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AUDI TT v RCZ R v MINI

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COULD 2014 BE THE SPORTS CAR'S GREATEST YEAR?

We thought long and hard about whether this line on our newsstand cover should be a question or a statement (i.e. 'why 2014 is the sports car's greatest year'), because all the signs suggest it will be. However, as production editor Ian Eveleigh highlighted, we can't really make this claim until the end of the year.

So why is the **evo** team so excited about 2014? It's all explained in our A-to-Z guide, starting on page 53. Suffice to say, we're looking forward to a year of incredible diversity, including the launch of a new British sports car manufacturer – Zenos. **evo** had exclusive access to the Zenos team as it built its first car, which was an extraordinary privilege. We are unashamedly excited about the Zenos E10: it's a project with not only the thrill of driving at its core, but also value – the basic car will cost just £24,995.

Speaking of value, the BMW M235i arrives at a time when the majority of the world's automotive press are obsessing over the new BMW M3 and M4. Naturally we are excited about the bigger M3/M4, but the M235i really does appeal – a rear-wheel-drive coupe with a limited-slip diff, a six-cylinder turbo engine and at a price that undercuts its bigger brothers by £20k. How does it drive? Henry reveals all on page 54.

Likewise, perhaps the biggest news about the Jaguar F-type Coupe is not that it will de-atomise its rear tyres at will, but that the V6 versions cost £7285 less than their roadster equivalents. This makes the S Coupe £60,235, undercutting the basic 911 Carrera by a whopping £13,178. Your friendly Porsche dealer will no doubt point you in the direction of a Cayman S for £50-60k, but the F-type Coupe has a tangible glamour that the Cayman can't match. Not only that, but as you'll read in Jethro's F-type Convertible Fast Fleet piece, the V6 S version is proving to be a dynamic star. The corresponding coupe promises to be a belter and we've driven the range-topping V8-powered R Coupe in this issue; read Mike Duff's verdict on page 64.

I won't give the rest of the viewpoints away here, but I hope you agree that 2014 promises to be a blinding year for the performance car. And as ever, I'd love to hear your views – contact me at nickt@evo.co.uk.

Looking further ahead, I had the privilege of briefing the students on the Royal College of Art's Vehicle Design course recently. We're running a competition in conjunction with Bridgestone, the aim being that the RCA students visualise the ultimate 'evo' sports car of 2020 based on input from **evo** readers. A big thanks to all who made suggestions via our social media channels – the RCA tutors and students were impressed with your knowledge and foresight. We'll reveal the students' designs next month. Exciting stuff!

Nick Trott Editor (@evoNickTrott)



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MASERATI GT MC STRADALE



*'Plenty of people do not want a 911 GT3.
And at that point the Jaguar and
Maserati step into the frame'*



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When you have finished with this magazine please recycle it.

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Radar

News, new metal, investigations, interviews, technology and more...



Japan rocks Detroit

First look

The best new metal from the big US show

America's biggest motoring exhibition is normally where the latest US-bred superstars hog the limelight. But this year, all the attention was firmly on sporty plans from Toyota and Lexus...

Words: Mike Duff



I

IT'S VERY RARE to be surprised by a new car at a motor show these days. Manufacturers

tend to release images (often those infuriating 'teaser shots') well ahead of the official launch to whet appetites and ensure coverage. And even when carmakers are confident enough to try and hold back for the unveil, pictures have a nasty habit of being leaked.

But we didn't know anything about the FT-1 concept that appeared at

Detroit in January until it was unveiled on press day, other than the fact Toyota would have a car at the show. Officially it's just a far-looking design concept – 'FT' stands for 'Future Toyota' – that's intended to highlight the brand's commitment to creating more interesting cars. But it looks to us like a clear proposal for a new Supra, a sports car to cast some much-needed glory over the rest of the range. And even in a show packed with interesting metal, the FT-1 provided the proper jaw-dropping moment.

Despite several significant debuts, the other stand-out star in Detroit from **evo's** perspective was another sports car from within the Toyota family: the Lexus RC-F. This production-ready coupe is the successor to the much-missed IS-F saloon, sticking with the same combination of a brawny V8 driving the rear wheels. And, it must be said, it looks stunning from pretty much every angle. It's welcome proof that, despite the dynamic disappointment of some of the company's recent products,

p12 SUBARU TO BRING WRX TO UK

Latest version of rally-bred icon to cost £28,995 in Britain



p14 911 TARGA Wows Detroit Crowds

Porsche shows off amazing new roof design



p18 AUTOSPORT HIGHLIGHTS

We run down the best of the new road, race and rally machines on display at Birmingham's NEC



'Lexus's decision to stick with natural aspiration is set to create a fascinating point of difference with the BMW M4'

Lexus is still serious about making a proper drivers' car.

Let's start with the FT-1. Details are being kept deliberately vague – you get the sense on the stand that Toyota's execs were enjoying blanking technical queries as to what might power any production version. All they would officially admit is that the concept is rear-driven and 'combustion only' – devoid of the hybrid systems few modern show cars escape. From that, we can read an intent for it to be a pure-blooded sports car if it's made. The concept did, however, have a see-through panel in its bonnet revealing what looked (in terms of length) like a straight-six engine in the tradition of the Supra and 2000GT.

In design terms, the FT-1 is pure sports car porn: low, wide and covered with aggressive aero. Proportions and stance definitely owe something to the last Supra, but the concept also seems to channel some of the spirit of the 'FD'-generation Mazda RX-7, especially at the back where a huge movable wing dominates. The concept is the

work of Toyota's Californian design studio, and we're told it's the result of a move away from the inoffensive 'consensus' styling the marque has adopted in recent years. Officially there are no plans to make it, and as Toyota already has another two-seat sports car, the Subaru-built GT86, doing so would be a huge corporate indulgence. But looking at the concept it's hard not to feel that something pretty much exactly like this is what Toyota needs to cast a halo over the duller parts of its range.

By contrast, we've got full technical details on the RC-F. Lexus's decision to stick with natural aspiration is set to create a fascinating point of difference with the BMW M4 and its twin-turbo straight-six. We're told that the Lexus will use a new 5-litre V8 that's designed to rev and which will produce 'more than' 450bhp and 385lb ft of torque. Under gentle use the engine switches to Atkinson Cycle operation (altering valve timing to create a smaller compression ratio) to boost economy, but returns to the

conventional Otto Cycle near-instantly when performance is needed.

As in the IS-F, performance is sent rearwards via an eight-speed auto gearbox with a manual mode. At the back a clever differential offers 'active' torque vectoring across the rear axle, with this offering three different modes: Standard, Slalom and Track. Top speed will be limited to 168mph, with a deployable rear wing for stability. This, the roof and the bonnet are all carbonfibre to help Lexus claim a kerb weight of 'under 1800kg'.

The cabin looks almost as good as the muscular exterior, with the instrument cluster featuring a vast central rev-counter in the style of the LFA plus a secondary display screen that can be configured to show various data, such as a real-time indication of the rear axle's left-to-right torque split.

This was the best Detroit show in years, with far more interesting cars than we've seen for ages. But when we look back on it from the future, we might see it as the point when Toyota and Lexus got interesting again. ☒

Left: FT-1 looks the part, but tech details are unclear.

Above: carbon bonnet, roof and wing help keep RC-F's kerb weight down



evo Comment

It's nice when something is a genuine shock at a motor show. I really hope this concept hasn't been teasingly created just so that it can exist within *Gran Turismo 6*.
Henry Catchpole

Motor City magic

One of the most eventful Detroit motor shows of recent times brought a multitude of new production models and eye-catching concepts right across the performance car spectrum. Here are the stars that warmed the attendant petrolheads in a cold Michigan winter

Words: Mike Duff

SUBARU WRX STI ↗

The Japanese were out in force in Detroit. In addition to the Toyota FT-1 and the Lexus RC-F, the show also played host to the debut of the new Subaru WRX STI, and brought us confirmation that the new car will be coming to the UK.

So, is this the new dawn for a much-loved performance icon, or the last roll of the dice? As with the last iteration of the previous-generation car, the Impreza name has gone – now reserved exclusively for the basic versions of the saloon that don't make it to the UK – but the rest of the formula is reassuringly familiar.

The new STI sticks with the tried-and-tested recipe of a turbocharged flat-four engine and permanent four-wheel drive. The 2.5-litre motor puts out 301bhp and 290 lb ft of torque – marginal increases on the last car – with a six-speed manual gearbox, all-strut suspension and – a new development – active torque vectoring.

Being based on the standard Impreza, the new STI is a slightly odd-looking thing, with its narrow track and tall proportions emphasised by the extra height added by the trademark STI rear wing. Subaru claims that serious effort has been put into improving the perceived quality of the

car's interior, with soft-feel materials in place of the scratchy plastics of the old car, plus carbon and metal trim to lift the interior ambience. Up close, it certainly felt considerably plusher than any of its predecessors.

The company has also acknowledged that the old STI's price tag had become pretty much unsustainable in a performance car market containing talent like the BMW M135i. The new STI will therefore go on sale in the UK with a basic price of £28,995, £4000 less than the final price of the last-generation model. That still sets it against some serious competition, but Subaru is clearly hoping the new car will drive well enough to justify its price.

CORVETTE Z06 →

When a company's own executives refer to their new model as 'The Big Nasty', you can be fairly confident it's not going to be subtle or understated. And so it proved with the unveiling of the inevitable Z06 version of the new 'C7' Corvette at Detroit, with the new super-Vette wearing a paint job that could probably be seen from space.

As in the last-generation Z06, the C7 iteration uses a force-fed version of the direct-injection 6.2-litre V8 from the standard Corvette, boosted by an Eaton supercharger to deliver 625bhp





and 635lb ft of torque. To deliver those numbers, the engine uses titanium valves and conrods and has forged aluminium pistons. The Z06 will be offered with the choice of a seven-speed manual gearbox or a new eight-speed automatic, which – although it uses a torque converter – is claimed by GM to offer upshifts that are 0.08sec quicker than those of a PDK-equipped Porsche 911.

Although performance numbers haven't been released, we're told the new Z06 is quicker round a track than the ZR1 C6, a car that boasted a 7:19 Nordschleife lap and which could dispatch 0-60mph in 3.4sec on its way to a top speed of 205mph. Which leaves the obvious question of how much faster the C7 ZR1 will be...

If the basic Z06 isn't hardcore enough, buyers will also be able to spec it with a 'Z07' package (confused yet?), which adds carbon-ceramic brakes, various aero tweaks and Michelin Pilot Super Sport Cup tyres.

Chevrolet also revealed the C7R Corvette racer at Detroit, a car that makes the Z06 look positively tame by comparison.

KIA GT4 STINGER ←

One of Detroit's nicest surprises was this stylish, rear-wheel-drive coupe concept from Kia. Although unconfirmed for production, it does tie in very nicely with the Korean company's stated aim to produce a sports car by 2016.

evo Comment

Kia loves to tease us with concepts – in its own way, it is as much of a design-led brand as Audi or Mercedes. And although it has produced some interesting road cars, it has never made a proper sports car.

But a production version of the Stinger could be a winner, especially given the limited number of cheap rear-drivers out there. Build it, Kia. Please. **MD**

The Stinger is the work of Kia's Californian design studio, created by a team led by the centre's chief designer, Tom Kearns, around a brief for an affordable but fun sports car. The mechanical spec is all production-viable, with a 315bhp version of Kia's four-cylinder petrol engine and drive sent rearwards through a six-speed manual gearbox. The cabin has been kept simple, with no carpets and minimal switchgear. The design team has focused everything possible on the driver, with the concept including some neat see-through A-pillars, very similar to the ones that Volvo proposed on its 'SCC' concept shown at Detroit all the way back in 2001.

And although the GT4 has been created around what the design team see as American demand for cheap, basic sports cars, it's not hard to see any production version having a strong appeal in Europe too – especially if it could be priced competitively against relatively underpowered rivals like the Toyota GT86/Subaru BRZ.

'When I get to the track, I see Subarus and Scions and Miatas [MX-5s],' explained Kearns. 'We would love to see a Kia in that group. Kia is a value brand, we make a luxury car that's value-orientated and we can make a sports car that's value-orientated, too.'

BMW M3 & M4 ↗

There was so much new metal at Detroit that the production versions of the new M3 and M4 were almost pushed into the background, largely because we've already seen the near-identical M4 concept (and even ridden in a prototype back in **evo** 189).

Both cars will be going on sale together in May, and will be wearing very similar price tags (the M3 will be £56,175 and the M4 £56,635). And although BMW anticipates the majority of buyers will opt for the coupe (the M4), there's an unarguable appeal to the extra practicality of the four-door M3 – and no obvious dynamic penalty for opting for it.

Suffice to say, it's a car that we're really looking forward to driving.





PORSCHE 911 TARGA ↑

Here's a confusing one: a genuinely desirable 911 Targa that arguably looks even better than its coupe sister. Porsche's stand at Detroit on press day was permanently rammed with journos wanting just one more look at the Targa's magic roof in operation.

When the central fabric panel is lowered, the rear clam (consisting of the rear screen and engine cover) lifts up and back to allow the roof panel to motor itself underneath. And yes, it looks properly good up close, with the Targa hoop giving a real '70s vibe.

The Targa is based on the same bodyshell as the 911 C4 Cabriolet, meaning only four-wheel drive will be available from launch. The biggest surprise is pricing, with Porsche charging slightly less for the Targa than the equivalent 911 Cabrio. In the UK the Targa 4 will cost £86,281 and the Targa 4S £96,316 – £650 less than the Carrera 4 Cabriolet and Carrera 4S Cabriolet respectively.

AUDI ALLROAD SHOOTING BRAKE →

Despite its name, the Shooting Brake concept was an early look at the third-generation TT rather than a statement of intent to produce an off-road estate-coupe – surely a niche too far, even for Audi.

The concept dropped some broad hints about Audi's future powertrain direction, which is set to see part-electrification pretty much throughout the range. It's powered by the combination of a familiar 2-litre TFSI four-cylinder engine backed up by a 40kW (54bhp) electric motor within the transmission and a separate 85kW (114bhp) motor driving the rear axle and justifying the 'quattro' badging.

Things got interesting when **evo** got a chance to speak to Audi's R&D supremo, Ulrich Hackenberg, who was happy to go into detail about the company's future direction. The big news is that the R8 e-tron – the pure-electric sports car that Audi





officially cancelled last year – is now back on, with Hackenberg signalling his determination to get it made. 'I'm seriously discussing how we can give life to this car,' he told us, 'to use it as a carrier for some of the new technology we are introducing across the range.'

He also confirmed that Audi is planning both a raft of new Q-badged SUVs and a similar onslaught of more-welcome RS performance models. We already know Audi is working on a Q1, but Hackenberg also confirmed that we'll see 'fill-in' models between the Q3, Q5 and Q7. The company is also planning to produce RS versions of the majority of the cars in its range, in a similar fashion to AMG Mercedes, so don't be surprised to see an RS Q6 Coupe in a few years' time...

But there was more cheer to be found with confirmation that work is continuing on making a production version of the Sport Quattro concept shown at Frankfurt last year. Although early reports suggested it would be the most expensive car in the range, Hackenberg now says it will sit between the TT and the R8, and

also that it could well come with a simpler powertrain than the concept's 700bhp hybrid system. 'Being based on our matrix system means there's the potential for it to take other drivetrains,' he said.

Sitting on Audi's MLB platform, the Quattro will be based around a longitudinal engine. So place your bets: a development of the RS4's naturally aspirated V8, or the RS6's brutish twin-turbocharged one?

MERC C-CLASS ↙

Mercedes came to Detroit all guns blazing. In addition to the new C-class we also had a new SUV in the shape of the GLA AMG, and the compellingly mad S600 (for those who think the S63 AMG is a bit under-gunned). We'll have to wait until next year to see the AMG version of the C-class, but there's still plenty of interest in the basic car.

Structurally it's breaking new ground for a car in its segment, with a body that's almost 50 per cent aluminium. Top-spec versions will get air suspension, and Mercedes has also said that all of the new technology

recently unveiled on the S-class will be offered in the smaller model. As is the way these days, most versions will be four-cylinder, with Mercedes offering a 235bhp turbo version of its 2-litre petrol engine. V6s and hybrids will follow. The new C will also get the option of four-wheel drive for the first time, something AMG sources hinted will eventually be offered on the C63.

FORD MUSTANG ↙

Detroit was a first chance to see the new Mustang in the flesh ahead of its European launch later this year. And it's big enough to make us wonder how well the base four-pot engine will cope.

MINI COOPER JCW ↙

Even before the new Mini goes on sale, we've got to see what the JCW will look like – although BMW is coy about what will power it. Our money's on a 2-litre turbo four with about 200bhp.

MERCEDES GLA45 AMG ↓

It had to happen, didn't it? Mercedes'

A-class-based mini-SUV has also spun off an AMG variant, powered by the same 355bhp 2-litre four-cylinder turbo in the A45 and CLA45. And Mercedes claims it's nearly as quick as the A45 around the Ring...

INFINITI Q50 EAU ROUGE ↙

This muscular concept is nothing more than a broad hint that Infiniti is planning a performance version of its new exec saloon, but it certainly has more personality than the standard car. We're told the front spoiler was 'inspired' by Red Bull's RB9 F1 car. Um...

BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GT V8 S ↓

Finally, some British interest at Detroit, with the debut of the 'S' version of the V8 Conti coupe. Power output has been boosted slightly to 521bhp – still less than the Audi RS6 makes from the same engine – but we're also promised the car is more dynamically focused. We'll tell you how much more once we've driven it next month. ☒

evo Comment

The new Targa shape bravely alters the 911 aesthetic. I'm sure it'll be fabulous to drive, and will look striking with the right body/hoop colour combo. Yep – I'm a fan.

Nick Trott



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Model displayed: Infiniti Q50S Hybrid. Official fuel economy figures for the Infiniti Q50S Hybrid in mpg (l/100 km): urban 34.4 (8.2), extra urban 55.4 (5.1), combined 45.6 (6.2). CO₂ emissions: 144 g/km. Also available in 2.2d 6MT and 7AT. Official fuel economy figures for the Infiniti Q50 2.2d in mpg (l/100 km): urban 50.4 (5.6), extra urban 76.3 (3.7), combined 64.2 (4.4). CO₂ emissions: 114 g/km.



Interview: Rolf Frech

Bentley's engineering chief talked to **evo** about the firm's new Continental GT3 race car as it made its debut at the Gulf 12 Hours in Abu Dhabi

Words: Nick Trott



Top: Conti GT3 finished fourth at Gulf 12 Hours, driven by Steven Kane, Andy Meyrick and Bentley's 2003 Le Mans winner Guy Smith. **Above:** Frech is keen to see the GT3 car race globally. **Below:** over 1000kg has been stripped out for racing; 4-litre twin-turbo V8 can produce up to 600bhp

What are the key hurdles you've faced trying to get the Continental GT3 ready for its first race?

A lot of people talk about the engineering challenges, and of course there have been many, but one of the biggest challenges was simply the timing. We announced the car at the Paris motor show in September 2012 and the deadline was always a test race within 18 months. What was not planned was the drive at the Goodwood Festival of Speed in July 2013, but we decided to set ourselves a new challenge...

A Ferrari 458 or a McLaren 12C seem obvious candidates to transform into a GT racer, but a Continental GT?

To be honest, the Continental GT is a really good base car for this because it is a really stiff car already. On the road, if you want comfort then you need a certain stiffness in the car and the Continental GT has high stiffness in the structure.

And the inevitable question – how did you manage to lose the weight from the car?

Weight reduction is about always looking at the small parts and I think the hardest part was to be disciplined enough to say what was really

necessary to keep or to take out. Some structural parts you have to keep in order to meet the regulations, but at those moments when we questioned whether to leave something in or take it out, we took it out. However, one of the things I'm pleased about is that the car still looks like a Bentley – inside and out.

What technical challenges did you face with the V8 engine?

We moved the turbos outside the V. The advantage was package-wise: the engine is now in a better race car configuration in that it could go more backwards and balance the weight distribution. It has also allowed us to mount the engine lower. The good thing was that there is a production engine available to us that has that solution.

[The engine is a Bentley V8, lifted from the Continental GT V8, but the team borrowed the heads from the Audi RS5 to allow them to move the turbos outside of the V – Ed.]

Many fans, **evo** included, will be disappointed to hear that you won't race the Continental GT at Le Mans. Why is this?

We started with this investigation into returning to motorsport in spring 2012 and looked at everything, including returning to Le Mans. But it became clear that it was this GT3 category that

suited our needs and sadly Le Mans is not possible with GT3 cars.

Can you clarify what you mean?

To get the motorsport programme signed off by the board, our best approach was to bring the race car as close to the production car as possible, which is why we went for GT3. We also wanted a customer race car programme, and the car to be recognisably a Bentley. Then our task was to build a car that fits to every track – an adaptable car.

So you are hopeful that the Continental GT3 will race all over the world?

Yes. It was one of our targets to bring the car into different series all over the world. So there are possibilities for customers to race it in the US, in China and in the Middle East, as well as Europe in series like the Blancpain Endurance Series. We didn't want to make a car just for one continent.

What about the Nürburgring 24 Hours? Can we expect to see the car there?

We have had a lot of discussions about a number of races but that is possible. We have no plans for it at the moment, but we'll see. A lot of people are asking: 'Would it be possible...?' ✉





Left: Radical RXC Turbo garnered huge interest. **Below:** Elise S Cup R's big rear wing; Sin R1 set to go on sale within weeks. **Bottom:** new saloon-shape Subaru WRX rally car; Chevron's GS8



J JANUARY'S AUTOSPORT International exhibition at Birmingham's NEC was, as ever, the

traditional curtain-raiser to the new motorsport year. And while the show wasn't perhaps quite as buzzing as it has been in the past (a few well-known carmakers and event organisers that had big presences last year were completely absent this time round), there was still plenty of new metal of interest on display.

While the Zenos E10 (looked at in more detail on page 76) was one of the most interesting new cars launched on the press day – who wouldn't want 313bhp/ton for £24,995? – Radical wasn't about to be outdone in the trackday warrior stakes: it unveiled a new version of its RXC road-legal Le Mans coupe-style sports car. Called the RXC Turbo, it swaps the base car's 3.7-litre Ford Duratec V6 for the largest of Ford's EcoBoost units – a 3.5-litre V6 – assisted by a pair of turbochargers. The result is 454bhp, 500lb ft of torque, a claimed 0-60mph time of 2.6sec and a reputed top speed of 185mph. The price? £129,000.

An interesting facet to this launch was the heavy Ford influence – the car was revealed on the Blue Oval stand and numerous Ford bigwigs were in attendance. Ford's European sales boss, Roelant de Waard, stressed how important the RXC Turbo was to the development of the top end of the EcoBoost engine range, underlining

Stars of Autosport

The annual motorsport show at Birmingham's National Exhibition Centre featured plenty of new machinery for road, race and rally

Words: Dan McCalla **Photography:** Malcolm Griffiths



the fact that Radical's success in the sports car market has made Ford some useful friends in high places.

Equally unlikely new road cars came from Sin and Chevron, which both had new GT-style models on display. German firm Sin's R1 was developed extensively through its race programme and is set to go into production within weeks. With 493bhp, 479lb ft, a paddle-shift 'box and weighing just 100kg, its estimated UK price tag is a tempting £72,000.

Holding up Blighty's honour was the Chevron GS8, shown alongside its new GT3 and GT4 racers. The £144,000 two-seater carries a 6.2-litre Chrysler-



sourced V8, and while it produces 330bhp in basic spec, it can be tuned to as far as 700bhp if a customer demands. Company owner David Witt told *evo* that the firm is awaiting IVA approval for the car prior to it going on sale in the spring.

Race and rally launches included the £46,950 Elise S Cup R racer, which Lotus hopes will bring its Lotus Cup series into the 21st century. Powered by the current Elise's 1.8-litre supercharged engine, the 217bhp, 181lb ft roadster is festooned in factory-developed aero tweaks and is intended to supersede the K-series-powered converted road cars that normally

prevail on grids across the globe.

Porsche, meanwhile, showed off its new 991-based 911 GT3 Cup car. It puts out 453bhp and features paddle-shift for the first time, operating a six-speed sequential gearbox. And fans of loose-surface motorsport were thrilled to see a saloon-shape Subaru WRX return to Group N rallying courtesy of British developer JRM.

Finally, on the tuner front, one machine stood out: Severn Valley Motorsport's 1000bhp Nissan Qashqai R-SVM. Running the R35 GT-R's chassis and running gear, the four-seat crossover is available to discerning plutocrats for around £275,000. **X**

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RX 450h

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Model shown is RX Advance priced at £49,105 including optional metallic paint at £610. Price correct at time of going to print and includes VAT, delivery, number plates, full tank of fuel, one year's road fund licence and £55 registration fee. *For Business Users only. Initial rental and VAT applies. Available on new sales of RX 450h Advance when ordered, registered and financed between 17th November to 31st March through Lexus Financial Services on Lexus Connect Contract Hire. At participating Lexus Centres. Advertised rental is based on a 3 year non maintained contract at 10,000 miles per annum with an initial rental of £3,450 +VAT. Excess mileage charges apply. Other finance offers are available but cannot be used in conjunction with this offer. Terms and conditions apply. Indemnities may be required. Finance subject to status to over 18s only. Lexus Financial Services, Great Burgh, Burgh Heath, Epsom, Surrey, KT18 5UZ. Subject to availability. Lexus Centres are independent of Lexus Financial Services. The mpg figures quoted are sourced from official EU-regulated test results. These are provided for comparability purposes and may not reflect your actual driving experience. RX fuel consumption figures: urban 43.5 mpg (6.5L/100km), extra urban 47.1 mpg (6.0L/100km), combined 44.8 mpg (6.3L/100km). CO₂ emissions 145g/km.

 **Driven**



 **Test location:** Brands Hatch, Kent, UK **GPS:** 51.35947, 0.25908

McLaren *12C GT Sprint*

Revised chassis, new aero, stripped interior, air jacks...
McLaren's GT racing division creates the ultimate trackday toy



THE F1 TEAM MIGHT have been in the doldrums lately, but there's nothing tardy about the pace with which McLaren Automotive is maturing as a brand. Hot on the heels of the 12C coupe came the Spider, plus a host of MSO (McLaren Special Operations) bespoke options, while the racing division – McLaren GT – has produced the 12C GT3 racer and

GT3-derived Can-Am. Now, slotting neatly between the 12C coupe and the full-blown GT3 sits this, the track-only 12C GT Sprint.

Though it doesn't have its own high-profile one-make series, the Sprint is McLaren's answer to the Porsche 911 GT3 Cup and Ferrari 458 Challenge. Sitting 40mm lower, wearing centre-lock rims shod (today) with Pirelli race wets, and boasting choice aerodynamic upgrades including a GT3-

Every new evo car that matters, rated

This month

McLAREN 12C GT SPRINT

Track-only version of 616bhp
British supercar

p20



BMW 330d xDRIVE M SPORT TOURING

Four-wheel-drive version of
254bhp, 413lb ft diesel estate

p27



BBR MAZDA MX-5 GT270

Turbo conversion boosts 2-litre
sports car's power to 268bhp

p28



MAZDA 3

Cooking hatch boasts clever
engine tech and tidy chassis

p30



ABBAY MOTORSPORT TOYOTA GT86

Tuner's supercharger upgrade
delivers 270bhp

p32



AUDI RS6 AVANT v MERC E63 AMG S ESTATE

550bhp+ load-luggers
go head-to-head

p34



The test team

With the new year in full swing, this month our road testers each name the car they are most looking forward to driving in 2014:



NICK TROTT

Editor

'Mercedes' baby SLS is high on my list. AMG V8, compact-ish shape, rear-drive... It promises to frighten the 911 Turbo.'



MIKE DUFF

Motoring editor

'F-type R Coupe, in production form and on proper roads. And without a corporate chaperone sitting next to me...'



HENRY CATCHPOLE

Features editor

'A new BMW M3 or M4 with a manual gearbox and carbon-ceramic brakes. Can't wait.'



JETHRO BOVINGDON

Contributing editor

'So many to choose from, but I'll go for the Lamborghini Huracan because, well, just look at it.'



RICHARD MEADEN

Contributing editor

'Zenos E10. Looks great, the chassis structure is clever and intriguing, the price compelling. Hope it's a cracker!'



DAVID VIVIAN

Contributing road tester

'Simply has to be the McLaren P1. In a group test with the LaFerrari and Porsche 918 Spyder.'

Below: fixed rear wing is an option. **Right:** NACA cooling ducts are new and recall those often seen on McLaren's Can-Am racers. **Below right:** chief test driver Chris Goodwin gives our man Meaden some tips.

Bottom: road car's airbag steering wheel is replaced by a lightweight carbonfibre item



'The harder you push and the deeper you dig, the more ability you release in the car, which in turn allows you to get more from yourself'





inspired front bumper, bonnet, air vents and front wing louvres, the Sprint makes a regular 12C look a little soft around the edges. There's a hint of GT3, but no more than that, which, of course, is the point, as the Sprint sits between the road car and the full-on factory racer, both in price and performance.

The Sprint cannot be used on the road, which perhaps comes as a surprise given it doesn't appear to be *that* extreme, but it can be raced. However, it isn't being marketed as a pure racer because it hasn't been built to a clear set of regs. That's not to say McLaren GT couldn't or wouldn't make the necessary tweaks to enable it to comply with your chosen championship or series (something like Britcar in the UK or VLN in Germany), but from what I can gather McLaren sees it more as a car for the (very) serious trackday customer who wants more than their 12C road car can deliver.

To ensure they feel in familiar surroundings – and to keep costs under control – the 12C Sprint retains much of the hardware and

many of the electronic systems found in the road car. That means aside from beefed-up oil and cooling systems, the 3.8-litre 616bhp bi-turbo V8 remains unchanged, as does the seven-speed twin-clutch gearbox. Even the ProActive Chassis Control (PCC) system stays, although the switchable suspension settings have been ramped up, so that Normal in the Sprint is the equivalent of Race in the regular road car. The brakes are new, with race-spec cast-iron discs. Brake Steer is retained, as is a recalibrated stability control that is adjusted via the PCC switches, just like on the road car. Our test car also features the full optional aero kit comprising a carbonfibre front splitter and a sizeable fixed rear wing. This negates the need for the stability-enhancing active McLaren Airbrake, which is shared with the road car and appears on the Sprint in basic specification.

The interior is stripped of non-essential trim and sound-deadening, but retains air conditioning for driver comfort. Race seats and harnesses look and feel the business, while a

digital instrument display taken from the GT3 racer sits in place of the road car's instruments. There's also a full roll-cage (also from the GT3) and a carbon-spoked non-airbag steering wheel. The Sprint even has built-in air jacks to speed tyre changes. The weight of this system, plus the roll-cage and other safety equipment, results in a kerb weight virtually unchanged from the road car's 1434kg.

