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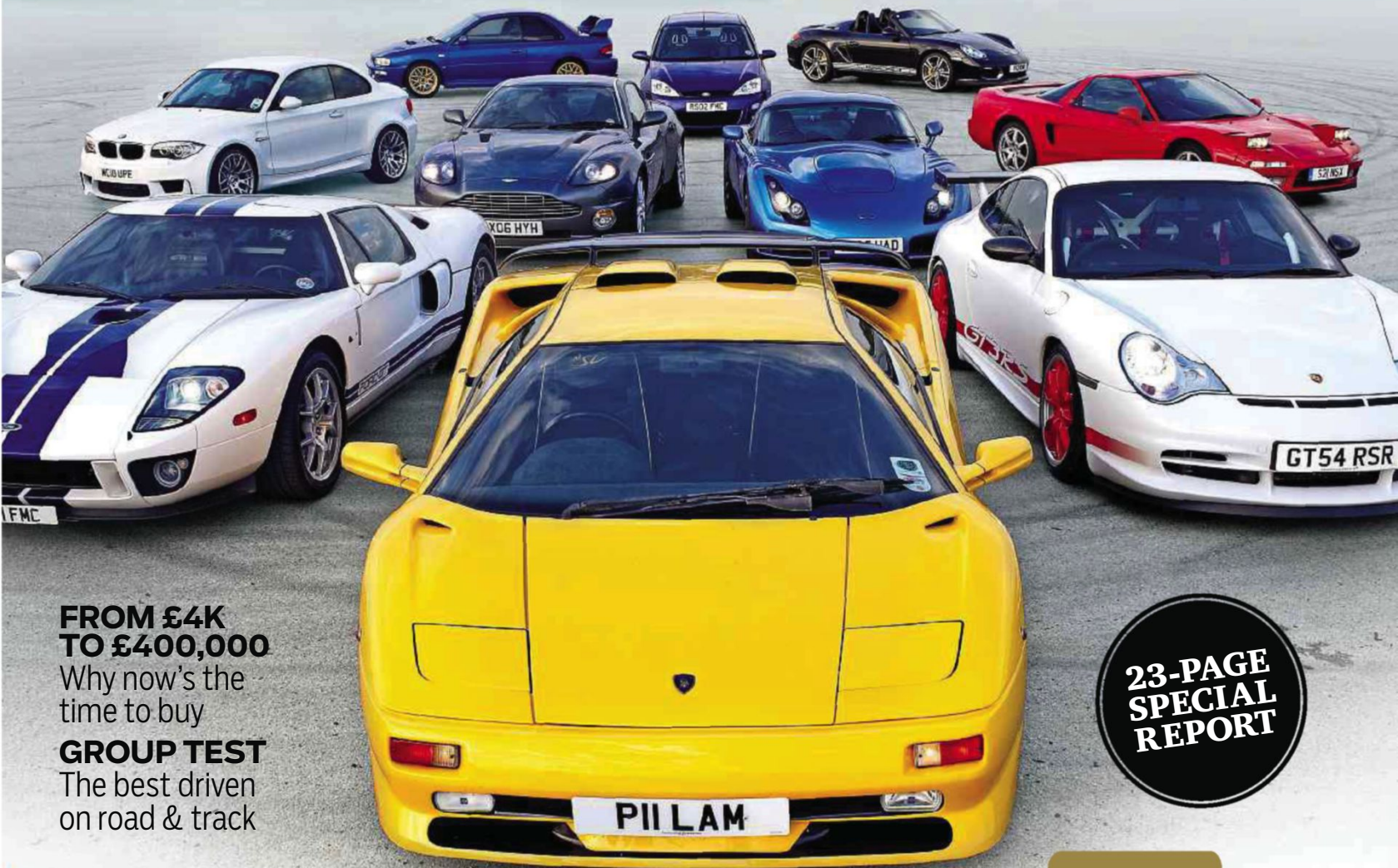
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# Ed Speak

‘Most people fishing for buying advice ask me: “Will it look after me financially?”’

M

MAN MATHS, EVONOMICS, BLIND OPTIMISM, CALL IT what you will – the concept of being able to afford a great drivers' car, with that car also acting as an investment, is undoubtedly a hot topic at the moment. Most people who collar Harry or myself at dinner parties fishing for buying advice will always include the line: ‘Will it look after me financially?’

It's a tough question to answer for many reasons. Partly because the room tends to go quiet, like the moment in *Trading Places* when street hustler-turned-commodities broker Billy Ray Valentine is asked in a restaurant which future investments he will be favouring. Everybody in the dining area freezes and listens intently. Suffice to say, it's hard to put other people's money where your mouth is as there are no guarantees. And, as Harry reminded the *evo* team when he sold his Zonda for £208,000 more than he paid for it, that appreciation wasn't there to cover servicing and maintenance (totalling a not inconsiderable £49,000) as the bills came in. So, the first tip we can give you is: go in with your eyes wide open.

As you can see on page 56, there are some cars that cannot fail to become icons and correspondingly ‘look after you’ financially. I've looked at buying a few myself, in particular the BMW M3 CSL. I made a big fuss in the mag about how smitten I was with the CSL after a drive in BMW's heritage car and how I was going to buy one. Instead, I bought a 1982 Porsche 911 SC (see page 135).

The reason for this comes down to the second piece of advice we tend to dispense on these matters: buy the car that you're going to enjoy driving the most. In my case, I adore the CSL but it's a little too similar to the cars that I drive every day in this job (lucky me). And if I'm absolutely honest, I would've missed changing gear manually, and that in turn would've made me kick myself for not enjoying the £15k saving over a CSL by buying a standard E46 M3 manual. I had to be honest with myself, because I knew the CSL would probably appreciate more than my SC, but in my heart I also knew this wouldn't make up for what the old 911 delivers from a driving perspective.

However, I did ignore the third piece of advice we dispense: ensure you can afford to run, service and fix the car should it go wrong, so that you can continue driving and enjoying it. If my SC's engine went pop, I don't think I could afford to fix it...

Ah well, to hell with it – I'm going for a drive.

*Nick*

Nick Trott Editor



## Across the evo universe this month

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# evo

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***'You always expect the Ford GT to be intimidating and recalcitrant to drive, when actually it's anything but'***



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# Ferrari 458 gets Speciale

**First look**

The low-down on a star car of the future

Ultimate version of 458 earns its stripes with 597bhp, 90kg weight loss and a faster Fiorano lap time than a 599 GTO **Words:** Mike Duff

**W** E TOLD YOU about Ferrari's plans for an ultimate version of the 458 in the last issue.

Now we can bring you the first official images of the so-called Speciale ahead of its official unveiling at the Frankfurt motor show. And yes, it's a stunner.

There's never been much wrong with the standard 458 Italia, of course. But Ferrari has managed to boost power, trim weight and improve the car's already impressive aerodynamic performance. The Speciale will be the ultimate incarnation of the 458, following on from the tradition the company established with the 360 Challenge Stradale and 430 Scuderia, and although pricing details haven't yet been released, you can confidently predict that the basic sterling price will start with a '2' and be followed by five other digits.

Visually, you're left in little doubt that you're looking at the ultimate 458 – even without the full-length body stripe, which we believe will be

an (expensive) option. The Speciale gets some serious aerodynamic revisions, including a vent integrated into the bonnet, channels on the outer edges of the front bumper and small winglets on the side sills. At the back is a vast diffuser, and the Speciale loses the 458 Italia's triple exhaust tailpipes for two wider-bored outlets, one each side of the new diffuser's tall central element. Ferrari says that moveable aerodynamic surfaces front and rear help balance aero downforce levels – similar in principal to the system on the F12 – and claims the Speciale is the 'most aerodynamically efficient range production car' in the company's history.

The cabin is stripped, if not spartan. The Speciale doesn't get an audio system or carpets, but keeps climate control and a stitched part-leather dashboard. Lightweight carbon-framed bucket seats should provide plenty of support, too.

Power comes from a revised version of the 458's 4.5-litre V8 engine with 597bhp – a 35bhp increase. That works out at a specific

**p18 BENTLEY CONTI V8 GETS HOTTER**

Sportier new 'S' model gets power increase and chassis revisions



**p20 NEW METAL FROM FRANKFURT**

The best models and concepts unveiled at German motor show



**p22 FASTEST PRODUCTION GOLF EVER**

New Golf R chases super-hatch pack with sub-5sec 0-62 time



**p24 R.I.P: KARL-HEINZ KALBFELL**

Motor industry veteran dies in motorcycle crash at Brands Hatch



output of 133bhp per litre, which Maranello boasts is the highest ever produced by a naturally aspirated road-car engine. It's enough to ensure the Speciale's peak power figure runs the 616bhp McLaren 12C – and its twin turbochargers – close. As with the regular 458 Italia, peak power arrives at a heady 9000rpm.

The amount of weight saved has been even more impressive. Previously we estimated the Speciale would only be about 35kg lighter than the standard car, but Ferrari has managed to trim a claimed 90kg – cutting the Speciale's dry weight to 1290kg. To save you making with the calculator, that translates

into a power-to-weight ratio of 470bhp per ton. Ferrari says that the 0-62mph sprint will be dispatched in 3 seconds dead, 0.4sec quicker than the 458 Italia. We're also promised a 9.1sec 0-124mph (200kph) time. The Speciale gets around a lap of the company's Fiorano test track in just 1min 23.5sec – just half a second shy of the 730bhp Ferrari F12, but quicker than the mighty 599 GTO by the same margin. The peak lateral grip level – a stonking 1.33G – is claimed to be the highest achieved by any Ferrari road car.

The Speciale also adds a new driving aid to Ferrari's battery of acronyms – Side Slip Angle Control

**'The 0-62mph sprint will be dispatched in 3 seconds dead'**

or SSC. This is a new system that, basically, seems intended to make owners feel like drifting gods. It promises to help a driver maintain a consistent slip angle by managing both the traction control system and vectoring torque between the rear wheels. Or, as the official release puts it, 'makes it easier to achieve car control on the limit, therefore greatly

improving driving emotions.' Sounds like fun, doesn't it?

As is increasingly the way, the Speciale has been designed to work with unique tyres, in this case Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2s that were developed alongside the car. We're told that much of the Speciale's technical content will make it to other future Ferrari road cars – with the SSC and active aerodynamics being near certainties. And as we believe the 458's replacement is likely to switch to a turbocharged engine, it's entirely possible the Speciale will be viewed by history as the high water mark of the naturally aspirated Ferrari V8. ❧

**The evolution of Ferrari's V8 specials**



**Ferrari 348 GT Competizione**

Years produced 1993  
Power 316bhp @ 7200rpm  
Weight (dry) 1180kg  
Power to weight 272bhp/ton  
0-62mph 5.0sec (estimated)  
Top speed 175mph (estimated)



**Ferrari 360 Challenge Stradale**

Years produced 2003-2004  
Power 419bhp @ 8500rpm  
Weight (dry) 1180kg  
Power to weight 361bhp/ton  
0-62mph 4.1sec (claimed)  
Top speed 186mph (claimed)



**Ferrari 430 Scuderia**

Years produced 2007-2010  
Power 503bhp @ 8500rpm  
Weight (dry) 1258kg  
Power to weight 406bhp/ton  
0-62mph <3.6sec  
Top speed 198mph



**Ferrari 458 Speciale**

Years produced 2014-  
Power 597bhp @ 9000rpm  
Weight (dry) 1290kg  
Power to weight 470bhp/ton  
0-62mph 3.0sec (claimed)  
Top speed TBC

# BMW M4: the big questions

The M3 Coupe is dead. But here comes the M4.  
We look at what you can expect

Words: Mike Duff



**B** BMW'S DECISION TO show a 'design concept' of its new M4 at the Frankfurt motor show, without releasing any further technical details, can be taken in one of two ways. Either it's a welcome opportunity to check out the styling of one of next year's most eagerly anticipated performance cars, or it's a cynical attempt to get a second dose of publicity when the 'official' car is unveiled at the Detroit motor show in January. We'll leave you to decide which. In the meantime, here's our run-down on what we know about the M4: what's official, what we think is likely, and what we're marking as internet speculation.

The big news is that new M4 badge, which will now be used for the coupe and cabrio versions of what used to be called M3s. BMW insiders admit there was a heated debate about switching from the iconic M3 moniker, with many in M division wanting to keep

it despite the arrival of the new 4-series. However, we can still expect to see the M3 badge on a future saloon version, although this is likely to sell in far smaller volumes than the coupe. There 'definitely won't' be an estate, a senior BMW executive told us earlier this year, but we can expect an M4 version of a future 4-series Gran Coupe.



BMW insiders are happy to confirm that the concept you see here is nearly identical to the styling of the finished car. The company has form here: the current M5 is indistinguishable from the 'styling exercise' that previewed it at the 2011 Shanghai motor show. Few would deny that the M4 concept looks great, building on the already-handsome base of the standard 4-series with a widened track and an aggressive bodykit. We're told that the front splitter, rear diffuser and roof of the concept are all made from carbonfibre and we can safely assume the production car will follow suit. It sits on 20-inch twin-spoke alloys. At the back are twin double-bore exhaust pipes.

Trying to work out what those shiny tailpipes will be connected to is where it gets interesting and where the speculation starts. Conversations **evo** has had with M division executives over the last year mean that we're almost certain that the



**From left:** M4 gets larger air intakes; 20in alloys; concept's exhausts feature carbon surrounds



## 'Speculation has already given the M4 a sub-4sec 0-62mph time and a 190mph+ top speed'

M4 will follow the downsizing trend of the M5 and move away from the outgoing E92 M3's 4-litre V8 engine, switching instead to a smaller, turbocharged powerplant. We'd be very surprised if this wasn't based on BMW's existing 3-litre straight-six, albeit fed with two turbochargers. We're not expecting power to rise dramatically over the E92, which managed 414bhp at a dizzying 8300rpm: reckon on between 430bhp and 450bhp, achieved somewhere in the region of 6000rpm. But the new engine will certainly have more torque than the naturally aspirated V8's comparatively anaemic 295lb ft. Kerb weight should come in under the 1600kg of the DCT-equipped E92.

Transmissions? The sure bet is that the M4 will get a version of BMW's DCT seven-speed twin-clutch 'box, tuned for improved response and to work better with the new engine's fatter torque curve. The more contentious subject is whether there will be a manual gearbox option and, if so, whether this will be offered

in all markets. Online speculation that the M4 will be two-pedal only has been rife, but our cautious prediction is that there will be a self-shifter, not least due to spy photographs of a prototype M4 with a manual 'box. Whatever transpires, the decision will have been a tricky one – US buyers still expect to shift their own gears in sports coupes and saloons, but an



increasing number of manufacturers are launching driver-focused models without them. Porsche's decision to launch the 991 GT3 with the sole choice of a paddle-shift is likely to have caused some serious head-scratching amongst M's engineers.

When it comes to performance numbers, the only certainty is that the M4 will be faster than the E92 M3, both in a straight line and over a flying lap. Speculation has already given the M4 a sub-4sec 0-62mph time and a 190mph+ top speed with the more permissive speed limiter that BMW offers outside the UK. However, we'd be surprised if the M4 is significantly quicker than the M5 (4.3sec 0-62mph).

Finally, money. The E92 M3 raised the bar on pricing in the segment with its £50,625 price tag in 2007 (£54,980 by the time it went off sale earlier this year), so with the M4 we'd be surprised if you get much (if any) change from £60,000 at launch. You'll find out how accurate our crystal ball is after Detroit. ☒

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(8.3) Extra Urban 29.1 (9.7) – 42.2 (6.7) Combined 22.1 (12.8) – 38.7 (7.3) CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions 298 – 194 g/km.  
differ from that achieved in such tests and these figures are for comparative purposes only. Subject to availability and at participating dealers.



# 'S' upgrade for Conti

Bentley gives V8-powered coupe 521bhp and 502lb ft **Words:** Mike Duff

**W**E SEEM TO GET a new Bentley Continental variant on an almost monthly basis these days, and here's one that we've been expecting for some time.

As its name suggests, the new V8 S is a sportier version of the Continental coupe and GTC cabrio, powered by a modestly boosted version of the recently launched V8 engine. But we're more interested in some promising-sounding chassis revisions. Don't be surprised if, once we drive it, the S becomes our favourite version of the recently revised Conti.

The increase in power is slightly underwhelming. The S gets 521bhp and 502lb ft – increases of just 21bhp and 15lb ft over the standard V8, but still a fair way short of the 552bhp and 516lb ft that Audi gets from the same engine in the RS6. The problem, of course, is that RS6-level numbers are too close to those delivered by Bentley's venerable 6-litre W12.

Bentley claims the S is 0.3sec quicker to 60mph than the ordinary V8, posting a time of 4.3sec, and, at 191mph, all of 3mph faster. Economy and emissions figures are similar, too, with an official (if unlikely) 25.9mpg.

Chassis changes are more comprehensive, with the S getting a similar set of revisions to those given to the full-on W12-powered Conti GT Speed. It sits 10mm lower than the

regular V8, with spring rates 45 per cent stiffer at the front, 33 per cent at the rear. Bushes and anti-roll bars have also been firmed up and the power steering system recalibrated. We're also told that the stability control system has been tweaked to allow more wheel slip and to reinstate torque more quickly after intervening. This is to, as the official release puts it, 'provide the spirited driver more opportunity to exploit the full potential of the uprated chassis'.

Styling tweaks are slight, with a marginally different front splitter, sill cladding and a beefier diffuser, along with 'V8 S' badges on the front wings, which will probably be necessary for casual viewers to realise anything

## 'Don't be surprised if the S becomes our favourite version of the Conti'

is different. Prices have yet to be announced, but you can bet that the S will be positioned between the standard V8 and the W12 (£123,850 and £135,760 respectively for the coupe versions.)

The V8 S seems to be the conclusion of former Bentley boss Wolfgang Dürheimer's pledge to produce a

**Right:** eight-speed automatic 'box is retained, as are 20in wheels (below)



sportier V8 variant of the Continental. When we spoke to him about that back in 2011, he told us that the road-going version would feature some major weight-saving over the standard car, describing it as being a similar car to a 911 GT3. After Dürheimer departed to head development at Audi (before leaving his new role in acrimonious

circumstances), his plans for a lightened road-going V8 were quietly dropped, although it's fair to say that plenty of mass has been shaved from Bentley's forthcoming Conti GT3 racer.

Although we're looking forward to driving the 'S', we're still hoping there will be a sportier V8-powered Continental somewhere behind it. ❌



Porsche recommends **Mobil 1** and **Motul**

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**PORSCHE**

# 308 turns up the heat

Peugeot's 270bhp Frankfurt concept could emerge as an RS Mégane rival – if it makes production

Words: Mike Duff



**P**EUGEOT IS SHOWING off the 308 R, a 270bhp version of its recently launched second-generation 308, at Frankfurt, albeit as a concept rather than a confirmed production model.

The show car is finished in a weird, diagonally split two-tone colour scheme and shares its powertrain with the forthcoming RCZ R. That means a heavily reworked version of the BMW-Peugeot 1.6-litre turbocharged petrol engine, a six-speed manual gearbox and a Torsen limited-slip differential.

It certainly looks mean. The 308 R sits 26mm lower than the standard car, has 19in alloys, widened arches and a front bumper with a massive airdam. Peugeot says the concept's panels are made from carbonfibre to save weight, a detail we'd be surprised to find making it to production. But the rest of the car looks ready to go if Peugeot opts to build it.

With 270bhp and a proper diff, the 308R would go up against the top end of the senior hot hatch segment – think the 261bhp Renault Mégane RS and the 276bhp Astra VXR. ☒

**O**NE OF THE most stylish debuts at the Frankfurt show is set to be this, the Volvo Concept

Coupe. Behind its unimaginative name sits a handsome reinterpretation of the P1800 coupe. It's intended to show off both the more exciting direction in which we're promised Volvo's design will now head, but also the possibilities created by the company's 'scaleable product architecture'.

We can also anticipate that the concept's drivetrain – a plug-in hybrid electric system working with a supercharged and turbocharged four-cylinder petrol engine – will appear in forthcoming production models, although probably not producing the 400bhp and 442lb ft that Volvo claims for the CC.

Volvo is remaining tight-lipped on whether the coupe itself has a chance of making it to production. It's fair to say that the previous C70 coupe always struggled in the marketplace, but something as stylish as this could be a great way to launch the new design direction... ☒



# Volvo turns on the style

Concept Coupe drops hints at big design changes

Words: Mike Duff



## News in brief



### Audi unleashes Quattro concept

Audi's reborn Quattro has morphed into a new concept for the Frankfurt motor show. Tipped to use a twin-turbo V8 engine (perhaps the 552bhp unit from the RS6, though a 600bhp output has been touted), a small production run will price it above Audi's current most expensive model, the £128,710 R8 V10 Plus S-tronic. It should be Audi's fastest car, too, though...



### Infiniti Q30 revealed

Infiniti's small UK sales should receive a nice boost from its new Q30. Its styling (as well as its name) point to it being a high-riding, SUV-style premium hatchback to rival the Audi Q3, and it's tipped for part sharing with Mercedes. The Q30 will be the first Infiniti to roll out of Nissan's Sunderland factory.



### Tavares departs

As **evo** closed for press, news came in that Renault's chief operating officer Carlos Tavares has left the company with immediate effect to 'pursue personal projects'. Tavares had been one of the company's keenest exponents of motorsport and performance projects, so his departure could well have an effect on Renault's sporting activities. Speculation is already linking him with a move to another carmaker...

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The mpg figures quoted are sourced from official EU-regulated test results, are provided for comparability purposes and may not reflect your actual driving experience. Vehicle shown is the Ford Fiesta Titanium with optional Candy Blue pearlescent paint and 17" 8-spoke alloy wheels. Ford SYNC with Voice Control works with compatible connected mobile phones only. See [ford.co.uk](http://ford.co.uk). SYNC standard on Zetec S, Titanium and Titanium X. Optional extra on Style and Zetec. Not available on Studio.



**Go Further**



# Golf gets R treatment

296bhp four-wheel-drive hatch can reach 62mph in 4.9sec **Words:** Stephen Dobie

**T**HE FRANKFURT motor show has also yielded the fastest factory Golf ever. The new VW Golf R's 0-62mph time dips under the 5sec barrier, helping it hang on to the coat-tails of the rest of its 'super hatch' contemporaries, including the new Mercedes A45 AMG.

The R uses a development of the Golf GTI's EA888 2-litre turbocharged four-cylinder engine, with a new turbo, cylinder head, pistons and injectors. The result is a hike in output to 296bhp and 280lb ft; up 69bhp and 22lb ft on a Performance Pack-equipped GTI, and good for that headline 4.9sec sprint if you've chosen the optional six-speed DSG gearbox. The standard six-speed manual R hits 62mph in 5.3sec, while both versions are electronically limited to 155mph.

The performance is, of course, assisted by the R's biggest differentiator over the GTI – its four-wheel-drive system. Still dubbed 4MOTION, it's a new fifth-generation Haldex coupling. While it's classed as permanent all-wheel drive, the rear axle decouples under low load to save fuel, but is awoken quickly when extra traction is needed, and can receive almost 100 per cent of



**Top:** Golf R sits lower than GTI. **Above:** rear wheels can be decoupled from 4wd

that 280lb ft when necessary. And happily, the stability control can now apparently be switched off fully, too...

Leave it switched on and EDS (four diff locks integrated into the ESP) brakes slipping wheels to distribute power to those with grip. XDS+ is borrowed from the GTI and works as an extension of EDS, braking inside wheels on both axles to increase cornering agility.

The Golf R's suspension is 20mm lower than standard (5mm lower than the GTI) with claims of improved ride comfort over the old R. The optional DCC (Dynamic Chassis Control) features Comfort, Normal and Sport modes, while a Driving

Profile Selector, with Eco, Normal, Individual and Race modes, alters other functions, including throttle response and shift speeds of the optional DSG 'box. Progressive steering – also on the GTI – boasts a variable ratio.

There had been rumours that the new R wouldn't make it to the UK, but it's been confirmed that sales of three- and five-door versions will start here next summer. Starting from around £30,000, the Golf will be priced similarly to its Audi S3 cousin, with which it shares its engine, MQB architecture and Haldex all-wheel-drive. The question is how different VW can make the Golf R feel... ❧

## News in brief



### Caterham gets Suzuki turbo

Caterham's new sub-£17,000 entry-level Seven will also be its first turbocharged car. Its rear wheels will be driven by a front-mounted, three-cylinder 660cc Suzuki engine. Less than half the size of the Seven's current smallest engine, it's a radical change, its dinky weight likely to aid the car's power-to-weight ratio even further. We can't wait to find out more...



### New Super GT racers

Both Honda and Lexus have pulled the covers off their new GT500 racers, built to compete in the Japanese Super GT series from next year. Based on their respective concept cars, the NSX (pictured) and LF-CC are both set to provide the first glimpses of these new hybrid performance cars in action.



### Spyker Venator convertible unveiled

Spyker has revealed a convertible version of the B6 Venator, called the Spyder, at Pebble Beach. The new concept will pave the way for a production model in 2014, powered by a mid-mounted 375bhp V6. This will be the most affordable Spyker model to date, aimed squarely at 911 buyers at around £95,000.

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# Obituary: Karl-Heinz Kalbfell

Former Alfa and Maserati CEO and ex-BMW Motorsport chief killed in classic motorcycle crash

Words: Harry Metcalfe



**O**NE OF THE most remarkable men in the car industry, Karl-Heinz Kalbfell, lost his life in a tragic accident in August, whilst practising for a classic motorbike race. It was typical of Karl-Heinz that, at the age of 63, he should be hurtling around a damp Brands Hatch on a Saturday, when most would have expected to find him relaxing at home, reading the weekend papers.

I first met Karl-Heinz at the Goodwood Festival of Speed in 2005, just after he was made CEO at Maserati, and he was about to give me a ride up the hill in the beautiful Birdcage concept car. He was easy to spot in the throng surrounding the car in the supercar paddock, standing well over six feet tall with thick-set features, and a restyled nose thanks to his passion for boxing as a teenager. But it was when we discussed some of his previous achievements that Karl-Heinz revealed his exceptional talent as a motor industry visionary.

His career really kicked off at BMW. He joined the company in 1977

and quickly rose through the ranks. When he was put in charge of BMW Motorsport, one of his first moves was to question why it was making the E28 M5 in such limited numbers. He felt demand was much greater than the limited supply BMW had decided on, and he was instrumental in making sure all future M-cars (including the E30 M3 and E34 M5)

become a highly profitable division. How right he was. Later Kalbfell was put in charge of reinventing Rolls-Royce, for which he set up a design office just off Marble Arch in London and created the Phantom. On top of all that, he agreed the deal to supply Morgan with BMW engines because he liked what Charles Morgan was doing with the brand.

making Alfa and Maserati closer partners would benefit both brands. It all proved too much for the Italians and Kalbfell was ousted from his job the day after the interview. How ironic that Kalbfell's master plan for Maserati back then exactly matches the brand's exploits today.

Kalbfell was one of the greatest visionaries I've ever met, with a

## 'KALBFELL WAS ONE OF THE GREATEST VISIONARIES I'VE EVER MET, WITH A DEEP-ROOTED PASSION FOR CARS FROM MINI TO McLAREN'

were built in far greater numbers.

Whilst at BMW Motorsport, he also played a huge part in getting a BMW engine into the McLaren F1, before setting up BMW's Le Mans race team that subsequently won the 24-hour race in 1999 with the V12 LMR.

It was during this time that BMW was struggling with its troublesome 'English patient', the Rover Group. When the BMW board decided to sell Rover to the Phoenix consortium, it was Kalbfell who successfully argued that BMW should retain Mini, as he believed it had the potential to

After his Rolls-Royce work, Kalbfell received a surprise call from Luca di Montezemolo offering him the job of CEO at Alfa Romeo. He accepted immediately and was also given the same role at Maserati a couple of months later. I interviewed Kalbfell at Maserati in September 2006 (*evo* 098), where he laid out his plans for revitalising the marque. His ideas were radical: he knew an SUV was essential for future growth and that Maserati needed to be separated from Ferrari because it was such an expensive business partner, while

deep-rooted passion for cars that straddled everything from Mini to McLaren. He always put the customer first and placed great emphasis on listening to what the dealers were saying because they were closest to customer desires.

Karl-Heinz was an exceptional character and always great fun to meet up with. His amazing portfolio of cars will be his lasting legacy to enthusiasts around the world, but his sudden passing is a massive loss to the industry. Our thoughts are with his wife and family. ❧





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Every new evo car that matters, rated  
**This month**

**LEXUS  
TMG TS-650**

Premium Lexus saloon gets F1 tech treatment

p26



**ALPINA B3**

BMW fettler uprates 3-series saloon to 404bhp and 442lb ft...

p30



**ALPINA XD3**

...and it's also had its first stab at refining an SUV

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**FORD FIESTA ST  
MOUNTUNE**

Fabulous ST gets an extra 33bhp for just £599

p35



**VW GOLF GTD**

Diesel version of hot hatch icon blends thrills with frugality

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**K-TEC  
TWINGO 163**

Renault specialist gets 30bhp more out of the RS Twingo 133

p38



**VW SCIROCCO GTS  
v SUBARU BRZ**

Front-drive meets rear-drive in sub-£30k coupe duel

p40



**The test team**

No, we don't know why they're wearing coats in the height of summer, but we do know that this month evo's road testers are picking out their top 'growers'.



**HARRY METCALFE**  
Editorial director

'I almost felt sorry for anyone who bought a Porsche Carrera GT new, but I'm now deeply jealous of owners of one.'



**NICK TROTT**  
Editor

'The latest Astra VXR. I found it uncouth to begin with, then later warmed to its lunatic charms.'



**MIKE DUFF**  
Motoring editor

'Mk1 Focus RS. Loved it on Ford's Lommel test track, less so on rough UK tarmac, but I've liked it more on every drive since.'



**HENRY CATCHPOLE**  
Features editor

'Controversial, but when you first drive one, it takes a while to get used to the unique ways of a 911.'



**JETHRO BOVINGDON**  
Contributing editor

'Ford Escort Cosworth: felt harsh, laggy and a bit wheezy at first, but I grew to love the creamy balance and attitude.'



**RICHARD MEADEN**  
Contributing editor

'I've really grown to appreciate the new Mini GP. I thought it was far too frantic, but now I love its intensity and focus.'



**DAVID VIVIAN**  
Contributing road tester

'The new Jag XJ looked weird and rode badly for a limo. They later fixed the ride and I've done a 180 on the styling.'

44 Driven



Test location: Gross Dölln, Templin, Germany GPS: 53.03037, 13.56399

**Lexus  
TMG TS-650**

Toyota's ex-F1 technicians take the LS460 executive saloon and turn it into a 641bhp, 200mph super-limo



**L** **LET'S GET A FEW THINGS** out of the way. Should Lexus put a 641bhp, twin-turbo 5-litre V8 LS limo, developed and evolved by Toyota Motorsport GmbH, into production? Yes. Would it give Mercedes AMG and BMW's M division a bloody nose? Yes, and probably a broken jaw, too. Will a product closely resembling the one and only so-called TMG TS-650 be seen in a

Lexus showroom any time soon, or indeed ever? No. Unless production could be ramped up to fantasy levels, it would have to cost as much as a nice house in Middlesex or, to put it in an automotive context, about three times as much as the next Mercedes S63 AMG – a notional and similarly powerful rival.

Given all that, I'm especially glad I've driven it. I can't tell you what it's like on the road. It rolled off a transporter near the Polish

border in East Germany at a proving ground originally built by Russia as a Cold War airbase for MiG fighters. I have no idea what it feels like at 200mph on a German autobahn, though I'm assured by TMG's marketing and communications manager, Alastair Moffitt, that its stability at very high speeds is one of the things the team that put it together is proudest of. But I can tell you this. If the Marvel comic book character Thor were to lose the power



## 'The big car drifts so progressively under power in slower turns, you'd swear you were in a Toyota GT86'

of flight, he could do a lot worse than get one of these. At the very least he'd be able to blow Tony 'Iron Man' Stark's Audi R8 into the weeds. And there'd be no need to overdub an engine soundtrack for the cinema screens: thunder's bassiest notes bellow from the large-bore quad pipes and full-throttle upshifts at the 7450rpm red line are punctuated by a noise that sounds like a crack of lightning. Thor's Hammer would take on a whole new meaning.

This unlikely project to re-imagine the Lexus LS460 as 'a high-speed cruiser with sports car handling using the Formula 1 design, testing and production technologies at TMG' began in 2010, soon after Toyota's F1 team was shut down. 'We were looking for new challenges, to find a footprint for ourselves in a wider industry,' explains TMG's Moffitt. 'We wanted to create a showcase that demonstrated how we can use the F1 technologies we'd developed and put them into a road car.'

'Of course, we could have chosen a light car, but it would have been too close to what we were doing before. So we preferred to take a large Lexus, bring our F1 knowledge and

experience using the processes and facilities we have back at TMG in Cologne, and to put it into practice – to show what you can do with a car like this. We could deliver more speed and take away weight. So this is a showcase for all of those technologies and ideas.'

After three years, the TS-650 is the so-called 'Phase Three' car. Moffitt explains its genesis: 'The Phase One car was extremely ambitious. We were looking at 800bhp so it really was a very serious bit of kit. But we had to look to a road application – that means Euro 5 emissions, fuel efficiency and practicality. At least in concept, we needed a car that you could build again and again.'

Although not 800bhp, the Phase Three car is mouth-watering nonetheless. It uses the 2UR-GSE naturally aspirated 5-litre V8 from the Lexus IS-F. To this two Garrett GT2871R turbos are added and the compression ratio dropped from 11.8:1 to 9.6:1. The cylinder heads, pistons, intake manifolds and con rods are new and the valve timing has been adjusted for the blowers. The sump has been redesigned to cope with the higher cornering forces, the oil

jets modified and there's extra cooling for the pistons. Compared to the LS460's outputs, the upshot is 68 per cent more power (641bhp at 6500rpm compared to 382bhp) and 55 per cent more torque (564lb ft at 5460rpm compared to 364lb ft). All that is sent to the rear wheels via an eight-speed Aisin automatic transmission with paddle-shift. Despite the still-prodigious 2000kg kerb weight, TMG claims a sub-4sec 0-62mph time and 200mph top speed.

Aero work was undertaken at TMG's wind tunnels and modifications include a front splitter, side skirts, flat underfloor, a rear diffuser incorporating cooling for the Torsen limited-slip differential and a rear spoiler. The original steel roof has been replaced with a strut-reinforced carbonfibre item that's slightly more aerodynamic and 7kg lighter, while carbon struts in the engine bay add some stiffness to the body structure.

Fatter arches wrap around the monster 20-inch alloys shod with Michelin Pilot Super Sport rubber: 10J and 275/35R at the front, 12J and 345/30R at the rear. Modified and lowered suspension features custom-made lightweight



**Above left:** 5-litre twin-turbo V8 produces a brutal 641bhp. **Left:** large-bolstered seats clash somewhat with the luxurious limo surroundings. **Below:** presence of emergency stop button indicates TS-650's prototype nature

Specification	
Engine	V8, 4969cc, twin-turbo
CO2	n/a
Power	641bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque	564lb ft @ 5460rpm
0-62mph	3.9sec (claimed)
Top speed	200mph (claimed)
Basic price	see text



uprights to improve high-speed stability. The active dampers are supplied by Sachs and the carbon-ceramic brake discs are from the Lexus LFA supercar, as are the pads.

Inside, a conspicuous effort has been made to establish some sort of TMG 'trim language' fashioned from Alcantara, chrome and carbon, despite this essentially being a rolling test bed with cables sprouting from unlikely places and most of the cubbies being stuffed with telemetric electronics. But by far the most dominant features are the extravagantly bolstered seats that do a brilliant job of locking your torso in place but look somewhat incongruous in a limo, even a superfast one.

I finally strap myself in and head off for the proving ground's handling circuit after watching and listening to the leviathan Lexus vanish down the circuit's long straight during the warm-up. There can be no argument here: the TS-650, when you put your toe all the way down, is blisteringly, almost surreally, rapid in a straight line. But what is surprising is how benign and relaxed the external visual and aural violence seems from behind the wheel.

The chilled personality is obvious from the start. After a few seconds' churning, the engine fires up languidly with none of the explosive, blaring histrionics of a modern supercar, and settles to a tickover composed entirely of infra-bass shockwaves. The motor responds lazily to blipping the throttle, the revs rising and falling with a heavy flywheel effect. There appears to be no built-in urgency at all.

The first few sighting laps, at a reasonable lick, are accomplished in rumble mode on a wave of seemingly inexhaustible torque. Steering is good – well weighted and direct – and the car's two-tonne mass seems well contained, even with the chassis electronics on the Comfort setting, which allows some modest body roll. Flicking the centre console switch to Sport elicits a noticeable firming of the suspension and, in this development guise at least, defeats the traction control.

Now the tyres start to squeal and the car's weight enters the equation. And yet the sense of calm composure doesn't flinch. Braking from around 140mph for the long, sweeping left-hander at the end of the straight, the TS-650

feels massively stable and beautifully balanced on turn in, slicing through the following chicane with a measured precision and persistence of grip that almost beggars belief. Confidence builds rapidly and with it the temptation to feel more and more of the motor's sledgehammer thrust and to giggle at the upshift exhaust bombs. But however many liberties I take, there seems to be all the time in the world to sort things out, the big car drifting so progressively under power in the slower turns, you'd swear you were in a Toyota GT86.

No other performance limo goes, sounds, handles and stops like the TS-650. If it could be produced, even at £150,000, I'm sure it would sell. But don't hold your breath. ❌

**David Vivian**

**Verdict**

- ⊕ A race-developed limo like no other
- ⊖ You can't buy it

**evo rating: ★★★★★**

Test location: B645, Cambridgeshire, UK GPS: 52.26542, -0.33336

# Alpina B3

Up-rated 3-series gets 404bhp.

0-62mph in 4.2sec

Photography: Stuart Collins



**T**HERE'S SOMETHING about Alpinas that makes me go a bit strange. I'm not sure if it's the fabulous trademark multi-spoke alloys that defy time and trends, the long-held admiration for the love-them-or-hate-them stripes (sadly not present on this demo car), or the fact that the people I know who own examples of Buchloe's most famous exports tend to have very good taste in cars. Of course, the fact Alpinas invariably drive so nicely could also be a major factor.

Whatever 'it' is, this new B3 Biturbo has it in spades. From the way those 20in wagon wheels and the subtle-yet-sharp body kit bring the new 3-series' shape to life, to the sumptuously trimmed interior and seriously spiced-up powertrain, chassis and brakes. Every aspect of the car has had attention lavished upon it, so although you know the basis for the B3 is a BMW, it very definitely feels like its own car.

And a very rapid one at that, thanks to its 404bhp twin-turbo straight-six engine. That's serious power, backed up by an equally potent 442lb ft of torque. Alpina claims it'll hit 62mph from a standstill in 4.2sec, 125mph in 14sec and run on to an unrestricted top speed of 190mph. We have no reason to doubt those numbers. Coupled to ZF's excellent eight-speed automatic transmission (complete with Alpina's Switchtronic system that gives the shift speed some extra zip, and suppresses auto upshifts so you can hit the rev limiter) it makes for a sharp,

Specification	
Engine	In-line 6-cyl, 2979cc, twin-turbo
CO2	177g/km
Power	404bhp @ 5500-6250rpm
Torque	442lb ft @ 3000-4000rpm
0-62mph	4.2sec (claimed)
Top speed	190mph (claimed)
Price	£54,950

responsive and effortlessly smooth delivery.

Breathing through an Alpina/Akrapovic exhaust, the B3 sounds purposeful but stops short of shouty. The chassis retains electronically adjustable adaptive dampers, which have been re-rated to Alpina's settings and work in combination with stiffer springs, new bump stops and new anti-roll bars, also made to Alpina's specification.

The ride quality is a little brittle at low speeds – largely due to those ultra-low 30-profile tyres – but the B3 soon begins to settle with speed. Indeed, the faster you go, the better it feels, thanks to tight body control and impressive depth to the damping. Braking is equally well sorted, with 370mm front and 345mm rear discs using high-performance pads for better bite and resistance to fade. On-limit handling is surprisingly neutral, although clearly with so much torque you can bring the tail into play with provocation. It's not a natural hooligan like, say, the E90 M3, and the transition from



grip to slip can be a little snappy, but the B3 remains an entertaining car to hustle.

In the absence of a new M3 for the time being, Alpina could really be on to a winner. The B3 has always been a different take on the high-performance 3-series, and this new model is no exception. It's significant money, but not outrageous given the quality and sheer performance on offer. It's also beautifully executed, satisfyingly grown-up and effortlessly rapid. In fact it covers all the bases so well that it's hard to imagine a better or more appealing daily driver. ☒

Richard Meaden (@DickieMeaden)

**Verdict**

- ☒ Styling, engineering, monster performance
- ☒ On-limit handling not as honed as E90 M3

**evo rating: ★★★★★**



***LET THERE BE LIGHT...***



# Alpina XD3

Respected BMW fettler unleashes its first SUV

Photography: Stuart Collins

Test location: B660, Cambridgeshire, UK GPS: 52.34484, -0.40537

**F**OR A COMPANY WHOSE aesthetic trademarks include 20-spoke alloy wheels, Alpina has made some wonderfully subtle cars. Its products always seem so considered and so restrained, offering M Power performance but with less aggressive dynamics and clean, understated looks. We like Alpina. Incredibly, and despite the success of BMW's 'X' models since the X5 was launched in 1999, never before has it turned its hand to one of BMW's SUVs. Like I said, we like Alpina.

So the new Alpina XD3 Biturbo marks a shift in the company's policy and, by the looks of it, a seismic shift in character. This thing is about as subtle as a house falling on your head. At least it is when it's fitted with optional 21in rims and painted as white as your average Evoque owner's teeth. It makes sense for Alpina to fill the obvious gaps in its range but part of me wishes it hadn't. I can't help but wonder if it's abandoned its principles to chase volume.

The £54,950 XD3 Biturbo's engine is based on the 3-litre twin-turbocharged straight-six diesel found in the X3 xDrive35d. Unique induction, exhaust and cooling has liberated a healthy 345bhp at 4000rpm (up from 309bhp) and an outrageous 516lb ft between 1500 and 3000rpm (up from 465lb ft). Alpina claims that the 1910kg XD3 covers 0-62mph in 4.9sec and will go on to 157mph. Oh, and that it'll still average 42.8mpg. More importantly, the X3's dynamics have been retuned by Alpina and each setting on the Drive Performance Control system (manipulating damping, steering

## Specification

Engine	In-line 6-cyl, 2993cc, twin-turbo diesel
CO2	174g/km
Power	345bhp @ 4000rpm
Torque	516lb ft @ 1500-3000rpm
0-62mph	4.9sec (claimed)
Top speed	157mph (claimed)
Basic price	£54,950

weight, gearshifts and DSC settings) has been tailored to deliver a sharper driving experience.

As ever with Alpinas, it's the little things that make the XD3 feel special: the splashes of Alcantara, the green and blue stitching on the steering wheel, the rich blue dials. The engine sounds deep and distant on start-up and the eight-speed ZF auto 'box (strengthened to deal with the torque) is as smooth and decisive as ever. Despite the big wheels the ride is decent, too. You're aware that the XD3 takes the 'S' part of SUV seriously, but it's acceptable in either Comfort or Sport mode, even at urban speeds, even if catseyes and potholes create a bit of a thwack through the cabin. It feels agile too, with quick steering and lots of grip.

The engine is stonking and when you're flowing along a road and utilising the monumental mid-range performance, the XD3 feels almost absurdly quick, firing in upshifts with sweet force as the Akrapovic-developed exhaust emits a deep, smooth howl. Keep an eye on the speedo and you'll see that it zips from 60mph into three figures relentlessly.



The chassis is well up to the task too, changing direction precisely and staying steadfastly neutral most of the time.

Surprisingly, you do need the very stiff Sport Plus setting to ensure accurate body control, and while there's abundant grip, the chassis isn't really 'adjustable' when you really push. Basically, the XD3 grips like mad and then understeers mildly whilst hoiking an inside rear wheel up in the air. Impressive, but not the stuff of dreams. Beautifully built, practical and amazingly fast across the ground, it should sell very nicely indeed and it's closer to a real Alpina than I'd feared. However, given the choice we'd take a B3 Touring every time. ✘

Jethro Bovingdon (@JethroBovingdon)

## Verdict

- 🔧 Torque and grip in abundance
  - 🚗 Can't fully escape that SUV feeling
- evo rating:** ★★★★★





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📍 **Test location:** Little Linford, Milton Keynes, UK **GPS:** 52.09139,-0.77219

## Ford Fiesta ST Mountune

Stellar Blue Oval supermini upgraded to 212bhp while retaining factory warranty

**T** **THIS STRETCH OF ROAD** is one that I know well. It's remarkably quiet today, the sun's out and I'm in a Fiesta ST. The planets have aligned... almost. The only problem is that I've got a passenger. But sometimes it's just too hard to resist. I'm sure she'll be fine.

The Fiesta is in its absolute B-road element; normally I wouldn't carry quite this much speed through corners with someone sitting next to me unless they're calling notes, but I decide to keep my foot in through that tricky right-hander where you have to let the car skip sideways over the bump on entry. It feels fantastic. Next up is the fast sweeper through the compression at the bottom of the hill: no room for error with that bit of kerbing on the exit, but the dampers have it all under control as the ST squats down on its springs through the dip. It almost feels easy. Everything about the little Ford just encourages you to throw it about. The steering is perfectly weighted and geared to let you place the nose exactly where you want it and then the rear seems to follow on, either sliding predictably or clinging on and three-wheeling through the tighter stuff. It's so much fun.

