but virtually impossible to modulate smoothly or precisely at urban or even open-road speeds. They're never less than frustrating, but prior experience tells me that with time you do learn to mitigate some of, if not all of their inconsistencies.

What does all this work cost? Well, as a package (excluding the personalisation seen in this car) the McLaren Edition conversion costs £150,000. That's a significant amount of money, but given a full re-spray alone would cost you in the region of £25-30k if done by McLaren, the total cost of the MSO work is by no means outrageous. Add upwards of £120k for your base car, however, and you'll be well past F12 and Aventador money. But perhaps that's missing the point. For some people – particularly those who gelled with the original SLR – the prospect of a refreshed and personalised SLR will still seem like a no-brainer. ❌

## Some SLRs they made earlier



### SLR (2004)

The SLR was launched as a coupe. Weighing in at 1693kg it was heavy for a carbon-bodied car, but its 617bhp supercharged V8 ensured true supercar performance.



### 722 Edition (2006)

Limited run of 150 cars with more power (641bhp) and less weight (1649kg). Name referred to the number of Moss and Jenkinson's 1955 Mille Miglia-winning Mercedes 300 SLR.



### Roadster (2007)

Same powertrain as standard coupe with an extra 57kg to shift thanks to folding fabric roof. Performance was barely affected, though. Scissor doors remained, too.



### 722 GT (2007)

Race-ready track special developed by Ray Mallock Ltd in the UK. Weight drastically cut to 1300kg, engine boosted to 670bhp and a five-speed manual gearbox introduced.



### Roadster 722 S (2009)

Another limited run of 150, this time with no roof. A 208mph top speed was 2mph higher than the standard Roadster's, and the 3.7sec 0-62mph time a 0.1sec improvement.



### Stirling Moss (2009)

Inspired by the 300 SLR racer of the '50s, the Moss weighed 200kg less than the regular Roadster and had a top speed of 220mph. Just 75 built. Sold only to existing SLR owners.



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# Fast Fleet

Living with *evo's* long-term test cars

From 308 to RS4, *evo's* Fast Fleet is the biggest and most comprehensive long-term section in the business. This month...

## FERRARI 308 GTB

by Harry Metcalfe  
Editorial director

NEW

**This month:** Another month and it's another new car for Metcalfe  
**Favourite long-term to date:** Audi RS6; the mad, bad, twin-turbo V10 version. Fitted perfectly into my life. Silly quick but understated too



## McLAREN MP4-12C

by Nick Trott  
Editor

**This month:** Trott gets used to having a supercar as his daily driver  
**Favourite long-term to date:** C63 Coupe, more so than the Aston V8 Vantage or BMW 1M. Completely fell for its mix of pace and practicality



## BMW M135i

by Henry Catchpole  
Features editor

**This month:** It's manual versus auto. Which wins? Catchpole decides  
**Favourite long-term to date:** My favourite was also my first – a white Caterham R300. At 23 years old it was a dream come true



## HYUNDAI VELOSTER TURBO

by Stephen Dobie  
Staff writer

**This month:** An encounter with a pothole results in a bent alloy  
**Favourite long-term to date:** Clio 200 Cup. If I get to run a more addictive, effervescent all-rounder again, I'll be a very lucky man



## NISSAN NAVARA

by Sam Riley  
Film-maker

OUT

**This month:** Riley says goodbye to the Fast Fleet's trusty workhorse  
**Favourite long-term to date:** The Navara! With a 3.0 turbodiesel V6 and rear-wheel drive selected, it's a lot more fun than you'd expect



## AUDI RS4 AVANT

by Dean Smith  
Staff photographer

**This month:** Smith puts the RS4's sport differential to good use  
**Favourite long-term to date:** The RS4. Because it's an RS4



## RANGE ROVER EVOQUE

by Mike Duff  
Motoring editor

**This month:** The Evoque comes back from the menders  
**Favourite long-term to date:** VX220. I just loved the simplicity and effortless performance of the 'standard', non-turbo version



## JAGUAR XKR-S

by Richard Meaden  
Contributing editor

**This month:** A squeaking driver's seat gets on Meaden's nerves  
**Favourite long-term to date:** Running an Aston DB7 GT was pretty sweet, though daily access to a manual V12 does spoil you



## RENAULT CLIO WILLIAMS

by Adam Shorrock  
Senior designer

**This month:** Shorrock considers selling his share in the classic hatch  
**Favourite long-term to date:** The Mazda MX-5 was 12 months of sheer fun. It was also the first car I got sideways



## VAUXHALL ASTRA VXR

by Jethro Bovingdon  
Contributing editor

**This month:** Bovingdon analyses his complex relationship with the VXR  
**Favourite long-term to date:** BMW M3 saloon (E90). Terrible on fuel but brilliant at everything else and so much cooler than the coupe



## MAZDA MX-5 MK2

by Peter Tomalin  
Contributing editor

**This month:** The little Mazda runs up a big bill  
**Favourite long-term to date:** 309 GTI in the early '90s. Pug ugly, but utterly involving, exquisitely poised and just fast enough. I still miss it



## FERRARI F50

by 'SSO'  
Contributor

**This month:** The Secret Supercar Owner on owning an F50  
**Favourite long-term to date:** The Ferrari F50. Read this month's report to find out why...



## MERCEDES C63 AMG

by Stephen Dobie  
Staff writer

**This month:** Dobie finds out what the C63 has to offer youngsters  
**Favourite long-term I've borrowed:** The North York Moors in an R26.R was memorable, making a 1M on the Autobahn even more so



## RENAULT TWINGO 133

by Ian Eveleigh  
Production editor

**This month:** It's Cup versus non-Cup. Which wins? Ev decides  
**Favourite long-term to date:** Nissan 370Z Roadster. Not perfect, but so much character. I swear the sun shone every day that summer...



## ALFA ROMEO GIULIETTA

by Rob Gould  
Art director

**This month:** It's another holiday for Gould. This time he's taken the Alfa  
**Favourite long-term to date:** A 2.7-litre Porsche 944. It wasn't fast, but it was quick and the weight distribution was excellent



**Also on the *evo* fleet:** Alfa Romeo Mito, Aston Martin DBS, Ferrari F40, Ferrari 430 Scuderia, Ferrari 458 Italia, Ferrari 550 Barchetta, Ford Escort RS2000, Jaguar XJR-15, Lamborghini Countach, Lamborghini Espada, Lamborghini LP640, Lamborghini Murciélago, Lancia Delta Integrale, Lotus Elan. **Coming soon:** Toyota GT86, Mini JCW GP

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NEW ARRIVAL

# Ferrari 308 GTB

Metcalfe has added a rare, lightweight 1970s supercar to his stable

**Y**EP, THERE'S another mid-engined Italian in my garage: a 1976 Ferrari 308 GTB 'Vetroresina' (fibreglass sounds so much better in Italian, don't you think?). I've been secretly watching these in the classifieds for a while now because I think they're a bit special.

Introduced at the Paris motor show in October 1975, the 308 GTB was effectively Ferrari's Dino replacement. While the original Dino was a desperately pretty car, its performance was borderline mediocre, something Ferrari wanted to put right with the 308.

These days, we're used to the final version of each Ferrari V8 model being the most hardcore (Challenge Stradale, Scuderia, etc) but back in '75, Ferrari wanted its new 'baby' to have greater innate race potential than the Dino, so the first 308s were properly special. Powered by a 255bhp, dry-sump, quad-cam 3-litre V8 (red lined at 7700rpm), they were near 160mph machines, but crucially

they were also the lightest 308s ever made because they wore fibreglass bodies built by Scaglietti.

This resulted in a kerb weight of 1240kg. But production of these lightweights was short lived and after a mere 712 had rolled off the line, Ferrari swapped to steel bodies, which increased the weight to 1320kg (when the 308i arrived in 1980 it got worse – power went down to 210bhp and weight increased again). To complicate matters even further, out of the 712 Vetroresinas built (12,149 Ferrari 308s were made in total), only 100 were RHD, and of those only the UK versions had the 255bhp, dry-sumped engine. With many now converted into racers, finding an all-original UK Vetroresina is hard work.

That's why when I saw a completely original '76 308 GTB up for sale at The Hairpin Company, I had to check it out. Thirty test miles later and I was smitten: the fibreglass 308 blended the delicacy of my Lotus Elan Sprint with the firepower of a racy Ferrari V8. The steering was exquisite, the brakes surprisingly sharp and the



Above: this 308 cost £9181.69 new in '76

grunt of the howling quad-carb V8 instant and seriously addictive.

This particular example was pretty special too, being exactly as it left the showroom some 37 years ago, apart from a recent engine rebuild and a suspension refresh 500 miles ago. With a pile of history (including the original invoice), Hairpin was asking £75,000, and after a little haggling, a deal was done.

That was a few weeks ago, and the more I discover about my 308's early life, the more I love it. It was originally

owned by a Reg Philips, who was a bit of the star on the UK hill climb scene, eventually retiring from competitive hill climbing in 2003 at the grand age of 82. He drove this 308 almost every day, covering over 30,000 miles in two years before selling it in July 1978.

The next owner very rarely drove the car due to health problems, but being a fastidious engineer, he was meticulous with the maintenance. His family finally sold it last year after over 34 years of continuous ownership, hence why it's so original.

It's now showing 36,300 miles and my plan is to drive it a whole lot more than the last owner because it's way too special to be locked away. All we need now is spring to arrive, then the fun can start. ☒

Harry Metcalfe (@harrym\_evo)

Driver's log	
Date acquired	March 2013
Total mileage	36,300
Mileage this month	0
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	n/a





## McLaren MP4-12C

Trott's first full month with the 12C has seen its practical side given a thorough test

**N**OTHING FOCUSES the mind quite like looking at your 616bhp, £160,000, rear-wheel-drive, carbon-clad supercar covered in snow, and then realising you have no other way of getting home. Yes, the first month with the McLaren 12C has been interesting to say the least...

The initial week was quite straightforward. The weather was dry and cool and I had a number of airport runs in the diary. One early challenge was a multistorey car park at Heathrow, which it completed with ease. The 12C's footprint isn't dissimilar to a Ford Focus's, so it's easy to thread. Care needs to be taken on down-ramps, but otherwise it's a cinch. The only issue was the number of car alarms I set off (and the ensuing guilt) – the 12C isn't particularly loud but the exhausts emit a resonance that alarm sensors don't seem to like.

### 'On a late run back from Heathrow, I had a scary half-spin...'

Fuel economy on long runs hovers around 18mpg (McLaren quotes 24.2 combined). If I'm honest I was expecting better from the 3.8-litre twin-turbo V8. Select Sport in the Active Dynamics panel and this drops to 16mpg or less due to, I suspect, a combination of manual gearshifting and increased drag from the extended rear wing. Take B-roads and exercise your right foot and you sink to 12mpg...

On the late run back from Heathrow, I had a scary half-spin – rescued not by my talent but by the 12C's. Fourth gear on a gently curving on-ramp, the boost spun up, the

rear tyres did the same and I hit a half-turn of opposite lock before the car's ESP intervened – and all this in the 'middle' Sport mode. It was soaking wet, and I have a suspicion that there was some diesel on the road (I know, excuses, excuses), but maximum respect to the 12C for preventing a six-month loan turning into a two-weeker.

The next challenge was a 150-mile round trip to a tricky-to-find destination, again in terrible conditions. The chassis and 235 (front) and 305 (rear) Pirelli P Zero tyres manage to resist aquaplaning extremely well, meaning you never have to suffer the ignominy of crawling in the inside lane at 50mph while grannies overtake you in old Escorts. However, the bottom corners of the screen mist up even on the highest fan setting – which itself whistles like an elephant with a flute up its trunk! The 12C's IRIS found the destination OK, but

crashed on the way home. The fix? I turned the car off and switched it back on again.

Not much 'thrill of driving' in the first month then, but still some good challenges for the 12C. I adore the driving position, the steering feel, the general useability and the fact that after three days in an Aventador and a Ferrari F12 for last month's cover story, it still felt shockingly fast. When the weather improves, this long-term loan will really get going. Problem is, there's no sign of this – as I write there are six inches of snow on the ground and British Summer Time officially starts in five days...

**Nick Trott** (@evoNickTrott)

#### Driver's log

<b>Date acquired</b>	March 2013
<b>Total mileage</b>	8536
<b>Mileage this month</b>	720
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	17.9



# BMW M135i

Which suits the M135i better: auto or manual? Catchpole's been finding out



# F

FREQUENTLY THESE days (as we saw last issue) you don't get a choice. Buy a new Ferrari or

Renaultsport Clio and you won't be allowed more than two pedals in the footwell. You do get the option with the M135i, however, and recently I got to try the two choices back to back.

My car (the black five-door) has the optional (£1600) eight-speed ZF automatic, and to be honest I was expecting to come away rather envious of the standard manual 'box. In some ways I did turn a little green because the manual is a really beautiful shift – it's swift, smooth and engages sweetly. What's more, the throttle and brake pedals are positioned so perfectly that even

Shrek in a pair of rigger boots wouldn't have a problem performing twinkle-toed downchanges.

The interesting thing, though, is just how much more sparkle the eight-speed 'box brings out of the engine when you're going for it. As a

rough guide, at 50mph in third gear the manual is sitting at 3300rpm, while the auto is at 4600rpm. Even in fourth at 50mph the auto still has 200 more revs showing than the manual in third. This shorter gearing in the lower gears means the turbocharged straight-six always

seems to be punching from its sweet spot, and that has a knock-on effect (in a good way) to the handling. With so many closely stacked ratios to choose from in the auto, you have to rely on feel and what your ears are telling you as you go

down the road, flicking the paddles accordingly without ever being entirely sure which of the myriad gears you're in. It's an odd feeling at first, but you do get used to it. The only tiresome thing comes when downshifting from eighth all the way to third or even second. But that eighth gear does have an upside: at 70mph in sixth in the manual you're doing 2500rpm, while the same speed in eighth in the auto yields just 2000rpm and a commensurate fuel saving (although it would take a while to recoup £1600).

So which would I have? It's close, but I'd take the manual because you'd appreciate that shift on every journey, even the dull ones. ❌

**Henry Catchpole**  
(@HenryCatchpole)

## 'It's interesting how much more sparkle the auto 'box brings out of the engine'

rough guide, at 50mph in third gear the manual is sitting at 3300rpm, while the auto is at 4600rpm. Even in fourth at 50mph the auto still has 200 more revs showing than the manual in third. This shorter gearing in the lower gears means the turbocharged straight-six always

down the road, flicking the paddles accordingly without ever being entirely sure which of the myriad gears you're in. It's an odd feeling at first, but you do get used to it. The only tiresome thing comes when downshifting from eighth all the way to third or even second. But that

### Driver's log

<b>Date acquired</b>	January 2013
<b>Total mileage</b>	3429
<b>Mileage this month</b>	1204
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	32.7



## Hyundai Veloster Turbo

**O**'OUCH!' IS THE word of the month for the Veloster.

Firstly, thanks to one of the many potholes on a particularly ragged stretch of the A43. Steering around one nasty-looking crater I planted the driver's side front wheel in a neighbouring crack. It sounded awful, and when it was safe to stop I found a slightly bent alloy and a lump in the tyre's sidewall.

Thank goodness it's not my own

car, really, or I'd be furious about the £500 bill and unable to complain to the local council without risking life and limb with a tape measure and camera in the middle of a 60mph road. Perhaps the Veloster's skinny 40-profile Hankooks can shoulder a little blame, too, though.

The second 'ouch!' is a sheepish whine from me after a handful of long journeys. More than 45 minutes in the Turbo-etched driver's seat can elicit a notable ache in my lower back, the electronic lumbar support unhelpfully too far up my spine. Can I succumb to a 'driving cushion'

without surrendering my dignity?

In more jovial news, my search for forerunners to the Veloster's quirky door layout continues; stick 'Mitsubishi Minica Lettuce' in your search engine and rejoice. ❌

**Stephen Dobie**  
(@evoStephenDobie)

### Driver's log

<b>Date acquired</b>	February 2013
<b>Total mileage</b>	6593
<b>Mileage this month</b>	1205
<b>Costs this month</b>	£500
<b>mpg this month</b>	31.0



**END OF TERM**

# Nissan Navara

After 13,000 miles attending **evo** tests, the Navara has gone. Film-maker Riley says farewell



## Audi RS4 Avant

Photographer Smith has been trying out the RS4's 'halfway house' ESP setting. He rather likes it

**I** DON'T CLAIM to be a good driver. The only dabs of oppo I ever need are due to my incompetence, and my current driving career highlight is stalling an automatic Peugeot 5008. Twice. Therefore I hadn't ever thought to touch the ESP settings on the RS4, but as I've spent more time with the car and my confidence has grown, I've been eager to explore what the quattro sport diff and the 40:60 torque split

can do when not strangled by the ESP (plus I'd seen a few sideways videos on the net). Usefully, the RS4's ESP has a Sport mode. Much like the MDM mode in our beloved old 1M long-termer, in theory it allows drivers like me to have a little fun without the fear of spinning, although in fairness you'd have to be going at a fair old lick and doing something really quite daft to spin an RS4 on the public road. So I tried Sport mode on my favourite roads back to Deanton

Abbey in the dry, but I didn't really notice a great difference. The following morning, however, the roads were slippery from a short downpour overnight.

There's one really good corner

**'I hadn't ever thought to touch the ESP settings...'**

about ten miles into my journey to work, an unravelling, second-gear, slow-in, fast-out, traffic-free, wide corner with great visibility. I turned in, felt that there was good traction up front, and just as I clipped the apex I got on the power quickly, just

as I do every morning. But this time the rear gently swung wide and adopted an ever-so-slight oversteer angle all the way until 8000rpm.

I was howling with laughter. It was only about 10 degrees of slip, yet it couldn't have been more perfect. I felt like a driving god, but it was all down to the car's clever sports differential, quattro system and computers. Not that I care, though. It felt magic. ☒

**Dean Smith** (@evoDeanSmith)

<b>Driver's log</b>	
<b>Date acquired</b>	Sept 2013
<b>Total mileage</b>	14,139
<b>Mileage this month</b>	1945
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	23.9



**J**UST WHEN I thought winter was finally over, it started to snow. Pity, then, that as the British spring arrived in full force, my eight months with the Nissan Navara Outlaw came to an end.

Through the endless winter this pick-up truck was brilliant, dealing with every situation we threw at it. It performed faultlessly in the snow with four-wheel drive selected; so capable was it, in fact, that I very rarely had to engage low-gear mode. I can't praise its load-lugging abilities highly enough, either: from moving fridges and towing broken cars, to transporting a 150-year-old church pew and proving itself as the ultimate tracking vehicle on our eCoty 2012 DVD shoot.

The Outlaw sits at the top of the Navara range. Its 3-litre turbodiesel V6 produces 228bhp with an impressive 406lb ft of torque, delivered via a seven-speed automatic gearbox. The pulling power never failed to impress, and made the Outlaw a bit of a secret assassin off the line (0-62mph took just 9.3sec). This obviously proved pretty handy when trying to keep up with our road testers whilst flying around the *evo* Triangle. The downside to such performance in a 2150kg pick-up is, of course, running costs. I averaged about 27mpg



**Above:** carrying a 7ft camera jib for our eCoty video shoot. **Left:** V6 good for 406lb ft. **Below left:** driver could select 2wd, high-range 4wd and low-range 4wd



overall, which isn't great, yet it's still better than most of the cars on our Fast Fleet can manage!

The Outlaw is equipped with all the gadgets you could possibly need, including heated leather seats, satnav (I personally think Nissan has the best nav system), DVD, USB and Bluetooth. The only issue I noticed was when I changed to an iPhone 5,

**Driver's log**

<b>Date acquired</b>	July 2012
<b>Duration of test</b>	8 months
<b>Total test mileage</b>	13,200
<b>Overall mpg</b>	27.6
<b>Costs</b>	£1818.22
<b>Purchase price</b>	£36,485
<b>Trade-in value</b>	£29,900
<b>Depreciation</b>	£6585

as the USB input struggled to recognise it and often froze. Nissan has assured me that a simple update to the system fixes this glitch.

The Navara's ride did seem a bit fidgety and roly-poly in the corners, but you have to expect that with a vehicle of this type, and the payback, of course, was its impressive all-conditions competence. On long journeys I found the Navara pretty comfortable, although I'm not sure passengers would agree. The rear seating in the double cab was pretty cramped for fully grown adults, which brings me to another problem: with the load bay offering no means of stopping smaller objects moving around, I was forced to use the rear seats as a boot when food shopping, for example. It made the Navara strangely unpractical.

We added an Armadillo roll-top cover to help keep secure any cargo that did make its way into the load area, but at £1818.22 fitted, it seemed overpriced. Thankfully there are cheaper options. This was the only money spent on our Navara, though, as it was completely reliable, and its first service was still some way off, due at 18,000 miles.

Overall, then, the Navara was a tough, quick, practical, off-road-capable vehicle that lent itself to an array of tasks and delivered. I'll certainly miss it. ❌

**Sam Riley (@samgriley)**



**Left:** Smith goes on a hunt for a wet corner to put the RS4's sport differential to the test

## Mercedes C63 AMG Coupe

**M**ERCEDES IS TRYING to make AMGs appeal to 20-something whippersnappers like me. Evidence comes in the form of Professor Green (the rapper, not a rejected Cluedo character) leaping about on the bonnet of a C63 Coupe in TV adverts for an energy drink.

Fearing some sort of official warning, I resisted the temptation to replicate this with Trott's C63 and instead just drove it for a few days while he was practising the door-stroke technique on his new McLaren.

So what did I find? It makes properly gargly V8 noises, which are

even better if you fold down the rear seats. It has the best steering and most approachable limits of any of its ilk. And it's a wonderful (if very thirsty) cruiser, an opinion rubber-stamped by a comfy (but 14.4mpg!) Heathrow run.

Overall, the C63 is probably the best of its breed right now, splicing the honed dynamics of an M3 with the effortless mooching of an RS5. And with a shouty soundtrack to keep us young 'uns happy... ❌

**Stephen Dobie**

**Driver's log**

<b>Date acquired</b>	April 2012
<b>Total mileage</b>	21,384
<b>Mileage this month</b>	1988
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	20.9





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# Range Rover Evoque SD4

The Evoque has returned from being repaired, and Duff is glad to see it again



**I**T'S TAKEN TWO months, but our Evoque is back – and it's as if nothing ever happened. To remind you, back in January the baby Range suffered from a serious overdose of tree, sliding off a snowy road and hitting a sizeable oak in an impact that destroyed both the front offside wing and the right-hand lower suspension arm. As I waited, shivering, for the recovery truck – kicking myself both metaphorically and literally – I even wondered if the Evoque would be declared a write-off.

Fortunately not. The damage was limited to the front corner and, behind the shredded wing and broken suspension, the Evoque stood up to the impact remarkably well. The delay was caused by the usual insurance company faffing and a wait for some less-used parts, including new airbags. It's a remarkable repair. I've been

## 'I really can't find any evidence of the impact it's survived'

over the de-spangled Evoque with a fine toothcomb and, even lying down for a good look underneath, I really can't find any evidence of the impact it's survived. The only small giveaway is the very faint smell of new paint in the cabin, which will hopefully fade soon. And it's good to have our Evoque back – not least as our seemingly perpetual winter means I'm still glad of its four-wheel-drive system (although I'll be tackling any late snow at little

more than walking pace). The other welcome difference will be in my wallet; two months with the petrol automatic Si4 Evoque that stood in while ours was away pretty much ate my credit card, with 25mpg under very gentle use and a more regular 22–23mpg. Our diesel manual does 35mpg without really trying. Not that we're going to have long together: our Evoque's 12 months are very nearly up and it will be returning to

Land Rover soon. The last two months have already proved I'll miss it when it goes for real. **Mike Duff**

Driver's log	
<b>Date acquired</b>	March 2012
<b>Total mileage</b>	16,350
<b>Mileage this month</b>	130
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	35.2

# Renault Clio Williams

**W**ITH A PAUSE in the awful weather, I drove the Williams some 100 miles to a dealership to view a potential car purchase.

Being the longest run I'd had in the Clio for some time, I was slightly apprehensive, with what appears to be an indecisive immobiliser occasionally delaying the engine starting. But my reservations were short-lived as the Willy performed without a hitch and even got some admiration from fellow petrolheads on the windy, scenic A616 that briefly hugs the Peak District.

After test driving two lovely mk1 Focus RSs, I contemplated the thought of selling my half of the Williams to help fund one of the Fords. Upon arriving home, I decided to clean off the salt that had covered the Clio. A passing builder bellowed: 'Don't see



Driver's log	
<b>Date acquired</b>	August 2010
<b>Total mileage</b>	93,205
<b>Mileage this month</b>	526
<b>Costs this month</b>	£3 (screenwash)
<b>mpg this month</b>	33.8

many of them about anymore, do ya?' and told me he used to own a Renault 5 GT Turbo back in the day. With that, I realised it'd be incredibly difficult to let go of such a cool car. **Adam Shorrock**

# Jaguar XKR-S Convertible

**S**QUEAKS. I HATE 'em. So you can imagine how annoyed I've been by the Jag's chirruping driver's seat. My driveway's pretty bumpy and on cold mornings it's sounded like a family of chipmunks have taken residence. It's not so bad once I'm up to speed or if I crank up the B&W stereo, but that's not the point. When I'm confident we've seen the back of the snow and ice I've got to return the car to Jaguar to have it re-shod with summer rubber, so I'll get them to check it out then.

I also really ought to discuss the XKR-S's paltry fuel range – 240 miles on a very good day – and its fearsome thirst. When I have the opportunity to really enjoy the Jag's spectacular performance, I expect it to drink like there's no tomorrow. What surprises me is that even when I rely on the



Driver's log	
<b>Date acquired</b>	Sept 2012
<b>Total mileage</b>	8453
<b>Mileage this month</b>	898
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	19.6

torque and use little more than 3000rpm, it still struggles to beat 18mpg. The only time I ever see 20mpg is on a long motorway journey... **Richard Meaden (@DickieMeaden)**



# Vauxhall Astra VXR

Having had time to get used to the fast Vauxhall, Bovington assesses its perks and its foibles



Left: Bovington is a fan of the Astra's wild ways, but not of its cluttered dash (below left)

**S** SO I'VE LIVED with the VXR for a few months and many thousands of miles now. The verdict? Well, we have a complicated relationship.

I still loathe the confusing dashboard but I rather like the aggressive exterior styling – although a more sober colour would make it look classier. But it's dynamically that the VXR delights and frustrates in equal measure.

The frustrations are pretty substantial. The throttle is incredibly aggressive even in the car's default setting, so around town you find yourself wheel-spinning when you just want to glide away. The engine's power curve is curiously lumpy like it's got a dodgy reprogrammed ECU.



The diff locks up beautifully but drags you wildly away from the apex rather than towards it. And whether in Normal, Sport or VXR mode, the ride/body control compromise never seems quite right.

Put like that, things don't look good for the VXR. It's nothing like as

polished or controlled as the Mégane 265, nor does it have the all-round competence of a Golf GTI. But the story doesn't end there because the VXR does have *something*. It is very, very rapid for a start. It's also got superb brakes, it sounds great and I've grown to like the VXR-only hydraulic power steering, too.