Our testing venue is Brands Hatch. Being McLaren, this exercise isn't done by halves. Behind the pit garage is an immaculate race truck, complete with an upstairs lounge area in which to get changed. It certainly massages the ego (not to mention makes you suck your stomach in) when you step through the door and saunter down the stairs in your race overalls. It doesn't appear anywhere on the options list, but I'm assuming should you wish for an adoring rent-a-crowd of fans and autograph seekers, McLaren GT could arrange one for the right price.

Sadly the weather is less than welcoming,



'The uplift in performance and increased intensity make for a driving experience that's on an altogether different level'

the murky, cold and wet conditions making the Indy circuit rather more treacherous than I or McLaren would like. Still, it is what it is, so while it means I'll be denied the experience of feeling what a 12C's like on slicks (apparently the slick-shod Sprint will lap the Dunsfold test track 5sec quicker than the road car), it does mean I'll have ample opportunity to feel the Sprint at the limits of grip and see how forgiving – or not – the car is when you exceed them and need the electronic systems to catch you.

After a few exploratory laps with pro racer Tim Mullen in a road car, it's my turn to drive the Sprint. The 12C has a distinctive, hard-edged exhaust note, and even with the muffling effects of a crash helmet the Sprint sounds like it means business. Dab the brake, pull back on the right-hand paddle (or push on the left, if you're a seasoned 12C hand) and we're away with no more fuss or drama than in the road car. Mullen and Chris Goodwin, McLaren's chief test driver, suggest I start in Normal for the first five or ten laps, then after a quick stop to check all's well switch to Sport and then Race mode.

It's a smart and revealing strategy. The first few laps are pretty edgy while the Pirelli wets get some heat and I try to dial myself in to the

Sprint's responses. As predicted, it's faithful to the road car, except the race tyres pluck much more grip from the horribly slippery tarmac. As confidence builds, you can feel the Sprint begin to slither, but milliseconds before your butt cheeks make a pre-emptive clench, the electronics gather things up. It's an initially spooky sensation, but such is the speed with which you learn to trust in McLaren's suite of driver aids that you can forget about managing the throttle from apex to exit, instead focusing all your attention on spotting your braking point and gauging your turn-in speed so that it precisely matches the grip available.

The same is true in the more aggressive PCC modes. You instantly feel the additional support from the stiffer suspension, and you also notice the electronics allow some slip angle before intervening. The subtlety remains, though, and with practice you can balance the Sprint at an optimal angle of slip, but while maintaining good forward momentum.

Where you have to tiptoe towards the limits of the road car you can mount a measured, sustained attack in the Sprint. Better still, the harder you push and the deeper you dig, the more ability you release in the car, which in



turn allows you to get more from yourself. It's a hugely impressive and thoroughly addictive process.

In terms of outright pace, McLaren is characteristically cagey, but Goodwin is quick to say they benchmarked the obvious rivals – that's to say the Ferrari 458 Challenge and Porsche 911 GT3 Cup racers – and that the Sprint more than held its own.

As next steps go, the Sprint is a pretty big one for McLaren customers who have until now satisfied themselves with the odd trackday in their road car, but the uplift in performance and increased intensity make for a driving experience that's on an altogether different level. At just under £200,000 (plus local taxes), the financial commitment is pretty significant too, but there's no question it's an extremely well-judged machine in which an experienced driver of fast road cars could take their on-track skills to the next level, and then try their hand at competitive motor racing. Whether you use it as a super-serious trackday toy, or a stepping stone to racing a full-blown 12C GT3, if you have the means to buy it, the GT Sprint makes a compelling case for your £200k. ☒

Richard Meaden (@DickieMeaden)



Opposite page: roll-cage is from the 12C GT3 racer; race seats and harnesses keep driver and passenger securely in place. **Above:** PCC controls work as before, but operate on an even more focused chassis

Specification

Engine	V8, 3799cc, twin-turbo
CO2	n/a
Power	616bhp @ 7500rpm
Torque	442lb ft @ 3000-7500rpm
0-62mph	3.1sec (estimated)
Top speed	204mph (estimated)
Basic price	£234,000

evo rating: ★★★★★

- ☑ Capable, involving and rewarding
- ☑ It's not the cheapest of trackday toys...

*When is the right time to
open a door for someone?*



FORD KUGA

➤ Hands-Free Power Tailgate

A car you can talk to? That takes your calls, reads your texts, plays your music and gives you directions? With the hands-free tailgate that opens when you wave your foot? Sounds like the SUV just got smart.

ford.co.uk/kuga

Official fuel consumption figures in mpg (l/100km) for the Ford Kuga range: urban 27.7-44.8 (10.2-6.3), extra urban 44.8-60.1 (6.3-4.7), combined 36.7-53.3 (7.7-5.3). Official CO₂ emissions 179-139g/km. 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. SYNC Voice Control System standard on all Kuga. Keyless Opening System with Hands-Free Power Tailgate optional extra on Titanium, Titanium X and Titanium X Sport. Not available on Zetec. Vehicle shown is the Ford Kuga Titanium X in Ginger Ale at extra charge with Appearance Pack (option) and 19" 5-spoke alloy wheels (option).



Go Further



📍 **Test location:** near Great Houghton, Northamptonshire, UK **GPS:** 52.21435,-0.85009

BMW 330d xDrive Touring

Four-wheel drive adds a worthy new dimension to powerful diesel 3-series

Photography: Dean Smith

T

THE BMW 330d XDRIVE

M Sport Touring appears to hold all the aces for the modern family. Few cars at any price promise to combine quality, versatility, economy, performance, entertainment and any-season useability. But for a shade under £40,000 this BMW combines 253bhp, 413lb ft, 0-62mph in 5.4sec, 52.3mpg and a four-wheel-drive system that has a nicely rear-biased 40/60 torque split but can apportion as much as 100 per cent of torque to either axle in 0.1 seconds. It also doesn't look anything like an X1... which can only be A Good Thing.

But does the xDrive system add anything other than weight and an imagined sense of security to the dynamic experience? The roads are slimy and the temperature is low, so we couldn't ask for a better time to find out.

The xDrive system itself consists of an electronically controlled multi-plate clutch behind the gearbox, from where a separate driveshaft runs forwards to power the front wheels. The system uses wheel speed data from the DSC sensors and steering angle information to constantly alter the torque split for optimum traction. The weight penalty is 65kg and a 330d xDrive will cost you £1515 more than a standard rear-drive version.

First impressions of the 330d xDrive are much like those for any other 3-series Touring. It really is a quality item and despite its ever-ballooning size this is still a car that suits our crowded island, feeling relatively compact and instantly putting you at ease. The 3-litre



turbocharged diesel engine punches hard and smooth, producing peak torque from as little as 1500rpm, while the superb eight-speed automatic gearbox (there is no manual offered) is adept at exploiting the delivery. The 330d feels genuinely fast and ever-ready to translate your commands into serious action.

However, while the innate rightness of the 3-series formula still shines through, there's no question that the F30-generation cars have lost some of the tension and response that's always been so central to the model's personality. The ride is much improved over the old car's but the sharpness in direction changes is gone and the body control can actually feel slightly ponderous, belying its hefty 1675kg. Toggle the Drive Performance Control up to Sport or Sport+ and some of the agility is restored, but the slightly lazy feel remains. As a result, in everyday driving the 330d xDrive feels more 'luxury' than 'sports' and less distinctive for it. It should be said that our test car's winter tyres no doubt add to this less precise feel and it would be improved with regular rubber. Even

so, it's disappointing that the 3-series feels well rounded almost to the point of anonymity.

And what of xDrive? Well, it's actually very good indeed. Whereas the rear-drive 3-series is quite a tricky car to really get to flow due to in-built understeer and then inside-wheelspin due to the lack of limited-slip diff, the xDrive car seems better able to find a nice rhythm. There's still some understeer but – again, on winter tyres at least – that push is quickly contained and then the rear axle starts to dictate the car's balance. For the most part you'll just feel the car neutralise and get terrific drive, but should you try to find the limits it tends to adopt a mild oversteery balance that is easy to modulate and never runs away into panic-inducing big angles.

It's nice to drive a powerful 3-series that can really deploy its power without getting ragged and one that feels comfortable being driven at its maximum potential. Is that worth £1515 over a rear-drive 330d? We'd say so. ☒

Jethro Bovingdon (@JethroBovingdon)

Specification

Engine	In-line 6-cyl, 2993cc, turbodiesel
CO2	142g/km
Power	254bhp @ 4000rpm
Torque	413lb ft @ 1500-3000rpm
0-62mph	5.4sec (claimed)
Top speed	155mph (limited)
Basic price	£39,915

evo rating: ★★★★★

- ⊕ More composed than rear driver, tail-led balance
- ⊖ Body control could be tighter, not as agile as you might expect

Test location: at and near Blyton Park, Lincolnshire, UK GPS: 53.45919, -0.69207

BBR MX-5 GT270

Turbo conversion boosts power to 268bhp for £6900 premium

Photography: Dean Smith



E ELSEWHERE IN THIS issue you'll find the new Jota Mazda MX-5 GT, which produces 203bhp at 7000rpm and 160lb ft at 5200rpm. It's a riot, and a large part of its character comes from the fact that its screaming normally aspirated 2-litre engine seems to have enough power when wound up to spin the rear wheels at will.

What hope, then, does the BBR GT270 have of its turbo-boosted power getting cleanly onto the road surface in the middle of the British winter? After all, it has a faintly ridiculous 268bhp at 7350rpm (up 110bhp on standard) and a killer 227lb ft at 5100rpm (up 88lb ft). With over 200lb ft available from 3000 to 7000rpm, you're entitled to think that this might be a very wild ride indeed.

As soon as the engine is up to temperature I brace myself and pin the throttle to its stop in third. The traction control light flashes momentarily but the delivery doesn't seem to stutter and the GT270 fires up to the limiter with a whole heap of force but very little sense of impending disaster. With the memory of the Jota fresh in my mind I can scarcely believe it, but time and again the GT270 confounds my expectations and finds really strong, reassuring traction even in the face of a Garrett GT25 ball-bearing turbo spinning at 100,000rpm.

Much of this control must be down to BBR's optional suspension set-up, which adopts Koni dampers and BBR's own springs and softens-off the rear axle to help the tyres stand a fighting chance against the torque. However, some of the credit should go to the engine's progressive delivery, too. BBR claims that it wanted to create an OEM-style power curve and ensure that



maximum power was delivered right near the rev limiter. It's worked beautifully and although the GT270 will make fearsome progress even if you never venture beyond 5000rpm, there's real reward to chasing the needle around to the red. BBR claims 0-60mph in 4.9sec and it certainly feels capable, combining that effortlessly big torque/little car muscle with a hair-raising top-end that befits a proper sports car. It would murder the Jota in terms of pure performance.

The conversion itself consists of that bespoke turbo, a new stainless steel manifold and downpipe (a full exhaust with tubular manifolds is also available), a front-mounted aluminium intercooler, an upgraded intake, all sorts of neat details like Teflon-coated oil and water lines, and an uprated Exedy clutch. Just 100 numbered units will be built as complete cars at £29,995 (the same price as the Jota) plus whatever additional trick bits might tempt you. Certainly you'll want to upgrade the suspension – either to BBR's own road-optimised set-up (£1190 fitted) or perhaps a more extreme coilover solution if you fancy doing regular trackdays. A standard MX-5 chassis with this level of power could get pretty, erm, interesting.

Specified with the BBR suspension, the GT270 is a compelling road car. Much of the vagueness

at the front is eradicated and the car feels more cohesive – body roll is much better contained and more uniform front-to-rear. Despite the strong traction there's oversteer whenever you'd like to indulge and the progressive power delivery means that, as in the standard car, you can creep up to it and then teeter either side of the limit as you gain in confidence. Having said that, the suspension doesn't magic up any genuine steering feel and when we tried the GT270 on track it showed its wilder side, sliding like a car possessed and requiring real concentration to keep under control. The temperatures all stayed well within tolerances, though – another endorsement of the work done to make this car useable and reliable.

There are a few other fancy bits of electronic trickery thanks to the EcuTek ECU: four maps to account for things like fuel quality; a variable-rev launch control function; and even downshift blips for the manual 'box. But the real appeal lies in the weight of the engine's punch, the way it's metered out so accurately, and how this car feels so poised and exciting on the road. ❌

Jethro Bovingdon (@JethroBovingdon)

Specification

Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 1999cc, turbo
CO2	n/a
Power	268bhp @ 7350rpm
Torque	227lb ft @ 5100rpm
0-60mph	4.9sec (claimed)
Top speed	150mph (limited)
Basic price	£29,995

evo rating: ★★★★★

- ➕ Huge performance increase, talented optional suspension
- ➖ Steering feel still lacking

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*Compared to Cooper Zeon 2XS



COOPERTIRES

DRIVING ON

📍 **Test location:** near Olney, Milton Keynes, UK **GPS:** 52.13540, -0.69998

Mazda 3

Don't be fooled by the unassuming looks. This five-door hatch packs an innovative engine and an accomplished chassis too

Photography: Dean Smith



I **IN A WORLD WHERE IT** often feels like mainstream cars are becoming more or less interchangeable, the new Mazda 3 is refreshing.

Not because of the way it looks. It's handsome enough in its own way, but regardless of Mazda's grandiose claims for the styling – we're told that it 'expresses dynamic motion in every detail' – it could wear the badge of at least half a dozen manufacturers without causing doubt. No, it's under the bonnet that petrol-powered versions of the new 3 gets properly interesting, with a radical new naturally aspirated engine.

Carmakers behave like unimaginative sheep when it comes to engine technology, and over the last few years downsizing and turbocharging have spread through the industry like a virus. The result has been a generation of powerplants that are good on official CO2 numbers, but are tight-feeling, characterless and considerably less accomplished at delivering real-world economy. Not Mazda, which has done pretty much the exact opposite with the new Skyactiv-G engine.

Not only does this engine do without forced induction, it also has more swept capacity (in its most basic form) than the engine it replaces. It uses both direct injection and a very high 14:1

compression ratio to boost economy, with the extra heat created by this monstrous amount of squeezing handled by some very cleverly shaped pistons and an extra-long 4-2-1 exhaust manifold to stop hot gases being pulled back into the engine. Combined with some trick low-friction engine internals, the upshot is an extremely competitive combination of power and CO2 numbers. Two versions are available, the basic one combining 118bhp and 119g/km, the more powerful one – which we're driving here – producing 163bhp and 135g/km.

Given its sky-high compression ratio, the engine unsurprisingly isn't a screamer – peak power arrives at 6000rpm and the red line is set just 500rpm higher. But it does have lag-free response and a perfectly proportional power delivery its over-boosted rivals can't match. The downside is a relative lack of low-down torque by modern standards: there's enough for everyday use, but to summon acceleration you have to get busy with the gearbox. Fortunately, the shift action is excellent.

Dynamically, the rest of the 3 is also pretty good. The chassis initially feels a bit over-firm by cooking hatchback standards, but it proves to be nicely compliant on the move and does an excellent job when asked to deal with rougher road surfaces. The electric power steering

system is decently weighted, and allows a moderate amount of feel to reach the helm. And although grip levels are modest compared to a proper hot hatch, the Mazda has a well-judged balance between front and rear ends that helps it to resist understeer under anything short of outright abuse. The only real complaint is with loud cruising, with lots of road noise in the cabin at motorway speeds. Real-world economy also falls short of the claimed 48.7mpg combined: we averaged high-30s in everyday use.

Smart, sensible and not a diesel – there's a lot to like about the 3. And although it can't deliver a huge amount of excitement, it does augur extremely well for a subsequent MPS version. ✕

Mike Duff

Specification

Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc
CO2	135g/km
Power	163bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque	155lb ft @ 4000rpm
0-62mph	8.2sec (claimed)
Top speed	130mph (claimed)
Basic price	£21,620

evo rating: ★★★★★

- ✚ Decent chassis, good engine, fills up from the green pump
- ✚ Lacks torque, over-dark interior, loud cruising

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JAGUAR.CO.UK/XFOFFERS

REPRESENTATIVE EXAMPLE

On the Road Price	£32,945
Finance Deposit Allowance	£3,324
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Purchase Fee (Included in final payment)	£10
Credit Facility Fee (Included in final payment)	£285
36 Monthly Payments	£329
Final Payment	£13,486
Total Amount Payable	£35,653
Duration of Agreement (Months)	37
Representative APR %	4.9% APR
Interest Rate (Fixed) %	4.35%



JAGUAR

HOW ALIVE ARE YOU?

Official fuel economy figures for the Jaguar XF Saloon range in mpg (l/100km): Urban 16.7-48.7 (16.9-5.8); Extra Urban 32.8-64.2 (8.6-4.4); Combined 24.4-57.7 (11.6-4.9). CO₂ emissions 270-129 (g/km). Official EU Test Figures. For comparison purposes only. Real world figures may differ. *Plus Deposit and Final Payment, Representative 4.9% APR available on new Jaguar XF Saloon and Sportbrake models only (excluding all 163PS models apart from Luxury), registered between 2nd January 2014 and 31st March 2014 at participating dealers only. Finance is subject to status and only available to applicants aged 18 and over resident in Mainland UK and N.Ireland. Indemnities may be required. This finance offer is available from Black Horse Limited trading as Jaguar Financial Services, St William House, Tresillian Terrace, Cardiff CF10 5BH. **This promotion applies to eligible Jaguar XF Saloon and Sportbrake cars registered between 2nd January 2014 and 31st March 2014 at participating Jaguar dealers. Services must take place at participating Jaguar Authorised Repairers. The 'free servicing certificate' should be presented to the dealership at time of booking the vehicle in for a service in order to qualify. The promotion is only available at the point of registration of the vehicle in the customer's name. Free servicing covers scheduled servicing and associated parts (oils, hydraulic fluids, seals, filters, elements and antifreeze) and labour for three years from the date of invoice up to a maximum of three services (3 years or 48,000 miles diesel / 45,000 miles petrol, whichever is sooner). Scheduled servicing intervals are detailed in the vehicle handbook. Excludes wear and tear items such as shock absorbers, exhaust systems, tyres, windscreens, windows, engines, transmissions, electronics, cost of fitting or repairing accessories and any form of accident damage and non-routine servicing work, parts or labour. The service package is not a warranty package. The free service promotion is only valid for the vehicle purchased.



📍 Test location: Box Hill, Surrey, UK GPS: 51.25395, -0.31253

Abbey Motorsport Toyota GT86

British tuner's supercharger conversion gives Toyota's coupe the extra power it's crying out for **Photography:** Dean Smith

LET'S RECAP. THE BACK-to-basics formula for the Toyota GT86 and its Subaru BRZ clone was meant to shift the emphasis away from tiresome modern obsessions such as power and cornering grip and return us to a time when joy was an affordable, front-engined, rear-driven coupe with skinny tyres, and a damp roundabout. Mission accomplished? Kind of. To drive a GT86 is to reconnect with an earlier paradigm when peak engine outputs weren't just lower but had to be mercilessly hunted down with a pack of

revs – which, in turn, made a slick, short-throw gearchange pretty much a necessity to keep the thrill of the chase alive.

The GT86 has one of those, and a nice low centre of gravity, too. It changes direction alertly and feeds a constant news stream to the seat of the driver's pants, all the better to act on should any gratuitous oversteering opportunity present itself. It's this kind of old-school, rather frenetic involvement that the Toyota and Subaru deliver in spades.

It's the prescription for good old-fashioned fun that Toyota and Subaru obviously conceived

from the off. But prescriptive it is. And it sells the car's potential short. Thing is, the GT86 only needs a bit more power (and admittedly quite a lot more torque) to broaden its dynamic repertoire and become a steelier steer without compromising its playful spirit. As such, it's something of a gift to the aftermarket tuning fraternity, and the number of firms offering a performance upgrade seems to grow monthly, especially in Japan. Closer to home, Surrey-based Nissan Skyline specialist Abbey Motorsport has started offering a couple of packages that send more poke in the direction

Right: supercharger sits exposed on top of the flat-four. **Below right:** new multi-function gauge sits in air vent

of those meagrely dimensioned rear Michelins and a fruitier soundtrack to the cabin – and, indeed, anyone within earshot.

Stage 1.5 will set you back £1249 and comprises a re-map, HKS air filter and Cobra de-cat exhaust system. Power jumps from 197 to 212bhp, with torque a little fatter at 161lb ft (up from 151). ‘Most customers go for this first as a sort of toe-in-the-water exercise,’ explains Abbey Motorsport director Mark Gillam. But for our morning on the roads around Surrey’s picturesque Box Hill he’s brought along a GT86 with the rather more serious Stage 1.5+SC conversion, which adds a Sprintex supercharger/charge-cooler kit (running 0.9bar boost) plus an oil cooler and sundry ancillaries. And that gives you 270bhp and 206lb ft. It costs £4452 as an upgrade from Stage 1.5, but you can have the whole lot done in one go for £5441.

Under the bonnet, the little supercharger sits proudly atop the four-pot boxer motor with no obvious giveaways to betray its aftermarket origins. The engine fires up instantly and apart from a deeper exhaust burble, you could be in a regular GT86. You sit low and snug, the stubby gearlever snicks satisfyingly through its short-throw gate, the ride is unapologetically firm and the steering feels direct and precise.

Initial throttle response is characteristically crisp and linear, but Mark warns that this car has a slightly more aggressive throttle map than he, personally, feels is ideal, though it’s simply a matter of plugging in the laptop to soften it – whatever the customer wants. If that was me, I’d be happy to keep it as it is, especially if I craved reassurance I’d spent my £5.4k wisely.

Push a little harder and suddenly the GT86 wakes up and goes for it in startling fashion, the need to wring its neck to feel you’re going fast replaced by a sustained lunge from around 2000rpm and a sense of urgency – heightened, it must be said, by the swelling buzz-saw shriek of the supercharger – that would make a Porsche Cayman S feel tardy.

Keep the stability control in Sport mode and you can go remarkably quickly while nibbling amusingly at the neutral/oversteer interface. Switch it off and, well, you have to concentrate that bit harder, especially in the wet. That, of course, is a good thing. The GT86 you thought you knew becomes the one you hardly dared imagine. ☒

David Vivian (@davidjvivan)



Specification

Engine	Flat-four, 1998cc, supercharger
CO2	n/a
Power	270bhp @ 7500rpm
Torque	206lb ft @ 5500rpm
0-62mph	5.5sec (estimated)
Top speed	155mph (limited)
Conversion price	£5441

evo rating: ★★★★★

- ⊕ Bags of power and character, drifts on demand
- ⊖ Needs care in the wet



About Abbey Motorsport

STARTED BY MARK Gillam’s father 40 years ago, Abbey Motorsport today can lay claim to being the longest-running tuner of Nissan Skylines and GT-Rs in Europe. The company’s tuning philosophy is ‘useable power’ and it claims that whatever the modification – from 350 to over 800bhp in the case of its GT-R work – ‘all start,

run and drive with the docility of a standard car’.

As well as developing power upgrades for the GT86 and Subaru BRZ, Abbey Motorsport has also infiltrated the British drag racing scene and re-engineered John Bradshaw’s Project GTST Skyline, which currently has a best standing quarter-mile time of 7.68sec at 178mph.



📍 **Test location:** near Harrold, Bedfordshire, UK **GPS:** 52.21134, -0.60803

Driven twin test: Audi RS6 Avant v Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG S Estate

These two German estates sit at the top of the fast load-lugger class. But does the Audi's four-wheel drive give it the edge over the rear-driven and more powerful Merc?

Photography: Dean Smith



A **AS A GREAT ADVERTISING** copywriter once said, power is nothing without control. But as power levels continue to rise, so that control becomes harder to deliver. It's a point made in very short order when you drive the Mercedes E63 AMG S Estate down a cold, damp road on its standard summer-spec tyres and find the stability control light comes on in time with the throttle pedal.

Now, to be fair to Mercedes, it did offer to send us this über E-class on the winter tyres it prefers to slot under its press cars at this time of year. But as its purpose was to go head-to-head with our long-term Audi RS6 Avant, itself sitting on a set of 7000-mile-old Pirelli P Zero Rossos, that didn't really seem fair. And it certainly helps to reveal the fundamental differences between these two cars.

This is a very quiet bit of the performance car world. Indeed, both the cars here are pretty much each other's only direct competition. People with this much money in search of both performance and practicality are depressingly prone to picking a big SUV instead. Audi has long since owned fast estates: this RS6 is the third generation to wear the badge. And with BMW having chickened out of producing an M5 version of the current 5-series Touring, it's up to Mercedes to try and keep Audi honest, with both AMG and AMG S versions of the E-class

Estate in addition to the stylish but less practical CLS63 Shooting Brake.

Actually, hold that thought. I'm not sure the CLS63 is more stylish than either of these mega-fast load-luggers. Maybe finding estate cars attractive is just a sign of getting older, but I reckon both these cars look brilliant – especially compared to the sort of hulking SUVs those with more money than taste tend to gravitate towards. The RS6 looks ultra-aggressive even without the optional £4000 Carbon Styling Package that includes the 'quattro'-branded front grille, while those vast alloys fill arches that are set in flanks with more flare than a mid-'70s disco. Next to the Avant, you'd almost say the Merc looks subtle, but there's still a definite muscularity to its tighter contours and filled-out stance. You have to know what you're looking at to spot that this isn't a body-kitted CDI on big wheels. But that's part of the appeal.

Comparing cabins reverses things. The Mercedes feels more different to its lesser brethren and a bit more special, containing an Alcantara-trimmed steering wheel with fat metal gear paddles behind it, and AMG's familiar gear selector sitting between the seats. Next to this is the transmission mode dial and buttons for the stability control, switchable dampers and 'AMG' mode. By contrast, barring a few graphics, the RS6 doesn't feel much different to a top-spec A6, with some carbon trim

and Alcantara door panels, but its switchable dynamic modes handled through the standard Drive Select system. The Audi's steering wheel is leather-trimmed and doesn't feel as nice as the Merc's, though it will undoubtedly hold up better after a few years of sweaty palms.

Compare spec sheets and the Merc should have this tied up. Both cars use twin-turbocharged V8s, but the E63 S's extra displacement (5.5 litres versus 4.0) gives it the edge in terms of power. The standard E63 AMG is only 3bhp down on the 552bhp Audi, and the 577bhp S turns that deficit into a 25bhp gain. On torque, meanwhile, it's 590lb ft to the Mercedes against 516 for the Audi, so it looks like a clear victory for the E.

Except, of course, it isn't – largely because the AMG has to channel all of that urge exclusively through its rear wheels, while the RS6 can distribute its torque to all four corners. Even on the official figures – doubtless gathered on some bone-dry German test track – the Audi has a clear advantage on 0-62mph time with 3.9sec playing the Merc's 4.2. Swap the environment for a wet British winter and the difference is enough to separate the two cars by a comprehensive margin. 'Wouldn't see which way it went' might be a horrendous, over-used car journo cliché, but it happens to be true here.

The Audi sticks and goes. The amount of grip it can generate from reasonably well-worn summer tyres on cold and wet surfaces is frankly astonishing, and you'd struggle to find any other car that can deliver this level of performance with so little apparent effort. The engine is quick to spool up, and although the eight-speed automatic gearbox can be slow to react, the sheer quantity of across-the-board torque means the RS6 never feels less than very quick. Traction is comprehensive: you can pull out of a junction or go for a big-throttle overtake on a wet road, confident you'll get the acceleration you're asking for.

The AMG, however, struggles to deliver its massive performance on wet roads. The stability control ensures there's never any untoward drama, flashing its yellow light when the rear wheels run out of traction and reacting instantly to prevent slip or slide. But in the wet, or even on cold, dry tarmac, you really don't have to push to find yourself against this electronic wall. Winter tyres would undoubtedly make a difference, but they still wouldn't be enough to get the E63 S on parity with the RS6.

Low-grip pace aside, the E63 S makes a far better case for itself. For a start, it possesses the more characterful engine, its V8 having both crisper reactions and a nicer soundtrack,



Above: RS6 cabin feels lacking in special touches. **Below:** Audi's 4WD system is a huge boon on wet roads





especially at low revs. AMG's MCT gearbox (essentially an auto without a torque converter and with a wet start-up clutch) is clearly superior to the Audi's conventional auto, too, changing gears more quickly and considerably more intelligently if left to its own devices.

We've never been fans of the RS6's steering and its strange, synthesised weighting, and the Merc really shows it up: the E63's helm is both lower geared and lighter and is all the better for it, offering a far better feel of what the front end is up to, especially in wet conditions. And the E63's relative lack of driven wheels gives it another neat trick: the ability, with the stability systems off, to play the hooligan. It's something it seems to relish, with progressive oversteer pretty much on demand. It can't match the Audi on pace, but it's definitely more amusing.

The Merc's problem is that buyers in this segment want four-wheel drive, a point proved in the markets where the company offers 4-Matic versions of its AMG saloons and estates, and where buyers overwhelmingly opt for them. Sadly the location of the front transfer case means the system can't be combined with right-hand drive, denying us four-wheel-drive E-classes and S-classes, at least for now. That's a shame, because although the E63 S wagon is the driver's choice here, it's impossible not to conclude that the RS6 is better-suited to life in the British winter. ❌

Mike Duff



Above: E63 S easily delivers oversteer when driver aids are off. **Left:** Alcantara wheel is a welcome AMG addition

Specifications

	AUDI RS6 AVANT	MERCEDES-BENZ E63 AMG S ESTATE
Engine	V8, 3993cc, twin-turbo	V8, 5461cc, twin-turbo
CO2	229g/km	234g/km
Power	552bhp @ 5700rpm	577bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque	516lb ft @ 1750rpm	590lb ft @ 2000-4500rpm
0-62mph	3.9sec (claimed)	4.2sec (claimed)
Top speed	155mph (limited)	155mph (limited)
Basic price	£76,985	£85,880

evo rating: ★★★★★☆

- ⊕ Performance, foolproof powertrain, looks
- ⊖ Torque converter gearbox, gloopy steering

evo rating: ★★★★★★

- ⊕ Engine, quick-witted gearbox, V8 soundtrack
- ⊖ Permanent glow of the stability control light...

Watches

This month, a Scottish motorsport tribute, an AMG-inspired ceramic special and a Bugatti throwback

Words: Simon de Burton

1 Bremont Ecurie Ecosse Edition

Price: £4500 **From:** bremont.com

Ecurie Ecosse has been in the news following December's Bonhams sale of a selection of former team cars from the 1950s and '60s plus its famous Commer race transporter – all for a combined total of over £8million. Now the modern-day team has released this special-edition Bremont chronograph based on the brand's ALT 1-C pilot's watch. It features the Ecurie Ecosse logo on the dial and a leather strap based on the team colour of Flag Metallic Blue. Sixty are available, direct from Bremont.

2 IWC Ingenieur AMG Black Series Ceramic

Price: £8750 **From:** thewatchgallery.co.uk

Ten IWC watches were launched last year to mark the brand's link with the Mercedes F1 team. Among them is this understated AMG Black Series model, which features a 46mm ceramic case containing IWC's simple but superb in-house automatic movement. The five screws holding it together hark back to watch designer Gérald Genta's 1970s reworking of the original '50s Ingenieur, while you can choose from a black dial and rubberised textile strap or a brown dial with a calfskin strap.