I'd worried that the addition of a Mountune kit might spoil the ST's perfectly blended recipe. Although the standard ST never felt like it was teetering precariously on the edge of traction, everything felt so in harmony there was always

### Specification

<b>Engine</b>	In-line 4-cyl, 1596cc, turbocharged
<b>CO2</b>	138g/km
<b>Power</b>	212bhp @ 6000rpm
<b>Torque</b>	236lb ft @ 2750-3500rpm
<b>0-62mph</b>	6.6sec (claimed)
<b>Top speed</b>	140mph (estimated)
<b>Basic price</b>	£17,594

the danger that more power and torque might have just tipped things out of kilter. With 33bhp and 22lb ft hikes to the 1.6-litre turbo's outputs, pushing them to 212bhp and 236lb ft, there are decent gains in performance. The 0-62mph sprint now takes 6.6 seconds (0.3sec quicker than before and a whisker ahead of a Clio 200 Turbo) but perhaps even more impressively, 31-62mph in fourth gear now takes just 5.7 seconds, down from 6.4.

The Mountune kit costs £599 and it should take just an hour to be fitted. What's more, because it's an officially sanctioned Ford upgrade, the car remains covered by its original three-year/60,000-mile warranty. As well as an ECU tweak, the kit also includes a new air filter and a remodelled airbox, both of which are responsible for changing the Fiesta's engine note above 5000rpm so that it has more of an angry-wasp-in-a-biscuit-tin resonance to it.

The best news, however, is that the front

wheels still seem more than capable of handling the extra grunt and there's no detrimental effect on the car's balance. You just have a bit more pace to play with and a slightly freer-revving engine that encourages you to squeeze every last drop from it before you sling the gearlever at the next of the sextet of ratios. It remains a really enjoyable gearshift too: nicely weighted, happy to be rushed and allied to pedals that feel perfectly placed. There certainly doesn't seem to be a downside to the Mountune Fiesta as the road scythes across the countryside between newly harvested fields. Who needs a Clio 200?

Eventually civilisation reappears on the horizon and as everything slows back down to normal, I wait anxiously for the tirade of abuse from the passenger seat. Thankfully my girlfriend says she actually quite enjoyed it, but reaffirms her position that she will never be my co-driver on a rally. She is also delighted when I absent-mindedly stall at some traffic lights about five minutes later, giving her piss-taking ammunition for days to come. ☒

**Henry Catchpole** (@HenryCatchpole)

### Verdict

📺 The best mid-sized hatch gets even better

📺 Badge snobbery

**evo rating:** ★★★★★

# VW Golf GTD

Diesel version of benchmark hot hatch combines 280lb ft punch with claimed 67mpg economy

Photography: Dean Smith



T

## THE NEW VW GOLF GTD IS

expected to sell between two and three times the number of units as the new GTI in the UK, thanks mostly to fleet sales and unquestionably low running costs. Those who plump for the GTD will not be disappointed.

Built on the MQB platform shared with the current Audi A3, Skoda Octavia and SEAT Leon (and soon the new Audi TT and VW Scirocco), the new GTD uses a 2-litre turbodiesel engine developing 181bhp at 3500-4000rpm – a small increase over the previous-generation equivalent. And, as ever, torque is the name of the game, with 280lb ft from just 1750 rpm.

Performance will frighten all but the hottest of hatches, with 0-62mph taking 7.5 seconds. Mid-range acceleration is impressive, and the slick-shifting optional DSG gearbox on our test car is sharp and refined. It also has a coasting function in Eco mode that disengages drive and drops the engine to idle when you lift at motorway speeds. Drive is reintroduced with a mild jolt, but after managing around 42mpg in Normal mode, we reached 47 in Eco. Some way off VW's claimed 67.3mpg, but still excellent.

The GTD shares virtually identical chassis technology with the GTI, which means a familiar strut set-up at the front with a multi-link rear axle. The damper rates are slightly softer than the GTI's, which curiously introduces a looseness to the chassis that the GTI misses. The GTI's chassis is astonishingly capable (see page 108), but it lacks a fraction of movement in pitch and yaw that a good driver can exploit to improve turn-in, tighten the line, or agitate

## Specification

Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 1968cc, turbodiesel
CO2	119g/km
Power	181bhp @ 3500-4000rpm
Torque	280lb ft @ 1750-3250rpm
0-62mph	7.5sec (claimed)
Top speed	143mph (claimed)
Basic price	£25,285

the car into releasing tyre grip. The slightly softer GTD allows a fraction more movement, corresponding to a greater feeling of dips, compressions and roll, and consequently a greater understanding of the road surface.

The steering, with a progressive rack, is accurate but not exactly buzzing with feel, even in the weightier Sport mode. And speaking of modes, the optional Adaptive Chassis Control fitted to our car gives the driver a choice between Normal, Sport, Eco and Individual, very subtly tweaking steering assistance, damping and throttle response. We'd urge you to test the car with and without the system before deciding if you want this £800 option or not.

XDS+ and ESC Sport are both standard on the GTD. XDS+ 'targets' braking of the inside wheels and is felt only as an astonishing resistance to understeer. ESC Sport allows a tiny amount of slip, but what the GTD really needs is the ability to fully deactivate the stability control. We sense there's some extraordinary chassis behaviour being disguised by electronic intervention, which is a shame for those of us who covet the exploration of such things.



**Above:** DSG Golf GTD achieves 18mpg more than equivalent GTI on combined cycle.

**Left:** six-speed DSG; manual is also available

The GTD's engine is more vocal on full throttle than you'd expect thanks to a sound generator, and the sound isn't unpleasant. The engine is impressively refined, too. But it's not a powerplant you meter with the throttle: you tend to keep the right pedal buried and meter your performance with the DSG 'box. In other words, it's a little one-dimensional.

The GTD is not as invigorating as the GTI but is still mightily impressive. Its performance characteristics, while not perfect, are enjoyable, and that 'Golf effect', where it constantly reminds you of its premium and iconic status, is present and correct throughout. As an ownership proposition, it excels. That it also offers driver enjoyment should be celebrated. ✕

**Nick Trott** (@evoNickTrott)

## Verdict

- ▣ Pace, sound, fuel economy
  - ▣ Lacks the extra edge of the GTI
- evo rating:** ★★★★★

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Test location: near Riseley, Bedfordshire, UK GPS: 52.24640, -0.46018

## K-Tec Twingo 163

Tuner gives littlest Renaultsport a 32bhp power hike

Photography: Stuart Collins



**R**ENAULTSPORT'S TAKE on the Twingo never really emerged from the shadow of the glorious Clio Cup, did it?

It looked the part – all flared arches, chunky wheels and pugnacious face – but despite competitive pricing, sales were slow, perhaps hampered by the '133' tacked on the end of its name. Sure, 131bhp (133PS) is nothing to be sniffed at in a car weighing 1050kg, but only real enthusiasts twigged the power-to-weight ratio and looked past the cheap interior to the talent and fun beyond. Sadly, the Twingo RS is now no more, destined to be the forgotten car in the dazzling Renaultsport dynasty.

That's not to say the Twingo isn't a whole heap of fun, though. With the Cup chassis it's a stiff, aggressive little car and the short wheelbase and narrow track mean it's always leaping from bump to bump and teetering on the edge of grip. In a period when we've been moaning about the speeds at which you can enjoy performance cars creeping ever upwards, the Twingo is a refreshing reminder that you can have fun below the sound barrier. The naturally aspirated engine is also a dying breed and when the Twingo's 1.6 is howling up above 5500rpm, you can't help thinking that's a real shame, too. Especially if the Twingo in question has been fettled by tuner K-Tec, like this one.

Renaultsport proudly displayed the 133's bunch-of-bananas tubular exhaust manifold on motor show stands as an example of how it strives for the very best performance, so it's a surprise to learn that part of K-Tec's package for

### Specification

Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 1598cc
CO2	n/a
Power	163bhp @ 7050rpm
Torque	142lb ft @ 4250rpm
0-62mph	8.2sec (estimated)
Top speed	130mph (estimated)
Conversion price	£2625 (www.k-tecracing.com)

the Twingo is a new exhaust system, including its own tubular manifold. Added to that is a Cat Cams camshaft and a software remap, all of which endows the Twingo RS with 163bhp at 7050rpm and 142lb ft at 4250rpm – gains of 32bhp and 24lb ft. The upgrade is suitable for pre- or post-facelift 133s, and costs £2625 including fitting and VAT. The power-to-weight ratio is up to 158bhp per ton. That's just 8bhp per ton shy of the last nat-asp RS Clio. Handy.

The K-Tec Twingo sounds genuinely rorty at idle, but it's a quality noise – tight and precise, it gives the Twingo an engine note to match its chunky aggression. Start to extend the engine and the exhaust note is ever-present. For some it'll doubtless be a bit too loud, but when you're skimming along a narrow B-road with the crisp engine wound around close to the red, it sounds fantastic. Sadly the noise isn't quite matched by the performance.

The K-Tec Twingo feels quicker than standard but not by the advertised 32bhp, and it certainly never has the bite of a Clio, despite what the power-to-weight ratio says. The new camshaft



also brings a pronounced flat spot from 2300 to 2800rpm or so, which is a bit of a pain in everyday driving. Admittedly, as the engine doesn't really get going until after 3000rpm it's less of an issue when you're enjoying a quiet road, and from about 4500rpm the 163 definitely pulls harder than the standard car.

Apart from that, the inherent Twingo qualities shine through – sweet steering, good traction, adjustable balance, slight instability on the brakes (and too much ABS intervention) and a lumpy, physical ride. I thoroughly enjoyed it, but felt slightly disappointed by the power increase – a 24 per cent power hike should be more transformative than this. ☒

**Jethro Bovingdon** (@JethroBovingdon)

### Verdict

- ☑ Soaks up the extra power with no problems
  - ☑ The uplift doesn't feel as big as you'd hope
- evo rating:** ★★★★★

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The mpg figures quoted are sourced from official EU-regulated test results obtained through laboratory testing and are provided for comparability purposes and may not reflect your actual driving experience.

Retail sales only, subject to vehicle availability for vehicles registered between 01.07.13 and 30.09.13 at participating dealers. T&Cs apply. \*0% finance available on all Mazda MX-5 models. At the end of the agreement there are 3 options: (i) Renew: Part exchange the vehicle, where equity is available, (ii) Retain: Pay the Optional Final Payment to own the vehicle or (iii) Return the vehicle. Further charges may be made subject to the condition of the vehicle. Finance subject to status, 18s or over. Guarantee/Indemnity may be required. Mazda Financial Services RH1 1SR. Model shown: Mazda MX-5 1.8i Sport Graphite, OTR from £20,245 including a £750 saving. Model shown includes Free of Charge Mica paint. OTR price includes VAT, number plates, delivery, 12 months' road fund licence, first registration fee, 3-year or 60,000-mile warranty and 3 years' European roadside assistance. Test drives subject to applicant status and availability. Details correct at time of going to print. Not available in conjunction with any other offer unless specified.



**Test location:** near Melchbourne, Bedfordshire, UK **GPS:** 52.28254, -0.48160

## *Driven special:* *Subaru BRZ v VW Scirocco GTS*

Rare Japanese rear-driver and special-edition front-drive German go head-to-head for sub-£30k coupe honours

**Words:** Jethro Bovingdon **Photography:** Stuart Collins

**T** **THIS IS AS MUCH A** contest of philosophy as dynamics. Two more different coupes it would be hard to find.

On the one hand we have the front-wheel-drive, turbocharged Scirocco that's big on style, deep on quality and is as pain-free a performance car as you could ever find. Then there's the Subaru BRZ, with its beautifully designed rear-wheel-drive chassis, torque-light but rev-happy flat-four engine, plastics that put durability way ahead of tactility and rear seats that serve merely as decoration. However, diverse as these cars might appear, the limited-edition Scirocco GTS and the scarce Subaru (around 100 sell annually in the UK compared to over 1000 Toyota GT86s) are priced very closely: £28,540 plays £26,495 for the Subaru in SE Lux spec, as here.

Drive these cars back-to-back along your

favourite road for ten minutes and there's no contest – the BRZ feels so much lighter, so much more alive next to the rather stodgy VW. Its agility and responsiveness are in another world. The cheaper materials, the useless rear seats and the relative lack of torque all seem inconsequential. This manual BRZ is so much more exciting than the automatic we first tried, a car that simply fell flat in the face of some very stern competition from the Renaultsport Mégane 265 (evo 170). Miles – 16,000 of them on this car – have also given the engine a new vigour. It would be an exaggeration to say that the 2-litre flat-four has become a real firecracker, but suddenly 197bhp and 151lb ft seem entirely believable numbers.

It's a stiffer car than the GT86, with more immediate front-end response, less body roll and also a little less oversteer dialled into its balance. I actually rather like the compromise

because it makes this low, lightweight car feel just that, and brings welcome added precision. The downside is that the BRZ can be pretty unsettled on bumpy roads and a little of the GT86's low-speed driftiness is sacrificed. However, at higher speeds the BRZ has a really good neutral balance with none of the slightly odd-feeling yaw that can make the Toyota feel like the rear axle is actively steering itself into a pre-programmed oversteer slide. It also retains all of the strengths we've outlined before – superb brake feel, a great driving position, excellent six-speed manual gearbox and well-weighted, feelsome steering.

The Scirocco GTS looks rather desperate by way of comparison. It's essentially a 2.0 TSI R-line with some hastily applied slap: stripes, red wing mirrors, 18-inch 'Thunder' alloys, a panoramic glass roof and black leather with red stitching and GTS logos. Yet the basics remain





**Above:** VW has nicer interior and punchier engine.  
**Above right:** BRZ's cabin feels cheaper, while its flat-four needs to be revved

Specification	VW SCIROCCO GTS	SUBARU BRZ
Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 1984cc, turbo	Flat-four, 1998cc
CO2	172g/km	181g/km
Power	207bhp @ 5300-6200rpm	197bhp @ 7000rpm
Torque	206lb ft @ 1700-5200rpm	151lb ft @ 6400-6600rpm
0-62mph	6.9sec (claimed)	7.6sec (claimed)
Top speed	149mph (claimed)	140mph (claimed)
Basic price	£28,540	£26,495 (SE Lux)

mightily appealing. Its 2-litre turbocharged engine still produces 207bhp from 5300rpm and 206lb ft from as little as 1700rpm. That makes it a quicker car than the BRZ, hitting 62mph in 6.9sec – 0.7sec ahead of the Subaru – and topping out at nearly 150mph (versus the BRZ's 140). The Scirocco also features Adaptive Chassis Control switchable dampers and VW's XDS virtual limited-slip differential.

The raw ingredients initially seem to create something that's less than the sum of its parts. The GTS is refined, supple and very quick, thanks in part to the slick (optional) DSG gearbox fitted here, but it also feels a bit stodgy – every response damped to the extent that it can actually feel heavy and numb. The engine is super-smooth and revs cleanly, but as the arrival of peak power at 5300rpm suggests, there's not huge reward to be had in pinging it off the limiter. The adjustable dampers give

good body control but each mode is very close to the next, so even in Sport you don't quite get the initial response that you crave.

However, the GTS gets better the more you drive it and the harder you go. Throw it at a corner and the front end bites quickly and the rear unloads, just helping to tip the car towards the apex. Now the stodge seems to evaporate and the Scirocco's more precise, adjustable side is revealed. You start to appreciate the excellent

brakes and the strong traction and can really throw the GTS around with proper hot-hatch style abandon.

Across the ground the GTS certainly has the edge, then, but the BRZ isn't too far behind and is undoubtedly the more rewarding car to extract the maximum from. Ultimately its greater agility and more bespoke sports-car feel make it the car we'd enjoy more often. **X**

**Jethro Bovingdon** (@JethroBovingdon)

**Verdict**

**VW SCIROCCO GTS**

- +** Quality, composure, strong performance
- Only exciting when you're going very quickly

**evo rating: ★★★★★**

**Verdict**

**SUBARU BRZ**

- +** Balance, agility, tactile controls
- Unsettled on bumpy roads

**evo rating: ★★★★★**

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It stands to reason, then, that if you're the savvy maker of the sort of cars that stoke the passions of an evo reader, you'll be keen to specify the very best tyres possible for your new model, tyres that bring out its optimum performance. And the best way to achieve that is to have tyres designed specifically for the characteristics of the car.

Michelin has a division dedicated to the needs of premier league car manufacturers

such as Porsche, BMW and Mercedes-Benz, as well as smaller prestige producers such as Alpina, AMG and the hypercar maker, Koenigsegg. The division is known as the OE Group, with the two initials standing for 'Original Equipment'. Think of OE as the official seal of approval from some of the most respected automotive brands in the world.

To become an OE supplier at this level means absolute trust between Michelin and its clients, because the company tends to be brought into a new car project at a very early stage, often before the first prototypes are even built.

Initial conversations between Michelin and its client establish which characteristics are deemed desirable from a tyre for the project. Grip, steering response, consistency, stability, longevity, rolling resistance (for economy) and noise levels are all discussed in the context of what type of car is being developed. Then, as Frederic Spetler, one of Michelin's Vehicle

Handling Experts, explains: “When we receive specifications from a car manufacturer, our first job is to adapt those specifications into tyre characteristics in keeping with the overall vehicle specifications, that will then, once part of the car, translate into a pleasurable driving experience for the customer.”

Michelin tyre tester, Jérôme Haslin, continues: “We start off with a computer simulation and calculations. Then we make prototype tyres that we test on a machine. Once these machine tests prove successful, we test the tyres on vehicles, using on-board monitoring systems.”

But equally important as the hard data collection are the subjective appraisals by Michelin’s own highly experienced test drivers and those of its clients.

Michelin has a dedicated test facility in Ladoux, near Clermont-Ferrand in France. But the high-speed banking of the Nardo track in southern Italy, and the gruelling twists of the Nürburgring, are regularly included in the testing schedule as well, not to mention the test tracks of the car makers themselves.

Tyres are typically subjected to at least 50,000km (31,000 miles) of punishing appraisal before being signed off for production.

But can the tyre requirements of one ultra-high performance sports car be that much different from any other? Well, at a basic level



## **PREMIER LEAGUE CAR MAKERS WANT THE VERY BEST TYRES FOR THEIR NEW MODEL, TYRES THAT BRING OUT TOTAL PERFORMANCE**



most manufacturers do want roughly the same things. High levels of grip are a given. Consistent handling for corner after corner after corner, on road and track, is essential. Excellent steering response is a must-have. Reasonable longevity is, too. And, increasingly, low rolling resistance to aid fuel economy and emissions. But within those generic objectives are individual nuances that can be achieved only via a close relationship between car and tyre makers.

The new Porsche 911 GT3, soon to be launched with the Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 as OE fitment, is a great example of this.

It’s a powerful, rear-wheel-drive car with a rear-mounted engine. Superb traction off the line. Lots for the rear tyres to deal with. Extreme roadholding and consistent handling performance on the track are paramount.

And yet tyre life still has to be acceptable, especially in track use. That’s quite different from, say, a front-engined BMW M3, which is much more likely to be used for everyday commuting in all conditions.

The Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG Black Series also wears the forthcoming Michelin Pilot Sport

Cup 2 as standard (in fact, the tyre was revealed on this car). It’s a 622bhp front mid-engined beast, quite different to the Porsche, but its tyres are still required to deliver outstanding performance on the track and road.

Or how about the Koenigsegg CCR, which achieved a Guinness Production Car World Speed Record of 241mph on bespoke Michelin tyres in 2005? No prizes for guessing what the design emphasis for those tyres was...

Company owner Christian von Koenigsegg spoke of his relationship with Michelin: “This world record really solidified our collaboration and our trust, of how the car works together with the tyre – it was a really good match.”

That relationship was further cemented in 2011, when a Michelin tyre-shod Koenigsegg Agera R accelerated from 0-300-0km/h (standstill to 186mph and back to zero) in just 21.19 seconds. Extraordinary performance that set a new Guinness World record.

And the faith that Koenigsegg places in Michelin’s technical expertise is echoed by the many other serious players in the sports car world who use Michelin OE tyres to add sparkle to every last facet of their latest creations.

# Watches

This month, a '60s drivers' throwback joins tributes to the Force India F1 team and the Isle Of Man TT

Words: Simon de Burton

## 1 Graham Chronofighter TT Superlight

Price: £5560 From: [graham-london.com](http://graham-london.com)

Graham marks its fifth year as official timing partner of the Isle of Man TT with a new Chronofighter Superlight oversize chronograph. 'Superlight' refers to the black carbon composite case, which helps keep the overall weight of the watch down to 100 grams. Special TT touches include a yellow indicator at the 17-minute mark (honouring the approximate time of John McGuinness's 131.671mph record lap) and a tachymeter scale based on the 37.73-mile length of the Snaefell Mountain Course. Available in an edition of 200, each watch has its number marked on the transparent case back alongside the Isle of Man's triskelion symbol.

## 2 Tissot PRS516 Extreme

Price: £915 From: [tissot.ch](http://tissot.ch)

Last year we featured the Tissot PRS516 (evo 170), a great vintage-look drivers' watch based on a '60s model called the Visodate. It'll be joined in November by this new 'Extreme' version, a 21st-century take on the car watch with a case said to have been inspired by 'the smooth and somewhat futuristic bodywork of the ultimate modern car' and dial details reminiscent of a 'sophisticated dashboard'. There's more car imagery in the wheel-style case back and the radiator-like 'honeycomb' rubber bracelet. The movement is an ETA mechanical chronograph mechanism with a customised oscillating weight, while the case combines plain and PVD-coated steel.

## 3 TW Steel Sahara Force India Pilot

Price: £295-365 From: [twsteel.com](http://twsteel.com)

The name of watch brand TW Steel can now be seen on the cars of the Sahara Force India F1 team. To mark the alliance, the Dutch specialist in affordable 'oversized' timepieces has developed six new chronograph models based on its existing Pilot collection: 45mm and 48mm case sizes each available in brushed steel, sandblasted steel or PVD. Powered by good-quality Miyota quartz movements, the watches have carbonfibre dials decorated with the team's flag logo and are available with straps made from white silicon or leather in black or grey, depending on the model.

## Watch tech

### Louis Vuitton Twin Chrono



Split-second chronographs, featuring two chronograph hands that can be stopped independently to give two elapsed time readings, aren't new. But Louis Vuitton has created a highly complex chronograph movement that not only records two elapsed times on separate sub-dials, but also displays the difference between them on a third sub-dial.

LV spent two years developing the Twin Chrono to highlight its role as the official timekeeper of the America's Cup yacht contest, and the watch is designed for timing match races between two boats. Behind the distinctive blue enamel dial lies some sophisticated micro-engineering, which, in addition to the two column wheels, boasts four barrels, four balance wheels and 80 ruby bearings. But perhaps its most impressive feature is that all functions are controlled by a single push-button, the mechanism for which Louis Vuitton has registered for patent.

When a race starts, a push on the left-hand button sets the two counters in motion; a second push on the button records the finish time of the first yacht on the lower-left counter, while the lower-right counter continues to run; a third push records the finish time of the second yacht on the latter counter, with the difference between the two displayed on the top counter.

The right-hand side of the case, meanwhile, features two winding crowns for the conventional timekeeping mechanism and the chronograph respectively.

## Now & Then



### NOW Jaeger-LeCoultre AMVOX 5 World Chronograph

Worn by: Darren Turner

Aston Martin Racing works driver Darren Turner is currently sporting the AMVOX 5 World Chronograph, a ceramic and titanium world timer. The watch displays the time in 24 locations around the globe simultaneously and features a 'gridwork' dial based on the look of an Aston grille.



### THEN Rolex Oyster Day-Date

Worn by: Sir Jackie Stewart

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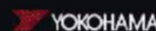
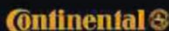
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# Insider

by HARRY METCALFE



Harry wonders if the current boom in supercar trading could soon be followed by bust

**X** **XP5, THE McLAREN F1 WE USED FOR OUR** recent 'analogue supercars' cover story (*evo* 186), was insured by us for that test for £5million. That figure was so much bigger than I expected. You could buy five LaFerraris for that! And with an insurance excess of 20 per cent (£1million), had we pranged it, we would have broken *evo's* editorial budget for decades.

To check this valuation was correct, I rang Simon Kidston, the Geneva-based dealer who just happened to have an F1 up for grabs, as well as one in his personal collection. It turns out that Simon knew of four F1s that had been sold in the preceding few weeks (including the example he had in stock), and the average selling price was around the £6million mark. Gobsmacked is the only way to describe how I felt on hearing that news.

Then there was the ex-Juan Manuel Fangio Mercedes W196 sold by Bonhams at the Goodwood Festival of Speed for £19.6million (including commission and taxes) – the highest price ever paid for a car at auction. The world is hardly swimming in cash right now, but with such enormous sums being paid for famous cars, could there be a '90s-style price crash on the horizon?

It makes you wonder, but there are significant differences between the last boom and this one. Back in the late '80s, speculators were heavily involved because all types of cars, old and new, were booming. The message was that you couldn't go wrong. In 1989, you could buy a new Lamborghini Countach QV for list on a Monday and advertise it for double the price in the *Sunday Times* at the end of the week. That's why when Lamborghini decided to produce a special Countach model to mark 25 years of the firm, it opened the taps and produced 658 examples in just over a year, when a mere 1300 Countaches had been sold over the previous 16 years. Then the crash hit in 1990, resulting in piles of unloved 25th Anniversary Countaches gathering dust in storage facilities worldwide as buyers realised they could only sell at a big loss.

Another key factor in 1990 was that better cars were arriving, so once buyers had driven the new generation of supercars, they couldn't wait to trade in their old versions. Wind the clock forward to 2013 and I'm not so sure that's the case. While many of today's cars are much more user-friendly, they often aren't as involving to drive as their predecessors. Our analogue supercar test made the incredible McLaren 12C (which was also present, but behind the scenes) look almost redundant: the driver appeal simply wasn't there like it was in the (mostly slower) supercars we were testing.

That's not the case right across the motoring landscape, but I'm

sure it's an increasingly important factor that wasn't an issue in 1990 and is why we're seeing a boom in prices for slightly older cars. The only reason you can buy a good second-hand Ferrari 458 for £130,000 is that there isn't enough demand to keep the price higher. Many of today's buyers would rather swap the extra performance the 458 offers for better residuals, or even the chance of appreciation on a limited-run car like the 360 Challenge Stradale or 430 Scuderia.

Another phenomenon that wasn't there in the '80s was a range of world-class 'star car' events such as Goodwood, Salon Privé, Pebble Beach, and the Ferrari 250 GTO and McLaren F1 tours. All these events have contributed massively to the appeal of owning something rare like an ex-Fangio racer, or a special road car like the McLaren. Then there's the fact that cars can now

**'The world is hardly swimming in cash right now, but with such enormous sums being paid for famous cars, could there be a '90s-style price crash on the horizon?'**

be easily traded globally, just like fine art, to which supercars are now often compared. Keeping tabs on what's available is so much easier, too: a collector in India or Malaysia is no longer disadvantaged by not knowing what's available in Europe, because as long as you've got an internet connection, you can find out exactly what's for sale anywhere in the world.

The only fly in the ointment in all of this is that no-one actually needs to own an iconic or classic car. The simple act of transportation is done better by any modern supermini, so if interest rates bounce back or unemployment soars again, prices could wilt as people are forced to sell up. But buy wisely (limited-run cars, perfect condition and highly acclaimed) and you should be fine, because one thing's for sure: they don't make 'em like they used to. ☒

@harrym\_evo

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



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# Petrolhead

by RICHARD PORTER



The ordeal of buying kitchen appliances reminds Porter that car manufacturers don't make things easy for themselves

**L**AST WEEK, I BOUGHT A NEW dishwasher, which was, in truth, quite a tedious business. Buying a new car is fun. Buying a new home appliance is not. That's because, if you like cars, you're hitting the ground running with a basic amount of knowledge and the ability to see through offers and incentives and the pungently over-cologned bullshit of the unctuous salesman. Appliances, I know nothing about. They all look the same and the temptation is to buy whichever has the twinkliest lights or the one that's nearest the shop entrance. I suppose some people experience this exact feeling when shopping for a car, which would explain the ongoing popularity of the Vauxhall Corsa.

The real problem with appliances, however, isn't that they look the same. It's that they all have impenetrable names like JT5939382R or 100K928208F-G. So you find something online that you think suits you but you want to be sure that your chosen N-H588222940T-A model doesn't have unfathomable buttons or a sprung-loaded door that'll catch you in the knackers as you're trying to retrieve the kitchen scissors. That means an old-fashioned trip to the shop during which you'll waste 20 minutes trying to identify which one it is. 'Sorry sir, we don't have the N-H588222940T-A on display at the moment. I can show you the N-H588222940T-B, which is exactly the same except it has a hugely sprung-loaded door for maximum testes damage...'

I'm convinced that the first company to announce a new generation of appliances with proper bloody names will be onto a winner. Get rid of the inexplicably massive hierarchy of basically identical machines and just offer a simple three-tier range with a simple system of names. The Dishmatic L, the Dishmatic XL and then maybe a high-performance model called the DishmaticR. I'd buy one in a heartbeat. The R, obviously. This is *evo*, after all. Although I'd wait until we'd taken it to North Wales for a couple of days just to make sure it could handle dried Weetabix in all conditions. Who knows, perhaps the entry-level L would prove to have sweeter handling (of a dish used to make lasagne).

My worry, however, is that carmakers aren't much better. If you read this mag you understand this stuff because you make it your business to know the difference between, say, a C250 and an E63 AMG. But to someone who's not into cars, that's as much gibberish as the product code for a blender. Overarching model names are no better. If you've no interest in German saloons, you're not even going to care what a 5-series is, or an A5 or an S-class. You're just going to say, 'I was almost run over by a BMW' or 'There was some

arsehole tailgating me in an Audi' or 'I just saw Moira Stuart getting into a Merc.'

It's a problem that Jaguar faces, too. F-type is all well and good because it reminds people of the very famous E-type, but what about the rest of the range? XJ has been with us for over 40 years and yet I suspect the average person just calls it 'a big Jag'. And XF just sounds like a coffee machine. So how does it help if someone sees a particular Jag, really wants to buy one but can't remember the letters that make up its name? They'll have to walk into a Jag showroom and point at the one they want like a stropky toddler.

Contrast this with a company like Ford, which gives all its cars proper, easy-to-remember names. As a result everyone knows that the small one is a Fiesta, the slightly bigger one is a Focus and so on. It makes things so much easier and, more importantly, it makes the models seem friendlier for people not normally

**'What if someone wants a particular Jag but can't remember the letters that make up its name? They'll have to walk into a showroom and point like a stropky toddler'**

interested in cars. Which, let's face it, is most of the population.

So, here's the job for Jaguar. They've got a new small car coming soon to slot below the coffee machine and take on the BMW whatsit, you know, the saloony one, no, smaller than that, like the one Geoff used to have. Rumours are it'll be made of aluminium and that Jag is spending a fortune on its development to make sure it's bang-on. But what it really needs to succeed is a proper name. XB or whatever simply will not cut it. Those are codes for printer refills. What this car must have is a proper, easily remembered, comfortingly familiar name. A name that is current and modern and stoutly British. A name that reminds us of supermodels and actresses and now makes headlines around the world thanks to a regal connection. Ladies and gentlemen, the 2015 Jaguar Kate.

No need to thank me, Jag. I'm busy loading the dishwasher. ✕

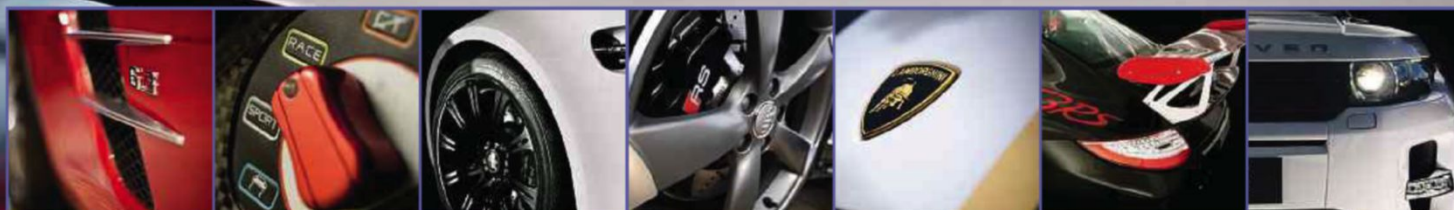
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Richard is *evo*'s longest-serving columnist and the keyboard behind sniffpetrol.com

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 997 CARRERA » 348 BHP  
 997 CARRERA PDK » 368 BHP  
 997 GT3 3.6 » 436 BHP  
 996 3.6 » 344 BHP  
 BOXSTER 3.4S » 336+ BHP  
 CAYMAN S » 342 BHP  
 CAYENNE GTS » 440 BHP  
 CAYENNE TURBO 4.5 » 565+ BHP  
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 S500 2008 » 411+ BHP  
 SLK55 AMG » 389 BHP & DELIMIT  
 SLK 350 » 328 BHP  
 200K » 205+BHP  
 C220 CDI (W204) » 210 BHP  
 280 /300 CDI V6 » 257 BHP  
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 730D » 290+ BHP  
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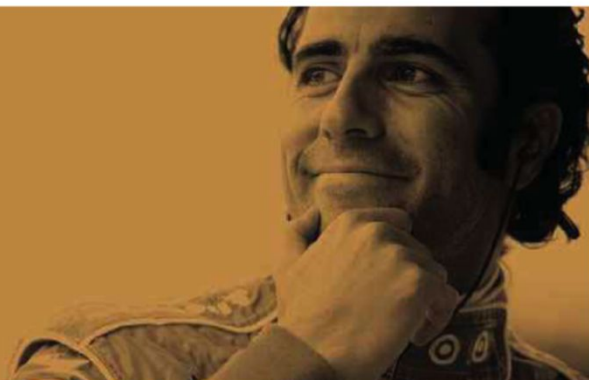
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# Champ

by DARIO FRANCHITTI



## Dario's trip to the Pebble Beach concours in California turned into a celebration of all things Porsche

**B** BEFORE I WENT THERE, I ALWAYS HAD this opinion that Pebble Beach was just all about the concours, but that really couldn't be further from the truth. This was the seventh year in a row that I've been and I now tend to spend at least a week there, because it's just such an amazing place for anybody that loves cars.

Even if you don't go anywhere near the concours and historic races, you'll see all kinds of cool stuff while walking down the street. This year there were two New York-registered Ferraris – an Enzo and an F50 – and they looked like they'd been driven all the way from the East Coast. Covered in road grime and full of cans of energy drinks, they had that wonderful patina you only get from a long, hard drive. Then my little brother Marino and I were sitting in traffic and a first-year 911 Turbo with the Turbo Carrera script on the back pulled up alongside.

As it turned out, Porsche was a big part of Pebble for me this year. For a start, I couldn't help but pore over the Singer. If it drives half as well as it looks it's going to be an amazing thing, because the attention to detail is just incredible. It also provided one of the more surreal moments when I was lying underneath the front of it and Bobby Rahal was lying underneath the back of it, both of us checking out the suspension!

Undoubtedly my most memorable day began with a very early morning start and lots of 911 drivers doing double-takes as I drove past in a 918 Spyder. Perhaps it's because I love my Carrera GT so much, but I was a total non-believer in the 'Nine-Eighteen' concept and just didn't think I was going to be impressed by it. We took off in electric mode and I thought: 'Yeah, that's OK. Pretty interesting.' And then I flipped the little switch on the steering wheel and the engine cranked in. Then we just kept turning up the volume, as it were, and it was fabulous.

The instant torque of the electric motors is surprisingly addictive. You just nail the throttle and – boom – it's right there. The gearbox is fantastic too and I loved little touches like the engine noise being right next to your head with those pipes coming out of the top. It's not an intrusive soundtrack, but when you lift off and it backfires on the downshifts, it's genuinely exciting and much more emotional than I'd expected. No, I'm not about to sell my CGT to buy one, but I've got a couple of friends with 918s on order and it was nice to be able to ring them and say: 'By the way, boys, this thing is actually quite good.'

The day didn't end there, though, because once we got back from the drive I had one of those really difficult conversations. A man from Porsche asked me: 'Would you like to drive something

this afternoon?' I replied: 'Um... what have you got?' The answer came back: 'We've got the Le Mans-winning GT1, Moby Dick and the Baby 935.' There's only really one thing you can say to that.

That afternoon I fronted up at Laguna Seca, 15 miles from Pebble Beach, and before I knew it Klaus Bischof from the Porsche Museum was introducing me to Moby Dick, the Le Mans racer version of the 935, so-called because of its white paint and long tail. Klaus is a pretty cool cat and simply said: 'OK, you know what to do. Just don't step on the floor because your foot will go through it. And the roll-cage is aluminium...' You can't help but look at the huge boost knob in front of the gearlever as you get in and there are plenty of funny idiosyncrasies. For example, it has 911-like instruments but Porsche experimented with lights that lit up all the way round the rev counter rather than a needle.

It has a spool diff, which made it a bit tricky getting out of the

## 'The instant torque of the 918's electric motors is addictive. You just nail the throttle and – boom – it's right there'

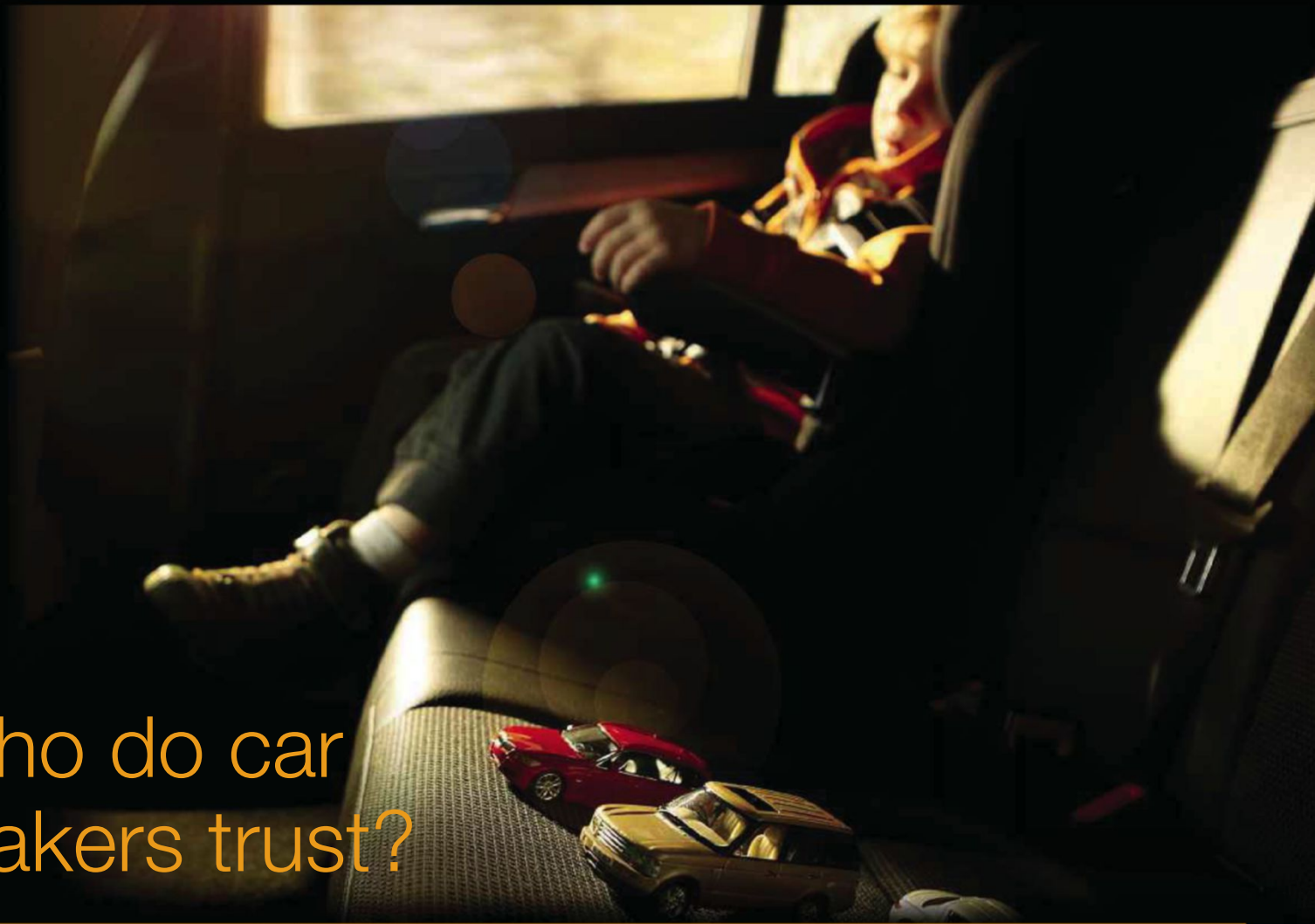
pits, and the first lap was a bit of a handful on cold slicks, but as the tyres heated up it was just magic. The other thing Klaus had said was: 'This car doesn't do modulation. It does flat-out or off-throttle.' It's so true. There is just massive turbo lag – even bigger than in the Audi RS2 I mentioned last month! You can tell it was designed for the flat-chat straights of Le Mans because whole seconds pass between pressing the throttle and getting the boost up. And there's definitely no Corkscrew at Le Mans.

I don't particularly like Laguna's most famous corner. It's mega to watch, but not particularly great to drive. You come up to the crest in Moby Dick and, with the locked diff, you turn in and it just wants to understeer. So you have to muscle it to get it across that first left-hand kerb, and then you definitely have to feather the throttle as you get back on the power, because it's a bit too interesting when the boost comes in with all that lock on...

My run was over all too soon, but Wolfgang Hatz was going flat-out in the GT1, which was impressive to watch, and Patrick Dempsey was driving the Baby 935, so it was a superb afternoon. Just like every other year, I'd have loved Pebble Beach even if I hadn't driven an iconic Porsche. But it definitely helped. ☒

@dariofranchitti

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



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# Inbox

## What's been outperforming your GT-R this month?



**Letter of the Month**

### MR2 vision

evo 187 raised a question in my mind that I feel Jethro Bovington is in a perfect position to answer: which Toyota does he prefer, Mk3 MR2 or GT86?

The MR2 has historically been based upon Corolla parts, so surely the GT86 offers the same opportunity to create a sub-1000kg midship runabout two-seater? I'd beat a hasty path to the local Toyota dealership to trade up if they made one: I've done my best to thrash the living daylights out of my MR2 yet it's resolutely reliable and does a brilliant job of making me feel like Jim Clark despite my Mr Bean talent.

I would want the MR2 to win and I'd almost expect the MR2 to win. The GT86 just doesn't have that exotic mid-engined layout to get me excited.

**Colin Dowding**

*The MR2 trades the GT86's oversteery tendencies for greater grip and more subtle shifts of balance – but when you do unlock the chassis it's more rewarding. I love it – JB*

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### GT-R rage

What a shame your 911 GT3 v Nissan GT-R road test in evo 187 was so very distorted. Jethro Bovington [sic] seems to have distorted what should have been a great road test.

Mr Bovington's quote, 'The GT3 murders the GT-R on the brakes and through the corners,' completely distorts this test! To compare a 911 GT3, a car with ceramic brakes, against a car with steel brakes such as the GT-R removes any credibility of this test and of Mr Bovington!

Secondly, to say, 'The GT3 is near-as-dammit as fast in a straight line as the GT-R,' is another distortion! Your own figures show a 0-62mph time of 3.5sec for the GT3 and 2.8sec for the GT-R! That's not 'near-as-dammit as fast in a straight line'. 0.7sec is a huge difference!

Needless to say, I am now very suspicious of any claims and road tests that evo produces! What a shame such fundamental issues were distorted by what seemed to me like a biased road test.

Back to Top Gear magazine for me now. What a shame.

**Jeremy Flashman (a proud GT-R owner)**

### Ring query

As an avid reader of evo and knowing how you've been accused of 911 favouritism in the past, maybe you could explain how the new GT3 'murders the GT-R on the brakes and through the corners' but is 6sec a lap slower around the Nürburgring?

You quoted the GT3 time of 7:25 but conveniently never mentioned the GT-R's time alongside it. How can a car that's much better, lighter and with a better power-to-weight ratio be slower around a track with 113 corners?

**Jason Butler**



**Above:** should speed limits be raised to match better car safety? See 'Speed thrills'

*Neglecting to mention that the current GT-R has run the Ring in 7:19 was an oversight on our part. We can't explain the difference in lap times. Different drivers and different conditions can have an impact; perhaps the GT3 used for the Ring lap didn't have the optional carbon-ceramic brakes of our test car; perhaps the GT-R is just more suited to the Nordschleife. However, our twin test was about much more than Ring lap times... – Ed*

### GT3 without USP?

I have been on tenterhooks in anticipation of your first test of the new Porsche 911 GT3. As I suspected, the result is predictable and I remain unconvinced by Porsche's decision not to offer a manual gearbox.

This may prove disastrous to Porsche in the long run as it is taking a huge risk by moving the GT3 closer to tech-infested cars like the GT-R when it already has the 911 Turbo for that role. The truth is, that decision was made easier once Ferrari dropped the manual in the 458 and McLaren launched the 12C as automatic only.

The mere fact that the GT3 is now compared to the GT-R shows it has become nothing more than a moniker and the car itself is simply a very good version of a 911 PDK. Those who have £100,000 to spend on a car will also be able to stump up another £70k and buy the 12C, which is faster and far more exclusive. Yes, the GT3 is purer and more responsive because of the naturally aspirated engine, but is that really paramount for someone who wouldn't bother to shift manually?

**Ofir Shaked, Israel**

### Speed thrills

When today's sporting Ford Focus model can outpace and outbrake a GT40, our current speed limits are



**Above:** Jeremy Flashman sent us a strong defence of the Nissan GT-R's performance



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**Above:** Jethro's carbon-framed shades caught the eye of Jonathan Broadbent



**Above:** the simplicity of the 620R is akin to a light aircraft, says Brandon Gonzales

akin to a man with a red flag walking ahead of every powered vehicle. I was recently fined and given points for driving my modern-ish mid-engined sports car at a mere 46 per cent of its designed top speed on the Old Military Road, on a clear, dry day with absolutely no danger to anyone. It struck me how ridiculous that was.