More importantly, it has a really adjustable balance that feels deliciously neutral through fast turns and occasionally wildly oversteery if you think better of your turn-in speed halfway through a corner. Leave the ESP alone and you can enjoy the subtle shifts in balance – turn it off and you can scare yourself witless at every turn.

This is a car with an edge, an attitude and a personality – things I found severely lacking in the Golf

GTI Edition 35 I ran previously. The Golf very quickly became a means of getting around, but in the VXR I'm always thinking about the best roundabout on the journey ahead to disable the ESP for. You have to engage with it, drive around its faults and work hard to exploit the thrills it can deliver. It's by no means perfect, but I like that it can turn any journey into an adventure. Surely that's what a hot hatch is all about? ☒

**Jethro Bovington**  
(@JethroBovington)

### Driver's log

<b>Date acquired</b>	July 2012
<b>Total mileage</b>	13,852
<b>Mileage this month</b>	1168
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	28.4

## Mazda MX-5 1.8i

**I** IT'S BEEN BY far the most expensive month for the MX-5 since I bought it almost a year ago. It was MOT time, so I was expecting to take some sort of hit, but nothing like this.

The Mazda sailed through the test itself, requiring only a number-plate bulb at a princely 80p. And then the fun began. I mentioned last month that I'd bought a cut-price hub/front

wheel bearing for £55 off eBay. After wasting my local garage's time trying to fit a hub that had an ABS ring at least two sizes too big, I splashed £100 on a proper hub from MX-5 Parts. And then we discovered the first one could be used after all, by prising the rusty old ABS ring from the knackered hub on the car and pressing it onto the replacement. So I had both fitted. Cost: £100 for labour, plus the MOT.

A few days later the hubs were joined by two new front brake calipers:

£100 each from Autolink, plus £36 for some new braided brake hoses and another £75 for labour. Oh yes, and the road tax is due. I need a lie-down. ☒

**Peter Tomalin**

### Driver's log

<b>Date acquired</b>	April 2012
<b>Total mileage</b>	112,424
<b>Mileage this month</b>	120
<b>Costs this month</b>	£605.61
<b>mpg this month</b>	32.0



Above: new front brake calipers form part of Tomalin's cash injection into MX-5





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# Ferrari F50

It's our favourite drivers' Ferrari ever, but what's it like to own an F50? The Secret Supercar Owner reveals all

**I** OFTEN GET ASKED: 'If you could only have one, which would it be?' The answer for the last five years has been the Ferrari F50. The F50 is unique. It is the last and arguably the greatest purely analogue supercar. No one will ever build another car like it.

With the F50, Ferrari set out to build an F1 car for the road, and it got closer to that goal than anyone else. The 513bhp, 4.7-litre V12 can trace its roots directly to the unit that powered the 1992 F1 car, and the gearbox is in a league of its own – quick and smooth, a real delight to use. The carbonfibre tub, steering and inboard pushrod suspension are all on a par with the phenomenal engine, too. From an engineering standpoint, the F50 is a work of art. As a result, the huge levels of grip and performance are all achieved in the absence of any stability or traction control systems. Even the brakes are unservoed.

I acquired my F50 back in the summer of 2007 after a six-month search for the right car (only 349 were produced). Back then it had just over 7000km on the odometer and I have almost doubled that. By supercar standards, running the F50 has been quite reasonable. With the exception of the fuel cells, which needed replacing in 2012, it has been lighter on the wallet than the F40, 365BB and 360 I've run. But the F50 is a simple car in terms of electronics and has little in the way of high-tech items that tend to go wrong.

You sit quite forward in the F50's chassis and visibility is excellent. This combination helps the car to shrink around you when on the move and enables you to place it exactly where you want it. This is useful, because the F50 will launch itself down the road with an aggression I have never experienced in any other car.

Because the engine is bolted to the bulkhead, the whole car feels alive. As the rpm gauge passes 5500,



the exhaust note rises to an F1-type scream, which simply intensifies as you close in on the red line. The factory quoted 0-62mph time of 3.9sec is easily believable. Add in perfectly weighted steering and outstanding road handling and you have a truly great drivers' car.

One of my favourite drives in the F50 so far was an early morning dash from Madrid to Lisbon. At that time of day you have the roads to yourself, so the temptation to let the F50 run was very hard to resist. Swing down off the slip road, shift up to third, open the throttle, and let it rip to 8000rpm. Hold it there for a few moments and soak in the sound of pure power before slotting fourth.

The F50 dispatched the miles in short order. At around the 200-mile mark we crested a hill to find a pair of Guardia Civil cruisers parked up with the officers standing around having their morning coffee. Resisting the primal instinct to brake, we just waved and kept going. Fortunately they just waved back; we even got a thumbs up from one...

By late morning we'd reached Lisbon, but we didn't stop there. Instead we carried on up to Sintra for a quick spin around the mountain before heading down to Cascais for lunch. The coastal cliff road from Sintra to Cascais is one of the better drivers' roads in Portugal. Get it right and it rewards; make a mistake and the next stop west is New York... Strong brakes, confidence and a chassis you trust are key to a good run. The F50 was in its element, absolutely cemented to the tarmac, V12 echoing off the hills.

Arriving in Cascais, we parked up by the beach and let the engine tick over and cool for a few minutes. Four hundred plus miles had come and gone, but I still wasn't ready to stop.

The F50 might not be quite as fast as the latest super- or hypercars, but for a total driving experience, it remains unmatched. ☒

**Secret Supercar Owner**  
(@SupercarOwner)

'From an engineering standpoint, the F50 is a work of art'

**Top:** V12 engine has F1 genes. **Left:** gated manual gearchange is a delight to use

<i>Driver's log</i>	
<b>Date acquired</b>	July 2007
<b>Total mileage</b>	13,170km
<b>Mileage this month</b>	52km
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	n/a





# Renaultsport Twingo 133

Ev got the chance to try the French supermini *sans* Cup chassis, finding plenty of subtle differences in the process

**D**ON'T WORRY. You're not seeing double. This month our Twingo had a visit from a twin.

Nearly an identical one, but not quite. The car leading the way in this shot does without the optional Cup chassis that's fitted to our long-termers, but otherwise it's the same. It even has the 17in alloys that form part of the £700 Cup option; on their own they're a £500 extra.

I'd been wanting to try a non-Cup 133 ever since our car arrived. As much as I'm a fan of the harder-riding Twingo, I'd wondered what you'd be missing in dynamic terms by not ticking that particular box, and what the corresponding gain in comfort would be.

The non-Cup car is by no means soft. There's more suspension travel and more lean in the corners, but it doesn't wallow, and plenty of detail still makes it through to the driver's

seat. With the harsh edge of the Cup chassis gone, it's more forgiving for occupants (especially passengers, who seem to suffer the most from the Cup's harsh ride). It feels less twitchy under braking too, and that new-found roll allows you to feel the outside-rear corner working in the

**'With the harsh edge of the Cup chassis gone, it's more forgiving for occupants'**

bends, which is a nice sensation. In short, it's a well-judged set-up for a modern hot hatch.

A clear win for the non-Cup car then? Almost, but one thing was missing. In the Cup car, when you turn in for a corner, the car reacts instantly. Tackle the same corner in the non-Cup car and there's a slight

delay felt through the steering as the weight transfers and the outside-front wheel loads up. It's a small thing, and if you hadn't experienced the Cup car you wouldn't even think about it. But if you have it makes the non-Cup car feel slower-witted, less accurate and just a bit less *special*.

So, which should you choose? If you regularly carry passengers, or would prefer a slightly easier ride, go for the non-Cup car. It's a great supermini and you'll have a whale of a time. But do yourself a favour: make sure you never, ever drive a Cup Twingo. Once you have, you won't be able to get it out of your mind. ❌

**Ian Eveleigh**

Driver's log	
Date acquired	August 2012
Total mileage	9804
Mileage this month	620
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	33.3



**Above:** Cloverleaf visited the Cotswolds

# Alfa Romeo Giulietta Cloverleaf

**W**ITH THE BITTER aftertaste of the Chevrolet Spark hire car I sampled last month still lingering, I vowed to put as many miles on the Alfa as possible. So with the prospect of fair weather, I took the Giulietta to the Peak District via the A515 and A6.

I drove past six-foot snow drifts and snowed-in pubs, through picturesque villages like Ashbourne and Bakewell, and via that curious seaside town-not-by-the-sea Matlock, with its rows upon rows of motorbikes parked up and their owners scoffing fish and chips.

After the Peak District, it was time to drive a more circuitous route through the achingly beautiful Cotswolds and brilliant roads like the A44 (blessed with some of the best bends going, even though glancing at a map it may not seem like it). When you find the right roads, the Alfa just comes alive, with its usefully weighty steering, level cornering and even torque delivery.

There is an unhappy side to this story, though. Unfortunately I didn't have much luck with those lovely dark-grey 18-inch alloys, and kerbed them twice in as many days – cue much shouting, swearing and tearing of what hair I have left.

So much for the peace and quiet of the countryside... ❌

**Rob Gould (@RobGould72)**

Driver's log	
Date acquired	Dec 2012
Total mileage	7542
Mileage this month	1321
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	28.0



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# Market Watch

Knowledge

Insights into the used-car market. Edited by Harry Metcalfe

## Market watch



# FALLING FERRARIS

Generously specced 458s are taking a big depreciation hit on the second-hand market

**A**S THE UK ECONOMY continues to flatline, I'm convinced we're all becoming increasingly 'depreciation averse'. It's not helped by countless stories in the media telling us that collectable cars have proved to be the next best investment to gold over the past ten years.

One result of this is that cars which could be seen as overly expensive when new are suffering frightening depreciation when the reality of today's second-hand marketplace bites. Even Ferraris aren't immune to this 'correction'. According to the latest *Glass's Guide*, the 458 lost a shocking £7250 in depreciation terms last month. I believe that's because the 458 was significantly more expensive than its predecessor, the F430.

Another factor is that Ferrari introduced a whole new level of personalisation with the arrival of the 458 and many customers specced their cars so heavily, the final price ballooned to well over £200,000 – at least £60,000 more than a well-specced F430 would have cost. Early 458s are now struggling to sell for £130,000 today, thanks

to a very crowded market, and it's not much better when you check out its big brother, the Ferrari 599. Today's trade is reluctant to pay much over £80,000 for good 2007 cars, with mileages over 20,000. That's a significant drop, especially when you realise similar cars were being advertised for around £100,000 only six months ago.

Other prestige brands are suffering too, with early V12 Aston Vantages settling at £65,000-70,000, which is starting to look good value, as are early 997 Porsche 911s priced around the £20,000 mark and the desirable GTS run-out version at £55-60k.

If you hate depreciation as much as I do, the best option is to downscale your everyday car into something like an Abarth 500 (which seems to hold its value better than gold at the moment) and then get a proper weekend toy that's done all its depreciation, rather than trying to combine the two roles into one still-depreciating car. It works for me, although I admit I've probably overdone the 'toy' element recently...

Harry Metcalfe  
Editorial director



## Auction watch

### BMW M1 and Porsche 959 amongst the lots in US sale of huge private car collection

Canadian auction house RM Auctions has built up an excellent reputation for successfully selling off huge car collections over recent years, and its next sale, on 27 April in Texas, will see 64 cars owned by businessman Don Davis go under the hammer. There's a wide range of machinery amongst the lots, from muscle cars and hot rods to classic Italian exotics and modern-day supercars.

One of the most stunning cars is a 1980 BMW M1, painted in the most iconic colour – Henna Red. The Giugiaro-designed M1 was BMW's first and so-far only attempt at building an all-out supercar. It debuted the legendary M88 in-line six-cylinder engine, which eventually made its way into the first BMW M5. This particular car was originally sold in Europe then imported into the US later in its life, and has covered a pampered 2412km from new. Just 455 M1s were built, and such low-mileage and immaculate examples rarely come on the market. RM is estimating the hammer will fall between \$150,000 and \$250,000 (£100,000-165,000). All the cars in this sale are offered without reserve.

Another hugely important and pioneering German technological masterpiece, this time built to compete in Group B motorsport, is the 197mph Porsche 959. It was at one stage the fastest production car in the world (until the Ferrari F40 came along) and is seen here in 'Komfort'-spec. This slightly heavier version comes with adjustable suspension, electric leather seats, air-con and all sorts of goodies omitted from the lighter Sport model. It's actually rarer than the M1, with fewer than 300 959s having left the factory. This 17,000km model is not road registered in the USA, as the 959 was never federalised for sale Stateside, but is still expected to sell for \$500k-600k (£330k-400k). **Matthew Hayward** (@octaneMatthew)



**Above:** this BMW M1 is one of 455 built and has covered just 1500 miles, yet it should sell for less than £165,000



**Above:** Porsche 959 has covered just 10,500 miles (it isn't even road-legal in the US); it should fetch up to £400,000



# Market Watch

Knowledge

Insights into the used-car market. Edited by Harry Metcalfe

## Ask the expert



**Q** Which car would you recommend for use only on trackdays and to explore the Alps? I am looking for low depreciation (possibly eventual appreciation) plus high safety, high reliability and low running costs. I am considering the Caterham R300, Lotus Exige S2, Lotus 2-Eleven and Lotus 340R. Is there anything else I should look at?  
**Giorgio Doderio, Italy**

**A** All the cars you mention would be great fun, but for low depreciation the Lotus 340R and Exige S2 are your best bets

(an Exige S1 would be even better than an S2). The only downside of the Exige is that it's enclosed, but there's not a lot else wrong with it.

While thrills don't come much more intense than those you get from a Caterham, you probably won't want to do big distances in one, and with zero crash protection, safety isn't great.

I'd also seriously consider adding the Ariel Atom to your list. With a growing fan base, reasonable entry price, Honda reliability and endless tweaking potential, it would be my top choice.

**HM**  
**Email your question to experts@evo.co.uk**

## Trader chat

Tom Hartley Junior, Tom Hartley  
[www.tomhartley.com](http://www.tomhartley.com)



'Classic cars are a big part of our business these days. Owning a classic is becoming increasingly fashionable. I'm finding many buyers use theirs for networking and meeting new people, as well as enjoying them for their obvious design and driver appeal.'

'As for newer cars, I think most premium brands have taken a serious hit this year, with prices down 5-10 per cent almost across the board. Rolls-Royce is really suffering, with too many Ghosts available. Range Rover is achieving a premium of £5000-7000 for TDV8 and Supercharged models, though, but there's no demand for the TDV6.'

'We've got three Enzos in stock at the moment and trade is brisk, but the Veyron still doesn't generate the same amount of interest. I suspect we will look back in ten years' time and be amazed you could buy a Veyron for less than an Enzo. The hottest car in 2013 is the LaFerrari [pictured]. If I could guarantee supply of early examples, I could achieve a £500,000 premium right now, such is the demand for that car. Premiums are hard to come by these days, though. We're still in recession and buyers no longer tolerate excessive depreciation on their "toy" cars. Those days have long gone.'

## Just looking

The pick of the classifieds this month



**Morgan AeroMax**  
£89,970  
Lawton Brook, Yorkshire  
[www.lawtonbrook.co.uk](http://www.lawtonbrook.co.uk)  
08450 944555

'You could look at the AeroMax for hours. The fact that it also moves seems like a bonus,' said features ed Henry Catchpole back in 2008. And he was bang on. Whether you're a Moggie fan or not, it's a car you never seem to get bored of looking at, a new design feature revealing itself each time you come across an AeroMax in person or print (I've just spotted the half-dozen slats behind the front wheels).

Only 100 were made, a mere 19 of those with RHD, and I'd wager even fewer are painted 'Porsche GTS Red' like this example at Lawton Brook. Among its options are a six-speed auto gearbox, side-exit exhausts and a photographic record of its build.

Despite its 2009 registration, it's covered a mere 950 miles. Perhaps its last owner was happy to just look at it...

**Stephen Dobie (@evoStephenDobie)**



**Audi RS6 Avant**  
£35,995  
Amari Super Cars, Lancashire  
[www.amarisupercars.com](http://www.amarisupercars.com)  
01772 663777

The new RS6 has launched this month (read our first drive on page 37) but, as is the way these days, it's been subjected to 2013's most frequent automotive buzzword – 'downsizing'. Its 4-litre twin-turbo V8 almost looks measly when its predecessor – this fine example of which is for sale at Amari Super Cars – powered its four wheels with a 5-litre twin-turbo V10 engine.

'A sledgehammer to crack a nut,' we called

it back in 2008, yet judging by the relatively high mileages (many are past 50,000) on most second-hand RS6s, especially Avant estates, their owners have used them as everyday cars. Ones with 572bhp, at that.

Amari's 36,899-mile example therefore sounds particularly fresh, while its Mugello Blue paint and cream leather make for a bolder look than the many grey and silver RS6s for sale elsewhere.

**SD**

## Fantasy garage: £100,000 challenge

This month, our sub editor Dan McCalla was given 100 virtual grand to bag a car with more than eight cylinders, a two-seater and a sports saloon, all from forsale.evo.co.uk



**1**  
**Ferrari Testarossa**  
£56,000

More than eight cylinders? How about a flat-12? This 1990 Testarossa has done just 20,800 miles and wears Rosso Corsa paint.



**2**  
**Lotus Elise 134S**  
£14,995

A very British two-seater I reckon I can just about squeeze my legs into. This 2007 version has done 39,000 miles and is in 'exceptional' condition.



**3**  
**BMW E28 M5**  
£23,995

Inspired by Henry Catchpole's drive of one last month. It may have 134,000 miles on the clock, but this M5 has recently had an extensive service.



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**2008/08 BUGATTI VEYRON**  
2,650 miles, Single Tone Solid Black with Black UK Car, 1 Owner, Originally Supplied by Romans.

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**NEW HENNESSEY VENOM GT**  
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Fastest production car in the world.  
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**2007/07 PORSCHE CARRERA GT**  
665 miles, Basalt Black with Black  
One of the last registered and lowest mileage cars in the world, Like Brand New.

£345,000



**2012/62 ASTON MARTIN VANQUISH**  
125 miles, Quantum Silver with Winter Wheat. 2+2 seating, Diamond Turned Alloys  
Big saving off list price.

£179,950



**2011/11 FERRARI 458 ITALIA**  
2,350 miles, Rosso Corsa with Nero  
Huge specification, best example.

£172,950



**2012/12 MCLAREN MP4-12C**  
1,850 miles, Volcano Orange with Black,  
Huge specification, best example.

£162,950



**2009/58 MERCEDES SL65 BLACK SERIES**  
12,500 miles Palladium Silver with Black  
Believed to be 1 of 10 UK RHD cars.

£154,950



**2012/62 LAMBORGHINI GALLARDO LP560-4 SPYDER**  
750 miles, Nero Serapis with Nero  
Big saving off list price, great value.

£144,950



**2010/10 ALFA ROMEO 8C SPIDER**  
620 miles, Competizione Red with Red UK Car, 1 Owner, Highest Specification Available.

£124,950



**2011/11 MERCEDES SLS AMG**  
4,790 miles, Imola Grey with Classic Red,  
1 Owner, Immaculate example.

£114,950



**2012/62 NISSAN GT-R PREMIUM RECARO EDITION**  
2,850 miles, Glacier White with Black & Red  
550bhp, Incredible performance.

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# Buying Guide

Knowledge

Your indispensable resource when buying used

## TVR Tamora 2001-2006

### Overview



The oft-overlooked Tamora is one of the best-driving TVRs and good value too

Words: Peter Tomalin

**T**HE GRIFFITH AND Chimaera were always going to be tough acts to follow. Not only were they the cars that finally allowed TVR to shrug off its kit-car roots and stand toe-to-toe with the likes of Porsche, they also married thunderous performance to timeless handsome lines. But they couldn't go on forever.

The early 2000s was a time of change for TVR; out with the old guard – Griff, Chimaera, Rover V8s – and in with the new: Tuscan, Tamora and TVR's own range of straight-sixes and V8s. Peter Wheeler described the Tamora as a 'more practical TVR for urban driving'. There's no doubt the new entry-level TVR was designed to appeal to the widest possible market. That meant tempting Porsche fans out of their Boxsters.

Based on the then-recently released Tuscan Speed Six, the Tamora had the same wheelbase, steel-backbone chassis and all-wishbone suspension, but with a short-stroke 3.6-litre version of the Tuscan's 4-litre straight-six, and sharply abbreviated glassfibre bodywork. With 350bhp to propel just 1050kg it was exhilaratingly rapid – and there was no ABS or traction control to get you out of any trouble, though it did have power steering. It also had a more manageable clutch than other TVRs, while its long throttle travel and more progressive power delivery than the V8s helped you avoid snap oversteer. Smaller (16in) alloys with deeper-profile (225/50) tyres gave a more absorbent ride than the Tuscan.

As *evo* reported in 2001 (see 'What we said'), the Tamora was, at the time, the best-sorted TVR we'd experienced. Yet in a production run that lasted until 2006, it never sold in big numbers (the total produced was only around 350). The slightly awkward looks were partly to blame, as were high running costs and the engine's reputation for poor reliability. But as we'll see, the reliability issues have since largely been addressed, making the Tamora a very useable and highly enjoyable TVR. Its time may yet come.

### Checkpoints

#### Engine and transmission

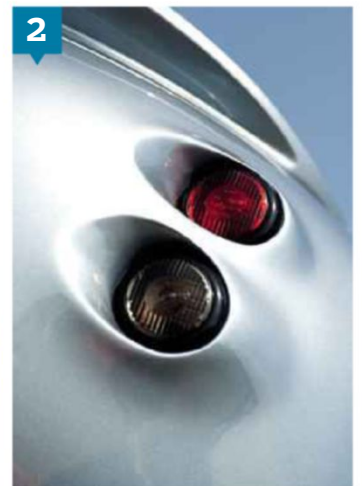
Evidence of meticulous servicing by well-known specialists is vital. According to Dom Trickett of TVR Power, the all-alloy dry-sumped Speed Six engine isn't a problem, as long as it's regularly serviced by people who know what they're doing. That means every 6000 miles, with tappet clearances set every 12,000 miles. Always budget around £1500 a year for maintenance, and beware of any car where the owner has skimped. Early cars in particular suffered valvegear problems, with rapid wear of the finger followers by the cam lobes, but these have been addressed by fitting better quality replacement parts. As Dom says, 'If an engine was going to go pop, it probably would have by now.' If the worst does happen, TVR Power can provide an exchange engine for £5400 with a three-year, unlimited-mileage warranty and the option of increasing that to five years or 100,000 miles. The T5 gearbox is tough as old boots, but look out for clutch slip or judder – a replacement could set you back £1000. Clutch life is around 20-25k miles in normal driving.

#### Suspension, steering, brakes

One potential expense is replacing the diff bushes; if they haven't been done already, it's only a matter of time. It's a five-hour job, so budget around £500. Also check the dampers for leaks, etc. If they need replacing, Dom really rates the factory-specced Bilsteins, but Gaz Gold Pros and Nitrons both have their advocates for track work.

#### Body, interior, electrics

Check the square-section steel chassis carefully, particularly around the catalytic converter. Dom has noticed a number of high-mileage cars suffering chassis fatigue in this area, largely as a result of the extreme heat generated by the cat, sometimes necessitating cutting out sections of the frame and welding in new metal. Tamoras don't seem to suffer many electrical glitches, but check everything works, including the central locking, boot release and adjustable mirrors. Also check for pixel lines on the LCD display; a replacement can cost as much as £300.



**1:** straight-six engine is reliable if serviced regularly. **2:** no ongoing issues with glassfibre bodywork. **3:** Tamoras cost from £36,500 when launched in 2001



## What we said

June 2001



**Above:** *evo* was the first mag to drive the Tamora; Meaden was impressed

'The Tamora starts with the twist of a key, settling into a loud, proud idle. The pedals are floor-hinged and wonderfully precise, as is the gearshift, which feels weighty and positive. The throttle pedal has a familiar long travel, and the engine responds cleanly and lustily. Almost immediately the Tamora feels right. Less immediate and pointy than the Tuscan, it is taut but compliant, absorbing more of the road's imperfections and feeling less agitated. There's a terrific feel about the way it drives... the sweetest chassis of any modern TVR I have driven.

'Now using an electric power steering pump, rather than the mechanical, engine-driven pump on the Tuscan, it has a far more natural and uniform feel, which gives you so much more confidence in what the car is doing. Guiding the Tamora feels instinctive and above all fun. It's fast too. Despite the friendly, deliciously linear surge of torque, it never feels less than brisk... and urges you to exploit all 7500rpm.

'Here is a TVR that can be driven hard like a Boxster... a complete and exploitable dynamic package.' (*evo* 032)



**Above:** the Tamora was built to take on the Boxster, but it only sold in the hundreds



**Above:** interior has the trademark TVR swoops and the company's own eccentric dials

## 'I bought one' Pete Ather

'About ten years ago, just after I turned 30, I bought my first TVR, a Chimaera 400. I've since owned a Cerbera 4.2 and a Griffith 500, but I began hankering after a Tamora a couple of years ago.

'Ideally I wanted one with a rebuilt engine. An 02-plate car in Scotland caught my eye – it had a full service history, 15,000 miles on the clock, and was advertised for £17,000. Those facts outweighed it still

being on its original engine, and the car was delivered to me just after Christmas 2011. As the weather improved I instantly fell in love with it. The chassis and brakes are a big improvement on other TVRs', and the character of the Speed Six is so different from the V8s. All these elements combine to make a hell of a drivers' car.

'But during a routine service, a lot of swarf and metal filings were found in the

oil, and an engine inspection showed a full rebuild was required. I've covered nearly 3000 miles now. The car owes me a lot, but over the winter I had the suspension renewed and upgraded, by choice, to reflect the fact that I fully intend to keep it. I get 15-20mpg and insurance is around £400 per annum. The Tamora is the most underrated and – of the convertibles – best-handling TVR of all.'

## In the classifieds



### 2002 Tamora

31,000 miles 3 black with black 4 FSH 5 recent new clutch and top-end overhaul 6 www.target-cars.eu

£14,350



### 2002 Tamora

25,000 miles 4 Jet Black 5 one owner 6 FSH 7 sports exhaust 8 www.racinggreentvr.com

£17,995



### 2006 Tamora

14,950 miles 4 Formula Red 5 FSH 6 18in alloys 7 12,000-mile service done 8 www.autotrader.co.uk

£23,990

## The rivals

### Porsche Boxster

£15-20K gets you a second-generation Boxster S. Lacks the Tamora's charisma and rarity, but not much else.

### BMW Z4 M Roadster

Closer in spirit to the Tamora, the M Roadster has similarly brawny appeal, and there are loads to choose from.

### TVR Griffith

Fast becoming a classic. Prices have climbed but you can still get one for sub-£20k.