3 Parmigiani Bugatti Aerolithe

Price: £20,000 **From:** parmigiani.ch

After more than a decade of making its limited-edition transverse-movement Bugatti watches costing up to £250,000 apiece, high-end brand Parmigiani has just released the more conventional (and more realistically priced) Aerolithe, which is named after the famous Elektron-bodied Bugatti of 1935. The deep-blue dial and red lacquered indicators give the watch a suitably racy appearance, while the strap lugs recall the typical style of the art-deco era. Also, note how the left-hand lugs incorporate the push pieces for stopping and starting the flyback chronograph mechanism. Disappointingly, the case is not made from Elektron but from titanium and white gold.



Watch tech

Hydro-mechanical horology

Having spent many a decade perfecting the art of keeping liquids out of watch cases, one of the industry's more avant-garde makers is now working to keep them in. This 'hydro-mechanical horology' has been pioneered by HYT, which broke new ground with the launch of its H1 watch in 2012.

The main feature of the H1 is that instead of displaying the minutes with a conventional hand, it does so by using a fluorescent liquid that moves slowly around a capillary tube on the outer edge of the dial.

The liquid starts out in a reservoir at one end of the capillary, while a second reservoir at the other end collects a clear, viscous fluid that provides resistance. These reservoirs are linked to a pair of piston-driven bellows, which are in turn connected to a relatively normal, hand-wound mechanical watch movement, the action of which drives the bellows – one expanding, one compressing – to move the liquids around the 11cm-long borosilicate glass capillary with an internal diameter of 1mm. The hour, meanwhile, is shown by a single conventional hand.

When the fluorescent liquid reaches the six o'clock position, having made a full circuit of the tube, the 'issuing' pump compresses to allow its reservoir to be re-filled so that the whole process can start again.

Needless to say, such complex watchmaking technology doesn't come cheap. The H1 has a starting price of £34,000 in titanium, with the next-generation 'H2' model, which is due to go on sale in February, costing from £93,000.



Now & Then



NOW Richard Mille RM011 Worn by: Jules Bianchi

In *evo* 191 we highlighted the Armin Strom watch worn by Marussia driver Max Chilton. His team-mate Jules Bianchi, however, favours a Richard Mille RM011. Mille started backing the young driver in 2007, when he was an 18-year-old racing at Formula Renault level.



THEN Patek Philippe Reference 1526

Worn by: Briggs Cunningham

Cunningham was a gentleman racer in the 1950s, establishing his own race team and constructor. He appreciated a quality timepiece, and his steel-cased 1949 Patek Philippe perpetual calendar watch fetched \$4million at Christie's in 2008.





German test ground, Swedish playground

The Swedish landscape is both beautiful and functional. It's even used by German brands as a testing ground due to its challenging weather and driving conditions. But only Volvo cars are really born there.

The Volvo V40 Cross Country.



VOLVOCARS.CO.UK

Official fuel consumption for the Volvo V40 Cross Country Range in MPG (l/100km): Urban 24.4 (11.6) – 67.3 (4.2), Extra Urban 44.1 (6.4) – 80.7 (3.5), Combined 34.0 (8.3) – 74.3 (3.8). CO₂ Emissions 194 – 99g/km. MPG figures are obtained from laboratory testing intended for comparisons between vehicles and may not reflect real driving results.

Simulations

The latest news, kit and reviews from the world of racing sims

Words: Kim Adams and David Lillywhite



WRC 4

Formats: PS3, PSVita, Xbox 360, PC Price: £34.99 From: www.wrcthegame.com

RALLYING MAY HAVE its first new world champion for nearly a decade but you can continue the Sébastien Loeb domination with the latest incarnation of the console game – WRC 4.

As the officially licensed game you get all the 2013 drivers and cars, as well as the supporting runners from the WRC2, WRC3 and Junior WRC classes. Sadly the historic cars from the previous game have been pensioned off, but there is instead a welcome focus on the rallies and stages themselves. In fact this wider game experience is the major reason for WRC 3 players to upgrade.

WRC 4 is an odd mix of superbly detailed cars and scenery – which look even better in this version – and a somewhat arcade-style driving experience. There are clear differences between the classes, with the top-level WRC machines being quite a handful, but there's precious little between cars despite their differing ratings. It's the same with surfaces: moving from tarmac to gravel only makes the steering a little slower rather than inducing a dramatic loss of grip as it usually would in real life. The driving changes in this version have also made the machines darty and hard to drift through a series of corners almost regardless of the surface.

Despite these deficiencies there's plenty to entertain, with single-stage, rally or career modes plus online play made all the more immersive thanks to the almost video-like graphics – right down to changing light conditions depending on the time of day. Yes, there's the odd gremlin, like the overhead view which can make the car look like it's floating, but from any angle the game really draws you in.

Once you've overcome the snappy handling and mastered the art of the power broadside handbrake turn – there are dozens of hairpins on pretty much all surfaces – it's relatively easy to work your way through the career mode from 2WD Junior WRC cars to full-on WRC machines. You don't have to wait, however, as all levels can be enjoyed in single-stage or rally mode. If you want more of a challenge you can increase the speed of the opposition to match your own skills or alter the time you have to master the routes, while there is a range of driver aids if you're struggling.

The stages may seem to take an age to load, with plenty of clunking from our test PS3, and choosing team managers and so on in career mode is irrelevant. But the game's core driving challenge should keep you entertained. ❏

Peripherals

THE SIMULATOR

Price: from £12,000 From: www.thesimulator.co.uk



IF YOU WERE expecting a game, you'll be shocked at the price. If you were expecting a professional-level simulator, you'll be shocked it doesn't cost more.

This is a full-motion set-up; you're moved from side to side, backwards and forwards, up and down as you corner, accelerate, brake and bounce across kerbs, and it simulates rear traction loss so you truly feel the slide. A hydraulic pedal box ensures the best possible brake feel.

The iRacing software (others can be used) gives a healthy choice of circuits and cars, around 50 per cent of which are American, though the list

of more familiar tarmac and machinery is growing. We chose Brands Hatch, initially in the MP4-12C. Familiar territory!

Tracks are laser-scanned, millimetre-correct down to camber changes, bumps and changes in tarmac. Cars are simulated from manufacturer data, and boy does it feel (and sound) right. A few laps will have you sweating, mad-eyed and lap time-obsessed. We loved the Ford GT and Lotus 79, while the Lotus 49 was just difficult...

You really can learn a circuit this way, without the cost of tyres, fuel, transport (or accident damage). Or you can just have a load of fun with it. ❏





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Outside Line

by RICHARD MEADEN



Meaden pines for a return to the days when evocative race and rally cars spawned evocative road cars

COMPILE A LIST OF GREAT, COLLECTIBLE and desirable drivers' cars of the last 30 years or so and the chances are homologation specials will rank highly amongst them. Of those, it's safe to assume products of the Group B and GT1 eras remain some of the most extreme and extraordinary. However, it's the more attainable, less exotic cars based closely on production models that tend to press our buttons, because they better connect us to the sport we love and the heroes behind the wheel.

Sometimes the pursuit of maximum in-built potential leads to homologation specials that are actually rather flawed as road cars. The original Escort Cosworth is one such example, with its high-rise wing and big, laggy turbo. Once 2500 cars had been built to satisfy Group A regs, Ford updated it with a smaller turbo and made the whale tail a delete option. This version was much the better road car, but if I was to buy one now it'd be the early, laggy car I'd want, because it's the one with true motorsport pedigree. Perverse? Perhaps, but only if you attempt to apply a layman's logic to a delightfully contrary world where motorsport fairy dust magics flaws into virtues.

I was a teenager when Group A followed in Group B's tragic wake. I remember thinking it was limp by comparison, yet it spawned some wonderful road, race and rally cars. As the manufacturers got to grips with what was required to win, they built a succession of increasingly special road cars that normal people could genuinely go into their local dealership and buy. Notable Group A cars include the E30 M3, 190 Cosworth, Sierra Cosworth, Lancia Integrale and Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution.

Fast-forward to 2014 and motorsport seems selfish and irrelevant by comparison. Sébastien Loeb might well be the most talented rally driver of his or any generation, but his WRC Citroëns were based on some of the least inspiring road cars in recent memory. As a result he was denied the chance to dazzle us in cars we could relate to and ache to own. This disconnect was further highlighted by the mk2 Focus RS road car: it was undeniably exciting but its five-pot turbo motor and front-wheel drive bore no relation to the WRC car's four-cylinder turbo engine and 4WD.

Much like today's WRC cars, modern Touring Cars mean little to you or me. For instance, when did you last watch a World Touring Car Championship race? Hmm, thought so. But that's no surprise when the cars – Chevrolet Cruze or Lada Granta, anyone? – are less appealing than haemorrhoids. The BTCC offers diverse grids and plenty of rough-and-tumble, but the cars are still lumpy-looking, stropy-sounding tin boxes. If I wanted to watch blokes crashing repmobiles into each other, I'd spend more time on the M25.

Of all the current motorsport categories, GT3 is far and away the most compelling and successful, but even here the fabulous cars you see on track are often only very distant relatives of those you can buy and drive on the road. And this is all because the rules are framed in such a way as to enable manufacturers to go racing without having to build and sell showroom equivalents. One of my favourite GT3 cars is the BMW Z4, but for reasons best known to the rulemakers, BMW is not required to build a V8-powered Z4 road car for us to buy. Likewise the Nissan GT-R and Audi R8 GT3 racers are rear-wheel drive, despite the road cars being four-wheel drive. Not even the 991 GT3 is immune: the road cars use new-generation direct fuel injection flat-sixes while the racers continue with an evolution of the old Mezger motor. The cars and racing are great, but when it's so contrived,

'A reinvention of homologation rules would give us road cars with genuine motorsport pedigree'

what does it actually mean?

When you're a professional keyboard warrior, it's easy to ignore the politics and technicalities that come with running top-level motorsport, but who wouldn't love to see Aston Martin make a truly lightweight, wide-body V12 Vantage GT3 road car, or to see Audi, Bentley and Nissan build wild rear-drive showroom versions of the R8, Conti V8 and GT-R? Failing that, I'd be fascinated to see how all-wheel-drive R8, Conti V8 and GT-R race cars would compare against rear-drive opposition from Ferrari, Lamborghini, McLaren and Porsche. Furthermore, if they had a major advantage would we see Porsche respond by building and homologating a 991 Carrera 4 RS?

Motorsport has given us some of the finest road cars ever made, but it's been too long since their number were bolstered by new true homologation specials. It would most likely need an initial backward step in terms of pace and drama on the race tracks and rally stages, but just as Group A shaped a generation of brilliant drivers' cars after the rarefied lunacy of Group B, so a reinvention of today's homologation rules would serve to give us road cars with genuine motorsport pedigree and reconnect us to the racing and rallying we once loved. FIA, over to you... ✕

 @DickieMeaden

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



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Petrolhead

by RICHARD PORTER



Porter's pre-Christmas plans to test the Infiniti Q50 Hybrid were hampered by some canine intervention

T

THINGS I LIKE ABOUT MY DOG: AMUSING ears. Excuse me for a good walk. Brings me her toys and then looks really pleased with herself. Things I don't like about my dog: we'll come to that in a minute. But first, the Infiniti Q50.

What do you know about Infiniti? I'm guessing not very much, unless you're American. Infinitis are quite big in America. In Europe, they are not. The Q50 signals a new push to change that. It's a rival for the BMW 3-series or Merc C-class and, since Infiniti sponsors the Red Bull F1 team, they're making claims that it was signed off by Sebastian Vettel who, apparently, is the company's 'director of performance'. I was quite surprised to hear of this appointment, though probably not as surprised as he was.

Anyway, it's easy to be snide about stuff like this but it can seem pretty hollow if you haven't driven the car. So I asked to borrow a Q50. No problem, said the PR man, we can send one over the Friday before Christmas. I checked my diary and realised I was scheduled to get drunk that day. That's fine, said the PR man, we'll drop it at your house while you're out and pop the keys through the letterbox.

Which brings me back to my dog – you might be able to see where this is going. The Friday before Christmas arrived. It was late afternoon. My wife rang me as soon as she got home. 'I've got some good news and some bad news,' she said. 'The good news is, the car's here. The bad news is, erm... the dog's eaten the keys...'

At this point I wasn't drunk. But I wished I was. This was very, very bad. Someone had kindly dropped a £40,000 car at my house and the stupid hairy hearth rug that gnaws my skirting boards had scooped a very vital part of it. Calmly but firmly, I instructed my wife to take the dog to Battersea and then I went to the pub. While there, I realised that the Infiniti Q50 has keyless go. If the relevant chip was still intact perhaps the system would work, as long as the dog itself was nearby. Indeed, perhaps the car would keep functioning for the foreseeable future as long as I scooped up a week's worth of mutt turds and carried them with me in a bag.

I was still finessing this unhygienically ingenious plan when I got home and discovered that, strictly speaking, the dog had not eaten the keys. What the woofing moron had actually done was chew them until the tiny keyless lozenge had been reduced to its surprisingly numerous constituent parts. I resisted the temptation to throw her favourite ball in the fire and went to bed.

The next morning, I had more chance to look at the immobile Q50 parked outside. Some bits of it are quite good, notably the soft swoop of the rear pillar and flaring of the back wing, but with its Lexus-ish nose and generic tail it's not a distinctive car. That said,

parked back-to-back with my neighbour's outgoing-shape C-class it did look more modern. Conversely, my neighbour's Merc had one major advantage over this particular Infiniti in that it could both start and run, as it would since its key hadn't been mauled by a panting oaf nor were any crucial parts of its ignition system making their way around a mongrel's digestive tract.

On closer inspection, the wreckage of the fob contained an actual key, which had emerged unscathed. If I could use a real key in a real lock perhaps the car was useable after all. My wife warned me that she'd tried that last night and it just made the alarm go off. Pfft, I said, I'm sure there's a way round it. So I went outside, put the actual key in the actual door lock and promptly set the alarm off. I got into the car anyway and tried to find the ignition barrel in the hope that the siren would stop. There is no ignition barrel. It's keyless or nothing. And the keyless key was

“The good news is the car's here,” my wife said. “The bad news is the dog's eaten the keys...”

mostly in pieces on my worktop, or in small splintered parts shortly to make a painful exit from a hairy idiot's anus.

I sat disconsolately inside the Infiniti for a few minutes wondering what it was like to drive, then went back in the house. After a few days I finally agreed to start talking to the dog again.

In case you're wondering, I drove the Q50 in the end after Infiniti sent over the spare key. It turned out to be a mixed bag. The V6 makes a nice growly noise and, in the Hybrid model, joins forces with an electric motor to provide subtle but significant acceleration. On the other hand, the snarly sportiness of the petrol engine is at odds with the relaxed, quiet progress of the low-speed electro mode. I'd also say the ride is too hard, the brakes are dreadfully inconsistent and the drive-by-wire steering, though clever and more normal-feeling than expected, isn't as sweet as a mechanical link. Also, the key isn't dog-proof.

Truth be told, this car needed to be better-looking, dynamically superior or just massively cheaper than any rival, and it isn't. As a result, I can't imagine it will make Infiniti a household name. Dogs, on the other hand, remain strangely popular. Although not in our house for a few days before Christmas. ❧

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

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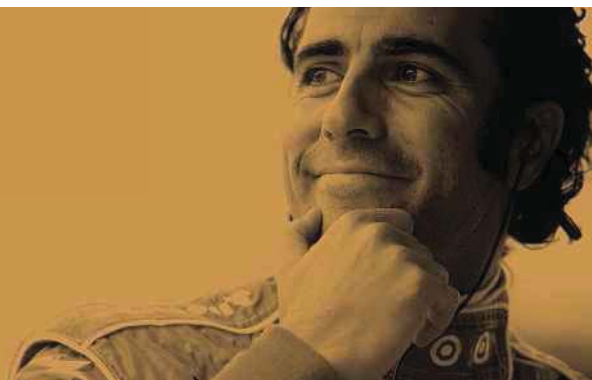
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by DARIO FRANCHITTI



After media criticism of the Porsche Carrera GT following the accident that killed Paul Walker, owner Dario mounts a passionate defence

LIKE MILLIONS OF FANS AND CAR enthusiasts across the world, I was shocked by the tragic death of the actor Paul Walker late last year. We never met, but clearly he was a guy passionate about cars who found himself in the wrong place at the wrong time. As you'll know, Paul was passenger in a Porsche Carrera GT when his friend Roger Rodas lost control with devastating consequences for both men and their families.

Inevitably, the reaction in the media and on platforms like Twitter was overwhelming, but I have to say I was genuinely shocked and disgusted by some of the reports that followed; sensationalist nonsense that firstly pilloried the Carrera GT then switched to a nasty kind of fatalism. 'They were speeding and so what did they expect?' seemed to be the underlying message. I've never seen such ill-informed hysteria and it really turned my stomach.

My own Carrera GT is currently on its way back from the US to my home in Scotland and during my rehabilitation I've had time to think a lot more about my cars and what they mean to me. Now, I won't pretend that the Carrera GT is as easy to drive as your average hatchback, but to suggest that it's inherently dangerous is absurd. Any car at this level requires a high level of concentration and we all know that – certainly anyone experienced in high-performance cars would always approach a supercar with respect. So the Carrera GT demands concentration. To me it's almost like the next generation of Ferrari F40: the drivetrains couldn't be more different, of course, but both require the driver to really think about what they're doing – which of course makes them incredibly rewarding, too.

It's also true to say that no two Carrera GTs (or F40s, come to think of it) are identical. Because of its race car roots, there's a level of adjustability built into the suspension that means the car can be tailored to a driver's individual tastes. I think that's why **evo's** road testers can often come back with subtly different conclusions when they drive different examples – one might absolutely blow your mind, while the next might seem nervous or whatever. From personal experience I can also say that keeping on top of maintenance and consumables is absolutely key: a Carrera GT on brand-new tyres has unbelievable grip and fantastic chassis balance, but one on five-year-old tyres, no matter the tread depth, can be much trickier. I always make sure my cars are perfect in terms of this stuff because although I don't get to drive them as often as I'd like, when I do I drive them properly.

I love to jump into my Carrera GT for short hops to the shops, the

garage, or just for a blast for the pure enjoyment of driving the thing. It's just incredible. I think my best-ever drive in it was from Nashville down to Barber Motorsports Park in Birmingham, Alabama, for an early drive event for potential 918 Spyder customers. Me and a couple of pals went together – me in the GT, joined by a 599 GTO and a 4.0 RS. It's not a long journey direct, about 200 miles, but we went the longest possible way that we could find on empty back-roads. In the end we did over 350 miles and it was epic.


It's hard to single out the CGT's defining feature. The 5.7-litre V10 is fabulous, especially when you remove the silencers – it screams! There is no word to describe the noise other than ridiculous. But everything about the car – the handling, the brake feel, the engine response – makes it a great thing to just get into and drive. It immerses you completely and it naturally

'Everything about the Carrera GT – the handling, the brake feel, the engine response – makes it a great thing to just get in and drive. It immerses you completely'

makes you focus for every single second.

The Carrera GT is sharing container space across the Atlantic Ocean with probably my least dynamic car: a 1965 Plymouth Sport Fury convertible that was one of the pace cars at the Indy 500. I wanted it because '65 was the year Jimmy Clark won in the Lotus 38 – he even skipped the Monaco Grand Prix to go and win at Indy. Anyway, the Fury is the size of a small house. I've only driven it twice so far but it's hilarious and feels more like sailing a boat than driving. With drum brakes all round, let's just say it's not quite a Carrera GT! I expect I'll only drive it very occasionally but it's a bit of fun and it means an awful lot to me because of the connection with Jimmy.

I guess this period of reflection has been great for me to rekindle that excitement about driving for driving's sake. I'm really looking forward to having more time to do that, to plan road trips and just take off. Every moment in a car you really love is to be cherished, right? ☒

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

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What's fracking in your neighbourhood this month?



Letter of the Month

Patience is a virtue

Unlike Graeme Kidson (Inbox 192) and probably 99.9 per cent of *evo* readers, I've both seen and heard a P1 on the road and up close after some great stalking. I can wholeheartedly assure him and other readers that the P1 is phenomenally beautiful in motion – and from a distance of two feet.

The F1 is from a different age, with 20 years of eulogies and reputation-building articles, books and interviews behind it. Comparisons between the F1 and P1 are both unfair and invalidated by this. Maybe in 2033 we will be in a position to compare both on a more level playing field. Until then, let's see the P1 for what it is: the most amazing car ever made.

Ben Armitage

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Dour downsizing

I fully share Mike Duff's reflections on the new Audi S3 Saloon (*evo* 192) being a close match to a B5 S4, a car which I owned back in 1998.

Unfortunately the laggy and boomy four-pot engine is not a match for the old low-pressure twin-turbo V6 in terms of sensations and power delivery. Likewise, my current B8 S4 is probably the closest possible match to the C5-version RS6 I owned back in 2002, in both size and performance, except that the supercharged V6 does not even come close to that fantastic NASCAR-like V8 soundtrack.

The name of the game is bigger cars, smaller engines. Compactness, a key ingredient to driving enjoyment on twisty roads, is becoming a scarce commodity. And compactness linked to a charismatic engine is even scarcer: if you want a new practical sports saloon or estate today with the footprint of a B5 S4 (or E46 3-series for that matter), you are looking at the Golf/A3/1-series/A-class segment. That mostly means low-displacement, high-pressure four-pot turbos (with the notable exceptions of M135i/M235i and RS3). Yes, the numbers of this new generation of engines are impressive, but unfortunately, despite sound generators and the like, the sensations and thrills are definitely not at the same level.

Lucio Pompeo

Mini magic

I was very interested to read Ian Eveleigh's report on the Mini JCW GP1 against the GP2 (*evo* 192). I have had a GP1 from new and would agree with his assessment of more compliant suspension. I have fitted mine with Koni FSD dampers and Eibach springs and these take the ride and handling to a new level even with run-flat tyres



Above: Dave Davies agrees that the first-gen Mini GP1 is superbly damped

– definitely worth every penny. I have an Exige S1 and a 997 GT3 RS and the GP1 is the equal of the both of them in B-road cross-country traffic.

Dave Davies

Old spice

The feature on the future of the performance car in *evo* 192 left me feeling despondent and the developments forecast leave me cold. Reflecting on Dickie Meaden's excellent story on the great TWR XJS, however, cheered me up and reminded me that the past can give us the future we want.

For example, there's a new Heritage Touring Cup race series for pre-1985 Touring Cars like the XJS, so one can see these great beasts race again. Here, and at events like the Tour Auto, the Le Mans Classic and the Goodwood Revival, it is easy to see the love of the cars and competition, from drivers, crews and spectators alike. What a contrast to most current motorsport, which struggles to command a fraction of the devotion Dickie Meaden spoke of when he saw the mighty Jag at Silverstone as a boy. The future is clearly more classics!

Andrew B

Superhuman spirit

evo 192, Outside Line. Thank you, Mr Meaden. I knew I wasn't alone!

Surely the main part of the appeal of motorsport is to be slack-jawed in amazement at the level of skill you're watching; to know that, no matter how good you think you are, to control one of those beasts is almost totally outside your capability? But how many of us watching F1 today secretly think: 'Give me a year on a simulator and I'd give you a run for your money'? It shouldn't be that way.

Liam Devine



Above: classic racing cars like the TWR Jaguar XJS are thrilling to Andrew B



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Talking Point

The new 'C7' Corvette: would you?

The new Corvette is one of the best in the model's history. It will cost £61,495 when it goes on official sale in the UK. Would you consider one?

NO The idea of blasting around in an American car is great. The reality is in the UK you would just look a massive berk and everyone would be wondering why you didn't buy a Porsche instead.

M135i

YES It is actually quite well priced when you consider how other cars have got more expensive over time, especially a 911, which will be over £100k for a 991 S with a few options. At £61,495, a well-specced Cayman is more of a price rival, and the Vette would certainly be an interesting alternative.

Alan

NO I think I'd rather have an F-type to be honest.

integrale_evo

YES If they make a Le Mans racer-style lightweight version with yellow paint, black wheels and Compuware stickers I would.

Bunta

YES They make so much more sense over here (Canada). If I wanted to purchase a base coupe, it's roughly £38.5k, while a convertible is £42k. You simply cannot beat the bang for the buck. Imports are way, way more expensive here. It's a reasonably pretty thing, too, with that slightly 458 front end.

Montychristo128

NO A sports car built for the UK – the F-type – will do better on English roads than a sports car built for America. Plus it looks 100 times better.

Cam Shaft

NO Remind me what used Ferrari 430s are going for these days...

Markcoopers

YES I still miss my C6 Z06, much more so than my F430 Spider, for example. Its weakest link was the totally numb steering, but some reports I've read say the C7 Stingray's is exceptionally good, which is promising. I think the forthcoming Z07 will be superb, and I'd seriously consider one.

David Yu

NO At over £60k in the UK, the heart is never going to win the argument with the head. The Vette might be very good and have a bit more grunt, but an F-type, Boxster/Cayman or even M3/M4 will always be preferable in the UK.

BlackStuff

NO The Corvette has always looked reasonably well priced in the UK until you consider that it's LHD only and the US price is about half that over here, so it's never going to sell well in the UK.

Jobbo

NO I like the styling of the new Vette very much and it certainly delivers performance-wise. But I would not spend my own money on one, especially as I could get a dealer-demo GT-R for the same money.

Eric Pisch

NO There are just too many other more exciting cars around at that price point that I would rather have.

Secret Supercar Owner

NO For two reasons: it's LHD and it's only worth £30k in the US, so any other £60k car is going to have an interior roughly twice as nice.

IanF

NO Some things should just stay in America to keep them special: Peanut Butter M&Ms, Beef Jerky, Corvettes. They're just not the same over here.

Gwaredd

Next month

The Zenos E10 (see page 76) packs 200bhp, weighs 650kg and costs just £25k. Should Caterham be worried?

Email your thoughts to letters@evo.co.uk, or join the discussion at community.evo.co.uk



From the forums: community.evo.co.uk

Thread of the Month

MIKERT4

'50 years of development'

'I can't help but wonder what our kids will be drivelling on about on the equivalent to the evo forum in 50 years. I suspect it will be them laughing at the fact that their parents actually used to drive themselves everywhere. But other than this technology (which we know is coming), I wonder what other joys the younger ones on the forum can look forward to...?'

MONTYCHRISTO128

Yet another 911.

BARRY

Performance-wise I think we'll see a much more standardised level. You'll have smaller cars for cities, family ones, and obviously the luxury and sports brands, but traffic and road networks will be so organised and limited that we won't look at outright performance as there'll be no call for it.

MARKCOOPERS

We will drive exactly what we do today. The need to get anywhere will be replaced by virtual travel, meetings with holograms, etc. Thus all travel will be for pleasure, and as today's and older cars are more fun, they will still be driven.

MITO MAN

I reckon the next 20 years will see more

change than from the Model T until now. Will new cars have combustion engines at all, or even steering wheels?

GWAREDD

I reckon fossil fuel-powered cars will be a thing of the distant past and very heavy penalties will be implemented for those who choose to drive them.

DUNCS500

I suspect there will come a point where non-autonomous cars are banned from the roads. After all, once autonomous ones are working properly the only cars causing accidents will be the non-autonomous ones. So if we want to enjoy a current performance car, we'll probably only be able to do it on tracks, etc. I love the idea of having an autonomous car and a nice old-school car in the garage for having fun, but I don't think the two will overlap for long.



Thread of the Month wins a Jorg Gray watch

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

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2014 is set to be an incredible year for the performance car.

*Over the next 31 pages, the **evo** team highlights everything to get excited about, from Alfa to Zenos*



Alfa Romeo Spider

Best of both worlds or an identity-trashing collision of cultures? We've got our hopes pinned on the former. The next Alfa Spider may be the next Mazda MX-5 with an Italian accent, but how can that be a bad thing? The new car won't just be a Mazda with Alfa badges and engines, either. The story goes that Mazda's designers went back to the drawing board when they saw Alfa's take on the same platform and created something that was a fusion more fabulous than either. A stunning lightweight roadster powered by the 1750TB engine from the 4C has to be worth waiting for. **DV**

BMW M235i





B

BMW M235i

This year the coupe counterpart of the M135i arrives. With more power and an even further honed chassis, it might be the perfect real-world M-badged BMW. We test it on road and track near Las Vegas

by HENRY CATCHPOLE | PHOTOGRAPHY *by* BARRY HAYDEN

V

VEGAS. NOT SO MUCH A DEN AS A FULL-blown metropolis of iniquity, where vice is a virtue and anything goes. Want to bankrupt yourself in a couple of hours? Not a problem. Hankering for a drive-through marriage ceremony? Elvis will do the honours. Wish to go out on a Sunday, wake up on a Wednesday and

have no idea how you acquired the burning sensation or what happened to Monday and Tuesday? Sin City is happy to oblige. Long to drive out to an empty piece of road nearby with stunning scenery and some inviting bends? That's fine, too. Just don't go faster than 35mph...

Yes, in a state where you can be as reckless as you like and live life at a million miles an hour (as long as your bank account keeps up), it seems that the wrath of the Nevada authorities will descend upon you if you drive a car at a pace greater than a Dean Martin song. This poses a slightly ticklish problem if you're trying to enjoy (let alone test) a BMW M235i. With 321bhp, 332lb ft of torque and a claimed 0-62mph time of 4.8sec (if you've got the eight-speed auto, which we have), the most potent new 2-series has the ability to land you in hot water quicker than jumping off the Hoover Dam. For the moment, then, it's lucky that we're based at the Las Vegas Motor Speedway for the afternoon. The road assessment can wait, for now.

In the same way that 4-series is the new name for the 3-series coupe, 2-series is the new name for the 1-series coupe. Gone is the slightly bowler-hat look of its predecessor: in its place is a much sleeker roofline that flows





‘THE 2-SERIES GETS A FACE ALL OF ITS OWN. IT’S A GOOD-LOOKING CAR’



Top right: 18in wheels all round. **Top:** speed limits on open roads near Vegas are a frustration. **Above:** UK cars will come with aluminium interior trim of a better standard than that of US-spec test car

more smoothly into the boot. It’s 72mm longer (with 30mm of that in the wheelbase), and the front and rear tracks have been widened by 41 and 43mm respectively. What’s more, while the 1-series coupe shared its front end with the hatchback, the 2-series gets a face all of its own, complete with more prominent kidney grilles and lights that appear to have heavy eyebrows. It’s a good-looking car, even if I still find it a little odd when number plates are omitted from the front.

As you might expect, the infield circuit at Las Vegas Motor Speedway isn’t the most topographically fascinating place. A miniature Spa-Francorchamps it is not, but there is plenty of room to have a bit of an exploratory play and there’s a good mixture of corners that let you get a decent rhythm through a lap. As I was lucky enough to run an M135i as a long-termer and took it on a few trackdays, I’m hopefully in a fairly good position to appreciate any changes – for better or worse.