Some can point to a studied link between reducing speed and road deaths and injuries, but I haven't found one that considers and accounts for improvements in car design. Such studies are short on scientific rigour. The same is also true of pedestrian safety too, so when I'm faced with the glib, 'But would you rather be hit by a car at 30mph or 35mph?' my answer is always: 'Whichever one that is NCAP 5 for pedestrian safety.' With better structures, brakes and safety systems, we currently have the safest motoring we have ever had.

I think it's time to raise the speed limits, certainly on motorways and deserted roads – although I'm not holding my breath for this because even fellow enthusiasts are throwing in the towel.

**Chris Cooper**

### Feels like flying

Nick Trott couldn't have said it better about the Caterham 620R in his Ed Speak (evo 187). What Trott described is the exact ritual you do before flying. It doesn't matter if you're strapping into a Cessna Skyhawk or a British Airways Boeing 747.

What matters to petrolheads and pilots is the complete experience. Sure, fast lap times and 0-60mph times imply a more intense and rewarding drive, but visceral enjoyment of the complete experience is what makes us do it.

The Caterham is as simple as you can get, just like a Piper Cub (which isn't fast at all). They have both been around for a long time, but are still as great as ever because they leave you with a feeling that you just can't shake.

Trott's comment made me appreciate both experiences just a little more, and you can't get much more **evo** than that!

**Brandon Gonzales, San Diego**

### Atom bombshell

In his review of the Caterham 620R, Dickie Meaden claims that the car

is 'totally focused yet surprisingly versatile', unlike an Ariel Atom, Radical or BAC Mono. He should have a chat to a few of us Atom owners that have camped with the car or crossed the Alps in all weathers. The Atom actually has more useable space than the Caterham, and more bars to hang stuff off. OK, it doesn't have a windscreen (as standard), but everyone knows they're for hairdressers anyway.

**Steve Gibson**

### Carbon specs

I personally agree with James Bowen's letter (evo 186) regarding the over-use of carbonfibre in everyday products. However, judging by his sunglasses worn in the 'analogue supercars' test in the same issue, it seems Jethro Bovingdon isn't so concerned. Great article, by the way.

**Jonathan Broadbent**

### Roaring F40s

I read the 'analogue supercars' article with great interest when **evo** 186 arrived at my house. I found the commentary to the point and very well done. However, the comparison is difficult as the Ferrari F40 is a generation removed from the other cars.

While all the cars tested are 'analogue' when compared to today's offerings, the other cars have suspension, braking and spaceframe technology that is clearly a generation further on. The F40, by comparison, is old-school, with manual steel Brembo brakes, steering and suspension derived from the mid-'80s. It is beautiful in its simplicity.

As the owner of an F40 for nearly 15 years now, I can say that I have never driven a car that gives me a rush like this car still does. It is truly honest and rewards you with its race-bred character every time you drive it, if you know what you are doing. Among the other cars tested, with the exception of the McLaren F1 it is the only car that, with relatively minimal modifications, successfully competed in GT racing at the highest level for many years, even after production was discontinued. That speaks volumes about the overall soundness of the design and execution by Ferrari's engineers, and of Enzo's vision.

**Emmett M. Murphy, Dallas**



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

## Thread of the Month

**MARKMCTAVISH**

### 'Historic racing on the cheap'

I was blown away by how ridiculously fun Dickie's 'Inside *evo*' video of historic racing was. I'd quite like to properly have a go at RWD in future as FWD is rather limiting. How can you get an RWD car that's got enough poke, little weight and fun handling without spending the crazy sums on an old historic race car? I'm thinking £10,000 including buying a nice bucket seat, cage, tyres and suspension. Must be a tin-top.

**BEANY**

I'd be looking at a fairly clean XR4x4 and throwing a pair of small turbos on it at that budget.

**MARKCOOPERS**

MX-5 with hard-top, cheap tyres and about £8k of fuel.

**JIMMY CHOO**

I'd say MX-5 with a mahoosive turbo bolted on. You're looking for more power than grip, and generally lower grip, so I think a mk1 MX-5 is probably the way forward.

**MARKMCTAVISH**

The MX-5 is not a tin-top, though. A BMW still seems like it's the best bet for the UK.

**CANESWELL**

I can't think of a worse possible option than an XR4x4! E36 M3 is the correct answer.

**MARV**

Probably be as shonky as Beany's XR4x4, but a Rover SD1.

**MIKE1215**

After driving a few old Fords, I'd say a lot of the newer stuff won't have the same 'feel'. An old Anglia or one with a tweaked Xflow would be ideal, or a Mk1 Escort - you can find these for £10k.

**ZEDLEG**

I've had a hankering to do a track toy Anglia for a while: stripped and caged with modern suspension and brakes. Can never decide if I'd put a classic engine in it or a Zetec, though.

**PHUT**

A RWD Mini with the highest torque/lowest weight engine you can fit in the front of it. And you can tear out everything in the back and have pushrod suspension squeaking away behind your bucket seat.



### Thread of the Month wins a Jorg Gray chronograph

The originator of the best *evo* forum thread wins a fabulous Jorg Gray chronograph. Jorg Gray has quickly become one of the world's most sought-after brands and is found in fine jewellery stores throughout the UK.

[www.jorggray.co.uk](http://www.jorggray.co.uk)



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by HARRY METCALFE, NICK TROTT  
RICHARD MEADEN & JETHRO BOVINGDON

# FUTURE ICONS

**T**HE FOLLOWING 44 cars have all been on sale new during the life of *evo* (the last 15 years). They are all modern classics, although we've tried to avoid the word 'classic' because it implies a classic driving experience, which couldn't be further from the truth.

We've chosen these cars based in part on current market knowledge, but most of all on driver appeal. And that's the core of this feature: these aren't cars to squirrel away. They are cars to drive in the knowledge that their values aren't going to plummet and may well do exactly the opposite. Let the good times roll...

## INVESTMENT RATING

- £££££ — Great to drive & the best option for big short-term profits
- ££££££ — A driving gem, but you may have to play the long game
- £££££ — Values static but you're unlikely to take a hit



## LAMBORGHINI DIABLO SV

**1995-1999**  
**New £124,950**  
**Now £80k-£90k**

The SV arrived in 1995 as a stripped-out, back-to-basics, two-wheel-drive Diablo. With reduced equipment and lightweight seats, the kerb weight dropped 50kg compared to a regular four-wheel-drive Diablo, but rather than charge extra for this exciting road-racer special, Lambo reduced the list price by five per cent. With optional shorter gearing, the SV proved to be a cracking car to drive. Okay, the controls are old-school heavy and 510bhp powering 1576kg isn't quite as mad now as it was back then, but the noise, the looks and the sheer drama of an SV make this one very special Lamborghini indeed.

**INVESTMENT RATING** **£££££**



## SUPERCARS



**LEXUS LFA** **2010-2012**  
**New £352,000 Now £400k+**

The LFA is a masterpiece of Japanese craftsmanship: the engine is a jewel-like Yamaha V10 with one of the best soundtracks ever created by man, the body is formed out of carbonfibre, and everything on the car is bespoke. It might not have the ultimate punch of a 599 GTO but it has a feeling of finesse that the big

Ferrari can only dream of. Now the LFA is out of production, values are staying high because owners know they've bought something that will be impossible to replace. If you're ever offered one, buy it. You won't be disappointed.

**INVESTMENT RATING** **£££££**



**FERRARI 16M /SCUDERIA** **2009/2007-2010**  
**New £220,581/£171,494**  
**Now £180k/£130k**

Everyone remembers their first drive in a Scuderia. It's pure Ferrari magic: screaming engine, howling exhaust, instantaneous responses to any input and a gearchange that seemed unbeatable until the 458's DCT arrived. Even today, the Scuderia feels very special, and one could hold its value better than a regular 458. The drop-top 16M version was made in very limited numbers, which is likely further good news for future values. This is raw Ferrari at its very best.

**INVESTMENT RATING** **£££££**



## PORSCHE CARRERA GT

Much has been written about the Carrera GT being a tricky supercar to handle, but almost ten years since it was launched, it's time for a rethink. Porsche has done much to improve the on-off clutch and most GTs will have had the improved clutch pack fitted by now. It's still not super-friendly, but it's a whole lot better than it was when the car was new. Next, the latest-generation Michelin

**2004-2006**  
**New £330,000**  
**Now £260k-£330k**

Super Sport tyres have calmed on-limit handling massively. But what hasn't altered is the outstanding build quality and the magical V10 engine's appetite for revs. Even at over £250,000, the Carrera GT looks like a bargain, as there's no way it is truly worth less than half what a good F40 fetches today.

INVESTMENT RATING



## PORSCHE 996 GT2

**2004-2006**  
**New £109,800**  
**Now £40k-£60k**

It's odd that the fastest version of the 996 is often overlooked in favour of the lesser 996 GT3, resulting in prices around the £40k mark for this as-near-as-dammit 200mph 911. The GT2 is basically a two-wheel-drive 996 Turbo, with more power, uprated GT3-based suspension and no stability or traction control, and it soon got a reputation for being scary to drive. That's why the number sold compared to the Turbo and GT3 was tiny, hence why we think values will climb.

INVESTMENT RATING



# SUPERCARS



## FORD GT

**2004-2006**  
**New £125,000 Now £145k-£150k**

Launched in 2004, the GT was Ford's 100th birthday present to itself and soon gained an enthusiastic following thanks to the purity of its (GT40-aping) design and monster performance. Today, the Ford GT continues to hold its value well, with prices staying firm at around £150,000. If you're lucky enough to have driven one, you'll understand why.

INVESTMENT RATING



## LAMBORGHINI GALLARDO BALBONI

**2009-2010**  
**New £137,900 Now £110k-£120k**

The Balboni was a limited-run (250) two-wheel-drive Gallardo with a distinct white stripe down its centre line. Built to celebrate Lamborghini's legendary test driver, Valentino Balboni, it's now highly sought-after and examples rarely come up for sale. It's also one of the best-driving Gallardos and that's why we can see them maintaining their value.

INVESTMENT RATING



## FERRARI 599 GTO

**2011-2012**  
**New £305,676 Now £260k-£330k**

A limited production-run Ferrari with a brutal power delivery and stripped-out cabin, the GTO cost a chunky £100k more than a regular 599. Today, values seem to be holding well but with at least 599 examples produced, future increases aren't guaranteed.

INVESTMENT RATING



## McLAREN SLR

**2004-2007**  
**New £313,465 Now £130k-£210k**

Yes, it remains an oddball choice, but at around £125,000, SLRs are finally starting to make sense. Brutally fast and with concept-car looks, the SLR is the forgotten everyday supercar with an exhaust sound that rivals a WW2 Spitfire. Automatic gearbox and weird brake feel count against it, but even so, it's definitely worth a second look.

INVESTMENT RATING



## ASTON MARTIN DB9

2004-present

New £103,000 Now £30k-£50k

A truly gorgeous Aston, the DB9 looks superb value today, especially if you find one fitted with the Performance Pack, which sharpens up the handling no end. As a traditional GT the DB9 takes some beating, and with prices starting at £30k, they look mightily tempting.

INVESTMENT RATING



## MASERATI GRANSPORT

2004-2007

New £66,600 Now £19k-£25k

Buying the last version of a long model line often means you're getting a car with most of its 'bugs' resolved. That's certainly the case with the GranSport, which is the sportiest version of all the 3200/4200 Maserati models produced. Find a good one and limit your mileage to no more than a few thousand miles a year and life should be sweet.

INVESTMENT RATING



## BENTLEY CONTI GT

2003-2011

New £110,000 Now £25k-£30k (early)

A Continental GT is never going to gain value, but this is a beautifully constructed car that's available at crazy prices only because Bentley sold so many in the first place. It's not often you discover a car with zero issues, but the Conti GT really is that close to perfect. £25,000 bags you an early example, and that's knockout value for what you get in return.

INVESTMENT RATING



## ASTON MARTIN DBS

2007-2012

New £160,000 Now £75k-£100k

Feeling much more modern than the Vanquish it replaced (see below), particularly inside, the DBS is a stunning-looking car, with second-hand values holding rock solid at £75k-£100k, depending on mileage. In fact, the only thing holding back future values is the free and easy availability of the DB9 (above left).

INVESTMENT RATING



## GTs



## FERRARI 575M (MANUAL)

The only trouble with a manual Ferrari 575M is finding one for sale. Just 10 per cent of 575s were ordered with a manual gearbox, but because the 'F1' transmission fitted to all other 575s feels ponderous today, the manual is worth searching out. The 575's 5.7-litre V12 feels more muscular than the 5.5 in the

2002-2006

New £154,350  
Now £65k-£75k

earlier 550, and as long as the car has the Fiorano handling pack, its chassis feels better too. The only problem is the export market (chiefly Asia) has no interest in manuals, which is why values haven't yet surpassed those of F1-equipped cars.

INVESTMENT RATING



## ASTON MARTIN VANQUISH S

2005-2007

New £174,000  
Now £75k-£90k

Everyone loves its looks, and with the muscular Vanquish S being the last regular production Aston built at Newport Pagnell, we expect future values to remain rock solid. The other ace the Vanquish holds is value for money, because you can pick one up today for around £75,000 – £100k less than they were new. Only 290 right-hand-drive examples were ever built, so it's rare too, and with looks to die for, we think its future value looks secure.

INVESTMENT RATING



## ASTON V12 VANTAGE

2009-present

New £135,000 Now £75k-£90k

The V12 Vantage is the most exciting car Aston has ever built. It's also refreshingly old-school – manual gearbox, a 5.9-litre V12 with 510bhp and 420lb ft, tough fixed-rate dampers and a limited-slip diff. The new V12 Vantage S has a paddle-shift 'box, and with AMG now technical partners, its future could be turbocharged and dual-clutched. The original will be remembered as something very special indeed.

INVESTMENT RATING

£££££



## PORSCHE BOXSTER SPYDER

2010-2012

New £44,640 Now £23k-£33k

The roof is a pain to put on or remove, but the Spyder is a sensational-looking car. It's also special to drive: with weight down by 80kg, power up by 10bhp to 316bhp and suspension lowered by 20mm compared to the regular Boxster S, the Spyder delivers response, feel and performance from Porsche's very top drawer. Worth the hassle of a fiddly roof.

INVESTMENT RATING

£££££

## HONDA NSX

We all know the clichés, right? Ayrton Senna-developed, frightened Ferrari, so useable, Gordon Murray loved it... Yawn. Fortunately the NSX is much less dull than an NSX bore. In fact it's pretty fantastic – the 3-litre V6 revs so crisply, the gearbox is incredibly precise and the supple chassis ensures superb traction. However, with no power steering it can be quite physical to drive and the balance is pretty tricky right at the limit. In 1997

1990-2005

New £55,000 Now £23k-£75k

the engine size increased to 3.2 litres for the (now six-speed) manual cars and electric power steering was fitted. For 2002, the pop-up headlights were replaced by fixed units and the handling benefitted from revised chassis settings. The later cars are now highly sought-after and incredibly scarce. Prices can only go one way...

INVESTMENT RATING

£££££

# COUPES & SPORTS CARS



## BMW 1M COUPE

2011-2012

New £40,020 Now £37k-£38k

We all wondered if a car with a tweaked turbocharged engine instead of a bespoke, high-revving normally aspirated unit could really be an M-car. Turned out it could. The 1M is a seriously aggressive little car: massively fast and sometimes pretty wild, but always utterly enthralling. And rare, too – just 450 examples came to the UK.

INVESTMENT RATING

£££££



## TVR SAGARIS

2005-2007

New £49,995 Now £50k-£54k

Did the body ever see a wind tunnel? Why did it have pretend cooling vents on the front wings? These questions and many more were swept aside when we saw the Sagaris in the fibreglass, wrung its 4-litre Speed Six engine out to 7500rpm and felt its nose dart into a fast corner without hesitation. The wildest of the wild? Possibly. Commanding big money now, too.

INVESTMENT RATING

£££££

## PORSCHE 997 GTS

2011-2012

New £76,758 Now £54k-£60k

The GTS was the last hurrah for the 997 911. It was rear-drive but featured the Carrera 4 wide-body, and its 3.8-litre engine benefited from the factory power kit, pushing its outputs to 408bhp and 310lb ft. We loved the result, even more so after we'd driven the 991. Spend £55,000 on a manual GTS and be happy.

INVESTMENT RATING

£££££

## LOTUS ELISE S1

1996-2000

New £18,950 Now £8k-£12k

With every passing year the original Elise's purity of purpose, featherweight build and pared-back driving thrills appeal more and more. It feels special at any speed and yet requires real skill to exploit, which is why it's a genuinely exciting test. Available from around £8k, but the best are approaching the teens.

INVESTMENT RATING

£££££



## BMW M3 CSL

2003-2004

New £58,455 Now £26k-£33k

There are people paying upwards of £75,000 for E30 M3 Sport Evos, but an E46 M3 CSL could be yours for just £25k. The original M3 has unmatched motorsport pedigree and was built in tiny numbers, but just 422 right-hand-drive CSLs came to the UK and it really is a special car. It's already an icon but the prices haven't quite caught up yet...

INVESTMENT RATING



## PORSCHE 997 GT3 RS (3.8)

2010-2011

New £100,760 Now £75k-£95k

The 997 GT3 RS came in three flavours: 3.6-litre (from 2007), 3.8-litre (from 2010) and 4.0 (2012). All are brilliant. We'd go for the 4.0, but as they're already changing hands for over £200,000, a 3.6-litre car for under £70k looks like great value, with 3.8s starting at around £85k. All make fantastic propositions long-term. But please enjoy driving them, too.

INVESTMENT RATING



## LOTUS ESPRIT GT3

1996-1999

New £39,450 Now £15k-£18k

'Give it a V8!' they cried. Lotus obliged. 'We all prefer the lightweight four-cylinder!' said the press and purists. Oh dear. And so came the 2-litre turbo GT3. Never has 240bhp been put to better use, and rarely has a mid-engined car been so fluid, adjustable and viceless. Magic.

INVESTMENT RATING



## MERCEDES-BENZ CLK63 AMG BLACK

2007-2009

New £99,517 Now £65k-£80k

Despite a slow-witted auto gearbox we loved the CLK Black Series, which just shows how superb the rest of it is. You really need to drive this thing, because when you do it's breathtakingly exciting. Available from around £65,000 in left-hand drive or £80k for one of the 19 UK cars.

INVESTMENT RATING



# ROAD RACERS



## PORSCHE 996 GT3 RS

2003-2005

New £84,230 Now £60k-£80k

Porsche's first go at a GT3 RS was incredibly extreme and equally rare: just 682 were produced and only 110 came to the UK – all painted white with either red or blue graphics. With a full roll-cage, stiff fixed-rate suspension and no traction control, it's about as hardcore as road-going 911s get. Get one now before prices go into the stratosphere.

INVESTMENT RATING



## PORSCHE 996.1 GT3

1999-2003

New £76,500 Now £40k-£45k

The car that introduced the sub-RS genre of Porsche Motorsport 911. Not as extreme – and perhaps less robust – than later generations of GT3, but a very appealing and truly special car. Prices are on the up for Clubsport versions, but it's still good value.

INVESTMENT RATING



## LOTUS ESPRIT SPORT 300

1993

New £64,995 Now £40k-£50k

The Sport 300 homologated the Esprit GT1, with a stiffened structure, wider rear track (hence the gorgeous tacked-on arches), bigger brakes and a thumping 302bhp and 287lb ft to push 1243kg. Just 64 were produced and even at over £40k, they look an outrageous bargain.

INVESTMENT RATING



## FERRARI 360 CS

2003-2004

New £135,000 Now £90k-£120k

A 360 Modena could be yours from around £35,000, but for a Challenge Stradale you'll need more like £90k. Is it three times the car? Probably. It's only 20bhp to the good at 420bhp but it's 110kg lighter and is so much sharper, more composed and more progressive. And the noise, bare interior and little styling tweaks all add up to something that feels truly special.

INVESTMENT RATING





## CATERHAM R500

1999-2006  
New £36,995 Now £24k-£28k

Of all the headbanger-spec Sevens, the K-series-powered R500 is arguably the greatest of all. Manic and raucous, yet still blessed with all the deftness and tactility that makes a Caterham uniquely rewarding, the R500 is addictive. The highly stressed engines still need looking after, but they aren't the £10k grenades they used to be, so you can sleep easy.

INVESTMENT RATING **£££££**

## AUDI RS4

2006-2008  
New £49,980 Now £14k-£28k

The B7 version of the RS4 from 2006-2008 is one of the few RS Audis to have truly polished dynamics and genuine tactility. Built to go toe-to-toe with the E90 M3 and C63 AMG, Audi has yet to rediscover its magic.

INVESTMENT RATING **£££££**

## SUBARU IMPREZA WRX STI SPEC C

2003-2007  
New £27,995 Now £16k-£18k

In 2003 we took a 911 GT3 and a Spec C to meet the brand-new BMW M3 CSL (evo 060). The Spec C was a left-field choice that blew us away and went on to win the 'real world' eCoty that year (063). Few cars are as ferocious or addictive and in true Japanese style.

INVESTMENT RATING **£££££**



## NISSAN SKYLINE GT-R R34

1999-2002  
New £54,000 Now £24k-£26k

For many diehard fans, this is the last true GT-R, for it was the last to feature the legendary Skyline name and Nissan's RB26 straight-six engine. Born to be tuned, your best bet is a car currently with around 400bhp, preferably sourced from a reputable specialist.

INVESTMENT RATING **£££££**

# TRACK CARS & CURIOS

## HONDA INTEGRA TYPE-R

1996-2006  
New £20,500 Now £3k-£4k

Purists prefer the DC2 Integra – one of the best front-wheel-drive performance cars ever made – but both this and the later DC5 share a sharper dynamic focus than the equivalent Civic Type-R. Success in motorsport also adds to its aura.

INVESTMENT RATING **£££££**

## ARIEL ATOM 1

1999-2003  
New £16,996 Now £25k-£27k

One of the few truly original post-Seven lightweight sports cars, the Atom's architectural design and intense driving experience remain as fresh and thrilling as ever. Rare Atom 1 had a K-series in 140, 160 and 190bhp forms. Honda-powered Atom 2 and 3 are equally tempting.

INVESTMENT RATING **£££££**



## LOTUS 340R

2000  
New £35,000 Now £26k-£30k

The most extreme and extrovert Elise derivative ever seen, and one of the craziest cars ever built. The lack of a roof is a big compromise, but it's actually a pretty comfy car once you're in and driving. For the ultimate 340R, try and find one of the examples fitted with the optional VHPD engine and close-ratio gears. It is genius at its maddest.

INVESTMENT RATING **£££££**



## SUBARU IMPREZA 22B

1998-1999  
New £40,000 Now £31k-£33k

Subaru's working-class hero with a dash of exoticism, the 22B is the ultimate Impreza. The wide-arch, two-door body looks sensational, while the blue and gold scheme harks back to the WRC glory days. Drives better than any other Impreza thanks to more feel-some steering and a more throttle-adjustable balance. Limited edition of 400 cars; Type UK version even rarer.

INVESTMENT RATING **£££££**



## RENAULTSPORT MEGANE R26.R

**2008-2009**  
*New £23,815 Now £16k-£18k*

It seems hard to believe Renault UK struggled to sell its allocation of these uncompromising and totally exceptional hot hatches when the car was new. Now they're highly collectable, especially ones with the roll-cage and titanium exhaust options. The poor man's 911 RS.

INVESTMENT RATING



## RENAULTSPORT CLIO TROPHY

**2005-2006**  
*New £15,500 Now £4k-£7500*

Recaro seats, funky Sachs dampers, red paint and a few white decals denote one of Renaultsport's finest creations. A gutsy engine and nose-led, rear-wheel-cocking handling make for a wonderfully boisterous little car with dazzling A-to-B pace. Worth a second look.

INVESTMENT RATING



## HONDA CIVIC TYPE-R CHAMPIONSHIP WHITE

**2009-2010**  
*New £20,140 Now £13k-£14k*

What a difference a diff makes. And a coat of white paint. It's amazing that these two additions could make the CTR so much more desirable, but the combination of pointier, more direct handling and Racing White paint manage the trick brilliantly.

INVESTMENT RATING



# HOT HATCHES



## HONDA CIVIC TYPE-R

**1997-2000**  
*New £15,995 Now £3500-£5k*

Right on the edge of our 15-year-old cut-off point, the EK9 Civic Type-R is a waspish hot hatch with an absolute screamer of a 1.6-litre VTEC four-cylinder. It was never officially imported to the UK, so it's rare groove Honda at its best.

INVESTMENT RATING

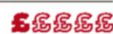


## MINI COOPER S WORKS GP

**2006**  
*New £22,000 Now £10k-£12k*

No rear seats makes this as uncompromising as a series-production Mini gets. Harder, sharper and faster than any Cooper S or JCW before it, the Works GP's tenacious turn-in-at-any-speed handling is head-scrambling. The decals aren't to all tastes, mind.

INVESTMENT RATING



## FORD FOCUS RS MK1

**2002-2003**  
*New £19,995 Now £6k-£9k*

If you've got strong forearms and don't mind a fight, the Mk1 Focus RS is your perfect hot hatch. Rare, tough-looking and placing an emphasis on agility over raw power, if you can find a cherished example, you can't go wrong. Seems like a bargain at the moment, too.

INVESTMENT RATING



by RICHARD MEADEN

PHOTOGRAPHY by GUS GREGORY

# future ICONS

*Need help narrowing down your choice?  
We pick our ten favourites from the  
preceding pages and find out just  
how much fun they still  
are to drive*





**S****SO THIS IS IT. TEN OF**

the most impressive, appealing, exciting, intriguing and potentially rewarding entries from our list of future icons. Look good, don't they? That many of you would

doubtless have chosen differently illustrates the joy of this exercise, for there are few things more personal and all-consuming than the musings of a petrolhead in the grip of a theoretical (or actual) car-buying frenzy. It's not rated the world's second most popular male displacement activity for nothing.

As you can see, this gathering is an attempt to cover as many bases as we can, from the affordable to the exotic, the iconic to the frankly irresistible. That such a rich and diverse selection of shapes, sizes and flavours falls within the same timeframe *evo* has been in existence suggests we really have been living through a golden age. Only time will tell whether the next decade and a half can hope to match or surpass it, but for now let's reacquaint ourselves with two handfuls of the most desirable cars money can buy.

Starting with the Ford GT. When it was first announced, there was much muttering about it being a pastiche. I suspect prejudicial European snobbery about American high-performance cars muddied the waters a little. Then we drove it and were blown away. Perhaps it's those '60s Le Mans car looks, but whether you've driven one before or not, you always expect the Ford GT to be intimidating and recalcitrant to drive, when actually it's anything but. The steering is alert and moderately weighted, the clutch light, the gearshift free and precise, the brakes smoothly responsive. That supercharged 550bhp V8 delivers epic, easily accessed performance and the chassis is beautifully optimised for the road, with a broad operating window that allows you to work happily between limits defined by progressive understeer or more abrupt, but well-telegraphed oversteer. In short, it works with you, rather than against you.

It feels big on anything smaller than an A-road, but it has a deliciously languid delivery and is genuinely comfortable. It also feels incredibly well engineered. There's no sense of frailty, nor high-maintenance hissy fits waiting to bankrupt you. In fact it feels as dependable as any of Ford's mainstream family cars. Some of the materials used to construct the interior are a bit cheap, but there's no denying the sense of occasion as the huge door scythes shut above your head and you look out over the wraparound dashboard, perhaps catching a glimpse of those curvaceous rear haunches in the door mirrors.

There are more exotic supercars available for the money, but none connect you so completely to the action without overwhelming you, or making you feel ham-fisted. Of course it demands respect, especially on damp or wet roads, but as one of the last cars with this level of performance to be developed without a reliance on electronic driver aids, it has a level of transparency and consistency that fosters a deep and satisfying bond between you and the car.

Few brands can span a gulf as large as that



## **‘You’d never tire of hearing the Sagaris at full-chat, bellowing through the gears and emitting a barrage of pops and bangs on the overrun’**

between a re-imagined Sixties supercar and a nutty Noughties hot hatch, but Ford did just that with the GT and Mk1 Focus RS. That both find themselves in our group might come as a surprise to some of you, especially as we’ve had a rocky relationship with the hardcore hatch. Our beef was the torque-steer that dominated the driving experience on anything but a smooth road. We also weren’t that keen on the interior, which had a distinct aftermarket whiff about it.

It’s funny how a few years and an evolutionary path that has made hot hatches much bigger, heavier and more powerful can change your perspective. Parked amongst the more exotic and expensive cars in this test, the Focus looks far from out of place. In fact it looks bloody wonderful. The clean, crisp styling of the original Focus has aged very well, and with its more muscular stance and more aggressive detailing, the RS looks as tough now as it did back in 2002.

The black and blue Sparco seats seem less

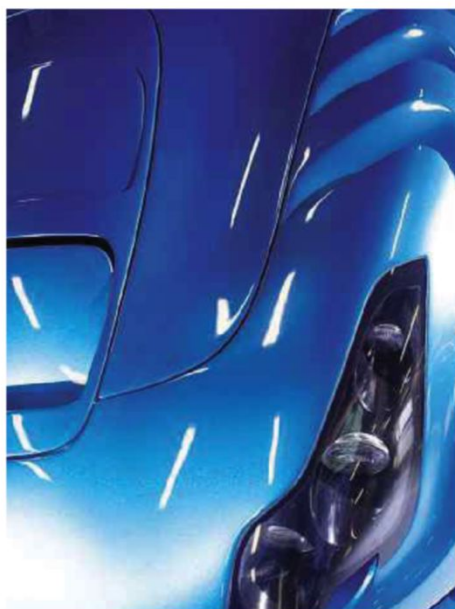
offensive than they did and I’d forgotten all about the satin carbonfibre centre console and shiny green starter button. The Brembo brakes are hugely impressive, and the way the RS clings on in corners and digs for traction makes it endlessly amusing through a tangle of twists and turns. The five-speed gearbox isn’t quite as slick as you’d like and the driving position leaves you feeling perched a few inches higher and with less lateral support than ideal, but on the whole it’s a good place to be.

So what of the legendary torque-steer? Well, yes, it still yanks you all over the road like a disobedient dog on a lead, but the torque-led tugs are largely confined to the first two gears and are also less prolonged than the constant meandering of the fatter, less-agile Mk2 Focus RS. The turbocharged four-cylinder engine has a pleasingly snorty edge to its delivery, so while 212bhp is small beer in 2013, the Mk1’s light build and quick wits mean there’s more than a hint of Mégane RS 265 about it. The flaws are still there, but as the years pass, this prodigal

hot hatch is rapidly finding redemption.

From the Focus RS to another distant Ford relative, in the heroically handsome shape of the Aston Martin Vanquish S. Lest we forget, this was the last Newport Pagnell model, built right on the cusp of Aston’s transition into independent ownership and the advent of the Gaydon era. As such, the Vanquish is a landmark car, a world away from the models that preceded it, but a clear pointer to the direction in which the marque was heading.

Ian Callum’s design still stops you in your tracks, for some its defined muscularity, solid stance and borderline pornographic proportions have yet to be surpassed. The interior is a bit clunky and hasn’t dated especially well, but it’s as cosseting as you’d hope the cabin of a big, front-engined GT would be. With 520bhp, the 5.9-litre V12 is in a relatively mild state of tune compared to the latest 550bhp motor in the Gen 2 Vanquish, but it’s still one of the standout aspects of the car. It sounds so good – brassy and exuberant, but less showy than the current



**Top:** Honda NSX and TVR Sagaris sit at opposite ends of the coupe spectrum. **Above left:** Sagaris has outlandish lines and details everywhere you look. **Above right:** Honda's cabin is quite sober for a supercar

breed of Astons – and it pulls like a train right through the rev range.

The major bugbear with the Vanquish was the paddle-shift automated sequential manual transmission. Improvements were made for the S, and while it's slow-witted in the context of 2013, it's not the disaster you might fear. Drive it with sympathy, helping each upshift along with a fractional lift of the throttle before you pull the right-hand paddle, and it's possible to finesse your progress. Using Sport mode makes a further step forward.

Dynamically, the Vanquish S is softer than I remember. It is very definitely a GT, not a hard-edged sports car, but the way it smothers lumpy tarmac and copes with mid-corner bumps means you can carry formidable pace without trying too hard. Push it to its limits and it'll surrender to understeer or fall into oversteer, depending on how creative you've been on turn-in, but it's perfectly possible to find a neutral sweet spot, at which point it feels very fine indeed.



## ‘The 22B still sends a spike of adrenalin through your body, your

Despite being uprated for the S model, the brakes still feel a bit weak. There’s decent progression and linearity and they offer sufficient stopping power in normal driving, but when you work them hard they feel as though you could make them wilt pretty easily. Better to calm yourself down and focus on enjoying the Vanquish’s elastic performance and fabulous soundtrack.

From the consummate GT to Porsche’s track-honed 996 GT3 RS. With a full cage, lightweight carbon bonnet, plastic rear window and a massive rear wing, it looks every inch the road racer. Back when it was new, this RS was too extreme for some tastes, with an unforgiving ride, edgy on-limit handling and no traction or stability control. Unsurprisingly, we loved it. For a while values began to fall – much like its predecessor, the 964 RS – and you’d regularly see hordes of them at trackdays. Some are still active in that scene, but there’s a real sense these cars are now becoming collectable, a fact reflected in their increasing value.

It’s great to get back into one of these. Tight Recaro seats covered in fireproof cloth, an Alcantara-trimmed steering wheel, the roll-cage... it’s so simple and uncomplicated that your attention is immediately focused on the driving experience. The (optional) full harness means you have to show the car commitment before you’ve even turned a wheel, which is just as well, for the 996 RS requires you to drive it hard and at least attempt to show it who’s boss if you’re to glimpse what all the fuss is about.

The ride is punishing and compromised along our bumpy Buckinghamshire test route, but the car feels totally alive. This urgency percolates from the rev-hungry 375bhp motor, the precise, mechanical-feeling gearbox, and the steering, which is super-sharp and never stops telling you about every bump and camber change. It’s a physically and mentally demanding car to drive quickly, but retains that Porsche Motorsport quality of being just tolerable enough to take on a cross-continent mission to somewhere like Spa or the Nürburgring.



**Top right and above:** Vanquish will go sideways, of course, but it’s happier playing the GT. **Top:** Impreza 22B chases 996 GT3 RS. **Right:** turbo flat-four in the Subaru flat-four in the Subaru has 276bhp



## internal organs nicely compressed by the longitudinal G-force'



This immaculate 996 RS has done just 12,000 miles, but like most examples has spent some of its life on track. Still it feels tight as a drum and truly special at low or high speed, and it exudes that magical aura of attitude and ability that's so particular to RS 911s. Too hardcore for many, that only makes it all the more appealing to a few. A sure-fire icon and a brilliantly intense experience. One day...

Just how sad it was to witness TVR's demise is rammed home on seeing this fabulous Sagaris. From the sawtooth serrations along the tops of the front wings to the asymmetric roof bubble, sideways exhausts and clear Perspex rear Gurney flap, the Sagaris still looks completely insane. Press the little rubber nipple beneath the door mirror to release the driver's door and you gain entry to the weird, sculptural curves of the interior. TVR was doing some pretty mad stuff towards the end, but it was well resolved and totally original. If I'm honest, I wasn't expecting it to feel quite so well put together, nor to have worn so well. It's not an Audi, but

it still has a level of integrity that may surprise TVR doubters.

All the controls – steering, gearshift and pedals – have wonderful weight and precision, and when the 406bhp Speed Six engine starts, the whole car pulses to its throbby idle. Right from the off the Sagaris feels sorted. It also feels light and super-responsive, small inputs to throttle or steering having an immediate effect. It's not jumpy like early Tuscanos – cars that barely had a blink factor, let alone a sneeze factor built into the steering response – but it's direct and alert in a way more modern sports cars simply aren't.

Unfiltered is a good word to describe the overall driving experience. Honest is another. There's more wind noise and general mechanical kerfuffle than 'normal' cars, but when you have such a clear sense of what each corner is doing, how much traction is available and how hard you can brake before a wheel will grab, there's plenty to take your mind off a little NVH. It's a totally immersive car to drive



## ‘The Diablo has the power to make schoolboys of every

fast, your sensitivity to its needs and limits heightening with time behind the wheel. The *l-o-n-g* travel throttle acts as a brilliantly simple traction control system (there are no electronics to help you), and though more stiffly suspended than other TVR models, it still has enough pliancy to work with on uneven roads.

As with all TVRs it's the sound and charisma of the car that's so appealing and addictive. You'd certainly never tire of hearing the Sagaris at full-chat, bellowing through the gears and emitting a barrage of pops and bangs on the overrun. And if the experience of its current owner is anything to go by, so long as you treat the car to a specialist annual service you won't suffer any mechanical maladies either. Peter Wheeler, we salute you.

**I'VE ALWAYS HAD A SOFT SPOT FOR** the Honda NSX. This might have something to do with it being one of the first serious cars I ever drove. The involvement of a certain Mr A Senna didn't do any harm either. Perhaps

because of his connection to the NSX project it's always the early cars that I'm drawn to most. That said, there's a lot to like about this very rare transitional car, which retains the purity of the pop-up headlights, yet features the later 276bhp 3.2-litre engine, six-speed manual gearbox and multi-spoke alloy wheels.

The NSX is one of those cars that has an aura about it. Whether it's because we knew it was something special at the time, or because Honda has grappled with how to surpass it ever since, I'm not sure. Perhaps a little bit of both. It also has a mystique about it that elevates the car above its less than jaw-slackening power, torque and performance figures.

The interior is a mix of Japanese executive chic and impressive simplicity. The view out is beautifully clear, the wheelarch tops rising helpfully into view. This, don't forget, was billed as the first useable supercar, and it shows in the ease with which you simply get in and drive the thing. It's certainly clear where McLaren drew a lot of inspiration from for the 12C.

The chassis is supple. Actually it's borderline soft, but there's damping control to go with the comfort. The steering – power-assisted in this car – still has a strangely dead and slightly slow-witted rate of response that mirrors that of the early non-assisted cars. It forces a less than urgent driving style on you, but this smoothness actually makes a refreshing change and tallies with the 'everyday' mission statement.

As you'd expect, the engine and gearbox play a starring role. In fact they are spectacularly impressive. Honda's jewel of a V6 always felt stronger than the spec sheet suggested, and that feeling holds true today. It has such class, from the silken refinement and appetite for revs, to the steely howl that grows in intensity until, just when you think it can't feel or sound any better, the VTEC kicks in and the NSX reveals its alter ego. The gearbox is a perfect partner, with a clean, rapid shift, and a tight, precisely engineered feel. The Honda is certainly one of the less extreme cars in our group, but its style of delivery and quality of engineering are right



## grown man within a 400-metre radius'

up there with the best.

Stepping from the Honda into the Diablo SV is a journey from the sublime to the magnificently ridiculous. Its sheer size and outlandish looks are truly incredible, with the power to make schoolboys of every grown man within a 400-metre radius. If a little bit of you died when Audi acquired Lamborghini then this car will make you rejoice.

It'll also make you see how far things have come in terms of whole-vehicle engineering, for there's the very real (and obvious) sense these old-school Lambos were all about the looks, noise and engine, with cursory attention paid to finessing the details. That's not a criticism of this car – they were all like that, signore – but it does come as quite a shock to see it.

Of course, the Diablo gets away with it easily, because from the second you slide the scissor door up and ponder how to lower yourself into the driver's seat, you're totally overwhelmed. Once in, you struggle to get your head around the driving environment, so extreme is the rake



## Why wouldn't you?



### Mini Cooper S Works

We liked them new, and we love them even more now you can buy a good Mk1 for £5500



### Mercedes SL55 AMG

Componentry and suspension flaky but sound makes it worth the risk from £18k



### BMW M3 (E92)

V8 M3 never lit up the sales charts. Great car, but values (from £18K) will continue to sink



### BMW M3 (E46)

With good ones from £8k, a bargain. One of the world's best engines comes as standard



### Porsche 911 C4S (996)

With desirability second only to the GT3, your £17k should be reasonably safe here



### Tesla Roadster

Now changing hands for £55k. Honest 200-mile range and amazing performance, but...

**Above left:** the 'Super Veloce' Diablo lacked the four-wheel drive of the VT, but had more power. **Left:** interior quality leaves a little to be desired, though...

## Future icons

of the windscreen and acreage of dashboard. The side glass that dives down towards the front wheels is also a bit freaky.

Perhaps most off-putting is the knowledge you're sat at the pointy end of a very broad arrowhead. Worse, that monstrous V12 sits high up and occupies all the rearward length of the car, giving the SV a weight distribution to rival that of a hammer. Spin the engine into life and you're immediately engulfed in noise and deep, resonant vibrations. In fact it's like you're sat in one of the combustion chambers. Hefting down on the clutch, pulling the gearlever through the exposed gate and feeding in the revs has rarely felt so physical, or so intimidating, yet the ride has only just begun.

The gearing is crazy tall, second and third gears taking you straight to your local Magistrates' Court. What's more amazing is that the 510bhp V12 pulls them with conviction, rumbling and roaring with increasing fury until you need to take the next gear.

Corners are less enjoyable, not least because you're always aware that the tail feels totally at the mercy of its own momentum. You can make decent progress if you keep your inputs very

calm, but it's all a bit tense and sweaty-palmed. Better to adopt a slow-in, slow-out approach and take a big lunge down the straights. Something of a one-trick pony, then, but boy, what a trick!

If you get your kicks from corners then the Impreza 22B will have caught your eye. Here is a car that lives for the challenges of a mountain road or country lane. With its wide track, all-wheel drive, big Brembo brakes and short gearing, everything about this member of rally-bred royalty is optimised for getting into, through and out of a corner faster than just about anything else.

Quite how Subaru has managed to squander its brand equity amongst enthusiasts is one of the world's great mysteries. It certainly illustrates the power of motorsport success in creating and sustaining a brand's image. All of which means the 22B sits atop a select group of road cars that for many defined great modern eras of motorsport and attainable exotica.

The two-door, wide-body style of the 22B remains totally compelling, in the same way an Integrale still makes us dribble after two decades. Blue and gold came close to cliché back in the day, but the 22B wears its legendary

livery with pride and some panache.

The driving experience still sends a spike of adrenalin through your body, thanks to the big slugs of boost-enriched acceleration from the 276bhp flat-four and the punchy gear ratios that keep your left arm busy and your internal organs nicely compressed by the embrace of longitudinal G-force. The steering has significantly more feel than a regular Impreza STI's, and the adjustable diff lends it a unique handling balance that you can tailor to road conditions or your mood. Standard apart from a de-cat exhaust, this 22B sounds fabulous, but not offensive, with plenty of characterful flat-four *dugga-dugga* that melds with a rousing howl at high revs.

Point the bluff blue nose down a bumpy B-road and the 22B is truly in its element, extracting grip and traction from the tarmac like a dentist pulls teeth. As a consequence it fights with the road a bit, rather than passively going with the flow, but this is all part and parcel of the Impreza's appetite to be hustled. You force the pace and the car responds in kind. Yield to the 22B's desire to be driven hard and you'll get yourself into trouble, not through







**‘The flaws are still there, but as the years pass, this prodigal hot hatch is rapidly finding redemption’**



**Left:** IM is newest car in our group. **Top:** NSX is the oldest. **Above:** Focus's interior is a matter of taste. **Right:** RS still hangs on in the corners, though

*Future icons*





**Left:** Vanquish chases Ford GT. **Above:** GT's mid-mounted supercharged V8 feels built to go the distance. **Above right:** traction control in Ford's supercar is down to the driver... **Below right:** 5.9-litre V12 in the Vanquish S has 520bhp

## 'If you're after a 24-carat supercar that won't give you sleepless nights, I suspect the Ford is it'

any vice in the handling, but through the sheer speed you'll be travelling everywhere. Same as it ever was...

Another car that shares that up-and-at-'em attitude is the BMW 1M. There's something deliciously anarchic about this clenched fist of a coupe, for those distended 'arches suggest BMW struggled to contain the suspension and powertrain hardware beneath the 1-series Coupe's skin. One taste of the 1M's rampant performance tells you that impression is largely correct. It really does feel like a small car with BIG power, but there's plenty of grip, traction and braking ability to keep it all in check.

Some people really got a bee in their bonnet about M's transition to turbocharged engines, but the 1M wouldn't be the car it is without its thumping power and torque (335bhp and 369lb ft respectively). It really is a breathtaking car to wring through the gears, for thanks to its seamless blend of low- and mid-range torque and top-end power, the shove in your back never abates. Unusually, the 1M also has plenty of weight to its controls and gives you a true sense of connection. The steering is fast, so you have to calm your inputs a little to be smooth, but you need to stay on top of the car for it is aggressive in the way it eventually breaks traction. If you're new to rear-wheel drive it'll feel a bit intimidating – even with the DSC on – but if you're prepared to take your time to get



pooping manager was on annual leave. There's a maverick spirit about it that other M-cars don't have, and it's a uniquely characterful car as a result. With values refusing to fall much below the original retail price, the 1M has apparently gone straight from niche headbanger to in-demand icon without the chance for a few of us to pick up a bargain. Dammit!

Last to be driven, but most definitely not thanks to any reticence on our part, is the sublime Porsche Boxster Spyder. Every now and again a car is launched that springs a surprise. The Spyder is most certainly one of those cars, elevating itself above the already excellent base car with an alchemic, but less than radical, combination of weight reduction and detail changes to the chassis.