## DATA

## Specification

### TVR Tamora (2001-2006)

- 4 Engine In-line 6-cyl, 3605cc
- 4 Max power 350bhp @ 7200rpm
- 4 Max torque 290lb ft @ 5500rpm
- 4 Transmission Five-speed manual, rear-wheel drive
- 4 Weight 1050kg
- 4 Power-to-weight 338bhp/ton
- 4 0-60mph 4.5sec (claimed)
- 4 Max speed 160mph (claimed)
- 4 Price new £36,500 (2001)

## Parts prices

(Parts prices from TVR Power. Tyre prices from blackcircles.com. All prices include VAT but not fitting)

- 4 Tyres (each) £109.19 (Continental ContiSportContact)
- 4 Front pads (pair) £186.31
- 4 Front discs (pair, standard spec) £323.98
- 4 Damper (each) £315 (Nitron Racing)
- 4 Twin-plate clutch £569.99 (AP Racing)
- 4 Clutch master cylinder £89.99
- 4 Sports exhaust £551.99
- 4 Air filter £22.79
- 4 Oil filter £10.19
- 4 Set of spark plugs £28.74

## Servicing

(Servicing costs supplied by TVR Power, including VAT)

- 4 6000 miles £510
- 4 12,000 miles £780 (includes tappet adjustment)

## What to pay

With so few Tamoras built (howmanyleft.co.uk reckons around 200 are currently in the UK), prices have been holding pretty steady. The cheapest we could find at the time of writing was a 2002 car in the Netherlands, but RHD, at £14,250. £17-18k buys you a well-cared-for, low-mileage example (though few Tamoras do more than 3000-4000 miles a year). Over £20K should get you the pick of the bunch.

## Useful contacts

- 4 www.tvr-car-club.co.uk (owners' club)
- 4 www.tvrpower.co.uk (servicing, upgrades, parts)
- 4 www.xworksservice.co.uk (servicing, tuning)
- 4 www.racinggreentvr.com (servicing, upgrades, sales)
- 4 www.tonygilbertcars.co.uk (cars for sale)
- 4 www.pistonheads.com (cars for sale)

## Thank you

Dom Trickett of TVR Power and Pete Ather.



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### LOTUS EXIGE S

07/07. 15,000 miles only in Canyon Red with magnolia full leather interior. Alpine radio/CD, iPod connection, air-con, electric windows, central locking and traction control. This is a genuine, low mileage car and is in stunning condition. £28,750



### LOTUS EXIGE S1

2000 W reg. 14,000 miles only with FSH. The car is in New Aluminium with black cloth seats, blue aluminium side and removable steering wheel, 180 BHP conversion, sports exhaust, AP competition clutch, ultra close ratio Quilla gear train, quick shift, dynamic suspension dampers, Eback springs, AP ventilated discs with Pado RS14 pads, standard seat belts and Wilens 4 point harnesses, radio, Yokohama A048R tyres. The body work, interior, wheels etc are virtually unmarked. £32,000



### LOTUS 340R

2001 - 51 reg. No.336 Just 11,000 miles from new. 190 up-grade. Carbon wings and 4 point harnesses. Oil cooler kit. Firefox titanium exhaust. Track pack springs and adjustable Konis. Fantastic car. £27,950



### LOTUS CORTINA MK1

1983. This car has been rebuilt and re-engineered into a full FIA spec racing car by Guy Smith Motorsport with an engine by Yanwood Engineering. The rebuild has been completed to the highest standards with superb attention to detail and must be viewed to be fully appreciated. £57,500



### LOTUS ESPRIT S4

1994 L reg. Pacific Blue with tan leather upholstery, 79,000 miles only with an excellent service history. Brembo brake conversion. Kenwood radio/CD. C service, including cambelt, at 77,000 miles. Recent clutch and braided clutch hose. A lovely example. £13,950



### LOTUS ESPRIT S3

Lotus Esprit S3 D REG 63,000 miles genuine from new with an excellent service history. Glacier Blue with dark blue leather interior, air con and factory glass roof. The last owner has owned the car since 1990 and has done a wonderful job of keeping the car original and in superb condition hence this is not the usual tatty example. The car will have a cambelt service and 12 months MOT when sold. This is not a car to miss. £16,500



### LOTUS ELISE S3

Lotus Elise Just 5,250 miles from new. 1.6 touring. Lightweight wheels. Starlight Black. Edge spoiler, LED headlamps, wired in sat nav plus GPS. Factory fitted cruise control, full leather pack, Alcon and electric windows. Alpine music system, iPod connection and starter button. £22,995



### LOTUS MOTORSPORT ELISE

Well known ex-Graham Parker Hillclimb/Sprint/Track day car. Full spec includes mega lightweight body, Lotus Motorsports brakes, Nilsons, fully nickel plated suspension. Scholer 1.9 race engine refreshed for last season. 245 BHP. Jarvey throttle bodies, close ratio with Quaife LSD. This can beat many single seaters. 3 sets of wheels and tyres. £23,950

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\*Test driven EVO Issue 180

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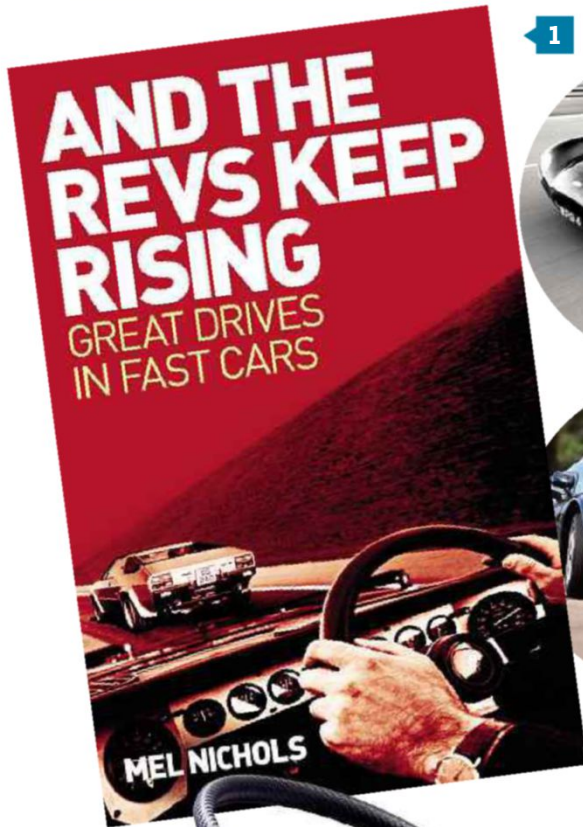
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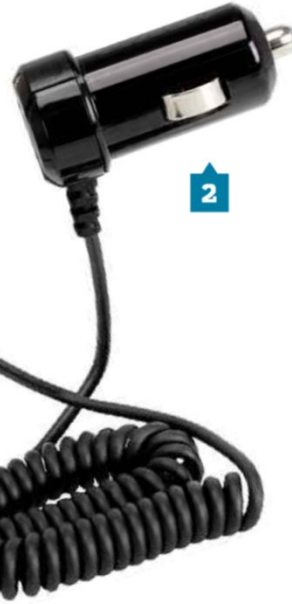
# Essentials

Knowledge

The best books, models, clothing, games, garage kit and tuning gear

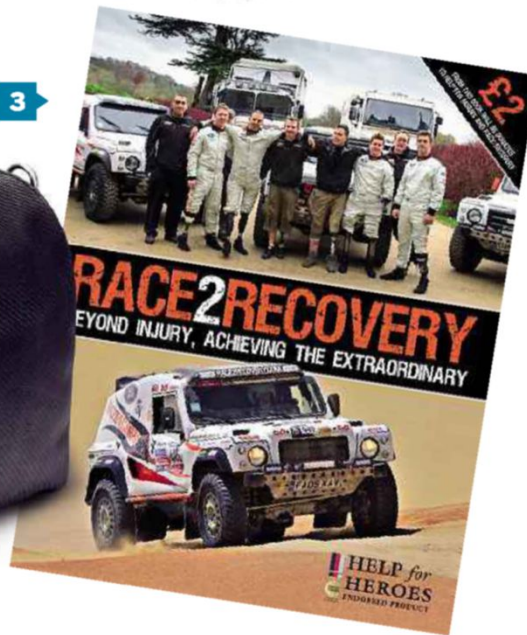


1



2

3



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## Tried & tested

**Race Glaze Maxi-Filter Refillable Water Filter** £99 [morethanpolish.com](http://morethanpolish.com)

Leathering your car after washing it is a time-consuming job, but it's the only way to avoid water spots. Or is it? Race Glaze's water filter connects easily to your hosepipe and its makers claim it allows you to just rinse your car and then leave it to dry.

On a bonnet, windscreen and

roof divided in two, I rinsed one side with tap water and the other with filtered water, then let both dry. The untreated side was left littered with water marks, but the filtered section was spotless. When I tested the water the reason was clear: my mains supply had 220 mineral parts

per million (ppm) but the filtered fluid had just 1ppm.

This Maxi-Filter is good for 400 litres of usage, and can also be refilled with the resin that does the filtering for £39, which drops the costs of using it from 25p a litre to just 10p.

**Kim Adams**



## Book

**And The Revs Keep Rising**

£19.99 [haynes.co.uk](http://haynes.co.uk)

1 Mel Nichols, the editor of *Car* from 1974 to 1981, has enjoyed a distinguished 40-year career penning compelling drive stories on some of the finest cars ever produced. This hardback is a compilation of 50 of the best of those stories, from a Holden Monaro GTS from 1970 right through to a Porsche Boxster S in 2001. In between is practically every important supercar made in that period. Perfect for fans of true classics.

## Accessories

**Scosche StrikeDrive 12W**

£24.99 [scosche.com](http://scosche.com)

2 Consumer tech firm Scosche has developed this nifty car-friendly charger for the latest breed of Apple gadgets. iPad 4s, iPad minis and iPhone 5s can all be juiced up via the coiled cable, which extends to as much as 90cm so that passengers can still use devices while they're charging. A less powerful 5W version is also available for £19.99, which works for smaller devices.

## Book

**Race2Recovery**

£17.99 [haynes.co.uk](http://haynes.co.uk)

3 As featured in *evo* 180, the efforts of the Race2Recovery team of injured servicemen in completing January's Dakar Rally were truly extraordinary. This large, full-colour hardback tells the story, from the birth of the idea, through the preparations and up to a day-by-day, blow-by-blow account of the rally itself. The accompanying pictures are stunning, while £2 from every sale goes to Help for Heroes and Race2Recovery.

## Luggage

**Caracalla 1947 Carbonio Nero Italian**

£520 [caracalla1947.com](http://caracalla1947.com)

4 This luxury carbon-effect holdall is the latest addition to the Caracalla 1947 range. Complete with a tricolore flash on either side, the holdall zips fully down both ends to open wide for ease of access, and it comes with a pair of similarly carbon-effect handles and a detachable carry strap. Ideal to throw into a roadster for a weekend jaunt around Tuscany.







# Trips & Travel

Knowledge

The best destinations to visit in your car



## Great drives: Exmoor

Start point: 51.13924, -3.75803

The route: the B3223 from Simonsbath to Dulverton, via the A39  
Great for: a Jaguar (obviously), or a Subarishi

**W**HEN I WAS a young chap with short trousers and an overactive imagination, I was fascinated by the legend of the Beast of Exmoor. The idea that a big cat elusively roamed the wilds was thrilling, but I never actually got to venture onto Exmoor until I joined *evo*. When I finally got there, it was just as I'd imagined: some sections tightly flanked by high hedges (from which a black leopard might easily jump out in front of you at any second), others bleak and exposed with smatterings of livestock to feed on.

In driving terms, the first road you want to look for is the B3223 heading north out of Simonsbath. How you get to Simonsbath in the first place will largely depend on where you're coming from, but beware of the large number of narrow single-track lanes. Once out on the moor, you might as well be in Yorkshire as the B3223 is a wonderfully expansive stretch of tarmac, with a few tricky corners that can catch you out if you're not careful. As you head across the closing cattle grid and the hedges return, you will encounter a couple of hairpins, followed by a junction where you need to turn left up the hill onto the A39. Once through the trees and back among houses, turn right onto the B3234 opposite the petrol station and follow the signs to Lynmouth, slowing for the steep narrow descent.

Once in Lynmouth itself, follow the A39 towards Porlock and Minehead, a route that will lead you steeply uphill, onto the cliff tops and the start of a very scenic run along the Bristol Channel coastline. If you're in the right sort of car you could then take one of the single-track roads south towards Exford, where you can pick up a different stretch of the B3223 and head down as far as Dulverton. Alternatively, you can take the B3224 back towards Simonsbath to complete the loop. If you haven't spotted the beast of Exmoor in those 40-odd miles, then why not turn around and head back for another look?

**Henry Catchpole**  
Features editor



## The route



**Start** **Finish**  
Distance: 44 miles  
Time: 1 hour 20 minutes

## Where to stay

There are a couple of inns situated in Exford: the White Horse and the Crown. But for a bit of a bargain, it's worth seeking out the Royal Oak at Withypool, which does bed and breakfast from £40 and had an excellent range of bar food and local beer when we were last there. If you aren't staying in the area but just want a drink and a bite to eat, try Boevey's Tearooms in Simonsbath.

## Watch out for

There's a reason that the beast made its home on Exmoor: a healthy supply of food. The buzz of cattle grids will alert you to the fact you're entering an area with livestock wandering freely, so do keep your eyes peeled and drive appropriately. There is also likely to be a certain amount of pottering tourist traffic during the summer.

## Reader road trip

### European tour

Last year I completed a 3300-mile European road trip with an Aston Vantage, an Impreza and two 1950s Sunbeams. That sounds like a recipe for disaster, but it definitely wasn't.

With the aim of reaching Cortina d'Ampezzo in northern Italy by the most unusual route possible, we headed from the farmlands around Ypres, through Holland to Saxony, staying in Colditz Castle. Next it was into the Czech Republic for the Sumava hills, and then south of Austria to the Julian Alps of Slovenia. A temporary base in Opatija, Croatia, allowed a brief trip into the Gorski Kotar mountains before turning north to Cortina.



Our homeward leg took in Bavaria, the Vosges and the Ardennes.

The route was chosen by stitching together sections of rally routes from events old and new. Parts of the old Liège-Rome-Liège and Alpine rallies were married with Rally Germany and the Ypres Rally. Where rally routes ran out we took in the nearest 'twisties' and discovered such gems as the Namlos and Hantennjoch passes in Austria, plus the tortuous '609' in Slovenia.

Driving highlights were many, but the gravel 609 gave us all a reminder of how hard those legendary long-distance road races must have been! The scenery in the old Eastern Bloc was breathtaking and the people there were unfailingly friendly and helpful.

**Trevor Page**

Email your road trip story to [henryc@evo.co.uk](mailto:henryc@evo.co.uk)

## Events calendar

### MAY

**May 4-5**  
BTCC, Thruxton  
[www.thruxtonracing.co.uk](http://www.thruxtonracing.co.uk)

**May 10-12**  
Spanish Grand Prix, Circuit de Catalunya  
[www.circuitcat.com](http://www.circuitcat.com)

**May 13-15**  
RMA Trackdays, Spa-Francorchamps  
[www.rmatrackdays.com](http://www.rmatrackdays.com)

**May 17-19**  
DTM, Brands Hatch  
[www.brandshatch.co.uk](http://www.brandshatch.co.uk)

**May 26**  
Wilton Wake Up: Supercars, Wilton House  
[www.wiltonclassicsupercar.co.uk](http://www.wiltonclassicsupercar.co.uk)





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# Database

**Key** ■ = new entry this month. \* = grey import. Entries in italics are for cars no longer on sale. **Issue no.** is for our most recent major test of the car (D = Driven, R = Road test or group test, F = Feature). You can order back issues where still available - call 0844 844 0039. **Price** is on-the-road including VAT and delivery charges. **Weight** is the car's kerb weight as quoted by the manufacturer. **bhp/ton** is the power-to-weight ratio based on manufacturer's kerb weight. **0-60mph** and **0-100mph** figures in bold are independently recorded, all other performance figures are manufacturers' claims. **CO2 g/km** is the official EC figure and **EC mpg** is the official 'Combined' figure or equivalent.

## Knowledge

## Superminis / Hot Hatches

	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating	
Abarth Punto Evo	149 F	£16,852	4/1368	161/5500	184/2250	1155kg	142	7.9	-	132	142	47.1	+ Attractive and fun - Needs the Esseesse power upgrade	★★★★☆
Abarth 500 Esseesse	129 R	£17,207	4/1368	158/5750	170/3000	1035kg	155	<b>7.2</b>	<b>20.4</b>	131	155	43.5	+ A properly fun, old-school hot hatch - Limited numbers being imported	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo Miito Cloverleaf	149 F	£18,755	4/1368	168/5500	184/2500	1145kg	149	7.5	-	136	139	47.1	+ Great MultiAir engine, impressive ride - Not as feisty as we hoped	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo Giulietta Cloverleaf	144 D	£25,510	4/1742	232/5500	251/1900	1320kg	179	6.8	-	150	177	37.2	+ Shows signs of deep talent... - ...but should be more exciting	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo 147 GTA	053 F	'03-'06	6/3179	247/6200	221/4800	1360kg	185	<b>6.0</b>	<b>15.5</b>	153	-	23.3	+ Focus RS pace without the histrionics - Slightly nose-heavy	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo 145 Cloverleaf		'95-'01	4/1970	150/6200	138/4000	1200kg	127	8.0	-	129	-	32.1	+ Fiery engine, individual appeal - Ape-like driving position	★★★★☆
Aston Martin Cygnet	159 D	£30,995	4/1329	97/6000	92/4400	920kg	107	11.8	-	106	116	56.5	+ Necessary - Evil	★★★★☆
Audi A1 1.4 TFSI S Line		£21,270	4/1390	182/6200	184/2000	1190kg	155	6.9	-	141	139	47.9	+ Audi's Mini rival is an accomplished thing - But not a hugely fun one	★★★★☆
Audi A1 quattro	181 R	£41,020	4/1984	253/6000	258/2500	1420kg	181	5.7	-	152	199	32.8	+ Polished 253bhp all-wheel-drive A1 - Just 19 for UK, Porsche Cayman price	★★★★☆
Audi S3	106 R	£31,065	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1455kg	183	<b>5.6</b>	<b>13.6</b>	155	198	33.2	+ Very fast, very effective, very... err, quality - A little too clinical	★★★★☆
Audi RS3 Sportback	156 F	'11-'12	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1575kg	216	4.5	-	155	212	31.0	+ Above, with added five-pot character - Again, see above...	★★★★☆
BMW 125i M Sport	176 D	£26,070	4/1997	218/5000	228/1350	1420kg	156	6.4	-	155	154	42.8	+ Performance, price, running costs - Dull four-pot soundtrack	★★★★☆
BMW M135i	181 R	£30,555	6/2979	316/5800	332/1300	1425kg	225	5.1	-	155	188	35.3	+ Powertrain, noise, chassis, price - Odd styling, steering lacks feel	★★★★☆
BMW 123d M Sport	122 R	'07-'11	4/1995	201/4400	295/2000	1420kg	144	<b>6.5</b>	<b>17.4</b>	148	138	54.3	+ Economical and no slouch - Doesn't feel special enough	★★★★☆
BMW 130i M Sport	106 R	'05-'10	6/2996	261/6650	232/2750	1450kg	183	<b>6.1</b>	<b>15.3</b>	155	-	34.0	+ Fantastic engine - Suspension can still get a little boingy	★★★★☆
BMW 325ti Compact	031 D	'01-'05	6/2494	189/6000	181/3500	1480kg	130	7.1	-	147	-	31.7	+ Terrific engine, chassis, price - Looks a bit geeky	★★★★☆
Citroën C1/Peugeot 107/Toyota Aygo	126 F	£17,995+	3/998	68/6000	68/3600	790kg	87	14.2	-	98	103	61.4	+ Full of character and insurance-friendly - Insurance friendly power	★★★★☆
Citroën C2 GT	064 R	'04-'05	4/1587	108/5750	108/4000	1027kg	107	8.7	-	121	-	-	+ Appealing and affordable homologation special - Inert steering	★★★★☆
Citroën Saxo VTR	013 R	'97-'03	4/1587	100/5700	100/3500	920kg	110	<b>9.3</b>	-	116	-	36.7	+ VTS poise, half the insurance group - Cramped pedals	★★★★☆
Citroën Saxo VTS	020 R	'97-'03	4/1587	120/6600	107/5200	935kg	130	<b>7.6</b>	<b>22.6</b>	127	-	34.9	+ Chunky, chuckable charger - Can catch out the unwary	★★★★☆
Citroën DS3 1.6 THP	142 F	£16,800	4/1598	154/6000	171/1400	1240kg	126	7.2	-	133	155	42.2	+ A proper French hot hatch - Petrolheads might find it too 'designed'	★★★★☆
Citroën DS3 Racing	153 D	'11-'12	4/1598	204/6000	203/2000	1240kg	167	6.5	-	146	149	-	+ Faster, feistier version of above - Not as hardcore as its 'Racing' tag suggests	★★★★☆
Citroën Xsara VTS		'98-'04	4/1997	167/7000	142/4750	1190kg	143	8.0	-	137	-	33.6	+ Citroen's GTI-6 - Missing one gear and a bit of handling polish	★★★★☆
Fiat Panda 100HP	132 F	'06-'11	4/1368	99/6000	97/4250	975kg	103	9.5	-	115	154	43.5	+ Most fun per pound on the market - Optional ESP can't be turned off	★★★★☆
Fiat Punto Evo Sporting	141 D	£14,500	4/1368	133/5000	152/1750	1155kg	117	8.5	-	127	129	50.4	+ Great engine, smart styling - Dynamics don't live up to the Evo name	★★★★☆
Ford Sportka SE	084 R	'03-'08	4/1597	94/5500	100/4250	934kg	102	9.5	-	108	-	37.2	+ Big fun in a little package - Could handle even more power	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta 1.0T EcoBoost 125PS	181 D	£15,445	3/999	123/6000	125/1400	1091kg	115	9.4	-	122	99	65.7	+ Three-pot engine is surprisingly feisty - Struggles to justify the premium price	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST	182 D	£16,995	4/1596	179/5700	214/1500	1234kg	147	6.9	-	137	138	47.9	+ Chassis, price, punchy performance - Not as powerful as key rivals	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta Zetec S	123 D	'08-'13	4/1596	118/6000	112/4050	1045kg	115	9.9	-	120	134	48.7	+ Genuinely entertaining supermini - Grown up compared to Twingo/Swift	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta Zetec S Mountune	132 F	'08-'13	4/1596	138/6750	125/4250	1080kg	130	7.9	-	120	134	48.7	+ As above, with a fantastically loud exhaust... - ...if you're 12 years old	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST	075 D	'05-'08	4/1999	148/6000	140/4500	1137kg	132	7.9	-	129	-	38.2	+ Great looks, decent brakes - Disappointing chassis, gutless engine	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST185 Mountune	115 R	'08	4/1999	185/6700	147/3500	1137kg	165	6.9	-	129	-	-	+ Fiesta ST gets the power it always needed - OTT exhaust note	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta Zetec S	020 R	'00-'02	4/1596	102/6000	107/4000	976kg	106	<b>10.2</b>	-	113	-	38.2	+ Better than you'd ever believe - No-one else will believe it	★★★★☆
Ford Focus 1.6T Zetec S	165 D	£20,695	4/1596	179/5700	199/1900	1333kg	136	7.8	-	138	139	47.1	+ The fastest, keenest Mk3 Focus yet - The Mk1's sparkle is still absent, though	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST (Mk2)	172 R	£21,995	4/1999	247/5500	265/1750	1362g	184	6.4	-	154	169	-	+ All-round cracking hot hatch. Good value, too - There's a bit of torque-steer	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST (Mk1)	119 R	'05-'10	5/2522	222/6000	236/1600	1392kg	162	<b>6.7</b>	<b>16.8</b>	150	224	30.4	+ Value, performance, integrity - Big engine compromises handling	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST Mountune (Mk1)	137 R	'08-'11	5/2522	256/5500	295/2500	1392kg	187	<b>5.8</b>	<b>14.3</b>	155	224	-	+ ST takes extra power in its stride - You probably still want an RS	★★★★☆
Ford Focus RS (Mk2)	139 R	'09-'11	5/2522	300/6500	324/2300	1467kg	208	<b>5.9</b>	<b>14.2</b>	163	225	30.5	+ Huge performance, highly capable fwd chassis - It could be the last RS...	★★★★☆
Ford Focus RS500	181 R	'10-'11	5/2522	345/6000	339/2500	1467kg	239	<b>5.6</b>	<b>12.7</b>	165	225	-	+ More power and presence than regular RS - Pricey	★★★★☆
Ford Focus RS (Mk1)	053 R	'02-'03	4/1998	212/5500	229/3500	1278kg	169	<b>5.9</b>	<b>14.9</b>	144	-	-	+ Some are great - Some are awful (so make sure you drive plenty)	★★★★☆
Ford Escort RS Cosworth	157 F	'92-'96	4/1993	227/6250	224/3500	1304kg	176	5.8	-	143	-	24.5	+ The ultimate Essex hot hatch - Ultimate trophy for tea leaves	★★★★☆
Ford Puma 1.7	095 F	'97-'02	4/1679	123/6300	116/4500	1104kg	120	<b>8.6</b>	<b>27.6</b>	122	-	38.2	+ Everything - Nothing. The 1.4 is worth a look too	★★★★☆
Ford Racing Puma	016 F	'00-'01	4/1679	153/7000	119/4500	1174kg	132	<b>7.8</b>	<b>23.2</b>	137	-	34.7	+ Exclusivity - Expense. Standard Puma does it so well	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type-R	102 R	'07-'11	4/1998	198/7800	142/5600	1267kg	158	<b>6.8</b>	<b>17.5</b>	146	215	31.0	+ Looks great, VTEC more accessible - Steering lacks feel, inert balance	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type-R C'ship White	126 D	'09-'10	4/1998	198/7800	142/5600	1267kg	158	6.6	-	146	-	31.0	+ Limited-slip diff a welcome addition - It's not available on standard car...	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type-R Mugen	144 F	'09-'11	4/1998	237/8300	157/6250	1233kg	195	5.9	-	155	-	-	+ Fantastic on road and track - There'll only be 20, and it's a tad pricey...	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type-R	075 R	'01-'05	4/1998	197/7400	145/5900	1204kg	166	<b>6.8</b>	<b>16.9</b>	146	-	31.7	+ Potent and great value - Looks divide opinion, diff steering	★★★★☆
Lancia Delta Integrale	011 F	'88-'93	4/1995	210/5750	220/3500	1350kg	158	5.7	-	137	-	23.9	+ One of the finest cars ever built - Demands love, LHD only	★★★★☆
Mazda 2.1S Sport	132 F	£13,495	4/1498	102/6000	101/4000	1030kg	107	10.4	-	117	135	48.7	+ Fun and funky - Feels tiny after a Mini	★★★★☆
Mazda 3 MPS	137 R	£23,995	4/2261	256/5500	280/3000	1385kg	188	<b>6.3</b>	<b>14.5</b>	155	224	29.4	+ Quick, eager and very good value - The steering's iffy	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz A250 'by AMG'	173 D	£28,755	4/1991	208/5500	258/1200	1445kg	146	6.5	-	149	148	46.3	+ Mercedes builds a proper hot hatch - But denies it a manual gearbox	★★★★☆
MG Metro 6R4 Clubman	181 R	'84-'87	6/2991	250/7000	225/6500	1000kg	254	4.5	-	140	-	-	+ The most extreme hot hatch ever - Engine noise, heat soak, five mpg	★★★★☆
Mini One		£13,460	4/1598	97/6000	113/3000	1070kg	92	10.5	-	116	127	52.3	+ Perfect power-to-grip ratio - HUGE speedo, slow car	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper	167 R	£14,900	4/1598	120/6000	118/4250	1075kg	113	9.1	-	126	127	52.3	+ Still desirable - Steering has lost a little feel	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S	149 F	£18,180	4/1598	181/5500	177/1600	1140kg	161	<b>7.0</b>	-	142	136	48.7	+ New engine, Mini quality - Lacks old car's direct front end	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper SD	158 D	£18,870	4/1995	141/4000	225/11750	1150kg	125	8.0	-	134	114	65.7	+ A quick diesel Mini with impressive mpg - But no Cooper S alternative	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works	154 R	£22,455	4/1598	208/6000	206/2000	1140kg	185	6.5	-	148	165	39.8	+ A seriously rapid Mini - Occasionally just a little unruly	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works Coupe	164 R	£23,800	4/1598	208/6000	206/2000	1165kg	181	6.3	-	149	165	39.8	+ The usual raucous Mini JCW experience - But with a questionable 'helmet' roof...	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works GP	181 R	£28,790	4/1598	215/6000	206/2000	1140kg	192	6.3	-	150	165	39.8	+ Brazenly hyperactive - Too much for some roads and some tasters	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S Works (Mk2)	111 F	'07-'08	4/1598	189/6000	199/1750	1130kg	170	<b>7.6</b>	<b>18.0</b>	145	-	-	+ Cracking hot Mini, until the JCW - Expensive with option packs included	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S Works GP	144 F	'06	4/1598	215/7100	184/4600	1090kg	200	6.5	-	149	-	32.8	+ Storming engine, agility - Tacky styling 'enhancements'	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S (Mk1)	077 R	'02-'06	4/1598	168/6000	155/4000	1140kg	143	<b>7.8</b>	<b>19.9</b>	135	-	33.6	+ Strong performance, quality feel - Over-long gearing	★★★★☆
Mitsubishi Colt Ralliart	132 F	£14,229	4/1468	147/6000	155/3500	1060kg	141	7.4	-	131	161	40.9	+ Price, handling, performance - Its looks are a little odd	★★★★☆



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Official fuel consumption for the All-New Volvo V40 R-Design in mpg (l/100km): Urban 25.0 (11.3) - 70.6 (4.0), Extra Urban  
 \* Business users only. Examples exclude VAT, are based on non-maintained contract hire with an initial payment of 6 monthly rentals, followed by 35 monthly rentals, with a mileage of 10,000 miles per or while stocks last. Not available with other promotions. Volvo Car Leasing Contract Hire is provided by Lex Autolease Ltd, trading as Volvo Car Leasing. See vovocars.co.uk for full terms and conditions.