The first obvious difference is that there’s less roll. Turning into a long right, the 235i is noticeably flatter both into and through the corner. With 15 per cent stiffer springs and firmer bump-stops, this is to be expected, but the 235i feels lower and smaller too. The six-cylinder turbo engine is just as strong as I remember (it’s actually got an extra 5bhp), but it’s quickly obvious that you need to balance the car deftly to get the best from it when driving quickly. Turn in too aggressively and your only reward will be the front tyres letting go and the nose running wide of the apex. Take a more considered approach and learn where the grip levels of the Michelin Super Sports lie, however, and you find a beautifully balanced car that is very rewarding to string a lap together in.

With the DSC in its halfway-house setting, it’s much easier to hold the M235i in that malleable sweet spot of early slip that feels perfect on a quick lap (something I always found hard to do in the M135i). The newly recalibrated DSC will let you have much bigger slides too, and when it does rein everything back, it does so much more smoothly, so you feel much happier leaving it on. If you turn it all off then there is the potential



Above: well-weighted steering inspires confidence. **Left:** Catchpole finds snow up on Mummy Mountain as he ventures into ski-resort territory (right)



for even more fun, of course. BMW has listened to the feedback on the M135i and will be offering a mechanical limited-slip diff (sourced from Drexler and tuned by BMW) as an option, which is great news. However, perhaps understandably, the engineers were keen to show off the basic specification first and so all of the cars on this launch have a standard rear axle set-up. This means the only help comes from something called Active Differential Brake, a sort of pseudo-LSD that brakes a spinning driven wheel under acceleration.

Although ADB doesn't give you the satisfying control of a proper LSD, the M235i is still a huge amount of fun over the limit. Doing the photos with Barry Hayden there is the odd occasion during the first couple of runs when I feel sure the little coupe is going to spin, yet it seems happy to settle at ludicrously big angles with steering nudging the lock-stops and tyres smoking. The best moment comes at the end of the day, with the sun going down behind one side of the banked oval and the moon rising above the other, when I eventually nail one particular transition that had been bugging me. You turn into a second-gear left-hander a bit early, feel the nose bite, then get hard on the throttle so the rear breaks free and swings round. As you apply the opposite lock and keep the rears spinning, you can then ride the front-left wheel up over the high inside kerb, which always feels fun. The tricky bit is then provoking the slide a fraction longer than necessary, so that when you lift off there is enough momentum to get the car smoothly swinging back through the straight ahead and into oversteer the other way, picking up the throttle in the process and changing up to third gear so that you accelerate through the slide all the way to the exit of the long right-hander. Pointless really, but much more satisfying than putting everything on red!

'IT SEEMS HAPPY AT LUDICROUSLY BIG ANGLES WITH THE TYRES SMOKING'

As evening falls and we're ejected from the track with the lights on the Strip beginning to sparkle in the distance, thoughts turn back to the road route. The aforementioned 35mph speed limit isn't in force everywhere, of course – there are some very long, very straight freeways where you can take your life in your hands at 75mph – but in the few places where the road contorts and gets interesting, the speed limit always plummets. The place we had been hoping to go near here is the spectacular Valley of Fire to the north-east, but we know from reports that the police are literally waiting for us and we'd be about as welcome as Derren Brown loitering around a blackjack table. So it's out with Google Maps. At one point I consider making a run for California and Palm Springs where we tested the Aston Martin V12 Vantage S late last year, but it's three hours away and there simply isn't enough time. So, after a bit of searching, I decide we should try heading north-west to the splendidly named Mummy Mountain...

THREE Z06S, A '60S MUSTANG AND A CHARGER ARE ALL heading in the opposite direction as we head up Lee Canyon Road the following morning. This is a good sign. The two State Troopers parked up at the side of the road a few minutes ago were less encouraging, but I'm hoping they're the only ones we'll see. Since turning off Route 95 we've travelled over ten miles in a dead-straight line (at 50mph) and what looks like scrubby, dusty desert is stretching out either side



BMW M235i

of the road. Yet just up ahead are trees, corners... and snow. This is bizarre. What I hadn't realised is that the long gun-barrel of a road has been steadily climbing away from the heat of the desert in the rear-view mirror and we're now around 6000ft above sea level. As if to confirm this, my ears pop.

The M235i has been a good companion on the drive from Las Vegas. All the launch cars have been fitted with the optional adaptive dampers, and although the ride is slightly firmer than the 1's, it's still everyday comfortable in whatever mode you choose. The seats are good, if a touch lacking in support for the legs, while overall it feels like a very premium place to be. The exhaust sounds marginally louder and deeper too, although I've been slightly distracted by the wonders of American radio (DAB will be standard on UK cars) where an evangelical Christian has been vehemently linking Jesuits to aliens.

As standard, the M235i gets a six-speed manual with a short shift. If experience is anything to go by then it will be a delicious gearbox and probably the specification I would choose. However, the eight-speed auto is also a wondrous transmission that not only shaves 0.2sec from the 0-62mph time, but also improves the fuel consumption and CO2 figures to 37.2mpg and 176g/km respectively (from 34.9mpg and 189g/km). The paddles are attached to the steering wheel and have a lovely curve so that you can hook the tips of your fingers onto them. The shifts are not as ruthless as those from a dual-clutch automated manual, but they are extremely good nonetheless and give you a real sense of connection when batting between gears. The short ratios also serve to make the most of the fantastic 3-litre straight-six with its single twin-scroll turbocharger. It might seem crazy having eight forward gears, but when you're just listening to the revs and changing on instinct, it feels incredibly easy to keep the engine permanently on the boil.

As we reach 8000ft and see signs for the Las Vegas ski resort, the road has become well and truly interesting. Through a set of fast-climbing curves, the 2-series feels so well balanced that I can't help but push harder. The engine really comes alive when you stretch it, too, the note morphing into a more classic and appealing straight-six timbre. Traffic is sparse, but every time we stop for a photo it still feels like there might



‘THE COUPE IS BETTER DYNAMICALLY THAN THE ALREADY EXCELLENT M135i’

be a police car waiting round the bend, so Barry and I decide to head off down a side road. It's a good decision. The tarmac has the complexion of The Thing from the Fantastic Four and it's not a very wide strip of road, but it is an excellent test for the M235i. As on the track, the balance is superb, with the front willing to let go as readily as the rear if you're too aggressive, but the whole car flows beautifully when you get it right and is happy to be tweaked into playful oversteer on the tighter corners.

The steering doesn't wriggle with feedback, sadly (how many cars' helms do these days?), but it is accurate and well weighted in Sport mode so that it gives you confidence to push on. Small and medium-sized bumps are dispatched with aplomb, and although just occasionally a bigger lump or compression can make the rear dampers struggle slightly under rebound, it's never enough to make you back off like it would have been in some previous small BMWs.

We end up at a gate with signs telling us not to venture any further towards a remote and foreboding set of buildings that turn out to be a youth correctional facility. No matter, the view is already stunning, with snow in the foreground, melting through green scrubland to the desert far below and Vegas Valley in the distance. What's more, I feel I now know the M235i significantly better than the Nevada authorities would like. With its flatter stance and greater adjustability, the coupe is undoubtedly better dynamically than the already excellent M135i, and although it costs an extra ten per cent, it still feels like something of a performance bargain.

It's obviously not a full M-car, but 'mini M4' allusions are inevitable and seem entirely valid given that both have a turbocharged straight-six under the bonnet. No doubt the M4 will feel like a step up in grip, grunt and drama when we drive it later this year, but we also know that it will be a chunk longer and wider, and there is something extremely appealing about this small, wieldy 2-series package. It makes me think that (especially with the optional LSD) it could be all the M performance you actually need. ☒



Top: oversteer is easy to generate and maintain, even without the optional LSD. **Above:** 321bhp turbocharged straight-six works well with the optional eight-speed automatic gearbox

Specification

BMW M235i

Engine In-line 6-cyl, 2979cc, turbo
CO2 176g/km

Power 321bhp @ 5800-6000rpm

Torque 332lb ft @ 1300-4500rpm

Transmission Eight-speed automatic gearbox
(optional), rear-wheel drive, ADB

Front suspension MacPherson struts, coil springs,
adaptive dampers (optional), anti-roll bar

Rear suspension Multi-link, coil springs, adaptive
dampers (optional), anti-roll bar

Brakes Ventilated discs, ABS, Brake Assist

Wheels 7.5 x 18in front, 8 x 18in rear

Tyres 225/40 ZR18 front, 245/35 ZR18 rear

Weight (kerb) 1470kg

Power-to-weight 222bhp/ton

0-62mph 4.8sec (claimed)

Top speed 155mph (limited)

Basic price £34,250

On sale March 2014

evo rating: ★★★★★



C

Cayman R

The last one had just 9bhp more than a Cayman S and weighed just 55kg less (40kg if you reinstated the no-cost option air con and stereo), but somehow it felt very different: control and agility increased, the chassis was more adjustable and the sense of occasion ramped up to GT3 levels. Word is that Porsche Motorsport has had more input on the new R and the result will be even more transformative. Let's say 340bhp, 1250kg and a back-to-basics approach Porsche diehards will swoon over. **JB**



Clio Cup+

The last Clio Cup was untouchable: as focused as a Speciale, as raw as an Exige. The new car promised much: bigger but lighter, turbocharged for more torque (the last Cup's one weakness) and a new dual-clutch 'box in the hope that the technology would heighten the driving thrills. The reality was very different – lazy shifts and a character-free power delivery that took the shine off the excellent chassis.

Renaultsport is rumoured to be working on revisions to remedy the situation. The Cup+ can't come soon enough. We want our Clio back. **JB**



D

Ducati/VW

Proof that Audi didn't buy Ducati just to add a bike brand to the burgeoning VW-Audi portfolio, the Volkswagen XL Sport concept, with its 187bhp Ducati motor (below), points to a new generation of super-lightweight bike-engined sports cars with red lines in the clouds. Not a new idea, but mouth-watering all the same. **DV**



E



Formula E

On paper, this new electric racing series, which kicks off in September, looks promising, with street races in LA, London, Monaco and more. But whether the public will tolerate mid-race car swaps (because the batteries can't go a full race distance) is an unknown. Many of the *evo* team are looking forward to it. Henry Catchpole, meanwhile, is sceptical: 'I don't go to a race for peace and quiet. Imagine the anticlimax when the lights go green and the whole grid disappears silently towards the first corner...' **DM**

eCoty 2014

It's too early yet to predict how the contenders for this year's *evo* Car of the Year test will shake down, but it is one of those years in which, if the stars align, the final line-up will be phenomenal. Embarrassment of riches hardly covers it: BMW M4, Nismo GT-R, Corvette Stingray, Porsche 911 Turbo S, Ferrari 458 Speciale, Jaguar F-type Coupe, Renault Mégane RS, at least one hybrid hypercar (McLaren P1, LaFerrari or Porsche 918 Spyder) – to be continued... **DV**

F



Formula 1 by Tiff Needell

Once all the hullabaloo of paying drivers, double points, new noses and personalised numbers has settled down, a fascinating season of Grand Prix racing lies ahead. Purists like me are never going to be completely happy with the likes of KERS (sorry, now ERS) and DRS, but that's what we've got. The big question is: who's going to make the most of it?

For the first time in years there's a good chance we might see one power plant produce a significantly higher output than the others, so whether you've got a unit from Ferrari, Mercedes (pictured right) or Renault will be the first big variable. I expect all the 1.6 turbo V6s will produce around 600bhp and it's going to be the ERS that makes the big difference. Think Marussia-Ferrari flying past a Red Bull-Renault and you can see why F1 2014 has so many possibilities...

With exhausts now poking straight out the back, the years of the Newey/Vettel 'blowing' advantage have gone, but I have no doubt the Red Bull will still be the quickest thing around the corners, and if Renault have got their sums right a fifth title will be theirs – unless the big increase in torque the power units produce plays into the hands of virtuosos like Kimi Räikkönen and Lewis Hamilton.

G

Geneva

Other motor shows might be bigger, but none are better than Geneva, where this year we'll see the debuts of a slew of significant new performance models, from the Lamborghini Huracan (see right) downwards. Geneva is the best because it's a manageable size to walk around and because the industry recognises it as the best shop window. Tickets are inexpensive and it's right next to Geneva airport, making it easy to do in a day. **MD**



Goodwood Festival of Speed

Along with Geneva, the Festival of Speed is still the best place to see the world's most exciting cars up close. It is a car show like no other: we recommend you book two days, camp over with some friends and make a weekend of it. It's the first date we put in our calendar each new year. **NT**



H

Honda NSX

Considering the concept car has been doing the rounds for what seems like an eternity, there's still a fair amount we don't know about the new NSX (below). What we do know, however – three electric motors, a twin-turbo V6 engine and a target weight of 1400kg – might just make this one of the most exciting cars of 2014. It may be taking a slightly different approach, but considering how spectacular the original was, we wouldn't put it past Honda to knock this one out of the park. **MH**

Huracan

The good stuff? The Lamborghini Huracan (above) has a 5.2-litre V10 with 602bhp at 8250rpm and 413lb ft at 6500rpm, a new aluminium/carbonfibre structure, a seven-speed dual-clutch transmission, carbon-ceramic brakes and enough attitude to make a 458 whimper from 100 yards. The bad stuff? The manual Lamborghini is dead and there's an optional variable-ratio steering rack system borrowed from Audi. On balance? There will be fist-fights in the *evo* office when the launch invite lands. **JB**



The problem with excessive torque is that it's more likely to break traction than a progressive increase of power, so hopefully the harder Pirelli will be strong enough to allow some spectacular touches of oversteer. The challenge of making the softer tyre last will be much more difficult, though. The big cut to just 100kg of petrol (140 litres to you and me) means there's going to be plenty of 'range anxiety' and you'll never know if the car that has shot off into the lead will suddenly have to back off towards the end of the race...

It sounds silly to say it, but I like the fact that the F1 cars of 2014 are likely to be less reliable. The tension always rises when the race leader's team-mate has suffered a failure and you wonder if it'll happen to him, too.

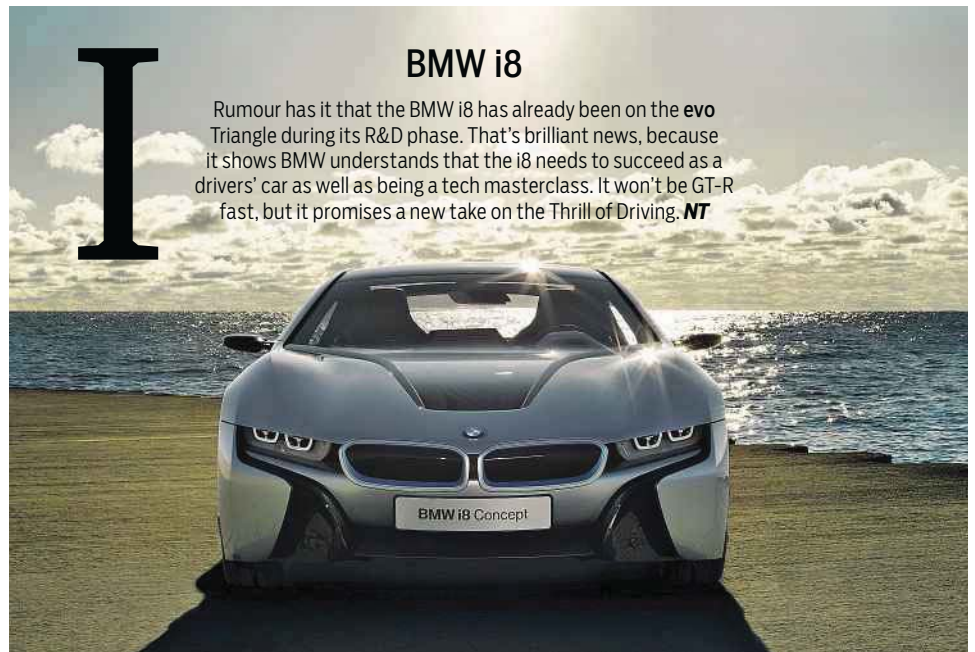
Trying to pick a winner is a lottery and that makes it such an exciting prospect. Vettel the favourite? Infighting at Ferrari? Mercedes muddled without Brawn? Grosjean the dark horse? I can't wait!



I

BMW i8

Rumour has it that the BMW i8 has already been on the *evo* Triangle during its R&D phase. That's brilliant news, because it shows BMW understands that the i8 needs to succeed as a drivers' car as well as being a tech masterclass. It won't be GT-R fast, but it promises a new take on the Thrill of Driving. **NT**





JAGUAR F-TYPE COUPE

by MIKE DUFF

This year sees the F-type Convertible joined by a hard-top alternative. It's even better looking, but is it a better drive? We sample a prototype of the range-topping 542bhp R Coupe





F-TYPE
COUPE

JAGUAR
F-TYPE

F-TYPE

T

THE F-TYPE COUPE ISN'T

a car, it's a state secret. That's certainly the impression to be taken away from this early drive of a not-quite-production version on track in Spain. To

even bring you this story we've had to sign a baffling array of non-disclosure agreements, not to mention a piece of paper promising not to Photoshop the word 'prototype' off the side of the car. Just in case you thought we'd had a go in a real one. All this for what is, behind the hype, a Jaguar F-type with a roof.

From an outsider's perspective it's hard to see the justification for such corporate paranoia, but it certainly proves the Coupe is an important car for Jaguar. And maybe it's also a tacit admission that, fine car though it is, the F-type Convertible leaves some fairly substantial questions unanswered. However exciting the open-topped car is to drive, we discovered back in *evo* 183 that it can't match the dynamic focus of either the Porsche 911 Cabriolet or the Boxster S. It also has less luggage space than a Mazda MX-5 and comes with a very senior price tag, with even the entry-level V6-powered Convertible costing £58,520.

All of which are issues that the F-type Coupe is set to address. The first bit of good news comes long before we drive the car, with Jaguar resisting the urge to try and 'do a Cayman' by demanding a supplement for the metal-roofed model. Instead, the two V6 versions of the Coupe (called Coupe and S Coupe) are set to be usefully cheaper than their Convertible equivalents, with a sizeable saving of over £7000 apiece.

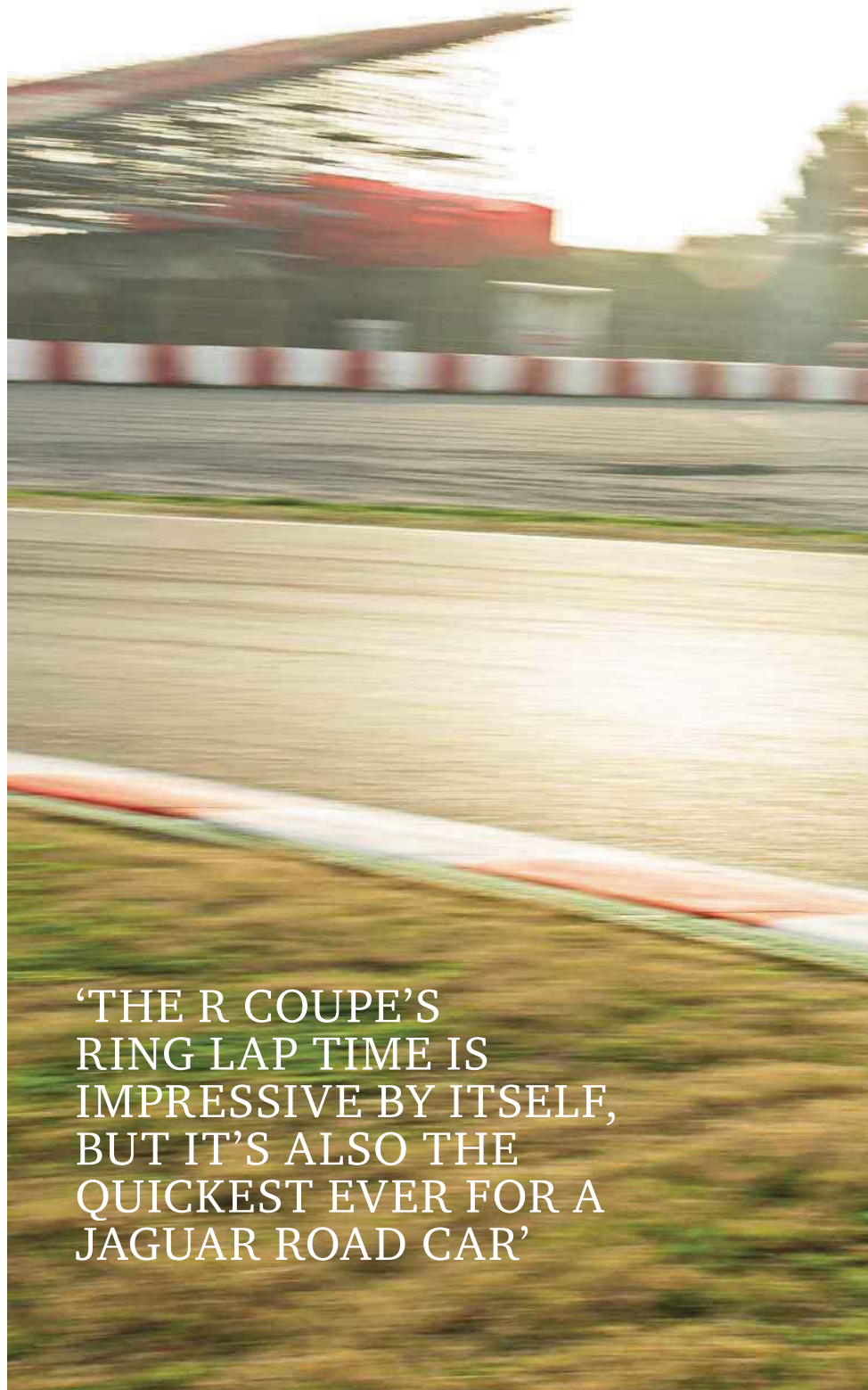
At the top of the pile the V8-powered Coupe will cost £85,000, making it more expensive than the V8 S Convertible by £5015, but the extra buys a more powerful version of Jaguar's 5-litre supercharged engine – up from 488bhp to 542 – plus reworked suspension and the 'R' badge that the company reserves for its fastest models. It's this car – the R Coupe – that, in carefully labelled prototype form, we've come to the Circuit de Catalunya near Barcelona to drive today.

We arrive at the circuit to find the pitlane is already full of Coupes, gleaming invitingly in the bright sunshine. But before being let loose on track we're herded into a room to be given the full PowerPoint on how the Convertible has been transformed into the Coupe.

Don't worry, I'll keep it short and sweet. There are two important numbers. The first of these is the torsional rigidity of the Coupe's all-aluminium bodyshell, claimed by Jaguar to be 33,000Nm per degree. Meaningless by itself, that figure means the Coupe is the stiffest-bodied road car the company has ever produced, with nearly twice the resistance to twist of the already-moderately-rigid roadster. And the second figure? That will be the 7 minutes and 39 seconds it takes the R Coupe to lap the Nürburgring Nordschleife – impressive by itself, but also the quickest-ever lap for a Jaguar road car there, and a full 15 seconds faster than the V8 S Convertible.

The stiffer shell means that the Coupe gets

Below: F-type Coupe prototype takes to the track at the Circuit de Catalunya in Spain; this 'R' version is the most powerful F-type yet, by some 54bhp



'THE R COUPE'S RING LAP TIME IS IMPRESSIVE BY ITSELF, BUT IT'S ALSO THE QUICKEST EVER FOR A JAGUAR ROAD CAR'





uniquely tuned dampers and revised software for its electric power steering system, while the R also gets slightly firmer springs (4.3 per cent stiffer at the front and 3.7 per cent at the rear compared to the V8 S Convertible). The claimed kerb weights are almost unchanged: the V6 models are each 20kg lighter than their Convertible equivalents, but that's with the standard aluminium roof – the heavier optional full-length glass roof redresses the balance. Officially, the R Coupe weighs 1650kg, which is just 15kg less than the V8 S Convertible. For perspective, that's 55kg more than the four-wheel-drive 911 Turbo, although the Jaguar is 29bhp up on the £118k Porsche.

Like all F-types, the R uses Jaguar's new eight-speed automatic gearbox, slightly retuned to improve responses, but it drives the rear wheels through a quicker-acting electronically controlled differential that can go from fully

'THE COUPE'S MORE MUSCULAR FORM AND BETTER-FILLED-OUT SHAPE TRANSFORM IT INTO A PROPER MINI-GT'

open to fully closed in just 0.2 seconds. Both the S Coupe and R Coupe can also be ordered with carbon-ceramic brakes as a £8400 option, and these are also now available on the S Convertible and V8 S Convertible.

So the Coupe is a slightly stiffer, moderately quicker F-type with a roof. What's perhaps just as important is that the Coupe looks so damned good, too. That's not to suggest the F-type Convertible is in any way a bad-looking car – far from it, in fact – but the Coupe's more muscular form and better-filled-out shape transform it into a proper mini-GT, the rear flanks and the perfectly judged roofline giving it a visual rightness that makes it hard for you to stop staring at it. Subjective call here, but I reckon this is designer Ian Callum's best work since he left Aston. It's probably not a revelation to learn that the production Coupe is within millimetres of the C-X16 concept car that debuted the F-type



Clockwise from above left: supercharged V8 puts out 542bhp; interior is unchanged from Convertible; rear spoiler reduces lift by up to 120kg; car's set-up can be individually configured; Jaguar's signature chromed C-pillar makes its F-type debut; as does some decent boot space



at the Frankfurt motor show back in 2011. The only significant change has been the loss of the concept's E-type-aping side-hinged tailgate for a conventional top-hinged one.

The surprise is that the production Convertible was engineered first, with the Coupe effectively spun off it – a point reinforced by its lack of B-pillars behind the doors. That means the entire side of the car is one aluminium stamping, with additional strength added to the structure by small reinforcing pieces that link the tail end of the roof rails to the bulkhead, just behind the seats. As with the Convertible, the Coupe is a strict two-seater, but beneath the tailgate the 315-litre boot feels like a cave compared to the Convertible's shoebox.

Despite the empty track and what feels like a pitlane full of prototypes, we're not thrown the keys and told to head out to see who's quickest. Instead, each journo is going to be limited to just

eight laps of the circuit – four in a steel-braked car and then four in one equipped with the new carbon-ceramic stoppers. And we're going to have race instructors sitting next to us, to make sure that we don't have too much fun – or risk binning these priceless prototypes, of course.

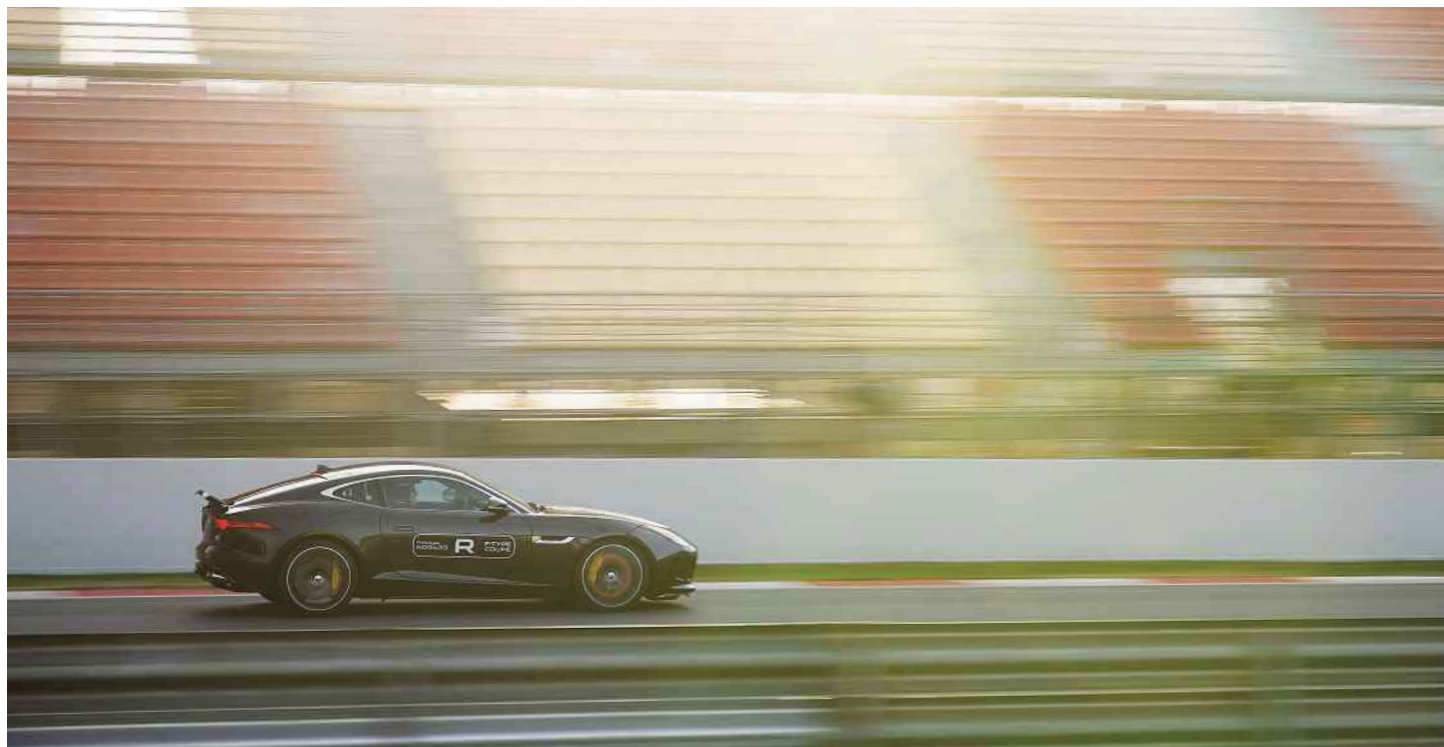
The Coupe certainly sounds good. Seriously good. As cars start to circulate on the track, so the empty grandstands start to reflect back the hard-edged V8 soundtrack as each blasts past, and it seems for a moment that we've wandered into a NASCAR test session. The R shares the V8 S Convertible's sports exhaust, with switchable acoustic flaps, but from the pit wall it sounds both louder and better than I remember the soft-top being. In fact, my first thought is that the Coupe is near-certain to fail the noise test at pretty much every UK circuit. Obviously they're a bit more liberal here in Catalonia...

Right, my turn. The cockpit is identical to that

of the F-type Convertible, complete with the same strange robot-vents that motor their way out of the top of the dashboard. The R fires into loud, rorty life and burbles down the pitlane like it fancies a go at the lap record. I'm wearing a helmet, but even so it's obvious that – although it's more muted in here – the V8 soundtrack isn't just for the amusement of passers-by.

Onto the track proper and the first dose of full throttle delivers some very solid acceleration, plus the distinctly unexpected impression of the back end trying to break traction – this at the top end of third gear. The stability control is in Track mode, and keeps everything pointing the right way, but it's still an immediate indication of just how potent the R Coupe is.