Here was a lightweight Porsche that proved the ruthlessly race-honed path of the RS models was not the only way to achieve greatness. In fact in purely dynamic terms the Spyder is a much more amenable road car than any recent RS 911, thanks to its apparently bottomless pliancy and beautifully generous, malleable and totally approachable handling.

Every element of this car is so perfectly wrought, so cohesive and consistent, it's as near as flawless as you're ever likely to get. The balance of grip to power and how this dovetails with the steering's rate of response is inspirational, while the engine has a magical

to know it, or are an old hand with rear-wheel drive, you'll love its readiness to oversteer.

As one of the youngest cars in the group it's not surprising that in terms of point-to-point pace it is probably the quickest machine here. Advances in suspension, tyre and brake technology give it a natural advantage, but BMW truly pulled out the stops with this car. They also endowed it with brakes that are more than up to the job, thereby avoiding the criticism levelled at generations of M3s.

As when it was launched, the 1M feels like an anomaly: a car that got signed-off when a party-



## ‘As with all the best group tests, it proves incredibly difficult not to fall in love with all ten cars’

**Above left and below left:** 996 GT3 RS makes a strong case for itself... **Above and right:** ...but for Meaden the other, more affordable Porsche in our ten, the Boxster Spyder, is the stronger draw

mix of silken smoothness and soaring, rev-hungry sharpness that has you searching for the red line with every gear.

It also satisfies your inner geek, thanks to its obsessive pursuit of weight reduction, from the use of aluminium in some of the larger body panels, to super-light alloy wheels (not fitted to this car) and an ingenious canvas roof that requires a little patience to erect or lower, yet doesn't compromise the car's useability as much as the naysayers would have you believe.

This, then, is a Porsche for the absolute purist. So finely honed, and with such a carefully crafted tactility to the steering, (manual) gearshift, throttle response, brakes and damping, you can't help but be utterly seduced. To wring this car out through the gears, to hear its engine howl through a sports exhaust and to experience its precision and fluency down a road that regularly ties lesser cars in knots, is to appreciate that less done brilliantly will always shine brighter than more done averagely.

**WHICH WOULD I CHOOSE? NOW** there's a question! As with all the best group tests, it proves incredibly difficult not to fall in love with all ten cars. That's another way of saying I won't limit myself to a wish-list of one. I mean to say, it's hard not to relish the notion of having a Diablo SV in your garage, especially as it's inconceivable that this dinosaur won't gain



significantly in value. Trouble is, I don't boast the colossal cojones or sizeable cash reserves necessary to ignore the dangers, or cope with the consequences, of a catastrophic mechanical meltdown. By contrast the Ford GT feels totally bombproof and a much nicer thing to drive. If you're after a 24-carat supercar that won't give you sleepless nights, I suspect the Ford is it.

It's no secret that Astons and Porsches float my boat, so the Vanquish S, 996 RS and Boxster Spyder all do it for me. Any one would make me a happy man, but in the context of this story – and coloured by my own not-too-fantasy budget criteria – it's the beautifully wrought Boxster that already has me monitoring the classifieds.

Of the remaining five cars the 1M is sorely tempting, but I can't quite get my head around

the fact they're going for very close to the same money that they did new. Likewise the Sagaris, wonderful though it is. The NSX's powertrain still has genuine star quality, but slow steering means the chassis doesn't share the same sparkle. A good Mk1 Focus RS is surely one of the great bargain future icons, but perhaps predictably the 22B is a star. Impeccable rally pedigree, limited numbers, strong performance, a truly distinctive character and solid potential for a significant uplift in future value ensure it's the blue and gold über Impreza that's hardest to ignore.

The beauty of this game is that as long as you do your research, buy for the right reasons and at least pay some heed to what the market and your calculator is telling you, rather than relying solely on Man Maths, the financial risks are limited. And you can be 100 per cent sure of getting more kicks slithering your savings through a roundabout than seeing them stagnate in an under-performing account that only generates wealth for the bankers. The economic times in which we're living are challenging, but when it comes to owning a truly special car, head and heart have rarely been so closely aligned. ✕

*With thanks to Marcus Carniel at Autoperform Ltd, Paul Nash, Geoff O'Neill, The Supercar Rooms, Kevin Ray and Alastair Winner.*



## Future icons

### FORD FOCUS RS

<b>Engine</b>	In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc, turbocharged
<b>Power</b>	212bhp @ 5500rpm
<b>Torque</b>	229lb ft @ 3500rpm
<b>Weight (kerb)</b>	1278kg
<b>Power-to-weight</b>	169bhp/ton
<b>0-62mph</b>	6.7sec (claimed)
<b>Top speed</b>	144mph (claimed)
<b>Years produced</b>	2002-2003
<b>evo rating</b>	★★★★☆

### SUBARU IMPREZA 22B

<b>Engine</b>	Flat-four, 2212cc, turbocharged
<b>Power</b>	276bhp @ 6000rpm
<b>Torque</b>	265lb ft @ 3200rpm
<b>Weight (kerb)</b>	1270kg
<b>Power-to-weight</b>	220bhp/ton
<b>0-62mph</b>	5.3sec (claimed)
<b>Top speed</b>	150mph (claimed)
<b>Years produced</b>	1998-1999
<b>evo rating</b>	★★★★★

### FORD GT

<b>Engine</b>	V8, 5409cc, supercharged
<b>Power</b>	550bhp @ 6500rpm
<b>Torque</b>	500lb ft @ 3750rpm
<b>Weight (kerb)</b>	1583kg
<b>Power-to-weight</b>	353bhp/ton
<b>0-62mph</b>	3.7sec (claimed)
<b>Top speed</b>	205mph (claimed)
<b>Years produced</b>	2004-2006
<b>evo rating</b>	★★★★★

### ASTON MARTIN VANQUISH S

<b>Engine</b>	V12, 5935cc
<b>Power</b>	520bhp @ 7000rpm
<b>Torque</b>	425lb ft @ 5800rpm
<b>Weight (kerb)</b>	1875kg
<b>Power-to-weight</b>	282bhp/ton
<b>0-62mph</b>	4.8sec (claimed, 0-60mph)
<b>Top speed</b>	200mph (claimed)
<b>Years produced</b>	2005-2007
<b>evo rating</b>	★★★★★

### LAMBORGHINI DIABLO SV

<b>Engine</b>	V12, 5707cc
<b>Power</b>	510bhp @ 7100rpm
<b>Torque</b>	428lb ft @ 5200rpm
<b>Weight (kerb)</b>	1576kg
<b>Power-to-weight</b>	329bhp/ton
<b>0-62mph</b>	3.9sec (claimed)
<b>Top speed</b>	187mph (claimed)
<b>Years produced</b>	1995-1999
<b>evo rating</b>	★★★★★

**‘As long as you do your research and buy for the right reasons, the financial risks are limited’**



### BMW 1M COUPE

<b>Engine</b>	In-line 6-cyl, 2979cc, twin-turbo
<b>Power</b>	335bhp @ 5900rpm
<b>Torque</b>	369lb ft @ 1500rpm
<b>Weight (kerb)</b>	1495kg
<b>Power-to-weight</b>	228bhp/ton
<b>0-62mph</b>	4.9sec (claimed)
<b>Top speed</b>	155mph (claimed)
<b>Years produced</b>	2011-2012
<b>evo rating</b>	★★★★★

### PORSCHE BOXSTER SPYDER

<b>Engine</b>	Flat-six, 3436cc
<b>Power</b>	316bhp @ 7200rpm
<b>Torque</b>	273lb ft @ 4750rpm
<b>Weight (kerb)</b>	1275kg
<b>Power-to-weight</b>	252bhp/ton
<b>0-62mph</b>	5.0sec (claimed)
<b>Top speed</b>	166mph (claimed)
<b>Years produced</b>	2010-2012
<b>evo rating</b>	★★★★★

### HONDA NSX

<b>Engine</b>	V6, 3179cc
<b>Power</b>	276bhp @ 7300rpm
<b>Torque</b>	224lb ft @ 5300rpm
<b>Weight (kerb)</b>	1410kg
<b>Power-to-weight</b>	196bhp/ton
<b>0-62mph</b>	5.7sec (claimed)
<b>Top speed</b>	168mph (claimed)
<b>Years produced</b>	1990-2005
<b>evo rating</b>	★★★★★

### PORSCHE 911 GT3 RS (996)

<b>Engine</b>	Flat-six, 3600cc
<b>Power</b>	375bhp @ 7400rpm
<b>Torque</b>	284lb ft @ 5000rpm
<b>Weight (kerb)</b>	1330kg
<b>Power-to-weight</b>	286bhp/ton
<b>0-62mph</b>	4.4sec (claimed)
<b>Top speed</b>	190mph (claimed)
<b>Years produced</b>	2003-2005
<b>evo rating</b>	★★★★★

### TVR SAGARIS

<b>Engine</b>	In-line 6-cyl, 3996cc
<b>Power</b>	406bhp @ 7500rpm
<b>Torque</b>	349lb ft @ 5000rpm
<b>Weight (kerb)</b>	1078kg
<b>Power-to-weight</b>	383bhp/ton
<b>0-62mph</b>	3.9sec (claimed, 0-60mph)
<b>Top speed</b>	185mph (claimed)
<b>Years produced</b>	2005-2007
<b>evo rating</b>	★★★★★

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*Next year, BMW will launch its first hybrid performance car, the i8. We get an early taste of the 357bhp coupe*

by HARRY METCALFE

# i8 hopes



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**THERE'S BEEN A** whole bunch of hybrid cars launched over the past few years but, let's be honest, most have been a bit of a yawn. But it's impossible not to notice

that the next-generation hybrids (Porsche 918, LaFerrari, McLaren P1, etc) due out next year are significantly more appealing. And one of the most intriguing has to be the BMW i8.

BMW describes the i8 as a 'real-world performance car', thanks to its claimed 155mph top speed, 4.5sec dash to 62mph and a promised 113mpg (although that last figure could prove to be EC bunkum at its best). Production versions of the i8 are still six months away from launch, but BMW has invited **evo** to drive one of its disguised pre-production cars at a secret test facility in the south of France.

Even before I clamber in, first impressions are good. The bodywork may be covered in a

strange disguise, but there's a futuristic look to the shape of this plug-in hybrid coupe that's very appealing. For starters, the sculptured nose and bonnet are set super-low thanks to the fact there's no pedestrian-unfriendly upright petrol engine underneath it. Instead there's the same single electric motor that you'll find in the forthcoming BMW i3 five-door hatchback, but here powering the front wheels via a two-speed gearbox. The motor has a lower output of 129bhp in the i8 (compared to 168bhp in the i3) because the accompanying battery pack is around a third of the size, but thanks to that gearbox, BMW reckons the motor can still deliver enough instant grunt to the front wheels in first gear to spin them up from a standing start.

The cool look continues thanks to the low angle of the windscreen, the swooping line of the bare-carbonfibre roof, and the roof rails that break free of the body just above the rear wheelarches before rejoining again just behind the rear hatch. These sweeping rails look like



**Above:** i8 wears a disguise here, but will soon be unveiled in final form (visit [evo.co.uk](http://evo.co.uk) for the latest pics). **Above left:** passenger cell is made from carbonfibre





## BMW i8

a pair of ski-jump ramps and are the type of detail that you marvel at on a concept but never normally see on a 'real' car. But on the i8, they look almost exactly like they did on the motor show car.

Underneath the glass rear hatch is a trick three-cylinder, 1499cc turbo engine (we'll also see it in the new-generation Mini, due out next year). It punches out 228bhp to the rear wheels via a six-speed automatic gearbox and is assisted by a second electric motor attached to it via a belt drive. This clever little unit can act as an infill motor, adding torque while the turbo is spooling up (up to 13bhp and 74lb ft), as a generator to charge the battery, or as the starter motor. You can't see any of this clever mechanical gubbins, though, as it's all hidden away under a soundproof tray, so the only reason to lift the glass hatch is to access the tiny boot that's just about big enough for a hand luggage-sized bag.

It's time to get behind the wheel. Press a hidden button at the back edge of the door to



release it, and it lifts up like a butterfly wing. The entry hole to the cabin you're presented with isn't as big as you might expect, plus there's a foot-high carbon sill to clamber over before you settle into the carbon-shelled driver's seat. It's worth the effort, though, as the i8's cabin has a refreshingly different feel inside, and is both driver-focused and intimate at the same time. A quick peer behind the driver's seat reinforces that view because it's pretty tight in the two rear seats, with minimal headroom and near vertical seat backs.

To get going, the first thing you do is press the starter button on the centre console. As soon as you do, a torrent of electrons flows through the car, sparking it into life. The dash wakes up and the dials start glowing a subtle blue colour, and once the graphics settle, an electronic *ping* tells you that you're ready to go.

The i8 defaults to Comfort mode, which means we pull away under pure electric power using the front wheels only. In a £100,000 BMW.

**'It's the deftness of the chassis when changing direction that's amazing me – it's quite unlike any other hybrid I've ever driven'**



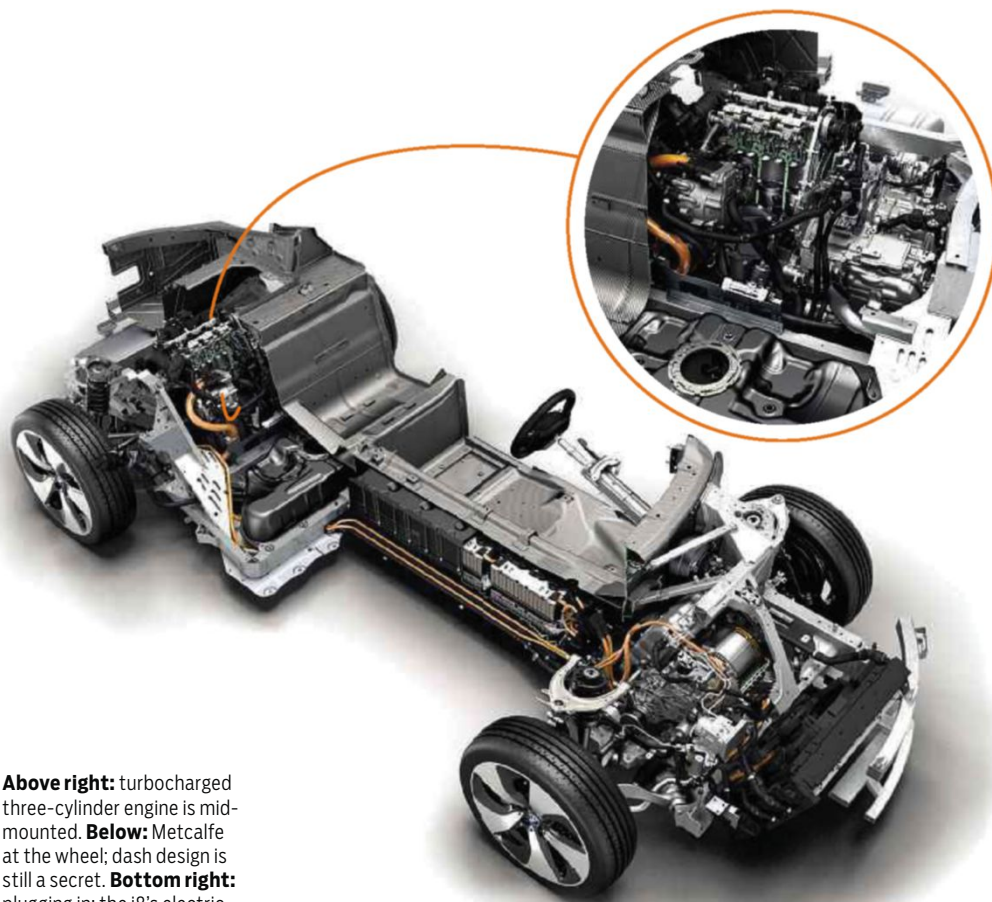
How weird... There's a slight whine emanating from up front, but otherwise it's all very serene inside. The electric steering initially feels too light; it's quick to respond as soon as you add lock, but any feeling of what the front wheels are up to seems completely absent. Build speed past 40mph and the petrol engine behind the rear bulkhead springs into life. If you're cruising, you'll barely register it coming on stream, but if you're nailing it, its awakening is announced by a pleasant grumble as it starts to build revs and makes for the 7000rpm red line.

One nice surprise is that the brakes feel remarkably normal, even though there's plenty of re-gen happening as soon as you touch the pedal. BMW's engineers say they wanted the braking to feel as natural as possible because the i8 will be competing with regular performance coupes, so it will be important not to alienate potential customers by it feeling a bit 'weird' to drive. Therefore, while high re-gen levels are deemed to be acceptable in a fully electric car like the i3, they are not in the i8.

In Comfort mode, the i8 happily wafts around but never really feels as though it has plenty of untapped performance. The real action starts when you push the gear selector over to the left, as that's how you engage Sport mode. Once selected, the dash turns red, the engine runs constantly, revs build quicker, the dampers stiffen, the steering weighting goes up a notch and a clever electronic sound actuator kicks in to amplify the noise of the engine. This last bit of tech may be controversial to purists but in reality it works brilliantly, filling the cabin with an intoxicating mid-range howl very reminiscent of an early 911, and it just gets better the closer you are to the red line.

As we lap a high-speed track, I can't help but be impressed by how I'm never conscious of where the power is being delivered from, even though there's a very clever ECU somewhere constantly juggling three separate power sources to keep the show on the road. You won't be surprised to hear that the i8 feels all-wheel-drive, but it's the deftness of the chassis when changing direction that's amazing me – it's quite unlike any other hybrid I've ever driven. The lightweight carbon construction has to be a major factor here, as must the positioning of the lithium-ion battery down the spine of the car, together with the other mechanical components being well within the wheelbase and positioned as low as possible. The result is a perfect weight distribution of 50:50, with minimal roll forces to control and a nimbleness to the chassis that makes the i8 feel like a real drivers' car.

The skinny tyres are another factor that helps, as they are refreshingly narrow – just 195-section front, 215-section rear – in an effort to keep rolling resistance to a minimum.



**Above right:** turbocharged three-cylinder engine is mid-mounted. **Below:** Metcalfe at the wheel; dash design is still a secret. **Bottom right:** plugging in; the i8's electric-only range is around 21 miles



## BMW i8



If you fancy more mechanical grip then there's an optional sports package available that ups the tyre sizes to 215/45 x 20 at the front and 245/40 x 20 at the rear.

Even though I've got a total of 357bhp and 420lb ft of torque to play with, the performance is interesting but never feels as fast as the claimed 4.5sec to 62mph suggests it should, which is a shame. After this initial drive, I don't think the i8 would see which way a 911 went on track, but on road it could be a fair bit closer.

There's still some chassis fine-tuning to be done, as this pre-production i8 develops a fair amount of tyre-squealing understeer as I turn in for some of the faster corners on this testing track, but then the understeer fades away as I get closer to the apex. BMW's head of chassis, Jos Van As, explains that the front motor is busy harvesting energy at this point, and doing this takes up a certain amount of the grip available to the front wheels, but once you turn in, the regen is cut, causing the front end to gain grip and the understeer to reduce.

It's stuff like this that shows the incredible level of engineering that has gone into making the i8 function as well as it does, and I'm starting to warm to all this new-age gadgetry because it makes driving the i8 more engaging than I dared hope it would be. Whether it actually delivers on its 100mpg+ promise is another matter, but as it stands, the BMW i8 introduces us to a new generation of plug-in hybrid, one that has been created to entertain the driver as much as it has to appease those politicians convinced that a performance car is a thing of evil. It's a fascinating combination and after this initial taster, we can't wait to drive the proper production version in a few months' time. ☒

## Specification

### BMW i8

**Engine** In-line 3-cyl, 1499cc, turbo, plus 96kW electric motor  
**CO2** 59g/km **Power** 357bhp (combined) **Torque** 420lb ft (combined)  
**Transmission** Six-speed automatic (rear wheels), two-stage automatic (front wheels)  
**Front suspension** Double wishbones, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar  
**Rear suspension** Multi-link, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar  
**Brakes** Ventilated discs front and rear, ABS, EBD  
**Wheels** 7 x 20in front, 7.5 x 20in rear  
**Tyres** 195/50 R20 front, 215/45 R20 rear  
**Weight** 1490kg **Power-to-weight** 243bhp/ton  
**0-62mph** 4.5sec (claimed)  
**Top speed** 155mph (claimed)  
**Basic price** c£100,000  
**On sale** 2014



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by JETHRO BOVINGDON

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# SMART BOMB

*Packing more tech than ever and promising GT3-rivalling pace, is Porsche's latest 911 Turbo still the ultimate everyday supercar? We drive it in 552bhp 'S' guise to find out*







## **‘ITS ABILITY TO GIVE YOUR FACE A MIDDLE PARTING REMAINS ITS STAND-OUT FEATURE’**

**T**

### **THE NEW PORSCHE 911**

Turbo S has *everything*: active rear-axle steering, an electronically controlled rear differential with torque vectoring, a new version of

Porsche's PTM four-wheel-drive system with electro-hydraulic control of the multi-plate coupling and a water-cooled front transfer case, active anti-roll bars, a seven-speed PDK gearbox with 'virtual' intermediate gears (it's as weird as it sounds), adaptive aerodynamics, active engine mounts, carbon-ceramic brakes, launch control... And yet it is defined by one very simple thing. Boost. Venomous, violent, crazy and wonderful boost. It seems that even when you chuck the electronic version of the kitchen sink at a 911 Turbo, its ability to give your face a middle parting remains its stand-out feature. Same old same old, then? Not quite. But when the 911 Turbo S squats on its rear suspension and waggles an inside front wheel in the air out of a tight hairpin bend under the brutal onslaught of torque, there's no doubt the old fire is still burning vociferously.

Take a glance at the Turbo S's vital stats and it's little surprise. Its 3.8-litre direct-injection twin-turbocharged flat-six produces 552bhp at 6500-6750rpm and 553lb ft at 2200-4400rpm

for short periods of overboost. The consistent 516lb ft at 2100-4250rpm should suffice on part throttle, I suppose. The net result of all that power and torque coupled to four-wheel drive, PDK and rear P Zeros that measure 305/30 ZR20 is a pretty astonishing set of performance figures. Porsche claims that the 1605kg Turbo S will launch from 0 to 62mph in 3.1 seconds, get to 124mph from rest in 10.3 seconds, and will run on to 197mph.

In reality it feels even faster than that, such is the mid-range acceleration and the security with which it puts it to the road. Perhaps that's why it'll lap the Ring in 7:27 on standard tyres or 7:24 on optional, more track-focused rubber. That's as quick as the new GT3 and faster than the old GT3 RS 4.0. I was a bit shocked when I first learnt that the new Turbo S costs from £140,852, but maybe it's got all the answers.

The launch venue suggests that Porsche believes it does. We're based at the new Bilster Berg race resort, near Paderborn in northern Germany, and we'll sample both the 513bhp, £118,349 Turbo (see page 91) and Turbo S on this incredible track and the surrounding roads. If a car has any dynamic weaknesses, you can bet that Bilster Berg, which swoops, heaves and plummets like a roller coaster, will find them out pretty damn quick. It is some circuit, I can tell



you. Unbelievably, it was designed by Hermann Tilke of incredibly-dull-new-F1-tracks fame. I'd like to have a glass of whatever he was drinking when he sketched this place out.

To be honest, I'm wondering if the Turbo S will fit through the pit garages to venture out onto the track. It looks almost comically wide. For the first time ever the 911 now comes in three body sizes – Carrera/Carrera S (M), Carrera 4/GT3 (L) and Turbo (XL) – and this widest body is 28mm wider than a GT3 and a whopping 72mm wider than a Carrera or Carrera S. We've long celebrated the 911's compactness that makes it so well suited to minor roads, so this is potentially a bit of a disaster.

There's no arguing with the drama the vast rear haunches create, though, and the gaping Edward Munch 'Scream'-style air intakes leave you in no doubt that this engine needs feeding. Oddly, when you're following a new Turbo, the broad, flat-topped arches really change the iconic and normally instantly recognisable 911 shape. In fact it barely looks like a 911 at all.

I'm pondering as much when we roll out onto Bilster Berg, instructor up ahead in a red Turbo S. Then it squats, the rear bumper melts behind a furious jet of hot exhaust gas and it simply disappears. Yikes. He's not hanging about. For the track session we've got the car in Sport+ mode, which means the adaptive aero is in its 'Performance' setting – the pneumatically deployed front splitter fully extended and the rear spoiler raised 75mm and tilted at 7 degrees for maximum downforce. In this mode the Turbo S generates 132kg of downforce at 186mph. What does that actually mean? Not much – a 10 per cent increase in transverse G-force. How many corners do you take at 186mph? Exactly. Even so, it's said to cut the Nürburgring time by two seconds on its own.

As well as setting the aero to attack mode, Sport+ provides a bit more exhaust noise and plenty of thuds on overrun, gives the fastest shift speeds for the PDK gearbox, allows bursts of up to 20 seconds of overboost, and puts the PDCC suspension in its firmest setting. PDCC (Porsche Dynamic Chassis Control) is standard on the Turbo S, and supplements two-stage dampers with active anti-roll bars to virtually eliminate body roll. I've also sneakily turned off the PSM (Porsche Stability Management), as I reckon the new four-wheel-drive system, which is now faster to react and can send more power to the front wheels, should provide enough mechanical help to get me around safely.

The first lap or so is a blur of blind crests and fear, but the Turbo S immediately feels mighty. It has the terrifying relentlessness that has come to characterise the breed since it went four-wheel drive with the 993. It exudes a sort of omnipotence, really, from the



**Left:** huge intakes feed the 3.8-litre twin-turbo engine; as before, the turbos have variable-turbine geometry. **Below:** Turbo S revs all the way to 7200rpm



## Porsche 911 Turbo

**Right:** Bovingdon gets to grips with the Turbo S. **Below:** PDK is the only gearbox option. **Bottom:** rear of the car is 85mm wider than the front; front is 49mm wider than last Turbo



monumental power delivery to the surreal traction and invincible carbon-ceramic brakes (again standard on the S). Bilster Berg is a huge challenge to any car but the Turbo S demolishes it, only feeling its weight on the undulating back straight, where it gets a bit floaty, and exhibiting nothing scarier than a hint of mid-corner understeer. It is efficiency itself. The Turbo S patently isn't a trackday car... but boy oh boy does it get going around here.

With more confidence the Turbo S really starts to shine. There's no question that it feels heavier and more lethargic in fast direction changes than a GT3, despite sharing that car's rear-wheel-steer system, but it has so much traction and the heavy punch of its engine is as addictive as the GT3's naturally aspirated chase for 9000rpm. There are no holes in the delivery, just a great spike of torque that's sustained from around 2000rpm right through the mid-range, and then a rush to the 7200rpm rev-limiter. In combination with the twin-clutch transmission, the Turbo S always feels satisfyingly over-endowed, and every time you pin the throttle you get that freefalling sensation that only the maddest supercars can provide.

Better yet is the balance. Sure, there's some steady-state understeer through most corners,

***'THE TURBO S IS EYE-POPPINGLY FAST AND DEEPLY COMPOSED. NOTHING SHORT OF A McLAREN 12C WOULD KEEP IT IN SIGHT'***



but the four-wheel-drive system and e-diff seem to really work wonders here, allowing you to drive through the understeer to a delicious phase where the car finds a broad plateau of neutrality. You can even get the engine swinging around behind you and make the Turbo S feel like a rear-drive Carrera, despite the active engine mounts and PDCC.

So on track the Turbo S is either impressive and insanely fast – if you just drive it up to the limits of front grip – or deeply exciting and hilariously adjustable if you get the tyres hot and find some confidence to get the weight shifting around. However, we know that on track the 991-generation 911 is pretty remarkable in all its guises. With its longer wheelbase and wider track it really is something special right at the limit. More relevant, especially in the case of the Turbo S, is how it makes you feel on the road. This car is £140,852, remember, so rocket-ship performance alone simply isn't enough.

It takes just a few seconds at a slower pace on the public road to notice lots of nuance that was lost on track. The engine, for example, remains smooth and feels even more surreally powerful,



but the deep, droning exhaust note is actually quite unpleasant. The steering, though, is nicely weighted and there seems to be a bit more information filtering back through it than in rear-drive Carreras. Henry Catchpole found the Carrera 4 had a much more communicative set-up (evo 179) and perhaps that's mirrored here.

The ride is firm but on the smooth roads around the track seems perfectly supple enough for everyday use, and the PDK 'box is smooth but still has the slightly soft-edged feel that is eliminated so impressively in the GT3. Some of that is down to the longer travel of the Turbo's paddles, which feel needlessly gloopy after the quick, decisive action of the GT3 set-up.

However, any concerns about the paddle action melt away in the presence of the 'virtual' intermediate gears introduced for the Turbo to increase efficiency (what else?). In practice this means that the gearbox shifts up earlier than it usually could but without stalling the engine; it then slips the clutch to bring the revs up to the minimum practical engine speed. Now, if you've ever driven a dual-clutch gearbox in automatic mode you'll know that they tend to

change up through the gears absurdly quickly to score low CO2 numbers... so imagine a 'box that takes that logic to the extreme. The Turbo S will shuffle up to seventh gear, which is a very long overdrive-type gear, by around 30mph. It feels like it's on the verge of stalling and makes the car feel deeply unresponsive – and surely you buy the Turbo S to feel overwhelmed by its performance potential on every journey...

Best to forget all that nonsense and shift manually and adopt Sport or Sport+ to get the best throttle response. Now the Turbo S feels like a supercar again. There's one section of road nearby that cuts through a wood and has fast, well-sighted curves and long, constant-radius hairpins where you can really load the chassis up, and it's really very revealing indeed. You won't be surprised that the Turbo S is eye-poppingly fast and deeply composed along here, nor that nothing short of a McLaren 12C would keep it within sight. It really is stupefying performance both in terms of its scale and useability. However, where you hope the Turbo S might come alive as it did on track, it rather starts to feel slightly aloof and unresponsive.



THE 911 TURBO is available from £118,349 – £22,503 less than the Turbo S – and is 39bhp and 29lb ft lighter, with its flat-six rev-limited at 7000rpm instead of 7200rpm. It also lacks the S's full-LED headlamps, fancier door mirrors, carbon-ceramic brakes, Sport Chrono package (which offers Sport and Sport+ modes and the overboost facility) and centre-lock wheels – all of which are available as options. The controversial (around these parts) PDCC is also absent from the spec sheet.

Sadly we couldn't try a non-PDCC-equipped car, but we did sample a relatively basic Turbo with steel brakes. To be perfectly honest, it felt pretty much exactly like a Turbo S: same runaway acceleration, same astonishing grip and traction, same terrific balance on the circuit and similar glimmers of outright brilliance on the road. The steel brakes were also superb and stood up to six laps of Bilster Berg at full speed with no issues at all. My hunch is that a standard Turbo without PDCC could be the one to have.

## Porsche 911 Turbo

### Specification

#### PORSCHE 911 TURBO S

**Engine** Flat-six, 3800cc, twin-turbo  
CO2 227g/km

**Power** 552bhp @ 6500-6750rpm

**Torque** 553lb ft @ 2200-4000rpm

**Transmission** Seven-speed PDK, four-wheel drive, electronically controlled rear differential lock, PTV Plus

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

**Rear suspension** Multi-link, coil springs, PASM dampers, anti-roll bar

**Brakes** Ventilated carbon-ceramic discs, 410mm front, 390mm rear, ABS, EBD

**Wheels** 9 x 20in front, 11.5 x 20in rear

**Tyres** 245/35 ZR20 front, 305/30 ZR20 rear

**Weight (kerb)** 1605kg

**Power-to-weight** 349bhp/ton

**0-62mph** 3.1sec (claimed)

**Top speed** 197mph (claimed)

**Basic price** £140,852

**evo rating:** ★★★★★

The roll-eliminating PDCC system is at the very centre of this sense of detachment because it is designed to tame weight transfer in order to reduce yaw moments. It works brilliantly and keeps the Turbo S completely flat through any given turn, but it also reduces the driver's ability to influence the balance of the car. In the past the key to unlocking a 911's potential was to tweak its tail and use the rear-biased weight distribution to your advantage. Now, that's almost impossible on the road without suicidal aggression and well-timed left-foot braking.

Of course, you'll almost never get to the Turbo S's limits on the road anyway, so PDCC actually takes away the subtle little shifts of balance that provide a real thrill even at modest speeds. Peel into one of those long hairpins and the front tyres load up and might even start to gently understeer. So you lift the throttle to tuck the nose in but nothing happens, as the anti-roll bar compensates for your 'mistake' and suddenly you're out of the loop, an amazed passenger instead of an enthralled part of the process.

Furthermore, the lack of body roll seems to

hide messages as you do approach the limit, so when the Turbo S does let go at the rear it's with a real snap, like all the momentum has been held back and then the dam busts and spills over quickly and without warning. This effect is reduced with the car in its stiffer setting, but the Turbo S always remains a little fuzzy in terms of feedback at the limit. I spoke to a Porsche engineer about this and he was incredulous: 'You actually *miss* this weight transfer?' Erm, well, yes. The tragedy of it is that the Turbo S showed such brilliant balance on the track, where I could impose myself on it, and on those rare moments I find the commitment and the perfect corner to tweak the balance with the throttle or brakes, it feels absolutely brilliant.

Sorry if I just rather geeked out on all that PDCC stuff, but sometimes it does feel as if Porsche wants to expunge any sense that the 911 is rear-engined at all. In a time where all cars at this level are nigh-on impossible to fully exploit on the road, that's a great shame, because some of the peculiarities of that layout are what give the 911 its character – even at low speeds – and have kept owners and enthusiasts alike fascinated for 50 years.

Of course, the Turbo S is a remarkable car – useable, incredibly fast, largely refined and as discreet as any car with this level of performance could hope to be. It remains unrivalled as an everyday supercar that can soothe or thrill depending upon your mood. It's just a pity the real thrills it can offer are so efficiently disguised at times. ❌





# IT TAKES ONE TO KNOW ONE...

*The team at Sky Insurance are dedicated petrolheads: no wonder they understand the specialist car insurance world so well*

**C**AR insurance can be a nightmare. Particularly if you own a high-performance or modified car, or a Japanese import. Suddenly the 'wonder' of online insurance comparison sites turns to frustration: your car isn't listed, there's no facility to detail its modifications, and the quote you're given isn't the bargain you'd been expecting. And as for talking to a clued-up human being on the end of a phone line, forget it...

Wouldn't it be nice to find a car insurer who's actually on your wavelength, who genuinely understands what it is you're looking to insure and can generate the right policy for it? That's what David Watson and Jae Pearse set out to create when they refocused the direction of the company, Sky Insurance, ten years ago, having previously run it as a chain of high street insurance brokers.

As Jae explains: "Sky took the decision not to use the fashionable methods of price comparison sites and call centres.

"We wanted to remain true to our roots and continue to offer our services to drivers who were not looking for the 'stack it high, sell it cheap'

approach, and preferred brokers who were focused as much on service as they are on price. Our policies appeal to drivers with more complex insurance needs – whether their vehicle has lots of modifications or is a high-performance car, or whether they just want to speak to an insurance professional who could add value to the process of buying insurance."

The key to Sky's empathetic approach is that the whole team are car enthusiasts – between the team members Ollie Frost, Chris Mann, Luke Tillbrook and Alex Kinrade, they own or have owned everything from a Lancia Delta HF Integrale, Mitsubishi Lancer Evo IV and Nissan 350Z to a Toyota Celica GT4 WRC, Subaru Impreza Turbo, Nissan Skyline and even a Turbo Technics Peugeot 205 GTI, amongst many others. And all the team are regular attendees at trackdays and car club meets and events, sharing the same passions as their customers and proving that Sky doesn't just talk the talk.

Further evidence of Sky's zeal for all things quick and automotive is the company's five-year sponsorship of Driftworks – the UK and Europe's number one drifting team. And right now, Sky are also running a competition to win an Ariel Atom Driving Experience. This is your chance to hurtle around sideways in a car with the power-to-weight ratio of a Bugatti Veyron – simply visit [www.skyinsurance.co.uk/blog/2013/01/ariel-atom-experience-competition/](http://www.skyinsurance.co.uk/blog/2013/01/ariel-atom-experience-competition/) to enter.

Thanks to their intimate knowledge of the market, the Sky team are able to produce tailor-made policies, not just for individual cars, but for fleets, too, whether they're company cars or your private collection. And the company can provide trackday cover, like for like modification cover and agreed valuations.

Sky does good business with UK car clubs, too, and has a dedicated car club team – car club members receive discounts on their premiums because, as Jae explains, "members of car clubs are generally car enthusiasts who take pride and care with their cars, which when it comes to car insurance, is music to our ears".

As tends to be the way with companies that offer great customer service, 85 per cent of Sky's business comes from word of mouth. "Best policy, best price, best service (Sky's strapline) is not a boast," reveals Jae Pearse. "It's the benchmark that we set ourselves. We believed that if we were to grow the business based on customer recommendations alone, then this was the benchmark we had to strive to reach."

So, has Sky Insurance achieved that self-imposed benchmark? There's only one sure-fire way to find out...

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*The Maserati GranTurismo Sport is one of our favourite fast GTs.  
But can it deliver on that big European adventure we all dream of?  
We drive one from Modena to the UK to find out*

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by HARRY METCALFE | PHOTOGRAPHY by DAVE SMITH

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# TRANS-EUROPE EXPRESS

**I** I'M A SUCKER FOR CROSS-EUROPEAN blasts, especially if they involve me driving a gorgeous Italian coupe with a forked emblem on its nose. I'm at the Maserati factory in central Modena again, lowering my overnight bag into the boot of a brand-new GranTurismo Sport.

Parked outside Maserati's huge reception area, it looks super-cool, finished in vibrant 'Blu Sofisticato' paint and sitting on jet black wheels. It must be hard updating what many believe is already a desperately

good-looking car, and the revisions made for this recently introduced Sport version have been pretty subtle. The most obvious change is the revised front valance, which has extra air intakes either side of the gaping centre grille. I'm not sure it's an entirely successful update but it's there to increase airflow to the front brakes (which carry revised calipers). The two spotlights that used to live where the new intakes reside have been moved to the corners of the updated headlight units, which now include LED daytime running lights.

It's when you open the driver's door that you get to see the most



## ‘THE CACOPHONY FROM THE V8 IS FABULOUS:

welcome change, and that’s the new front seats. They’re designed to give proper support when cornering and have the added benefit of being slimmer than before, resulting in a few extra millimetres of legroom for anyone using the plush rear seats. But there’s no time to hang around here admiring all the new details, as we’ve got a strict deadline to meet. This GranTurismo Sport is Maserati UK’s new press car and we have 48 hours to get it to them.

**JUST LIKE AT FERRARI, YOU EDGE OUT** of the Maserati factory gates and straight onto one of the busiest roads in town. It’s a legacy from the early days when both companies built a handful of specialist race cars each year and never envisaged becoming the global brands they are today. It’s cool having a factory right in town, but it does mean you’ve got to implement an escape route, otherwise you find yourself

cruising along the cobbled shopping district in central Modena. Fortunately, the satnav does its stuff and it’s not long before we’re at the barrier for the A1 autostrada, heading north towards Milan. Ticket grabbed, we launch out of the gate and wind the 4.7-litre engine to its 7500rpm red line for the first time. The cacophony erupting from the free-revving V8 is simply fabulous; not in-your-face-loud like a Ferrari V8 but attention-grabbing all the same. It’s way more cultured but with real racing pedigree.

The only trouble is that knowing this constantly tempts you to use a few more revs than is really necessary, just to hear that V8 come on song. This press car has the MC Auto Shift gearbox, which means a ZF six-speed auto gearbox mounted up front and attached directly to the engine, rather than the optional MC Shift automated manual, which is a transaxle gearbox living at the rear (and borrowed from

the Ferrari 599). The difference between these two versions is quite marked, with the auto gearbox being much longer geared and easier to live with. In this latest installation, Maserati has tried to make it feel more ‘sporty’, with the time taken to swap cogs being halved to 0.2sec (in Sport mode), and there’s now a perfectly deployed electronic ‘blip’ on downshifts that adds to its appeal no end.

We can’t go too crazy on the autostrada today, as it’s reasonably busy and Italians tend to drive a lot slower than they used to thanks to the average speed cameras installed along most of the Italian motorway network. It’s probably for the best, as I can remember doing some crazy speeds along this stretch years ago. Even at 130mph-plus, Italians used to think nothing of driving so close to your rear bumper that you’d be able to tell whether their Prada sunglasses were rip-offs or the real thing simply from a



*Maserati GranTurismo Sport*



**Left:** early morning pit stop before heading into the mountains. **Below:** test car has a six-speed ZF automatic gearbox. **Bottom and opening spread:** Maserati's new Grugliasco plant lacks charm of old facility



**IT'S CULTURED WITH REAL RACING PEDIGREE'**



## Maserati GranTurismo Sport



**Above:** superb chassis makes for total control. **Below:** old Biturbo looks horribly dated, outside and in



## ‘THE CHASSIS HANGS ON SURPRISINGLY WELL,



**Above:** leather and carbon combine in GT Sport’s plush interior.  
**Right:** the top of the Great St Bernard Pass is closed today, although the alternative tunnel is open



glance in your rear-view mirror. Anyway, our plan is to get to Aosta tonight and then blast up the Great Saint Bernard Pass at first light tomorrow, but on the way there, I’m keen to drop by Maserati’s new factory in Grugliasco (on the western outskirts of Turin) to see where the next generation of Masers will be built.

As we pull up outside the new facility, the contrast between this and the ‘old’ Maserati factory we’ve just left is breathtaking. The new plant is huge, with countless production halls laid out over a massive business park. There’s plenty of building work still to be done, but new Quattroportes and Ghiblis are already popping off the end of the production line and annual production from this one facility is predicted to soon hit 25,000 units – around four times the output of the old Modena factory.

As we leave, I can’t help but feel a tinge of sadness, because this facility looks like any



## JUST WHEN YOU EXPECT IT TO START TO DRIFT WIDE'

other car factory, with none of the romance that oozes out of the old plant in Modena. I just can't see Grugliasco ever becoming a pilgrimage destination for enthusiasts in the way Modena, Maranello and Sant'Agata are, but then how many customers actually visit where their car is built? I'd guess only a small minority.

We're soon back on the A5 autostrada as it swoops its way north through the foothills of the Alps that separate Italy from Switzerland. There's hardly any traffic around as most sensible people are back at home after a hard day at work, so I let the GranTurismo's speed inch higher until we're humming along at 120mph or so. It feels so natural travelling at this speed, with the needle nudging 4000rpm, right in the engine's sweet spot. The sight of the distant snow-covered peaks brings up goosebumps when I imagine what tomorrow might bring, and we watch them slowly change

colour from a brilliant white to a vivid orange, as the sun begins to dip under the horizon behind us.

Aosta is a strange place. The old part of town bustles with character, but like so many other Italian towns, it's surrounded by a faceless '60s facade, totally at odds with the stylish persona of Italy we all imagine. Still, it's bloody cheap to dine out here. We choose a busy restaurant in old Aosta and feast on Parma ham as a starter followed by some great pasta, all washed down with a decent local plonk. At a mere £22 for myself and snapper Dave Smith, it's an excellent way to prepare for our big day tomorrow.

**IT'S A HORRIBLY EARLY START. AFTER** filling the Maserati's tank, we find the beginning of the Great Saint Bernard Pass just as the sky begins to shed its greyness. A beautiful crimson hue gently washes through the vastness of

space above our heads and we're treated to a perfect dawn. I want to get up higher before the sun peeks out from above the horizon, but I can already feel the Sport's engine losing a little energy due to the altitude of this wide, perfectly surfaced, open pass. It's stunning up here and we're lucky with the traffic too, as there's hardly any around and no lorries to be seen. We round a corner to be met by the first rays of sunlight glinting off a distant snowy peak. It's impossible not to pull over and take it all in – it's why we got up so early, after all.

This ancient route over the Alps feels made for the GranTurismo, but even here, it feels a big car to drive really hard. It makes all the right noises and the chassis hangs on surprisingly well just when you expect it to start to drift wide, but somehow it's missing that last five per cent of driver involvement that makes a car truly special. I think the problem lies with the



## ‘IF YOU’D JUST DONE THIS TRIP, YOU’D WONDER

steering, which has that Ferrari-esque instant turn-in nervousness but then doesn't ever give you as much feedback as you'd like when really pressing on. The chassis is so damned capable, so you never feel like you're really testing the car, because the V8's peak torque of 383lb ft isn't quite enough to overwhelm the strong traction.

The best way to enjoy the GranTurismo on these roads is to revel in the way it plays the GT role to perfection and wallow in the brilliant soundtrack bouncing off the vicious-looking rocks lining our route up the mountain. Maserati's Skyhook damping system has been updated recently and is so much better than it used to be: there's now proper wheel control in the default setting and when you press 'Sport' it tightens up, but not to a point where it's annoyingly stiff.

And then there are those seats, which not only look good but do indeed offer the proper

support promised. Decent seats have been a long time coming in the GranTurismo, but these are worth the wait.

As we climb higher and the weather closes in, the road above us leaves the comfort of the mountainside and is suspended on stilts as it winds up into the cloud that's swirling around us. The final part of the ascent is closed today due to maintenance, so we're diverted through the alternative tunnel, preceded by a Swiss border post. We're relieved of 33 euros (£28) for a vignette before we negotiate the tunnel and carve our way back down the mountain.

There's a reminder of Maserati's past on the way down, when we stop at a café with all sorts of strange vehicles on display. One of the exhibits is an early Biturbo, and when we start to look closer, it's a shock to see how far Maserati has come since this rusting '80s monster gave the company a legacy of woe it's

still trying to shake off. A peer inside reveals its dreadful brushed velour trim and shocking yellow leather. It represents the last time Maserati tried to do volume and it almost killed the company. The new line-up of the Ghibli, Quattroporte and next year's Levante SUV seems far more competitive, and with huge investment behind the trio, this new Maserati revolution has every chance of being the success story Fiat is so desperately hoping it will be.