### Our Choice

**Renaultsport Mégane 265 Cup.** You'll struggle to find a front-drive chassis more sublime than the 265 Cup's. Poised, flattering and entertaining too, when combined with the 261bhp turbo engine it enables the Mégane to set a searing cross-country pace.



### Best of the Rest

We're still waiting to get the new Fiesta ST and Clio 200 Turbo together before we make a call on which is the best mid-sized hot hatch. In the meantime, if it's a junior hatch you're after, the Renaultsport Twingo 133 and Suzuki Swift Sport (left) are belters.

## Superminis / Hot Hatches

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft./rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating
Nissan Juke Nismo	181 D	£19,995	4/1598	197/6000	184/2400	1293kg	155	7.8	-	134	159	40.9	+ More than the sum of its parts - Not enough to add up to a pukka hot hatch
Nissan Sunny GTI-R	'92-'93	4/1998	220/6400	197/4800	1269kg	176	6.1	-	134	-	25.1	+ Nissan's Escort Cossie - Make sure it's a good one	
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 2)	'97-'98	4/1587	103/6200	97/3500	865kg	121	8.8	-	121	-	34.0	+ Bargain no-frills thrills - Not as much fizz as original 1.3	
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 1)	095 F	'94-'96	4/1294	100/7200	80/5400	826kg	123	9.3	-	118	-	35.6	+ Frantic, thrashy fun - Needs caning to extract full potential
Peugeot 106 GTI 16v	034 R	'97-'04	4/1587	120/6600	107/5200	950kg	128	<b>7.4</b>	<b>22.2</b>	127	-	34.9	+ Fine handling supermini - Looks its age
Peugeot 205 GTI 1.9	095 F	'88-'91	4/1905	130/6000	119/4750	910kg	145	7.9	-	124	-	36.7	+ Still scintillating after all these years - Brittle build quality
Peugeot 306 GTI-6	020 R	'93-'01	4/1998	167/6500	142/5300	1215kg	139	<b>7.2</b>	<b>20.1</b>	140	-	30.1	+ One of the great GTIs - They don't make them like this any more
Peugeot 306 Rallye	095 F	'98-'99	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1199kg	141	<b>6.9</b>	<b>19.2</b>	137	-	30.1	+ Essentially a GTI-6 for less dosh - Limited choice of colours
Peugeot 309 GTI	'89-'92	4/1905	130/6000	119/4750	985kg	134	8.3	-	124	-	28.2	+ 205 GTI in drag, cheap - Who wants a cheap drag queen?	
Renaultsport Twingo 133	175 R	£13,565	4/1598	131/6750	118/4400	1050kg	127	8.6	-	125	150	43.5	+ Renaultsport experience for pocket money - Optional Cup chassis gives bouncy ride
Renault 5GT Turbo	123 F	'87-'91	4/1397	120/5750	122/3750	831kg	146	7.8	-	120	-	28.4	+ Clio Williams' grand-daddy - Most have been thrashed
Renaultsport Clio 200 Turbo	182 R	£18,995	4/1618	197/6000	171/1750	1204kg	166	6.7	-	143	144	44.8	+ Faster, more refined, easier to drive - We miss the revvy nat-asp engine and manual 'box
Renaultsport Clio 200 Cup	154 R	'09-'13	4/1998	197/7100	159/5400	1204kg	166	<b>6.6</b>	<b>16.7</b>	141	190	34.5	+ The hot Clio at its best - Why the long face?
Renaultsport Clio 197 Cup	115 R	'07-'09	4/1998	194/7250	158/5550	1240kg	161	6.9	-	134	-	33.6	+ Quick, polished and capable - Not as much sheer fun as 182 Cup
Renaultsport Clio 182	066 R	'04-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1110kg	165	<b>6.6</b>	<b>17.5</b>	139	-	34.9	+ Took hot hatches to a new level - Flawed driving position
Renaultsport Clio 182 Cup	074 D	'04-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	168	6.5	-	139	-	34.9	+ Full of beans, fantastic value - Sunday-market upholstery
Renaultsport Clio Trophy	095 F	'05-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	168	<b>6.6</b>	<b>17.3</b>	140	-	34.9	+ Most fun you can have on three wheels - Just 500 were built
Renaultsport Clio 172 Cup	048 R	'02-'04	4/1998	170/6250	147/5400	1011kg	171	<b>6.5</b>	<b>17.7</b>	138	-	-	+ Bargain old-school hot hatch - Nervous in the wet, no ABS
Renaultsport Clio V6 255	057 R	'03-'05	6/2946	255/7150	221/4650	1400kg	182	-	-	153	-	23.0	+ Supercar drama without the original's edgy handling - Uninspired interior
Renaultsport Clio V6	029 F	'99-'02	6/2946	230/6000	221/3750	1335kg	175	<b>5.8</b>	<b>17.0</b>	145	-	23.0	+ Pocket supercar - Mid-engined handling can be tricky
Renault Clio Williams	095 F	'93-'96	4/1988	148/6100	126/4500	981kg	153	<b>7.6</b>	<b>20.8</b>	121	-	26.0	+ One of the best hot hatches ever - Can be fragile like an Integrale
Renaultsport Mégane 265 Cup	181 R	£25,245	4/1998	261/5500	265/3000	1387kg	191	6.0	-	158	190	34.4	+ Standard RS Mégane gets same power as Trophy; chassis still superb - Not a lot
Renaultsport Mégane 265 Trophy	170 R	'12	4/1998	261/5500	265/3000	1387kg	191	6.0	-	158	190	34.4	+ Hot Mégane gets more power and fwd Ring record - A pricey upgrade
Renaultsport Mégane 250 Cup	139 R	'09-'12	4/1998	247/5500	251/3000	1387kg	181	<b>6.1</b>	<b>14.6</b>	156	190	34.4	+ Fantastic chassis... - partially obscured by new-found maturity
Renaultsport Mégane dCi 175 Cup	119 R	'07-'09	4/1995	173/3750	265/2000	1470kg	119	<b>8.3</b>	<b>23.5</b>	137	-	43.5	+ A diesel with a genuinely sporty chassis - Could take more power
Renaultsport Mégane Trophy	087 F	'05	4/1998	222/5500	221/3000	1355kg	166	<b>6.7</b>	<b>17.3</b>	147	-	32.1	+ Mega grip and traction - Steering needs a touch more feel
Renaultsport Mégane R26 R26	102 R	'07-'09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1345kg	171	<b>6.2</b>	<b>16.0</b>	147	-	-	+ Best hot Mégane... until the R26.R - FI Team stickers in dubious taste
Renaultsport Mégane R26.R	181 R	'08-'09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1220kg	189	<b>5.8</b>	<b>15.1</b>	147	-	-	+ One of the true hot hatch heroes - Two seats, plastic rear windows
SEAT Ibiza FR 2.0 TDI	144 F	£16,340	4/1968	141/4200	236/1750	1245kg	115	8.2	-	131	123	60.1	+ More fun than the petrol FR, manual 'box option - Almost as pricey as the Cupra
SEAT Ibiza Cupra	139 R	£17,905	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1172kg	154	<b>6.9</b>	-	140	148	44.1	+ Funky (especially in Bocanegra trim), economical - The FR's a better drive
SEAT Leon FR+	163 D	£21,940	4/1984	208/5300	206/1700	1334kg	158	7.2	-	145	170	38.7	+ As quick as a Golf GTI 5dr but £4K cheaper - Misses the VW's completeness
SEAT Leon Cupra R	139 R	£25,995	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1375kg	193	<b>6.1</b>	<b>14.0</b>	155	190	34.9	+ Bold car, blinding engine - Lacks the character of its rival mega-hatches
SEAT Leon Cupra	105 F	'07-'11	4/1984	237/5700	221/2200	1375kg	175	6.3	-	153	190	34.0	+ Great engine, composure - Doesn't have adjustability of old Cupra R
SEAT Leon Cupra 20v T	020 R	'00-'06	4/1781	178/5500	173/5000	1322kg	137	7.7	-	142	-	33.2	+ Terrific value - Lacks sparkle of very best hatches
SEAT Leon Cupra R 225	067 R	'03-'06	4/1781	222/5900	206/2200	1376kg	164	6.9	-	150	-	32.1	+ Cross-country pace, practicality, value - Not as thrilling as some
Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk2)	146 D	£16,915	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1218kg	148	7.3	-	139	148	45.6	+ Well priced, well made, with great engine and DSG 'box - Dull steering
Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk1)	077 F	'04-'07	4/1896	130/4000	229/1900	1315kg	100	9.6	-	127	-	55.4	+ Fascinatingly fun and frugal hot hatch - A little short on steering feel
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk2)	163 R	£20,330	4/1998	197/5100	206/1700	1395kg	143	7.3	-	149	175	37.7	+ Drives like a GTI but costs much less - Green brake callipers?
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk1)	032 D	'01-'05	4/1781	178/5500	173/1950	1354kg	135	7.9	-	146	-	35.3	+ Remarkably fun and capable - Cabin quality
Smart Fortwo Brabus	110 D	£15,000	3/999	97/5500	104/3500	780kg	126	9.9	-	96	119	54.3	+ Telling people you drive a Brabus - Them realising it's not a 720bhp S-class
Subaru Impreza STI CS400	146 R	'10-'12	4/2457	395/5750	400/3950	1505kg	267	<b>4.6</b>	<b>10.7</b>	155	-	-	+ Cosworth kudos. One of the fastest hatches we've tested - Pricey, lifeless steering
Subaru Impreza WRX	125 D	'08-'10	4/2457	251/5400	288/3000	1395kg	180	5.5	-	130	270	-	+ An improvement over the basic WRX - Still not the WRX we wanted
Subaru Impreza STI 330S	124 F	'08-'10	4/2457	325/5400	347/3400	1505kg	219	4.4	-	155	-	-	+ A bit quicker than the STI... - but not better
Suzuki Swift Sport (Mk2)	175 R	£13,499	4/1586	134/6900	118/4400	1045kg	130	8.7	-	121	147	44.1	+ The Swift's still a great pocket rocket - But it's lost a little adjustability
Suzuki Swift Sport	132 R	'05-'11	4/1586	123/6800	109/4800	1030kg	121	8.9	-	124	165	39.8	+ Entertaining handling, well built - Lacking in steering feedback
Vauxhall Corsa VXR	154 R	£18,900	4/1598	189/5850	192/1980	1166kg	165	6.8	-	140	172	38.7	+ Looks snazzy, punchy engine - Lacks feel, uncouth compared with rivals
Vauxhall Corsa VXR Nürburgring	164 R	£22,295	4/1598	202/5750	206/2250	1166kg	176	6.5	-	143	178	-	+ VXR gets more power and a limited-slip diff - But it's over £3K more expensive
Vauxhall Astra GTC 1.6T SRI	164 D	£20,215	4/1598	178/5500	169/2200	1393kg	130	7.8	-	137	168	39.2	+ Three-door Scirocco rival looks good, drives well - Non-VXR petrol engines lack zing
Vauxhall Astra VXR (Mk2)	173 R	£26,995	4/1998	276/5500	295/2500	1475kg	190	5.9	-	155	189	-	+ Better than the car it replaces. Loony turbo pace - Lacks RS Mégane's precision
Vauxhall Astra VXR (Mk1)	102 R	'06-'11	4/1998	237/5600	236/2400	1393kg	173	<b>6.7</b>	<b>16.7</b>	152	221	30.7	+ Fast and furious - Lacks a little composure and precision
VW Up/SEAT Mii/Skoda Citigo	171 R	£7630+	3/999	59/5000	70/3000	854kg	70	14.1	-	99	105	62.8	+ Accomplished city car is dynamically sound... - but predictably slow
VW Lupo GTI 6-spd	036 D	'00-'05	4/1598	125/6500	112/3000	978kg	128	8.3	-	127	-	38.2	+ Looks, performance, snappy gearshift - Lacks fizz of 106 GTI
VW Polo GTI	154 R	£18,935	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1184kg	153	6.8	-	142	139	47.9	+ Modern-day mk1 Golf GTI gets twin-clutch DSG - It's a little bit bland
VW Golf GTD (Mk6)	133 D	'09-'13	4/1968	168/4200	258/1750	1329kg	128	8.1	-	138	134	55.4	+ Punchy performance and good economy - Not as much fun as the GTI
VW Golf GTI (Mk6)	172 R	'09-'13	4/1984	207/5300	207/1700	1318kg	160	<b>6.4</b>	<b>16.5</b>	148	170	38.7	+ Still a very accomplished hot hatch - 207bhp isn't a lot any more
VW Golf GTI Edition 35	168 R	'12-'13	4/1984	232/5500	221/2200	1318kg	179	6.5	-	154	189	34.9	+ Mk6 GTI gets the power it craves - Expensive compared to the standard car
VW Golf R (Mk6)	140 D	'10-'13	4/1984	266/6000	258/2500	1521kg	178	5.5	-	155	199	33.2	+ Great engine, tremendous pace and poise - High price, ACC only optional
VW Golf GTI (Mk5)	102 R	'05-'09	4/1984	197/5100	207/1800	1336kg	150	<b>6.7</b>	<b>17.9</b>	145	-	-	+ Character and ability: the original GTI is back - Lacking firepower?
VW Golf R32 (Mk5)	087 F	'06-'09	6/3189	246/6300	236/2500	1510kg	165	<b>5.8</b>	<b>15.2</b>	155	-	26.4	+ Tractor's great and you'll love the soundtrack - We'd still have a GTI
VW Golf R32 (Mk4)	053 F	'02-'04	6/3189	237/6250	236/2800	1477kg	163	<b>6.4</b>	<b>16.3</b>	154	-	24.6	+ Charismatic - Boomy engine can be tiresome
VW Golf GTI 16v (Mk2)	'88-'92	4/1781	139/6100	124/4600	1111kg	127	8.0	-	124	-	28.8	+ Arguably the best all-round Golf GTI ever - We'd be splitting hairs	
VW Golf GTI (Mk1)	095 F	'82-'84	4/1781	112/5800	109/3500	840kg	135	8.1	-	112	-	36.0	+ The car that started it all - Tricky to find an unmolested one
Volvo C30 T5 R-Design	122 R	'08-'12	5/2521	227/5000	236/1500	1347kg	165	<b>6.6</b>	<b>16.9</b>	149	203	32.5	+ Good-looking, desirable Volvo - Lacks edge of best hatches. Avoid auto

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### Our Choice

**BMW M5.** The turbocharging of BMW's M-cars met with scepticism, but the new M5's 4.4-litre twin-turbo V8 feels a perfect fit. It's a brutally fast car, and there are clever (and useable) adjustable driving modes. It looks cool, too. The best big saloon is now even better.



### Best of the Rest

Mercedes' AMG department is on a roll right now: the 6.2-litre C63 is superb as either saloon or estate, likewise the now-turbocharged E63 (left), which is only narrowly shaded by the M5. Lexus's tail-happy IS-F remains a wonderfully alternative choice too.

## Saloons / Estates / 4x4s

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating	
Alfa Romeo 156 GTA	045 F	'02-'06	6/3179	247/6200	221/4800	1410kg	180	6.3	-	155	-	23.3	+ Noise, pace and individuality - Front-drive chassis can't keep up	★★★★☆
Alpina D3		'08-'12	4/1995	211/4000	332/2000	1495kg	143	6.9	-	152	-	52.3	+ Excellent chassis, turbodiesel oomph - Rather narrow powerband	★★★★☆
Alpina B5 Biturbo	149 D	£75,045	8/4395	500/5500	516/3000	2040kg	265	4.7	-	191	-	-	+ Big performance and top-line luxury - Driver not really involved	★★★★☆
Alpina B5 S	118 D	'07-'10	8/4398	523/5500	535/4750	1720kg	309	4.5	-	197	-	23.0	+ Quicker and more exclusive than the E60 M5 - Suspension has its limits	★★★★☆
Alpina B7	134 D	£94,845	8/4395	507/5500	516/3000	2040kg	252	4.5	-	174	-	-	+ Massive performance and top-line luxury - Feels its weight when hustled	★★★★☆
Alpina B7	085 R	'05-'08	8/4398	500/5500	516/4250	1950kg	261	4.8	-	186	-	-	+ Alpina makes a mad, bad 7-series - Over-cautious traction control	★★★★☆
Aston Martin Rapide S	182 D	£149,995	12/5935	550/6000	457/5000	1990kg	281	4.9	-	190	332	19.9	+ Performance, soundtrack, looks - Small in the back, brakes lacking	★★★★☆
Aston Martin Rapide	141 F	'10-'13	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1990kg	240	5.2	-	188	355	-	+ Better than its DB9 sibling - More a 2+2 than a proper four-seater	★★★★☆
Audi A4 2.0 TFSI quattro		£30,805	4/1984	208/4300	258/1500	1535kg	138	6.4	-	153	159	41.5	+ A good match for its German foes - No longer any naturally aspirated options	★★★★☆
Audi S4 (Mk3)	166 D	£38,830	6/2995	328/5500	324/2900	1685kg	198	4.9	-	155	190	34.9	+ Great powertrain, secure chassis - The new RS4 is here now...	★★★★☆
Audi S4 (Mk2)	073 D	'05-'08	8/4163	339/7000	302/3500	1700kg	206	5.4	-	155	-	-	+ Effortless V8, agile handling - Lacks ultimate finesse of class leaders	★★★★☆
Audi RS4 Avant (Mk3)	173 D	£54,925	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1795kg	251	4.6	-	174	249	26.4	+ Looks, value, quality, noise, balance - Harsh ride, unnatural steering	★★★★☆
Audi RS4 (Mk2)	088 F	'06-'08	8/4163	414/7800	317/5500	1650kg	255	4.5	10.9	155	-	-	+ A leap on for fast Audis, superb engine - Busy under braking	★★★★☆
Audi RS4 Avant (Mk2)	105 F	'07-'08	8/4163	414/7800	317/5500	1710kg	246	4.6	-	155	-	20.6	+ 414bhp at 7800rpm! - Everyone thinking you're married with kids	★★★★☆
Audi RS4 (Mk1)	024 R	'00-'02	6/2671	375/6100	325/2500	1620kg	236	4.8	12.1	170	-	17.0	+ Effortless pace - Lacks finesse. Bends wheel rims	★★★★☆
Audi RS2	091 F	'94-'95	5/2226	315/6500	302/3000	1595kg	201	4.8	13.1	162	-	18.0	+ Storming performance (thanks to Porsche) - Try finding one	★★★★☆
Audi S6	019 D	'06-'11	10/5204	429/6800	398/3000	1910kg	228	5.2	-	155	299	22.4	+ Even faster, and discreet with it - Very muted V10	★★★★☆
Audi S6	124 D	'08-'10	10/4991	572/6250	479/1500	1985kg	293	4.5	-	155	331	20.3	+ Looks and drives better than estate version - M5 still looks tempting	★★★★☆
Audi RS6 Avant	116 F	'08-'10	10/4991	572/6250	479/1500	2025kg	287	4.3	9.7	155	333	20.2	+ The world's most powerful estate - Power isn't everything	★★★★☆
Audi RS6 Avant	052 R	'02-'04	8/4172	444/5700	413/1900	1865kg	242	4.8	11.6	155	-	19.3	+ The ultimate estate car? - Numb steering	★★★★☆
Audi S7	171 D	£62,310	8/3993	414/5000	406/1400	1945kg	216	4.6	-	155	225	-	+ Looks and drives better than S6 it's based on - Costs £8000 more	★★★★☆
Audi S8	164 D	£78,200	8/3993	513/5800	479/1700	1975kg	264	4.1	-	155	237	27.7	+ Quicker and much more economical than before - But still underwhelming to drive	★★★★☆
Audi S8	088 D	'06-'10	10/5204	444/7000	398/3500	1940kg	232	5.1	-	155	-	21.4	+ V10 engine, ceramic brakes, fantastic gearbox - Light steering	★★★★☆
Audi Q7 V12 TDI	124 D	'08-'12	12/5934	493/3750	737/1500	2635kg	190	5.1	12.2	155	298	25.0	+ Undeniably quick, relatively economical - A tad ostentatious	★★★★☆
Bentley Continental Flying Spur	080 D	£133,200	12/5998	552/6100	479/1600	2475kg	226	4.9	-	155	396	16.6	+ Performance, wonderful interior - Have you seen petrol prices?	★★★★☆
Bentley Continental Flying Spur Speed	141 F	£150,900	12/5998	600/6000	553/1750	2440kg	250	4.6	-	200	396	16.6	+ 600bhp; surprisingly fun handling - Could look a bit more like it goes	★★★★☆
Bentley Mulsanne	178F	£225,900	8/6752	505/4200	752/1750	2585kg	198	5.1	-	184	393	16.7	+ Effortless pace - Shame it doesn't look like one too	★★★★☆
Bentley Arnage R	048 F	'02-'08	8/6750	400/4000	616/3250	2585kg	157	6.9	17.1	155	-	13.7	+ Twin-turbo thrust, limo-like ride - It's a bit heavy	★★★★☆
Bentley Arnage T	096 D	'06-'08	8/6751	500/4200	737/3200	2585kg	196	5.2	-	179	-	14.5	+ Still able to impress - Something of an anachronism	★★★★☆
BMW 320d	168 R	£28,410	4/1995	181/4000	280/1750	1495kg	123	7.4	-	146	120	61.4	+ Fleet-friendly new 328i is economical yet entertaining - It's a tad noisy	★★★★☆
BMW 328i	165 D	£29,395	4/1997	242/5000	258/1250	1430kg	172	5.8	-	155	149	44.8	+ New-age four-pot 328i is great all-rounder - We miss the six-cylinder soundtrack	★★★★☆
BMW 330d M Sport	180 D	£36,610	6/2993	254/4000	413/2000	1540kg	168	5.6	-	155	129	57.6	+ Great engine, fine handling, good value - Steering confuses weight with feel	★★★★☆
BMW M3 (E90)	123 R	'08-'11	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1605kg	262	4.9	10.7	165	290	22.8	+ Every bit as good as the M3 coupe - No carbon roof	★★★★☆
BMW M3 CRT (E90)	179 R	'11-'12	8/4361	444/8300	324/3750	1580kg	285	4.4	-	180	295	-	+ Saloon chassis + weight savings + GTS engine = best E90 M3 - Just 67 were made	★★★★☆
BMW 335i M Sport (E90)	134 F	'05-'11	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1535kg	200	5.6	-	155	196	31.0	+ Stunning drivetrain, controlled chassis - Looks a bit steady	★★★★☆
BMW 528i	164 D	£34,015	4/1997	242/5000	258/1250	1710kg	144	6.2	-	155	152	41.5	+ Four-pot 528i is downsizing near its best - You'll miss the straight-six sound effects	★★★★☆
BMW 535i SE	141 D	£39,355	6/2979	302/5800	295/1200	1685kg	182	6.1	-	155	185	34.9	+ New 5-series impresses... - But only with all the chassis options ticked	★★★★☆
BMW M5 (F10M)	165 R	£73,350	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1870kg	300	4.3	-	190	232	28.5	+ Twin-turbocharging suits all-new M5 well - Can feel heavy at times	★★★★☆
BMW M5 Touring (E60)	105 F	'07-'10	10/4999	500/7750	383/6100	1780kg	285	4.8	-	155	-	19.3	+ Brilliant at ten tenths - Feels slightly clumsy when pottering	★★★★☆
BMW M5 (E60)	129 F	'04-'10	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1755kg	289	4.7	10.4	155	-	19.6	+ Close to being the ultimate supersaloon - SMG gearbox feels old-tech	★★★★☆
BMW M5 (E39)	110 F	'99-'03	8/4941	394/6600	369/3800	1795kg	223	4.9	11.5	155	-	-	+ Magnificent V8-engined supersaloon - We'd be nit-picking	★★★★☆
BMW M5 (E34)	110 F	'92-'96	6/3795	340/6900	295/4750	1653kg	209	5.9	13.6	155	-	-	+ The Godfather of supersaloons - The family can come too	★★★★☆
BMW M5 (E28)	182 R	'86-'88	6/3453	282/6500	251/5400	1431kg	200	6.2	-	151	-	-	+ The original storming saloon - Understated looks	★★★★☆
BMW X5 xDrive 40d SE		£47,930	6/2993	302/4400	442/1500	2110kg	145	6.6	-	147	198	37.7	+ Handling, comfort, refinement - Looks like a big X3	★★★★☆
BMW X6 xDrive 50i	118 D	£58,385	8/4395	408/5500	442/1750	2190kg	186	5.4	-	155	292	22.6	+ Stunningly good to drive - Will you want to be seen arriving?	★★★★☆
BMW X6M	134 D	£86,185	8/4395	547/6000	502/1500	2305kg	241	4.7	-	171	325	20.3	+ Fast, refined and comfortable - But it definitely lacks the M factor	★★★★☆
BMW 750i	174 D	£71,340	8/4395	449/5500	480/2000	2020kg	226	4.7	-	155	199	-	+ Well specced, impressively refined - Lags far behind the Mercedes S-class	★★★★☆
Bowler EXR S	180 R	£186,000	8/5000	550/6200	461/2100	1800kg	310	4.2	-	155	-	-	+ Outlandish all-terrain supercar - Vast suspension travel takes some getting used to	★★★★☆
Brabus Bullit	119 F	£330,000	12/6233	720/5100	811/2100	1850kg	395	3.8	-	217	-	-	+ Seven hundred and twenty bhp - Three hundred thousand pounds	★★★★☆
Cadillac CTS-V	148 F	£67,030	8/6162	556/6100	551/3800	1928kg	293	3.9	-	191	365	18.1	+ It'll stand out among M-cars and AMGs - But the novelty might wear off	★★★★☆
Chrysler 300C SR8T	096 D	'06-'11	8/6059	425/6000	420/4800	1965kg	220	4.9	-	168	337	20.2	+ Looks, supple ride, composed chassis - Too much understeer, slow 'box	★★★★☆
Chrysler 300C S.7 Hemi	088 D	'05-'08	8/6654	340/5000	387/4000	1910kg	180	6.2	15.1	155	-	23.3	+ Gangster chic - Ginsters suspension	★★★★☆
Ford Mondeo 2.0 Eco Boost Titanium X		£25,355	4/1999	200/6000	221/1750	1569kg	129	7.9	-	144	179	36.7	+ Terrific chassis, sweet engine - People will still want an Audi	★★★★☆
Ford Mondeo ST220	043 D	'02-'07	6/2967	223/6150	204/4900	1550kg	146	6.8	-	151	-	27.7	+ Muscular engine, fine chassis - Hotted-up reprieve image	★★★★☆
Ford Sierra RS Cosworth 4x4		'90-'93	4/1993	220/6250	214/3500	1305kg	159	6.6	-	144	-	24.4	+ Fast and furious - Try finding a straight one	★★★★☆
Ford Sierra RS Cosworth		'86-'90	4/1993	204/6000	204/4500	1220kg	169	6.2	-	143	-	-	+ Roadgoing Group A racecar - Don't shout about the power output!	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type-R *	108 D	'07-'10	4/1998	222/8000	158/6100	1525kg	180	5.9	-	150	-	-	+ Screaming engine, razor-sharp chassis - Specialist import only	★★★★☆
Honda Accord Type-R	012 R	'99-'03	4/2157	209/7200	158/6700	1306kg	163	6.1	17.4	142	-	29.4	+ One of the finest front-drivers of all time - Lack of image	★★★★☆
Infiniti M37S	150 D	£45,200	6/3696	316/7000	265/5200	1765kg	182	6.2	-	155	235	27.7	+ Stands out from the crowd - Not as involving as some rivals	★★★★☆

## POCKET buying guide

### Meet the ancestors

The forerunners of last month's cover-story stars are all potential used bargains



SEEN THE TRIO of V12 superstars in this issue's big test? Like the idea of a more affordable alternative? Then consider their predecessors: taking the plunge on one could cost less than you thought.