Of course, the V8 S Convertible is a serious flying machine itself. On paper, the R Coupe is only slightly quicker in straight-line pace (4.0sec to 60mph versus 4.2), but it's clear



within a couple of corners that its higher torque output (501lb ft, up from 461lb ft) makes it even more inclined to be steered from the rear – the effect barely diminished even through some of the Circuit de Catalunya’s quicker corners. This is with hot tyres on dry tarmac: quite what the Coupe is going to be like on a damp Welsh A-road is another matter.

What’s not obvious on track is either the body’s extra rigidity, or the suspension’s fractionally firmer settings. It’s not as if the Convertible suffers from noticeable scuttle shake on anything short of Belgian pavé anyway. On the circuit the R feels properly lashed down, and the occasional bite of kerb shows the dampers aren’t fazed by big bumps in isolation. The steering, meanwhile, appears to have a stronger self-centring action and marginally more weight than on the Convertible. And whatever the back end is doing, the front stays faithful and accurate. Although my passenger-seat

‘THE COUPE LOOKS SET TO BE THE PICK OF THE F-TYPE RANGE, AND THE R THE BEST OF THE LOT’

chaperone is encouraging me to be as smooth as possible – to better experience the F-type’s towering grip levels and the new option of torque vectoring – it’s clear the car itself wants to play the hooligan. And on first impressions, this is a car you can chuck around while staying confident in its predictable reactions.

I’m less sure about the gearbox. Although we’re told the Coupe has new software to speed up its reactions, the shifts still feel notably slower than those delivered by a twin-clutch ’box. This car also seems determined to kick down whenever the throttle reaches the stop, even when in Manual mode, something not

really required given the breadth (and depth) of the engine’s torque output. To be honest, the close proximity of the eight gear ratios means that gear choice isn’t really as important as it probably should be – the car seems just as happy on track left in Drive with the gearbox in its most aggressive sport mode.

Driving both steel- and carbon-braked versions of the R is very interesting. Barcelona is a fast track, and even some very early braking points (politely policed from the passenger seat) can’t hide the fact that, after four laps, the steel-braked car is starting to run short on retardation. The carbon-ceramics are epic, scrubbing speed both effortlessly and tirelessly – although they probably don’t justify their price unless you’re planning to regularly take your F-type on track. Which is ridiculous, of course.

Or is it? Because although you’d be hard-pressed to think of a single previous Jaguar that buyers might consciously choose with circuit use in mind, the F-type R feels, on first impressions at least, to be completely at home on track. The bigger question is how it will cope with life on real British roads, and that’s one we’ll answer as soon as possible. But on first impressions, the Coupe looks set to be the pick of the F-type range, and the R looks set to be the best of the lot. ❏

How the F-type Coupes compare

	COUPE	S COUPE	R COUPE
Engine	V6, 2995cc, supercharger	V6, 2995cc, supercharger	V8, 5000cc, supercharger
Power	335bhp @ 6500rpm	375bhp @ 6500rpm	542bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque	332lb ft @ 3500-5000rpm	339lb ft @ 3500-5000rpm	501lb ft @ 3500rpm
Weight (kerb)	1577kg	1594kg	1650kg
Power-to-weight	216bhp/ton	239bhp/ton	334bhp/ton
0-60mph	5.1sec (claimed)	4.8sec (claimed)	4.0sec (claimed)
Top speed	161mph (limited)	171mph (limited)	186mph (limited)
Basic price	£51,235	£60,235	£85,000



Specification

JAGUAR F-TYPE R COUPE

Engine V8, 5000cc, supercharger
CO2 259g/km

Power 542bhp @ 6500rpm

Torque 501lb ft @ 3500rpm

Transmission Eight-speed automatic gearbox, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip diff, ESC

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

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

Brakes Ventilated discs, 380mm front, 376mm rear, ABS, EBD

Wheels 9 x 20in front, 10.5 x 20in rear

Tyres 255/35 R20 front, 295/30 R20 rear

Weight (kerb) 1650kg

Power-to-weight 334bhp/ton

0-60mph 4.0sec (claimed)

Top speed 186mph (limited)

Basic price £85,000

On sale Spring 2014



K

Kris and Kubica

WRC is set to have its most exciting and interesting season for years. The addition of Hyundai brings the number of manufacturer teams up to four, and in Kris Meeke (pictured top) – the new Citroën number one – Britain has someone that can genuinely win rallies. Robert Kubica (above) has also worked hard, improved hugely and certainly doesn't lack commitment, so expect a few surprises from him. The Pole will be driving a Fiesta WRC, as will the young Welshman Elfyn Evans, who shows huge potential. BT Sport will be showing live stages from each rally and ITV4 will have highlights, but if we could actually go to one rally, we'd pick Finland. **HC**



M

Mercedes 'baby SLS'

The c£120,000 'baby SLS' – codenamed C190 – is expected to break cover this year. We expect it to have a 4-litre twin-turbo V8 and produce over 550bhp, and much like Porsche's 911 GT3, it could punch above its weight and take the battle to more expensive exotica such as the Ferrari 458, Lamborghini Huracan and McLaren 12C. **NT**



M3/M4

Over 80kg lighter than the outgoing models; manual or seven-speed dual-clutch 'box; intriguing tech (Stability Clutch Control opens the clutch when the car understeers to aid agility); carbon roof for both saloon (M3) and coupe (M4, pictured); and a 3-litre twin-turbo straight-six with 425lb ft and 406lb ft. BMW's next M-cars can't come soon enough... **JB**

Mazda MX-5

Twinned with the Alfa Spider (see 'A'), the fourth-gen MX-5 should arrive this year. We know it will be super-light thanks to Mazda's relentless determination to shave weight, and also that it will be powered by one of the new 'Skyactiv' engines (see p30), Mazda sticking with natural aspiration as almost every other manufacturer gives up. Definitely one to watch. **MD**

N

Nismo GT-R in the UK

For some reason the R35 GT-R's brilliance has always been clouded by prejudice. Okay, so the Nissan carries less kudos than, say, a Porsche, but as a driving experience the GT-R has always been right up there with the very best. The new Nismo GT-R goes toe-to-toe with anything Porsche's Motorsport



department can offer in terms of performance, price, pedigree and credibility. It's a car brimming with entirely justified confidence. It should mark the moment when this legendary – and legendarily divisive – supercoupe finally finds acceptance. A group test on UK roads should seal its status. **RM**

L

LaFerrari

Of the three hybrid hypercars, the LaFerrari is the one we've had least exposure to, which means it's also the one we're on tenterhooks to drive. With a screaming V12 and a big hit of KERS,

it promises to be scintillating. Whether Ferrari's focus on all-out performance makes it too much to enjoy on the road we'll have to wait and see. We've already driven the 918 and will most likely have tried the P1 by the time any LaFerrari opportunity arises, so it'll be quite a day when the last piece of the hypercar puzzle finally falls into place. **RM**



Lexus RC-F

The LFA is one of the most exciting cars *evo* has ever tested, and the IS-F is slightly unhinged and packed with character. If the RC-F (see p10) can meld the talents of these cars, it might just pull off the coup of the year by beating the BMW M4. **NT**

O



Obstructions (removal of)

by Richard Porter

You can get a lot of clever stuff on even very modest cars. Most Golfs have radar cruise control. Many small cars are available with auto braking. These days you don't need an S-class to encounter technology that keeps you in your motorway lane. Some of this kit is useful. Some of it is counter-intuitive and rather annoying. But the important thing is, you can switch it off. Or simply avoid spec'ing it in the first place.

But there's a worse sort of technology becoming almost universal on cars. It's the like-it-or-lump-it stuff that cannot be turned off or left out. Electric handbrakes, for example, or rain-sensing wipers, or auto headlights without a proper override. These kind of lumpen, nanny-knows-best technologies add complexity whilst taking away some of the fine detail of driving and the pride in doing it well.

So here's an **evo** challenge to car companies: make 2014 the year in which you pull back from this abyss of computer control and give us some personal liberty. Or, to put it in simpler terms, admit that we're not all bloody idiots.

Q

Q by Aston Martin

Although Q's launch last year concentrated on paint and interior trim, the department can also create bespoke exterior styling. I hope this is demonstrated in 2014 – McLaren's MSO did it with the X1 and Ferrari with the SP12 EC (Eric Clapton's unique 458). Make mine a special 'Q' V12 Vantage S with unique mk1 Vanquish-inspired bodywork and a manual 'box... **NT**



Porsche at Le Mans

by David Vivian

Maybe we shouldn't get too dewy-eyed about Porsche's return to the Le Mans 24 Hours. Of course, it has all the dramatic tension of a Ron Howard blockbuster: the most successful name in endurance racing returns to the greatest motor race in the world to take on the all-conquering Audi team. Thing is, Porsche is part of the Audi team these days and, the flat truth is, in the absence of any serious threat to its year-on-year dominance (admittedly Toyota has been

getting closer... but no cigar) the VW-Audi empire has had to engineer its own to re-boot a race some were already describing as an Audi yawn-a-thon.

No matter. This should be the most competitive Le Mans in years, with Porsche battling it out for an outright win in the LMP1 class with Audi and the ever-improving Toyotas. Better still, recent F1 retiree Mark Webber also makes his return to the La Sarthe circuit some 15 years after his Mercedes CLR back-flipped twice on the Mulsanne Straight in practice. He'll join Timo Bernhard, Romain Dumas – both previous Le Mans winners – and Neel Jani in a pair of four-cylinder hybrid Porsche 919s.

P1 drive

From what we know already – and no, I don't mean 'driving' it in *Forza 5* – the P1 (right) is like no supercar we've ever driven before. Quite what that means, and quite what it means for the 918 and LaFerrari is something we look forward to telling you in the (very) near future... **RM**



P13

This year we should be getting a chance to see the last major addition to McLaren's current model line-up – the smaller 'P13', which will share the 12C's carbonfibre tub but feature a less powerful engine. And, we hope, maybe a more driver-focused driving experience. **MD**

R

Räikkönen at Ferrari

Alonso says he's happy that Kimi is on-board. Kimi says he's not worried about any politics. Only one of them is telling the truth. Can you guess which one? Alonso may yet further enhance his reputation by taking care of his new team-mate, but you can't help thinking there will be fireworks along the way. Big, booming, angry fireworks. **JB**



RS

Manual gearbox? Don't hold your breath. Non-electric steering? Ditto. Bigger wing? Almost a given. Lighter? Absolutely, but paring down the current Porsche 911 GT3's lightweight construction won't be easy. More power? The previous-generation GT3 RS 4.0 (pictured) had 493bhp, so don't rule out 500. Yes, our current Car of the Year is a hard act to follow. **DV**

S



Speciale group test

Forget the P1, 918 and LaFerrari, the group test of the year will surely be the Ferrari 458 Speciale, Porsche 991 GT3 and Nismo GT-R. Three cars absolutely at the top of their game, three cars with the sort of focus and intent that inspires us to move mountains, tell white lies to PRs and put

the lives of several sheep in mortal danger.

The very thought of having them together on great roads is nape-prickling. Mostly because the outcome is impossible to predict. The Speciale is riotous but precise, the GT3 stupefyingly capable, and the Nismo GT-R looks outrageously exciting with Michael

Krumm behind the wheel...

Cynics will suggest that the Porsche is a shoo-in, idiots will say the Nissan must be dull and disciples will say the Ferrari is the best because it's red and noisy. We'll discover the truth somehow and somewhere, we promise. **JB**

U

Used bargains

Twenty-fourteen is the year of the bargain; the performance bargain that is, because so many great cars of the last decade are now available for surprisingly affordable prices. Take the E46 BMW M3 (above right), for example, which can now be picked up for just £8000. Compared to the £30,000 being asked for a range-topping CSL, it's a bargain.

Further up the price scale, an Audi R8 V8 can now be had for under £40,000, whilst its 911 rival in 997 form (right) can be snapped up for half that, although be wary of scored cylinders and failing intermediate shafts on these. Between the two price-wise you'll find the much more exclusive Lotus Evora, our 2009 eCoty winner. Or there's Nissan's GT-R from just £35k – it's almost impossible to go faster for less.



As a cheaper alternative, a six-year-old Subaru Impreza or Mitsubishi Evo (above right) can now be yours for £10,000. Sticking with the Land of the Rising Sun, our very own Jethro Bovingdon bought a third-gen Toyota MR2 – a car he believes is amongst the best handling sports cars – for less than £2000.

Looking at hot hatches, a clean EP3 Honda Civic Type-R can go for as little as £3500, while the even hotter Renaultsport R26.R is surely an investment at just £17,000. And look out for current-gen Fiesta STs, which will likely soon be available for around £15,000.

And finally, how does an ultra-cool Aston DBS for £70k sound? Or a Mercedes SLS for £90k? Neither are cheap, we'll grant you, but compared to their new prices, both are an absolute steal. **SS**



T



Trackdays

Driving a car to (and often beyond) its limit is a joy, and there's no better place to learn your car's handling quirks than on track. The sounds, smells and atmosphere can be addictive, and once you've sampled one circuit, it's often hard to stop, especially with great venues like Donington, Snetterton and

Brands Hatch on offer. Further afield, a trip to Spa is always recommended, and with the Nürburgring facing an uncertain future, we say enjoy the public days while you can. **evo's** very own track evenings at the Bedford Autodrome are great for beginners and seasoned track drivers alike, so why not join us? **MH**

V

Viper

We've tried, we really have. But getting into the new 8.4-litre V10 SRT Viper has proven impossible in 2013. However, the Viper TA (Time Attack) edition has given us new resolve: 640bhp, 600lb ft and 700 per cent more downforce than the standard car. Seven hundred. Yessiree. **JB**



X



WRX STI

Yes, 'X' for WRX. Ahem. Subaru gave up on the last STI in the UK, withdrawing it from sale as interest withered and exchange rates soared. The new car (see p12) is going to have to drive brilliantly to beat the talent that now occupies its segment – and we're itching to find out if it's good enough. The addition of active torque vectoring to the STI's dynamic arsenal is an interesting development. **MD**

Y

You

Yes, you. 2014 is the year you should buy the car you always promised yourself, take that trip you always fancied and try something with a car you've never tried before. A world of opportunity awaits, from hiring a supercar for a weekend away to taking part in your very first trackday. Not only that, but we want to hear about it. Join the **evo** community on Twitter, Facebook, evo.co.uk and youtube/evoTV **NT**



WTCC

Can Sébastien Loeb really become a world champion in both racing and rallying? Having won nine WRC titles, he's now going to attempt to do just that in the World Touring Car Championship. With his beloved Citroën team putting plenty of effort behind developing its C-Elysée (pictured), he's likely to have the equipment underneath him. His biggest problem will be the man alongside him in the Citroën garage and in the same car – four-time world champion Yvan Muller... **DM**

W



Zenos E10





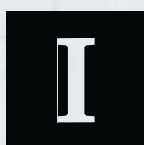
Z

ZENOS E10

by RICHARD MEADEN

PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH

With just hours to go before its unveiling at the Autosport International show, we help Zenos Cars put the finishing touches to Britain's newest lightweight sports car, the E10



IT'S 2:00AM ON A TUESDAY MORNING. IN A STARK white studio, three men are part-way through the painstaking process of assembling the first prototype of a car into which they have invested every last drop of blood, sweat and tears. In return they've gained dark rings beneath their eyes and a few more grey hairs, but in two days' time they'll know whether they have created something that will not only change their lives but, perhaps, the low-volume British sports car industry itself.

The men are Ansar Ali, Mark Edwards and Chris Weston, the car is the Zenos E10 and the location is HPL Proto on the outskirts of Coventry. We're joining them for a unique fly-on-the-aeroscreen view of these final few critical days, watching the car take shape and mucking in where we can. I can't imagine any other car company allowing a journalist and photographer such intimate access at such a pivotal phase, but as we're fast learning, Zenos Cars isn't really like any other car company.

For those of you with little or no knowledge of who and what Zenos Cars is, here's a quick recap. Zenos was co-founded by Ali and Edwards in 2013. With more than 30 years of motor industry experience between them, largely accrued in their time working together in senior roles at Lotus and Caterham, the pair embarked upon the Zenos project as a response to what they saw as an unserved sector of the sports car market. They announced their independent venture last summer, revealing sketches that gave clear hints to the E10's striking looks, together with a three-model strategy that will also have an E11 roadster and an E12 coupe on the road by 2018. Since then, they have been working flat-out to refine the design and engineering of the car, and to secure the funding needed to take the E10 to production reality.

As you can imagine, starting your own car company from scratch is a relentless process and one that has taken them to the brink on an number of occasions.



Above: how the first Zenos E10 looks around 48 hours before its public unveiling(!). **Far right:** dampers are situated inboard. **Right:** composite tub straddles a central aluminium beam

Thankfully a positive chain of events was triggered back in the early autumn when Zenos won a substantial grant through the Niche Vehicle Network and the government-funded Technology Strategy Board, who recognised Zenos Cars for the innovative technology featured in its new platform architecture. Not only did this provide a timely and significant financial shot in the arm, it was a tremendous endorsement of the project. Further private investment has since been secured, which hopefully means Ali and Edwards are spending a little less time staring at the ceiling when they should be sleeping. From a purely selfish standpoint, it means we can all look forward to Zenos completing the E10's ride and handling development over the next six months, with a pre-production car ready to try by late summer and early production cars in customers' hands by this time next year.

Right now, though, there's the small matter of building the first prototype, which is due to take pride of place on the Zenos stand at the Autosport International show at Birmingham's NEC, venue for the official launch of the E10. There's so much to do in such a short space of

time that there really is no room for error, nor for any glitches in the delivery of the one-off body parts arriving in a steady flow from HPL Proto's paintshop.

Thanks to relentless reality TV programming, we're used to the concept of jeopardy. Or at least we think we are, but let me tell you: *this* is what real risk and pressure looks like. Of course, the guys did a 'dry' assembly of the car and body panels before they went to paint, but with fine tolerances there's always the chance something won't fit, and with every panel a delicate one-off prototype, one false move or butterfingers moment could lead to disaster. Crying 'I'm a fledgling independent low-volume British sports car manufacturer, get me out of here!' doesn't cut any ice.

It's fascinating to watch the three amigos working together, for even under moments of intense stress they simply don't seem to crack. Ali – a self-confessed spanner dodger – is the frontman, working his phone and laptop to negotiate deals, arrange parts and work the media so that Edwards can concentrate on sweating on those details on which the E10 build relies. Alongside him is the tireless

Weston, who has been with Zenos from the beginning after a 20-year man-and-boy career at Caterham. Cut him deep enough and you'll reveal a welded tubular spaceframe, such is his love for the Seven, yet he too believes that the time is right for something new. A natural engineer, he's one of those blokes who has an effortless, intuitive skill for building things and making them work.

Watching the car take shape is a painfully slow process. Activity never stops, but the transformation from an inventory of parts on the floor to a fully formed car is the opposite of a time-lapse video. Hours pass and nothing seems to move on, but then one of HPL Proto's painters walks in with a bright rear wheelarch, and in the few moments it takes to attach it, the bare black tub gains some form and vibrancy.

It's times like this that provide essential shots of adrenalin and you can see all three tired faces light up as their eyes scan the panel from all angles, Edwards in particular stalking around the studio in an effort to find fault. Satisfied that he can't, there's time for a brief smile, a slurp of truly terrible vending-machine coffee (I think it's actually cleaning fluid for HPL Proto's paint guns) and a shared moment of praise before the work begins once more.

Underneath the black bodywork is the E10's innovative chassis structure. In the early days of the project, three things inspired Edwards to come up with the concept of a central beam and composite tub. The first was a discussion with Larry Holt, boss of Multimatic, industry leaders in chassis design, suspension kinematics and

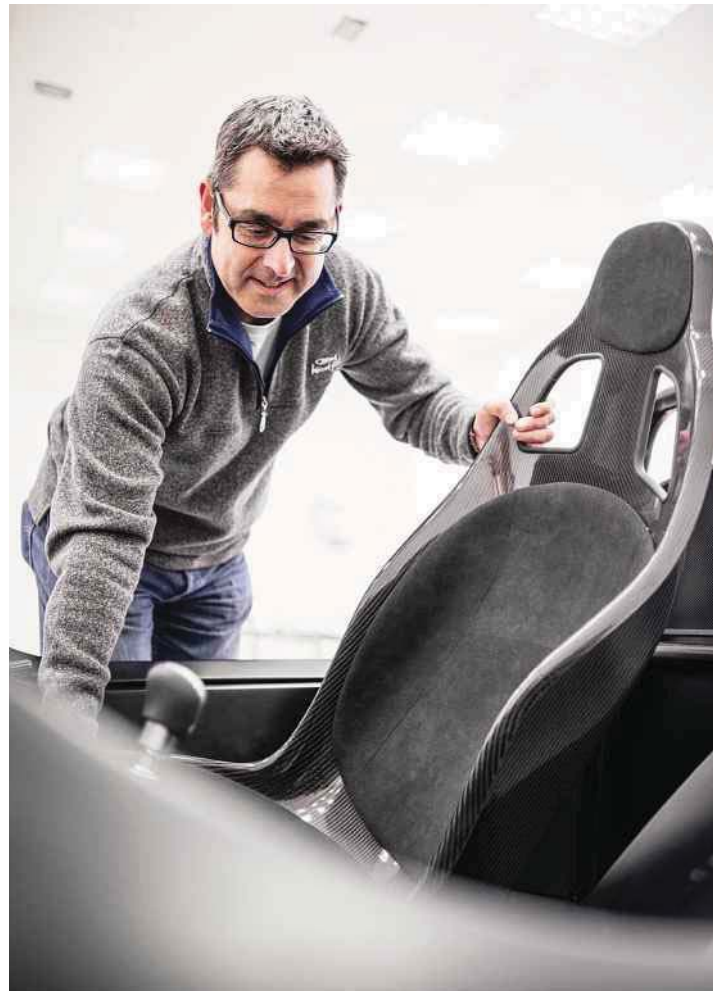
carbonfibre construction, who suggested a central beam could be an advantageous alternative to the common tubular spaceframe. The second was an approach from Antony Dodworth of Dodworth Design, who came to Zenos with his genius new composite material, which combines recycled carbonfibre (essentially off-cuts and waste from F1 teams and other major consumers of high-grade carbonfibre) with plastic drinking straws to create a super-light, super-strong sandwich sheet, much like old-school aluminium honeycomb. Offering 70 per cent of the intrinsic strength of continuous-sheet carbonfibre for just ten per cent of the cost, it's a truly wondrous material and perfect for Zenos.

With these elements swimming around in his head, Edwards then recalled Colin Chapman's

**'WITH EVERY PANEL
A PROTOTYPE, ONE
FALSE MOVE OR
BUTTERFINGERS
MOMENT COULD LEAD
TO DISASTER'**



‘THIS IS TRULY THE FIRST TIME ANYONE HAS SEEN THE PHYSICAL CAR RATHER THAN A 2D RENDERING ON A COMPUTER SCREEN’



chassis designs for the original Lotus Elan and Esprit, which used a form of central spine to provide strength and rigidity. The idea that crystallised was as simple as it was inspired: an extruded aluminium structural beam that runs the length of the car. At the front, this beam provides the central mounting point for the long front wishbones, inboard dampers and steering rack. At the rear is a subframe to cradle the transverse 2-litre Ford EcoBoost engine and transmission, the supply of which Zenos secured through an official deal with Hendy Group and with the blessing of Ford of Europe. In the middle, a tub formed from Dodworth's composite sits over the central spine like a saddle, providing a safe, rigid cell in which to seat two occupants. It's clever stuff.

Engineering genius he may be, but every man has a weakness, and Edwards' is an insatiable appetite for '80s music. So the next day, while Ali paces the floor with mobile phone pressed to his ear, Weston and Edwards work methodically through the build plan to the dulcet tones of Adam and the Ants, Nik Kershaw and The Human League (Google 'em, kids). I consider making good use of the vending machine 'coffee' by using it to douse the laptop that's providing the stream of Absolute 80s radio, but

falter in the belief it might be considered rude.

Mercifully, just before I begin to think a large hammer would be the more effective route to silence, Edwards and Ali emerge from a serious conversation. The upshot is that Ali – Zenos's CEO and, er, van driver – needs to collect some vital parts from Kent. As we're in Coventry and it's already 2pm on Tuesday (the car needs to be on the stand at the NEC tomorrow afternoon, the eve of the unveiling), there's considerable pressure to get to the supplier before they close. Having had my fill of Spandau Ballet, I offer to ride shotgun.

I've known Ali for the best part of ten years, in which time I've always appreciated him for being one of the most approachable men in the car industry. His level of honesty and openness probably makes his life more difficult at times, but his attitude is as refreshing as it is unusual. He'd make a rubbish politician, which explains why, instead of chasing a motor industry career trajectory that took him up the food chain within one of the major volume manufacturers, he instead carved a well-respected niche within the British sports car scene. Perhaps this is why it comes as quite a shock when he looks me in the eye and emphatically states Zenos Cars is not three men chasing a dream.

For a moment, I'm not sure how to take his assertion. Surely it's dreams that energise this lively and perilous corner of the car industry, and dreams that lead otherwise sensible men to jack in their jobs and build cars in sheds? I can remember sitting in the office of the late (and much missed) Peter Wheeler, laughing with him as he delivered the 'How do you make a small fortune in the car industry? Start with a large one' line. He was joking – kind of – but the against-the-odds success of TVR and others are all part of the *Field of Dreams* folklore that surrounds small sports car companies. However, as Ali was alluding, it's also why for every triumph, there are countless failures that leave many a fantasist broke and hollow-eyed, their ill-defined dreams dashed on the jagged rocks of delusion and commercial reality. He's determined Zenos will not fall into this trap.

There's good reason to believe him, not least because to my knowledge Zenos is the only small independent carmaker started by men with extensive experience and no little success working for bigger, established leaders in the sports car sector. Consequently its approach to financial control, process and project management has the rigour, realism and discipline of a 'proper' company. Don't let the lack of a fag-packet business plan fool you, though. There's unquestionably plenty of passion for the product and a genuine zeal to

deliver brilliant, affordable cars. The crucial difference is that Ali and Edwards do not live in a fool's paradise, each promising the other from day one that if the figures didn't stack up, they wouldn't allow ego or denial to seduce them into pressing on regardless.

By the time Ali and I return to HPL Proto, the E10 is a car transformed. All the body panels and lights are fitted, and though there's still a ton of detail assembly to complete – not least the interior – it looks like a finished car, with a face and form that stops you in your tracks. It's a strange moment, for this is truly the first time anyone has seen the physical car rather than a 2D rendering on a computer screen. The Zenos boys look chuffed and ever so slightly dazed.

Wednesday is another blur of activity, with many finishing touches left to do before a photo session to generate the images for both the Zenos website and the press release material for the show. While Edwards and Weston make the final few tweaks in advance of the shoot and the loading of the E10 into its trailer for the short journey to the NEC, Ali, Edwards' wife Jackie and I head to the exhibition hall to set up the stand, to which my contribution is sitting on the floor assembling a pile of IKEA tables and chairs. Three hours later, the car joins us and for the first time in three days there's a palpable collective sigh of relief as it's pushed into position and hidden beneath a black satin sheet

Left: Ali installs the seats into the prototype.
Below: Weston and Edwards fit another panel.
Bottom: Edwards studiously checks for a perfect finish



Zenos E10

Right: Ali and Edwards look on as Weston applies first Zenos badge (below).

Below right: the E10 is unveiled to a sizeable press pack at Autosport International



in readiness for tomorrow morning's unveiling.

The next day, I arrive at the stand to find Ali pacing around like an expectant father, rehearsing his lines in his head while Edwards and Weston lurk nervously at the back of the stand. Mark Goossens, Ali's best mate and volunteer manager of the all-important website and social media feed during the show, says: 'I've not seen him look this nervous since his wedding day!' Which sums things up perfectly.

At 9:45am, Ali begins an emotional presentation in which he introduces the company, the team and the E10 before pulling back the sheet and revealing the car to an intrigued and impressed audience. It's very hard to imagine how Ali, Edwards, Weston and their families feel at this moment, but by the looks on their faces it's a potent mix of elation, exhaustion, euphoria and anxious anticipation at the four critical days of the show to come.



Malcolm Griffiths

'FROM WHAT WE'VE SEEN, THE E10 PROMISES TO BE ONE OF THE HIGHLIGHTS OF 2014'

THE NEXT TIME ALI AND I SPEAK IS Monday, the day after the show closed. I'm half-expecting him to be asleep and his phone to go to voicemail, but as ever he's there to answer the call. So, how did things go? 'To be honest, Dickie, I'm still in a state of shock,' he says. 'The build-up was so intense that we really had no time to think about anything other than getting the car built, but those four days on the stand were brilliant. We've had such praise for the platform and the styling, not to mention such genuine, heartfelt words of encouragement and support. It's really quite overwhelming.'

'What's more, we've taken dozens of orders. That's a tremendous and humbling vote of confidence in the product, not least given no one has driven the car yet. The first order came from a guy who enjoys trackdays and hill climbs. He came to the stand, had a good chat and look round the car, then went away to look at other cars on his shortlist. He came back a short while

later saying he was completely seduced and wanted to place an order! Of the other orders placed, the type of customer has been a real mixture. Of course, there are those who are currently Caterham and Ariel customers, but we've also taken orders from owners of some real exotica. That's very encouraging because we're not just fighting over the same group of customers, we're growing the niche. That's not just good for us, it's good for the whole sector.'

It's been a fascinating and unforgettable few days witnessing the birth of Britain's newest lightweight sports car. There are doubtless plenty of late nights, grey hairs and exciting chapters yet to unfold, but from what we've seen the Zenos E10 promises to be one of the highlights of 2014 and could just be the car to join the Caterham Seven, Lotus Elise and Ariel Atom in the pantheon of great lightweight British sports cars. Much like Ali, Edwards and Weston, we can't wait to find out. ✕

Specification

ZENOS E10

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1999cc

CO2 n/a

Power 200bhp @ 7200rpm

Torque 155lb ft @ 6100rpm

Transmission Five-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, LSD

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

Rear suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, adjustable dampers

Brakes Solid discs, 285mm front and rear, ABS

Wheels 16in front, 17in rear

Tyres 195/50 R16 front, 225/45 R17 rear

Weight (kerb) 650kg

Power-to-weight 313bhp/ton

0-62mph 4.5sec (estimated)

Top speed 135mph (estimated)

Basic price £24,995

On sale Early 2015



Jaguar XKR-S GT v Maserati GT MC Stradale



by HENRY CATCHPOLE

PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH

*When it comes to hardcore
V8 GT supremacy, two cars
lay claim to the throne:
Maserati's GranTurismo
MC Stradale and the
Jaguar XKR-S GT. We test
them head-to-head in Wales*

CROWN DUEL



'THE
MASERATI
GIVES THE
IMPRESSION
THAT IT
IS TAKING
ITS ROAD
RACER
INTENTIONS
SERIOUSLY'

RV63 NGZ

OV13 BBE



Left: road-racer feel of the Jag is amplified by mix of infotainment system, half-cage and racing harnesses (below left)

Y

YOUR EYES FLIT around the bodywork as you walk across the wet car park. Dive planes riveted to the nose. Functional rear wing stuck up in the breeze. Ride

height low enough to give it a proper stance. Promising. But looks can be teasingly deceiving.