Switzerland is soon dispatched thanks to its perfect (but heavily policed) motorway network and it isn't long before we're diving through the multitude of tunnels that run under Basel and emerging at the border crossing to Germany and the A10 Autobahn beyond. Even though I've done this route zillions of times, it's still a weird feeling leaving the draconian speed limits of Switzerland behind and immediately finding yourself on a derestricted Autobahn. It's



Above: heavy traffic denied Metcalfe an Autobahn blitz – but he still managed 140mph (below right)



## WHY MASERATI DOESN'T SELL MORE CARS'

### Specification

#### MASERATI GRANTURISMO SPORT

Engine V8, 4691cc

Power 454bhp @ 7000rpm

Torque 383lb ft at 4750rpm

Transmission Six-speed ZF automatic, rear-wheel drive, LSD

Front suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, adaptive dampers

Rear suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, adaptive dampers

Brakes Ventilated discs, 380mm front and rear, ABS, EBD

Wheels 8.5 x 20in front, 10.5 x 20in rear

Tyres 245/35 ZR20 front, 285/35 ZR20 rear

Weight (kerb) 1880kg

Power-to-weight 245bhp/ton

0-62mph 4.8sec (claimed, auto)

Top speed 185mph (claimed, auto)

Basic price £90,785

On sale Now

evo rating: ★★★★★

a shame, though, that the traffic is against us hitting a true maximum speed today. Still, we manage to nudge 140mph a few times before we turn off for Strasbourg and northern France.

Nine hours after crossing the border into France, I pull up outside my home in Oxfordshire at the end of an 1100-mile adventure. It's been another memorable trip, as these journeys across Europe so often are. This new Sport model is an improvement on previous GranTurismos but it's all subtle stuff, rather than being a big mid-life refresh. But Maseratis are cars you tend to buy with the heart, anyway. No one buys a Maserati because it has slightly better boot space, for example. You buy one because you want to own a car created by a super-cool brand.

A true Maserati doesn't compete on a straightforward level: that's best left that to the Germans. But maybe that's also why Maserati

has never hit the big-time. I'm always amazed at the love there is for Maserati, not just with enthusiasts but with people in general. Yet this passion for Maserati has never translated into decent sales numbers. If you'd just done this trip, you'd scratch your head and wonder why. Here is one of the most beautiful new coupes on sale today, built by one of the coolest automotive brands out there and powered by an engine built by Ferrari. Perhaps it's the sector of the market the GranTurismo competes in – the Maser is very competitively priced and yet is still outsold ten to one by the Porsche 911.

It's a conundrum that Maserati hopes will be transformed by the new generation of cars about to hit its showrooms around the globe. But until they arrive, it's well worth driving the latest GranTurismo. It's a lot more than just a pretty face – it's one of the most charismatic cars on sale today. ✉

*Forty years on from his F1 debut and 20 years since his death, the release of Hollywood film Rush has brought James Hunt's story back into the public eye. His son Tom shares memories of his famous father and explains how charities are set to benefit from his legacy*





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by CHRISTIAN SYLT & CAROLINE REID

PHOTOGRAPHY by ADAM DUCKWORTH

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# BACK IN THE HUNT

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## THERE IS SOMETHING FAMILIAR ABOUT TOM

Hunt. Sitting in the Bluebird restaurant in London's fashionable borough of Chelsea, he seems right at home. The Bluebird is named after the land speed record-breaking cars and boats raced by Sir Malcolm Campbell, who had a car dealership on the site 70 years before it was converted into a restaurant in 1997. The original iron beams of the garage still support the roof of the eatery, which evokes images of speed and style. They are the same pictures that come to mind when chatting to Hunt, with good reason.

The 27-year-old is the son of the 1976 Formula 1 world champion James Hunt, and with his floppy golden hair and chiselled jaw, he looks like a youthful version of his late father. He even shares the same high-class accent for which his dad was famous. This year marks the 40th anniversary of Hunt's Grand Prix debut and it is also 20 years since his untimely death at the age of 45. His life story is being told in *Rush*, a Hollywood movie which premieres this month, and Hunt Jr is using the opportunity to launch a brand based on his father's name. It's one of the most famous in F1 history.

Although Hunt didn't win multiple world titles, unlike fellow Britons Graham Hill, Jim Clark and Jackie Stewart, his high-octane lifestyle boosted his profile far beyond that of his rivals. His outrageous parties were the stuff of legend and frequently featured snooker ace Alex 'Hurricane' Higgins and motorcycle superstar Barry Sheene. Epitomising the exotic nature of the shindigs, Joan Collins turned up to Hunt's 40th birthday dressed as a peacock.

The wild parties made Hunt a national celebrity, but it was his on-track prowess that earned him legions of fans. Hunt started his F1 career driving for Lord Hesketh – who once quipped that he made a small fortune from motor racing after starting with a large one – then switched to McLaren for his championship-winning year.

Fans nicknamed him 'Hunt the Shunt' due to his aggressive driving style and involvement in spectacular crashes. Complementing this was a hot-headed attitude, which in 1977 led to him instinctively punching a trackside marshal who grabbed him after he stumbled out of his wrecked car at the Canadian Grand Prix. On realising

**Right:** Tom Hunt, born six years after his father quit F1, remembers James as a father more than a racing driver. **Below left:** interview was held at land speed record-themed Bluebird restaurant. **Below right:** *Rush* has been well-received by F1 community

that the marshal meant no harm Hunt immediately apologised, but the incident cemented his position as one of the wild men of racing.

The devotion of his fans was never more apparent than at the 1976 British Grand Prix at Brands Hatch, when Hunt's McLaren was damaged in a first-lap crash. He drove back to the pits down an access road and, whilst this was happening, the race was stopped due to the resultant debris. Stewards then

barred Hunt from the restart because he wasn't on the track when the race was stopped. Fans in the grandstands were outraged by the decision and started chanting Hunt's name, causing the stewards to let him compete. Their fervour was rewarded as Hunt won the restarted race, but his victory was overturned two months later after a protest by Ferrari. The Italian outfit's lead driver, Austrian Niki Lauda, was Hunt's main challenger, and the story of their rivalry is at the heart of *Rush*.

Although Hunt, played by *Avengers* star Chris Hemsworth, took the '76 championship, the twist is that Lauda nearly lost his life when a devastating accident at the German Grand Prix on the Nürburgring Nordschleife left him in a coma. He returned to racing just six weeks later, only to lose the championship to Hunt by just one point – perfect Hollywood fodder.

Directed by Ron Howard, the Oscar-winner behind *A Beautiful Mind*, *Apollo 13* and *Frost/Nixon*, *Rush* contains stunning footage of races and crashes, but it is the interaction between Hunt and Lauda that steals the show.

Hunt Jr says: 'I know from speaking to Ron that the thing that attracted him to it was not necessarily the racing, it was the interaction between Dad and Niki and that gripping season. It is as much a human story as it is a racing movie. I'm pleased with it. I think they've done a good job and haven't focused too much on the partying.'

Lauda is played by German actor Daniel Brühl, who starred in Quentin Tarantino's *Inglourious Basterds* and had a minor role in *The Bourne Ultimatum*. He bears an uncanny resemblance to the Austrian driver and it is even hard to distinguish between their voices. He expertly conveys Lauda's methodical approach to racing and staccato manner of speaking. It makes a stark contrast to Hunt's playboy lifestyle, a feeling amplified by Brühl featuring in some of the most harrowing scenes in the film, in which toxic gases and dust are removed from Lauda's lungs.

Perhaps the most poignant point comes in the closing moments of the movie as Hunt asks Lauda what he has got out of life. By that time Lauda was a three-time champion and a qualified pilot, whilst Hunt was about to fly off partying in a private plane. Hunt Jr remarks: 'You do get that feeling throughout the film that it is Niki,



**'Although Hunt only won one title, his high-octane lifestyle boosted his profile beyond that of his rivals'**





Niki, Niki, but then actually at that very last scene you do feel very sorry for Niki. The whole thing suddenly shifts.'

For the first time, the film then switches to actual footage of Hunt during his 13-year stint as the BBC's F1 commentator alongside Murray Walker. 'My favourite part of the film is that final scene when they show the original footage,' says Tom. 'I'm quite pleased they did it because it does leave you with emotional feelings. Those events did happen, will never happen again like that and we will never have characters again like that. This is a really cool little piece of history that happened and it is just nice to be able to look back on it. I think it just seals it nicely.'

Hunt and his brother Fred were invited to watch when scenes were being filmed at Blackbushe Aerodrome in Surrey and they ended up being included as extras. It is a blink-and-you-miss-it scene, but Hunt says it has a special place in his heart. 'You can't see me very clearly but I can spot Fred easily and it is actually the best scene to be in. We're cheering when dad crosses the finish line to win at Brands Hatch at the British Grand Prix. There is a side-on profile of Fred hugging someone. It's a brilliant scene to be in.'

Inevitably the film-makers had to bend the truth in some areas of the film but it has been warmly received by the most discerning critics – the F1 industry. At the German Grand Prix in July, *Rush* was shown to a group of F1 drivers, team bosses and Bernie



Ecclestone. Howard called the experience his toughest test so far, comparing it to screening *Apollo 13* to NASA's astronauts and mission controllers in 1995.

*Rush* got a standing ovation and Ecclestone told **evo** that: 'It was very entertaining. It shows people who weren't around in that period how different F1 was to today. I think it will be good publicity for F1 and it will give F1 a boost in profile in the United States. I thought it was generally accurate and the guy who plays Niki was very, very good. But nobody could play James. He was a bit special. He would have livened the film up an awful lot.'

Hunt concurs and says: 'For me to watch it, it is definitely not Dad up there. I think the one thing it does lack a little bit is the cheekiness and charisma that Dad had, which obviously is so difficult to convey. I can't think of any actors alive today, or anyone at all, who would be able to do that, but that is because Dad was so unique. It is very personal, and that is another one of the reasons why he was loved so much and was so fascinating for so many people. Yes, he was an arrogant public schoolboy on one level but at the same time he was incredibly intelligent, had a cheeky charisma, wit and a caring and loyal side which allowed him to get away with that arrogance. I think the film is weighted a lot to that arrogant side.'

'I didn't pick up on it, because I wasn't around at the time, but a few of my family members have said that in the film you don't really get an idea of just how popular my dad was at the time. You really just don't quite get the James Hunt fever that was happening in the mid-'70s.'

Strangely absent from the film is Hunt getting reinstated at Brands Hatch thanks to the crowd's reaction, and it isn't the only omission, according to Tom: 'The film really focuses on a kind of hatred between Niki and my dad, which is a bit of a Hollywood twist on it. In real life they were arch-rivals but they totally respected each other, right from Formula Three. I don't know if they were what you might call best friends who would go for a drink, but they were certainly friendly and they lived with each other at one point. So it's another bit of the film which isn't quite accurate. But that's Hollywood, isn't it?'

Hunt says that *Rush* 'didn't bring back memories as such' since it is set before he was

**Left:** away from motorsport, Tom Hunt has become a successful businessman in his own right. **Below:** Hunt's sons have created a merchandise range, with a cut of the profits going to good causes



born in 1985. His mother is interior designer Sarah Lomax, the daughter of Rosemary Lomax, the first woman to train a Gold Cup winner at Royal Ascot. He grew up with his brother in a seven-bedroom home on tree-lined Bathgate Road in Wimbledon.

## 'Two years ago, Tom decided to change track and build on his father's legacy'

'Wimbledon Common was such a big part of my childhood,' Tom recalls. 'We lived right next to it and we were always out on the common flying a kite, walking the dogs, feeding the Canada geese. Cutting the lawn

was one of Dad's passions. He was passionate about keeping his stripes perfect and I remember him teaching me how to do it.'

The family house was home to a menagerie of animals, including a German shepherd, a parrot and a collection of prize-winning budgerigars in a state-of-the-art aviary in the back garden. 'Dad had up to 300 at one point and he used to breed them and show them around the country,' Hunt remembers.

He didn't follow his father into racing due to the soaring costs of entering the sport. Instead Hunt's professional career began with two years in the head office of a pub company followed by a similar amount of time running his own pubs in London. But two years ago he decided to change track and build on his father's legacy. The new movie and the anniversary of his father's racing debut have reminded F1 fans about James Hunt and to make the most of this, a new merchandise range is being launched.

The clothing has been designed by famed artist Nicolas Hunziker, who has worked with Porsche and the estate of Steve McQueen. Half-scale replicas of James Hunt's helmet will also be available, along with limited-edition prints by British painter Paul Oz. The clothing collection carries a logo based on James Hunt's helmet and shows his name and the navy blue and gold colours of Wellington College in Berkshire, which is where the Hunt family were schooled. Tom explains: 'My vision is to emulate Fred Perry. There's a part of everybody which would have liked to have been James Hunt so there's a lot of potential there.'

Tom is setting up a charitable foundation that will receive a cut of the sales from the merchandise as well as the proceeds from one-off auctions of Paul Oz paintings: 'Fred and I will be trustees of the foundation and we are going to appoint a couple of other key people who will decide at the end of each year on the charities that will receive the income. This is the great thing about it, it is very open. It's not like we are dedicating it to one charity for the rest of the days. We want to be able to move with the needs of the world. The whole idea is that it is partly to do with what Fred and I believe in but also what we think dad would have supported if he was around today.' He adds with a smile: 'It could even be budgies.' ❌

*Golf GTI v rivals*





THE

by MIKE DUFF

HEAT

PHOTOGRAPHY by GUS GREGORY

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*The new VW Golf GTI faces a much tougher hot hatch marketplace than its predecessor. How does it fare against four more powerful rivals?*

ON



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**HOW SHOULD WE** measure the temperature of a hot hatch? The *evo* approach – which by being here you're likely to agree with – has always

been to rate it according to the total driving experience rather than to get hung up on its raw pace. How broad your grin is at the end of a given journey, not how many seconds you've sliced off your bogey time.

Yet this is putting us at increasing odds with the manufacturers who are actually producing these cars, and who are clearly obsessed with numbers. We're in the middle of what feels like an arms race, as makers vie to beat their rivals' equivalent models. Yet for all the tumbling 0-60mph times, it's not an approach that's showed much sign of producing a generation of brilliant driver-focused cars.

So maybe Volkswagen is on to something with its new Golf GTI, a car that's being launched with less power than any of its obvious rivals. Instead, VW has chosen to offer an optional Performance Pack version

that brings a relatively modest 10bhp over the standard car (lifting the total to 227bhp), but adds bigger brakes and a proper limited-slip differential. Are the priorities shifting away from numbers and towards turning this Golf into a proper drivers' car? Costing £28,895 for the five-door PP DSG that we've got here, the Golf looks expensive – you could have a manual BMW M135i for just £2200 more. So it had better be good, then.

To find out, we've assembled a group of rivals from every part of the senior hot hatch universe, with two obvious challengers and two less apparent ones. First up, the saw-it-coming Focus ST. The Ford was built to beat the previous-generation mk6 GTI, and it managed to score a narrow victory when we put the two cars together in Germany last year (*evo* 172). As befits its status as a blue-collar hero, the Focus is the cheapest car here by a considerable margin. Opt for the boggo ST1 and you get 247bhp for just £21,995. Even adding a few toys with the ST2 we've got here only increases the asking price to £23,495.

Next, the inevitable Mégane RS. To describe

the Renault as being an *evo* favourite would be like describing outer space as being a bit cold. It's managed to beat every rival we've put against it in the three years since it was launched. Yet despite the critical adoration, the Mégane has found it hard to gain a following in the UK – just 323 found homes here last year, compared to 1735 Golf GTIs. For all its dynamic brilliance, it's a car that struggles to engage with buyers.

Then there's a challenger from inside VW Group itself: the new Audi S3 Sportback. As the GTI has grown more expensive, so the S3 has found itself drawn into its cousin's orbit. And, on paper, the Audi should definitely have the Golf worried. Both cars sit on the same 'MQB' platform, but the Audi gets part-time four-wheel drive and a more powerful version of VW's 'EA888' 2-litre turbocharged four (the same engine that will power the forthcoming Golf R – see page 22). That means it gives you 296bhp for £31,260 if bought with the standard six-speed manual 'box. The two previous S3s were always more of a fashionista's choice than hardcore driving appliances – one *evo* staffer lives in fear of being outed as a former owner of



**Far left:** even with the Performance Pack, the mk7 GTI is 128bhp down on the A45 AMG. **Left:** S3 shares MQB platform with the Golf. **Below:** basic Focus ST is over £3500 cheaper than any other car in the group



## ‘Are the priorities shifting away from numbers and towards turning this Golf into a proper drivers’ car?’

one. Is this the car that breaks the mould?

Which brings us to the Mercedes A45 AMG, the car most determined to push the boundaries of hatchback performance. Your first instinct might very well be that the 355bhp A-class doesn't really belong here, with performance closer to a GT-R than a GTI and a price tag that gets on for double that of the Ford. As standard the A45 costs £37,845, but our spec-laden test car is over £50,000 after options. Yet the similarities are compelling. Like the other cars here, the Merc has a transversely mounted four-cylinder engine displacing two litres. And with the Audi's four-wheel-drive system and the Golf's (optional) double-clutch 'box, no part of the A45's mechanical package is unique in this company. Perhaps it's just an early view of the future direction of the whole segment.

**TODAY'S PLAN HAS TWO PARTS. FIRST** we're going to get some numbers, using the former USAF base at Bruntingthorpe to record both acceleration figures and some suitably low-flying photographs. And then, more importantly, we're going to see how this lot cope

with the challenges of a proper A- and B-road workout. But before that, the trip to deepest, darkest Leicestershire gives me my first chance to drive the new GTI.

It's hard not to talk about the Golf without sounding a bit shallow. It's just so nice – handsome, stylish and beautifully finished. VW has stuck with the evolutionary design that, let's be honest, has served the Golf so well over the years. The mk7 GTI is bigger and slightly glitzier than its predecessor, but it doesn't need badges to tell you what it is. It's the same story inside the cabin: trademark tartan seat trim and a well-formed sport steering wheel with a subtle 'GTI' logo on the bottom of its boss.

The engine is surprising, but in a good way. When VW told us that the new GTI developed its peak power at just 4700rpm, our natural fear was that, like an increasing number of modern turbo petrol engines, it had been turned into some kind of pseudo-diesel, tuned for mid-range torque and official economy numbers. The missing detail from the early press release was that the engine produces this peak through to 6200rpm – and it feels almost as enthusiastic



as the revvy mk6. The DSG 'box is improved too. It's still a six-speeder, as the newer seven-speed transmission only works with lower torque outputs, but gearchanges in manual mode feel quicker than before, and it's far better at dealing with requests for multiple downshifts. You can approach a roundabout in sixth, quickly pull the downshift paddle three times and be confident that you'll arrive in third.

As we roll into Brunters, the first thing to deduce is how quickly each car can shoot down the runway. For all the importance attached to 0-62mph figures by marketing types, actually achieving them requires you to drive like you're trying to escape from a tornado in a stolen rental car. It's several years since I last did any acceleration testing, and I'd forgotten just how brutal a process it is.

The Focus ST goes first. The engine's boosty power delivery makes it hard to get a clean launch – not enough revs and it bogs down, too many and it just vaporises its front tyres. Bruntingthorpe's rough concrete doesn't help either, but after several scrabbling starts the VBOX records a best time of 6.5sec to 60mph – the same as the official 0-62. More surprising is the 0-100 time of 16.8sec, which isn't as quick as I was expecting.

The Mégane is easier to launch and although

its best 0-60 today is a 6.4sec – nearly half a second adrift of the official 0-62 – it's definitely got bigger lungs at higher speeds. A 14.8sec 0-100mph time puts it two seconds ahead of the ST. Surprisingly, the Golf is even quicker. The DSG 'box doesn't have an official launch mode, but covering the brake and flooring the throttle brings the revs to 3500rpm, with the clutch fed in when you lift your left foot. Times of 6.2sec to 60 and 14.7sec to 100 put it pretty much level pegging with the Mégane.

Unsurprisingly, the Audi raises the bar again, with its four-wheel-drive system finding the traction the front-drivers struggle for. Its 0-30 time is a whole second less than the Golf's – 1.8sec plays 2.8 – and 1.1sec quicker than the Mégane's, and accounts for most of the advantage in the 5.4sec 0-60 time. And you can't sniff at any family hatchback that manages to crack 100mph in just 12.5sec.

Which is where things get silly, of course. The A45 is as much of a ringer in this company as Sébastien Loeb at an autotest. In addition to four-wheel drive and a seven-speed twin-clutch gearbox, Mercedes has also given it launch control. And although the process of engaging this takes considerably longer than the car then requires to blast itself to 100mph, it certainly delivers results. First, you put the car into

Drive and hold it on the brakes. Next you press the stability control button once to engage its Sport mode, then switch the transmission to its manual mode. Now pull back on both steering-wheel gearshift paddles simultaneously until the dash display reads 'race start available'. Then pull the right paddle again to confirm go, and then floor the throttle and release the brake when you're ready to blast off.

That process produces a winner. The Merc takes a tenth off the Audi to 30mph, dispatches 60mph in just 4.3sec and gets to 100mph in 10.6sec. To put that into perspective, those numbers are near-identical to those we recorded in the E92 M3 coupe. What's even more impressive is that the Merc can do the same thing again and again – we recorded another run within a tenth of a second to 60 and within two-tenths to 100. It's a very neat trick.

But it's not one that turns the A45 into a great hatch. It might sound like sacrilege to even suggest this, but as the test switches to the road, the baby Merc feels close to being too fast. Or, more precisely, too dominated by its engine and the chassis' need to find enough traction to match its prodigious output. There's no doubting that the motor is a deeply impressive thing: lag-free, linear in its responses and pulling relentlessly from 2500rpm upwards,



**Left:** S3 is more than a second quicker to 60mph than the Focus. **Right:** Golf's stability control can't be fully disabled. **Below:** Merc's cabin is a quality affair. **Bottom:** Mégane is supremely balanced on track



**‘The Mégane is agile and adjustable, with the balance of grip between the front and rear pretty much spot-on’**





**Right:** S3's six-speed manual shift is enjoyable but doesn't feel weighty.  
**Below:** new GTI fares better against Focus than its predecessor

**'This GTI feels more at home on a B-road than any of its predecessors, not to mention the R32 and the Golf R'**





with each upchange accompanied by a bird-scarer *bang!* The A45 is blisteringly quick everywhere, especially with the transmission left in the more aggressive Sport auto mode, in which the gearbox sheds ratios in response to even the smallest throttle pressures. Overtakes that would feel marginal in any of the other cars here are accomplished safely.

But this isn't a car that gives more than cursory rewards beyond the thrill of pure speed. The need to keep everything under control has saddled the Merc with a punishingly firm ride over anything but the smoothest surfaces. The steering is heavy and responses are keen, but there's no encouragement to go and find the massively high limits, let alone try to breach them. The A45 doesn't slip, doesn't slide – even with all the assistance settings switched off and chucked into Bruntingthorpe's wide corners. On the road, you never find more than the slight understeer that marks the limit in slower corners. There's no doubt the Merc is the fastest car here over any road you could throw it down. But you emerge from it equally certain it would be a more rewarding car to drive if it had less grip and a chassis that enabled you to explore its limits, even if that meant less straight-line pace.

Switching to the S3 feels like a return to

normal service. Harry has been driving it before me, and he emerges looking slightly puzzled: 'I like it more than I expected to,' he admits, clearly surprised. 'I'm just trying to work out if it's because it's got a manual gearbox.'

Within a mile, I know exactly what he means. Shifting your own gears gives a level of control that feels almost novel these days in a car with this sort of performance. The S3's engine is a cracker: smooth-revving, lag-free and delivering serious performance without apparent effort. You can use its broad power band as you choose – working it hard, which it enjoys, or trusting the gutsy mid-range to pull a taller ratio.

But otherwise, it's close to just being a generic fast Audi. The gearshift is clean and accurate, but lacks weight. The clutch and brake pedal both feel too light, and the steering is over-assisted, too. Some traditions never change. On track, the S3 had a nice balance, running wide at the limit, but then tightening its line nicely on an eased throttle. But on a rougher road surface it quickly starts to feel out of its depth, the damping struggling to keep the body under control and a surprising amount of float developing. On a more practical level it feels surprisingly small, too – noticeably tighter

than the Golf and with a seating position hard to get comfortable in. The S3 is safe, rapid and desirable, and there's an unarguable appeal to it. But, like its predecessors, it still doesn't feel like a proper hot hatch.

There's no doubting the Focus ST's credentials as a proper hot hatch. Bruntingthorpe's wide-open spaces have already given it a chance to demonstrate some proper hooligan tendencies, such as old-school lift-off oversteer. Turning the stability control off transforms the Ford into a sideways hero on the track's high-speed corners. Easing the throttle once the chassis is loaded up in a corner sends the back swinging wide in a lazy, predictable fashion, and getting on the power pulls it back straight. It's fun, if not the quickest way around a circuit.

On road, the ST is still brimming with character. The high-g geared steering delivers excellent front-end responses, and although there's a fair amount of torque-steer on bumpy surfaces, the overall effect is a feeling of unbridled enthusiasm after the staid Audi. The engine feels surprisingly laggy in this company: power is always there, but it doesn't have the linear responses of its rivals. However, considering the ST's relative lack of pace against the clock, it still feels respectably rapid on road.



## Specifications

	AUDI S3	FORD FOCUS ST	MERCEDES-BENZ A45 AMG	RENAULTSPORT MÉGANE 265 CUP	VOLKSWAGEN GOLF GTI PP
<b>Engine</b>	In-line 4-cyl, 1984cc, turbo	In-line 4-cyl, 1999cc, turbo	In-line 4-cyl, 1991cc, turbo	In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc, turbo	In-line 4-cyl, 1984cc, turbo
<b>CO2</b>	162g/km	169g/km	161g/km	174g/km	149g/km (DSG)
<b>Power</b>	296bhp @ 5500-6200rpm	247bhp @ 5500rpm	355bhp @ 6000rpm	261bhp @ 5500rpm	227bhp @ 4700-6200rpm
<b>Torque</b>	280lb ft @ 1800-5500rpm	265lb ft @ 1750-4500rpm	332lb ft @ 2250-5000rpm	265lb ft @ 3000-5000rpm	258lb ft @ 1500-4600rpm
<b>Transmission</b>	Six-speed manual, four-wheel drive, ESP	Six-speed manual, front-wheel drive, ESP	Seven-speed DCT, four-wheel drive, ESP	Six-speed manual, front-wheel drive, limited-slip diff, ESP	Six-speed DCT (option), front-drive, limited-slip diff, ESP
<b>Front suspension</b>	MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar	MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar	MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar	MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar	MacPherson struts, coils, ACC dampers (option), anti-roll bar
<b>Rear suspension</b>	Four-link, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar	Multi-link, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar	Multi-link, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar	Torsion beam, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar	Double wishbones, coils, ACC dampers (option), anti-roll bar
<b>Brakes</b>	Ventilated discs, 340mm front, 310mm rear, ABS, EBD	Ventilated discs, 320mm front, 271mm rear, ABS, EBD	Ventilated discs, 350mm front, 330mm rear, ABS, EBD	340mm ventilated front discs, 290mm solid rears, ABS, EBD	Ventilated discs, 340mm front, 310mm rear, ABS, EBD
<b>Wheels</b>	7.5 x 18in front and rear	8.5 x 18in front and rear	9 x 18in front and rear	8 x 18in front and rear	7.5 x 18in front and rear
<b>Tyres</b>	225/40 R18 front and rear	235/40 R18 front and rear	235/40 R18 front and rear	225/40 R18 front and rear	225/45 R18 front and rear
<b>Weight (kerb)</b>	1395kg	1362kg	1480kg	1387kg	1351kg
<b>Power-to-weight</b>	216bhp/ton	184bhp/ton	244bhp/ton	191bhp/ton	171bhp/ton
<b>0-62mph</b>	5.3sec (claimed)	6.5sec (claimed)	4.6sec (claimed)	6.0sec (claimed)	6.4sec (claimed)
<b>Top speed</b>	155mph (limited)	154mph (claimed)	155mph (limited)	158mph (claimed)	155mph (limited)
<b>Basic price</b>	£31,260	£21,995	£37,845	£25,545	£26,825
<b>Rating</b>	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆

## Acceleration times

<b>0-30mph</b>	1.8sec	2.7sec	1.7sec	2.7sec	2.8sec
<b>0-60mph</b>	5.4sec	6.5sec	4.3sec	6.4sec	6.2sec
<b>0-100mph</b>	12.5sec	16.8sec	10.6sec	14.8sec	14.7sec
<b>1/4 mile</b>	13.7sec @ 105.4mph	15.2sec @ 94.4mph	12.8sec @ 110.6mph	14.7sec @ 99.0mph	14.8sec @ 100.8mph

But parked next to the Mégane and Golf, the Ford's case wilts. It looks inferior to both – a blobby, amorphous shape that, despite the fancy alloys, tailgate wing and black grille, appears almost identical to a merely warm Focus. The cabin is grey and plasticky, too – we reckoned it was the area where the ST felt most obviously inferior to the mk6 GTI, and it's fair to say the mk7 has moved the game on a fair bit further.

Of course, the Mégane has also taken plenty of stick for its plasticky cabin over the years. But it's always been able to make the riposte of a brilliant driving experience. And after the slightly immature Focus ST, this 265 Cup feels very grown up – faster, grippier and harder-edged. On track the Renault is less keen to play the hooligan, feeling agile and adjustable and with the balance of grip between the front and rear ends feeling pretty much spot-on, but it takes serious abuse with the stability control in its deactivated Sport setting to make it go sideways. And, as always, there's the magic locking differential to help it find extra traction, pulling the front end into the corner just as it feels grip fade away.

On road, the Renault remains a brutal thing. The ride is hard at low speeds, and although you acclimatise to it, it never feels anything other than punchy. But few cars can demolish a B-road

so convincingly: suspension pummelling the bumps into submission, the steering bristling with feedback yet uncorrupted by the need to share the front wheels with so much torque, and the magic diff that's just as helpful on road as it is on track. It is, unquestionably, a proper drivers' car – but it's also fair to say it lacks showroom bling. 'As an ownership proposition, I really struggle with it,' admits Harry.

Which brings us back to the Golf, a car definitely capable of providing plenty of warm, fuzzy want-it vibes. On track, the GTI feels aloof and a bit distant. The unswitchable stability control certainly doesn't help, even its most permissive Sport mode refusing to let you play with anything more than the smallest of slip angles. The high-g geared steering is accurate, but messages struggle to get past its light assistance. In short, it feels a bit underwhelming.


It isn't perfect on the road, either. The brake pedal lacks a bit of weight and, even at lesser speeds, the occasional flashing of the stability control light makes you want to know how the Golf would feel if you could switch everything off. Yet the GTI is good on road. Really good. Our test car has the Adaptive Chassis Control switchable dampers (an £800 option), and their firmest Sport mode proves capable of dealing with poor road surfaces at serious speeds while

keeping the body under rigid control. It doesn't feel as firm as the Mégane, but it doesn't feel slower either, and although the Volkswagen can't match the near-sensory overload that the Renault manages, there's noticeably more feedback from its electric power steering system at road speeds than on track. And although the Golf's limited-slip diff is far less aggressive than the Renault's, it's definitely effective. This GTI feels more at home on a B-road than any of its predecessors.

Indeed, the Volkswagen is good enough to turn this five-car test into a straight two-way fight. Neither the Audi nor the Mercedes really matches our definition of a proper hot hatch, with neither of them capable of delivering the sort of driver involvement that tops the list of requirements here. The Golf also manages to avenge its predecessor's defeat by the Focus ST. Back then, the Ford made the VW feel a bit boring. Now the new Golf makes the Focus seem a bit immature.

So can the Golf beat the Mégane as a pure drivers' car? No, it can't. And for that reason, according to the laws of *evo*, it must come second in this test. But as an ownership proposition, as a car to put money into and as a car to live with every day, the new Golf GTI is pretty much spot-on. ☒





**2013**  
**evo**  
**TYRE TEST**

by HENRY CATCHPOLE

PHOTOGRAPHY  
by DEAN SMITH

*They influence the character of a car, and contribute to its safety levels too.  
We help you decide which performance tyre you should choose next*

**I** **IT'S 1999 AND A REPORTER IS** standing at the end of the final Ruuhimäki stage of Rally Finland. It is being broadcast live on television, so when the rally's winner, Juha Kankkunen, pulls up in his Impreza, the reporter is clearly hoping for snappy sound bites and intense emotion. Grasping for some insight he asks Juha, 'It was raining, so what kind of tyres did you have?' To which the laconic Kankkunen simply replies, 'Black. Round. Pirelli,' before promptly driving off. TV gold, but not the type the deflated reporter was hoping for.

To many people tyres really are just what JK said: black round things with a name they may or may not have heard of

embossed on the side. But as you already know, not all tyres are equal. Far from it. This year in the **evo** summer tyre test we are putting eight different sets in the popular 225/40 R18 size through their paces. They range vastly in price but they all have an asymmetric design and will all be put through the same rigorous tests. Objective tests make up 60 per cent of the final result, while subjective scores for each tyre make up the other 40 per cent. In each test the best tyre is awarded 100 per cent, and the rest a percentage of this.

These tests will tell you exactly how each tyre behaves in a variety of conditions, helping you decide which will best fit your needs. Will budget rubber finally be able to challenge the premium brands? The next few pages will reveal all...



## The car

A non-AMG Mercedes A-class might not seem like the most **evo** car to test tyres with, but modern Mercs have some of the best steering feel around, and the A-class is no exception. We had two identical A200s with manual gearboxes, and for the handling tests all the stability- and traction-control systems plus the ABS were turned off. This made it surprisingly willing to oversteer! With 154bhp and 184lb ft of torque from the 1.6-litre turbocharged engine, there was also enough going through the front wheels to challenge the traction of the tyres out of the corners.

## The track

Originally designed as a motorcycle racing circuit, and built into a hillside overlooking the Mediterranean, Goodyear/Dunlop's Mireval complex is like a heavenly automotive playground. Imagine a slightly smaller Millbrook (it's almost equally hilly) with considerably better weather than Bedfordshire. We saw temperatures consistently well into the 30s when we were there, so conditions were excellent but also quite taxing for the tyres, particularly on the dry handling laps. While I was responsible for the circuit laps and subjective assessment, Kim Adams took charge of the braking tests, and we both had input on the road route.

## Tyres

<p><b>1. Continental</b> Sport Contact 5 £123.56</p> <p><b>2. Dunlop</b> Sport Maxx RT £108.03</p> <p><b>3. Goodyear</b> Eagle F1 Asymmetric 2 £107.81</p> <p><b>4. GT Radial</b> Champro HPY £91</p> <p><b>5. Linglong</b> Green-Max £67.90</p> <p><b>6. Michelin</b> Pilot Sport 3 £123.94</p> <p><b>7. Pirelli</b> P Zero £118.66</p> <p><b>8. Yokohama</b> Advan V105 £105</p>			

*All tyres 225/40 R18.  
Prices are per tyre,  
including fitting*





## Wet handling

**W**ITH ITS MIRROR-LIKE sheen of constantly replenished water, the narrow and unforgiving wet handling track at Mireval is an intimidating place. The first part of the lap climbs uphill through some tricky medium-speed corners, before cresting on an awkward right-hander and descending through a medium-speed left and braking into a tight hairpin. The trickiest section is near the end of the lap, however, with a fast left-right-left complex that sees the car teetering on the edge of grip and testing confidence through high-speed direction changes. The lap ends with a 180-degree constant-radius right-hander.

We recorded outright lap times and also measured the time through a section of that last corner to gauge lateral G. In addition to this, seven subjective aspects of the tyres' performances were also assessed, included such things as steering feel, traction, turn-in and confidence. The reason for this is that while a tyre might grip hard and produce a very good lap time, it could also, for example, let go alarmingly and without warning. This would be extremely undesirable yet wouldn't

### 'THE NARROW AND UNFORGIVING WET HANDLING TRACK AT MIREVAL IS AN INTIMIDATING PLACE'

be reflected in the objective scores.

There was a clear winner at the top of the time sheets, and the same tyre – the Yokohama – topped the subjective scores too. Overall grip was superb and while the feel on turn-in wasn't the best, the tyre gave huge confidence once you were into the corner, and there was a nice subtlety to it as it approached its (high) limits.

The Continental was actually very similar to the Yokohama in its sensations of high grip and equally high confidence. Best for feel was the Goodyear, and although it couldn't quite match the Michelin, Yokohama and Conti for outright turn-in and grip, it did well on the long right-hander as you could confidently use all the grip right to the edge without overstepping it.



**Top:** Mireval's wet handling circuit ensures constant conditions for each tyre. **Above:** hundreds of wheel changes were required while conducting our tests

## Tyre test 2013

The Dunlop also did well in the feel stakes, but really struggled for traction if you had any lock applied, needing a much more cautious approach to getting on the throttle if you wanted to avoid simply washing wide on corner exits. The GT Radial got very close to the Dunlop on lap time and actually beat it on the lateral G test.

Both the Chinese tyres suffered from a lack of feel, and it was interesting to see how their lower overall grip changed the balance of the Mercedes. Where the better tyres left you driving the car very much on the nose, the GT Radial and Linglong seemed to move the pivot point further back, making the A200 much more tail-happy and eager to be 'backed into' corners. This might sound fun, but the reality was that as soon as grip was breached you were left waiting an alarming amount of time for it (and therefore control) to return. Fast corners in particular were a tentative experience.

## 'THE CHINESE TYRES MADE THE A200 MUCH MORE TAIL-HAPPY AND EAGER TO BE BACKED INTO CORNERS'

### Wet lap

	Tyre	Percentage
1	Yokohama	100
2	Continental	98.2
3	Michelin	96.7
4	Goodyear	96.4
5	Pirelli	95.9
6	Dunlop	91.7
7	GT Radial	91.4
8	Linglong	87.9

### Wet lateral G

	Tyre	Percentage
1	Yokohama	100
2	Goodyear	98.4
3	Michelin	96.1
4	Continental	95.7
5	Pirelli	94.7
6	GT Radial	92.8
7	Dunlop	90.7
8	Linglong	86.9

### Wet handling – subjective

	Tyre	Percentage
1	Yokohama	100
2	Michelin	98
3=	Continental	95
3=	Goodyear	95
5	Pirelli	91
6	Dunlop	88
7	GT Radial	73
8	Linglong	69



## Braking and rolling resistance

**T**HE WET BRAKING TEST (conducted from 80kph down to 1kph) provided a stunning result for the Continental, which

stopped nearly six metres sooner than its closest rival, the Pirelli. The Goodyear and Yokohama also put in strong second-string results, but the Linglong in last place needed another six metres beyond the Pirelli, leaving it over 12 metres or nearly the length of three Mercedes A-classes further down the road.

In the dry it was the Continental leading the way again, but this time joined by the Goodyear. In fact all the top seven tyres stopped within a metre of the best. However,

the last-placed Linglong took over three metres longer to stop than the Conti and Goodyear – something that was very clear on the dry handling track (see later).

The rolling resistance test is designed to measure the amount of energy absorbed by a tyre as it runs against a road; effectively it shows how fuel efficient the tyre is. Here the Linglong lives up to its Green-Max name, taking the win by a clear margin. The Continental and Yokohama bring up the rear, perhaps to be expected given that their tyre-label rating is an F (on a scale from A to G). This would still equate to less than 1mpg difference on a car capable of 30mpg.

### Wet braking

	Tyre	Percentage
1	Continental	100
2	Pirelli	95.6
3	Yokohama	93.5
4	Goodyear	93.0
5	Michelin	89.0
6	Dunlop	84.2
7	GT Radial	80.7
8	Linglong	76.0

### Dry braking

	Tyre	Percentage
1=	Continental	100
1=	Goodyear	100
3	Dunlop	99.3
4	Yokohama	99.1
5	Pirelli	99.0
6	GT Radial	97.3
7	Michelin	96.6
8	Linglong	91.9



## Aquaplaning

**Y**OU NEVER REALLY FORGET that horrible glassy feeling as the tyres of the car you're driving along a wet motorway suddenly encounter more water than they can cope with and rise up onto the surface rather than cutting through it. Our aquaplaning tests, both curved and straight, determine how well the tread patterns of the tyres shed water.

Just as in the wet braking test, the Continental again proved to be supreme, taking a resounding victory in the curved test and also winning the straight test. Further down the results there's a fairly good correlation between the curved and straight tests. All the tyres resisted 15 per cent slip until well past 80kph in the straight test, which is impressive.

There was a much greater spread in the curved test, which is carried out on a 100m-radius circle with 8mm of standing water. However, the only real difference (apart from the winning margin of the Conti) is the perhaps surprise last place of the Pirelli.



**Top and above:** straight-line aquaplaning test looks for slip levels greater than 15 per cent on one wheel



### Rolling resistance

	Tyre	Percentage
1	Linglong	100
2	Dunlop	93.6
3	Goodyear	90.8
4	GT Radial	90.5
5	Michelin	86.7
6	Pirelli	80.0
7	Continental	78.2
8	Yokohama	75.0

### Straight aquaplaning

	Tyre	Percentage
1	Continental	100
2	Michelin	98.5
3	Dunlop	96.3
4	Goodyear	95.7
5	Yokohama	95.6
6=	Linglong	93.6
6=	Pirelli	93.6
8	GT Radial	92.5

### Curved aquaplaning

	Tyre	Percentage
1	Continental	100
2	Dunlop	91.1
3	Michelin	90.0
4	Goodyear	86.4
5	Yokohama	85.1
6	Linglong	79.7
7	GT Radial	77.0
8	Pirelli	72.3

**Below and right:** lap times were recorded on the dry handling circuit, but the tyres were rated subjectively too.  
**Far bottom right:** Catchpole keeps track of the scores

**‘HIGH TEMPERATURES MEANT JUST TWO LAPS WERE POSSIBLE BEFORE A SET OF TYRES WOULD START TO GO “OFF”’**



## Dry handling

**T**HE START/FINISH LINE also marks the highest point on the dry handling circuit, and the A200 was generally just in need of an upchange into fourth gear as the white line flashed underneath. From here you brake hard, change back to third for a chicane, then plunge downhill (up into fourth again) into the trickiest section – two right-handers that link together so you have to slow through the first before turning into the slower but heavily banked second. Then it’s an off-camber left into a flat-out right onto the back straight. After more heavy braking a series of slower corners leads you back uphill, testing traction as you go.

Given the high temperatures, just two laps

were possible before a set of tyres would start to go ‘off’ too much, so there was no time for dilly-dallying once out of the pits on the first flyer. Like the wet handling, the tyres were scored on various subjective criteria as well as their outright lap time.

The tyres at the top were all very close, but it was the Michelin that not only stopped the clock with the fastest time but also scored the best subjectively. With really impressive, even grip it was a joy to use and easy to predict in the way it would slide. It also had excellent traction, with the feeling that you could get on the power just that fraction earlier than with the others.

The Yokohama followed up its win on the wet handling with another impressive time on

the dry handling circuit. However, it didn’t go down quite as well subjectively. There was good weight through the steering and decent balance into and through a corner, but despite the lap time it felt like it bled grip away more quickly than some of the others.

The Pirelli felt very similar to the Yokohama and produced a remarkably similar lap time too, just feeling a little less incisive and confidence inspiring compared to the best.

Once again it was the Goodyear that communicated the most through the steering, and while the grip didn’t feel outstanding, you could meter it out perfectly and hit lines easily, making for a very enjoyable experience and a good subjective score.



### Dry lap

	Tyre	Percentage
1	Michelin	100
2	Yokohama	99.2
3	Pirelli	99.1
4	Goodyear	98.8
5	Continental	97.8
6	GT Radial	97.3
7	Dunlop	96.5
8	Linglong	94.8

### Dry handling – subjective

	Tyre	Percentage
1	Michelin	100
2	Goodyear	98.8
3	Continental	96.3
4	Pirelli	93.8
5	Yokohama	92.5
6	Dunlop	91.4
7	GT Radial	86.4
8	Linglong	71.6



The battle of the budget tyres was once again won convincingly by the GT Radial, which gave a lot of confidence right up to the point where it let go, when grip seemed to fall off a cliff. However, traction was good. With the Linglong it was immediately obvious how much more steering input was required through the corners, and braking points that had felt comfortable with all the others suddenly seemed wildly ambitious.

## Road route

**T**HE ROADS OUTSIDE the gates of Mireval are not quite up to the standard of the Route Napoleon or the A- and B-roads of North Wales, but what they do offer is a huge variety of surfaces. There's broken tarmac, smooth tarmac, dusty tarmac, potholes, concrete, speed bumps, rumble strips – the lot. This allows you to make good and valid comparisons between the tyres in our three subjectively scored areas – steering, comfort and noise.

While it's conceivable that the Goodyear could have a home advantage inside the gates of the test track, the conditions outside were certainly too diverse to provide any advantage. Nonetheless, it swept to victory on the road, with superb textural feel through the steering, which was always babbling subtle messages about the road surface, and then good (although not winning) scores in the other two disciplines.

Next came the Pirelli and Yokohama, two tyres that had been close on the track and proved close again on the road. Both were excellent all-rounders in the rough and tumble of the real world, with the Pirelli just edging ahead for steering feel but the Yokohama proving to be the quietest of all

the tyres on test. The most comfortable tyre was actually the Dunlop, which had a lovely pliant ride and absorbed both high-frequency bumps and larger ridges extremely well.

Receiving the same score as the Goodyear for steering feel was the Michelin. However, although it had a lovely, confidence-inspiring weight to it both around the straight-ahead and once loaded up, it was easily the noisiest of all the tyres on test. With a comparatively large volume of rumble making its way into the cabin, it would potentially be annoying on a long trip and this dropped it down the order. Road noise was also the undoing of the Continental, which again had nice steering feel and damped out the bigger bumps well, but suffered in its secondary ride quality and the associated aural feedback.