With the Ferrari 599, prices of good examples start from £90,000, although there are high-milers on the market for less. The HGTE package is sought after and will add to the price. The nicest and best-specced examples will be pushing £170k. It's critical to ensure the car has a full, detailed, Ferrari-



approved service history. A juddering clutch is also a sign of abuse and expensive to fix.

Early Lamborghini Murciélagos can be found for less than £70k, but with a wide range of different models and special editions around, prices for more desirable versions can cost upwards of £170k. By the time it launched in 2001, Audi had significantly improved quality control at Lambo, resulting in a product that's generally well behaved. Servicing is the most important factor and a recent clutch



change is always a bonus. Check for leaking power steering pipes and dampers, as these are common. Early 2008 examples of Aston's DB9-based DBS can be bought for around £70k, with more recent cars commanding twice that. It's fairly hard-wearing but make sure you carefully inspect the carbon-ceramic brakes for de-lamination or any vibrations, as a new set costs £10k. On a test drive, engage the various electronic damper settings to make sure they're in good working order.



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# Saloons / Estates / 4x4s

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating	
Jaguar XF 3.0 V6 Diesel S	145 D	£41,855	6/2993	271/4000	443/2000	1695kg	162	5.9	-	155	159	47.1	+ Sweet handling plus diesel economy - But we'd still have the R	★★★★★
Jaguar XF Sportbrake 3.0 V6 Diesel S	177 D	£44,355	6/2993	271/4000	443/2000	1695kg	153	6.1	-	155	163	46.3	+ Looks and drives better than the saloon - Pity there's no Sportbrake R...	★★★★★
Jaguar XF 3.0 V6 Supercharged	178 D	£47,550	6/2995	335/6500	332/3500	1695kg	201	5.7	-	155	224	29.4	+ Fast, comfortable, refined - Bland engine, poor economy compared to diesel V6	★★★★★
Jaguar XFR	181 D	£65,380	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1800kg	284	<b>4.8</b>	<b>10.2</b>	155	270	24.4	+ Brilliant blend of pace and refinement - Doesn't sound as special as it is	★★★★★
Jaguar S-type R	048 R	'02-'07	8/4196	400/6100	408/3500	1800kg	226	5.3	-	155	-	22.5	+ Fine dynamics belie <i>olde worlde</i> looks - Auto-only, and no LSD	★★★★★
Jaguar XJ 3.0 V6 diesel	148 D	£56,260	6/2993	271/4000	442/2000	1700kg	162	6.0	-	155	167	46.3	+ A great Jaguar - But not as great as the Supersport...	★★★★★
Jaguar XJ Supersport	163 R	£91,735	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1795kg	285	4.7	-	155	270	24.4	+ Superb handling, monster performance - Opinion-dividing looks	★★★★★
Jaguar XJR	054 R	'03-'09	8/4196	400/6100	408/3500	1665kg	244	5.0	-	155	-	23.0	+ Genuine 7-series rival - 2007 facelift didn't help middle-aged image	★★★★★
Jaguar XJR 4.0	018 R	'00-'03	8/3996	370/6150	387/3000	1775kg	211	<b>5.6</b>	<b>13.5</b>	155	-	21.9	+ Matchless grace, extraordinary pace - Not much space	★★★★★
Lamborghini LM002	016 F	'86-'89	12/5167	450/6800	369/5200	2700kg	169	-	-	130	-	-	+ Craziest 4x4 ever, Countach V12 - Craziest 4x4 ever...	★★★★★
Lexus IS-F	151 R	£58,416	8/4969	411/6600	372/5200	1714kg	247	<b>4.7</b>	<b>10.9</b>	173	270	24.4	+ Shockingly good Lexus - The M3's available as a (second hand) four-door too	★★★★★
Lotus Carlton	035 F	'91-'93	6/3615	377/5200	419/4200	1658kg	231	<b>4.8</b>	<b>10.6</b>	176	-	17.0	+ The Millennium Falcon of saloon cars - Every drive a work-out	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte S	137 R	£87,430	8/4691	425/7000	361/4750	1990kg	216	<b>5.1</b>	<b>12.1</b>	174	365	18.0	+ Finally, a QP with more bhp - Grille is a bit Hannibal Lecter	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte Sport GTS	141 F	£94,380	8/4691	433/7000	361/4750	1990kg	221	5.1	-	177	365	18.0	+ The most stylish supersaloon - Slightly wooden brakes, unforgiving ride	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte	082 F	'04-'08	8/4244	394/7000	333/4500	1930kg	207	5.1	-	171	-	17.9	+ Redefines big-car dynamics - Don't use auto mode	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte Sport GTS	113 D	'07-'08	8/4244	396/7000	339/4250	1930kg	208	5.5	-	167	-	-	+ Best Quattroporte chassis so far - More power wouldn't go amiss	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz 190E 2.5-16	'89-'92	4/2498	202/6750	177/5500	1360kg	147	7.2	-	-	142	-	24.4	+ M-B's M3 alternative - Not as nimble as the Beemer	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG	151 R	£56,930	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1730kg	264	<b>4.4</b>	<b>9.7</b>	160	280	23.5	+ Monstrous pace and extremely engaging - M3's just a little better...	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz DR250	148 D	'10-'11	8/6208	513/6800	479/5000	1730kg	301	4.1	-	187	-	-	+ C63 AMG goes feral - Just try finding one; only 20 were made	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz G55 AMG	088 R	'04-'08	8/5439	367/5250	376/4000	1635kg	228	5.2	-	155	-	23.7	+ Furiously fast, commendably discreet - Overshadowed by M3 and RS4	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG	165 R	£73,720	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	1840kg	286	4.2	-	155	295	28.8	+ New turbo engine doesn't dilute E63 experience - Pricey options	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG	096 D	'06-'09	8/6208	507/6800	464/5200	1840kg	280	4.5	-	155	-	19.8	+ Brilliant engine, indulgent chassis - Vague steering, speed limits	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG	052 R	'03-'06	8/5439	476/6100	516/2650	1760kg	271	<b>4.8</b>	<b>10.2</b>	155	-	21.9	+ M5-humbling grunt, cosseting ride - Speed limits	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG	'98-'02	8/5439	354/5500	390/3000	1642kg	191	5.5	-	-	155	-	23.0	+ Dragster disguised as a limo - Tyre bills	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz S63 AMG	148 D	£113,740	8/5461	536/5500	590/2000	2155kg	257	4.5	-	155	244	26.9	+ Massive torque, massively reduced emissions - Massive car	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz S65 AMG	098 F	£165,085	12/5980	604/4750	737/2000	2260kg	272	4.4	-	155	334	19.8	+ God's own supersaloon - Unholy price and thirst	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG	178 R	£81,905	8/5461	518/5250	516/1700	1870kg	281	4.4	-	155	231	28.5	+ Monster performance, 549bhp an option - Not as desirable as a Bentley or Aston	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG	099 F	'06-'11	8/6208	507/6100	464/2650	1905kg	270	4.5	-	155	345	19.5	+ Beauty, comfort, awesome performance - M5 has the edge on B-roads	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz ML63 AMG	176 R	£83,620	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	2270kg	232	4.2	-	155	276	23.9	+ Great engine, surprisingly good dynamics - £85k buys a Boxster and an ML350...	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz S63 AMG	172 D	£123,140	8/5461	537/5500	560/2000	2475kg	220	5.3	-	130	322	-	+ It exists; epic soundtrack - Ancient chassis, silly price	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz G55 AMG	092 F	'04-'12	8/5439	476/6100	516/2650	2550kg	190	5.2	-	130	378	17.8	+ Thuggishness, anti-style statement - It's a bit silly	★★★★★
MG ZT 260 V8	068 F	'03-'05	8/4601	256/5000	302/4000	1680kg	155	<b>6.5</b>	<b>16.3</b>	155	-	21.5	+ Lovely woolly V8, well-sorted rear-drive chassis - Thirst	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-300 SST	118 F	£31,349	4/1998	290/6500	300/3500	1590kg	185	<b>5.2</b>	<b>13.9</b>	155	256	26.2	+ Evo gets twin-clutch transmission - Not as exciting as it used to be	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-360	122 D	£38,559	4/1998	354/6500	363/3500	1560kg	230	4.1	-	155	328	19.9	+ Ridiculously rapid new Evo - A five-speed gearbox?!	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-300	'08-'12	4/1998	290/6500	300/3500	1560kg	189	4.7	-	-	155	246	27.4	+ The Evo grows up - Perhaps just a little too sensible?	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-330 SST	134 F	'08-'12	4/1998	324/6500	322/3500	1590kg	207	4.4	-	155	256	-	+ Great engine and gearbox combo - It still lives in the shadow of the Evo IX	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-400	181 R	'09-'10	4/1998	403/6500	387/3500	1560kg	262	3.8	-	155	328	-	+ Most powerful factory Evo ever... - about X grand too much when new	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo IX FQ-340	088 F	'05-'07	4/1997	345/6800	321/4600	1400kg	250	<b>4.3</b>	<b>10.9</b>	157	-	-	+ Gives Porsche drivers nightmares - Points. Lots of	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo IX MR FQ-360	181 R	'05-'07	4/1997	366/6887	363/3200	1400kg	266	3.9	-	157	-	-	+ Well-executed engine upgrades - Prison food	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VIII	055 F	'03-'04	4/1997	276/6500	289/3500	1410kg	199	5.1	-	157	-	-	+ The Evo grows up - Brakes need beefing up	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VIII MR FQ-300	057 R	'03-'05	4/1997	305/6800	289/3500	1400kg	221	4.8	-	157	-	20.5	+ Extra pace, extra attitude - Extra money	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VIII	031 F	'02-'03	4/1997	276/6500	282/3500	1360kg	206	<b>5.0</b>	<b>13.0</b>	140	-	20.4	+ Terrific all-rounder - You tell us	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VII RS Sprint	041 D	'02-'03	4/1997	320/6500	327/6200	1260kg	258	4.4	-	150	-	-	+ Ruthlessly focused road weapon - For the truly committed	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VII RS Sprint	011 F	'99	4/1997	330/6500	323/3000	1255kg	267	<b>4.5</b>	<b>11.8</b>	145	-	-	+ Lighter, keener, quicker than regular Evo - A little uncompromising	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VI Makinen Edition	181 R	'00-'01	4/1997	276/6500	275/2750	1365kg	205	4.6	-	150	-	-	+ Our favourite Evo - Subtle it is not	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera S	165 R	£79,091	8/4806	394/6500	369/3500	1770kg	226	5.6	-	177	293	22.6	+ Great cabin and typically fine Porsche chassis - Only a mother could love its looks	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera GTS	168 D	£91,239	8/4806	430/6700	383/3500	1920kg	228	4.4	-	179	251	26.4	+ Sharper chassis; more urgent and vocal V8 - A BMW M5 is £17k less...	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera Turbo	137 R	£104,758	8/4806	493/6000	516/2250	1970kg	254	<b>3.6</b>	<b>8.9</b>	188	270	24.6	+ Fast, refined and dynamically sound - It still leaves us cold	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera Turbo S	159 D	£123,776	8/4806	542/6000	590/2250	1995kg	276	3.7	-	190	270	24.6	+ Pace, excellent ergonomics - Steering feed, ride	★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne GTS (Mk2)	173 D	£67,147	8/4806	414/6500	380/3500	2085kg	202	5.6	-	162	251	26.4	+ Dynamically the best SUV on sale - At two tons, it's still no sports car	★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (Mk2)	144 D	£87,726	8/4806	493/6000	516/2250	2170kg	231	4.7	-	173	270	24.6	+ Greener, faster, better - Odd rear styling, numb steering	★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (Mk1)	104 F	'06-'10	8/4806	494/6000	516/2250	2355kg	213	<b>4.7</b>	<b>11.4</b>	171	-	19.0	+ Appears to defy physics - Still cracks mirrors at 50 paces	★★★★★
Range Rover Evoque Coupe Si4	164 D	£41,495	4/1999	237/6000	251/1900	1670kg	144	7.0	-	135	199	-	+ Striking looks, sporting dynamics - Hefty price, and petrol version is auto-only	★★★★★
Range Rover Sport V8 Supercharged	135 D	£68,995	8/5000	503/6000	461/2000	2590kg	200	5.9	-	140	348	19.0	+ Thumpingly fast and hugely comfortable - It's no Cayenne in the corners	★★★★★
Range Rover SDV8	180 D	£78,095	8/4367	334/3500	516/1750	2360kg	144	6.5	-	140	229	32.5	+ Lighter, more capable, even more luxurious - Diesel V6 model feels more alert	★★★★★
Range Rover V8 Supercharged	134 D	'09-'12	8/5000	503/6000	461/2000	2710kg	189	5.9	-	140	348	19.0	+ Fast, comfortable, luxurious - Big, heavy, thirsty	★★★★★
Rolls-Royce Ghost	140 D	£170,250	12/6592	563/5250	575/1500	2435kg	235	4.7	-	155	317	20.8	+ More sporting, more affordable Rolls-Royce - But it still costs £200,500	★★★★★
Rolls-Royce Phantom	054 F	£276,275	12/6749	453/5350	531/3500	2550kg	181	5.7	-	149	377	18.0	+ Rolls reinvented for the 21st Century - The roads are barely big enough	★★★★★
Subaru WRX STI	151 D	£26,995	4/2457	296/6000	300/4000	1505kg	200	5.1	-	158	243	26.9	+ Fast Subaru saloon is back (now with 58k off) - Blue paint and gold wheels aren't	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WRX STI S206 *	167 D	£45,400	4/1994	316/6400	318/3200	1470kg	218	4.5	-	155	-	-	+ The best current Impreza - Japan only, and it's sold out there...	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WRX GB270	109 D	'07	4/2457	266/5700	310/3000	1410kg	192	5.2	-	143	-	-	+ Fitting final fling for 'classic' Impreza - End of an era	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza STI	090 R	'05-'07	4/2457	276/6000	289/4000	1495kg	188	5.3	-	158	-	25.9	+ Stunning to drive - Not so stunning to look at	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza STI Spec C *	084 D	'05-'07	4/1994	320/6730	311/3500	1350kg	240	4.3	-	157	-	-	+ Lighter, faster, fiercer - The need for self-restraint	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza RB320	105 F	'07	4/2457	316/6000	332/3750	1495kg	215	4.8	-	155	-	-	+ Fitting tribute to a rallying legend - Too hardcore for some?	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WRX STI PPP	073 F	'03-'05	4/1994	300/6000	299/4000	1470kg	207	<b>5.2</b>	<b>12.9</b>	148	-	-	+ A Subaru with real edge - Bit too edgy in the wet	★★★★★
Subaru STI Type RA Spec C *	067 F	'03-'05	4/1994	335/7000	280/3750	1380kg	247	<b>4.3</b>	<b>11.1</b>	160	-	-	+ Best Impreza since the P1 - Lost its throbby flat-four voice	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WR1	067 R	'04-'05	4/1994	316/5800	310/4000	1470kg	218	<b>5.3</b>	<b>13.1</b>	155	-	-	+ Most powerful official UK Impreza until RB320 - Spec C is better	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza Turbo	011 F	'98-'00	4/1994	215/5600	214/4000	1235kg	177	<b>5.4</b>	<b>14.6</b>	144	-	27.2	+ Destined for classic status - Thirsty	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza PI	067 F	'00-'01	4/1994	276/6500	260/4000	1283kg	219	<b>4.9</b>	<b>13.3</b>	150	-	25.0	+ Ultimate old-school Impreza - Prices reflect this	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza RB5 (PPP)	011 F	'99	4/1994	237/6										



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## Our Choice

**Audi R8 Spyder.** The Spyder boasts supercar looks, presence and performance, yet you really could drive one every day. And while the V10-engined car makes the more spine-tingling noise, the lighter and even more agile V8 version gets our vote.



## Best of the Rest

Despite its electrically assisted power steering, the mk3 Porsche Boxster is brilliant, while the Mazda MX-5 is best for budget rear-drive fun. For the ultimate thrills, choose a Caterham R300 or an Ariel Atom, though Morgan's 3 Wheeler (left) is a curious alternative.

## Sports Cars / Convertibles

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating	
AC MkVI GT	135 D	£93,500	8/6162	437/4800	431/4800	1000kg	444	3.9	-	162	-	-	+ Cobra charm with a modern twist - It's priced against some strong rivals	★★★★★
Alfa Romeo 8C Spider	161 R	'09-'11	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1675kg	273	4.5	-	181	-	-	+ Beauty meets beast. They hit it off - Good luck trying to buy one	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3.5 Supercharged	180 D	£38,000	4/1998	310/8400	169/7200	550kg	573	2.7	-	158	-	-	+ As mad as ever - Rain	★★★★★
Ariel Atom Mugen	165 R	£55,000	4/1998	270/8300	188/6000	550kg	499	2.9	-	150	-	-	+ Perfect engine for the Atom's chassis - Only ten being made	★★★★★
Ariel Atom V8 500	165 R	£146,699	8/3000	475/10,500	284/7750	550kg	877	3.0	5.8	170	-	-	+ An experience unlike anything else on Planet Car - £150k for an Atom	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3 245	113 D	'08-'12	4/1998	245/8200	155/5200	500kg	498	3.2	-	150	-	33.0	+ The Atom just got a little bit better - Can still be a bit draughty...	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3 Supercharged	138 F	'09-'12	4/1998	300/8200	162/7200	550kg	554	3.3	-	155	-	-	+ It's brilliant - It's mental	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3 Supercharged	123 R	'03-'09	4/1998	300/8200	162/7200	550kg	554	3.3	-	155	-	28.0	+ Making your face ripple - ...like Clarkson's	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 1	015 F	'99-'03	4/1796	125/5500	122/3000	496kg	256	5.6	18.0	115	-	-	+ Amazing styling, huge fun - As practical as a chocolate teapot	★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage Roadster	130 F	£98,995	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1710kg	250	4.7	-	180	328	20.4	+ Sportiest, coolest drop-top Aston in years - Lacks real teeth	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vantage S Roadster	161 R	£110,700	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1690kg	258	4.6	-	189	299	21.9	+ Sounds amazing, looks even better - Still not the best drop-top in its class	★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage Roadster	175 R	£150,000	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1760kg	294	4.4	-	190	-	-	+ As good as the coupe, with amplified V12 rumble - Just a smidgen shakier	★★★★★
Aston Martin DB9 Volante	150 D	£138,150	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1815kg	263	4.6	-	190	368	18.2	+ Consummate cruiser and capable when pushed - Roof-up wind noise	★★★★★
Aston Martin DBS Volante	133 D	£190,812	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1810kg	286	4.3	-	191	388	17.3	+ A feelgood car par excellence - It's a bit of a heavyweight	★★★★★
Audi TTS Roadster	122 D	£37,715	4/1984	268/6000	258/2500	1455kg	187	5.6	-	155	189	34.9	+ Effortlessly quick - Long-term appeal open to question; not cheap either	★★★★★
Audi TT RS Roadster	133 D	£47,820	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1510kg	225	4.7	-	155	212	31.0	+ Terrific engine... is the best thing about it	★★★★★
Audi TT Roadster (Mk1 225bhp)	016 R	'00-'06	4/1781	225/5900	206/2200	1395kg	164	6.9	20.0	150	-	30.4	+ Winner on the King's Road - Trails Boxster on the open road	★★★★★
Audi S5 Cabriolet	130 D	£45,895	6/2995	328/5500	325/2900	1875kg	178	5.6	-	155	199	33.2	+ Gets the S4's trick supercharged engine - Bordering on dull	★★★★★
Audi RS5 Cabriolet	179 D	£68,960	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1920kg	235	4.9	-	155	249	26.4	+ Pace, looks, interior, naturally aspirated V8 - Not the last word in fun or involvement	★★★★★
Audi RS4 Cabriolet	094 D	'06-'08	8/4163	414/7800	317/5500	1845kg	228	4.9	-	155	-	-	+ That engine - Wibble wobble, wibble wobble, jelly on a plate	★★★★★
Audi R8 Spyder V8	161 R	£96,595	8/4163	424/7900	317/6000	1660kg	259	4.8	-	186	337	19.6	+ Dynamically outstanding, sounds terrific - V10 sounds even better	★★★★★
Audi R8 Spyder V10	152 F	£117,710	10/5204	518/8000	391/6500	1720kg	306	4.1	-	194	349	19.0	+ Looks and sounds sensational - It's the most expensive Audi ever	★★★★★
BAC Mono	176 R	£89,940	4/7261	280/7700	206/6000	540kg	527	2.8	-	170	-	-	+ The most single-minded track car available - That means no passengers...	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GTC V8	168 R	£136,250	8/3933	500/6000	487/1700	2470kg	207	4.9	-	187	254	25.9	+ Still arguably the world's best topless GT - Still no sports car	★★★★★
Bentley Conti Supersports	147 D	£182,100	12/5998	621/6000	590/2000	2395kg	263	3.9	-	202	388	17.3	+ Fast, capable and refined - Coupe does the Supersports thing better	★★★★★
Bentley Conti GTC Speed	131 D	'09-'11	12/5998	600/6000	590/1750	2485kg	245	4.5	-	200	396	17.0	+ A great convertible just got better - Optional carbon brakes a necessity	★★★★★
Bentley Azure T	140 D	'09-'11	8/6761	500/4200	738/1800	2695kg	188	5.2	-	179	465	14.5	+ Two-and-a-half-ton sunbed - Cheaper Conti GTC a much better drive	★★★★★
BMW Z4 sDrive 20i (Mk2)	164 D	£29,480	4/1997	181/4800	199/1250	1470kg	125	6.8	-	142	159	41.5	+ The Z4 has grown up... and got fat	★★★★★
BMW Z4 sDrive 35i (Mk2)	130 D	£39,430	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1505kg	204	5.2	-	155	219	30.1	+ As above, with more power - Not as much fun as it used to be	★★★★★
BMW Z4 3.0si (Mk1)	094 D	'06-'09	6/2996	265/6600	232/2750	1310kg	205	5.7	-	155	-	32.9	+ Terrific straight-six - Handling not as playful as we'd like	★★★★★
BMW Z4 M Roadster	091 R	'06-'09	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1410kg	244	4.8	-	155	-	23.3	+ Exhilarating and characterful, that engine - Stiff suspension	★★★★★
BMW M Roadster	002 F	'98-'02	6/3246	325/7400	258/4900	1375kg	240	5.3	-	155	-	25.4	+ Fresh-air M3, that motor, hunky looks - M-Coupe drives better	★★★★★
BMW 335i SE Convertible	102 D	£41,710	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1735kg	177	5.8	-	155	205	32.1	+ Looks good, great to drive, fantastic engine - A bit shaky	★★★★★
BMW M3 Convertible (E93)	119 D	£58,785	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1810kg	232	5.3	-	155	297	22.2	+ M DCT transmission, pace, slick roof - Extra weight blunts the edge	★★★★★
BMW M3 Convertible	035 D	'01-'06	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1655kg	207	5.3	-	155	-	23.3	+ That engine - Gets the wobbles on British B-roads	★★★★★
BMW M6 Convertible	098 D	'06-'10	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1930kg	264	4.8	-	155	352	19.2	+ Composure, grip, power, comfort - Steering lacks feel at low speed	★★★★★
BMW Z8	026 R	'00-'03	8/4941	400/6600	369/3800	1585kg	256	4.8	11.1	155	-	14.4	+ M5-powered super-sportster - M5's more fun to drive	★★★★★
Brooke 260 Double R	094 F	£34,995	4/2261	260/7500	200/6100	550kg	480	3.9	-	155+	-	-	+ Fast, dynamic, well built - No roof, looks not for everyone	★★★★★
Caterham 7 Classic	068 F	£17,495	4/1397	105/6000	95/5000	540kg	198	6.5	-	110	-	-	+ The Caterham experience starts here - It's pretty raw	★★★★★
Caterham 7 Roadsport 125	105 F	£22,995	4/1595	125/6100	120/5350	539kg	235	5.9	-	112	-	-	+ New Ford-engined model is just great - Bigger drivers need SV model	★★★★★
Caterham 7 Roadsport SV175	140 D	£30,995	4/1999	175/7000	139/6000	555kg	321	4.8	-	138	-	-	+ The Caterham for everyday use, R300 engine - Loses intensity of R300	★★★★★
Caterham 7 Supersport	165 R	£24,495	4/1595	140/6900	120/5790	520kg	273	4.9	-	120	-	-	+ One of the best Caterhams is less than £20k... if you build it yourself	★★★★★
Caterham 7 Supersport R	180 D	£27,995	4/1999	180/7300	143/6100	535kg	342	4.8	-	130	-	-	+ The best road-and-track Seven yet - Impractical, noisy, uncomfortable	★★★★★
Caterham 7 Supersport R400	105 F	£35,995	4/1999	210/7800	152/5750	525kg	406	3.8	-	140	-	-	+ R400 reborn with (lots of) Ford power - Slightly hesitant low-rev pick-up	★★★★★
Caterham 7 Superlight R500	123 R	£42,495	4/1999	263/8500	177/7200	506kg	528	2.9	-	150	-	-	+ Better power-to-weight ratio than a Veyron - Until you add the driver	★★★★★
Caterham CSR 260 Superlight	094 F	£44,995	4/2261	256/7500	200/6200	565kg	460	3.8	-	155	-	-	+ Brilliant for high days, holidays and trackdays - Wet Wednesdays	★★★★★
Caterham Levante	131 F	£115,000	8/2398	550/10000	300/8500	520kg	1074	4.8	8.2	150	-	-	+ Twice the power-to-weight ratio of a Veyron! - Not easy to drive slowly	★★★★★
Caterham 7 Superlight R300	150 F	'09-'12	4/1999	175/7000	139/6000	515kg	345	4.5	-	140	-	-	+ Possibly all the Caterham you need - They're not cheap	★★★★★
Caterham 7R300	068 F	'02-'06	4/1796	160/7000	130/5000	500kg	325	4.7	-	130	-	-	+ Our 2002 Trackday Car of the Year - Not for wimps	★★★★★
Caterham 7R400	068 F	'03-'06	4/1796	200/7500	150/5750	490kg	415	3.9	-	140	-	-	+ Race-car with a number plate - Your missus will leave you	★★★★★
Caterham 7R500	068 F	'99-'06	4/1796	230/8600	155/7200	460kg	510	3.6	8.8	146	-	-	+ Fine for the Nürburgring - Hard work around the Bullring	★★★★★
Caterham 7R500 Evolution	069 F	'04	4/1998	250/8000	190/4000	460kg	552	3.9	8.1	150	-	-	+ Madder than Mad Jack McMad - Er, it's a bit mad	★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette C6	083 D	£56,816	8/6162	430/5900	424/4600	1460kg	300	4.3	-	186	316	21.2	+ Corvette performance - Convertible dynamics, electronics	★★★★★
Ferrari California	171 D	£152,116	8/4297	483/7750	372/5000	1705kg	290	3.8	-	193	299	-	+ Revised with sharper performance and dynamics - We'd still take a 458 Spider	★★★★★
Honda S2000	118 D	'99-'09	4/1997	237/8300	153/7500	1260kg	191	6.2	-	150	-	28.2	+ An alternative and rev-happy roadster - The Boxster's better	★★★★★
Jaguar XK 5.0		£71,430	8/5000	380/6500	380/3500	1621kg	238	5.3	-	155	264	25.2	+ Basic XK gets extra power... but loses some of its GT refinement	★★★★★
Jaguar XKR	130 F	£84,930	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1725kg	296	4.6	-	155	292	23.0	+ Gains Jag's fantastic new V8 - Loses sporting ground to its main foes	★★★★★
Jaguar XKR-S	167 R	£103,430	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1725kg	319	4.2	-	186	292	23.0	+ Loud and mad; most exciting Jag in years - It's also the most expensive in years	★★★★★
Jaguar XK	089 F	'06-'09	8/4196	294/6000	303/4100	1635kg	183	6.6	-	155	-	25.0	+ Every bit as good as the XK coupe - 294bhp still only just enough	★★★★★
Jaguar XKR		'06-'09	8/4196	414/6250	413/4000	1705kg	247	5.0	-	155	-	-	+ First Jag sports car for years - Overweight detailing	★★★★★
Jaguar XKR	004 F	'97-'06	8/3996	370/6150	387/3600	1750kg	215	5.4	12.8	155	-	15.6	+ Hurricane-in-the-hair motoring - A danger to couples everywhere	★★★★★
KTM X-Bow	138 F	£49,482	4/1984	237/5500	229/2000	790kg	305	3.8	-	137	-	-	+ Mad looks, real quality feel - Heavier and tricier than we'd hoped	★★★★★
KTM X-Bow R	165 R	£64,850	4/1984	295/5500	295/3300	790kg	379	3.6	-	144	-	-	+ Sharper handling, more power - Pity it's not even lighter, and cheaper	★★★★★
Light Car Company Rocket	104 F	£46,000	4/1002	143/10500	77/8500	406kg	358	4.4	-	145	-	35.0	+ Single-seater style, speed - Old Formula Fords cost £5k	★★★★★
Lotus Elise 1.6	144 D	£29,050	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	876kg	155	6.0	-	127	149	45.0	+ New 1.6 Elise is light and fantastically - Smaller engine could put some off	★★★★★
Lotus Elise 1.6 Club Racer	159 R	£28,450	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	852kg	160	6.0	-	127	149	45.0	+ Even lighter, even more focused Elise - A touch pricier for a stripped-out Elise	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S	172 R	£37,150	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	924kg	239	4.5	-	145	175	37.5	+ New supercharged Elise boasts epic grip and pace - £37k before (pricy) options...	★★★★★