Pull the chunky handle and as the glass drops and the door swings open, you instinctively scan the dark interior being revealed. Bright red belts catch your eye first, then the seats – Recaros? Sparcos? You put your left leg into the footwell, drop down onto the firm, unyielding bucket and notice the half-cage in the back as you do so. Shuffling to get comfortable, perhaps trying to slide the seat forward a notch, you instinctively reach out to grasp the wheel for support and soft, suede-like Alcantara meets your palm.

You close the door and glance down to your left for the starter button on the transmission tunnel. Despite the clues so far, you flinch when the initial blare from barely muffled exhausts fills the cabin more loudly than you were expecting. The standard shiny cylinder of a gear selector suddenly seems incongruous as you twist it three clicks clockwise, like cracking the easiest safe in the world. The car jolts gently, straining slightly against its carbon leashes as Drive is selected. Ease open the calipers and it crawls forward as you move your right foot to the throttle and head slowly for the car park



exit. Immediately the first morsels of ride and steering information come bubbling to the surface. They're just scraps really, but by the time you reach the road a few seconds later, you've already felt enough to know for certain that the XKR-S GT is a very different sort of Jaguar. It should be a good couple of days.

Driving up the high street of a very murky Betws-y-coed, I look in the rear-view mirror to check that the Maserati has made it out of the car park too. The sleek shape that's soon filling the mirror could only be Italian. Behind its big smiling grille and those almost feline eye-like headlights, the crisp tailoring of the bodywork performs a minor miracle by managing to disguise the huge dimensions of the car quite beautifully. Although slightly hidden by the dark colour scheme, it's also just possible to

make out the single central nostril that marks this out as the second-generation MC Stradale version of the GranTurismo. That nostril is set into a new carbon bonnet and there are various other discreet carbonfibrous adornments too, so although the Maserati doesn't have the Jaguar's more obvious protrusions disrupting the airflow, it nonetheless gives the impression that it is taking its road racer intentions seriously. The fact that both cars are sporting almost identical huge carbon-ceramic Brembo brakes, complete with matching yellow calipers, also highlights their shared purpose.

Daylight seems horribly scarce this close to the winter solstice, but the appearances the sun does make are usually dramatic as it runs low across the sky between dawn and dusk. Turning left at Capel Curig and pointing the Jaguar's nose towards Snowdon, the clouds ahead are lit up spectacularly. They're almost glowing from within, and as both V8s get into their stride down the fast, sweeping road next to the lake, it's one of those magical moments that you just want to be able to bottle and keep safe like a rare single malt, so that you can uncork it and savour a little dribble of it sometime in the future, perhaps on a rainy evening by the fire. Contributing editor Bovingdon (who prefers amaretto to whisky, should you ever want or need to procure him a late-night tippie) isn't arriving until this evening, so snapper Dean Smith and I decide to get as much photography committed to memory cards this afternoon as

Jaguar XKR-S GT v Maserati GT MC Stradale

we can, leaving tomorrow more for driving.

We stop in a small car park in the shadow of the mountains and whilst Dean busies himself with detail shots, I swap seats and have a poke around the Maserati. After the Jaguar's bucket, the Maser's driver's chair feels rather high and over-stuffed. The steering wheel has also been trimmed in a way that I always find curious, with Alcantara gracing the north/south quadrants and leather the east/west ones. I've seen plenty of other steering wheels set up like this but it just seems wrong – surely you want to have the Alcantara where your hands rest? Anyway, material positioning apart, it's a nice wheel to hold and (perhaps unsurprisingly) very reminiscent of Ferrari helms from a few years ago. The paddles behind the wheel also have a span that is only matched by those from down the road in Maranello: splendid arcs of carbonfibre that look like the heads of blunted pickaxes.

The previous-generation MC Stradale was a strict two-seater with buckets and a half-cage in the back, much like the XKR-S GT, but due to customer demand this second-generation car has reverted to a four-seater. It's interesting how the number and the shape of seats dictate the ambience of the cabin and therefore your mindset towards driving a car. Engineering-wise, this Stradale should be just as focused as the last, if not more so, yet I'm already thinking of it as a far less likely companion on a trackday. Better take it for a quick exploratory drive and stop judging the book by its cover.

I shout to Dean, telling him that I'll be back in a few minutes and not to enjoy himself too much. Then I twist the blue key, smile instinctively at the cultured eruption of the naturally aspirated V8, select Drive and head up the Llanberis Pass. The steering is the first thing to catch your attention because it controls a very direct front end. Turn the wheel and the long nose seems impressively eager to get the front tyres into a bend and this immediacy of response shrinks the big car around you. The ride and roll both feel more relaxed by comparison but, certainly in these first few investigative miles, the chassis as a whole seems to come together beautifully as an intriguing blend of restrained sportiness that's easy to get flowing down the road.

The single-clutch automated manual gearbox takes a bit of getting used to as it initially spoils the flow between bends by taking an age over its torque interruptions on the way up the 'box. However, you very quickly remember to feather the throttle on upshifts and if you switch the mapping to Race (which also opens up the exhaust pipes and loosens the ESP) then upshifts also improve markedly. Downshifts

are always wonderful and perfectly show off the lovely 4.7-litre engine, which now boasts 454bhp, up 10bhp on the first-gen MC.

When I get back, Dean says he's ready to do some moving shots. I say that he should probably go and work for Reuters if he wants moving images, but nevertheless I spend the rest of the afternoon going back and forth for his Nikon until the last useable light has leached out of the western sky and we're forced to retreat to the sanctuary of the Royal Oak back in Betws. Jethro arrives just in time for steak and chips and then, after he's sipped a small Disaronno on ice, we all retire to bed in anticipation of blue skies and empty roads in the morning.

HAMMERING DOWN THE NEXT straight, I glance in the rear-view mirror to check on the progress of the Maserati. This time I'm not wondering if it's still there, I just want to see if it goes as sideways out of the previous corner as the Jag did. We're on a great bit of road that we don't get to drive very often (because it isn't suitable for photography) and the bends just keep coming at us like rapid-fire *Mastermind* questions from John Humphrys.

'What's the gear required for this cresting left-hander?'

'When's the braking point for this medium right between the dry-stone walls?'

'If the car's velocity is X and increasing, will that bump through the fast kink unsettle the rear axle too much?'

'Which German philosopher said: "If you can see the tree you're going to hit, it's understeer. If you can't, it's oversteer"?''

I undoubtedly score badly but it's huge fun, partly because it's still very slippery beneath the trees and the Jag has seemingly been dancing on the limit of grip for miles. I'd love to say that it was my talent pushing it that far, but to be honest it's just the result of a 502lb helping of supercharged torque, lashings of cold, greasy tarmac and unseasonal Pirelli P Zero Corsa tyres. What's impressive, though, is how easy it is to pilot the big Jaguar accurately. The body control and alacrity of response to steering and throttle inputs are of a completely different magnitude to anything I've felt on an XK before.

In some ways it's not surprising when you look at the numbers, because the front and rear spring rates haven't just been tweaked, they are a full 68 per cent and 25 per cent stiffer respectively than on the 'regular' XKR-S. Combine those with revised damper settings, a front track that's got an extra 52mm in it, wider wheels and the quicker steering rack from the F-type, and you've got a substantially different car. The litmus test for the development team



Above: single-clutch paddle-shift in the MC Stradale lags behind in shift times. **Right:** both cars run Brembo carbon-ceramic brake systems



‘WHAT’S
IMPRESSIVE IS
HOW EASY IT IS
TO PILOT THE
BIG JAGUAR
ACCURATELY’



Left: Maserati's carbon door handles and rear spoiler (below) look discreet against dark paint job. **Far left:** Jag's huge bonnet hinges at the front to reveal 5-litre supercharged V8. **Right:** XKR-S GT's rear wing can produce 145kg of downforce



was the Nürburgring, where the GT managed a 7:40 lap around the Nordschleife – that's some 11 seconds quicker than an XKR-S, without the slightest power or torque increase.

Of course, if the sum total of the changes was just a lap time, then it wouldn't be very interesting, but the development of the car has also led to a machine that, right now on this testing bit of Welsh road, I can adjust not only more quickly but much more subtly. Interestingly, the relatively light steering hasn't actually got a great deal of genuine feel, yet it takes a while to notice this because of the far greater sense of overall connection. The rate of response from the front end is so much more immediate and the whole chassis reacts so much more quickly that you simply don't need to grope your way slowly and fearfully up to the limit of grip. The balance is intuitive.

By the time Jethro and I reach our next rendezvous point to wait for Dean, I've come to the conclusion that two is the perfect number for a stop across the countryside. Sometimes you just want to go on a drive on your own, but by and large we're a sociable species and so it's often more fun having another car around – apart from anything else, it's nice to have someone to chat excitedly to when you stop. But keeping it to just two it means no one is ever stuck in the middle and feeling hemmed in.

Jethro's a big fan of the MC Stradale: 'It's just such a cool thing. A proper GT that you could live with every day. And the engine is glorious. It really is a Porsche alternative because it's not even trying to compete with a GT3, it's something entirely different and I like that a lot.'

Ah yes, the GT3 question. The rear-engined elephant in the lay-by. Given the road-racer vibes of both the Jag and the Maser, it might have seemed natural to pit them against the Porsche, but I just don't think it would have added anything to this test having the GT3 here. It would have won with a slightly crushing inevitability (it's our eCoty champion for a reason) and there would probably have been a collective yawn because it was expected. It would have told us nothing that we don't already know.

People that want and can afford a GT3 will buy a GT3. Same with a GT-R. But plenty of other people do not want a GT3. For myriad reasons, like badge or handling balance, they simply wouldn't consider the Stuttgart offering. And at that point the Jaguar and Maserati step into the frame – particularly if you happen to be a fan of front-engined, rear-drive V8s.

Jethro and I swap cars for the next leg of our tour through North Wales and I have to say that I'm looking forward to a bit more time with the Maser's drivetrain. In bald numbers it might be

lagging some 88bhp and 119lb ft behind the 542bhp Jaguar, but on the road the MC Stradale hardly gets blown into the weeds by the Brit. The XKR-S GT's supercharged 5-litre engine is mightily effective and makes a good noise, but it lacks the subtlety of sound and ability to crescendo that the Italian possesses. As we head off down the road and I watch the Jaguar ahead attacking the dry tarmac through the first few corners, I'm already enjoying wringing every last rev from the naturally aspirated V8.

Both cars produce their peak power outputs within 500rpm of each other (the Jaguar at 6000-6500rpm, the Maserati at 7000rpm) but the difference is that you instinctively find yourself driving the Maserati on power and the Jaguar on torque. In the Jag you just need to make sure you're somewhere on the lb ft plateau between 2500rpm and 5000rpm, and so can be more flexible about gear choice as a result. But if you're to make the most of the Maser you are compelled to hang on and on until the needle is kissing the red line (7200rpm) before changing up, and then when you brake you need to make sure you've popped in every available downchange to keep things fizzing.

The clever thing about the Maserati is that the red line doesn't feel hard to access like it can in some naturally aspirated motors, so you can repeatedly enjoy the feeling of the power swelling and the exhaust note rising

'IT MIGHT BE LAGGING SOME 88BHP AND 119LB FT BEHIND THE JAGUAR, BUT THE MC STRADALE HARDLY GETS BLOWN INTO THE WEEDS'



Jaguar XKR-S GT v Maserati GT MC Stradale

can instantly tell that the XKR-S GT is a car that has been honed at the Ring. There's a lot of negative press that seems to say developing there is a bad thing, but it certainly isn't for a car like this: it just deals with everything in a much more ruthless manner. Up to a point, it also gets better the faster you go. As Jethro points out, you can feel the steering get out of phase over a crest just occasionally to remind you that it's not a true lightweight, but fundamentally the GT is deeply impressive and a lot of fun.

On dry roads the traction and the sense of control you get over the rear axle is in a totally different league to an XKR-S (or a V8 F-type). You can really use the performance of the engine with confidence as a result and know that when you do reach the limit of the tyres, the chassis is sorted enough to make it feel like a natural progression. It's fortunate that the engine is flexible enough to allow the

Opposite page: Maserati looks classier and less extreme than bewinged XKR-S GT.
Bottom: wide torque band makes the Jag a joy to slide

to their joint peak. The gearbox is fun, too. As the miles pass, I find that what it loses in shift times compared to an almost seamless twin-clutch is almost made up for by the enjoyable mechanical feedback you get with the single-clutch system's more tangible cog-swapping. In Race, a full-throttle, fully loaded, high-revs upshift feels thrilling because there's a palpable thump of mechanicals like you get when you flat-shift a sequential dog 'box. The right-hand paddle feels like a trigger on a rifle because such a light touch causes such an instant and fearsome recoil. To be honest, you do wonder about the sustainability of such brutality and whether the internals can take it, but it makes you smile every time nonetheless.

We've been gradually working our way cross-country towards the **evo** Triangle and it seems appropriate that it's here that the final dynamic pieces of the puzzle fall into place. The Maserati is best when you can commit unwaveringly to a bend and get the chassis loaded up. There's more roll than in the Jaguar but most of the time you can use the body movement to great effect, and the long wheelbase means it's actually very easy to catch and hold smoothly when it does slide. Where the Maserati struggles slightly is through fast bends if you can't quite commit: in this instance the quick steering and inability to fully load the chassis can leave you in a slight no-man's land.

It's on a particularly roller-coastering section of the eastern side of the Triangle (you'll know the bit I mean if you ever visit) that the Jaguar takes a clear dynamic step into the lead, however. The big compressions simply find the limits of the Italian's body control when I try to go through them at the same speed as the Jaguar. I swap back into the Jag immediately afterwards and head back down the road and

gearbox some leeway, because the six-speed auto's performance isn't up to the rest of the car, but sadly there was nothing that the small development team could do about that.

Parked up next to the lake with both cars pinking as they cool and with the afternoon sun making a beeline for the horizon once more, Jethro and I agree that it's been one of the best and most intriguing twin tests we've done for a while. The Maserati is such a desirable car, with real class and a drivetrain that is as beautiful as the bodywork surrounding it. I can totally understand the decision to revert to four seats too, which might sound like a slur, but it's just because it fits the car's perfectly rounded nature. It would be a wonderful thing to live with, go on a long journey with or simply wake up and go for an early morning drive in. Jethro and I just can't understand why they don't sell more of them.

Meanwhile, Bovingdon and I also agree that the GT is really what the XKR-S should have been all along. Jaguar certainly shouldn't be afraid of producing a car like this (and the limited production run – no more than 50 cars, with just ten allocated to the UK – suggests they are). With the dampers not in Dynamic mode it's still a fine everyday proposition, but it also has an edge and an ability that suddenly takes Jaguar into new territory for people that want a proper drivers' car. We certainly can't wait to see what the results are when the same treatment is dished out to an F-type Coupe. Watch your back, GT3. **x**





Specifications

JAGUAR XKR-S GT

Engine V8, 5000cc, supercharger
CO2 292g/km
Power 542bhp @ 6000-6500rpm
Torque 502lb ft @ 2500-5000rpm
Transmission Six-speed automatic,
rear-wheel drive, eDiff, ESP
Front suspension Double wishbones, coil
springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension Double wishbones, coil
springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar
Brakes Ventilated carbon-ceramic discs,
398mm front, 380mm rear, ABS, EBD
Wheels 9 x 20in front, 10.5 x 20in rear
Tyres 255/30 R20 front, 305/30 R20 rear
Weight (kerb) 1638kg
Power-to-weight 336bhp/ton
0-60mph 3.9sec (claimed)
Top speed 186mph (claimed)
Basic price £135,000
On sale Now

evo rating: ★★★★★

MASERATI GRANTURISMO MC STRADALE

Engine V8, 4691cc
CO2 337g/km
Power 454bhp @ 7000rpm
Torque 383lb ft @ 4750rpm
Transmission Six-speed automated
manual, rear-wheel drive, LSD, ESP
Front suspension Double wishbones, coil
springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension Double wishbones, coil
springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
Brakes Ventilated carbon-ceramic discs,
380mm front, 360mm rear, ABS, EBD
Wheels 8.5 x 20in front, 10.5 x 20in rear
Tyres 255/35 ZR20 front, 295/35 ZR20 rear
Weight (kerb) 1800kg
Power-to-weight 256bhp/ton
0-62mph 4.5sec (claimed)
Top speed 188mph (claimed)
Basic price £110,110
On sale Now

evo rating: ★★★★★



Japanese cars have long been a target for aftermarket modifications and improvements, but now the carmakers themselves are creating their own upgrades. We pit Nissan, Toyota and Mazda's latest uprated examples against each other on road and track

RISING REASONS

by JETHRO BOVINGDON | PHOTOGRAPHY by GUS GREGORY



W

WE'RE A LONG WAY from Tokyo, but for tonight this far western part of Great Britain has just a flavour of the Shuto or Tomei Expressway.

Racing white paint glows a faded yellow under fluid streetlights, a big rear spoiler flares with distorted reflections and engines boom through big-bore exhausts. When the 370Z Nismo ahead streaks into the white light of a deep two-lane tunnel, the image is complete. Instinctively I change down a gear and give chase.

What follows doesn't quite match the evocative *Midnight Club* vibe. There's no slurping induction, no sense of a great big turbo winding itself up to speed, and the violent surge

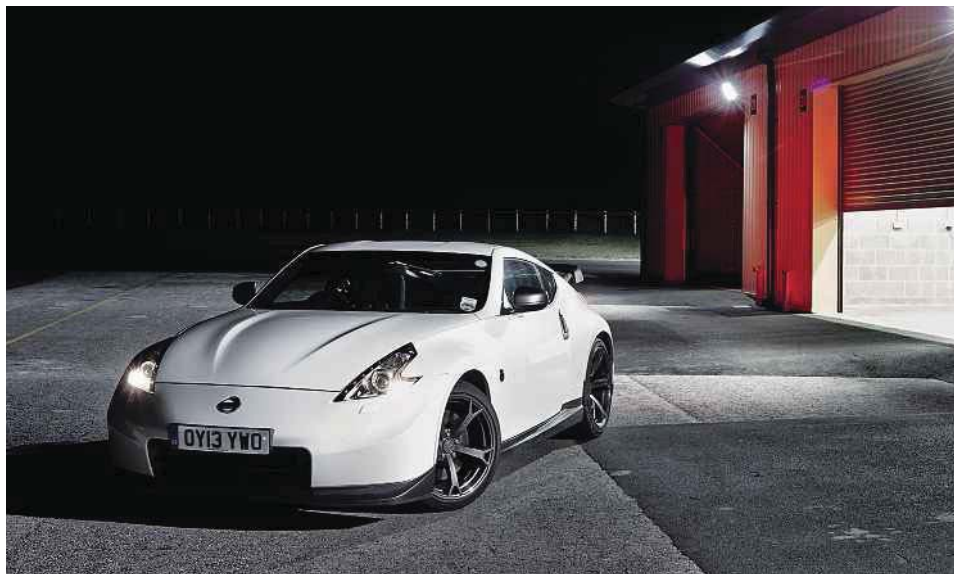
of crazy boost and chirruping wastegate are just figments of my imagination. Not a solitary flame is belched from those rocket-launcher exhausts ahead. Instead a flat-four thrashes around to 7000rpm and a bloody MX-5 zips past me and steadily pulls away. An MX-5! It would be a wholly ignominious experience but it's late, there's nobody around to see the humiliation and I'm still comforted by the memories of a day and evening of great roads and a great circuit.

Forgive the self-indulgent introduction but this threesome demands – to a certain extent – a suspension of reality in order to be fully enjoyed. You see, the 370Z Nismo, priced at £36,995 (exactly £10,000 more than an entry-level Zed), creeps into Boxster and Cayman territory and,

in short, it's simply outmanoeuvred by both. The Toyota GT86 TRD, meanwhile, is £6500 more expensive than the car on which it's based and yet brings only styling tweaks and bigger wheels to the experience. Even at £24,995 the standard car feels a little light on power, so the mechanically identical TRD, priced at £31,495, is massively outgunned by cars like the M135i and pretty much any other hot hatch you might care to mention.

Then there's the newest car of our group, the intriguing Jota MX-5 GT. This is a semi-official project born out of Jota Sport and Mazda UK's racing partnership, which culminated in an assault on the British GT Championship in 2012 in a GT4-spec MX-5. It's a thorough job too, with

370Z Nismo v GT86 TRD v Jota MX-5 GT



the 2-litre four-cylinder engine's outputs up from 158bhp and 139lb ft to 203bhp at 7000rpm and 160lb ft at 5200rpm. The modifications that make those numbers possible include more aggressive cams, a revised intake and a freer-flowing exhaust system, while the Jota also gets a 15mm lower ride height and new Bilstein dampers to sharpen the handling.

However, like the Nismo and TRD, the Jota is pretty punchy on pricing and comes in at £29,995. So these three leftfield choices are for people who can look beyond a spec sheet, can forgive a few foibles and who might look at a Boxster or Golf GTI and feel cold to the core. I get that, absolutely. But they still need to be great fun. Which is why, when we rewind to early this morning, we find ourselves beating a familiar path northwest to Anglesey Circuit and the roads nearby.

I'm in the 370Z Nismo, a car that got a bit of a kicking at its launch in Germany. In fact I think it was perhaps unfairly bashed by some of the

assembled journalists. Part of this was because Nissan Germany laid on officially The Worst Launch Ever (culminating in a 'stunt' driver rolling a Juke Nismo with three journalists in the car. Whoops). And part of it was because a marketing type suggested over dinner that Nismo was more of a go-faster label than a real engineering-led approach to building exciting drivers' cars. It was a misjudged comment but the Zed's heavily revised suspension (damping force up 23 per cent at the front and 41 per cent at the rear) and braking components, and reinforced shell (improving rigidity by 25 per cent), should have been considered mitigating evidence before the hatchets went in.

Here and now, the Nismo feels a pretty cool place to be. The looks will be divisive, of course, but I love a bit of crazy Japanese sculpture. The interior feels marginal at this price and the driving position is hampered by a lack of reach adjustment for the Alcantara-trimmed steering wheel, but the 339bhp 3.7-litre V6 (up

13bhp) has booming mid-range torque (274lb ft at 5200rpm) and makes light work of the M6 and the A55 en route to Anglesey. You can feel the added rigidity from the way the car rides with an underlying control not present on the standard 370Z and because the steering feels so much more precise and more consistent. The brake pedal is short and solid, the six-speed manual gearbox is weighty but easy to operate, and the superb Synchro Rev function delivers perfect downshifts every time.

Away from the motorway network, things continue to stack up. The chassis is much more in control of the 1535kg kerb weight, cornering much flatter and also changing direction cleanly. Traction is good too, and with less body roll the rather lazy LSD feels more assured and you get little of the messy inside wheelspin that usually unravels the 370Z. It's actually a lot of fun, although the steering's initial stickiness as you try to turn into a corner can make the car feel more reluctant than it really is.

The one glaring reservation remains, though, and it's the big gnashing V6 up front that is the Nismo's weak link. There's nothing wrong with the ultimate performance or the way the energy builds from that stonking mid-range right up to the limiter – but such is the harshness as it does so that you wonder if there's any oil in the engine. It's a dominant part of the experience and so even if you're enjoying the chassis, you'll be simultaneously wincing as the motor grinds through another gear.

Having said that, you'd kill for some of the Nismo's power when you switch from the big Zed to the low, featherweight but torque-light TRD. The 197bhp, 151lb ft 2-litre flat-four has much better manners than the Nissan's V6



Top left: Nismo 370Z's steering wheel gets Alcantara treatment. **Far left:** wheels are 19in all round. **Left:** 3.7-litre V6 produces 339bhp, up 13bhp on the standard car

'THE NISMO FEELS A PRETTY COOL PLACE TO BE. THE LOOKS WILL BE DIVISIVE, BUT I LOVE A BIT OF CRAZY JAPANESE SCULPTURE'



370Z Nismo v GT86 TRD v Jota MX-5 GT

but it's not the sweetest unit either, reaching 7000rpm with a strained buzz rather than the sonorous off-beat roar you might expect. But the TRD feels so much more responsive and so light that it hardly matters.

The basics of this car are pitched perfectly: the driving position, the steering weight, the simply fantastic brake feel and of course the balance. Running on wheels an inch bigger (now 18s, up from the regular GT86's 17s) with 10mm wider Michelin Pilot Sport 3 tyres is transformative, the TRD finding much more front-end grip and greater traction than the standard car but also a less contrived oversteer habit. You might not be actively correcting the rear axle as often as you would in the basic '86 but you're always managing the balance with throttle and steering. More grip in this case means more consistency, a broader palette of cornering options and significantly more poise. Logic suggests the TRD should just be a slightly gaudier and less entertaining GT86, but it's actually satisfying in a way that's beyond the scope of the standard car, hobbled as it is by those much-celebrated low-grip tyres.

The MX-5 GT is a stark contrast. If the key to the TRD's appeal is a stable platform that allows minute adjustability and feels like it might spark to life even more with another 50bhp, then the GT feels almost over-endowed if you really wring-out its 2-litre engine. What a little screamer! The spec sheet says that peak power is at 7000rpm but the engine zings around to nearly 8000 and feels like it wants to run to 10,000. At low and medium revs it has more boom than bite, but from around 5000rpm the tiny MX-5 really flies along and has a manic edge that's lacking in the TRD and the bruising Nissan. The fizzing engine in combination with

a soft front end and stiff rear suspension makes for very exciting progress...

So you're in this tiny ball of energy and everything seems to happen in a hurry. The steering is light and slightly vague, lacking the sense of connection of the other two cars' helms, so you find yourself being too aggressive with it in order to feel what the chassis is doing underneath. The ride is firmer than a standard MX-5's, but while the 20mm lower ride height and stiffer damping does eliminate some of the odd floatiness of the standard MX-5, there's still often a disconnect between what the wheels and the body are doing. You feel and hear that the short, sharp bumps are being dealt with but bigger undulations can set the body heaving and put it out of sync with the chassis.

Body roll is, however, much better contained and the newfound power really gives the 205-section rear tyres something to think about. As even the standard MX-5 feels great once you've got through some of the squidge and loaded up the chassis, it's no surprise that the Jota GT is fantastic fun when fully committed. There's wheelspin and oversteer on demand, a lovely short-throw gearbox and the engine's appetite for revs never gets boring. On the fast, flowing and slightly damp roads that lead to Anglesey, it's a real workout and – despite some flaws – a barrel-load of laughs.

'THE TRD FINDS MUCH MORE FRONT-END GRIP AND GREATER TRACTION THAN THE STANDARD CAR'





Left: GT86's interior is largely unchanged by the TRD upgrade (bar a TRD logo on the gearknob); 2-litre flat-four's power output remains the same at 197bhp. **Top and far left:** aggressive body kit helps the TRD stand out



WITH A TIGHT WEATHER AND LIGHT window to get some dry lap times recorded, I roll out onto Anglesey's superb Coastal circuit in the Nismo first. It's pretty obvious that this car – over 135bhp to the good of its competitors – will be the quickest, but I'm more interested in seeing if the much improved body control and braking performance transfer to absolute on-limit behaviour – and if it deserves that famous badge. The track is cold but dry and the air temperature is 8deg C, so the 19in Bridgestones might need warming but the brakes and engine will get plenty of cool air.

Just three laps later, the water temperature gauge has rocketed and the ECU wisely winds back the throttle to let everything cool down. Surely this intolerance of any track work is completely at odds with the Nismo lineage? Having warmed to this car over the past few hundred miles, all my affection leaks away. It's a real pity as there are some strong features that emerge on track – excellent front-end grip, the engine's any-rev grunt, the superb downshift blipping function and brakes that manfully stand up to abuse. It feels fast and controlled even though you're always aware that this is a pretty porky car. The only real dynamic disappointment is that, like on the standard car, the limited-slip differential doesn't lock up aggressively enough, so power spins away through the unloaded inside-rear tyre. On the road, this trait is almost erased but

at track speeds it's an ever-present annoyance.

The Nismo's time is an impressive 1:20.8, which would be little compensation for spending 95 per cent of your trackday time in the pits while the car recovers its faculties.

By comparison the MX-5 GT feels miniscule, light and hyper-responsive. It lacks the firepower of the Nismo – in fact on track that manic top-end delivery feels much tamer – but the grunt-to-grip ratio is firmly in the favour of the former and it makes the Jota huge fun to hustle. That's the right word, too, as the soft front/stiff rear combination means the GT is always demanding decisive inputs. Turn in on the brakes and it'll oversteer and stay that way all the way through the corner. Try to be neat and tidy and you'll find some mid-corner understeer followed by a lovely flourish of oversteer as you rumble out onto the exit kerbs. It's exciting, if a little clumsy at times.

Slightly less enjoyable is the high-speed understeer through both Turn 1 and the never-ending right from Church to Rocket (see map, p102). It's a pretty wild ride and somehow the set-up isn't quite there yet – proved by the lack of cohesion between the front and rear roll rates and the grip levels through any given part of a corner. Jota offers a fully adjustable Öhlins suspension set-up for £1500, which we'd love to try. Even so, the GT would be a frantic and exciting occasional trackday machine and more resilient than the Nismo.

But its lap time is miles behind at 1:24.6.

The TRD can't challenge the Nismo in outright pace, either. However, it does a terrific job of combining the Nissan's stability and front-end grip with the MX-5's agility and sheer expressiveness. In fact it's rather wonderful. It's just magic through Turn 1, nailed to the apex with just a shade of oversteer ensuring perfect precision. Into 'The Banking' the TRD continues to tread the fine line between accuracy and entertainment, diving deep into the apex and then sliding gracefully and efficiently on the exit. But it's at its best through the fast right at Church and then building speed towards Rocket: just teetering on the edge of a slide at all times but allowing total commitment.

It makes the Zed feel heavy and lethargic, and the MX-5 seem unnecessarily flighty. The whole lap is an exercise in balancing the car in a deliciously accessible zone where it seems to respond to your every whim. The fact that it can maintain that performance for several laps is also very impressive. Despite an inferior power-to-weight ratio it puts nearly a second on the MX-5 GT with a 1:23.7.

THE PADDOCK IS INKY BLACK BY the time we leave Anglesey and head for those long North Welsh tunnels. I can almost forgive the 370Z Nismo's weedy showing on track under the glow of street lights: those 19-



Below: Jota is based on the folding hard-top Roadster Coupe MX-5. **Left:** 2-litre engine is tuned to 203bhp. **Above:** 17in wheels are same size as on standard MX-5. **Right:** Recaro part-leather seats are part of upgrade

'THE MX-5'S GRUNT-TO-GRIP RATIO IS FIRMLY IN THE FAVOUR OF THE FORMER AND IT MAKES THE JOTA-TWEAKED MACHINE A HUGE AMOUNT OF FUN TO HUSTLE'



370Z Nismo v GT86 TRD v Jota MX-5 GT



inch Rays alloys, the extended wheelarch lips to contain them and that rear wing come to life at night. It really is a heroically out-of-place touch of Tokyo in Anglesey. Sadly the engine's harshness and the asking price in combination are too much to ignore. It's superior to the regular 370Z but at £36,995 it's tough to make a case for it.