Both the budget tyres suffered from a lack of steering feel, but the Linglong scored a victory over its rival, the GT Radial, on the road as it was relatively quiet and absorbed the speed bumps quite well. The GT Radial didn't make too much of a racket either, but the ride was the least impressive of the group. The whole tyre simply felt heavier and more solid than the others, leading to a much harsher and firmer ride that would make it potentially tiring on a long journey.



### Road route – subjective

	Tyre	Percentage
1	Goodyear	100
2=	Pirelli	97.4
2=	Yokohama	97.4
4	Dunlop	92.1
5	Michelin	89.5
6	Continental	84.2
7	Linglong	81.6
8	GT Radial	78.9



# Results

**8th Linglong**  
It might not be a great shock to see the cheapest tyre coming in last, but to be fair the Green-Max did take a clear victory in the rolling resistance test, perhaps making its more ecological intentions clear. A performance tyre it is not, however, the dry braking performance in particular letting it down.

**7th GT Radial**  
The other tyre from China put in a creditable performance in many of the tests and stuck much closer to the more premium brands. Its biggest downfall remains the sensations that you get from it, both in terms of its harsh ride on the road and the feel through the steering wheel.

**6th Dunlop**  
Comfortable on the road, the Dunlop had a mixed performance, scoring well in the aquaplaning, rolling resistance and dry braking tests. Subjectively it also displayed good feel through the wheel on both the handling tests. However, overall grip was disappointing and too often it found itself in the bottom three, as it does overall.

**4th Pirelli**  
Clearly ahead of the Dunlop, finishing joint fourth and middle of the table, the Pirelli put in a solid performance without really shining anywhere. Marginally happier in the

dry than the wet, perhaps its most impressive performance came on the road, where it was second equal.

**4th Continental**  
The Continental put in some extraordinarily good objective performances, particularly in the wet, with clear water between it and the others. However, subjectively it lacked a little feel and it was not only expensive but also suffered on the rolling resistance test. Overall it was a very good performance, though.

**3rd Michelin**  
The top three were all extremely close. The Michelin is the most expensive of the top three (and overall) and curiously suffered in both the braking tests, but it did extremely well subjectively in the handling tests. With good weight and feel through the steering, it inspired real confidence in both the dry and wet.

**2nd Yokohama**  
There was a point when adding up the scores that it looked like the Yokohama might win, but a close second place is still an extremely impressive result. With strong performances across the board, it was only really let down by the rolling resistance test, and it shone in the lap times it set round both the wet and dry handling circuits. It also did

well subjectively both in the wet and on the road, which could make it an excellent choice in the British climate.

**1st Goodyear**  
There might be some cynicism about the Goodyear winning at Mireval, but a quick glance down the results shows that, ironically, the only test it won outright was held outside the gates of the test facility that the tyre's maker owns. The Goodyear put in a consistently strong performance, beating the others by never dropping lower than fourth in any test. However, it also excelled in the subjective tests in something that **evo** rates very highly indeed – steering feel. It always let you know how much grip you were using in both the dry and the wet, which then let you work right up to and over the limits of the tyres with real confidence. It is a deserving victor, and certainly more than just a black round thing with Goodyear on the side.

## Final results

	Tyre	Percentage
1	Goodyear	95.4
2	Yokohama	94.7
3	Michelin	93.8
4=	Continental	92.8
4=	Pirelli	92.8
6	Dunlop	90.7
7	GT Radial	86.3
8	Linglong	84.0



**'THE GOODYEAR WAS CONSISTENTLY STRONG, NEVER DROPPING LOWER THAN FOURTH IN ANY TEST'**



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# Fast Fleet

Living with evo's long-term test cars

From GP to GT-R, evo's Fast Fleet is the biggest and most comprehensive long-term section in the business. This month...

## MINI JCW GP

by Ian Eveleigh

Production editor

NEW

**This month:** The fastest production Mini ever joins our fleet.

**Highest speed in a long-term:** 'A timing beam-verified 150mph in a SEAT Leon Cupra at Bruntingthorpe. Four-up. And it was still climbing'



## AUDI RS4 AVANT

by Dean Smith

Staff photographer

OUT

**This month:** Snapper Smith bids farewell to his rapid load-lugger.

**Highest speed in a long-term:** '70mph, officer'



## FORD FOCUS ST

by Dean Smith

Staff photographer

NEW

**This month:** The fast Focus takes the RS4's space in the evo car park.

**Highest speed in a long-term:** See left



## AUDI RS6 AVANT

by Mike Duff

Motoring editor

NEW

**This month:** Duff takes delivery of our latest Audi super-estate.

**Highest speed in a long-term:** 'I got an indicated 130mph out of a 2.2-litre VX220, which I was quite proud of'



## FORD ESCORT RS2000

by Henry Catchpole

Features editor

**This month:** New wheels arrive.

**Highest speed in a long-term:** '155mph in our old B7 Audi RS4. At which point the Ruf Yellow Bird we were with came past about 40mph faster'



## ALFA ROMEO GIULIETTA

by Rob Gould

Art director

**This month:** The Alfa returns from a holiday with a cracked windscreen.

**Highest speed in a long-term:** '163mph in an Aston Martin V8 Vantage'



## McLAREN 12C

by Nick Trott

Editor

**This month:** The 12C has been out on track.

**Highest speed in a long-term:** 'Funnily enough, I haven't maxed the McLaren yet. I once saw over 160mph in the C63 AMG...'



## PORSCHE 911 SC

by Nick Trott

Editor

**This month:** The '80s 911 gets put to the test on track.

**Highest speed in a long-term:** See left



## JAGUAR XKR-S

by Richard Meaden

Contributing editor

**This month:** Top down everywhere.

**Highest speed in a long-term:** 'Completing the running-in of Jethro's Mini Cooper S on the way to a VLN race at the Nürburgring. Indicated 155mph. For miles'



## RANGE ROVER SDV8

by Harry Metcalfe

Editorial director

NEW

**This month:** A new Range for Harry.

**Highest speed in a long-term:** 'Oddly, it wasn't my Zonda but my Ferrari 550, which hit an indicated 205mph on a German Autobahn. Slippery things those 550s'



## HYUNDAI VELOSTER TURBO

by Stephen Dobie

Staff writer

**This month:** Dobie finds an area in which his Hyundai bests a Ferrari.

**Highest speed in a long-term:** 'An indicated 170mph in editor Trott's BMW 1M. When he'd barely driven it. He saw the funny side...'



## SKODA SUPERB OUTDOOR

by Peter Tomalin

Contributor

**This month:** The big estate gets purloined for a family holiday.

**Highest speed in a long-term:** See right



## MAZDA MX-5 MK2

by Peter Tomalin

Contributor

**This month:** Tomalin ponders the MX-5's wheels and ride height.

**Highest speed in a long-term:** 'An indicated 157mph in a Nissan 350Z on a late-night autoroute during a non-stop drive back from Estoril'



## NISSAN GT-R

by David Yu

Contributor

**This month:** It's VMax time again.

**Highest speed in a long-term:** 'I managed an indicated 206mph in GO02 LLA on that Autobahn north of the Ring back in 2010. Photograph only showed 205, though. Arse'



## TOYOTA GT86

by Jethro Bovingdon

Contributing editor

**This month:** Bovingdon discovers the GT86 gets quicker with miles.

**Highest speed in a long-term:** 'Indicated 160mph in my old, much missed, Evo VIII MR FQ-340. Shortly afterwards I hit a tree'



**Also on the evo fleet:** Ferrari 458 Italia, BMW M135i, Ferrari F50, Renault Clio Williams, Peugeot 106 Rallye, Mercedes 190E 2.5-16, Jaguar XJR-15, Lancia Delta Integrale, BMW 2002, Ferrari F40, Renaultsport Clio Trophy, Lamborghini Murciélago, Maserati GranTurismo S, Ferrari 430 Scuderia. **Coming soon:** Renaultsport Clio 200 Turbo

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## NEW ARRIVAL

# Mini John Cooper Works GP

Ev fulfils a long-held ambition of using a Mini as a daily driver. And it isn't just any old Mini...

**F**OR SOME TIME now I've wanted to run a Mini as a long-termer. I even quite liked the idea of staying away from the fancier, turbocharged models in favour of something simple; as our 'back-to-basics' story in *evo* 185 confirmed, a lowly Cooper can be a lot of fun. Then I heard that a 215bhp, £28,795 John Cooper Works GP would soon be joining our fleet and my hand shot up in the air to be its custodian. Well, I'm only human...

YF62 NYK arrived in the middle of July's heatwave with 4277 miles on the clock, having already served some time on Mini's press fleet (it's the same car that appeared in our 'extreme hatches'

group test in *evo* 181). There's only one option for the Mini GP: regular road tyres, available at no extra cost. I'm pleased to report that our car doesn't have them, sticking with the trackday-spec Kumho Ecsta V700 Sports.

Everything else on the car is standard. But despite the race-car vibe hinted at by the lack of rear seats, the GP isn't stripped down to the essentials like, say, Renaultsport's R26.R was. Far from it, in fact: standard kit includes DAB radio, Bluetooth, heated Recaros, climate control, bi-xenon headlights and satnav. Some, I'm sure, will sniff at this. I'd argue that almost everything on that list makes the GP more suitable for being used – and therefore enjoyed – every day,

rather than a car you'd save for special occasions, or suffer a little to live with day in, day out.

However, the GP isn't just a decently specced JCW with an extra 7bhp, some stickers and a £4k mark-up. Unique features include manually adjustable coilover suspension, larger front brakes (330mm discs with six-piston calipers), a front strut brace and a comprehensive aerodynamic makeover that includes a carbonfibre roof spoiler, a working rear diffuser and a fully panelled underbody. Downforce at the rear of the car is increased by a claimed 90 per cent.

Initial impressions? I absolutely love the looks. And so, it seems, do others. Despite the fact you see Minis of all colours, shapes and

sizes every time you step outside, there's something about the GP's combination of Thunder Grey metallic paint, red detailing and purposeful, nose-down stance that makes people look twice.

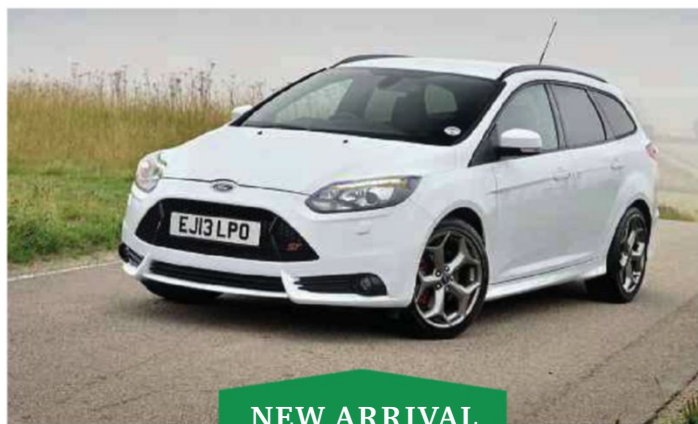
As for the driving experience, I can't say I've noticed that extra downforce yet, but I can say that driving the GP on dry summer roads is a full-on business. In a good way. I think. More on that next month. **x**

**Ian Eveleigh**

### Driver's log

Date acquired	July 2013
Total mileage	5529
Mileage this month	1252
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	29.4





NEW ARRIVAL

# Ford Focus ST Estate

Photographer Smith packs his bikes and lenses into his new load-lugger – a 247bhp hot hatch turned estate

**C**AN A CAR WITH a four-pot turbo engine and wearing the Blue Oval badge fill the wide-arched space left by the Audi RS4 Avant (right), which cost more than twice as much and had trick diffs, a seven-speed twin-clutch gearbox, a monstrous 4.2-litre naturally aspirated V8 and almost 200bhp more? It seems almost ridiculous to compare the two, but the 247bhp Focus ST is here to replace the RS4 and so the Audi has to serve as the benchmark.

Our new Focus is an ST3, which has plenty of standard kit: dual-zone climate control, Sony DAB audio, auto lights and wipers, auto-dimming rear-view mirror, bi-xenon headlights, LED running lights, LED rear lights, power-folding heated door mirrors, eight-way adjustable Recaro heated leather front seats and a Recaro-sculpted three-seat rear bench. I also specced cruise control with active speed limiter, privacy glass to help keep my gear and bikes out of sight and the ST Style Pack, consisting of anthracite wheels and red brake calipers.

I spent a long while deciding on the body colour and although the ST does look good in Frozen White, I do wish I'd gone for black. The only thing that stopped me was how difficult black is to photograph and how quickly it gets dirty. I spent so long mulling over the colour that I embarrassingly forgot to tick the box for satnav, which, given my job involves regular driving through Europe, is a hindrance. Thankfully

TomTom has sent me a Start 60 to try, and given the negative feedback from colleagues regarding Ford's built-in satnavs, I'm actually thankful I forgot to tick the box.

EJ13 LPO landed at the office with only 137 miles on the clock and an on-the-road price of £27,570. As I've not run the engine in yet I've not been able to delve into the characteristics of the 2-litre turbocharged EcoBoost unit, nor the ST's handling dynamics, but initial signs are good, not least the manual gearchange with pedals placed perfectly for heel-and-toe.

The dash does feel a bit '90s, with its small LCD screens and 88 buttons (literally!), but the rest of the interior is pleasing enough and the Recaros are supremely comfortable. If the steering wheel had more reach, the driving position would be perfect. ✘

**Dean Smith** (@evoDeanSmith)



Above: Style Pack 'Rado Grey' alloys

Driver's log	
Date acquired	August 2013
Total mileage	904
Mileage this month	766
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	27.3



Above: Eagle F1 s were costly fitment.

Below: oil level needed monitoring; estate accepted all Dean's camera gear



**N**OW THAT THE RS4 has departed, I can finally come clean about a little secret

I've been keeping: the RS4 is one of my two dream cars (the other being an Aventador Roadster). Or at least the original B5 is: the 2.7-litre biturbo nutter with bulging arches and aesthetics so thuggish you daren't stare at it for longer than a few seconds. So, as you can imagine, I was pretty excited about running the latest-generation RS4 for ten months.

I have to admit to being slightly underwhelmed when I first took a good look around it. The box arches seemed a little too subtle, the front-end design looked a touch weedy and the bright white leather was a bit 'pipe and slippers' alongside the crystal-effect Prism Silver paint.

Still, it had massive exhaust outlets and a thumping 444bhp V8 under the bonnet, so I was eager to get started. When he introduced our RS4, Mike Duff stated: 'It's never going to be the sharpest knife in the drawer.' And indeed it wasn't, but I was still

gobsmacked by the poor damping and just how queer the steering was. The ride was just too firm for UK roads, especially in Dynamic mode, and the variable-ratio rack meant you never really knew how much input you needed into corners. In time you get used to it, but if you're in and out of different cars, you'll notice it every time you get back in the RS4.

Other than a nail in a tyre and a knocking from the suspension that I noticed within ten feet of turning its wheels for the first time (apparently they all do that), running the RS4 was trouble-free and completely enjoyable, albeit rather expensive. It averaged 22mpg and got through a litre of oil every 4000 miles or so. The original Toyos lasted 13,000 miles. Replacing them with Goodyear Eagle F1s changed the car's driving characteristics for the better but did set us back an eye-watering £1160. The first service was also pretty costly, coming in at £615. Who would have guessed that running a near-two ton estate car with supercar performance would be costly...?



END OF TERM

## Audi RS4 Avant

With the Focus entering the **evo** car park, Smith's beloved RS4 had to vacate the space marked 'photographer's long-termer'

But expense aside, the Avant so perfectly suited my lifestyle of lugging cameras and bikes around whilst chasing supercars that it was almost as if it had been made just for myself – and perhaps the ungainly sideburned Henry Catchpole, who also used it to transport the odd bike or three.

The 4.2-litre V8 was the standout feature for me. Whilst my neighbours may have thought differently, I never tired of the 15 seconds at first start-up

### 'The 4.2-litre V8 was the standout feature'

where the exhausts would blare loudly whilst the engine cleared its throat. Those that have moaned about a lack of torque (317lb ft at 4000rpm) desperately need their pulses checking as they're clearly dead. It's true that to get the best out of the RS4 you have to use all the revs right up to the screaming 8500rpm red line, but even

my wife, who barely cares for the colour of a car, couldn't help but giggle when it was wound right up.

I was slightly gutted that the RS4 wasn't a manual, but the standard S-tronic 'box made light work of the countless hours I spent crawling along the UK's motorway network. If you could spec a manual 'box I imagine it could get boring having to hunt for the right gear, and the seven-speed S-tronic's kick-down program was so good, it put the V8 right into the upper levels of its rev range within a nanosecond of flattening your right foot to the floor. That, I can assure you, *never* gets boring.

As a long-termer, the RS4 was certainly a grower. It wasn't a car I ever wanted to take for a drive just for the sake of it – if you want a thrilling drive, you'll need something more focused in your stable. What it did do brilliantly, however, was cover ground at supercar speeds in all weathers and inspire 100 per cent confidence. How I've kept a clean licence for the last ten months, I've absolutely no idea. ✕

**Dean Smith** (@evoDeanSmith)



**Top:** variable-ratio steering rack meant Avant's handling at speed took some getting used to. **Above:** S-tronic transmission got the best out of the 444bhp, 4.2-litre V8



#### Driver's log

<b>Date acquired</b>	Sept 2012
<b>Duration of test</b>	10 months
<b>Total test mileage</b>	21,088
<b>Overall mpg</b>	21.7
<b>Costs</b>	£1796.86
<b>Purchase price</b>	£62,110
<b>Trade-in value</b>	£47,000
<b>Depreciation</b>	£15,110



## Ford Escort RS2000

Construction of Catchpole's classic rally car continues as he sources a distinctive set of wheels

**S** SKY BLUE, BABY blue, powder blue, pale blue, Gulf blue... whatever you want to call it, I happen to think Minilites in this colour look ace on a Mk2 Escort.

I'm not sure which design genius had the initial brainwave, but the first car I saw them on was an almost plain

white RS1800 with just a strip of green and red Castrol sponsorship across the nose. After a bit of research, I found light blue wheels on quite a few historic rally Escorts, curiously most of them also with some form of Castrol sponsorship in the livery, but that could just be coincidence.



## NEW ARRIVAL

## Audi RS6 Avant

Duff gets his hands on our brand-new £100,000, 552bhp super-estate

**I**T'S EASY TO complain that modern cars often seem to have more power than soul. But come on – five hundred and fifty-two horsepower. There was no way I was going to turn down the chance to find out what it's like to live with a ludicrous excess of urge, which is why I'm the keeper of our new Audi RS6.

This insane output means that the RS6 has more power than my last three long-termers put together. Indeed, by our reckoning it's the quickest production estate car in the world – we recently recorded an 8.18sec 0-100mph time in one. That makes it sound like a fire-breathing rocket ship, but it's not. Indeed, the most surprising thing after our first

month together is just how relaxed the RS6 is as an everyday prospect.

The 4-litre twin-turbocharged V8 is as happy trickling along as it is on a charge, and the standard air suspension makes the RS6 an impressively relaxed place to spend time at cruising speeds. Given it has the ability to exceed the UK's highest speed limit in just over 4sec, it's never going to spend too long on full throttle. I'm already planning a trip to the Autobahns to find out what it's like at really senior velocities.

The RS6's unoptioned price of £75,500 isn't too bad compared to rivals like the Mercedes CLS63 AMG Shooting Brake (£83,000). But Audi has given our car – one of the first in the UK – a predictable options workout. Highlights include the

'Dynamic' package that raises the speed limiter to 174mph (£2255), 21in alloys (£1900), the carbon styling package, which includes the 'quattro' logo across the front (£4250), and the upgraded Bang & Olufsen audio system (£6300. Ouch). But there's also a fair amount I wouldn't have chosen myself, including adaptive cruise control (£2255), night vision (£1510) and a head-up display system that was turned off after about three minutes, and which hasn't been switched on again since (£1240). The final score is a walloping £101,020, making this the first car I've run to get into six figures.

I'm bracing myself for high running costs, too. When trickled down the motorway, it can manage 25mpg, according to its trip computer. But used with the sort of occasional enthusiasm the mighty powertrain encourages, you're struggling to get over 20mpg. That's better than the V10 RS6 that Harry ran a few years back, but still pretty scary. ☒

**Mike Duff**



I knew that if I was going to go rallying I'd need a second set of wheels for DNF (so that I can swap to a new set of tyres at service if the stages have been rough), and when I saw a picture on Twitter of these blue 'ML' wheels by Compomotive it was a done deal. As a bonus, Compomotive is based in Wolverhampton, so it fitted nicely into my self-imposed criteria of putting British parts on the Escort wherever possible.

As the intention is to go haring through forests on gravel rather than

tarmac, the little blue rims are 6 x 13in (if I was going tarmac rallying the diameter would be more like 15in). If I eventually upgrade to a wider 'Atlas' axle at the rear of the Escort then I'll probably put positively monstrous 7in-wide rims on the back.

For now, I'm chuffed. I'm not sure what livery I'll eventually go with (I might have a sponsor in the pipeline, and their logo would actually match quite well!) but even if the car stays a mighty white, I know the wheels will make it stand out. Of course, wheels

are precious little use without any rubber on them, so some gravel tyres should be turning up any day now, more of which next time... ☒

**Henry Catchpole**  
(@HenryCatchpole)

## Driver's log

<b>Date acquired</b>	August 2011
<b>Total mileage</b>	n/a
<b>Mileage this month</b>	0
<b>Costs this month</b>	£480
<b>mpg this month</b>	n/a

## Alfa Romeo Giulietta Cloverleaf

The Alfa goes on holiday – and comes back with a cracked windscreen



**I** THOUGHT CRAMMING two kids, a dog, three suitcases and various miscellaneous holiday gubbins into the Giulietta was going to be an impossible task. Not so. In fact, it was surprisingly easy. Even the drive down to Cornwall, which took nearly eight hours, passed with no significant problems (apart from crippling backache from the slightly awkward seating position). But at least the kids didn't succeed in killing each other.

On the way back two weeks later, it was a different story. This kids still survived, but no sooner had we crossed into Devon than a lorry in the opposite lane kicked up a stone, which pelted the Alfa's windscreen with a sickening noise.

A quick check revealed that it had chipped the glass, but it was nothing serious. Five minutes later, a six-inch crack appeared. And it continued to crawl across the glass at an alarming pace, until – eight hours later, back at home – it covered half the windscreen. Guess we'll be needing a new one, then... ☒

**Rob Gould** (@RobGould72)

## Driver's log

<b>Date acquired</b>	December 2012
<b>Total mileage</b>	14,450
<b>Mileage this month</b>	1051
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	29.9

# McLaren 12C

The 12C throws a wobbler or two and Trott reflects on last month's laps against the new 911 GT3



**F**AST. INSANELY, madly fast. I had the chance to stretch the 12C's legs at Blyton Park recently (evo 187), and every time I stepped from the car I felt like I'd never driven quicker in my life. I've been lucky enough to drive all sorts of ultra-quick road cars in this job, but for all-round acceleration, braking and grip, the 12C matches them all – and that includes ultra-exotica like the Bugatti Veyron and Pagani Huayra. In fact, in terms of outright performance per pound (£), I'm not sure there's a faster car. A Nissan GT-R perhaps?

My car lapped a tenth faster than

the car we used for eCoty last year and topped out at 151mph on the back straight with Jethro at the wheel.

In Track mode the 12C is astonishing – it delivers lap times you'd expect of a slicks 'n' wings GT racer (although the new 911 GT3 was just as quick) – and allows you to access pretty much all of the performance, all of the time.

You tend to deliver consistent laps too, which points to an inherent friendliness in the chassis. Saying that, many of our team feel you need to reappraise how you drive to extract the absolute maximum from the 12C. I can't say I've got there yet – I'm happy driving at nine-tenths, but I tend to get

scrappy oversteer and uncomfortable transitions when I try my maximum. Time to go to school? Perhaps Jensen will give me some lessons...

So, the McLaren still shocks with its outright pace, but it has been throwing fault messages. Mostly they've been minor (but irritating), but one necessitated a return to McLaren: an engine light flashing ominously.

The first error message popped up back in May. It read: 'Right Rear Lamp Fault – Go To McLaren Service Centre'. Sure enough, the right rear lamp wasn't working and, being an LED item, I couldn't nip down to the local motor factors, buy a bulb and fix

it myself. Nope, I would have to visit a service centre. For a shonky light. To McLaren's credit, it sent an engineer and fixed it outside our office.

Next up, the central brake light failed. Again, I was told to visit a service centre, and again I didn't have the time, but again McLaren sent a technician to fix it.

After that I had errors flash up but then disappear, and the only other wobble was a reluctant air-con with the occasional accompanying message. Sometimes it took a few minutes to fire out cold air; other times it was immediate.

Then the big wobble occurred.

## Jaguar XKR-S Convertible

**H**ARD TO BELIEVE, but it's very nearly a year since the big white Jag arrived. Sadly that means it's due to head back to Jaguar any day now. I'll reflect on my time with the flagship XK in a future issue, but for now I'll bring you up to date with the last few weeks.

Well, there's no doubt the drop-top has come into its own during the

recent heatwave. Every journey, no matter how short or long, has been conducted with the roof down. The anti-buffeting screen is hugely effective, even at motorway speeds, so you can gently toast yourself without removing your hair by the roots. Shame the screen itself is a bit of a Heath Robinson affair to attach between the vestigial rear seats.

Repeated lowering and raising of the roof has aggravated a piece of loose chrome finishing trim, which keeps getting caught by the right-rear quarterlight window as it comes up to meet the roof. In other news, I had to top-up the oil for the first time, but half-a-litre in a little under 15,000 miles is pretty impressive. The 'Service Required' message has just appeared, too. The XK will go back before we've had a chance to have the service executed, but recent experience of

Marshall's of Peterborough suggests it would be handled well.

Full end-of-term report soon. **x**

**Richard Meaden**  
(@DickieMeaden)

### Driver's log

Date acquired	Sept 2012
Total mileage	14,351
Mileage this month	474
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	20.5



Left: 12C tearing it up at Blyton Park. Above: it hasn't all been plain sailing...



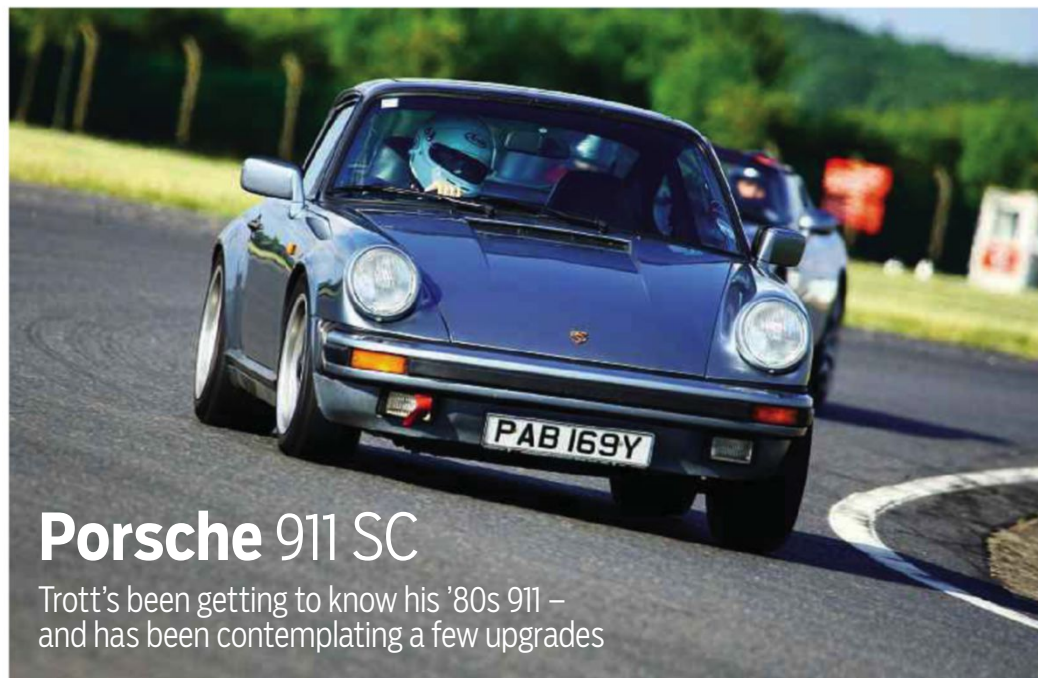
During the aforementioned blast at Blyton, the engine warning light came on. The car was running a little lumpily, but the lack of smoke and grinding noises gave me cause for optimism.

McLaren collected the car, found a broken lambda sensor, and returned the 12C within two days. ❌

**Nick Trott** (@evoNickTrott)

**Driver's log**

<b>Date acquired</b>	March 2013
<b>Total mileage</b>	15,982
<b>Mileage this month</b>	2343
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	17.1



## Porsche 911 SC

Trott's been getting to know his '80s 911 – and has been contemplating a few upgrades

**S** SO, I'VE BOUGHT a 911. If you read last month's 'Taking the Plunge' feature you'll know why, how and when – but you won't know what it's been like to live with these last few months. The simple answer is 'a joy'.

My car is a Slate Blue 3.0-litre SC from 1982. I bought it with a recently reconditioned engine and a thoroughly sorted chassis. The bodywork is good, with a few scabs on the bumpers but none of the structural rot that haunts older 911s. For me, I wanted a great drive – the bodywork I could live with. As is often the way with your pride and joy, you notice the imperfections that nobody else can see.

And how does it drive? Fun, fast, and challenging. On a recent *evo* track evening I pushed it pretty hard to explore some of the well-known

911 handling traits. Overall, it was friendlier than I was expecting – clumsy inputs made for clumsy progress, but smooth, deliberate driving delivered smooth, deliberate results. The brakes surprised: I was expecting them to crumble after a couple of laps but my forearms gave up before they did (the unassisted steering is very, very heavy).

If you follow me on Twitter you'll know that my car was in a Porsche parade at this year's Goodwood Festival of Speed. I was in Australia at the time, but Henry Catchpole and my dad took over driving duties. I clearly missed something special – thanks to all who tweeted me pics during the weekend.

Specialists RPM Technik, who sourced the car for me, have offered to work with me on a number of upgrades over the next few months.

The plan was hatched before I drove the car. The problem is, now I've had a chance to spend some time in it, there's not a lot I want to mess with. I'm keen to drop the wheel size from 16in to 15in to release some of the steering effort, but the handling, pace, balance and brakes are all pretty much spot on. Saying that, I have been secretly on the lookout for some throttle bodies... ❌

**Nick Trott** (@evoNickTrott)

**Driver's log**

<b>Date acquired</b>	March 2013
<b>Total mileage</b>	88,102*
<b>Mileage this month</b>	525
<b>Costs this month</b>	£14 (oil)
<b>mpg this month</b>	Um, dunno!

\* The speedo shows 88,102 but the chassis has done around 165k miles and the engine sub-10k. For the sake of the log we'll go with the speedo reading until I've calculated the true figure from a mountain of invoices. Sounds like fun, doesn't it?



'Every journey, no matter how short or long, has been conducted with the roof down'

Left: proper summer weather has suited the drop-top XKR-S perfectly

# Range Rover SDV8

A new Rangie has joined Harry's garage.  
Metcalf explains why...



NEW ARRIVAL

**T**HE LATEST RANGE Rover configurator is brilliant. You start with an outline of a Rangie and then spend hours decorating it with increasingly outlandish paint, smoked wheels and interior kit until, eventually, you're staring at the Range Rover of your dreams.

Press the finish button and the program spits out a summary sheet and... flipping heck! That'll be £90,260! A quick ring round a few dealers to see what sort of trade-in I'd get for my 60,000-mile, 2006 Rangie TDV8 resulted in a price-to-change of £72,000 – way too much for me to stomach, so I decided to wait a while before replacing my excellent '06 Rangie with a new one.

That was back in September 2012.

But in early 2013, an olive branch appeared, Land Rover offering **evo** a Range Rover long-termer. I quickly dug out my configurator summary and pinged it over to Land Rover, and eight months later, a beautiful new 4.4-litre SDV8 Vogue SE arrived.

I reckon OE13 SYO looks stunning in its distinctive Nara Bronze paintwork, but it isn't quite how I originally specced it, because I'd chosen the contrasting silver roof and side gills. Land Rover politely said no to these, because my two-tone look would have a negative effect come trade-in time. It was the same story with the more off-road-friendly 20in wheels I'd wanted, hence why there's a set of 21in wheels fitted. I'd also ordered a retractable tow bar, but that's gone AWOL too. On a working farm, that's a bit of a problem, but hopefully Land Rover can retro-fit one.

Other than that, it's almost exactly as I had envisaged, and becomes the seventh Range Rover I've run as our main family car in 23 years. I love the versatility of the Range Rover and owning one leaves me free to fill the rest of the garage with mad stuff. Trying to combine a sports car with a family car in something like a Porsche Cayenne Turbo doesn't make sense to me; I'd much rather have a (plenty quick enough) diesel Range Rover to cruise around in and then get my kicks from something properly daft.

It's early days, but what's impressed me so far is the way the new RR can attack roundabouts with gusto, without causing random stuff to fly around the cabin. The wider track and new anti-roll tech make a massive difference here. I'm also staggered by how much better the mpg is – helped by the slippery

new shape, no doubt – especially when cruising at motorway speeds. I can see 30mpg-plus is possible, as long as I drive like my dad.

On the flip side, there's an odd knocking sound coming from the suspension on broken tarmac, and it seems far too posh to use around the farm. It also looks huge compared to the previous version. Still, it's an impressive machine, and one I look forward to getting to know over the next 12 months or so. ✕

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

### Driver's log

Date acquired	August 2013
Total mileage	1380
Mileage this month	372
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	28.5

## Hyundai Veloster Turbo

**I**F YOU ENJOY driving, you'll appreciate what a well-sorted steering rack adds to a car. Take the month before last. After a purple patch of driving some truly pulsating cars, including a 458 Spider, I found the Veloster had more talkative steering than all but one of

them – a Lotus.

And it makes such a difference. I hopped in the Hyundai and drove what felt like as fast as in all those quicker cars because I instantly knew the grip state of its front tyres and how to finely play with it.

Hyundai put in plenty of UK development miles to fine tune the set-up. The tweaks were deemed so successful, you'll now find them on all European Veloster Turbos. It doesn't fully explain how a humble Hyundai

with electric power steering can offer Ferrari-felling feedback, but I'm not complaining... ✕

**Stephen Dobie**  
(@evoStephenDobie)

### Driver's log

Date acquired	February 2013
Total mileage	13,003
Mileage this month	1076
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	30.5





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**Mazda MX-5**

# Mazda MX-5 1.8i

The classic Mazda needs its wheels sprucing up, while Tomalin is in two minds about lowering the car's suspension

**I**T'S ALWAYS BUGGED me slightly that my MX-5 rides so high. As far as I know, it's still on the standard suspension for a 2005 mk2.5 1.8i and there's a good two inches of air between tyre and wheelarch, which frankly looks a bit naff. Thing is, there's a lot of high and very aggressively cambered speed 'cushions', as I believe they're called, around these parts. So I don't want it lowered so much that I risk snagging the sump, the exhaust or any of the other dangly bits. If anyone out there has any experience of lowering this particular flavour of MX-5 a little (not too much), I'd love to hear from you.

And while I've been frowning at the ride height, I've also noticed that ever since the sills have been repaired and resprayed, the 5's wheels are looking distinctly scabby and generally letting the side down. This Euphonic special edition has a unique 17in Enkei wheel with a 'Mesh Titanium' finish; if anyone can recommend a wheel refurbisher operating in the Cambridge area, again I'd love to hear about them. Send me an email at...

[petertomalin@me.com](mailto:petertomalin@me.com)



Above: wheels have seen better days

Driver's log	
Date acquired	April 2012
Total mileage	114,606
Mileage this month	275
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	32.3

**Skoda Superb Outdoor**



# Skoda Superb Outdoor

Tomalin pinches Riley's estate for a family holiday in France

**M**Y MAZDA MX-5 long-termer does many things well, and some brilliantly, but transporting a family of four and all their luggage on a week's holiday was never high on its designers' checklist of key targets. A quick scan of the **evo** car park, however, revealed a potentially perfect machine for the job: film-maker Sam Riley's Skoda (I was going to write 'Sam's Superb Outdoor' but it just looked weird).

Iffy name aside, the Superb ticks pretty much all the boxes as a family wagon: a punchy and frugal diesel engine, sturdily built, excellent satnav, air con and hi-fi, and lots of well-planned space. The rear seats are extremely commodious. Two strapping teenage boys and all their various iThings were swallowed without a blink, and we were off.

The Chunnel's fine when it's a work trip and you're on a tight schedule, but for me the journey is part of the holiday, so we took the 8am Brittany Ferries crossing from Portsmouth to Caen, followed by a gentle five-hour schlep down to Bénodet in southern Brittany, the

Superb sipping diesel at a mood-enhancing 50mpg.

Over the following sun-scorched week, it continued to impress in that accomplished, undemonstrative way that modern Skodas do. The looks grew on me,

**'It impressed in that accomplished, undemonstrative way that modern Skodas do'**

too. It's no glamourpuss – almost as though Skoda's designers are under orders not to make their cars quite as sexy and cohesive as their Audi cousins – but in profile and rear three-quarter, it's smart enough. The interior feels virtually Golf-like in its thunkiness and its use of shapes and materials. The satnav proved infallible, the air con was super-efficient even when the air temp hit 30deg C, and we appreciated little touches like being able to open all the windows from 50m across a scorching car park by

a single press on the plipper.

The 18in alloys give the ride a firm edge, but the underlying suppleness makes it a good distance-gobbler. Engine noise from the 168bhp 2-litre turbodiesel is a little more intrusive at an 85mph cruise than I was expecting, but the overtaking punch is ample – and a genuine surprise given the Superb's substantial bulk and 1579kg kerb weight.

A drivers' car? Well, a family holiday is not the best place to draw a definitive conclusion, but I sensed a little too much body-roll and a little too much inertia for it to feel quite as chuckable as the best wagons. But as a practical, spacious, well-made, wallet-friendly family car with a decent accelerative shove and a dash of character, it hits the spot. Just keep an MX-5 on standby (other sports cars are available). ☒

**Peter Tomalin**

Driver's log	
Date acquired	March 2013
Total mileage	9614
Mileage this month	1411
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	41.1

# Nissan GT-R

Yu had 200mph as his target at a recent VMax event, but would Stealthzilla oblige?



Steve Hall

**O**NE PARTICULARLY fun weekend recently started off at the Bedford Autodrome with an *evo* track evening. I'd been dreading a return to Bedford ever since I had decatted Milltek downpipes fitted as part of the Litchfield Stage 4.5 kit. I was certain the combination of those and the Akrapovic titanium exhaust was going to bust the strict noise limits at Bedford wide open.

However, I was delighted to find

that GO02 LLA cruised through the static test at a civilised 94dB out of a permissible 101. I was also delighted that it turned out to be a damp evening. I don't always welcome wet trackdays, but the beauty of Bedford is the relative lack of furniture to hit.

After a few exploratory forays in 'R' Mode, I soon switched off the VDC altogether to indulge in some childish slidey action, much to the amusement of the many passengers I took out that evening – I think. Stealthzilla was pretty much

uncatchable in those conditions, despite having to keep the revs down for the drive-by noise meters.

After the event, a few of us retired to a nearby hotel to swap tales of derring do and tankslappers, a hairy fourth-gear example of which can be seen here: [youtu.be/r0gfE7IRphs](http://youtu.be/r0gfE7IRphs).

The next morning, I set the TomTom to guide me to Bruntingthorpe in Leicestershire, where VMax 200 was holding one of its regular high-speed testing events. The drive there proved to be

utterly fantastic. Not a single mile of motorway, just wonderful sweeping A-roads and very light traffic.

I turned up at Brunters with great expectations of being able to finally break the 200mph barrier there. My last visit, in 2010, was when GO02 LLA had a mere 620bhp to its name. Running sticky Toyo R888s, it hit 192mph then, so I was hopeful that another 97bhp would allow it to make another 8mph this time.

Alas it was not to be, with numerous runs yielding only a snail-like 197mph best. Ironically, one factor in this was that extra 97bhp (and the lower grip of the Michelin Super Sports I now have fitted), which meant I couldn't get the power down early enough in the corner that leads onto the runway, wasting precious yards before full throttle could be applied. But even traction notwithstanding, I'm not completely convinced it could have broken the double century in that distance.

If you'd told me a couple of years ago that 717bhp would begin to feel inadequate... ❌

**David Yu** (@Auto\_Journals)

### Driver's log

<b>Date acquired</b>	April 2009
<b>Total mileage</b>	32,118
<b>Mileage this month</b>	821
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	15.6

## Toyota GT86

A few days with the TRD special edition has given Bovingdon some ideas for his regular GT86



**Y**OU MAY HAVE read the first drive of the GT86 TRD last month. Basically, it's a GT86 with an aggressive aerokit and bigger, 18in wheels with Yokohama Advan tyres. I really enjoyed it. The stiffer-sidewalled rubber brings greater front-end precision, yet the balance is still entertainingly tail-led, just without all the tyre squeal and enhanced with slightly more progressive on-limit behaviour.

It also rammed home just how much quicker my GT86 has got with miles and, ahem, appropriate use. The TRD, barely run-in, felt deathly slow in comparison with my car, and Ev's rather unscientific junction-to-bridge performance barometer on his journey home (we all have one, don't we?) revealed a 10mph deficit for the TRD. The flat-four really does

benefit from miles, it seems. OK, so the mid-range is still a bit weedy but the engine revs-out with much more energy and now feels like it might have a genuine 200bhp.

So the plan for our GT86 is this: get some proper tyres and keep piling on the miles. The Michelin Primacys still have plenty of tread but the blocks look frazzled – excuse enough to try some sportier rubber and bring a new edge to the GT86 experience, I think. ❌

**Jethro Bovingdon**

### Driver's log

<b>Date acquired</b>	May 2013
<b>Total mileage</b>	4708
<b>Mileage this month</b>	1011
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	32.1

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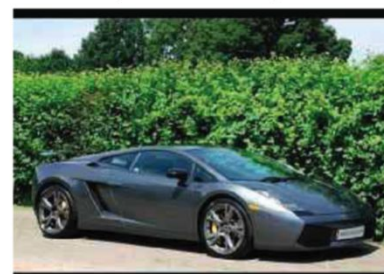
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# Market Watch

Knowledge

Insights into the used-car market. Edited by Harry Metcalfe



## Market watch

# 996 OF THE BEST

Older Porsche 911 Turbos offer plenty of power per pound

**W**ITH THE LATEST Porsche 911 Turbo tested in this issue, it seems only fitting to have a look at some of the earlier Turbos hiding in the classifieds, because there are some real bargains to be had. The 911 Turbo is the Range Rover of the supercar world, because it covers so many bases. That's why it has such a following with new car buyers, and it means there are plenty available at sensible prices second-hand.

When talking about 996s, it's impossible not to mention the potential engine issues that this generation of 911 has a reputation for. But the Turbo used a different engine – the tough, reliable Mezger – to the non-Turbo models, so there are no worries here.

Tiptronic versions were the most popular when new, so finding a manual is tricky, but don't instantly dismiss the Tiptronic as it suits the car really well.

One option worth looking out for is the 'X50' performance pack, which boosted power from 420bhp to 450bhp and torque from 413lb ft to 457lb ft thanks to bigger turbos, larger intercoolers and revised

engine management. You can really feel the difference, too: road tests from the period reckoned the X50 kit increased top speed to 202mph (from 189) and reduced the 0-60mph time from 3.9sec to a mere 3.6. The only downside is that the larger turbos introduced more lag at lower revs, but the much more aggressive rush to the red line more than made up for it.

Values for early 996 Turbos have settled at around £20,000, but just a few thousand more gets you a seriously tasty example. I saw a 2002, 68,000-mile X50 manual advertised for £23,995 recently, which looked great value, as did a 2001, 63,000-mile Tiptronic with a Milltek exhaust and a 515bhp DMS upgrade for £21,000. That's bargain money for the performance and useability on offer.

997 Turbos are still around £15-20k more than 996 Turbos, so I'd stick with a 996 and wait for 997 values to slip, because the 996 offers plenty of performance for nearly half the price. That's why 996s remain such a brilliant second-hand buy.

Harry Metcalfe  
Editorial director



## Auction watch

Modern supercar and modern-classic coupe stand out among lots at Brightwells sale

JUST IN CASE you haven't heard, this year marks the 50th anniversary of one of the most passionate car manufacturers ever: Lamborghini. Owning a Lambo is a dream for many people, and perhaps the most sensible way to do so is to find a used Gallardo, like the one offered at the Brightwells sale on September 25.

It might have changed somewhat since launch, but the Gallardo is still on sale today, meaning you can own a relatively fresh-looking junior supercar at a fraction of the list price. It's still a cracking car, too, and the distinctive wail of the V10 engine is intoxicating.

This particular 2004 Gallardo has just passed 64,000 miles, and has benefitted from a recent clutch and flywheel replacement. It comes in yellow and is fitted with the highly desirable six-speed manual gearbox. Brightwells has given the car a conservative £49,950-52,950 estimate, meaning someone could be picking up a bargain.

Another slightly cheaper piece of automotive history at the Brightwells sale is a bright red 1995 BMW 840Ci Coupe, a true multi-cylinder luxury barge. Okay, it's not the monster V12-engined 850, but the smaller V8 model is often thought to be the smart buy, with (slightly) less worrying running costs. The silky-smooth 282bhp 4-litre V8 is mated to a five-speed automatic gearbox, which helps push the sleek-looking coupe to an electronically limited 155mph.