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## Lexus IS-F Issue 112, January 2008

'Visually, the steroidally enhanced IS-F makes even the RS4 seem unusually demure. Meanwhile the 5-litre V8, with cylinder heads developed by Yamaha and a dual air intake system that massages power and cues up a proper V8 soundtrack, develops 417bhp and 371lb ft of torque.

For such a compact car, that V8 is



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# Sports Cars / Convertibles

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating	
Lotus Elise R	068 F	'04-'11	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	860kg	223	<b>5.6</b>	<b>13.9</b>	150	196	34.4	+ Most thrilling Elise yet - Blaring engine note	★★★★★
Lotus Elise SC	131 F	'08-'11	4/1794	218/8000	156/5000	870kg	254	<b>4.5</b>	<b>11.4</b>	148	199	33.2	+ All the usual Elise magic - Supercharged engine lacks sparkle	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S1.8	104 F	'06-'10	4/1794	134/6200	127/4200	860kg	158	<b>6.3</b>	<b>18.7</b>	127	-	37.2	+ Brilliant entry-level Elise - Precious little	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S2 111S	049 F	'02-'04	4/1796	156/7000	129/4650	860kg	197	5.1	-	131	-	40.9	+ A genuinely useable Elise - Air-con? In an Elise?	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S2 Sport 135	040 D	'03	4/1796	135/6200	129/4850	726kg	189	5.4	-	129	-	-	+ One of our fave S2 Elises - Brakes need more bite and pedal feel	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S2 Sport 190	044 F	'03	4/1796	190/7800	128/5000	710kg	272	<b>4.7</b>	<b>12.1</b>	135	-	-	+ Fabulous trackday tool - Pricey	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S1	126 F	'96-'00	4/1796	118/5500	122/3000	731kg	164	<b>6.1</b>	<b>18.5</b>	126	-	39.4	+ A modern classic - A tad impractical?	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven Supercharged	123 R	'07-'11	4/1796	252/8000	179/7000	670kg	382	3.8	-	150	-	-	+ Impressive on road and track - Not hardcore enough for some	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven GT4	138 F	'09-'11	4/1796	266/8200	179/7200	670kg	403	3.7	-	155	-	-	+ eva Track Car of the Year 2009 - It's a 76-grand Lotus with no roof	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven	126 F	'07-'11	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	720kg	267	4.3	-	140	-	-	+ Not far off supercharged car's pace - Pricey once it's made road-legal	★★★★★
Lotus 340R	126 F	'00	4/1796	190/7800	146/5000	658kg	293	<b>4.5</b>	<b>12.5</b>	126	-	-	+ Hardcore road-racer... - ...that looks like a dune buggy from Mars	★★★★★
Lotus Elan SE	095 F	'89-'95	4/1588	165/6600	148/4200	1022kg	164	6.7	-	137	-	21.0	+ Awesome front-drive chassis - Rather uninvolved	★★★★★
Lotus Elan Sprint	126 F	'71-'73	4/1558	126/6500	113/5500	720kg	178	6.6	-	122	-	-	+ Sensational chassis, properly quick - Affording a mint one	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio	142 D	€98,250	8/4691	434/7000	332/4750	1980kg	223	5.3	-	176	358	18.3	+ As good to drive as it is to look at - Lacks the grunt of some rivals	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio Sport	161 D	€102,615	8/4691	444/7000	376/4750	1980kg	228	5.1	-	177	377	19.5	+ Looks, performance, cruising ability - Brakes could be sharper	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.8i SE		£17,990	4/1798	124/6500	123/4500	1155kg	109	9.9	-	121	167	39.8	+ Basic MX-5 offers ESP-less fun - But you'll probably want the 2.0's power	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 2.0i Sport Tech	170 R	£21,135	4/1999	158/7000	139/5000	1173kg	144	7.6	-	132	181	36.2	+ Handles brilliantly again - Less than macho image	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk3 vi)	091 F	'05-'09	4/1798	124/6500	123/4500	1155kg	108	9.3	-	122	-	-	+ Gearchange, interior - Lost some of the charm of old MX-5s	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk2)	017 R	'98-'05	4/1839	146/7000	124/5000	1065kg	140	8.6	-	123	-	32.5	+ Affordable ragtop don't get much better - Cheap cabin	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.6 (Mk1)	131 F	'89-'97	4/1597	115/6500	100/5500	971kg	120	9.0	-	114	-	-	+ The original and still (pretty much) the best - Less than rigid	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK350 Sport	161 R	£44,725	6/3498	302/6500	273/3500	1465kg	209	5.5	-	155	167	39.8	+ Best non-AMG SLK yet - Still no Boxster-beater	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG	171 D	£54,965	8/5461	416/6800	398/4500	1690kg	195	4.5	-	155	195	33.6	+ AMG SLK is quicker and more economical than ever - Should be sharper, though	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG	087 F	'05-'09	8/5439	355/5750	376/4000	1575kg	229	4.9	-	155	-	23.5	+ Superb engine, responsive chassis - No manual option, ESP spoils fun	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG Black	110 F	'07-'08	8/5439	394/5750	383/3750	1495kg	268	<b>4.9</b>	<b>11.2</b>	174	-	-	+ AMG gets serious - Dull-witted TG-ironic auto box, uneven dynamics	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL500	169 D	€680,000	8/4663	429/5250	516/1800	1800kg	242	4.6	-	155	212	31.0	+ Warty performance, beautifully engineered - Lacks ultimate sports car feel	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	171 D	£112,000	8/5461	530/5500	590/2000	1770kg	304	4.3	-	155	231	-	+ Monster performance, lighter than before - Still heavy, steering lacks consistency	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	117 D	£106,820	8/6208	518/6800	464/5200	1970kg	278	4.6	-	155	328	20.0	+ More focused than old SL55 AMG - Lost some of its all-round appeal	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL55 AMG	070 F	'02-'07	8/5439	493/6100	516/2650	1955kg	256	<b>4.6</b>	<b>10.2</b>	155	-	-	+ As fast as a Murcielago - Not as much fun	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG	071 D	'04-'10	12/5980	604/4800	737/2000	2035kg	302	4.1	-	155	-	-	+ Gob-smacking performance - Gob-smackingly pricey	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG Roadster	167 R	£176,895	8/6208	563/6800	479/4750	1735kg	330	3.7	-	197	308	21.4	+ Loses none of the coupe's talents - But (understandably) loses the gullwing doors	★★★★★
Mini John Cooper Works Convertible	130 F	£24,850	4/1598	208/6000	206/1850	1230kg	172	6.9	-	146	169	38.7	+ A manlier Mini cabrio. As hardcore as the hatch... - ...which is still better	★★★★★
Morgan 3 Wheeler	177 R	£25,000	2/1990	80/5300	103/3250	525kg	155	6.0	-	115	-	-	+ Quirky, characterful, brilliant - Unnatural brake feel; you'd better not be shy	★★★★★
Morgan Plus 8	171 R	£82,500	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1100kg	334	4.4	-	155	-	-	+ Hilarious mix of old looks and new mechanicals - Refinement is definitely old-school	★★★★★
Morgan Aero SuperSports	145 F	£126,900	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1180kg	312	4.2	-	170	-	-	+ As above, with a V8 and targa top - It's proper supercar money	★★★★★
Morgan Aero 8	105 F	'02-'08	8/4799	362/6300	361/3400	1100kg	334	4.5	-	170	25.2	-	+ Glorious sound, view over bonnet, dynamics - Awkward-looking rear	★★★★★
Nissan 370Z Roadster	143 F	£32,050	6/3696	326/7000	269/5200	1554kg	213	5.5	-	155	262	25.2	+ The Zed's old-school character remains intact - Its purposeful looks don't	★★★★★
Nissan 350Z Roadster		'04-'09	6/3498	309/6600	264/4800	1600kg	196	5.8	-	155	-	24.8	+ Drives just like the coupe - But doesn't look as good	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster (Mk3)	172 R	£37,589	6/2706	261/6700	206/4500	1310kg	202	5.4	-	164	192	34.5	+ Goes & looks better; cleanest Boxster ever - Steering now electric to help cut CO2	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster S (Mk3)	169 D	£45,384	6/3436	311/6700	265/4500	1320kg	239	5.0	-	173	206	32.1	+ Boxster steps out of 911's shadow - But gets 911's less appealing new steering	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster (Mk2)		'05-'12	6/2893	252/6400	214/4400	1335kg	192	5.9	-	163	221	30.0	+ Second-gen Boxster's as brilliant as ever - It's a typically Porsche redesign	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster S (Mk2)	161 R	'05-'12	6/3436	306/6400	265/5500	1355kg	229	5.3	-	170	223	29.7	+ As above, but with more power - Lighter steering than before	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster Spyder (Mk2)	140 F	'10-'12	6/3436	316/7200	273/4750	1275kg	252	5.0	-	166	221	29.1	+ Lighter, more driver-centric Boxster - Collapsed-brolly roof not practical	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster (Mk1)	049 F	'99-'04	6/2687	228/6300	192/4700	1275kg	182	6.3	-	155	-	29.1	+ Still an impeccable sports car - Very little	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster S (Mk1)	070 F	'99-'04	6/3179	260/6200	228/4700	1320kg	200	5.5	-	164	-	26.9	+ Added power is seductive - As above	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera S Cabrio (991)	171 R	£89,740	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1465kg	273	4.6	-	187	229	29.1	+ All-new open 911 drives just like the coupe - Which means the same artificial steering	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera GTS Cabrio (997)	161 R	£85,249	6/3800	402/7300	310/4200	1515kg	270	4.7	-	190	242	27.4	+ The best 911 drop-top you can buy - Lacks glamour of an R8 Spyder	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo Cabrio (997)	139 D	£118,015	6/3800	493/6000	479/1950	1645kg	305	3.8	-	194	275	24.1	+ Absurdly quick and capable drop-top - We'd still take the coupe	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Speedster	152 D	'10	6/3800	402/7300	310/4200	1540kg	265	4.4	-	189	242	27.0	+ Rarity, quality, head-turning styling - More collectors' than drivers' car	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo Cabrio (996)	060 F	'03-'05	6/3596	414/6000	413/4600	1700kg	250	4.7	-	185	-	-	+ Faster than you'll ever need it to be - Just the image thing again	★★★★★
Radical SR3 SL	174 F	£69,850	4/2000	300/6000	265/4000	795kg	383	3.0	-	161	-	-	+ Our 2011 Track Car of the Year, and it's road-legal - You'll need to wrap up warm	★★★★★
Radical SR8LM	138 F	£88,000	8/2800	460/10,500	260/8000	680kg	687	3.2	-	168	-	-	+ Fastest car around the Nordschleife - Convincing people it's road legal	★★★★★
Smart Roadster Brabus	067 D	'04-'07	3/698	101/5600	96/2500	893kg	115	9.8	-	121	-	54.3	+ Feisty engine, growly soundtrack - Slow paddleshift gearbox	★★★★★
Tesla Roadster	131 F	£87,945	AC motor	248/4500	273/0-4500	1283kg	196	<b>5.0</b>	<b>14.3</b>	120	-	-	+ If this is the future, it's going to be fun - Limited range, high price	★★★★★
Toniq-R Duratec	102 D	£23,500	4/1999	193/6500	174/4500	550kg	357	4.5	-	140	-	-	+ Very good value, well built, and lots of fun too - No roof, no windscreen	★★★★★
Toyota MR2	078 F	'00-'06	4/1794	138/6400	125/4400	975kg	141	<b>7.2</b>	<b>21.2</b>	130	-	38.2	+ Tight lines, taut dynamics - Minimal luggage space	★★★★★
TVR Tamora	070 F	'01-'07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1050kg	338	4.5	-	160	-	-	+ Well-sorted soft-top TVR - Awkward styling	★★★★★
TVR Tuscan Convertible	091 R	'05-'07	6/3996	365/6800	315/6000	1100kg	337	3.8	8.1	195+	-	-	+ Spirit of the Griff reborn - Over 195mph? Really?	★★★★★
TVR Chimera 5.0	007 R	'93-'03	8/4988	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	4.6	-	167	-	26.4	+ Gorgeous noise, tarmac-rippling grunt - Details	★★★★★
TVR Griffith 4.3	068 F	'92-'93	8/4280	280/5500	305/4000	1060kg	268	<b>4.8</b>	<b>11.2</b>	148	-	-	+ The car that made TVR. Cult status - Mere details	★★★★★
TVR Griffith 500	009 R	'93-'01	8/4988	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	<b>4.8</b>	<b>11.2</b>	167	-	22.1	+ Gruff diamond - A few rough edges	★★★★★
Ultima GTR	017 R	£45,500	8/6300	534/5800	528/4800	990kg	548	<b>3.9</b>	<b>8.2</b>	204	-	-	+ Turns the MI into the Mulsanne - You'll have to build it yourself	★★★★★
Vauxhall VX220	023 R	'00-'04	4/2198	145/5800	150/4000	875kg	168	5.6	-	136	-	34.4	+ Absurdly good Vauxhall - The badge?	★★★★★
Vauxhall VX220 Turbo	066 R	'03-'05	4/1998	197/5500	184/1900	930kg	215	4.7	-	151	-	-	+ Nothing comes close for the money - Marginal everyday usability	★★★★★
Westfield Megabus	036 F	£24,450	4/1298	175/9800	102/9000	430kg	413	3.7	-	140	-	-	+ Bike-engined road-rocket - Not big on practicality...	★★★★★
Westfield 1600 Sport Turbo	140 D	£26,500	4/1598	195/5850	170/2000	650kg	305	4.7	-	142	-	-	+ Very quick and composed - Expensive, and a little on the heavy side	★★★★★
Westfield XI	078 D	'04-'10	4/1275	65/6000	72/3000	498kg	132	8.5	-	120	-	-	+ Old-school charm - Old-school power	★★★★★
Westfield XTR4	068 D	'01-'10	4/1781	220/5500	184/5000	542kg	413	3.6	-	160	-	-	+ Mini-Le Mans racer - You wouldn't want to drive it there	★★★★★

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## Our Choice

**Porsche 911 Carrera 4S.** It's taken a while for the 991-generation 911 to win us round, but the C4S has done it, thanks largely to its weightier steering and sweeter balance. Don't hesitate to be tempted by the Powerkit option – it's pricey, but worth it.



## Best of the Rest

The supercharged V6 Lotus Evija S (left) is a proper road racer for £53K and our joint 2012 Car of the Year. Audi's R8 just pips a two-wheel-drive 991 Carrera, and is a genuine junior supercar. We'll have ours with the V8. Alternatively, the Nissan GT-R mixes practicality with supercar pace.

## Coupes / GTs

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cy/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating
Alfa Romeo Brera 3.2 V6	120 F	'08-'11	6/3195	256/6300	237/4500	1532kg	170	6.9	-	155	260	-	+ Brera made better for UK roads - Steering lacking some feel ★★★★★
Alfa Romeo 8C Competizione	120 F	'07-'09	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1585kg	288	4.1	-	181	-	-	+ Looks, exclusivity, noise, balance - They're all sold ★★★★★
Alpina B3 Biturbo	108 F	£50,745	6/2979	355/5500	369/3800	1570kg	230	4.8	-	177	-	29.1	+ Alpina's M3 alternative - Too refined for some ★★★★★
Alpina B3 GT3	176 D	£66,950	6/2979	402/6000	398/4500	1535kg	266	4.4	-	186	224	-	+ Alpina's M3 alternative - Auto gearbox frustrates when pressing on ★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage (4.7)	169 D	£84,995	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1630kg	262	4.7	-	180	328	20.4	+ 2012 upgrades keep the V8 Vantage on song - Starting to feel a little dated, though ★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage S	168 R	£102,500	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1610kg	271	4.5	-	189	299	21.9	+ Keener engine, V12 Vantage looks - Slightly sluggish auto only ★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage	146 R	£135,000	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1680kg	308	4.4	<b>9.7</b>	190	388	17.3	+ The best series production car that Aston Martin makes - Erm, a tad thirsty? ★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Zagato	181 F	£396,000	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1680kg	308	4.2	-	190	388	17.3	+ The looks, the noise, the way it drives - It's three times the price of a V12 Vantage ★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage (4.3)	109 F	'05-'08	8/4281	380/7300	302/5000	1630kg	237	<b>5.2</b>	<b>12.0</b>	175	-	-	+ Gorgeous, awesome soundtrack - Can't quite match 911 dynamically ★★★★★
Aston Martin DB9	178 R	£131,995	12/5935	510/6500	457/5500	1785kg	290	4.6	-	183	368	18.2	+ Better than the old DB9 in every respect - Automatic gearbox could be quicker ★★★★★
Aston Martin DB9	146 D	'10-'12	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1760kg	271	4.6	-	190	368	18.2	+ Ride & handling improved for 2010 model - Rapide makes 2+2 seating pointless ★★★★★
Aston Martin DBS	142 F	£180,812	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1695kg	306	4.2	-	191	388	17.3	+ Stupendous engine, gearbox, brakes - Pricey, can bite the unwary ★★★★★
Aston Martin DB7 Vantage	010 R	'00-'05	12/5935	420/6000	400/5000	1770kg	241	<b>4.9</b>	<b>11.2</b>	185	-	18.6	+ DB7 with near-supercar pace - Handling lacks edge ★★★★★
Audi TT 2.0 TFSI	155 R	£27,140	4/1984	208/4300	258/1600	1295kg	163	<b>6.3</b>	<b>15.7</b>	152	154	42.8	+ Front-driver loses nothing to quattro TTs - Steers like a computer game ★★★★★
Audi TT S	119 D	£35,605	4/1984	268/6000	258/2500	1395kg	195	5.4	-	155	184	35.8	+ Usefully quicker TT; great drivetrain - Still steers like a computer game ★★★★★
Audi TT RS	158 R	£45,840	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1450kg	235	<b>4.4</b>	<b>11.1</b>	155	209	31.4	+ Sublime 5-cylinder turbo engine - Rest of package can't quite match it ★★★★★
Audi TT Sport (Mk1)	081 D	'05-'06	4/1781	237/5700	236/2300	1390kg	173	5.7	-	155	-	-	+ Deliciously purposeful interior, crisp chassis - Numb steering ★★★★★
Audi S5	163 D	£42,790	6/2995	328/5500	325/2900	1675kg	199	4.9	-	155	190	34.9	+ Supercharged V6 makes S5 cleaner and faster - Pricey once you add options ★★★★★
Audi RS5	055	£59,150	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1715kg	245	4.5	-	155	246	26.9	+ Brilliant engine and improved chassis - Still not as exciting as you'd hope ★★★★★
Audi R8 V8	168 R	£87,935	8/4163	444/7800	317/4500	1560kg	270	<b>4.1</b>	<b>9.9</b>	187	332	19.9	+ Finally, a true 911 alternative - Exclusivity comes at a price ★★★★★
Audi R8 V10	181 D	£112,675	10/5204	518/8000	391/6500	1620kg	325	<b>3.9</b>	<b>8.4</b>	194	346	19.0	+ Real supercar feel - We still prefer the V8 ★★★★★
Audi R8 V10 Plus	177 D	£124,675	10/5204	542/8000	398/6500	1570kg	351	<b>3.8</b>	-	198	346	19.0	+ More power and aggression, less weight - Firm ride may be too much for some ★★★★★
Audi R8 GT	169 F	'10-'12	10/5204	552/8000	398/6500	1520kg	369	3.6	-	199	-	-	+ Everything we love about the R8 - Not as hardcore as we wanted ★★★★★
Audi Quattro 20V	019 F	'90-'91	5/2226	220/5900	228/1950	1329kg	146	<b>6.2</b>	<b>18.2</b>	143	-	19.1	+ Modern classic - Buy wisely to avoid big bills ★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT V8	178 R	£123,850	8/3993	500/6000	487/1700	2295kg	221	4.6	-	188	246	27.0	+ A proper drivers' Bentley with decent economy - W12 suddenly seems pointless ★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT	152 D	£135,760	12/5998	567/6000	516/1700	2320kg	248	4.6	-	198	384	17.1	+ 200mph in utter comfort - Weight, heavy ★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT Speed	177 D	£151,100	12/5998	616/6000	590/2000	2320kg	258	4.0	-	205	338	19.5	+ 205mph in utter comfort - Feels nose-heavy in slow corners ★★★★★
Bentley Continental Supersports	137 F	£170,100	12/5998	621/6000	590/2000	2240kg	282	3.7	-	204	388	17.3	+ A thoroughly impressive car... ..rather than a fun and involving one ★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT Speed	115 F	'07-'11	12/5998	600/6000	553/1750	2350kg	259	4.3	-	202	396	17.0	+ Stupendous performance, fine dynamics - Fun, thirsty... ★★★★★
BMW 135i M Sport	113 F	'08-'12	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1455kg	211	5.3	-	155	198	33.2	+ Fast, fun, £20K cheaper than an M3 - You really want the 1-series M Coupe ★★★★★
BMW 1-series M Coupe	158 R	'11-'12	6/2979	335/5900	369/1500	1495kg	228	4.8	-	155	224	-	+ Character, turbo pace and great looks - Came and went too quick ★★★★★
BMW 335i M Sport	095 D	£39,145	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1525kg	201	<b>5.2</b>	<b>12.2</b>	155	196	33.6	+ Eager engine, exploitable chassis - Slightly unadventurous styling ★★★★★
BMW M3 (E92)	162 R	£56,720	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1580kg	266	<b>4.3</b>	<b>10.3</b>	155	290	22.8	+ Fends off all of its talented new rivals - ...except the cheaper 1-series M ★★★★★
BMW M3 GTS (E92)	171 R	'10-'11	8/4361	444/8300	324/3750	1530kg	295	4.3	-	193	295	-	+ Highly exclusive, most focused M-car ever - Good luck trying to find one ★★★★★
BMW M3 (E46)	066 F	'00-'07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1495kg	230	<b>5.1</b>	<b>12.3</b>	155	-	23.7	+ One of the best BMWs ever - Slightly artificial steering feel ★★★★★
BMW M3 CS (E46)	088 F	'05-'07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1495kg	230	<b>5.1</b>	-	155	-	23.7	+ CSL dynamics without CSL price - Looks like the standard car ★★★★★
BMW M3 CSL (E46)	060 R	'03-'04	6/3246	355/7900	273/4900	1385kg	260	<b>5.3</b>	<b>12.0</b>	155	-	-	+ Stripped-down road-race M3 - Standard brakes barely adequate ★★★★★
BMW M3 (E36)	148 F	'93-'98	6/3201	321/7400	258/3250	1460kg	223	<b>5.4</b>	<b>12.8</b>	157	-	25.7	+ Performance, image - Never quite as good as the original ★★★★★
BMW M3 (E30)	165 R	'86-'90	4/2302	212/6750	170/4600	1165kg	185	<b>6.7</b>	<b>17.8</b>	147	-	20.3	+ Best M-car ever! Race-car dynamics for the road - LHD only ★★★★★
BMW Z4 M Coupe	097 F	'06-'09	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1420kg	242	5.0	-	155	-	23.3	+ A real drivers' car - You've got to be prepared to get stuck in ★★★★★
BMW M Coupe	005 R	'98-'03	6/3246	325/7400	258/3250	1375kg	240	5.1	-	155	-	25.0	+ Quick and characterful - Lacks finesse ★★★★★
BMW 640d	165 D	£62,080	6/2993	309/4400	465/1500	1790kg	175	5.5	-	155	144	51.4	+ Great engine and economy, excellent build - Numb steering, unsettled B-road ride ★★★★★
BMW M6 (Mk2)	178 R	£93,820	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1850kg	303	4.2	-	155	232	28.5	+ Mighty ability, pace, technology - There are more exotic badges at this money ★★★★★
BMW M6 (Mk1)	106 R	'05-'10	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1635kg	311	<b>4.8</b>	<b>10.0</b>	155	342	19.8	+ Awesome GT, awesome sports car - SMG gearbox now off the pace ★★★★★
Chevrolet Camaro SS	148 F	£35,025	8/6162	426/5900	420/4600	1769kg	245	5.1	-	155	329	20.0	+ Looks like a Transformer made real - We'd prefer it in robot mode ★★★★★
Chevrolet Camaro ZL1 *	167 D	£60,000	8/6162	580/6100	556/3800	1900kg	310	4.0	-	180	-	-	+ The most powerful Camaro yet - UK sales yet to be confirmed... ★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette C6	116 D	£49,033	8/6162	430/5900	424/4600	1461kg	300	4.3	-	186	316	21.2	+ A Corvette with no apologies needed - Still left-hand drive only ★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette Z06	099 F	£66,403	8/7011	505/6300	469/4800	1418kg	363	<b>3.9</b>	<b>8.5</b>	198	350	19.2	+ 8.5 to 100, brakes, price - Not quite the road-racer we expected ★★★★★
Dodge Challenger *	122 D	£40,000	8/6059	425/6200	420/4800	1877kg	230	5.2	-	160+	-	-	+ Effortlessly cool... ..if you live in Hazard County ★★★★★
Ford Mustang Boss 302 *	162 R	£45,000	8/4951	444/7400	380/4500	1647kg	274	<b>4.6</b>	<b>10.5</b>	155	-	-	+ Looks great and has oodles of character - LHD only, far from dynamically perfect ★★★★★
Ford Shelby GT500 *	178 R	£60,000	8/5812	662/6500	631/4000	1747kg	385	3.5	-	202	-	-	+ Huge performance for the money - Putting it to use takes nerve ★★★★★
Ginetta G40 R	165 R	£29,950	4/1999	175/6700	140/5000	795kg	224	5.8	-	140	-	-	+ A race-compliant sports car for the road - Feels too soft to be a hardcore track toy ★★★★★
Ginetta G60	165 D	£68,000	6/3721	310/6500	288/4500	1080kg	292	4.9	-	165	-	-	+ Reborn Fabio GTs boasts great engine and good looks - The ride still needs work ★★★★★
Honda CR-Z GT	144 F	£20,820	4/1497	122/6100	128/1500	1198kg	103	9.9	-	124	117	56.5	+ The first hybrid with sporting intent - No match for a good diesel hot hatch ★★★★★
Honda Integra Type-R (DC2)	095 F	'96-'00	4/1797	187/8000	131/7300	1101kg	173	<b>6.2</b>	<b>17.9</b>	145	-	28.9	+ Arguably the greatest front-drive car ever - Too rare for some ★★★★★
Honda Integra Type-R (DC5) *	037 F	'01-'06	4/1998	217/8000	152/7000	1250kg	176	7.1	-	167	140	-	+ Sharp looks, massive grip - Lost a little of the DC2's magic ★★★★★
Honda NSX	043 F	'90-'05	6/3179	276/7300	224/5300	1410kg	196	5.5	-	168	-	22.8	+ The useable supercar - 270bhp sounds a bit weedy today ★★★★★
Honda NSX-R *	051 F	'02-'03	6/3179	276/7300	224/5300	1270kg	221	4.4	-	168	-	-	+ Evo Car of the Year 2002 - Honda never brought it to the UK ★★★★★
Hyundai Veloster Turbo	176 D	£21,995	4/1591	184/5500	195/1500	1313kg	142	8.2	-	133	157	40.9	+ The usual Hyundai value, with added fun - Styling might be too quirky for some ★★★★★
Infiniti G37S Coupe	127 R	£38,247	6/3696	316/7000	265/5200	1706kg	188	<b>5.8</b>	<b>13.8</b>	155	246	26.9	+ Softer 370Z delivers sharp-driving swing at the Germans - Bland looks ★★★★★
Jaguar XK 5.0	130 D	£65,430	8/5000	380/6500	380/3500	1585kg	244	5.2	-	155	264	25.2	+ Fine car for the likes of us - Jag buyers may not like the harder edge ★★★★★
Jaguar XKR	168 R	£78,930	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1678kg	305	4.6	-	155	292	23.0	+ Fast and incredibly rewarding Jag - The kids will have to stay at home ★★★★★
Jaguar XKR-S	168 R	£97,430	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1678kg	328	4.2	-	186	292	23.0	+ The most exciting XKR ever - It's nearly £100,000 ★★★★★
Jaguar XKR	'98-'06	8/4196	400/6100	408/3500	1735kg	234	5.2	-	155	-	22.9	+ Extra grunt of 4.2-litre motor - Lacks feedback ★★★★★	
Lotus Evija S (V6)	171 R	£53,850	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1176kg	298	4.0	-	170	236	-	+ Breathtaking road-racer, our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Doubts over Lotus's future ★★★★★
Lotus Evija S	105 F	'06-'11	4/1796	218/7800	158/5500	930kg	238	4.5	-	148	199	33.2	+ Lightweight with a hefty punch - Uninspiring soundtrack ★★★★★
Lotus Evija Cup 260	139 D	'10-'11	4/1796	256/8000	174/6000	890kg	293	4.0	-	152	199	31.1	+ Feels like a race car, yet works on the road - Pricey for a four-pot Evija ★★★★★