You might say the same of the TRD but despite the mild changes over standard the driving experience is much improved. OK, so you might not fancy spending £6500 extra to get bigger wheels and tyres – which are responsible for the transformation – but you might want to think about upgrading the wheel/tyre package on a regular '86. Initially the TRD feels a little flat on the road but with time the quality of the chassis shines through, and on track it's a fantastic exponent of the front-engine/rear-drive breed.

The Jota MX-5 GT is an easier proposition. It's based on a £23,095 MX-5 Roadster Coupe Sport Tech and for an extra £6900 offers nearly 30 per cent more power, uprated suspension, a trick little carbonfibre rear diffuser and decent Recaros. In the context of the other two cars here, the upgrade is a genuine bargain. But a £29,995 Mazda MX-5 still takes some getting used to. Especially when the chassis doesn't feel fully resolved and the engine – fun though it is – only comes to life right near the top of the rev range.

In the end, it comes down to a question of taste. If you can live without much power and appreciate the charms of poise and balance then the TRD is a treat. But if you like to roll up your sleeves and scrap to access and then exploit performance, the MX-5 GT will be much the better car for you. Me? I'd take the TRD by a whisker because although it doesn't deliver its very best that often, when it does it's something to cherish. ☑

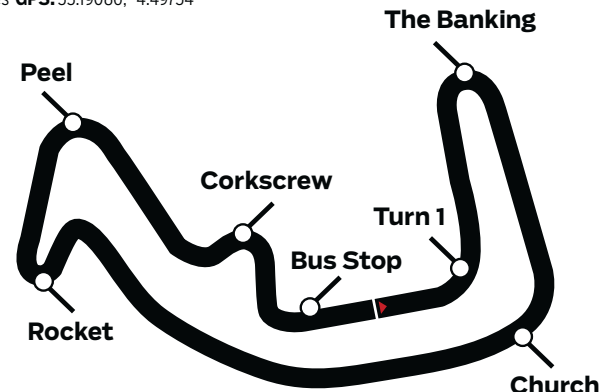
The track: Anglesey (Coastal Circuit)

📏 Distance: 1.55 miles

📍 Location: Aberffraw, Anglesey, Wales GPS: 53.19086, -4.49754

The lap trace shows the vast performance advantage of the Nismo. It just monsters the others whenever the track is vaguely straight. It's also good through the fast Turn 1 and the very slow entry to Rocket – which demonstrates the good balance of the car generally. However, its weight shows with lower apex speeds at most corners.

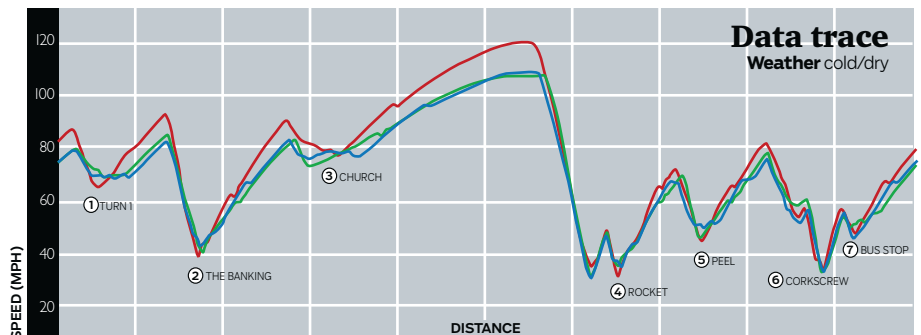
The Jota and TRD both require real patience at the beginning of the lap in Turn 1: the former to wait for the front tyres to bite, the latter as you're dealing with precise but time-sapping oversteer. But the later braking in the TRD shows how much more confidence-inspiring the car is generally – less prone to sudden and tricky under- or oversteer



than the busy Jota.

It's this stability that allows the TRD to overcome the performance deficit to the Jota across a lap. The downhill left before the Corkscrew

demonstrates this most clearly: the Jota couldn't cope with trail-braking and would lurch into snap oversteer, whereas the TRD was stable and very easy to manage through this section.



● Nissan 370Z Nismo: 1.20.8 (V-max 118.46mph) ● Jota Mazda MX-5 GT: 1.24.6 (107.64mph)
● Toyota GT86 TRD: 1.23.7 (107.35mph)

Specifications

NISSAN 370Z NISMO

Engine	V6, 3696cc
CO2	248g/km
Power	339bhp @ 7400rpm
Torque	274lb ft @ 5200rpm
Transmission	Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip diff, ESC
Front suspension	Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension	Multi-link, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
Brakes	Ventilated discs, 355mm front, 350mm rear, ABS, EBD
Wheels	9.5 x 19in front, 10.5 x 19in rear
Tyres	245/40 R19 front, 285/35 R19 rear
Weight (kerb)	1535kg
Power-to-weight	224bhp/ton
0-62mph	5.2sec (claimed)
Top speed	155mph (limited)
Basic price	£36,995
On sale	Now
Rating	★★★★★

TOYOTA GT86 TRD

Engine	Flat-four, 1998cc
CO2	181g/km
Power	197bhp @ 7000rpm
Torque	151lb ft @ 6400-6600rpm
Transmission	Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip diff, ESC
Front suspension	MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension	Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
Brakes	Ventilated discs, 294mm front, 290mm rear, ABS, EBD
Wheels	7.5 x 18in front and rear
Tyres	225/40 R18 front and rear
Weight (kerb)	1180kg
Power-to-weight	170bhp/ton
0-62mph	7.6sec (claimed)
Top speed	140mph (claimed)
Basic price	£31,495
On sale	Now
Rating	★★★★★

JOTA MAZDA MX-5 GT

Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 1999cc
CO2	n/a
Power	203bhp @ 7000rpm
Torque	160lb ft @ 5200rpm
Transmission	Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip diff, ESC
Front suspension	Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension	Multi-link, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
Brakes	Ventilated discs, 280mm front, and rear, ABS, EBD
Wheels	7 x 17in front and rear
Tyres	205/45 R17 front and rear
Weight (kerb)	1173kg
Power-to-weight	176bhp/ton
0-62mph	6.4sec (claimed)
Top speed	140mph (claimed)
Basic price	£29,995
On sale	Now
Rating	★★★★★



Peugeot RCZ R v Audi TTS v Mini JCW Paceman

by DAVID VIVIAN

PHOTOGRAPHY by MATT HOWELL

EURO



VISION

You've just seen the top Japanese coupe options at around the £30,000 mark – but what about the options from Europe's carmakers? We check out the Peugeot RCZ R, Audi TTS and Mini JCW Paceman



ONCE THE WORD FOR A SPECIFIC

type of two-door car with a swoopy rear roof line, 'coupe' has become more abstract in recent times – a pliable idea for marketing types and designers to kick around and use in increasingly popular genre mash-ups. It explains the existence of the otherwise inexplicable Mini JCW Paceman, a car impossible to describe without using an unsightly number of hyphens. 'Performance three-door coupe' – the admission ticket for this group test – is just part of a proposed skill set that includes hot hatch and chunky, propped-up all-wheel-drive SUV with four full-sized seats instead of the traditional coupe's '+2' perches. It's a car, Mini would claim, defined by the zeitgeist and poses a very modern question: why confine yourself to old-fashioned, straight-ahead concepts when you can have it all?

We reckon it's a bold ambition that inevitably prompts 'master of none' reservations but deserves a serious examination nonetheless. Fortunately, purist performance

Peugeot RCZ R v Audi TTS v Mini JCW Paceman

coupes – the sort that put speed and style ahead of rear legroom and ground clearance – remain just as abundant as cars that use ‘coupefication’ as a style conceit. And in the £36,045 Audi TTS (third-generation replacement due this summer but still formidable) and the £31,995 Peugeot RCZ R (the fastest road car Peugeot has ever made) the Paceman is up against two talented specialists.

Like the Audi TT, the Mini will soon appear in third-generation form, but with eight body styles already to its name in mk2 guise, its designers haven’t exactly been sitting on their hands. The John Cooper Works Paceman is the most wilfully crossed-over Mini of all, welding seemingly disparate elements together in a way that, it has to be said, isn’t entirely disguised by the aesthetic outcome. The Mini with the fattest repertoire is also the most expensive at £29,430, nearly £1k more than its five-door JCW Countryman equivalent. Its price even shades that of our favourite Mini, the JCW GP.

Peugeot’s prettiest coupe, contrastingly, has concentrated its focus to become the RCZ R. Up to now regarded as a car with heavy-duty levels of presence but insufficient dynamic resolve to close the deal, the RCZ has been taken to boot camp by Peugeot Sport, the outfit responsible for

Peugeot’s Le Mans racers and the awesome 208 T16 Pikes Peak record-breaker. This doesn’t happen very often – the last Peugeot Sport road car was the 205 T16 back in 1984 – so it’s no exercise in token bragging: 266bhp from the turbocharged 1.6-litre engine it shares with the Paceman (which, even in JCW tune, produces a ‘mere’ 215bhp) sees to that, as does a raft of racy chassis mods.

Not that the Audi TTS has cause to be cowed. A model developed, along with the even more muscular five-cylinder RS, to take the fight to the Porsche Cayman (an endeavour that will be pursued with even greater conviction with the forthcoming new-generation car), the TTS sets its sights sky-high. Any other RCZ, even the 197bhp THP, wouldn’t be considered a rival at all. The R changes that. It matches the Audi’s firepower and does so for £4050 less. But the TTS counters with a quattro drivetrain as standard and, on our test car, the optional S-tronic double-clutch transmission. On paper it has the edge.

Parked up for Matt Howell’s Nikon on the outfield of the Bedford Autodrome, however, it’s hard to stop looking at the Peugeot and, maybe for the wrong reasons, the Paceman. Mildly facelifted in 2013, the RCZ remains the most exotic-looking coupe you can buy for £30k and Peugeot



‘THERE’S AN IMMEDIACY TO THE PACEMAN’S MAJOR CONTROL RESPONSES, BOTH THROTTLE AND STEERING, THAT CAN BE QUITE BEGUILING’

Left: RCZ’s sporting credentials are discreet outside, less so inside (top). **Top left:** TTS still looks classy. **Opposite page:** Paceman’s styling is somewhat challenging



has clearly resisted the temptation to add unnecessary adornments for the R, which gets a fixed rear wing rather than one that pops up from the boot at speed, and a smattering of little 'R' badges. It sits a little closer to the ground than other RCZs, too. From most angles it looks simply gorgeous, especially those that show off its smoothly undulating double bubble roof. The Audi's visual impact is diluted by familiarity but it's still something of a design classic and its clean-cut simplicity is a potent counterpoint to the Peugeot's show-car glamour.

Mind you, some designers will tell you that pretty-pretty cars are passé. Ex-BMW design chief Chris Bangle achieved infamy with the notion. He should have no truck with the Paceman, which certainly looks tough and functional, and a little less SUV than a Countryman, thanks to its substantially lower ride height. If it has a 'pretty' angle, though, it's more elusive than a rainbow on a spider's web on an overcast day. It makes the Audi look sleek and the Peugeot horribly attractive. Bangleism lives.

Elevated expectations teed up by the Peugeot's exotic exterior, however, experience a sudden loss of cabin pressure when you open the Peugeot's doors and peer inside. Delivering fine support and a low-slung, well-judged driving position, the seats could hardly look more purposefully sculpted, there's a conspicuous smattering of 'R' badges and the gearknob is over-

engineered and unnecessarily large. But beyond these eye-catching distractions, the cabin shows little originality or flair. As you might expect, given the car's generously proportioned Karmann Ghia-esque flanks, the boot is decently capacious, but the rear seats would be a tight squeeze for a brace of garden gnomes.

Whether it's to your taste or not, the Paceman's interior is a riot of invention by comparison and more classily finished. Familiar, too. The fascia and lofty driving position are pure Countryman, as is the feeling you're perched on – rather than sitting in – the overly firm seats. It isn't as spacious as a five-door Countryman but, surprisingly, it's leg- rather than headroom that suffers. The Paceman is a true four-seater nonetheless, with none of the tank-turret visibility rear occupants have to suffer in more conventional coupes, and that includes the TTS, though for the driver things could hardly be rosier in the Audi. Its seats are even better than the Peugeot's and have a wider range of adjustment, while the control ergonomics and clarity of the instruments nudge perfection. To put it bluntly, the Audi's fusion of Alcantara, leather and soft-sheen aluminium, spare, clean design and immaculate finish are in a different league.

As, to be frank, are the Mini's mechanical stats. Despite sharing its 1.6-litre turbocharged engine with the RCZ, the Paceman JCW

Peugeot RCZ R v Audi TTS v Mini JCW Paceman

is comprehensively outgunned in this company. With 215bhp and 206lb ft driving all four wheels via the standard 'All4' drivetrain (other front-drive JCW Minis get 208bhp) it goes well enough. Mini claims a 6.9sec 0-62mph time and a 140mph top speed. The RCZ R's new EP6CDTR development of the same engine, however, has a reinforced engine block, specific turbo and exhaust manifolds, stronger conrods and new forged pistons developed with Mahle Motorsport (the last 20 Le Mans winners have used Mahle pistons). As a result, power leaps to 266bhp at 6000rpm, while 243lb ft of torque is generated from just 1900rpm all the way to 5500rpm. Despite this astonishingly high specific output (166bhp per litre) and a claimed 0-62mph time of 5.9 seconds, the RCZ R is actually the most efficient model in the petrol RCZ line-up, with claimed figures of 44.8mpg on the combined cycle and 145g/km of CO2 emissions against the Paceman's 38.2mpg and 172g/km.

On paper, the Audi edges the RCZ R thanks to its 2-litre turbocharged four's 268bhp and 258lb ft of torque, the latter sustained over a slightly narrower rev band than the Peugeot, from 2500 to 5000rpm. A six-speed manual gearbox is standard, but the six-speed S-tronic twin-clutch transmission shaves 0.2sec from the manual's 5.5sec 0-62mph time and offers the promise of seamlessly streamed urge, effortlessly choreographed by a couple of paddles set behind the chunky, flat-bottomed steering wheel. With a combined consumption of 36.7mpg, though, the TTS is thirstier than its rivals here.

But, point-to-point, it's undoubtedly the swiftest – especially today,

**'THE RCZ'S FRONT END
ACTUALLY FEELS MORE
NAILED THAN EITHER
THE AUDI'S OR THE
MINI'S, DESPITE THEIR
FOUR-WHEEL DRIVE'**



on an intermittently rainy morning on the B660. The Audi's grace under pressure is simply remarkable. It casually swats away the kind of tricky stuff that needs sorting at the wheel of the RCZ R, preserving speed as effectively as it does the driver's nerves. It makes hard roads seem easier than they really are. It can deploy all of its 268bhp with a lack of drama that borders on the anodyne. And it really is fast, the dual-clutch 'box eagerly exploiting the 2-litre turbo motor's fat torque band while doing much to mask the slightly laggy throttle response at modest revs.

That said, the Audi's engine/S-tronic transmission combo, while strikingly effective, isn't going to raise the hairs on the back of your neck. Although the engine rips through its stockpile of revs, it does so with a silkiness that's rare in a four-pot and no appreciable change in audible character. It's uniformly cool-browed and refined, delivering an all but seamless flow of near-furious acceleration without much attendant sense of excitement. Adrenalin junkies will have to look elsewhere.

But, in this case, not that far. The RCZ R may not quite be the Audi's match in a straight line or beat its 4WD all-weather pace, but the way it pulls you into the action could hardly be more different. It sounds angrier than the Audi and, despite having a wider on-paper torque spread, displays a distinct notch in its delivery, getting a second wind above 4000rpm as it charges to the red line. The upshot is that you need to change gear more than you might expect, but the shift is obligingly quick and crisp, and just adds to the sense of involvement. You find yourself adopting a more attacking style in the RCZ R and, with it being front-driven, you concentrate that bit harder to the play throttle response against the available front-end grip. It is pretty mighty, though, especially when you get the mechanical Torsen limited-slip differential to hook up.

High on Peugeot Sport's job sheet was to make the RCZ a more effective and engaging steer. In addition to the mechanical diff, the suspension is stiffer by 14 per cent at the front and 44 per cent at the rear while the bespoke dampers are made in house. It's also 10mm lower. The wheels are half an inch wider with track width and toe and camber angles adjusted accordingly. Braking has been beefed up, too, with huge 380mm discs at the front clamped by four-piston Alcon calipers.

Despite its front wheels being tasked with transmitting 266bhp to the road, the Peugeot has the best steering here. Yes, there's some tugging under power if the surface is less than perfectly smooth, but that goes hand in hand with a degree of genuine feel lacking in the TT and Paceman. The tugging isn't severe enough to dictate the car's line and neither does it deter the quickly learned technique of getting on the power early in a corner to exploit the LSD's ability to resist understeer and slingshot you onto the next straight. In other words, the front end actually feels more nailed than either the Audi's or the Mini's, despite their four-wheel drive. And its rear is definitely more mobile: on wetter sections, a little trail-braking gets the tail moving in a way that feels far more natural than the aggressive tactics required for a scrappier outcome in the TTS or Paceman.

The Audi's tendency to understeer when pushed hard in the wet remains a shortcoming in an otherwise hard-to-fault dynamic performance. Having the services of a quattro four-wheel-drive system that can direct up to 100 per cent of the torque to the front or the rear as conditions dictate is undoubtedly a useful ally in a car with so much power and a nose-heavy weight distribution (58 per cent on the front). In theory, the two-stage ESP should curb the front end's enthusiasm to run wide, while for the subtler aspects of body control and composure the TTS teams stiffer springs and anti-roll bars with Delphi magnetic variable-rate dampers. On dry tarmac, traction and grip are never issues and neither is torque-steer. Helm responses, while lacking in detail feedback, are accurate, linear and unsullied by squeezing the throttle all the way when exiting a bend. In the wet, though, the torque-shifting Haldex transmission and understeer-quelling ESP fail to harmonise and rob the TTS of any natural sense of balance and flow. Switch it off and literally stamp on the throttle and, sometimes, a satisfying drift will ensue. Or the nose will plough on.



Above, middle: big central speedo still dominates Mini cabin. **Above:** Paceman is over 50bhp down on its rivals here – and it shows. **Left:** Mini's 307mm discs are the smallest front rotors in our group



'SWITCH THE AUDI'S ESP OFF, STAMP ON THE THROTTLE AND SOMETIMES A SATISFYING DRIFT WILL ENSUE'



Above, middle: the Audi's interior finish is a cut above. **Above:** 268bhp turbo four is powerful if unexciting. **Right:** TTS runs 18in wheels all round

The Paceman is unfortunately named in this contest as in all but ride comfort – more forgiving than unremittingly firm RCZ R if not as well damped as the TTS – it is comfortably off the pace dynamically. Which isn't to say it completely betrays the reputation attached to its additional JCW badging. Like all JCW Minis, there's an immediacy to the Paceman's major control responses, both throttle and steering, that can be quite beguiling. The trouble with the 1400kg Paceman, though, is that what follows the initial sense of punch and agility is comparatively ponderous. This JCW feels brisk rather than quick and, on the faster sections of the test route, quickly loses touch with the Peugeot and the Audi. Within its own limits, though – and they're probably a good bit higher than a Range Rover Evoque's, a car it's sometimes cited as a cut-price alternative to – it's an enjoyable way to cover ground.

The engine sounds purposeful without being rowdy when worked hard and can even manage muted exhaust 'pops' on the overrun in Sport mode, which also adds some (artificial-feeling) heft to the steering and sharpens the throttle map still further. In common with most other Minis, it has a sweet, short-action gearchange, too. The pedals are perfectly spaced and well weighted, and the stability control system includes an 'electronic locking' function to mimic the effect of a proper limited-slip differential, braking a spinning wheel to redistribute torque with DSC off.

It's arguable whether four-wheel drive does it many favours beyond the obvious advantages in mud and snow – its ability to juggle power between front and rear axles via its electronic differential trading fun for traction – but there's little question that the Paceman always feels safe and secure however hard you push it.

But it isn't enough. For the Paceman to be a credible alternative to either the Peugeot or Audi it would frankly need a couple of solid-fuel rockets strapped to its roof and a chassis re-design by Adrian Newey. It may have 'coupe' written on its CV but it would never get away with it in its passport. Rear-seat passengers would doubtless disagree but the Mini is so out of its depth as a drivers' car in this company it fails to make its case.

Choosing between the TTS and the RCZ R is harder. The Audi may be long in the tooth but it's still a class act with a cracking powertrain, effortless pace across the ground, nicely understated style and peerless build and finish. But, for us, the RCZ R has its number. Peugeot doesn't intend to sell that many and the show-off looks aren't for everyone. But the specialist input shines through. Peugeot Sport has transformed a pretty also-ran into a potent and highly rewarding contender. ❏

Specifications

MINI JCW PACEMAN

Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 1598cc, turbo
CO2	172g/km
Power	215bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque	206lb ft @ 1900-5000rpm
Transmission	Six-speed manual, four-wheel drive, EDL
Front suspension	MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension	Multi-link, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
Brakes	307mm ventilated front discs, 296mm solid rear discs, ABS, EBD
Wheels	7.5 x 18in front and rear
Tyres	255/45 R18 front and rear
Weight (kerb)	1400kg
Power-to-weight	156bhp/ton
0-62mph	6.9sec (claimed)
Top speed	140mph (claimed)
Basic price	£29,430
On sale	Now
Rating	★★★★☆

AUDI TTS

Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 1984cc, turbo
CO2	179g/km
Power	268bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque	258lb ft @ 2500-5000rpm
Transmission	Six-speed S-tronic gearbox (optional), four-wheel drive, EDL
Front suspension	MacPherson struts, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension	Multi-link, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar
Brakes	Ventilated discs, 334mm front, 265mm rear, ABS, EBD
Wheels	9 x 18in front and rear
Tyres	245/40 R18 front and rear
Weight (kerb)	1430kg
Power-to-weight	190bhp/ton
0-62mph	5.3sec (claimed)
Top speed	155mph (limited)
Basic price	£36,045
On sale	Now
Rating	★★★★☆

PEUGEOT RCZ R

Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 1598cc, turbo
CO2	145g/km
Power	266bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque	243lb ft @ 1900-5500rpm
Transmission	Six-speed manual, front-wheel-drive, limited-slip differential
Front suspension	MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension	Torsion beam, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
Brakes	380mm ventilated front discs, 330mm solid rear discs, ABS, EBD
Wheels	9 x 19in front and rear
Tyres	235/40 R19 front and rear
Weight (kerb)	1355kg
Power-to-weight	202bhp/ton
0-62mph	5.9sec (claimed)
Top speed	155mph (limited)
Basic price	£31,995
On sale	Now
Rating	★★★★☆



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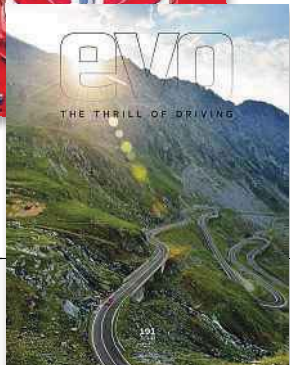
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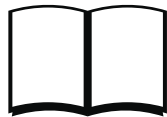


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Fast Fleet

Living with evo's long-term test cars

From MX-5 to 12C Spider, evo's Fast Fleet is the biggest and most comprehensive long-term section in the business. This month...

McLAREN 12C SPIDER by SSO

Contributor

NEW

No sooner has one 12C left than another arrives... The Secret Supercar Owner explains why he's added a McLaren to his collection.



BMW M6 GC by Nick Trott

Editor

Trott explains why he's a big fan of the Gran Coupe's gear selector and stop/start system, but not so fond of the car's front seats.



RENAULT CLIO TURBO by Richard Meaden

Contributing editor

Meaden has identified a couple of features missing from the current RS Clio that helped define its predecessor.



TOYOTA GT-FOUR by Matthew Hayward

Staff writer (website)

An unusual puncture forces Hayward to bring forward the replacement of the Celica's mismatched tyres with something more sporty.



PEUGEOT 208 GTI by Sam Riley

Film-maker

Riley and a friend take the French hot hatch on a road trip to - but not around - the Nürburgring.



NISSAN GT-R by David Yu

Contributor

With Godzilla sending its power to the rear wheels only for the time being, Yu indulges in some drifting. Indoors.



AUDI RS6 AVANT by Mike Duff

Motoring editor

Winter's in full swing and the roads are wet and slippery, and Duff is finding the fast four-wheel-drive estate's strengths are coming to the fore.



RENAULT WILLIAMS by Stephen Dobie

Staff writer

Ever fancied a go in a Clio Williams? How about in this very Clio Williams? In a few months' time you will be able to. Dobie explains all.



MINI JCW GP by Ian Eveleigh

Production editor

Eveleigh swaps the GP's trackday rubber for some tyres that should last more than 2500 miles per set (even in the hands of the road-test team).



TOYOTA GT86 by Henry Catchpole

Features editor

Catchpole's had his best drive yet in the driver-focused Toyota. Naturally, it involved going sideways quite a lot.



BMW 2002 by Will Beaumont

Designer

Can the 2002 really have anything in common with a 1M Coupe? Beaumont's driven the two back-to-back and reckons he's found some shared DNA.



VAUXHALL VXR8 by David Vivian

Road test contributor

Vivian's discovered that there's more to the big Aussie estate than its ample power. Turns out it's got a practical side, too.



FORD FOCUS ST by Dean Smith

Staff photographer

Smith goes to London to pick up a repaired camera lens, only for his Focus to get damaged on the way there.



MAZDA MX-5 by Peter Tomalin

Contributor

The MX-5's lower springs are causing Tomalin problems. Question is, should he do more suspension work, or revert to standard?



JAGUAR F-TYPE V6 S by Jethro Bovingdon

Contributing editor

Bovingdon finally gets to drive the F-type on a circuit and discovers that, while it's no 430 Scuderia, it's got plenty to offer on track.



MERCEDES 190E 2.5 by Mike Duff

Motoring editor

After seeing it languish on his driveway for three months, Duff resolves to get the 190E up and running again.



Also on the evo fleet:

Aston Martin DBS, Ferrari 430 Scuderia, Ferrari 458 Italia, Ferrari F40, Ferrari F50, Ford Escort RS2000, Jaguar XJR-15, Lamborghini Murciélago, Peugeot 106 Rallye, Porsche 911 SC, Porsche 996 Carrera

Coming soon:

Volkswagen Golf GTI, Audi R8 V10 Plus

McLaren 12C Spider

NEW ARRIVAL

The Secret Supercar Owner reports on his first few months with the latest addition to his stable

W

WITH EDITOR Trott's 12C having recently left the fleet (*evo* 191), it's time to welcome another

– this time a Spider rather than a coupe, and privately owned rather than on loan from McLaren.

The Spider actually arrived nine months ago. Back in early 2013, my test drive in the rain, followed by my better half disappearing for close to three hours on hers, are what sealed the deal – the 12C is incredibly impressive in normal conditions, but the way it handled wet and miserable cemented the deal.

With 616bhp, in power terms the 12C Spider is second only to the Koenigsegg CCR of the cars that I have owned. It's blisteringly quick in a straight line, but what really impresses is the speed you can carry through a corner without the car losing an ounce of composure. If the owner's manual didn't state that the car has a twin-turbo engine, it would be near-impossible to tell as

turbo-lag is effectively non-existent, and while the twin-clutch gearbox may not offer quite the fun of the 430 Scuderia's semi-auto single-clutcher, it is both quicker and smoother.

The three modes each for the suspension and transmission allow you to tailor the set-up to your mood and/or the driving conditions. Select Track for both and the Spider becomes hard and focused, while in Normal it's a comfortable, compliant grand tourer. Visibility is excellent once one learns the sightlines from the mirrors, and the front corners are easy to place. All this combines to make the 12C easily the most 'liveable with' supercar we have owned, and the first supercar my wife and I both enjoy driving on a regular basis.

Getting in sync with the 12C comes naturally, as does the confidence to push. It is not a car you need to fight with or manhandle to get the best from. In some supercars, you have the feeling that it could all end suddenly (and very badly), but in the McLaren you get the distinct

impression that the car's abilities far exceed the driver's.

In terms of reliability and running costs, it has been as expected. Drive with vigour and fuel economy is not great, but oil consumption has been zero. There was one minor temper tantrum with a low oil pressure warning, but we let the car sit for a few minutes, checked the oil level, then restarted the engine, and the message has never returned. There is, however, a short list of changes I would like: longer carbonfibre paddles and a larger fuel tank.

As I write, the Spider has just returned from its first service. More on that next time. ✉

Secret Supercar Owner
(@SupercarOwner)

Driver's log

Date acquired	April 2013
Total mileage	3540
Mileage this month	45
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	18.0





BMW M6 Gran Coupe

The big Beemer's driver-focused design impresses. Shame about the crumbs...

Above, from top: gear selector is a delight to operate; flaw in carbonfibre was an unexpected find; chasm behind thigh support is a magnet for detritus

THE BOND with the M6 continues to develop, thanks in part to a sense that this car was engineered by people who enjoy driving. Take, for instance, the gear selector. This short, stubby lever is a joy to hold, and while I appreciate that it's nothing more than a switch for the twin-clutch gearbox, the shape and the force of the spring return is pretty much perfect.

Not only that, but to shift manually you don't need to slide the gearlever across the gate or press a button first: you simply prod the lever forward or back – and in this instance forward (change down) and back (change up) are the right way around.

There should be a law against shifts operating the other way around – when you shift down you're generally

in a braking phase, right? So weight is pushing forward, logically making the downshift direction also forwards.

Moving on, the M6's fuel consumption is slowly improving, creeping up towards 19mpg after a few weeks in the 17s. I've not changed my driving style or made any unusual journeys, so I can only surmise that with more miles the twin-turbo V8 is beginning to loosen up.

On a related note, the M6's stop/start system is impressive. I generally hate stop/start, but here it whips the engine into life quickly and smoothly. In auto, the M6 pulls away smoothly in first and shuffles to fifth before you've reached 40mph. However, if you select manual mode and first gear, you have to operate the throttle with the sensitivity of a heart surgeon – too much and you explode forward

'There's a real sense that this car was engineered by people who enjoy driving'

in a manner that must look horribly juvenile and crude from the outside.

Niggles this month? The extending thigh support at the front of the seat base is useful, but the sunken area between the support and the rest of the seat collects crumbs and rubbish like my one-year-old's bib does. Perhaps there's a BMW-approved dustbuster on the options list!

Also this month I noticed a flaw in the carbonfibre door trim. It looks not dissimilar to a knot in a piece of wood – and I'm surprised it made it through quality control.