With just under 60,000 miles on the clock, this 8-series still has plenty to give – and the black leather interior and red bodywork wears its 18 years extremely well. At some point in the car's life it has been treated to a set of large AC Schnitzer wheels, too. Brightwells has given it an estimate of £5500-6500. Tempted?

Matthew Hayward (@octaneMatthew)



**Above:** this manual Gallardo from 2004 is estimated around the £50k mark – peanuts for a junior supercar



**Above:** BMW 840Ci Coupe is ideal if you fancy some '90s-style cruising. It's expected to fetch around £6000

# Market Watch

Knowledge

Insights into the used-car market. Edited by Harry Metcalfe

## Ask the expert



**Q** I've been weighing up the pros and cons of spec'ing a future purchase with a manual or auto gearbox. I've read your reviews on the subject and I understand the lure of the auto, but now I'm confused, and as I'm of a certain age I'm thinking about resale values too. The choice of car is made – a 911 C4S – but I can't decide on the gearbox.  
**Clive Vella**

**A** The choice between auto or manual normally boils down to how you're intending to use the car. If it's going to get regular use, including a degree of urban

commuting, then plumping for the automatic transmission is the sensible choice. But if it's going to be a weekend toy for more enthusiastic driving, a manual makes more sense.

However, the complication for you is that the seven-speed manual gearbox in the C4S isn't Porsche's best effort, being notchy and slightly awkward to use. So in your particular case, I'd go for the seven-speed PDK every time. It's super-slick, it suits the C4S well and, what's more, it actually adds to the driving experience in a positive way. **HM**

Email your question to [experts@evo.co.uk](mailto:experts@evo.co.uk)

## Trader chat

Steven Handley, MD, The Supercar Rooms

[www.thesupercarrooms.co.uk](http://www.thesupercarrooms.co.uk)



'I've stopped buying 996- and 997-generation 911s as there are simply too many around and prices keep slipping away. It means there are some bargains out there, but you can't have stock hanging around because prices are coming down quickly. It's the complete opposite with the Nissan GT-R, which is in great demand right now, and it doesn't seem to matter if the models we're offering are standard or not, because the buyers are probably going to modify them anyway. They sell as soon as we get them in: prices start at £35,000 and I can't see that going below £30k for a very long time, if at all.

'Our bread and butter are the Ferrari 360 and 430, which are now very affordable and great cars to run. Ferrari is easily the strongest brand at the moment – almost everyone aspires to own one and we've seen values of the 308 double over the last four years.

'One big issue is that British buyers are becoming very sensitive to mileage. We've just sold a 1991 Lamborghini Diablo on 38,000 miles – it took ages to sell because potential buyers said 1700 miles per year was too high! Oddly, mileage is less of a problem with the Gallardo, where having done over 30,000 miles doesn't seem to be a factor.'

## Just looking

The pick of the classifieds this month

### Lotus Europa S

£17,995

Williams Motor Company,  
Glamorgan

[www.williamsmotor.co.uk](http://www.williamsmotor.co.uk)

02920 230344



Remember the reincarnated Lotus Europa? You can be forgiven if your brain's car encyclopaedia has let you down. Yet upon its launch in 2006, it all looked so promising: it shared the cover of *evo* 097 with an Aston Vantage and the headline 'Hope and Glory'.

Seven years on, the Europa already seems like a footnote in Lotus's chaotic history, making it a hidden gem. It's a little more habitable than an Elise, and while it'll require

commitment as a daily driver, it does have a third more luggage space...

The 197bhp turbocharged 2-litre engine fires the Europa to a 5.5sec 0-60mph time. This one-owner, 37,800-mile example boasts a Blaupunkt satnav, Alpine stereo and tan leather, as well as a full service history and new Bridgestone tyres. And all for £10k less than a new Elise.

**Stephen Dobie** (@evoStephenDobie)

### Aston Martin Rapide

£89,995

Redline Specialist Cars,  
Yorkshire

[www.redlinespecialistcars.co.uk](http://www.redlinespecialistcars.co.uk)

01423 863100



Opinions on depreciation differ wildly, depending on which end of its wicked work you sit. If you'd spent north of £150,000 on an Aston Rapide, only to see that nigh on halve in two years, it wouldn't be a topic to raise in light-hearted conversation. But for a supersaloon buyer with £90k to spend, a cash-melting luxury car can provide an interesting new-versus-used conundrum.

Lovely as a Panamera or XJ Supersport

would be, who wouldn't find an Aston alternative sorely tempting? Yes, the Rapide's weeny rear quarters mean it's more four-door coupe than limo, but a practical hatchback and the ability to transport kids or small adults on a wave of wailing V12 power mean it's a fun one. Redline's 2011 example has covered less than 9000 miles, has a plethora of options fitted and comes in a classy blue and cream combo. **SD**

## Fantasy garage: £200,000 challenge

This month, Richard Meaden was given a fictional £200k to find a homologation special, an M-car and a rare hot hatch amongst the ads at [forsale.evo.co.uk](http://forsale.evo.co.uk)



**1**  
**Audi Sport Quattro SWB POA**

Group B Audis sound, look and drive exactly as you'd hope, so you can unleash your inner Röhr! We reckon this one will cost £150k.



**2**  
**BMW M3 (E46) £8450**

The E46 M3 has one of the finest straight-six engines ever made mated to a brilliantly balanced rear-wheel-drive chassis. It's practical, too.



**3**  
**Citroën AX GT £5995**

There can't be many of these featherweight hot hatches left. It's crazy money, but I always wanted one of these when I was a lad!

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MANUAL CABRIOLET  
£25,995**

Seal Grey metallic with Extended  
Black Leather interior, matching  
black hood 51,000 miles

Heated Seats	CD and Bose	Switchable	Sports Chrono
AirCon &	SatNav &	Sports Exhaust	Plus
Climate Control	Phone	Home light	19" Carrera
Litronic Lights	PSM & PASM	One owner	Alloys



**2006 997 CARRERA  
C2 MANUAL COUPE  
£21,995**

Basalt Black metallic with black  
Leather interior 91,000 miles

Heated Seats	SatNav &	PSM	19" Multispoke
AirCon &	Phone	Home Light	Porsche Design
Climate Control	6 speed	Multichanger	Alloys



**1999 996 C4  
MANUAL COUPE  
£10,995**

Arctic Silver metallic with Grey  
Leather interior 77,000 miles

Comfort seats	PSM	CD and Radio	Sports Exhaust
AirCon &	Sports		18" Carrera
Climate Control	Suspension	Electric Sunroof	Twist Alloys



**2005 997 C2S 3.8  
MANUAL £23,995**

Atlas Grey metallic with Coco  
Leather interior 68,000 miles

Comfort Seats	Litronic Lights	Switchable	Recent new
AirCon &	CD player	Sports Exhaust	clutch
Climate Control		Rear Park	19" Multispoke
SatNav module	PSM & PASM	Assist	Alloys



**2002 996 CARRERA  
C4S TIPTRONIC COUPE  
£19,995**

Basalt Black metallic with black  
Leather interior 46,000 miles

Heated Seats	Parrot Phone	PASM	Multichanger
AirCon &	Module	Rear Park	18" Carrera
Climate Control	PSM	Assist	Twist Alloys



**2007 BOXSTER 2.7  
MANUAL £13,495**

Arctic Silver Metallic with  
Metropole Blue Leather interior  
52,000 miles

1 owner	Comfort Seats	CD Changer	Home Light
Onboard	AirCon &	Rear Park	
computer	Climate Control	Assist	18" Alloys



**2005 CARRERA C2  
TIPTRONIC £22,995**

Seal Grey with Black Leather  
interior 50,000 miles

AirCon &	Comfort Seats	Radio/CD	Home Light
Climate Control	SatNav &	Sports Chrono	19" Carrera
PSM	Phone	Plus	Alloys



**1998 996 CARRERA  
TIPTRONIC £11,995**

Ocean Blue metallic with Grey  
Leather interior 54,000 miles

Comfort Seats	AirCon &	Sunroof	18" Carrera
Sports Steering	Climate Control	Rear Park	Twist Alloys
Wheel	Pioneer Stereo	Assist	



**2005 BOXSTER 2.7  
MANUAL £12,995**

Flat Black Metallic with Sand  
Leather interior 35,000 miles

2 owners	Comfort Seats	PAS	CD Player
Onboard	AirCon &	PASM	
computer	Climate Control	Black Hood	18" Alloys

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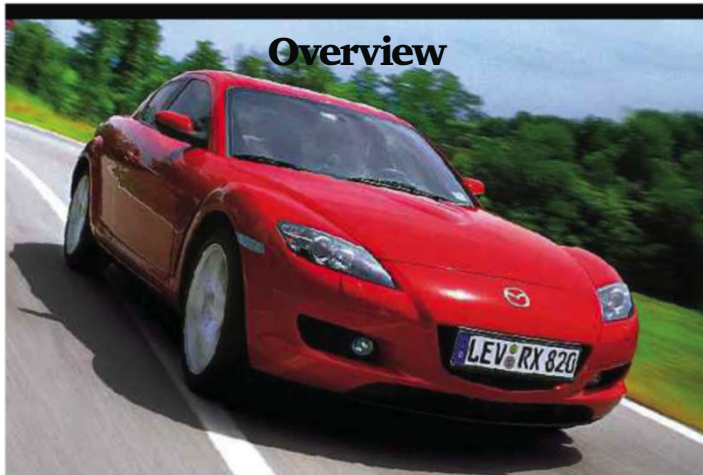
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# Buying Guide

Knowledge

Your indispensable resource when buying used

## Mazda RX-8 2003-2010



### Overview

Bold styling, brilliant handling – and a rotary engine. The RX-8 dared to be different, but how brave are you?

Words: Peter Tomalin

**C**ARS LIKE THE RX-8 don't come along very often. In fact, it's doubtful we'll ever see its like again. Smudging the line between coupe and saloon, it had rear-hinged 'suicide' rear doors, four genuinely useable seats, but most of all that unique rotary engine (now no more). It was so bold and so different that people tended to forget just what a damned good drivers' car it was.

Us included. Throughout its long life it seemed every time we climbed back into an RX-8 we were taken aback by just how well it handled. We shouldn't have been. Front engine and rear-wheel drive is always a good starting point, and the engine's compactness allowed it to be placed well back in the chassis, which helped the RX-8 feel nicely balanced. So it was composed and involving. More than respectably quick too – we clocked 6.5sec to 60mph for the more powerful 231PS (228bhp) variant – though the Wankel's slightly eerie smoothness and linearity of delivery led some to accuse it of lacking low-down torque and that slippery thing we call character. All it needed was revs – all the way to 9000rpm!

As with other rotaries, the RX-8 has a reputation for guzzling not just petrol (high-teens to low-20s if you press on) but oil too. The latter is not an issue if the level is checked regularly and the car serviced meticulously (see Checkpoints). Neglect spells trouble.

In 2008 the RX-8 was given a revamp. There was a new front bumper, side skirts and rear wing, a stiffer shell, uprated suspension, lower gearing, and excellent new Recaro seats. Dubbed R3, it was a useful improvement, enough to win an **evo** group test against its main rivals (issue 122).

Being a Mazda, there were several special editions with mostly just cosmetic changes. The one to look out for is the PZ of 2006 (800 made) – the 'P' standing for Prodrive, who tweaked the chassis, the 'Z' lifted from OZ Racing, who supplied the unique 18in alloys. With Eibach springs and Bilstein dampers, the result was a tauter, even more exploitable chassis.

### Checkpoints

#### Engine and transmission

Our guide here is the RX-8 Owners' Club's Derek Kenneth. The 192 and 231PS engines are essentially the same – the differences are largely in the intake systems. Like all rotaries they're designed to use oil (Mazda quotes 0.25 litres per 1000 miles), so if the level is not checked regularly (every second fill-up is ideal) and topped up with the correct oil (most specialists recommend 10W/40), expensive damage can result. If the owner of the car you're viewing isn't up to speed on this, walk away.

The other major issue is the ignition system: if not in good condition, the engine seals can deteriorate rapidly. The four coil packs need replacing around every 30,000 miles (c£250 per set – avoid cheap imitations), and the leads should be replaced at the same time. Check the engine starts easily when both cold and hot; starting problems when hot can be expensive to rectify. A quick way to spot a dud engine is a hot compression test, which can be carried out by a dealer or specialist (more at [rx8ownersclub.co.uk](http://rx8ownersclub.co.uk)).

The 192 has a five-speed manual, the 231 a six-speeder: both are largely trouble-free. The R3 has the MX-5's 'box, which can suffer synchro issues, usually on fifth.

#### Suspension, steering, brakes

The suspension anti-roll bar drop-links are prone to breaking, though it isn't dangerous or particularly expensive to fix. While you're underneath, check for damage to the low-hanging catalyst. With the engine running, the electric power steering should be light to turn from lock to lock with no sticky points. On a test drive the brakes should be powerful and progressive with no sign of juddering.

#### Body, interior, electrics

Rust can appear on the sills at the point where the front and rear doors meet, especially on early cars, and also around the bootlid tail light aperture. Check the condition of the oil cooler and air con heat exchangers inside the front bumper – these can be prone to stone damage.

Interiors seem to be holding up, though the driver's seat bolsters wear, while the plastic seat-backs tend to get marked by the seatbelts.

Check the excellent Bose hi-fi is fully functioning as it forms an integral part of the fascia, though an aftermarket replacement unit is now available.



**1:** RX-8 enjoys sweet handling balance, but fuel economy is poor. **2:** keeping Wankel rotary topped up with oil is crucial. **3:** most interiors are still in good nick

## What we said

### September 2003



Above: David Vivian tested RX-8 in Italy

'On the autostrada, the Golf R32's higher claimed top speed (154 plays 146mph) gives it no appreciable edge in the 100-130mph zone. And on country roads, the Mazda's anticipated performance deficit seems more modest still. Partly this is due to the perfect matching of engine characteristics and the ratios of its six-speed gearbox. First and second spin up enough turbine-smooth thrust to slingshot the RX-8 right into contention with the raucous R32, while third, fourth and fifth sustain a seductively silky surge that reaches out for the far side of 130mph. Settled in sixth, the almost electric hum of engine note merging with the modest levels of wind rush and road roar, it makes a superbly chilled cruiser.

'Supporting this is terrific straight-line stability and a special kind of finely tuned suppleness that smoothes away fatigue along with the bumps, dips and ruts.

'Although the Mazda can't match the R32's remarkable grip and traction out of tight bends, it feels the more transparent, incisive car to drive through random twists, with crisper responses and a more intimate sense of control.' (evo 059)



Above: RX-8s registered on or after 23 March 2006 cost £490 a year in Vehicle Excise Duty



Above: 'suicide' doors eased access to rear seats that could accommodate adults

## Specification

### Mazda RX-8 (231PS)

- ⊕ **Engine** Twin-chamber rotary, 1308cc
- ⊕ **Max power** 228bhp @ 8500rpm
- ⊕ **Max torque** 156lb ft @ 5500rpm
- ⊕ **Transmission** Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive
- ⊕ **Weight** 1394kg
- ⊕ **Power-to-weight** 166bhp/ton
- ⊕ **0-62mph** 6.4sec (claimed)
- ⊕ **Top speed** 146mph (claimed)
- ⊕ **Price new** £21,995 (2003)

## Parts prices

(Prices supplied by [mazdarotaryparts.com](http://mazdarotaryparts.com), [tyre price from blackcircles.com](http://tyrepricefromblackcircles.com). Prices include VAT but exclude fitting)

- ⊕ **Tyres (each)** £159.53 (225/45 R18 Bridgestone RE050)
- ⊕ **Front pads (pair)** £54.42
- ⊕ **Front discs (pair)** £198
- ⊕ **Ignition coils (set)** £264
- ⊕ **Ignition coil leads (set)** £52.79
- ⊕ **Catalytic converter** £462
- ⊕ **Starter motor** £312

## Servicing

(Prices supplied by [rotaryrevs.com](http://rotaryrevs.com), including VAT)

- ⊕ **Oil change service (6000 miles/12 months)** £99
- ⊕ **Intermediate (12,000 miles/24 months)** £185
- ⊕ **Major service (24,000 miles/36 months)** £330
- ⊕ **Compression test** £35 with any service

## 'I bought one' Sam Smallwood

'I've had my RX-8 – a standard 2004 231PS model – for about 18 months now. Previously I drove a Mk2 Golf, but when I got my new job, management insisted I replace it. The new car had to have four useable seats and look professional, but I wanted something that would also be fun to drive and useable day-to-day. I set myself a budget of £5000, and nothing else fitted the bill nearly as well as the RX-8.

'I've driven 8000 enjoyable miles since then and I've only had to replace the starter motor. I use the car for business and pleasure, as it's so enjoyable to drive. It is a bit thirsty, so I commute in our other car, a 1.4 Astra, but in terms of other running costs it's not as bad as I thought it would be – tax is £275 as it's a pre-2006 model, and I've still not got through the 20 litres of oil I bought when I got the car. Insurance

can be an issue for young drivers, but I'm 27 so it's not too bad – I pay £450.

'I'm not the only one that loves driving it: my wife and I are always flipping a coin for who gets to drive. Earlier in the year we enjoyed a day at Blyton Park with the Owners' Club. We gave it hell round the circuit all day, and drove it home the next day with no ill effects, so we'll be doing some more of those!'

## In the classifieds



**2003 RX-8 231**  
 ⊕ 57,993 miles  
 ⊕ Red with two-tone leather  
 ⊕ Bose hi-fi  
 ⊕ One previous owner  
 ⊕ FSH  
 ⊕ [www.lombardmotors.co.uk](http://www.lombardmotors.co.uk)

£3000



**2008 RX-8 192**  
 ⊕ 29,800 miles  
 ⊕ Blue with black leather  
 ⊕ Bose hi-fi  
 ⊕ FMSH  
 ⊕ One previous owner  
 ⊕ [thornhamcarsales.co.uk](http://thornhamcarsales.co.uk)

£4450



**2006 RX-8 PZ**  
 ⊕ 42,000 miles  
 ⊕ Prodrive edition  
 ⊕ Grey with black leather  
 ⊕ FSH  
 ⊕ Warranty  
 ⊕ [www.jct9.com](http://www.jct9.com)

£4888

## The rivals

### Nissan 350Z

If you don't need rear seats, the 350Z has RX-8-rivalling presence and a torquey V6. From around £4500.

### BMW 330Ci (E46)

Two doors but four decent seats, and not much slower than a contemporary M3, all for around £3-4k.

### Alfa Romeo Brera 2.2 JTS

A bit pricier, starting at around £6k, but a real looker with 2+2 seating and decent performance.

## What to pay

It's just about possible to pick up an RX-8 for £1500, but we wouldn't advise it. Two grand is a more sensible entry point for privately owned cars; early cars at dealers start at around £2500. £3-4k gives you a huge choice, including plenty with below-average mileage – but mileage isn't as important as correct maintenance. Expect to pay over £4500 for a PZ, while late R3s start at around the £7k mark. The more common 231PS variant generally commands a small premium over the rarer 192.

## Useful contacts

- ⊕ [rx8ownersclub.co.uk](http://rx8ownersclub.co.uk) advice, forums
- ⊕ [mazdarotaryparts.com](http://mazdarotaryparts.com) parts, tuning
- ⊕ [rotaryrevs.com](http://rotaryrevs.com) tuning, servicing
- ⊕ [pistonheads.com](http://pistonheads.com) cars for sale, forums
- ⊕ [forsale.evo.co.uk](http://forsale.evo.co.uk) cars for sale



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# Essentials

## Knowledge

The best books, models, clothing, games, garage kit and tuning gear



### Models

**McLaren P1 and LaFerrari**  
From £347.99 [pageandcooper.com](http://pageandcooper.com)

**1** So, it's a battle between the turbocharged V8 McLaren and the naturally aspirated V12 Ferrari, **2** both pushing out more than 900bhp with hybrid assistance. We can't wait to drive these two eagerly anticipated hypercars, and you'll soon be able to buy your own, slightly more affordable, McLaren P1 or LaFerrari.

Ferrari has chosen well-regarded builders BBR to 'hand-craft' its official LaFerrari scale model. The detailed replica has had input from the chief designer of the real car to ensure its accuracy, which is truly outstanding. This limited-edition resin model is mounted on a numbered, hand-stitched Alcantara plinth.

Technomodel, another Italian maker, is responsible for the production of McLaren's miniature P1, which is currently awaiting final approval from the company. This 1:18 model will be received by every owner of a real P1, and with McLaren's exacting standards, you know it'll be perfect. Also made in limited numbers, it too is mounted on an Alcantara base.

### Car care

**Perfection Valet Wax**

£350 (200ml tub)  
[perfectiondetailing.co.uk](http://perfectiondetailing.co.uk)

**3** After over 20 years in the business, valeting maestro and occasional *evo* contributor Richard Tipper knows which waxes deliver the best results. Now he's created his own product to meet his ruthlessly high standards. Each tub comes in a presentation box with two microfibre cloths and a numbered and signed certificate, and the wax consists of a huge 66 per cent pure white carnauba. The cost is high, but each tub should be good for 30 full-car applications, each of which should last for several months.

### Car care

**Diesel Turbo Cleaner Kit**

£49.99 [dieselturbocleaner.co.uk](http://dieselturbocleaner.co.uk)

**4** Turbodiesel not performing like it used to? This kit could save you a hefty garage bill. It cleans the turbo itself, and is said to be especially effective on those with variable vanes. This is no simple fuel additive – you need to remove the exhaust and apply two crud-removing aerosols direct into the turbo – and it isn't cheap in itself, but it could mean not having to replace your turbo.



## evo Essentials Top 3: T-shirts

**Hesketh Racing**

£19.99 [hotfuel.co.uk](http://hotfuel.co.uk)



The F1 team that made James Hunt famous, and the only T-shirt with a teddy bear on it that a man can get away with.

**evo Fuchs wheels**

£15.99 [shotdeadinthehead.com](http://shotdeadinthehead.com)



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**Monaco 1987**

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# Tried & Tested

## Knowledge

The best motoring products, put through their paces by the *evo* team



### Turtle Wax Essential Care Leather Cleaner £6.99 (500ml)

[www.turtlexeurope.com](http://www.turtlexeurope.com)

Leather in your car's cabin is usually seen as A Good Thing, but if that leather is anything other than black, keeping it looking smart can become A Big Chore.

The paler the leather, the worse it gets, and our recently departed Renaultsport Twingo 133 long-termer took pale leather to a new level, with strips of snow white cow skin on the top of the steering wheel and the edges of the seat bolsters. Inevitably, it started to look grubby after a few months, but the solution came from Turtle Wax in the form of a leather cleaner from its Essential Care range.

To use it, you simply spray on, rub in with a clean cloth, leave for a minute, then wipe off with a clean damp cloth. Quick results are promised, and that's exactly what I got on our Twingo. A couple of patches required a second application and some more vigorous rubbing, but I soon achieved a pristine white finish. The leather also gained a new softness thanks to the product's aloe vera content.

If, like me, you prefer cleaning jobs to be over as quickly as possible, this cleaner comes highly recommended.

**Ian Eveleigh**



### Pure Highway H260DBi £149.99 [www.halfords.com](http://www.halfords.com)

Digital radio is now quite common in new cars, but older motors don't have to miss out. Demand for aftermarket solutions is booming and this new Pure Highway, exclusive to Halfords, is the latest option.

For just £150 (plus £60 for an aerial and fitting), it boasts an impressive range of functions. You want for little when

it comes to music as it plays various files, CDs and USB sticks and has an Aux socket. Track selection is not as slick as on an iPod/iPhone, but you can play Apple kit through Bluetooth streaming, or charge and control it via USB. The Bluetooth allows hands-free calling, although dialling via the head unit is clumsy.

A button takes you direct to DAB radio, while FM and MW tuners are present too. Reception from the powered screen aerial didn't seem quite as robust as the £1000 Kenwood that the Highway replaced in our test Octavia and the sound lacked quite the same depth, but this first Pure head unit is a very cost-effective way to bring your sound system up to date.

**Kim Adams (@cargadgetguru)**



### CTEK MXS 5.0 £79.99 [www.ctek.com](http://www.ctek.com)

Swedish firm CTEK started the battery-charging revolution with its compact MXS range, and this latest version of the flagship 5.0 raises the bar even further.

Not only can it revive batteries from the sort of voltages other chargers simply ignore, but it also has a reconditioning mode to rescue severely neglected units. There's also a 'pulse mode', which keeps batteries healthy when left for long periods, making it ideal for little-used classics and track machines.

This latest version adds a setting for the demands of charging the absorbed

glass mat (AGM) batteries found on cars with stop-start technology. It also has a temperature sensor, which varies the current to suit the weather, avoiding damage and minimising charge times.

Using test equipment, it started charging at just two volts and delivered close to its maximum five amps on a flattened battery almost immediately. There's a choice of flying leads for permanent connection or fully insulated crocodile clamps with a 25mm jaw. Add in a tough pouch for when the charger isn't being used and you have the ideal solution for winter driving and storage.

**Kim Adams (@cargadgetguru)**

### Kärcher Window Vac £59.99 [www.karcher.co.uk](http://www.karcher.co.uk)

Kärcher's Window Vac is designed to Hoover up all the soapy water left on your glass once you've cleaned it. Because of the speed at which you can suck up said excess water, it's meant to eliminate any droplets falling onto areas below the glass. Also included is a separate spray bottle for detergent solution, which has a fuzzy pad above the nozzle so you can spray and clean in one movement.

On large panes of vertical glass the Window Vac is faultless, and if the fuzzy pad on the spray bottle was below the nozzle to catch runs or drops, that would be perfect. Unfortunately the Window Vac is too big and clumsy to be of any use inside a car. In our test car, it wouldn't fit between the dash and the windscreen to reach the bottom of the glass. And this was no supercar with a ludicrously raked windscreen: it was an estate. I had to mop up the excess water on the glass (and dash) with a microfibre towel.

**Will Beaumont (@WillBeaumont)**





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# Trips & Travel

Knowledge

The best destinations to visit in your car

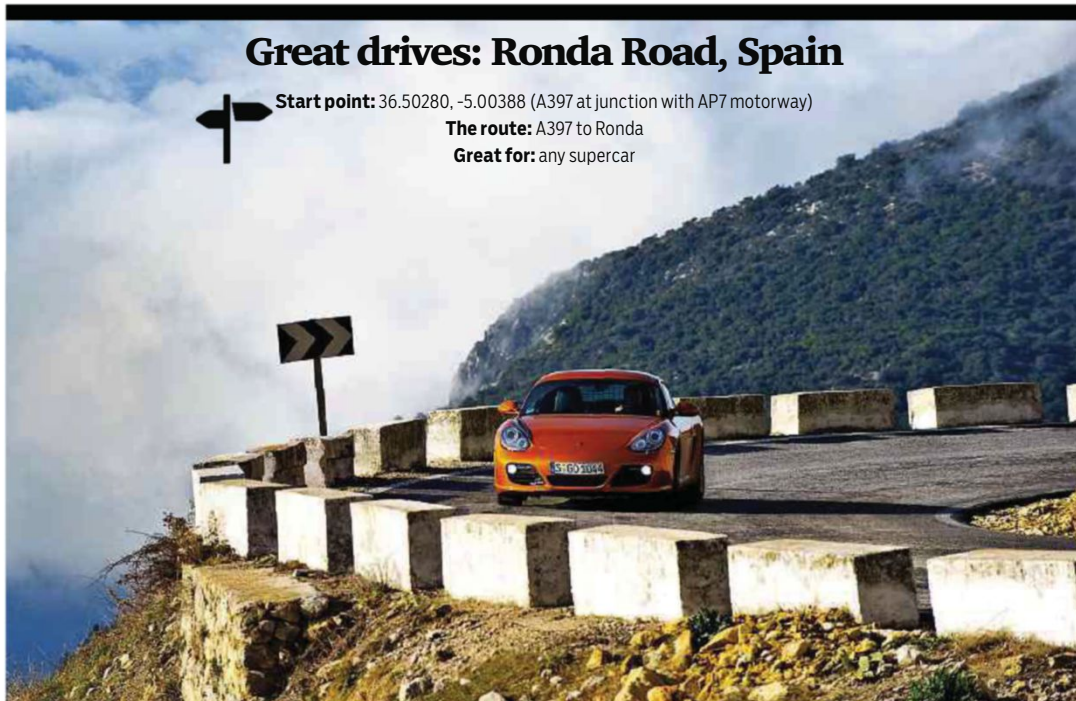
## Great drives: Ronda Road, Spain



**Start point:** 36.50280, -5.00388 (A397 at junction with AP7 motorway)

**The route:** A397 to Ronda

**Great for:** any supercar



**A**S I'M WRITING this column slap bang in the middle of the holiday season, I thought we'd done some offensive shorts and go to southern Spain this month. Hopefully you haven't got over-excited that I've missed out an 'h' and a 'd' and that we're heading to the Rhondda Valley in Wales. The Ronda Road – or if you want to be rather humdrum about it, the A397 – runs from just outside Marbella, the pulsating package-holiday heart of the Costa del Sol, to the beautiful town of Ronda itself.

Over the years there have been plenty of photo shoots in this area because, with good weather pretty much guaranteed, it's become a perennial favourite of manufacturers launching cars, particularly as the Ascari Race Resort is located just outside Ronda. Audi launched the R8 V10 around these parts, the E46 M3 was also launched in the area and I remember a particularly frustrating drive around the region in a Lexus GS450h, too.

The road is wide and as you head north, the massive valley looms large on your left with rock faces usually shouldering up to the road on the right. Driving along it certainly has a rather precarious feeling at times, especially given the speed that the road's size encourages. The fact that the huge drop is frequently guarded by no more than a single narrow strip of Armco simply focuses the mind further.

There are plenty of other roads in the Andalucía area worth driving too, although they're generally considerably narrower. We'd recommend the A372 between Grazalema and Benamahoma, which then leads you to the CA531 towards the Zahara reservoir. The latter road twists and turns as if trying to tie itself in knots, distinctive long white blocks marking the side of its billiard table-smooth surface as the road leads you inexorably towards the castle and bright white houses of Zahara village itself. It is spectacular.

**Henry Catchpole**  
Features editor



### The route



**Start** **Finish**

Distance: 28 miles

Time: 50 minutes

### Where to stay

If you're out on the Costa del Sol for your hols then you'll already be sorted and it's simply a case of hiring a car from Málaga airport. If you're going out there specifically to drive the roads, then we'd recommend staying in or near Ronda itself – if you're feeling flush, then the Hotel La Fuente de la Higuera gets tremendous reviews.

### Watch out for

Ronda is well worth a wander around, whether you stay there or not. It's defined by the huge El Tajo Canyon that runs through its centre and the Puente Nuevo bridge that spans said canyon. Eight miles to the north on the A367 (another good road) is the Ascari Race Resort. Sadly, it is almost prohibitively expensive to drive on it as a punter.

## Reader road trip Scottish Highlands

My friends and I had talked for some time about buying some cheap, exciting cars and going on a Scottish road trip. In April, after months of scouring internet car sales, we had purchased our budget exotica, and 'Bangerfest' commenced.

The line-up, which included two **evo**-rated



five-star cars (not bad for under £1000 each!) consisted of a Mk2 Golf GTI, a 1.7-litre Ford Puma, a 3-litre Alfa Romeo GTV V6 and a rather insane 3-litre Dutton Phaeton kit car.

We met in Aberfoyle, headed up Duke's Pass and towards Glencoe, followed by an adrenalin-filled lap around Loch Leven before passing Fort William and camping in Glenuig. The second and third days saw us head up towards Skye (the roads and scenery are particularly amazing up there), over to Inverness and then down through the Grampian Mountains.

To summarise: the weather was great, the cars were magnificent and the roads were truly epic. Three days and 500 miles of Scottish Highlands – for me, this is the thrill of driving.

**Peter Goudie**

Email your road trip story to  
[henryc@evo.co.uk](mailto:henryc@evo.co.uk)

## Events calendar

### SEPTEMBER

**September 10-22**

Frankfurt motor show  
[www.iaa.de](http://www.iaa.de)

**September 12-14**

Rally Isle Of Man  
[www.rallyisleofman.co.im](http://www.rallyisleofman.co.im)

**September 13-15**

Goodwood Revival  
[www.goodwood.co.uk/revival](http://www.goodwood.co.uk/revival)

**September 21-22**

MSA British Drag Racing finals, Santa Pod  
[www.santapod.com](http://www.santapod.com)

**September 28-29**

BTCC, Silverstone  
[www.silverstone.co.uk](http://www.silverstone.co.uk)

# 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	Maxmph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating	
Abarth Punto Evo	149 R	£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 Mito Cloverleaf	149 R	£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	187 R	'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	★★★★★
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	183 D	£30,500	4/1984	296/5500	280/1800	1395kg	216	5.2	-	155	162	40.4	+ Lots of grip and one of the best-sounding four-pot turbos - Still a little too clinical	★★★★★
Audi S3	106 R	'06-'12	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 R	'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	186 R	£30,555	6/2979	316/5800	332/1300	1425kg	225	5.1	-	155	188	35.3	+ Powertrain, noise, chassis, price - Ordinary styling; a limited-slip diff would be nice	★★★★★
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	★★★★★
Citroën C1/Peugeot 107/Toyota Aygo	126 R	£7995+	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 R	£16,800	4/1598	154/6000	177/1400	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	-	+ Citroën's GTI-6 - Missing one gear and a bit of handling polish	★★★★★
Fiat Panda 100HP	132 R	'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	184 R	£16,995	4/1596	179/5700	214/1500	1088kg	167	<b>7.4</b>	<b>18.4</b>	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 R	'08-'13	4/1596	138/6750	125/4250	1100kg	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	1176kg	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	172 R	£21,995	4/1999	247/5500	265/1750	1362kg	184	6.4	-	154	169	-	+ All-round cracking hot hatch. Good value, too - There's a bit of torque-steer	★★★★★
Ford Focus ST Mountune	187 D	£23,220	4/1999	271/5500	295/2750	1362kg	202	5.7	-	154+	169	-	+ Great value upgrade - Steering still not as feesome as that of some rivals	★★★★★
Ford Focus ST	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	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	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	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 R	'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 R	'97-'02	4/1679	123/6300	116/4500	1041kg	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	128 R	'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 R	'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	★★★★★
Kia Proceed GT	186 D	£19,995	4/1591	201/6000	195/1750	1448kg	141	7.4	-	143	171	29.1	+ Good chassis, appealing price - Thrashy engine	★★★★★
Lancia Delta Integrale	011 R	'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 R	£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	£29,025	4/1991	208/5500	258/1200	1370kg	154	6.5	-	149	148	46.3	+ Mercedes builds a proper hot hatch - But denies it a manual gearbox	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz A45 AMG	186 R	£37,845	4/1991	355/6000	332/2250	1480kg	244	4.6	-	155	161	40.9	+ Strong performance - Frustratingly unresponsive twin-clutch 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	185 F	£14,900	4/1598	120/6000	118/4250	1075kg	113	9.1	-	126	127	52.3	+ Brilliant ride and composure; could be all the Mini you need - You'll still buy the 'S'	★★★★★
Mini Cooper S	149 R	£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	225/1750	1150kg	125	8.0	-	134	114	65.7	+ A quick diesel Mini with impressive mpg - But no Cooper S alternative	★★★★★
Mini John Cooper Works	184 R	£22,460	4/1598	208/6000	206/2000	1160kg	182	<b>7.2</b>	<b>16.7</b>	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	1175kg	180	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	1160kg	188	6.3	-	150	165	39.8	+ Brazenly hyperactive - Too much for some roads and some tastes	★★★★★
Mini Cooper S Works (Mk2)	111 R	'07-'08	4/1598	189/6000	199/1750	1130kg	170	<b>7.6</b>	<b>18.0</b>	145	-	-	+ Cracking hot Mini - Expensive with option packs included	★★★★★
Mini Cooper S Works GP	144 R	'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	★★★★★





### 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

BMW's M135i feels like a bargain at £30k, and it's rear-wheel drive too, of course. At close to half the money, the mid-sized Fiesta ST (left) is an absolute riot, while if it's a junior hatch you're after, the Suzuki Swift Sport and Renaultsport Twingo 133 are belters.

## Superminis / Hot Hatches

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cy/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft./rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Maxmph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating	
Mitsubishi Colt Ralliart	132 R	£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	★★★★★
Nissan Juke Nismo	184 R	£20,395	4/1618	197/6000	184/2400	1306kg	153	<b>7.7</b>	<b>19.5</b>	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 R	'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 208 GTI	184 R	£18,895	4/1598	197/5800	203/1700	1160kg	173	<b>6.8</b>	<b>17.9</b>	143	139	47.9	+ Agile chassis works well on tough roads - Could be more involving	★★★★★
Peugeot 205 GTI 1.9	095 R	'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	142/5500	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 R	'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	★★★★★
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	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 200 Turbo	184 R	£18,995	4/1618	197/6000	177/1750	1204kg	166	<b>6.9</b>	<b>17.9</b>	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 - Flashed driving position	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 182 Cup	187 R	'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 R	'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	5.8	-	153	-	23.0	+ Supercar drama without the original's edgy handling - Uninspired interior	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio V6	029 R	'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 R	'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	★★★★★
Renault 5GT Turbo	123 R	'87-'91	4/1397	120/5750	122/3750	831kg	146	7.8	-	120	-	28.4	+ Clio Williams' grand-daddy - Most have been thrashed	★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane 265 Cup	181 R	£25,245	4/1998	261/5500	265/3000	1387kg	191	6.0	-	158	190	34.4	+ Same power as limited-edition Trophy, chassis still superb - Not a lot	★★★★★
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	019 R	'07-'09	4/1995	173/3750	265/2000	1470kg	199	<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	187 R	'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 R	£16,715	4/1968	141/4200	236/1750	1245kg	115	8.2	-	131	123	60.1	+ More fun than the petrol FR, manual gearbox option - The Cupra's not much more	★★★★★
SEAT Ibiza Cupra	183 D	£18,575	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1259kg	144	6.9	-	142	139	47.9	+ Punchy engine, unflappable DSG - Lacks engagement	★★★★★
SEAT Leon FR TDI 184	184 D	£22,075	4/1968	181/4000	280/1750	1350kg	136	7.5	-	142	112	64.2	+ Performance, sweet chassis, economy, comfort - Boorish engine	★★★★★
SEAT Leon FR+	163 D	'11-'12	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	'10-'12	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 R	'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 R	'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	'06-'13	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 SC400	146 R	'10-'12	4/2457	395/5750	400/3950	1505kg	267	4.6	-	107	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 R	'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	216/5500	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/Scoda 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-Speed	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 GTI (Mk7)	186 D	£25,845	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1351kg	163	6.5	-	152	138	47.1	+ Brilliantly resolved; feels faster than 217bhp suggests - You can't brag about the power	★★★★★
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	32.2	+ 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 R	'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 R	'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 R	'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 unmoled one	★★★★★

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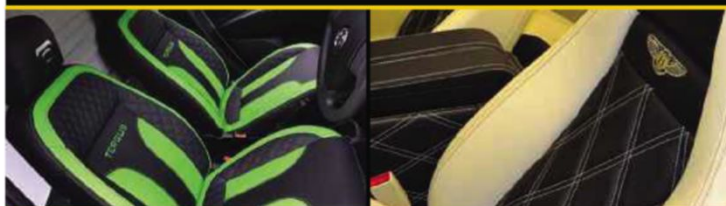


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### Our Choice

**BMW M5.** The turbocharging of BMW's M-cars met with scepticism, but the current 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 E63, which is now in its second turbocharged iteration. Jaguar's showy XFR-S (left) has a particularly impressive chassis, while Lexus's tail-happy IS-F remains a wonderfully alternative choice.