## POCKET buying guide

**Aston Vanquish mk1**  
 Years 2000-2007 Engine V12, 5935cc  
 Power 520bhp @ 7000rpm Torque  
 425lb ft @ 5800rpm 0-60mph 4.9sec Top  
 speed 200mph (claimed) (spec is for 'S')



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 For the kudos of owning the car James Bond drove in *Die Another Day* and the last Aston model built at Newport Pagnell. With fewer than 2600 built, it's a rare sight too.

**WHAT TO PAY**  
 Original 460bhp versions can be found for as little as £



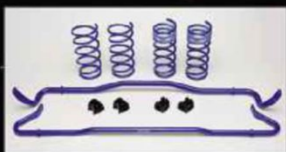
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**Bought, Sold & Exchanged**



## Coupes / GTs

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cv/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft./rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	rating
Lotus Evige (series 2)	068 R	'04-'08	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	875kg	219	4.9	-	147	-	321	+ Highly focused road and track tool - Lacks visual impact of S1
Lotus Evige (series 1)	067 D	'00-'01	4/1796	192/7800	146/5000	780kg	247	4.6	-	136	-	-	+ Looks and goes like Elise racer - A tad lacking in refinement
Lotus Evora	138 F	£52,500	6/3456	276/6400	258/4700	1382kg	203	<b>5.6</b>	<b>13.6</b>	162	217	30.3	+ Sublime ride and handling. Our 2009 car of the year - Pricy options
Lotus Evora S	168 R	£61,500	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1430kg	245	4.6	-	172	229	28.7	+ A faster and better Evora - But one which spars with the Porsche 911...
Lotus Europa SE	127 F	'08-'10	4/1998	222/5600	221/4000	995kg	227	4.9	-	146	-	28.8	+ More of a Lotus than S version - Overshadowed by the Evige and Evora
Lotus Esprit Sport 350	005 R	'99-'00	8/3506	350/6500	295/4250	1299kg	274	<b>4.3</b>	<b>9.9</b>	175	-	22.0	+ Designed for track work but brilliant on the road - Limited edition
Maserati GranTurismo	114 R	£82,190	8/4244	399/7100	339/4750	1880kg	216	<b>5.5</b>	<b>12.7</b>	177	330	19.8	+ Striking, accomplished GT - Doesn't spike the pulse like an Aston or 911
Maserati GranTurismo Sport	178 R	£90,750	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1880kg	245	4.8	-	185	331	-	+ The best everyday GranTurismo yet - Starting to get long in the tooth?
Maserati GT MC Stradale	160 R	£110,045	8/4691	444/7100	376/4750	1770kg	255	4.6	-	187	337	19.6	+ Brilliant blend of road racer and GT - No rear seats
Maserati Coupe	064 F	'03-'07	8/4244	390/7000	333/4500	1680kg	237	4.8	-	177	-	17.6	+ Glorious engine, improved chassis - Overly sharp steering
Maserati GranSport	073 F	'04-'07	8/4244	400/7000	333/4500	1680kg	239	4.8	-	180	-	-	+ Maser Coupe realises its full potential - Very little
Mazda RX-8	122 R	'03-'11	2R/1308	228/8200	156/5500	1429kg	162	<b>6.5</b>	<b>16.4</b>	146	299	24.6	+ Never mind the quirks, it's a great drive - Wafer-thin torque output
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupe	162 R	£57,165	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1730kg	264	<b>4.4</b>	<b>10.3</b>	186	280	23.5	+ Mercedes makes a proper two-door M3 rival - C63 saloon looks better
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Black	171 R	£98,765	8/6208	510/6800	457/5200	1710kg	303	4.1	-	186	286	-	+ The C63 turned up to 11 - Too heavy, not as fiery as Black Series cars of old
Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG	092 D	'06-'09	8/6208	481/6800	464/5000	1755kg	278	4.6	-	155	-	19.9	+ Power, control, build quality - Lacks ultimate involvement
Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG Black	106 F	'07-'09	8/6208	500/6800	464/5250	1760kg	289	4.2	-	186	-	-	+ AMG goes Porsche-hunting - Dull-witted gearshift spoils the party
Mercedes-Benz CL63 AMG	150 D	£115,660	8/5461	536/5500	590/2000	2060kg	264	4.5	-	155	244	26.9	+ Presence, pace, monster engine - Stiff ride, stiff competition
Morgan AeroMax	097 D	£110,000	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1180kg	312	4.1	-	170	-	-	+ Weird and utterly wonderful - They're all sold
Nissan 370Z	180 R	£29,950	6/3696	326/7000	269/5200	1520kg	218	5.4	-	155	248	26.7	+ Quicker, leaner, keener than 350Z - Not quite a Cayman-killer
Nissan 350Z	107 R	'03-'09	6/3498	309/6800	264/4800	1532kg	205	<b>5.5</b>	<b>13.0</b>	155	-	24.1	+ Huge fun, and great value too - Honestly, we're struggling
Nissan GT-R (2012MY)	168 R	£74,450	6/3799	542/6400	466/3200	1740kg	316	2.8	-	199	275	24.0	+ GT-R is quicker and better than ever - But over £20k more than its launch price
Nissan GT-R (2010MY)	152 F	'10-'12	6/3799	523/6400	451/3200	1740kg	305	3.0	-	194	279	23.5	+ More powerful version of the original - But they're not worlds apart to drive
Nissan GT-R (2008MY)	125 F	'08-'10	6/3799	473/6400	434/3200	1740kg	276	3.8	-	193	-	-	+ Our 2008 Car of the Year, now from just £35K - You won't see 20mpg often
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R34)	009 R	'99-'02	6/2568	276/7000	289/4400	1560kg	180	<b>4.7</b>	<b>12.5</b>	165	-	20.1	+ Big, brutal, and great fun - Very firm ride
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R33)	019 F	'97-'99	6/2568	276/6800	271/4400	1540kg	182	<b>5.4</b>	<b>14.3</b>	155	-	22.0	+ Proof that Japanese hi-tech can work (superbly) - Limited supply
Noble M400	089 F	'04-'06	6/2968	425/6500	390/5000	1060kg	407	3.5	-	185	-	-	+ Devilishly fast - Demon tweaks interior
Noble M12 GTO-3R	070 F	'03-'06	6/2968	352/6200	350/3500	1080kg	332	3.8	-	170	-	-	+ The ability to humble exotic - Flawed driving position
Peugeot RCZ 1.6 THP 200	155 R	£23,595	4/1598	197/5500	202/1700	1421kg	141	<b>7.3</b>	<b>18.1</b>	147	155	42.1	+ Distinctive looks, highly capable handling - Could be a bit more exciting
Porsche Cayman S (Mk3)	181 R	£48,783	6/3436	321/7400	273/4500	1320kg	247	5.0	-	176	206	32.1	+ The Cayman comes of age - Erm...
Porsche Cayman (Mk2)	131 F	'11-'13	6/2893	261/7200	221/4400	1330kg	199	5.8	-	165	221	30.1	+ Extra power, just as involving - Still lacks the desirability of other Porsches
Porsche Cayman S (Mk2)	132 F	'11-'13	6/3436	316/7200	273/4750	1350kg	237	5.2	-	172	223	29.7	+ Still want that 911? - Yeah, us too
Porsche Cayman R	158 R	'11-'13	6/3436	325/7400	273/4750	1295kg	255	4.7	-	175	228	29.1	+ Total handling excellence - Styling additions not to all tastes
Porsche Cayman S (Mk1)	097 F	'06-'09	6/3387	291/6250	251/4400	1350kg	219	<b>5.3</b>	<b>12.2</b>	171	-	26.6	+ Pure and rewarding - If they'd just move the engine back a bit...
Porsche 911 Carrera (991)	168 R	£71,449	6/3436	345/7400	288/5600	1380kg	254	4.7	-	179	212	31.4	+ 911 becomes cleaner and cleverer - But some of its character's gone AWOL
Porsche 911 Carrera S (991)	168 R	£81,242	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1395kg	287	4.4	-	188	224	29.7	+ As above, but with supercar pace - Electric steering robs it of some tautness
Porsche 911 Carrera 4 (991)	177 D	£71,924	6/3436	345/7400	288/5600	1430kg	245	4.5	-	177	219	30.4	+ A touch more engaging than 2wd 991 - Still stand-offish compared to 997
Porsche 911 Carrera 4S (991)	179 R	£87,959	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1445kg	277	4.5	-	185	234	28.5	+ The best 991-generation Carrera - Choose your spec carefully
Porsche 911 Carrera (997.2)		'08-'11	6/3614	341/6500	288/4400	1415kg	245	4.9	-	180	225	29.4	+ Faster and greener than the mk1 997 - Lost a little of the 911 magic
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.2)	121 F	'08-'11	6/3800	380/6500	310/4400	1425kg	271	4.7	-	188	242	27.4	+ Poise, precision, blinding pace - Feels a bit clinical
Porsche 911 Carrera GTS (997.2)	152 D	'11-'12	6/3800	402/7300	310/4200	1420kg	288	4.6	-	190	240	26.6	+ Fitting finale for the 997 generation - Absolutely nothing
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.1)	070 F	'04-'08	6/3824	350/6600	295/4600	1420kg	246	4.6	10.9	182	-	24.5	+ evo Car of the Year 2004, like a junior GT3 - Tech overload?
Porsche 911 Carrera 4S (996)	051 F	'02-'05	6/3596	316/6800	273/4250	1470kg	218	5.1	-	174	-	-	+ Second best 996 only to the GT3 - Very little
Porsche 911 Carrera (996.3)	008 R	'98-'01	6/3387	300/6800	258/4600	1320kg	230	4.6	-	173	-	28.0	+ evo Car of the Year 1998, beautifully polished - Some like a bit of rough
Porsche 911 Carrera 996		'94-'97	6/3600	285/6100	251/5250	1372kg	211	5.2	-	168	-	25.0	+ More character than 996 - Harder work at speed
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.2)	182 R	'09-'11	6/3797	429/7600	317/6250	1395kg	312	<b>4.2</b>	<b>9.2</b>	194	303	22.1	+ Even better than the car it replaced - Give us a minute...
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.2)	152 F	'10-'11	6/3797	444/7900	317/6750	1370kg	329	4.0	-	193	314	-	+ Our 2010 car of the year - Looks and noise are slightly OTT
Porsche 911 GT3 RS 4.0 (997.2)	164 R	'11-'12	6/3996	493/8250	339/5750	1360kg	368	3.8	-	193	326	-	+ The ultimate modern 911, and our 2011 Car of the Year - Unforgiving on-road ride
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.1)	182 R	'07-'09	6/3600	409/7600	298/5500	1395kg	298	<b>4.3</b>	<b>9.4</b>	192	-	-	+ Runner-up evo Car of the Year 2006 - Ferrari 599 GTB
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.1)	105 F	'07-'09	6/3600	409/7600	298/5500	1375kg	302	4.2	-	193	-	-	+ evo Car of the Year 2007 - A chunk more money than the brilliant GT3
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.2)	082 R	'03-'05	6/3600	375/7400	284/5000	1380kg	272	<b>4.3</b>	<b>9.2</b>	190	-	-	+ evo Car of the Year 2003 - Chassis is a bit too track-focused for some roads
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (996.2)	068 R	'03-'05	6/3600	375/7400	284/5000	1330kg	286	4.2	-	192	-	-	+ Track-biased version of above - Limited supply
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.1)	182 R	'99	6/3600	360/7200	273/5000	1350kg	271	<b>4.5</b>	<b>10.3</b>	187	-	21.9	+ Our Car of the Year 1999 - Porsche didn't build enough
Porsche 911 RS (993)	036 R	'95	6/3746	300/6500	262/5400	1270kg	240	4.7	11.2	172	-	-	+ Barking engine note, gearchange - Not quite hardcore enough
Porsche 968 Club Sport	019 F	'93-'95	4/2990	240/6200	225/4100	1335kg	183	<b>6.1</b>	<b>15.7</b>	149	-	-	+ One of the all-time greats - Lots have been driven very hard
Renault Alpine A610		'92-'96	6/2975	250/5750	258/2900	1420kg	179	<b>5.4</b>	<b>13.8</b>	160	-	21.0	+ Overlooked, bargain-price French 911. Try one - R5 interior
Subaru BRZ	170 R	£24,995	4/1998	197/7000	151/6400	1202kg	166	7.5	-	143	159	40.9	+ Fine chassis, great steering - Weak engine, not the slide-happy car they promised
Toyota GT86	174 R	£24,995	4/1998	197/7000	151/6400	1240kg	162	7.5	-	140	181	36.2	+ More fun than its cousin (above) - Same lack of torque, poor interior quality
TVR T350C	057 R	'03-'07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1100kg	318	<b>4.7</b>	<b>10.0</b>	175	-	-	+ Looks, engine - Unsuppressive seats; chassis lacks ultimate polish
TVR Sagaris	099 D	'05-'07	6/3996	406/7500	349/5000	1078kg	383	3.7	-	185	-	-	+ Looks outrageous - 406bhp feels a touch optimistic
TVR Tuscan S (Mk2)	076 R	'05-'07	6/3996	400/7000	315/5250	1100kg	369	4.0	-	185	-	-	+ Possibly TVR's best ever car - Aerodynamic 'enhancements'
TVR Cerbera Speed Six	004 R	'98-'04	6/3996	350/6800	330/5000	1130kg	315	<b>5.0</b>	<b>11.4</b>	160+	-	-	+ Accomplished and desirable - Check chassis for corrosion
Vauxhall Monaco VXR 6.0	079 D	'05-'07	8/5967	398/6000	391/4400	1677kg	241	5.1	-	180+	-	-	+ Improved chassis and steering, 180mph - Looks a bit snouty
VW Scirocco GT 2.0 TSI	155 R	£24,705	4/1984	207/5300	207/1700	1373kg	153	<b>6.1</b>	<b>15.8</b>	149	172	38.2	+ Golf GTI price and performance, 170mph - Interior lacks flair
VW Scirocco R	181 R	£31,135	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1352kg	196	5.8	-	155	189	34.9	+ Great engine, grown-up dynamics - Perhaps a little too grown-up for some
VW Corrado VR6	095 F	'92-'96	6/2861	190/5800	180/4200	1237kg	156	6.2	-	143	-	29.5	+ One of the great all-rounders - A little nose-heavy
Wiesmann GT MF5	127 D	£150,000	10/4999	500/7750	383/6100	1380kg	368	3.9	-	193	-	-	+ Striking coupe mated to BMW M5's V10 - Steering a little light

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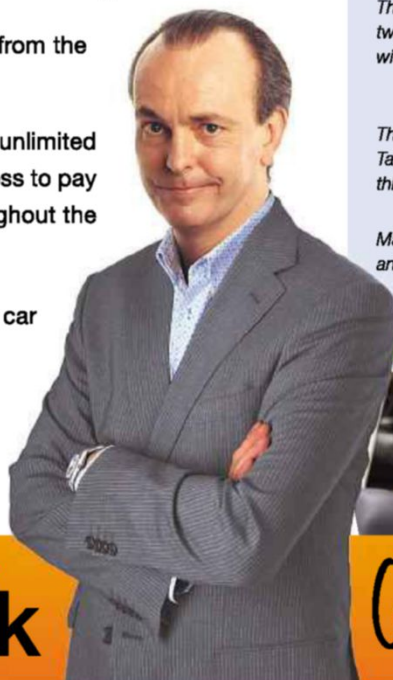
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**Miss Reyburn**

*Many thanks to Lynne and Gemma for their help, and in changing me from a pessimist to optimist.*

**Mr Stallard**

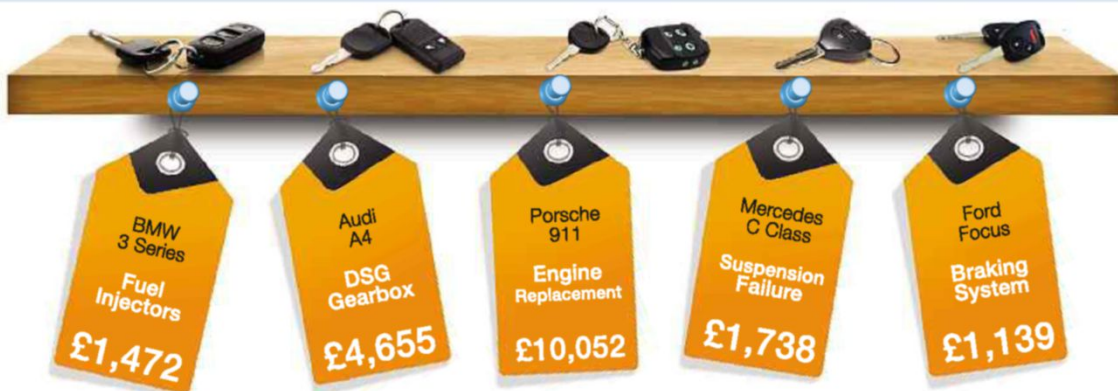
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*Quentin Willson*  
Designed by Quentin Willson

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### Our Choice

**Ferrari 458 Italia.** A huge step on from the F430 it replaced. The lack of a manual gearbox is a shame, but the scintillating 4.5-litre V8 and snappy seven-speed twin-clutch transmission result in a car that's markedly quicker than its V8 predecessors.



### Best of the Rest

Pagani's awesome Huayra (left) is our reigning joint Car of the Year. Ferrari's fastest-ever road car, the F12, is on a whole new level to its rivals technologically, but Lamborghini's Aventador has it licked for visual drama. The updated McLaren MP4-12C, meanwhile, remains tantalisingly close to greatness.