## Saloons / Estates / 4x4s

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2g/km	EC mpg	evo rating	
Alfa Romeo 156 GTA	045 R	'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	£75,150	8/4395	533/5200	538/3000	1920kg	282	4.5	-	198	24.4	26.9	+ 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	£98,800	8/4395	533/5200	538/2800	2040kg	265	4.6	-	194	23.0	28.5	+ Massive performance and top-line luxury - Feels its weight when hustled	★★★★★
Aston Martin Rapide S	182 D	£149,995	12/5935	550/6000	457/5000	1990kg	281	4.9	-	190	33.2	19.9	+ Performance, soundtrack, looks - Small in the back, brakes lacking	★★★★★
Aston Martin Rapide	141 R	'10-'13	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1990kg	240	5.2	-	188	35.5	-	+ Better than its DB9 sibling - More a 2+2 than a proper four-seater	★★★★★
Audi A4 2.0 TFSI quattro		£31,220	4/1984	208/4300	258/1500	1535kg	138	6.4	-	153	15.9	41.5	+ A good match for its German foes - No longer any naturally aspirated options	★★★★★
Audi S4 (Mk3)	166 D	£39,020	6/2995	328/5500	324/2900	1685kg	198	4.9	-	155	19.0	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	£55,525	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1795kg	251	4.6	-	174	24.9	26.4	+ Looks, value, quality, noise, balance - Harsh ride, unnatural steering	★★★★★
Audi RS4 (Mk2)	088 R	'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 R	'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	101 R	'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	091 D	'06-'11	10/5204	429/6800	398/3000	1910kg	228	5.2	-	155	29.9	22.4	+ Even faster, and discreet with it - Very muted V10	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant	182 D	£76,985	8/3993	552/5700	516/1750	1935kg	290	3.9	-	155	22.9	28.8	+ A mighty ground-coverer - Is that all you want?	★★★★★
Audi RS6	124 D	'08-'10	10/4991	572/6250	479/1500	1985kg	293	4.5	-	155	33.1	20.3	+ Looks and drives better than estate version - M5 still looks tempting	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant	116 R	'08-'10	10/4991	572/6250	479/1500	2025kg	287	4.3	9.7	155	33.3	20.2	+ The world's most powerful estate - Power isn't everything	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant	052 R	'02-'04	8/4172	444/5700	413/1950	1865kg	242	4.8	11.6	155	-	19.3	+ The ultimate estate car? - Numb steering	★★★★★
Audi RS7	187 D	£83,495	8/3993	552/5700	516/1750	1920kg	292	3.9	-	155	22.9	28.8	+ Stonking performance, great looks - Numb driving experience	★★★★★
Audi S7	171 D	£62,330	8/3993	414/5000	406/1400	1945kg	216	4.6	-	155	22.5	-	+ Looks and drives better than S6 it's based on - Costs £8000 more	★★★★★
Audi S8	164 D	£78,225	8/3993	513/5800	479/1700	1975kg	264	4.1	-	155	23.7	21.7	+ 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	-	27.4	+ V10 engine, ceramic brakes, fantastic gearbox - Light steering	★★★★★
Audi Q7 V12 TDI	124 D	'08-'12	12/5934	493/3750	737/1750	2635kg	190	5.1	12.2	155	29.8	25.0	+ Undeniably quick, relatively economical - A tad ostentatious	★★★★★
Bentley Continental Flying Spur	185 D	£140,900	12/5998	616/6000	590/1600	2475kg	253	4.3	-	200	34.3	19.0	+ More power than old Flying Spur Speed - Feels its weight; engine sounds dull	★★★★★
Bentley Continental Flying Spur	080 D	'05-'12	12/5998	552/6100	479/1600	2475kg	226	4.9	-	195	39.6	16.6	+ Performance, wonderful interior - Have you seen petrol prices?	★★★★★
Bentley Continental Flying Spur Speed	141 R	'08-'12	12/5998	600/6000	553/1750	2440kg	250	4.6	-	200	39.6	16.6	+ 600bhp; surprisingly fun handling - Could look a bit more like it goes	★★★★★
Bentley Mulsanne	178 F	£225,900	8/6752	505/4200	752/1750	2585kg	198	5.1	-	184	39.3	16.7	+ Drives like a modern Bentley should - Shame it doesn't look like one too	★★★★★
BMW 320d	168 R	£28,410	4/1995	181/4000	280/1750	1495kg	123	7.4	-	146	12.0	61.4	+ Fleet-friendly new Three is economical yet entertaining - It's a tad noisy	★★★★★
BMW 328i	165 D	£29,400	4/1997	242/5000	258/1250	1430kg	172	5.8	-	155	14.9	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	12.9	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	29.0	22.8	+ Every bit as good as the E92 M3 coupe - No carbon roof	★★★★★
BMW M3 CRT (E90)	179 R	'11-'12	8/4361	444/8300	324/3750	1580kg	285	4.4	-	180	29.5	-	+ Saloon chassis + weight savings + GT5 engine = best E90 M3 - Just 67 were made	★★★★★
BMW 335i M Sport (E90)	134 R	'05-'11	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1515kg	200	5.6	-	155	19.6	31.0	+ Stunning drivetrain, controlled chassis - Looks a bit steady	★★★★★
BMW 528i	164 D	£34,020	4/1997	242/5000	258/1250	1700kg	144	6.2	-	155	15.2	41.5	+ Four-pot 528i is downsizing near its best - You'll miss the straight-six sound effects	★★★★★
BMW 535i	141 D	£39,370	6/2979	302/5800	295/1200	1685kg	182	6.1	-	155	18.5	34.9	+ New 5-series impresses... - But only with all the chassis options ticked	★★★★★
BMW M5 (F10M)	165 R	£73,375	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1870kg	300	4.3	-	155	23.2	28.5	+ Twin-turbocharging suits all-new M5 well - Can feel heavy at times	★★★★★
BMW M5 Touring (E60)	105 R	'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 D	'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 R	'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 R	'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	251/4500	1431kg	200	6.2	-	151	-	-	+ The original storming saloon - Understated looks	★★★★★
BMW M6 Gran Coupe	184 D	£97,490	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1875kg	299	4.2	-	155	23.2	28.5	+ Enormous performance, stylish looks - Price tag looks silly next to rivals, M5 included	★★★★★
BMW X6 xDrive 50i	118 D	£58,420	8/4395	408/5500	442/1750	2190kg	186	5.4	-	155	29.2	22.6	+ Stunningly good to drive - Will you want to be seen arriving?	★★★★★
BMW X6M	134 D	£86,220	8/4395	547/6000	502/1500	2305kg	241	4.7	-	171	32.5	20.3	+ Fast, refined and comfortable - But it definitely lacks the M factor	★★★★★
BMW 750i	174 D	£71,355	8/4395	449/5500	480/2000	2020kg	226	4.7	-	155	19.9	-	+ 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 R	£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 R	£67,030	8/6162	556/6100	551/3800	1928kg	293	3.9	-	191	36.5	18.1	+ It'll stand out among M-cars and AMGs - But the novelty might wear off	★★★★★
Chrysler 300C SRT8	096 D	'06-'11	8/6059	425/6000	420/4800	1965kg	220	4.9	-	168	33.7	20.2	+ Looks, supple ride, composed chassis - Too much understeer, slow 'box	★★★★★
Ford Mondeo 2.0 EcoBoost Titanium X		£28,115	4/1999	237/n/a	251/n/a	1569kg	153	7.5	-	153	17.9	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	1500kg	146	6.8	-	151	-	27.7	+ Muscular engine, fine chassis - Hotted-up repmobile 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	£45,225	6/3696	316/7000	265/5200	1765kg	182	6.2	-	155	23.5	27.7	+ Stands out from the crowd - Not as involving as some rivals	★★★★★

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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	£41,860	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	£44,360	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	£47,570	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	£65,415	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 XFR-S	187 R	£79,995	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1912kg	288	4.4	-	186	270	24.4	+ XF gets turned up to 12 - Except for the soundtrack	★★★★★
Jaguar XJ 3.0 V6 Diesel	148 D	£56,265	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	£91,770	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	★★★★★
Lamborghini LM002	016 R	'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	170 R	'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	184 D	£80,095	6/2979	404/5500	406/1750	1860kg	221	5.3	-	177	242	26.9	+ Tempting alternative to V8 - Feel-free steering, secondary ride lacks decorum	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte V8	179 D	£108,160	8/3798	523/6800	479/2250	1900kg	280	4.7	-	191	274	23.9	+ Performance, sense of occasion - Lacks the charisma and edge of its predecessor	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte S	137 R	'08-'12	8/4691	425/7000	361/4750	1990kg	216	<b>5.1</b>	<b>12.1</b>	174	365	18.0	+ A QP with the bhp it deserves - Grille is a bit Hannibal Lecter	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte Sport GTS	141 R	'08-'12	8/4691	433/7000	361/4750	1990kg	221	<b>5.1</b>	-	177	365	18.0	+ The most stylish supersaloon - Slightly wooden brakes, unforgiving ride	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte	085 R	'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	185 F	'89-'92	4/2498	507/6750	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	£56,965	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1655kg	271	<b>4.4</b>	<b>9.7</b>	160	280	23.5	+ Monstrous pace and extremely engaging - M5's just a little better...	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C55 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	187 D	£73,745	8/5461	549/5500	531/1750	1770kg	315	4.2	-	155	230	28.8	+ Power, response and accuracy in spades - A little lacking in originality	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG	165 R	'11-'13	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	1765kg	298	4.2	-	155	230	28.8	+ Turbo engine doesn't dilute E63 experience - Sometimes struggles for traction...	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG	096 D	'06-'09	8/6208	507/6800	464/5200	1795kg	292	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, cossetting ride - Speed limits	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG	'98-'02	8/5439	354/5500	390/3000	362/4000	1642kg	219	5.5	-	155	-	23.0	+ Dragster disguised as a limo - Tyre bills	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz S63 AMG	148 D	£113,765	8/5461	536/5500	590/2000	2040kg	267	4.5	-	155	244	26.9	+ Massive torque, massively reduced emissions - Massive car	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz S65 AMG	098 R	£165,120	12/5980	604/4750	737/2000	2185kg	281	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	1795kg	293	4.4	-	155	231	28.5	+ Owner performance, 549bhp an option - Not as desirable as a Bentley or Aston	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG	099 R	'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	£83,655	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	2270kg	232	4.7	-	155	276	23.9	+ Great engine, surprisingly good dynamics - 585k buys a Boxster and an ML350...	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz G63 AMG	172 D	£123,140	8/5461	537/5500	560/2000	2475kg	220	5.4	-	130	322	-	+ It exists: epic soundtrack - Ancient chassis, silly price	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-300 SST	118 R	£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	231	4.1	-	155	328	19.9	+ Ridiculously rapid new Evo - A five-speed gearbox!	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-330 SST	134 R	'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 R	'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 R	'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 VII	031 R	'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	327/2600	1260kg	258	4.4	-	150	-	-	+ Ruthlessly focused road weapon - For the truly committed	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VI RS Sprint	011 R	'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 Mäkinen 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 4S	186 D	£85,721	6/2997	414/6000	383/1750	1870kg	225	4.8	-	177	208	31.7	+ Strong performance and typically fine Porsche chassis - Misses characterful V8 of old S'	★★★★★
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	493/6000	590/2250	1995kg	276	3.7	-	190	270	24.6	+ Pace, excellent ergonomics - Steering feel, ride	★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne S Diesel (Mk2)	185 D	£59,053	8/4134	377/3750	627/2000	2195kg	174	5.7	-	156	218	34.0	+ Supercar levels of torque; impressive all-round performance - GTS drives better	★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne GTS (Mk2)	173 D	£68,117	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	£89,324	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 S (Mk2)	184 D	£107,784	8/4806	542/6000	553/2250	2355kg	249	4.5	-	175	270	24.6	+ Near-identical power and torque to a Zonda C12S - In an SUV	★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (Mk1)	104 R	'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	160 D	£41,510	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	186 D	£81,550	8/4999	503/6000	460/2500	2310kg	221	5.0	-	155	298	22.1	+ Deceptively quick and capable sports SUV - It's still got a weight problem	★★★★★
Range Rover Sport V8 Supercharged	135 D	'09-'12	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	£78,120	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	6.9	-	140	348	19.0	+ Fast, comfortable, luxurious - Big, heavy, thirsty	★★★★★
Rolls-Royce Ghost	186 D	£200,500	12/6592	563/5250	575/1500	2360kg	242	4.7	-	155	317	20.8	+ It's quicker than you think - It's more enjoyable driven slowly	★★★★★
Rolls-Royce Phantom	054 R	£276,275	12/6749	453/5350	531/3500	2560kg	180	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 £8k off) - Blue paint and gold wheels aren't	★★★★★
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 R	'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 R	'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 R	'03-'05	4/1994	335/7000	280/3750	1380kg	247	<b>4.3</b>	<b>11.1</b>	160	-	-	+ Best Impreza since the PI - Lost its throbby flat-four voice	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WR	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 R	'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 R	'00-'01	4/1994	276/6500	260/4000	1283kg	219	<b>4.9</b>	<b>13.3</b>	150	-	25.0	+ Ultimate old-shape Impreza - Prices reflect this	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza RB (PPP)	187 R	'99	4/1994											



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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. The V8 has a sweet engine and great dynamics, but if money's no object, we'd be seriously tempted by the equally brilliant V10.



### Best of the Rest

The mk3 Porsche Boxster S is a brilliant all-rounder, while the Lotus Exige S Roadster counters with a more focused driving experience. Jaguar's F-type also impresses in both V6 S (left) and V8 S forms. Mazda's MX-5 is best for budget rear-drive fun, but for the ultimate thrills, get a Caterham 620R or Ariel Atom.

## Sports Cars / Convertibles

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2g/km	EC mpg	evo rating
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	-	155	-	-	+ 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	<b>3.0</b>	<b>5.8</b>	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 R	'09-'12	4/1998	300/8200	162/7200	550kg	554	3.3	-	155	-	-	+ It's brilliant - It's mental
Ariel Atom 2 300 Supercharged	123 R	'03-'09	4/1998	300/8200	162/7200	550kg	554	<b>3.3</b>	-	155	-	28.0	+ Makes your face ripple - ...like Clarkson's
Ariel Atom 1	015 R	'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 R	£95,080	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1710kg	250	4.7	-	180	328	20.4	+ Sportiest, coolest drop-top Aston in years - Starting to feel its age
Aston Martin V8 Vantage S Roadster	161 R	£105,080	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	£151,080	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	£143,080	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	'09-'12	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	£38,025	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 R8 V8 Spyder	133 D	£48,140	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	<b>6.9</b>	<b>20.0</b>	150	-	30.4	+ Winner on the King's Road - Trails Boxster on the open road
Audi S5 Cabriolet	130 D	£46,500	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	£68,985	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 - Wobble wobble, wobble wobble, jelly on a plate
Audi R8 V10 Spyder	186 D	£101,360	8/4163	424/7900	317/6000	1660kg	259	4.8	-	187	337	19.6	+ More delicate and subtle than the V10 - The V10 sounds even better
Audi R8 V10 Spyder	185 R	£122,460	10/5204	518/8000	391/6500	1720kg	306	<b>4.1</b>	-	194	349	19.0	+ Sensational for the money - Not quite a rival for the 458 and 12C Spiders
BAC Mono	176 R	£101,940	4/2261	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	+ Arguably the world's best topless GT - Still no sports car
Bentley Conti GT Speed Convertible	187 D	£168,000	12/5998	616/6000	590/1700	2495kg	251	4.1	-	202	347	19.0	+ Effortless performance, style - Running costs a tad on the high side
Bentley Continental Supersports	147 D	'10-'12	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 Continental 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
BMW Z4 sDrive 20i (Mk2)	164 D	£29,715	4/1997	181/4800	199/1520	1470kg	125	6.8	-	142	159	41.5	+ The Z4 has grown up... - ...and got fat
BMW Z4 sDrive 35i (Mk2)	186 D	£39,935	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1505kg	204	5.2	-	155	219	30.1	+ Looks, hard-top versatility, drivetrain - Clumsy chassis is upset by ragged surfaces
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 R	'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	£40,580	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	£59,075	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 (E46)	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	<b>4.8</b>	<b>11.1</b>	155	-	14.4	+ M5-powered super-sportster - M5's more fun to drive
Brooke 260 Double R	094 R	£34,995	4/2261	260/7500	200/6100	550kg	480	<b>3.9</b>	-	155+	-	-	+ Fast, dynamic, well built - No roof, looks not for everyone
Caterham 7 Roadsport 125	105 R	£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 - Losses 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 Superlight R400	105 R	£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 7 620R	187 R	£49,995	4/1999	311/7700	219/7350	545kg	580	2.8	-	155	-	-	+ Banzai on track, yet still relevant on the road - £50k for a Seven?
Caterham CSR 260 Superlight	094 R	£44,995	4/2261	256/7500	200/6200	565kg	460	<b>3.8</b>	-	155	-	-	+ Brilliant for high days, holidays and trackdays - Wet Wednesdays
Caterham Levante	131 R	£115,000	8/2398	550/10000	300/8500	520kg	1074	<b>4.8</b>	<b>8.2</b>	150	-	-	+ Twice the power-to-weight ratio of a Veyron! - Not easy to drive slowly
Caterham 7 Superlight R300	150 R	'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 R	'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 R	'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 R	'99-'06	4/1796	230/8600	155/7200	460kg	510	<b>3.6</b>	<b>8.8</b>	146	-	-	+ Fine for the Nürburgring - Hard work around the Bullring
Caterham 7R500 Evolution	069 R	'04	4/1998	250/8000	190/4000	460kg	552	<b>3.9</b>	<b>8.1</b>	150	-	-	+ Madder than Mad Jack McMad - Er, it's a bit mad
Chevrolet Corvette C6	083 D	'04-'13	8/6162	430/5900	424/4600	1460kg	300	4.3	-	186	316	21.2	+ Corvette performance - Convertible dynamics, electronics
Donkervoort D8 GTO Performance	185 R	£130,000	5/2480	375/5500	350/1750	695kg	548	2.8	-	168	-	-	+ There's nothing else like it - Pricey for a car with a five-cylinder engine
Ferrari California	171 D	£152,154	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 F-type V6	186 R	£58,520	6/2995	335/6500	332/3500	1597kg	213	5.3	-	161	209	31.4	+ Beautiful, enjoyable, responsive - Noticeably junior to the V6 S
Jaguar F-type V6 S	183 R	£67,520	6/2995	375/6500	339/3500	1614kg	236	4.9	-	171	213	31.0	+ Better-damped and more rounded than the V8 S - A Boxster S is £20k cheaper
Jaguar F-type V8 S	183 R	£79,985	8/5000	488/6500	461/2500	1665kg	298	4.3	-	186	259	25.5	+ Wilder than the V6 S - Could be too exuberant for some
Jaguar XK 5.0 Convertible	171 R	£71,465	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 Convertible	130 R	£84,965	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 Convertible	167 R	£103,465	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 R	'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	4/16250	413/4000	1705kg	247	5.0	-	155	-	-	-	+ First Jag sports car for years - Overweight detailing
Jaguar XKR	004 R	'97-'06	8/3996	370/6150	387/3600	1750kg	215	<b>5.4</b>	<b>12.8</b>	155	-	15.6	+ Hurricane-in-the-hair motoring - A danger to toupees everywhere
KTM X-Bow GT	183 D	£674,000	4/1984	281/6400	310/3200	875kg	326	4.1	-	144	189	34.0	+ Extraordinary ability, now in a more road-friendly package - Price
KTM X-Bow R	165 R	£64,850	4/1984	296/5500	295/3300	818kg	368	3.6	-	144	-	-	+ Sharper handling, more power - Pity it's not even lighter, and cheaper
KTM X-Bow	138 R	'08-'12	4/1984	237/5500	229/2000	818kg	294	3.8	-	137	-	-	+ Mad looks; real quality feel - Heavier and pricier than you'd hope

## PAST master

How much power is too much? Jethro Bovingdon went in search of an answer in Germany

### Brabus EV12 Issue 085, November 2005

The 6.3-litre, twin-turbo V12 develops 631bhp, enough for a top speed of 217.6mph. At 1750rpm the engine is already at the height of its powers, with a massive 757lb ft tearing chunks out of the road. The engine could produce more, but the gearbox would melt under the strain. On tiny throttle openings the EV12 feels muscular but

entirely tractable. The ride is tough, thwacking where a less-potent E would glide. But what it lacks in subtlety it makes up for in sheer gut-wrenching grunt. It hits harder between 120 and 180mph than any exotic I can think of. With Brabus's own limited-slip diff you can scorch black lines into the road out of every corner and bonfire the tyres with laughable ease.



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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 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 fantastic - Smaller engine could put some off	★★★★★
Lotus Elise 1.6 Club Racer	183 R	£28,450	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	852kg	160	6.0	-	127	149	45.0	+ Even lighter, even more focused - A touch pricey 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 (pricey) options...	★★★★★
Lotus Exige S Roadster	186 R	£52,900	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1166kg	301	4.0	-	145	236	28.0	+ Like the hard-top Exige S, but more road-friendly - Boxster S is a better all-rounder	★★★★★
Lotus Elise R	068 R	'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 R	'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 S 1.8	104 R	'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 R	'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 R	'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 R	'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 R	'09-'11	4/1796	266/8200	179/7200	670kg	403	3.7	-	155	-	-	+evo Track Car of the Year 2009 - It's a 76-grand Lotus with no roof	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven	126 R	'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 R	'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 R	'89-'95	4/1588	165/6600	148/4200	1022kg	164	6.7	-	137	-	21.0	+ Awesome front-drive chassis - Rather uninvolved	★★★★★
Lotus Elan Sport	126 R	'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	£98,315	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	£103,910	8/4691	444/7000	376/4750	1980kg	228	5.1	-	177	377	19.5	+ Looks, performance, cruising ability - Brakes could be sharper	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio MC	185 D	£111,710	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1973kg	234	4.9	-	179	337	19.5	+ Most powerful GranCabrio yet - The GranCabrio is starting to show its age	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.8i SE		£18,495	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	£21,595	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 v1)	091 R	'05-'09	4/1798	124/6500	123/4500	1155kg	108	9.3	-	122	-	-	+ Gorgeous 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 ragtops don't get much better - Cheap cabin	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.6 (Mk1)	131 R	'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	£44,600	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	186 R	£55,335	8/5461	416/6800	398/4500	1615kg	262	4.6	-	155	195	33.6	+ Quicker and more economical than ever - Needs to be sharper, too	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG	087 R	'05-'10	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 R	'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-Tronic auto box, uneven dynamics	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL500	169 D	£83,490	8/4663	429/5250	516/1800	1710kg	255	4.6	-	155	212	31.0	+ Wafly performance, beautifully engineered - Lacks ultimate sports car feel	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	171 D	£110,785	8/5461	530/5500	590/2000	1770kg	304	4.3	-	155	231	-	+ Monster performance, lighter than before - Still heavy, steering lacks consistency	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG	183 D	£168,285	12/5980	621/4800	737/2300	1875kg	336	4.0	-	155	270	24.4	+ Chassis just about deals with the power - Speed limits	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	117 D	'08-'12	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 R	'02-'07	8/5439	493/6100	516/2650	1955kg	256	<b>4.6</b>	<b>10.2</b>	155	-	-	+ As fast as a Murciélago - 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-smacking pricey	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG Roadster	167 R	£176,985	8/6208	563/6800	479/4750	1660kg	345	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 R	£24,950	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	£30,000	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	£85,200	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 R	£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 R	'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 R	£36,495	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 (981)	172 R	£38,237	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 (981)	186 R	£45,384	6/3436	311/6700	265/4500	1320kg	239	5.1	-	173	206	32.1	+ Boxster steps out of 911's shadow - But gets 911's less appealing new steering	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster (987)		'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 (987)	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 (987)	140 R	'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 (986)	049 R	'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 (986)	070 R	'99-'04	6/3179	260/6200	228/4700	1320kg	200	5.5	-	164	-	26.9	+ Added power is seductive - As above	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera Cabriolet (991)	183 R	£82,072	6/3436	345/7400	288/5600	1450kg	242	5.0	-	178	217	30.7	+ Brilliant engine - Doesn't quite have the 'magic at any speed' character of previous 911s	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera S Cabriolet (991)	171 R	£92,108	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 Turbo Cabriolet (997)	139 D	'07-'12	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 Turbo Cabriolet (996)	060 R	'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 R	£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 R	'09-'12	8/2800	460/10,500	260/8000	680kg	687	3.2	-	168	-	-	+ Fastest car around the Nordschleife - Convincing people it's road legal	★★★★★
Renault Sport Spider	183 R	'96-'99	4/1998	148/6000	136/4500	930kg	157	6.5	-	131	-	-	+ Rarity, fabulous unassisted steering feel - Heavier than you'd hope	★★★★★
Tesla Roadster	131 R	'08-'12	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	★★★★★
Toyota MR2	187 R	'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 R	'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 Chimaera 5.0	007 R	'93-'03	8/4988	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	4.6	-	167	-	26.4	+ Gorgeous noise, tarmac-ripping grunt - Details	★★★★★
TVR Griffith 4.3	068 R	'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	★★★★★
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	184/1950	930kg	215	4.7	-	151	-	-	+ Nothing comes close for the money - Marginal everyday usability	★★★★★
Vauxhall XTR4	068 D	'01-'10	4/1781	220/5500	184/5000	924kg	413	3.6	-	160	-	-	+ Mini-Le Mans racer - You wouldn't want to drive it there	★★★★★

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## Our Choice

**Porsche 911 GT3.** PDK, electric steering, a new engine with zero racing pedigree... Yes, we were nervous about the new GT3 before its arrival. Thankfully, it's still fully deserving of the badge, although you'll now need a healthy disregard for your licence to feel it truly come alive.



## Best of the Rest

The Carrera 4S is our pick of the 'regular' 911s, while the new Cayman S is right up there with it. The Lotus Exige S (left) is a proper road racer for £53k and our joint 2012 Car of the Year. Audi's R8 is another gem, especially in V10 Plus form. And, of course, we wouldn't dare not mention the Nissan GT-R...

## Coupes / GTs

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine c/y/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 R	'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	220 R	'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 R	£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 GT3 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	9.7	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 R	'05-'08	8/4281	380/7300	302/5000	1630kg	237	5.2	12.0	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 R	£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	4.9	11.2	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	6.3	15.7	152	154	42.8	+ Front-driver loses nothing to quattro TTs - Steers like a computer game
Audi TT S	119 D	£35,905	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	£46,160	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1450kg	235	4.4	11.1	155	209	31.4	+ Sublime 5-cylinder turbo engine - Rest of package can't quite match it
Audi TT RS Plus	185 D	£49,245	5/2480	355/5500	343/1650	1450kg	249	4.3	-	174	209	31.4	+ Stonkingly fast cross-country - Shockingly expensive for a TT
Audi TT Sport (Mk1)	081 D	'05-'06	4/1781	237/5700	236/2300	1390kg	173	5.7	-	155	-	30.3	+ 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		£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	£92,710	8/4163	414/7800	391/4500	1560kg	270	4.1	9.9	187	332	19.9	+ Finally, a true 911 alternative - Exclusivity comes at a price
Audi R8 V10	181 D	£113,810	10/5204	518/8000	391/6500	1620kg	325	3.9	8.4	194	346	19.0	+ Real supercar feel - The V8 is £20k less, and still superb
Audi R8 V10 Plus	183 R	£128,710	10/5204	542/8000	398/6500	1570kg	351	3.8	-	198	346	19.0	+ An R8 fit to take on the 458 and 12C - 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 R	'90-'91	5/2226	220/5900	228/1950	1329kg	146	6.2	18.2	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	17.0	+ A proper drivers' Bentley with decent economy - V12 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, thirst
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 R	£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 R	'07-'11	12/5998	600/6000	553/1750	2350kg	259	4.3	-	202	396	17.0	+ Stupendous performance, fine dynamics - Weight, thirst...
BMW 135i M Sport	113 R	'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 435i M Sport Coupe	187 D	£42,435	6/2979	302/5800	295/1200	1510kg	203	5.4	-	155	169	35.8	+ Betters the already outstanding dynamics of the 3-series - Engine could sound sweeter
BMW 335i M Sport Coupe	095 D	'06-'13	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1525kg	201	5.2	12.2	155	196	33.6	+ Eager engine, exploitable chassis - Slightly unadventurous styling
BMW M3 (E92)	162 R	'07-'13	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1580kg	266	4.3	10.3	155	290	22.8	+ Fends off all of its rivals - ...except the cheaper 1-series M
BMW M3 GT3 (E92)	171 R	'10-'11	8/4361	444/8300	324/3750	1530kg	295	4.3	-	193	295	-	+ Highly exclusive, one of the most focused M-cars ever - Good luck trying to find one
BMW M3 (E46)	066 R	'00-'07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1495kg	230	5.1	12.3	155	-	23.7	+ One of the best BMWs ever - Slightly artificial steering feel
BMW M3 CS (E46)	088 R	'05-'07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1495kg	230	5.1	-	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	5.3	12.0	155	-	-	+ Stripped-down road-race M3 - Standard brakes barely adequate
BMW M3 (E36)	148 R	'93-'98	6/3201	321/7400	258/3250	1460kg	223	5.4	12.8	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	6.7	17.8	147	-	20.3	+ Best M-car ever! Race-car dynamics for the road - LHD only
BMW Z4 M Coupe	097 R	'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	+ Greatly 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	4.8	10.0	155	342	19.8	+ Awesome GT, awesome sports car - SMG gearbox now off the pace
Chevrolet Camaro	148 R	£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 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 R	£66,403	8/7011	505/6300	469/4800	1418kg	363	3.9	8.5	198	350	19.2	+ 8.5 to 100, brakes, price - Not quite the road-racer we expected
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 R	£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 R	'96-'00	4/1797	181/8000	131/7300	1101kg	173	6.2	17.9	145	-	28.9	+ Arguably the greatest front-drive car ever - Too raw for some
Honda Integra Type-R (DC5)*	037 R	'01-'06	4/1998	217/8000	152/7000	1250kg	176	7.1	16.7	140	-	-	+ Sharp looks, massive grip - Lost a little of the DC2's magic
Honda NSX	043 R	'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 R	'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	£22,120	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	5.8	13.8	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 Exige S (V6)	171 R	£53,850	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1176kg	298	3.8	-	170	236	-	+ Breathtaking road-racer; our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Doubts over Lotus's future
Lotus Exige S	105 R	'06-'11	4/1796	218/7800	158/5500	930kg	238	4.5	-	148	199	33.2	+ Lightweight with a hefty punch - Uninspiring soundtrack
Lotus Exige 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 Exige
Lotus Exige (series 2)	068 R	'04-'08	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	875kg	219	4.9	-	147	-	32.1	+ Highly focused road and track tool - Lacks visual impact of S1

## POCKET buying guide

### BMW M5 (E60)

Years 2005-2010 Engine V10, 4999cc  
Power 500bhp @ 7750rpm  
Torque 383lb ft @ 6100rpm  
0-62mph 4.7sec Top speed 155mph



### WHY WOULD YOU?

That mighty, normally aspirated 500bhp V10 delivers supercar performance. Being based on a 5-series, the M5 is practical too, especially in rare Touring form. And despite costing from £61,775 new, today prices start at just £12,000.

### WHAT TO PAY

£15k is where the clearly-cared-for stuff starts. £20k-£25k gets you a tip-top, low-mileage car.

### WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

An engine warning light could mean the VANOS oil pump needs replacing - a

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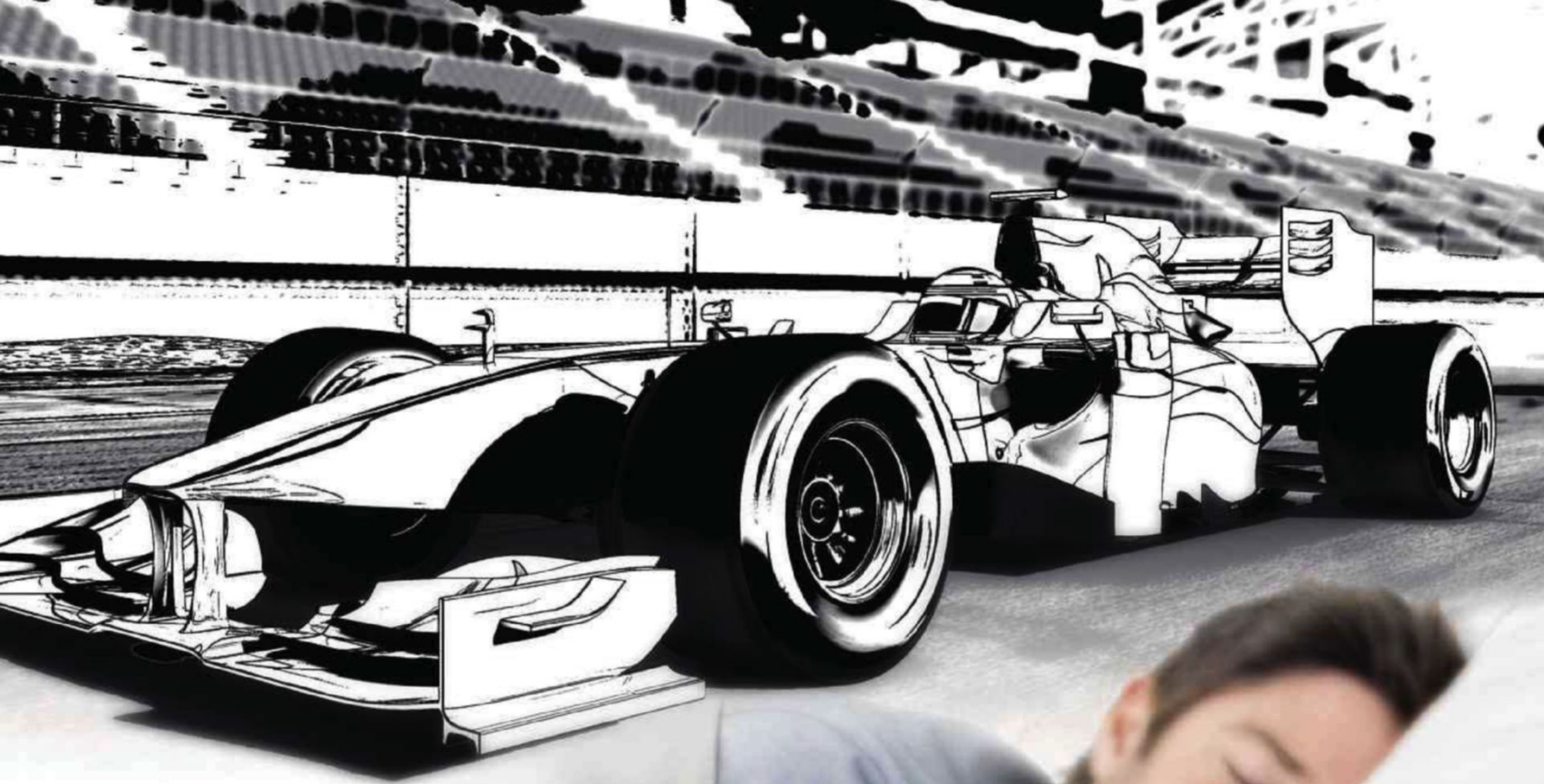
## Coupes / GTs

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/vcc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating
Lotus Exige (series 1)	067D	'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	138R	£52,500	6/3456	276/6400	258/4700	1382kg	203	<b>5.6</b>	162	217	30.3	+ Sublime ride and handling. Our 2009 car of the year - Pricey options ★★★★★	
Lotus Evora S	168R	£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	127R	'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 Exige and Evora ★★★★★
Lotus Esprit Sport 350	005R	'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	114R	£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	178R	£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	160R	£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	064R	'03-'07	8/4244	399/7000	333/4500	1680kg	237	4.8	-	177	-	17.6	+ Glorious engine, improved chassis - Overly sharp steering ★★★★★
Maserati GranSport	073R	'04-'07	8/4244	400/7000	333/4500	1680kg	239	4.8	-	180	-	-	+ Maser Coupe realises its full potential - Very little ★★★★★
Mazda RX-8	122R	'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	162R	£57,165	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1655kg	277	<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	171R	£98,765	8/6208	510/6800	457/5200	1635kg	317	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	092D	'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	106R	'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	150D	£115,660	8/5461	536/5500	590/2000	2100kg	271	4.5	-	155	244	26.9	+ Presence, pace, monster engine - Stiff ride, stiff competition ★★★★★
Morgan AeroMax	097D	£110,000	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1180kg	312	4.1	-	170	-	-	+ Weird and utterly wonderful - They're all sold ★★★★★
Nissan 370Z	180R	£26,995	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 370Z Nismo	186D	£36,995	6/3696	339/7400	274/5200	1535kg	224	5.2	-	155	248	26.7	+ More controlled, more polished, more fun - More expensive ★★★★★
Nissan 350Z	107R	'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/2013MY)	187R	£76,610	6/3799	542/6400	466/3200	1740kg	316	2.8	-	196	275	24.0	+ GT-R is quicker and better than ever - But over £20K more than its launch price ★★★★★
Nissan GT-R (2010MY)	152R	'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)	125R	'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)	009R	'99-'02	6/2568	276/7000	289/4400	1600kg	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)	019R	'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	089R	'04-'06	6/2968	425/6500	390/5000	1060kg	407	3.5	-	185	-	-	+ Devilishly fast - Demon Tweaks interior ★★★★★
Noble M12 GTO-3R	070R	'03-'06	6/2968	352/6200	350/3500	1080kg	332	3.8	-	170	-	-	+ The ability to humble exotica - Flawed driving position ★★★★★
Peugeot RCZ 1.6 THP 200	155R	£23,595	4/1598	191/5500	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 (981)	185F	£39,694	6/2706	271/7400	214/4500	1310kg	210	5.7	-	165	192	34.4	+ Very enticing for the money in basic spec - You might still want the power of the 'S' ★★★★★
Porsche Cayman S (981)	181R	£48,783	6/3436	321/7400	273/4500	1320kg	247	5.0	-	176	206	32.1	+ The Cayman comes of age - Erm... ★★★★★
Porsche Cayman (987)	131R	'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 (987)	132R	'06-'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 (987)	158R	'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 911 Carrera (991)	168R	£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)	168R	£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 tactility ★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera 4S (991)	177D	£77,924	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)	179R	£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	145kg	245	4.9	-	180	225	29.4	+ Faster and greener than the mkl 997 - Lost a little of the 911 magic ★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.2)	121R	'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 S (997.1)	070R	'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)	051R	'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 3.4)	008R	'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 (993)		'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 (991)	187R	£100,540	6/3799	468/8250	324/6250	1430kg	332	3.5	-	196	289	23.0	+ Devastating dynamics - Sense of connection has been eroded a fraction ★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.2)	182R	'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)	152R	'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)	187R	'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)	182R	'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 GTBs ★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.1)	105R	'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)	082R	'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)	068R	'03-'05	6/3600	375/7400	284/5000	1330kg	286	4.2	9.2	190	-	-	+ Track-biased version of above - Limited supply ★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.1)	182R	'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 968 Club Sport	019R	'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	187D	'91-'95	6/2975	247/5750	258/2900	1420kg	177	<b>5.4</b>	<b>13.8</b>	166	-	21.0	+ Overlooked, bargain-price French 911. Try one - R5 interior ★★★★★
Subaru BRZ	170R	£24,995	4/1998	191/7000	151/6400	1230kg	163	7.6	-	140	181	36.2	+ Fine chassis, great steering - Weak engine, not the slide-happy car they promised ★★★★★
Toyota GT86	174R	£24,994	4/1998	191/7000	151/6400	1275kg	157	7.6	-	140	181	36.2	+ More fun than its cousin (above) - Same lack of torque, poor interior quality ★★★★★
Toyota Celica GT-Four ST205	187R	'94-'99	4/1998	239/6000	223/4000	1496kg	162	5.2	-	143	-	-	+ Criminally overlooked homologation special - Finding one ★★★★★
TVR T350C	057R	'03-'07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1100kg	318	<b>4.7</b>	<b>10.0</b>	175	-	-	+ Looks, engine - Unsupportive seats; chassis lacks ultimate polish ★★★★★
TVR Sagaris	099D	'05-'07	6/3996	406/7500	349/5000	1078kg	383	3.7	-	185	-	-	+ Looks outrageous - 406bhp feels a touch optimistic ★★★★★
TVR Tuscan S (Mk2)	076R	'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	004R	'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 Monaro VXR 6.0	079D	'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	155R	£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 - Interior lacks flair ★★★★★
VW Scirocco R	181R	£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	095R	'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	127D	£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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### 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 12C, meanwhile, remains tantalisingly close to greatness.

## Supercars

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine c/y/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	33.5	19.6	+ A much better car than the DBS it succeeds - Shame it looks little different, then	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vanquish S (Mk1)	110 R	€189,995	12/5935	520/7000	425/5800	1875kg	282	4.9	10.1	200	-	-	+ Vanquish joins supercar greats - A tad intimidating at the limit	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vantage 600	131 R	€98	8/5340	600/6200	600/4400	2020kg	302	4.6	11.0	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 R	€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 R	€16-11	16/7993	1000/6000	922/2200	1950kg	521	2.8	5.8	253	596	11.4	+ Superbly engineered 4wd quad-turbo rocket - Er, lacks luggage space?	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron Grand Sport	133 R	€1.4m	16/7993	1000/6000	922/2200	1990kg	510	2.6	-	253	596	11.4	+ Warp speed and ferocious noise sans-roof - Ridiculous broly/roof thing	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron Super Sport	151 R	€5.2m	16/7993	1183/6400	1106/3000	1838kg	654	2.5	-	268	539	12.2	+ The world's fastest supercar - Limited to 258mph for us mere mortals	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron Grand Sport Vitesse	185 R	€51.7m	16/7993	1183/6400	1106/3000	1990kg	604	2.6	-	254	539	12.2	+ The world's fastest convertible - Limited to 258mph for us mere mortals	★★★★★
Bugatti EB110	078 R	€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 R	€301,975	8/3499	575/10,500	310/9000	689kg	848	3.8	6.2	205	-	-	+ Absolutely staggering performance - Absolutely staggering price tag	★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette ZR1	133 R	€106,605	8/1612	638/6500	603/3800	1528kg	424	3.8	7.6	205	355	18.8	+ Huge pace and character - Take plenty of brave pills if there's rain	★★★★★
Ferrari 458 Italia	183 R	€178,526	8/4499	562/9000	398/6000	1485kg	384	3.2	6.8	202	307	20.6	+ An astounding achievement, looks fantastic - There'll never be a manual	★★★★★
Ferrari 458 Spider	185 R	€198,971	8/4499	562/9000	398/6000	1530kg	373	3.3	-	198	275	23.9	+ A 458 that sounds and feels more organic - Er, 4mph slower?	★★★★★
Ferrari F430	163 R	€104-10	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 R	€104-10	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	€107-10	8/4308	503/8500	347/5250	1500kg	378	3.5	7.7	198	-	-	+ Successful F1 technology transplant - Likes to shout about it	★★★★★
Ferrari 360 Modena	063 R	€99-04	8/3586	394/8500	275/4750	1390kg	288	4.5	9.0	183	-	-	+ Worthy successor to 355 - Not quite as involving as it should be	★★★★★
Ferrari 360 Challenge Stradale	068 R	€103-04	8/3586	420/8500	275/4750	1280kg	333	4.1	-	186	-	-	+ Truly 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	-	-	+ 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	€106-12	12/5999	611/7600	448/5600	1688kg	368	3.5	7.4	205	415	15.8	+ Evo Car of the Year 2006 - Banks are getting harder to rob	★★★★★
Ferrari 599 GTO	161 R	€11-12	12/5999	661/8250	457/6500	1605kg	418	3.4	-	208	-	-	+ One of the truly great Ferraris - Erm, the air con isn't very good	★★★★★
Ferrari 575M Fiorano Handling Pack	169 R	€102-06	12/5748	508/7250	434/5250	1730kg	298	4.2	9.6	202	-	-	+ Fiorano pack makes 575 truly great - It should have been standard	★★★★★
Ferrari 550 Maranello	169 R	€97-02	12/5474	485/7000	415/5000	1716kg	287	4.3	10.0	199	-	-	+ Everything - Nothing	★★★★★
Ferrari Testarossa	185 R	€84-91	12/4942	385/6300	361/4500	1506kg	260	5.8	-	171	-	-	+ The ultimate '80s supercar - Intimidating handling; needs big roads	★★★★★
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	€104-11	12/5748	533/7250	434/5250	1840kg	294	4.3	9.8	199	470	13.8	+ Awesomely capable grand tourer - See above	★★★★★
Ferrari Enzo	156 R	€102-04	12/5998	650/7800	485/5500	1365kg	484	3.5	6.7	217+	-	-	+ Intoxicating, exploitable - Cabin detailing falls short of Zonda or F1	★★★★★
Ferrari F50	186 R	€96-97	12/4699	513/8500	347/6500	1230kg	424	3.9	-	202	-	-	+ Still the best drivers' Ferrari - The F40 looks better	★★★★★
Ferrari F40	186 R	€101-92	8/2936	471/7000	426/4000	1100kg	437	4.1	-	201	-	-	+ Brutally fast - It's in the dictionary under 'turbo lag'	★★★★★
Ferrari 288GTO	064 R	€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	€104-06	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 R	€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 R	€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 CXC	094 R	€106-10	8/4700	806/6900	678/5700	1180kg	694	3.9	7.7	241	-	-	+ Sweden's greatest supercar - Sweden's only supercar	★★★★★
Koenigsegg CCRX Edition	118 R	€108-10	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 R	€178,560	10/5204	562/8000	398/6500	1340kg	426	3.5	-	202	325	20.6	+ A reminder of how great the Gallardo is - LP560-4 does as good a job	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo	094 R	€106-08	10/4961	513/8000	376/4250	1520kg	343	4.3	9.4	196	-	-	+ On a full-bore start it spins all four wheels. Cool - Slightly clunky e-gear	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo Superleggera	104 R	€107-08	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 - Erm... expensive?	★★★★★
Lamborghini Aventador Roadster	184 R	€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	€101-06	12/6192	570/7500	479/5400	1650kg	351	4.0	-	205	-	-	+ Gorgeous, capable and incredibly friendly - V12 feels stressed	★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago LP640	093 R	€106-11	12/6496	631/8000	487/6000	1665kg	385	3.3	-	211	213	-	+ Compelling old-school supercar - You'd better be on your toes	★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago LP670-4 SV	186 R	€109-11	12/6496	661/8000	487/6500	1565kg	429	3.2	7.3	212	-	-	+ A supercar in its truest, wildest sense - Be prepared for stares	★★★★★
Lamborghini Diablo GT	016 R	€99-10	12/5992	575/7300	465/5500	1490kg	392	4.1	8.3	211	-	-	+ Briefly the world's fastest production car - They made only 80	★★★★★
Lamborghini Diablo 6.0	019 R	€100-12	12/5992	550/7100	457/5500	1625kg	343	3.8	-	200+	-	-	+ Best-built, best-looking Diablo of all - People's perceptions	★★★★★
Lamborghini Countach 5000 QV	184 R	€88-91	12/5167	455/7000	369/5200	1488kg	311	4.2	10.0	182	-	-	+ 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	-	-	+ Abundant and compelling supercar - Badge and price don't quite match	★★★★★
Maserati MC12	079 R	€104-05	12/5998	621/7500	481/5500	1445kg	437	3.8	-	205	-	-	+ Rarer than an Enzo - The Ferrari's better	★★★★★
McLaren 12C	187 R	€176,000	8/3799	616/7500	442/3000	1434kg	435	3.1	-	207	279	24.2	+ Staggering performance, refinement - Engine noise can be grating	★★★★★
McLaren 12C Spider	177 R	€195,500	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	186 R	€94-98	12/6064	627/7500	479/4000	1137kg	560	3.2	6.3	240+	-	-	+ Still the most single-minded supercar ever - There'll never be another	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG Black	131 R	€109-10	12/5980	661/5400	737/2200	1876kg	358	4.0	8.1	199	-	-	+ Bonkers looks, bonkers speed - Bonkers £250K price	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG	159 R	€168,395	8/6208	563/6800	479/4750	1620kg	335	4.1	8.4	197	308	21.4	+ Great engine and chassis (gulling doors too!) - Slightly tardy gearbox	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG Black	182 D	€229,985	8/6208	622/7400	468/5500	1550kg	408	3.6	-	196	321	20.6	+ Stunning engine, superb body control - Appetite for expensive tyres	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLR McLaren	073 R	€104-07	8/5439	617/6500	575/3250	1693kg	370	3.7	-	208	-	-	+ Zonda-pace, 575-style drivability - Dreadful brake feel	★★★★★
Noble M600	186 R	€5200,000	8/4439	650/6800	604/3800	1198kg	551	3.8	7.7	225	-	-	+ Spiritual successor to the Ferrari F40 - It's a bit pricey	★★★★★
Pagani Huayra	185 R	€1m	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 R	€101-05	12/7291	555/5900	553/4050	1250kg	451	3.6	-	197	-	-	+ Evo Car of the Year 2001 - Harry's sold his long-temper	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda F	186 R	€105-06	12/7291	602/6150	575/4000	1230kg	497	3.6	-	214	-	-	+ Everything an Italian supercar ought to be - Looks a bit blingy next to a Carrera GT	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda Cinque Roadster	147 D	€109-10	12/7291	669/6200	575/4000	1400kg	485	3.4	-	217+	-	-		

# Track Times

## Knowledge

**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
- + Direction Anti-clockwise
- + Opened 1999
- + Left turns 9
- + Length 1.85 miles (2.98 kilometres)
- + Right turns 6

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# Art of speed



## Bugatti Veyron Super Sport NACA duct

by DAVID VIVIAN | PHOTOGRAPHY by STUART COLLINS

**V**IEW A NACA DUCT FROM ABOVE AND IT LOOKS like a plan outline of Concorde. It's a shape that is inextricably associated with minimal aerodynamic drag. It enabled Concorde to fly at one and a half times the speed of sound. As a duct, it's efficient at channelling airflow onto whatever it is that needs to be cooled with minimal disturbance at the point of entry. In other words, it's a low-drag air intake. And on a car, well, it looks very cool. Imagine a Ferrari F40 without its twin NACA ducts on the bonnet. Or the Bugatti Veyron Super Sport, pictured here, missing the slightly longer-nosed variety set into its roof. Not quite the ticket.

NACA stands for National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, a US federal agency founded in 1915 to undertake, promote and institutionalise aeronautical research. In 1958, the agency was dissolved and absorbed into the newly formed NASA, but the acronym lives on. The NACA duct left the drawing board in 1945, originally called the 'submerged inlet' and consisting of a shallow ramp with flared walls recessed into a streamlined body. Its initial use was on aircraft, but unsurprisingly it soon found favour with the designers of racing cars.

The NACA duct makes use of the layer of slow-moving air that clings to the bodywork of a moving car, especially flatter surfaces like the bonnet, roof or side panels – the so-called 'boundary layer'. The flush duct with its gentle diffuser-like ramp and sharp-edged curved walls creates counter-rotating vortices which nudge the boundary layer away from the intake, coaxing in the faster-moving air, neatly sidestepping the flow separation and form drag of protruding inlet designs. It doesn't achieve very large ram pressures – ruling it out as an engine inlet vent – but it can accommodate a multitude of cooling duties.

And, of course, the duties of looking cool. The Golden Age, when it was almost impossible to buy a high-performance car that wasn't sporting at least one NACA duct, spanned the 1970s and '80s. Arguably the biggest, and usually painted black to draw attention to their presence, could be found on either side of the Lamborghini Countach, partially recessed into the rear flank panels. For a car composed mostly of trapezoidal shapes, it was an aesthetic gift.

And the first? That's a matter of some conjecture but, whether it was or not, I reckon it sits pretty well with a '69 Shelby Mustang. Although the NACA duct's function was relatively subtle, it always made a car look harder. ❏



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