## Supercars

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cy/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft./rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating	
9ff GT9R	127 D	€450,000	6/4000	1120/7850	774/5970	1346kg	845	2.9	-	260	-	-	+ Above 100mph eats Veyrons for breakfast - Eats M3 dust at traffic lights	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vanquish (Mk2)	182 R	£189,995	12/5935	565/6750	457/5500	1739kg	330	4.1	-	183	335	19.6	+ A much better car than the DBS it succeeds - Shame it looks little different, then	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vanquish S (Mk1)	110 F	'05-'07	12/5935	520/7000	425/5800	1875kg	282	<b>4.9</b>	<b>10.1</b>	200	-	-	+ Vanquish joins supercar greats - A tad intimidating at the limit	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vantage s/c	001 R	'93-'00	8/5340	550/6500	550/4000	1988kg	281	4.6	-	186	-	13.1	+ Two tons of well-hung British beef - Leaden gearbox	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vantage 600	131 F	'98	8/5340	600/6200	600/4400	2020kg	302	<b>4.6</b>	<b>11.0</b>	190	-	-	+ A proper, full-fat Aston Martin - Running costs will be equally 'proper'	★★★★★
Aston Martin One-77	179 R	'10-'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	★★★★★
BMW M1	110 F	'78-'81	6/3500	277/6500	239/5000	1303kg	216	5.8	-	161	-	-	+ Early supercar icon - A bit under-endowed these days	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron 16.4	134 F	€925,000	16/7993	1000/6000	922/2200	1950kg	521	<b>2.8</b>	<b>5.8</b>	253	-	-	+ Superbly engineered 4wd quad-turbo rocket - Er, lacks luggage space?	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron Grand Sport	133 F	€1.4m	16/7993	1000/6000	922/2200	1990kg	510	2.6	-	253	-	-	+ Warp speed and ferocious noise sans-roof - Ridiculous broly/roof thing	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron Super Sport	151 F	€2.0m	16/7993	1183/6400	1106/3000	1838kg	654	2.5	-	268	539	-	+ The world's fastest supercar - Limited to 258mph for us mere mortals	★★★★★
Bugatti EB110	078 F	'91-'95	12/3500	552/8000	451/3750	1566kg	358	3.4	-	212	-	-	+ Superbly engineered 4wd quad-turbo rocket - It just fizzled out	★★★★★
Caparo T1	138 F	£301,975	8/3499	575/10,500	310/9000	689kg	848	<b>3.8</b>	<b>6.2</b>	205	-	-	+ Absolutely staggering performance - Absolutely staggering price tag	★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette ZR1	133 R	£106,605	8/6162	638/6500	603/3800	1528kg	424	<b>3.8</b>	<b>7.6</b>	205	355	18.8	+ Huge pace and character - Take plenty of brave pills if there's rain	★★★★★
Ferrari 458 Italia	159 R	£178,491	8/4499	562/9000	398/6000	1485kg	384	<b>3.2</b>	<b>6.8</b>	202	307	20.6	+ An astounding achievement, looks fantastic - There'll never be a manual	★★★★★
Ferrari 458 Spider	164 D	£198,936	8/4499	562/9000	398/6000	1530kg	373	3.3	-	198	275	23.9	+ A 458 that sounds and feels more organic - Er, amply slower?	★★★★★
Ferrari F430	163 R	'04-'10	8/4308	483/8500	343/5250	1449kg	339	4.0	-	196	-	18.6	+ Just brilliant - Didn't you read the plus point?	★★★★★
Ferrari F430 Spider	095 F	'04-'10	8/4308	483/8500	343/5250	1520kg	326	4.1	-	193	-	18.6	+ Berlinetta dynamics, 8000rpm with the roof down - Looks?	★★★★★
Ferrari 430 Scuderia	121 R	'07-'10	8/4308	503/8500	347/5250	1500kg	378	<b>3.5</b>	<b>7.7</b>	198	-	15.7	+ Successful F1 technology transplant - Likes to shout about it	★★★★★
Ferrari 360 Modena	163 R	'99-'04	8/3586	394/8500	275/4750	1390kg	288	4.5	9.0	183	-	17.0	+ Worthy successor to 355 - Not quite as involving as it should be	★★★★★
Ferrari 360 Challenge Stradale	068 R	'03-'04	8/3586	420/8500	275/4750	1280kg	333	4.1	-	186	-	-	+ Totally exhilarating road-racer. It's loud - It's very, very loud	★★★★★
Ferrari F355 F1 Berlinetta	163 R	'97-'99	8/3496	374/8250	268/6000	1350kg	281	4.7	-	183	-	16.7	+ Looks terrific, sounds even better - Are you kidding?	★★★★★
Ferrari F12 Berlinetta	182 R	€239,736	12/6262	730/8250	509/6000	1630kg	455	3.1	-	211	350	18.8	+ 730bhp isn't too much power for the road - We'd rather have an Aventador (just)	★★★★★
Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano	101 R	'06-'12	12/5999	611/7600	448/5600	1688kg	368	<b>3.5</b>	<b>7.4</b>	205	415	15.8	+evo Car of the Year 2006 - Banks are getting harder to rob	★★★★★
Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano HGTE	146 R	'10-'12	12/5999	611/7600	448/5600	1688kg	368	<b>3.5</b>	<b>7.4</b>	205	415	-	+ As above, but with a bit more edge - Can be a little too edgy in the wet	★★★★★
Ferrari 599 GTO	161 R	'11-'12	12/5999	661/8250	457/6500	1605kg	418	3.4	-	208	-	-	+ One of the truly great Ferraris - Er, the air con isn't very good	★★★★★
Ferrari 575M Fiorano Handling Pack	169 R	'02-'06	12/5748	508/7250	434/5250	1730kg	298	<b>4.2</b>	<b>9.6</b>	202	-	12.3	+ Fiorano pack makes 575 truly great - It should have been standard	★★★★★
Ferrari 550 Maranello	169 R	'97-'02	12/5748	485/7000	415/5000	1716kg	287	4.3	10.0	199	-	12.3	+ Everything - Nothing	★★★★★
Ferrari FF	164 R	€227,107	12/6262	651/8000	504/6000	1880kg	347	3.7	-	208	360	15.4	+ Four seats and 4WD, but a proper Ferrari - Looks divide opinion	★★★★★
Ferrari 612 Scaglietti F1	090 R	'04-'11	12/5748	533/7250	434/5250	1840kg	294	<b>4.3</b>	<b>9.8</b>	199	470	13.8	+ Awesomely capable grand tourer - See above	★★★★★
Ferrari Enzo	149 F	'02-'04	12/5998	650/7800	485/5500	1365kg	484	<b>3.5</b>	<b>6.7</b>	217+	-	-	+ Intoxicating, exploitable - Cabin detailing falls short of Zonda or F1	★★★★★
Ferrari F50	064 F	'96-'97	12/4698	513/8500	347/6500	1229kg	424	3.7	-	202	-	-	+ The best drivers' Ferrari - Lines lack tension	★★★★★
Ferrari F40	157 F	'87-'92	8/2936	478/7000	425/4000	1100kg	441	3.7	-	201	-	-	+ The shape that launched a thousand posters - Er...	★★★★★
Ferrari 288GTO	064 F	'84-'85	8/2855	400/7000	366/3800	1160kg	350	4.9	-	189	-	-	+ Painfully beautiful, rarer than the F40 - You are joking?	★★★★★
Ford GT	087 R	'04-'06	8/5409	550/6500	500/3750	1583kg	353	3.7	-	205	-	-	+ Our 2005 Car of the Year - JC had one. Reckoned it didn't handle...	★★★★★
Gumpert Apollo	110 F	€275,000	8/4163	690/6300	675/4000	1200kg	584	3.0	-	220+	-	-	+ Stupendous performance, 'Apollo' - High price, 'Gumpert'	★★★★★
Hennessey Venom GT	180 R	€900,000	8/7000	1244/6500	1155/4000	1244kg	1016	2.5	-	275	-	-	+ 0-200mph in 14.5sec, and it handles too - Looks like an Exige	★★★★★
Jaguar XJ220	157 F	'92-'94	6/3498	542/7200	475/4500	1470kg	375	3.7	-	213	-	-	+ Britain's greatest supercar... - until McLaren built the F1	★★★★★
Koenigsegg Agera R	180 R	£1,080,000	8/5000	1140/7100	885/2700	1435kg	807	2.9	-	273	-	-	+ As fast and exciting as your body can handle - It's Veyron money	★★★★★
Koenigsegg CCX	094 F	'06-'10	8/4700	806/6900	678/5700	1180kg	694	<b>3.9</b>	<b>7.7</b>	241	-	-	+ Sweden's greatest supercar - Sweden's only supercar	★★★★★
Koenigsegg CCXR Edition	118 F	'08-'10	8/4800	1004/7000	796/5600	1280kg	797	2.8	-	254+	-	-	+ One of the world's fastest cars - Spikey power delivery	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo LP550-2	176 F	£166,784	10/5204	542/8000	398/6500	1380kg	399	3.9	-	199	315	16.0	+ The mad rear-driven Lambo is back! - Gallardo not feeling as fresh as the 458	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4	180 D	£164,444	10/5204	552/8000	398/6500	1410kg	398	3.7	-	202	325	16.0	+ Still a missile from A to B - Starting to show its age	★★★★★
Lamborghini LP570-4 Superleggera	152 F	£178,560	10/5204	562/8000	398/6500	1340kg	426	<b>3.5</b>	-	202	325	20.6	+ A reminder of how great the Gallardo is - LP560-4 does as good a job	★★★★★
Lamborghini LP570-4 Performante	160 R	£186,000	10/5204	562/8000	398/6500	1485kg	384	3.9	-	201	327	16.0	+ It's a Superleggera Spyder... - that's not actually that super-light	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo	094 F	'06-'08	10/4961	513/8000	376/4250	1520kg	343	<b>4.3</b>	<b>9.4</b>	196	-	-	+ On a full-bore start it spins all four wheels. Cool - Slightly clunky e-gear	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo Superleggera	104 F	'07-'08	10/4961	522/8000	376/4250	1420kg	373	3.8	-	196	-	-	+ Lighter, more agile - Grabby carbon brakes, clunky e-gear	★★★★★
Lamborghini Aventador LP700-4	182 R	£247,000	12/6498	690/8250	509/5500	1575kg	445	2.9	-	217	370	17.7	+ Most important new Lambo since the Countach - Er... expensive?	★★★★★
Lamborghini Aventador Roadster	181 D	£294,665	12/6498	690/8250	509/5500	1625kg	431	3.0	-	217	370	17.7	+ Sensational engine and styling - A wee bit on the thirsty side	★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago	089 D	'01-'06	12/6192	570/7500	479/5400	1650kg	351	4.0	-	205	-	-	+ Gorgeous, capable and incredibly friendly - V12 feels stressed	★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago LP640	093 F	'06-'11	12/6496	631/8000	487/6000	1665kg	385	3.3	-	211	-	21.3	+ Compelling old-school supercar - You'd better be on your toes	★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago LP670-4 SV	138 F	'09-'11	12/6946	661/8000	487/6500	1655kg	429	<b>3.2</b>	<b>7.3</b>	212	-	-	+ A supercar in its truest, wildest sense - Be prepared for stares	★★★★★
Lamborghini Diablo GT	016 F	'99-'00	12/5992	575/7300	465/5500	1490kg	392	<b>4.1</b>	<b>8.3</b>	211	-	12.5	+ Briefly the world's fastest production car - They made only 80	★★★★★
Lamborghini Diablo 6.0	019 F	'00-'02	12/5992	550/7100	457/5500	1625kg	343	3.8	-	200+	-	-	+ Best-built, best-looking Diablo of all - People's perceptions	★★★★★
Lamborghini Countach QV	162 R	'88-'91	12/5167	455/7000	369/5200	1447kg	320	4.9	-	188	-	13.7	+ Still the definitive supercar - Visibility, pract- oh hell, who cares?	★★★★★
Lexus LFA/LFA Nürburgring	161 R	£352,000	10/4805	552/8700	354/6800	1480kg	379	3.7	-	202	-	-	+ Absurd and compelling supercar - Badge and price don't quite match	★★★★★
Maserati MC12	079 R	'04-'05	12/5998	621/7500	481/5500	1445kg	437	3.8	-	205	-	-	+ Rarer than an Enzo - The Ferrari's better	★★★★★
McLaren MP4-12C	173 R	£176,000	8/3799	616/7500	442/3000	1434kg	435	3.1	-	207	279	24.2	+ Staggering performance, refinement - Lacks design flair	★★★★★
McLaren 12C Spider	177 R	£195,000	8/3799	616/7500	442/3000	1474kg	425	3.1	-	207	279	24.2	+ No discernible dynamic compromises - Requires commitment to come alive	★★★★★
McLaren F1	145 F	'94-'98	12/6064	627/7500	479/4000	1137kg	560	3.2	6.3	240+	-	19.0	+ Still the most single-minded supercar ever - There'll never be another	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG Black	131 F	'09-'10	12/5980	661/5400	737/2200	1876kg	358	<b>4.0</b>	<b>8.1</b>	199	-	-	+ Bonkers looks, bonkers speed - Bonkers £250K price	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL55 AMG	159 R	£168,395	8/6208	563/6800	479/4750	1620kg	335	<b>4.1</b>	<b>8.4</b>	197	308	21.4	+ Great engine and chassis (gulling doors too!) - Slightly tardy gearbox	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLR McLaren	073 F	'04-'07	8/5439	617/6500	575/3250	1618kg	387	3.7	-	208	-	-	+ Zonda-pace, 575-style drivability - Dreadful brake feel	★★★★★
Noble M600	178 F	€200,000	8/4439	650/6800	604/3800	1119kg	551	<b>3.8</b>	<b>7.7</b>	225	-	-	+ Leicestershire's unbelievably good attack on the supercar class - It's a bit pricey	★★★★★
Pagani Huayra	172 R	€820,000	12/5980	720/5800	737/2250	1350kg	542	3.3	-	224	-	-	+ Our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Engine isn't as nape-prickling as the Zonda's	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda 760RS	170 R	£1.5m	12/7291	750/6300	575/4500	1210kg	630	3.3	-	217+	-	-	+ The most extreme Zonda ever - The last Zonda ever (probably)	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda C12S	096 F	'01-'05	12/7291	555/5900	553/4050	1250kg	451	3.6	-	217	-	-	+evo Car of the Year 2001 - Harry's sold his long-temper	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda F	082 F	'05-'06	12/7291	602/6150	575/4000	1230kg	497	3.6	-	214	-	-	+ Everything an Italian supercar ought to be - Choose interior carefully	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda Cinque Roadster	147 D	'												



# Track Times

**Key** + = new addition this month. **Red** denotes the car is the fastest in its class.

Car	Lap time	Peak mph	Issue no.	Conditions
<b>Radical SR8LM (fastest car)</b>	<b>1:13.6</b>	<b>127.8</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>Dry</b>
<b>Caparo T1 (fastest supercar)</b>	<b>1:14.8</b>	<b>130.9</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>Dry</b>
Ferrari 458 Italia	1:19.3	120.0	159	Dry
Gumpert Apollo S	1:19.4	120.4	119	Dry
McLaren MP4-12C (Corsa tyres)	1:19.6	121.2	159	Dry
Caterham Levante V8	1:19.6	118.6	131	Dry
Porsche 997 GT2 RS	1:19.9	122.3	158	Dry
Lotus 2-Eleven GT4	1:20.1	113.2	138	Dry
Caterham Superlight R500	1:20.2	115.7	119	Dry
McLaren MP4-12C	1:20.6	120.9	159	Dry
Noble M600	1:20.8	121.8	159	Dry
<b>Porsche 997 GT3 RS 4.0 (fastest coupe)</b>	<b>1:21.0</b>	<b>118.2</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>Dry</b>
Lamborghini Murciélago LP670-4 SV	1:21.3	121.1	134	Dry
Ariel Atom 3 Supercharged	1:21.5	113.6	119	Dry
KTM X-Bow (300bhp)	1:21.5	112.7	138	Dry
Ferrari 430 Scuderia	1:21.7	117.2	121	Dry
Porsche 997.2 GT3 RS (3.8)	1:21.9	116.8	150	Dry
Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4	1:22.5	119.1	122	Dry
Brooke Double R	1:22.5	113.2	119	Dry
Lamborghini Murciélago LP640	1:22.9	116.7	143	Dry
Porsche Carrera GT	1:23.3	115.2	119	Dry
Porsche 997.2 GT3	1:23.3	114.5	138	Dry
Porsche 997 Turbo S	1:23.5	117.5	146	Dry
Porsche 997 GT2	1:23.5	115.1	119	Dry
Nissan GT-R (2008MY)	1:23.6	113.1	119	Dry
Porsche 991 Carrera	1:23.6	112.5	182	Dry
+ Porsche 991 Carrera Cabriolet	1:23.9	112.3	183	Dry
Porsche 997 Turbo	1:24.1	113.5	136	Damp
Lotus 340R (190bhp)	1:24.2	110.0	135	Dry
+ Porsche Boxster S (981)	1:24.2	109.3	183	Dry
Caterham Superlight R300	1:24.3	101.5	138	Dry
Maserati GranTurismo MC Stradale	1:24.5	115.1	160	Dry
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG	1:24.6	115.7	146	Dry
Porsche Boxster Spyder (987)	1:24.7	107.7	167	Dry
Ferrari California	1:25.0	111.8	134	Dry
KTM X-Bow	1:25.0	105.0	123	Dry
BMW E92 M3 Coupe	1:25.1	109.1	162	Dry
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG Black	1:25.2	108.6	131	Dry
+ Jaguar F-type V8 S	1:25.2	111.2	183	Dry
Audi RS5	1:25.4	108.8	162	Dry
Audi R8 Spyder V8	1:25.5	107.0	167	Dry
Porsche Cayman R	1:25.5	106.8	158	Dry
+ Aston Martin V8 Vantage Roadster	1:25.6	109.1	183	Dry
<b>BMW M5 (F10) (fastest saloon)</b>	<b>1:25.7</b>	<b>112.0</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>Dry</b>
Aston Martin V12 Vantage	1:25.8	110.9	146	Dry
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-400	1:25.9	107.5	138	Dry
BMW 1-series M Coupe	1:25.9	106.4	158	Dry
Mitsubishi Evo X RS 360	1:26.1	106.6	153	Dry
<b>Renaultsport Mégane 265 Trophy (fastest hot hatch)</b>	<b>1:26.1</b>	<b>105.3</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>Dry</b>
Audi TT RS	1:26.3	107.2	149	Dry
Aston Martin DBS	1:26.4	109.5	143	Dry
Porsche Panamera Turbo	1:26.5	109.2	137	Dry
Jaguar XJ220	1:26.7	111.7	131	Dry
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG	1:26.8	104.9	165	Dry
<b>Porsche Cayenne Turbo (fastest 4x4)</b>	<b>1:26.9</b>	<b>107.4</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>Dry</b>
Lotus Evora	1:27.1	104.2	145	Dry
Nissan 370Z	1:27.1	104.0	158	Dry
Porsche Panamera S	1:27.3	102.4	165	Dry
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupe	1:27.7	111.0	162	Dry
Lotus Elise SC	1:27.7	104.6	131	Dry
Vauxhall VX88 Bathurst S	1:27.8	106.1	131	Dry
BMW E46 M3 CSL	1:27.8	105.4	153	Dry
Renaultsport Mégane R26.R	1:27.8	103.3		
<b>Audi RS6 Avant (fastest estate)</b>	<b>1:27.9</b>	<b>111.0</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>Dry</b>
Jaguar XFR	1:27.9	108.1	137	Dry
Lexus IS-F	1:28.1	106.4	151	Dry
Porsche Boxster S (987)	1:28.1	105.4	120	Dry
Subaru WRX STI	1:28.3	101.6	157	Dry
SEAT Leon Cupra R	1:28.7	102.4	162	Dry
Bentley Continental Supersports	1:29.2	105.8	149	Dry
Lotus Elise Club Racer	1:29.2	95.5	162	Dry
Renaultsport Mégane 250 Cup	1:29.9	101.4	156	Dry
Honda NSX	1:30.1	101.3	145	Dry
Nissan 370Z Roadster	1:30.3	100.1	173	Dry
VW Scirocco 2.0 TSI	1:30.4	98.9	155	Dry
Ford Focus RS (Mk2)	1:30.8	101.8	131	Dry
Vauxhall Astra VXR (Mk2)	1:31.4	100.9	174	Damp
Renaultsport Clio 200 Cup	1:31.9	97.2	144	Dry
VW Golf GTI (Mk6)	1:32.4	99.3		

## TRACK MAP



### West Circuit facts

- Location Bedford Autodrome
- Opened 1999
- Length 1.85 miles (2.98 kilometres)
- Direction Anti-clockwise
- Left turns 9
- Right turns 6

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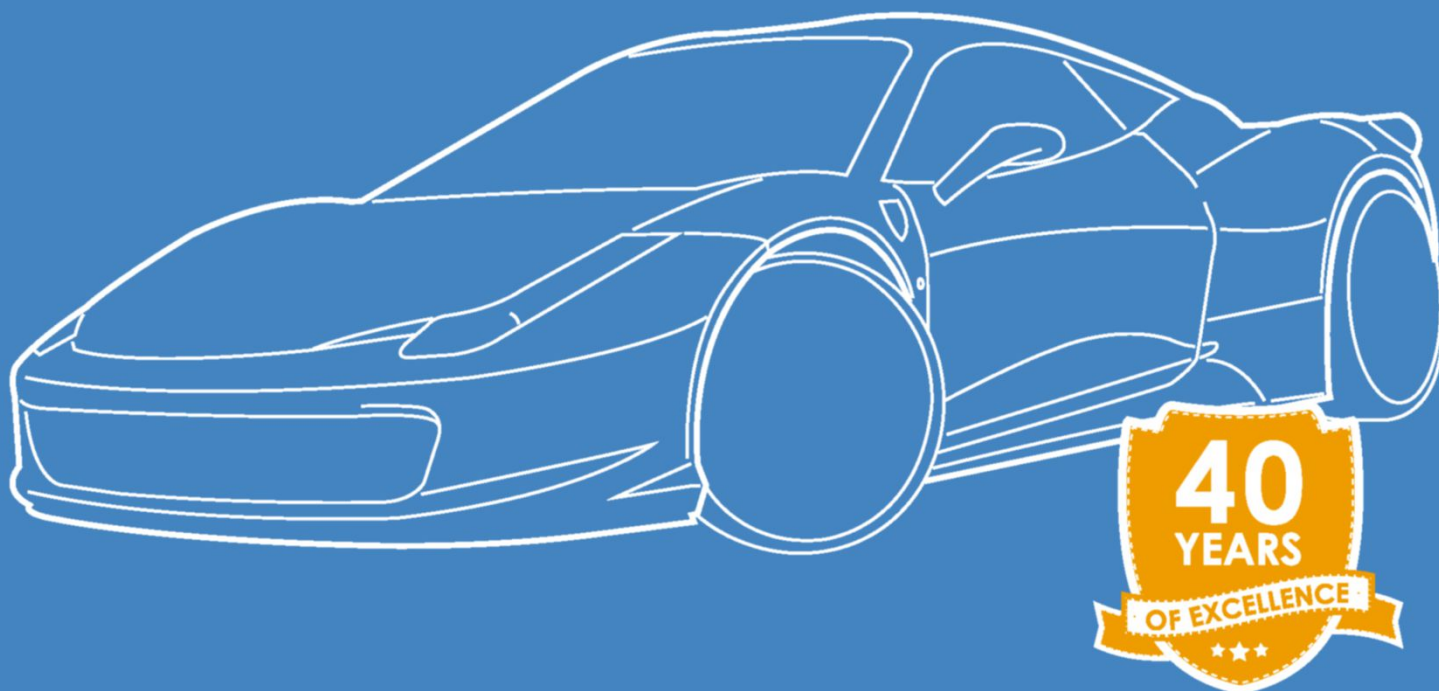
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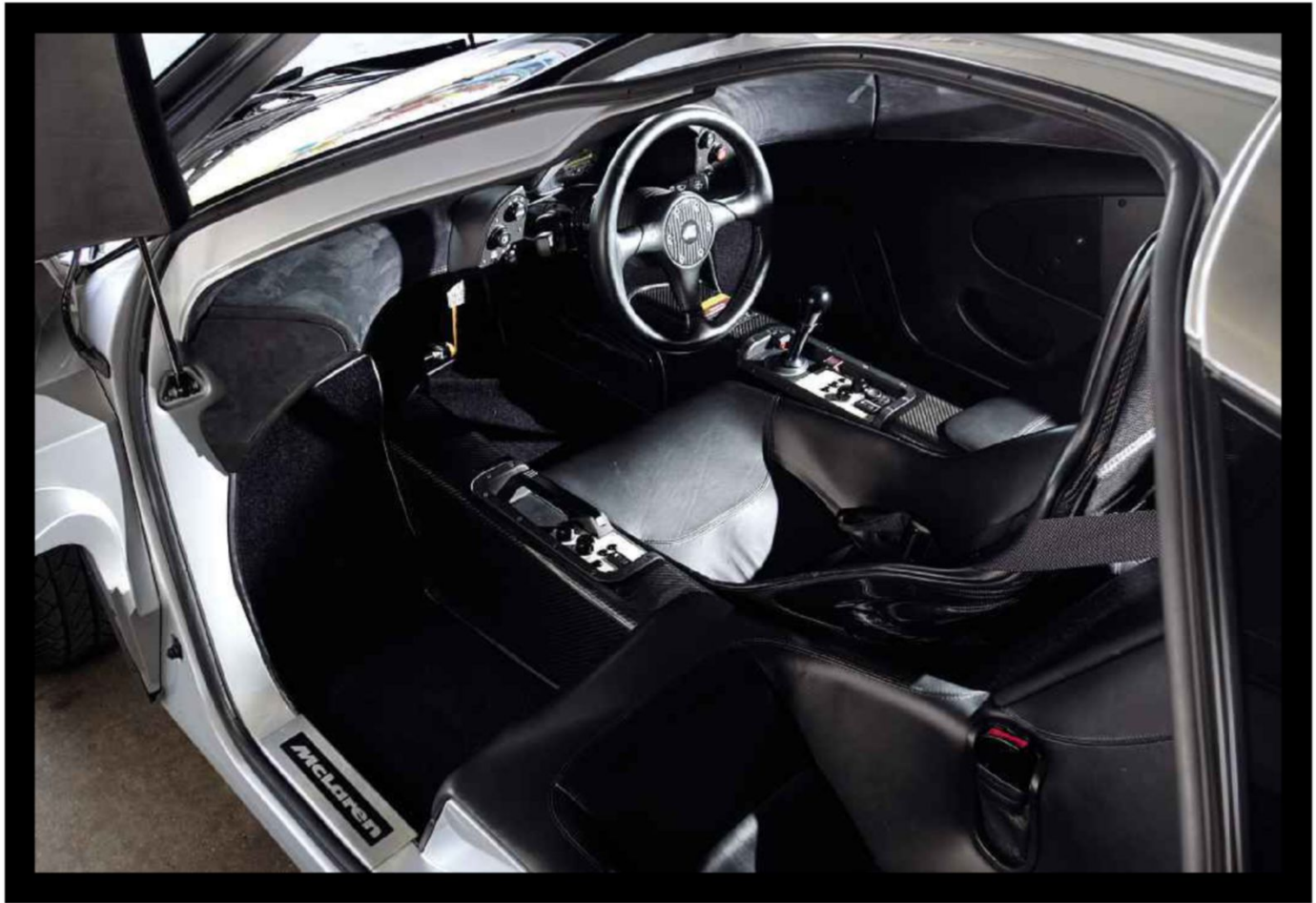
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# Art of speed



Camera: Nikon 300S. Exposure: 1/60sec at f/5.0 (ISO 100)

## McLaren F1 central driver's seat

by DAVID VIVIAN | PHOTOGRAPHY by DAVE SMITH

I

**IT'S BEEN OUT-MUSCLED ON THE DYNO, OVERTAKEN** in the record books and dropped in a drag race on YouTube. Yet for many, the McLaren F1 shouldn't be remembered as the progenitor of today's hypercar but, 21 years after its launch, as its finest example. The ultimate car. Full stop.

It's arguably the only car that could ever aspire to such heights: one man's extraordinary vision carried through in perfect detail from start to finish. That man was Gordon Murray, the most dazzling Formula 1 designer of his generation. The F1 was the road car he'd wanted to build since his youth: a three-seat 'sports car' but, crucially, one with the driver's seat out in front, centre stage. He pitched the idea that this could be the basis of the definitive driving machine, drawing heavily on Formula 1 experience and technology, to McLaren boss Ron Dennis, and his wish was granted, along with all the money and resources he needed to make it happen.

The F1 began life in the spring of 1990 as three chairs arranged in a delta pattern on the workshop floor. These were replaced a few months later by a crude wooden seating buck. The wooden buck evolved into three Corbeau sports

seats, which in turn became a more sophisticated seating buck with a framework made from MDF and ply, with parallel lines of fishing wire to show screen surface. 'Early versions gave a slightly uncomfortable "outside of car" feeling for side passengers,' recalls team member Mark Roberts, 'but by tweaking the A-pillar foot location you suddenly felt "inside" the car again.'

Sorting the control ergonomics from the centre seat was literally a hands-on exercise, with Murray and two colleagues agreeing the most natural feel for reach and rotation, and the push and pull actions of every knob and switch. Murray was adamant that the driver's seat should be set back against the F1's carbon bulkhead/fuel-tank cover, with no adjustment other than to slide fore and aft.

The central driving position required effort and a certain gymnastic dexterity to access, but that was only right. You savoured the moments. All of them. McLaren made 107 F1s and each one had a specially moulded carbon composite-shelled driving seat, upholstered in leather just 0.7mm thick, which was then tailored to the customer for fit and comfort – as were the steering wheel and the positioning of the pedals. The ultimate car with the ultimate driving position. That was the McLaren F1. 🚗

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