I don't want to end on a negative, however, which is why I'm pleased to admit that the M6 GC is growing on me massively... **✘**

Nick Trott
(@evoNickTrott)

Driver's log

Date acquired	Sept 2013
Total mileage	5650
Mileage this month	1393
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	18.8

Renaultsport Clio 200 Turbo

The turbocharged RS Clio is missing a couple of elements that helped define its predecessor

IT SOMETIMES TAKES a fresh pair of eyes to point out things you've ignored or overlooked. And so it was when a Clio 197 Cup-owning mate visited and took his first look at HN13 XYP. He loved the colour, but like me struggled to come to terms with the oversized styling elements, such as the massive 'diamond' badge on the nose and the equally enormous headlights. However, he thought the interior was great, and I couldn't help but notice he was immediately flapping the paddles back and forth, which suggests you should never underestimate the novelty of a paddle-shift gearbox at this end of the market.

A couple of things he pointed out that I'd forgotten are the lack of Brembo brake calipers and Recaro seats – the former standard and the latter an option on the previous-gen Clio. In isolation their absence

is not a big deal, and I've certainly got no complaints about the brake performance or the comfort of the seats, but it still chips away at the model's distinguishing features.

I've been trying 98-octane petrol instead of 95 recently to see if it makes a perceptible difference to the Clio's performance, and I think it does, with slightly better throttle response and a little bit more in-gear muscle. Whether it's worth the extra 50p a gallon I'm not so sure.

Sticking with fuel, the on-board computer has been vexing me. You can be happily bowling along with an indicated 45 miles in the tank, then when you look back at the gauge a few miles later it reads '---'. I haven't run out of fuel (yet), but must have come perilously close on several occasions. I now carry a five-litre fuel container in the boot, just in case. ❌

Richard Meaden
(@DickieMeaden)



Above: interior impressed Meaden's 197-owning mate...
Left: ...unlike the giant Renault badge



Driver's log	
Date acquired	August 2013
Total mileage	8381
Mileage this month	903
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	32.7



Left: unusual puncture brought the Celica to a halt. **Below:** thankfully the GT-Four has a space-saver spare – and it wasn't raining when Hayward had to fit it



Toyota Celica GT-Four WRC

Mismatched tyres – and then a puncture – meant it was time to get some new rubber on the Celica

I I'VE ALWAYS PAID close attention to the health and particularly age of tyres, so when I bought the Celica a few months ago the mix-and-match set it was wearing triggered alarm bells.

Driving in the wet revealed a serious lack of grip from the rear. This might sound fun, but there's a point when it stops being entertaining and starts being dangerous. For me, this happened when exiting a busy roundabout. Thankfully I managed to catch the tail, but it was a slightly less than gentle reminder.

Before I had chance to sort out a new set of boots, one of the front tyres suffered an unusual failure (see picture), so I had to switch to the space-saver at the roadside. Not ideal, but enough to limp home.

I've been a fan of Yokohama's performance tyres for a while, and

I liked the look of the lightly treaded Advan Neovas on Dobie's Williams, so I got a set for the Celica (£530). Unfortunately when having them fitted it was discovered that the wheel with the puncture had a slight crack in it. Thankfully it could be repaired by a specialist welder (£80), and a few days later the Celica was back on the road. Now I can finally find out how the new tyres deal with the cold weather. ❌

Matthew Hayward
(@evoMatthew)

Driver's log	
Date acquired	August 2013
Total mileage	46,649
Mileage this month	200
Costs this month	£610
mpg this month	20.0

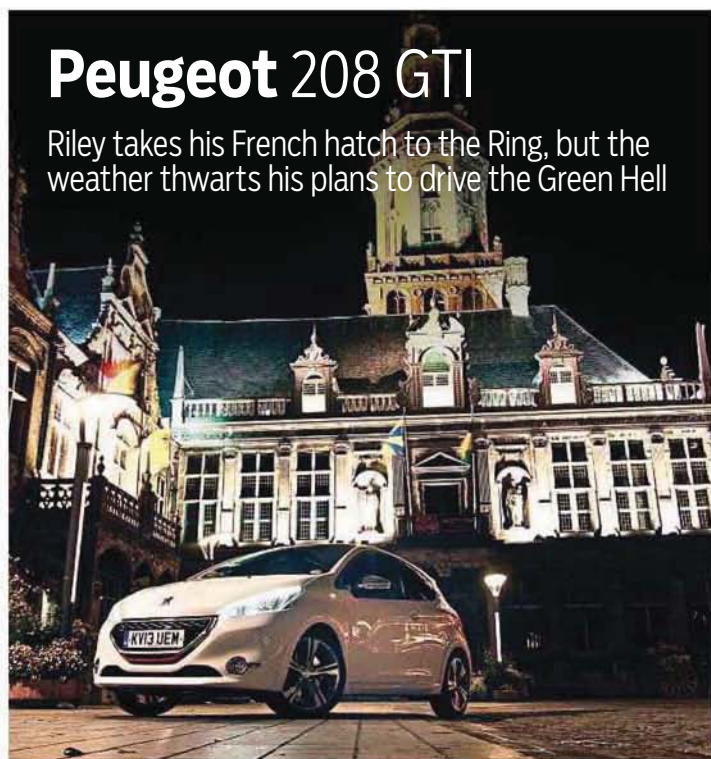
Nissan GT-R

Stealthzilla makes the most of an empty hangar to burn some rubber



Peugeot 208 GTI

Riley takes his French hatch to the Ring, but the weather thwarts his plans to drive the Green Hell



A FRIEND AND I had been meaning to go on a road trip for a while. Given that the 208 GTI had impressed me over its first few months on the **evo** fleet, it seemed like the perfect car for a trip to the Nürburgring.

After a rough ferry crossing to Rotterdam, we sped through the Netherlands into western Germany. We reached the Ring without trouble, the Pug eating up the Autobahn miles and returning a more than respectable 35mpg while also reinforcing its handling credentials on the twisty lanes that led to the Green Hell.

I'd only ever driven the Ring at touring speeds before and was relishing the chance to go full-pelt. However, the typically fickle weather there dampened my spirits. It wasn't just wet: it was so wet that I didn't want to risk the car in such slippery conditions on such a fearsome circuit. I wouldn't have enjoyed not being able to push the car to its limits, and I was

also relying on it to get me home, so we gave the lappery a miss and tucked into a good steak at the Pistenklause restaurant before heading off to Cologne for a couple of days that completed an enjoyable road trip.

I still want to take the 208 back to the Ring when the weather is likely to be better. For someone without the driving experience of a Catchpole or a Meaden (i.e. me), I reckon the GTI would make an ideal Ring 'starter' car. It has the handling dependability of front-wheel drive and with 197bhp, it's powerful enough to provide some thrills without feeling out of its depth in trackday-warrior company. **✘**

Sam Riley (@samgriley)

Driver's log

Date acquired	Sept 2013
Total mileage	13,517
Mileage this month	3540
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	35.7

AFTER A SUSPECTED 4WD clutch pack failure (evo 191), how does a GT-R cope with 717bhp to the rear wheels only? Er, not very well.

Full boost or even reduced boost simply results in runaway wheelspin in the first four gears, which makes for a rather wired driving experience. Of course I could just leave the Vehicle Dynamics Control on, but that means constant and lengthy interruptions to forward progress. However, in the spirit of 'when life gives you lemons, make lemonade', I recently attended an event that suited Stealthzilla's new status as a rampant wheelspinner.

A friend of mine is building up a business offering secure garaging for both long-term storage and as an alternative to traditional airport parking. He buys up disused hangars and converts them into cosy, heated, indoor storage for car enthusiasts' special machines. After acquiring his latest premises in Redhill, near Gatwick Airport, he had the brainwave of inviting a select group of his petrolhead mates to christen the hangar floor with some burnt rubber prior to the refurb.

There was a great collection of performance machinery in



'The dusty floor offered very little grip, meaning wheelspin was instant yet easily controlled'

attendance, including a race-liveried Dodge Viper, a couple of Ferraris, a smattering of TVRs and some nicely tuned Jap metal, including an RX-7 and an S2000. First out to play was a competition-spec drift-prepared Nissan 200SX. In hindsight, sending it out first was a big mistake. It put on a great show, with the driver doing some skilful drifting, getting quite close to the walls and pillars of the building. The noise indoors was deafening, with the tuned four-pot hitting the limiter regularly and spitting out big spikes of

flame. However, the prolonged static burnouts and donuts spewed plumes of atomised rubber into the confined atmosphere and soon created a thick fog that reduced visibility to a handful of yards.

Unfortunately, it was a virtually windless day and even leaving all the hangar doors open for half an hour afterwards failed to significantly thin the opacity of the insta-smog, so it was decided that only a handful of dedicated donutters would be given the chance to run in the reduced

visibility.

Despite my recent drift course with CAT Driver Training, I was nervous about performing in such a confined space (and in a pea-souper) with a large audience present, including many famous video bloggers with their fingers poised on the YouTube never-live-it-down button.

However, I needn't have worried, as the dusty floor offered very little grip, meaning wheelspin was instant yet easily controlled. With the tuned VR38 bouncing its magnificent tune off the walls, the overpowered rear Michelins made an easy job of executing a few crowd-pleasing circuits on full oppo, before ending with a few donuts for good measure. (You can see video online at youtu.be/C1mH5lgPF5s courtesy of Shmeel150 and Garaged.com.)

All in all, it was great fun and proof that even a broken GT-R is better than most ordinary cars. ☒

David Yu (@Auto_Journals)

Driver's log

Date acquired	April 2009
Total mileage	34,273
Mileage this month	256
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	16.7

Audi RS6 Avant

The fast Audi has come alive in the recent wet weather, but it's no longer the only estate vying for Duff's affections

WINTER IS HERE and the RS6 has come into its own. Put simply, there's no other car on the market able to apply so much performance in low-grip conditions as the mighty Audi wagon.

Indeed, greasy roads have revealed a new, more interesting side to the Audi's dynamic character. Carry too much speed into a corner and, as in the dry, the front end runs out of grip first. But use the old 'slow-in, fast-out' technique, accelerating up to the limit of grip, and the rear-biased torque split of the four-wheel-drive system is

evident. Indeed, switching the stability control to its more permissive 'ESP Sport' setting allows the RS6 some well-contained rear-end slip. It's predictable, safe and – yes – fun.

But while the RS6 is certainly the fastest car in my personal fleet, it's not the greatest estate car. That's right, Duff has been buying old Mercs again: in this case an 'S124' E220 wagon. I didn't really need it, but a friend's dad was selling it and it would take a stronger man than me to resist its combination of a two-owner pedigree, full history, almost no rust

and a mere 107,000 miles showing. Mine for £2200 – or slightly less than the RS6's adaptive cruise control.

Dynamically, the E is about as far as you can get from the RS6 without buying a Trabant – it's got half the driven wheels and barely a quarter of the power (the four-cylinder engine officially musters 147bhp, but works through a super-slushy four-speed auto). But it's peerless as an estate, with a vast, flat load space that's both wider and deeper than the Audi's. Every home should have one. ☒

Mike Duff



Above left: RS6 stars on greasy roads...
Above: ...but E220 trumps it on space

Driver's log

Date acquired	July 2013
Total mileage	9016
Mileage this month	1211
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	19.5



Renault Clio Williams

Dobie's classic hatch is prepared for a new life in a virtual realm

A PICTURE PAINTS a thousand words, so the saying goes. But I don't think that's the case here. What looks merely like a man taking a few photos of my car behind the *evo* office is actually quite a big deal: my Williams is being modelled for an appearance in the Xbox game *Forza Motorsport 5*.

I've got to admit that the simplicity of the shoot surprised me. I'd expected to greet a team of people with vanloads of equipment. What I got was a friendly American in a dowdy Astra hire car he'd driven up from Heathrow. Drew Larrigan was nice as pie, exhibiting the wide-eyed enthusiasm of a school-age work-experience kid when being shown around our humble HQ, which groans under the weight of old magazines and car-launch paraphernalia.

'I've shot over 2000 cars in this job but it's the people I'm most excited to meet,' Drew told me. Yup, having covered over a million air

miles to photograph a huge variety of machinery – and this is for *Forza 5* alone – it's the owners rather than the cars he remembers most fondly.

So what goes into modelling a car for a state-of-the-art computer game? Drew spent a couple of hours taking around 1000 photographs of the Clio, but the process can take up to four hours and require 1500 shots, depending on the size of the car and how many interior features it has (and therefore buttons that need pressing). The Williams' size and sparseness made his job swifter than normal.

Such copious imagery is the result of shooting every feasible angle of the car, inside and out, as well as recording all of the lights, any moving aero parts, the sweep of the gauges and even the key's position when the ignition is on. 'It's almost surgical,' said Drew. 'You have to learn it's not about the glamour; it's about making a car easy to model for someone who has no idea about cars.'

All Drew's photos are broken up

into folders and then passed on to a modelling team, who use the images and the textures they portray to recreate the car for the game. The fact most of the Clio's panels wear a chip or scratch and that the interior was overdue a dusting is unimportant, as this sort of stuff is polished up electronically. If only it were that easy in real life!

Drew's work takes place six to nine months before the car will be available to players, so if you're an avid *Forza* fan you'll have to wait a little while before you get to drive 'my' car. When you do, though, please be careful with it... ☒

Stephen Dobie
(@evoStephenDobie)

Above and below: snapper Drew Larrigan's photography of the Willy was exhaustive, requiring around 1000 shots



Driver's log

Date acquired	August 2010
Total mileage	95,348
Mileage this month	173
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	32.0

Mini JCW GP

With its trackday tyres worn out (again), Eveleigh is trying the GP on some more sensible rubber

A COUPLE OF months ago, I reported that our GP had a new set of OE-spec Kumho Ecsta V700s fitted to replace those that had met their demise during our Track Car of the Year contest. That first set had lasted around 4000 miles, which seems to be about the norm for these tyres. The new set lasted just 2500 miles.

The cause of their rapid decline was *evo* Car of the Year, where the GP was clearly enjoyed by the road test team, although they all blamed lensmen Smith and Riley for making them corner at ten-tenths for the cameras over and over again...

So another set of tyres was needed. With summer well and truly over, I figured some more practical rubber would make sense, but not something as fun-sapping as a full-on winter tyre. Having tried Dunlop Sport Maxxes on a previous long-term, I knew that they are particularly good in the wet – an opinion confirmed by our most recent tyre test. So a set was duly ordered for the GP (£535.68) and fitted by the ever-helpful Tyres Northampton, who also popped the Mini onto its wheel alignment machine to ensure everything was pointing in the right direction.

Recalibrating my brain to match the GP's new grip levels took a couple of days. No longer is there the near-total front-end grip offered by those super-sticky Kumhos on dry tarmac, so a more measured approach to corner entry is required to avoid understeer. The more normal levels of grip also seem to have amplified the GP's livewire chassis, meaning that even more measured inputs are required if you're not to unintentionally unsettle it; the power of the GP's upgraded brakes is now particularly noticeable as the car squirms to a halt. But it all fits the GP's extreme persona, and ensures there's still never a dull moment.

The Dunlops' softer sidewalls mean the GP's ride has mercifully lost some of its harsh edge, too. But best of all, the Sport Maxxes are – as I recalled – excellent in the wet. Just the ticket for this time of year. ☒

Ian Eveleigh

Driver's log

Date acquired	July 2013
Total mileage	12,121
Mileage this month	691
Costs this month	£535.68
mpg this month	33.5



Toyota GT86

A mostly sideways blast home from the office gives Catchpole an experience to remember

A ALL IT TAKES is one good drive. The same applies in golf. If you have just one good one where everything flows, it will stick in your mind. The majority can be forgettable – bad, even – but your brain will cling to the memory of the time when it all clicked, keeping you coming back for more in the hope that nirvana can be glimpsed again.

So it was that I left the office late at night after *evo*'s Christmas deadline and headed into the night in the GT86. At the last minute, I decided to go the interesting way home. VSC and TC were both off and as I turned onto the first bit of B-road, the '86 went sideways. It then stayed sideways for pretty much the entire journey home – one way then the other, slow corners and fast. I kept checking the temperature gauge, thinking it must be freezing outside because grip levels were so low, yet the numbers hovered resolutely around 7deg C. All I could conclude was that the road was leaching Fairy Liquid.

Strangely, the Toyota's rear wheels

aren't terribly communicative in the way they break traction, but once they're free, the chassis is so well balanced that you can maintain control incredibly easily. The recently fitted Dunlops help, too, as they offer more stability when they're sliding and keep everything smooth.

All in all, it was the sort of accessibly fun drive I'd imagined the GT86 would give when the concept was first announced, and its memory will now flit across my mind at the start of every subsequent journey, excited that it might be repeated. Here's hoping we have a long and slippery winter. ☒

Henry Catchpole
(@HenryCatchpole)

Driver's log

Date acquired	May 2013
Total mileage	10,150
Mileage this month	1123
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	31.4



BMW 2002

Designer Beaumont compares his classic Beemer to something a touch more modern – a 1M Coupe

HOW I PERSUADED my colleagues that I should be the one to take a 1M Coupe home for a weekend is beyond me. I didn't think for a minute that they'd fall for my pathetic excuse that I would write a Fast Fleet report comparing it with my 2002. I mean, how can a 2011-spec car with a 335bhp 3-litre twin-turbo straight-six possibly compare with my aged BMW and its 125bhp four-cylinder?

It was great having some time to get used to the 1M. It felt nicely firm, responsive and agile from the off, but it still took me a while to get used to

driving it quickly; turbo lag was almost imperceptible but the power delivery still didn't feel as linear or as natural as I'd have liked. But I did get used to it, and I began to thoroughly enjoy the 1M once I did.

I now absolutely adore the 1M Coupe, and what's even better is that I did find some notable similarities with my 2002 beyond the bonnet badge. However, all the things that feel similar on the '02 are the result of modifications I've made. The firm suspension – particularly since I fitted thicker anti-roll bars to the 2002 – feels robust on both cars, and although both can be deflected

by larger bumps, both always feel under control. My 2002's limited-slip diff is more aggressive and has a greater tendency to lock than the one in the 1M, but the huge 369lb ft of torque that the turbocharged engine produces means the LSD of the newer car actually dominates the driving experience, giving very similar feelings to those you get from the '02.

Would I swap my 2002 for a 1M? No. I feel so comfortable driving the '02 and everything comes so naturally. It's not exactly as I'd like just yet (I still need to lower and soften up the front end) but it suits me as the performance and the levels of grip

are so accessible. No, you aren't going anywhere near as quickly as you are in a 1M and everything happens at a much slower pace, but that means you get to savour the whole process.

As brilliant as the 1M is, I have to say that I find my 2002 an even more satisfying car to drive. ☒

Will Beaumont (@WillBeaumont)

Driver's log

Date acquired	July 2008
Total mileage	145,300-ish
Mileage this month	300-ish
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	15-ish

Vauxhall VXR8 Clubsport Tourer

After a few months obsessing over power, Vivian remembers that his Griffin estate is also about space

WHAT WITH ALL this yakking about superchargers, a dyno-certified 610bhp, the prospect of having to refuel halfway down the Bruntingthorpe strip in my drag race with Duff and his Audi RS6, and the awesomeness of Big Blue's fourth-gear flexibility, I've rather neglected to mention the VXR8's practical side.

It is an estate car, after all, and not one of those half-arsed Merc C63 AMG wagon affairs, either. The sort

of objects that require an ajar tailgate and string in the AMG or even in Duff's Audi are swallowed with ease by the Vauxhall, which, at 2000 litres, boasts the largest seats-flat cargo capacity of any estate on sale in the UK.

With only a minor adjustment to the front passenger seat, it accommodated a whole rolled-up carpet. And it's rather satisfying to arrive at a domestic recycling centre, off-limits to any kind of commercial vehicle, and disgorge more rubbish



than a small van.

Best of all, though, is driving the VXR8 straight after my Panda. The Fiat proves that 54bhp is all you really need. Big Blue's additional 556bhp is strictly for kicks. ☒

David Vivian (@davidvivian)

Driver's log

Date acquired	Sept 2013
Total mileage	11,462
Mileage this month	403
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	19.9

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Mazda MX-5 1.8i

The MX-5's lowered ride is causing some problems, and has given Tomalin a dilemma...

I I'M A WORRIED man. I'm not using the MX-5 as much as I used to, and I've a nagging feeling it's not all to do with the dank, foggy mornings we've been experiencing lately. In fact it all seems to stem from the day I had a set of shorter, stiffer, Eibach Pro-Kit springs fitted a few months back.

As I reported at the time, although the ride's a good deal firmer, it still copes pretty well with small lumps and bumps. But over bigger humps and dips it's now extremely bouncy, and occasionally feels right at the end of its travel. I suspect the standard dampers aren't resilient enough to cope with the extra sproing (technical



term) of the beefier springs. What's more, the ride height has been lowered to such an extent that I now flinch every time I pass over one of those sharp-edged speed 'cushions' that the local council are so besotted with. I've lost the plastic undertray, and next in the line of fire are the power steering pipes. It's no longer the car that I could leap into and drive anywhere without a care in the world. Thing is, I have a set of spiffy new

Bilstein B8 dampers kindly donated by the excellent chaps at Bilstein waiting to be fitted. I'm sure they'll bring the suspension back under control and no doubt sharpen the handling even further, and when that happens I'll probably find a way of coping with the speed-bumps. But if they make the ride even stiffer, it'll be a step too far for what is an everyday car rather than a trackday weapon. So do I stick, twist, or go back to the standard

springs? If you're an MX-5 owner and you've faced a similar dilemma, I'd very much welcome your thoughts. ✉

Peter Tomalin

Driver's log

Date acquired	April 2012
Total mileage	115,665
Mileage this month	141
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	32.5



Ford Focus ST Estate

Photographer Smith has a Monday morning to forget when his ST gets attacked by an HGV

HAVING LIVED IN London a few years back I consider myself a fairly confident and competent driver around our capital. So a quick pass through its centre at rush hour on a wet Monday morning to collect a repaired lens from Lambeth didn't phase me at all.

Leaving Deanton Abbey at 5am and being diverted away from the M1 over to the A1 just half an hour later, whilst sitting in stop-start traffic, wasn't the ideal beginning to my morning, but as I reached Park Lane at 9am my day was about to get much worse.

Driving in lane two of three and trying to get into lane one, the ST took a rub on the offside from a meandering HGV in lane three. Thankfully the driver of the lorry

noticed before completely spinning the Focus and me into three lanes of oncoming traffic.

Jumping out of the car expecting to find its rear hanging off, I was surprised and a little relieved to find only a large graze and the car still driveable. Details exchanged, it was then off to hand over £400 for the repaired lens and to shoot a grey car in the rain. The perfect Monday... ✉

Dean Smith (@evoDeanSmith)

Driver's log

Date acquired	August 2013
Total mileage	13,947
Mileage this month	1611
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	29.1

Jaguar F-type V6 S

The F-type has finally been on track, and Bovingdon was impressed with its performance



O ON A RECENT VISIT to Blyton Park to shoot some video on the 458 Italia and 430 Scuderia, I managed to finally get some track miles in the F-type. On reflection, jumping out of a Scuderia and straight into the V6 S might have been a mistake. It felt tall, wide, pretty soft and rather clumsy after the stripped-out and wonderfully precise Ferrari... Within a lap I wondered if I should just park it up and put it out of its misery. I'm glad I didn't because three or four laps later I was having a brilliant

time. Of course the F-type is no Scuderia, but once I'd dialled into its more relaxed demeanour, the chassis balance, the optional Super Performance Braking System and the engine's broad spread of power really started to shine. As on the road, the F-type has a very secure front end with little in the way of understeer on track. At circuit speeds you can really lean on that grip and dissect corners with confidence. What's more, by putting some load into the chassis you discover that the precise and progressive behaviour of the rear axle improves still further. So

rather than fall apart like many heavy sports cars might, the F-type hangs together very nicely indeed. Sadly I didn't have the time to record a proper lap time, but for all its precisely metered oversteer and the excellent brakes – which resisted fade superbly – the V6 S didn't feel like it would challenge a Boxster S against the stopwatch. Does that matter? Not to me. However, the laps did confirm my feelings that the V6 S is the pick of the F-type range. The mad V8 S model is a real hooligan and its *Gymkhana*-style acrid smoke and wild oversteer is fun for a while, but the V6 S feels

lighter and its drivetrain works with the chassis rather than overwhelming it completely. It'll oversteer like mad if you want it to of course, but you can also drive with a bit of restraint and enjoy more subtle rewards. ✕
Jethro Bovingdon
(@JethroBovingdon)

Driver's log	
Date acquired	September 2013
Total mileage	8683
Mileage this month	1011
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	28.1

Mercedes-Benz 190E 2.5-16

W WINTER IS WHEN old cars tend to go into hibernation. Not the 190E, which is bucking the trend as I finally try to get it back on the road. It's been a victim of that curse of older cars: sitting too long. After its trip to the Nürburgring last year the Merc got left for long enough for the battery to discharge. No problem, I thought, and made with the jump leads. The fuel pump ticked, the starter turned and the engine fired into a strange, lumpy idle before dying a few seconds later. Repeating the process a couple of times proved the 190E wasn't going to magically cure

itself. And, not wanting to spend the rest of the day disassembling the ignition system, I did the lazy classic owner thing of putting off a full diagnostic for another time. Three months later and, with the Merc in danger of growing roots on my drive, I finally admitted that I wasn't going to raise the initiative to sort it any time soon. So I did what I should have done at the outset and rang my favoured fettlers, Autoclass in Milton Keynes, to negotiate getting it professionally sorted. The 190E headed off on the back of a transporter a couple of days later. Anyway, to lessen the pain I've



opted to try and get everything sorted at once – including finally fitting the lowered Eibach springs I got last year, together with a matching set of Bilstein dampers. Things are about to get expensive. ✕
Mike Duff

Driver's log	
Date acquired	May 2012
Total mileage	159,661
Mileage this month	0
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	n/a

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Market Watch

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Market watch

BIG CAT BARGAINS

Coupe introduction means F-type Convertibles are going cheap

IT HAS WON awards around the world and been accepted as a worthy successor to the legendary E-type. But now that the spotlight has shifted to its eagerly awaited (and significantly cheaper) tin-top sibling, the Coupe, could it be time to start considering a Jaguar F-type Convertible as a pre-owned buy?

Waiting lists for new F-types have shortened considerably and, as this issue went to press, there were at least 150 used examples on offer around the UK, many being ex-demonstrators. But cars have also become available as a result of their original owners being the type of people who like to own the very latest four-wheeled wonder, even if it means losing a lump of money on it as soon as they become seduced by something newer.

Stratstone in Houghton-le-Spring, Tyne and Wear, is offering a V6 with 1250 miles on the clock for £53,870, a saving of almost £4500 on the showroom price of the basic model without any extras. But the person who originally ordered this particular car was good enough to make the most of the options

list, adding more than £12,000 to the cost of his or her new toy in the process. It works out at £12.80 per mile in depreciation. Now, I love an F-type as much as the next person – but not that much.

Harwoods of Basingstoke, meanwhile, is selling its V8 S demonstrator with close to 10,000 miles on the clock for £66,990, a saving of more than £17k over the new price as the car was specced to a high level before it left the factory.

'We have yet to have any pre-owned F-types being offered back to us as the car only became available about six months ago,' says Harwoods sales manager Andrew Wren. 'Most dealerships are on an allocation of around two cars per month and demand remains steady, but the order book for the Coupe is looking really strong, partly because of its £51,125 starting price.'

So stand by for a pre-owned Convertible priced below £45,000 coming your way soon...

Simon de Burton



Auction watch

French sale has attracted incredible collection of Alfa Romeos past and present

Artcurial is once again hosting the official auction at the annual Paris Retromobile show, and while the headline Ferraris go under the hammer on Friday February 7, a collection of more than 50 Alfa Romeos will be offered for sale the following day. The cars come from an anonymous Italian collector, who has gathered some of the most significant post-war Alfas ever produced.

A stunning example of the TZ1 is the star of the show, and also the most valuable. Built by racing specialists Autodelta, the TZ1 features an aluminium spaceframe, lightweight alloy body panels and a highly tuned 1600cc engine. Expected to sell for €800,000-1million (c£650,000-850,000), chassis number AR 750042 dates from March 1965 and originally left the factory in white. Now red, this special machine is in concours condition.

When first shown in 2005, the 8C Spider stunned the world with its fantastic looks. Finally launched in 2009, the production version stayed true to the concept, and chopping the roof off the equally good-looking coupe meant the lucky 500 buyers could enjoy the soundtrack of the V8 engine to the full. It might not have the best dynamics out there, but take one look at it and its flaws are forgiven. This perfect white example is estimated to sell for €180,000-200,000 (c£150,000-170,000).

The rest of the collection is also in original or fully restored condition and contains some real gems. Standing out from the crowd is the 1987 75 Turbo Evoluzione, a homologation special built to satisfy Group A motorsport regulations. It's expected to sell for €18-22k (£15-19k). There are a number of more humble models, but it has to be the inclusion of an Arna (at €2-3k, or £1600-2500) that reinforces this collector's dedication to the Alfa cause.

Matthew Hayward (@evoMatthew)



Top: 1965 Alfa TZ1 is the star amongst the Alfa lots, and could fetch €1m. **Above:** 8C Spider estimate is £150-170k

Market Watch

Knowledge

Insights into the used-car market

Ask the expert



Q After seven years and 70,000 miles, I'm looking to replace my ageing Clio 172. I've got a budget of £5000 and I'd like another hot hatch. Low mileage is important and it should be as young as possible, as I'd like to keep the car for some time. What do you recommend?

Lynn Roberts

A On the basis that you'll continue to drive an average of 10,000 miles per year, I'll assume that you'd like to enjoy a blend of hot hatch performance, economy and reliability – which brings the Skoda Fabia vRS diesel to mind. I'd recommend looking for a late mk1

version, which you should be able to find privately within your budget. As a guide, Redline Performance in Manchester currently has a Sprint Yellow 59,500-miler on offer with FSH for £6249 – but there's probably negotiating space for a cash sale.

I'd also contemplate a mk6 Honda Civic Type-R. Low-mileage examples (i.e. below 50,000) seem to be easy to find, and they tend to be enthusiast-owned and therefore well-maintained. Alternatively, how about a Mini Cooper? There are plenty for sale for around £5000 and if you're prepared to take time looking, you should be able to find a low-mileage Works version (pictured) with all the extras. Deprecation on cars at this price should be minimal. **sdb**

Trader chat



Neil Vas, Vas Vehicle Solutions
vvsuk.co.uk

Few people know the pre-owned Lamborghini market better than Neil Vas, who has been dealing in the Italian marque's later models since 2007 and now sells them at the rate of 35-40 per year from his Kent-based premises.

'This is generally a quieter time of the year, because people usually buy these cars in the summer,' says Vas. 'But, even taking that into account, there is still a lot of value in the market at the moment. Regardless of what anyone says, prices are coming down. Gallardo production ended in November and the prices to main agents have been heavily discounted to the point that a new car with a list of £185,000-190,000 can now be had for around £145,000. That has obviously had a knock-on effect on 2011- and 2012-plate LP560s and, at the entry level, the base price for a 2003 or 2004 coupe now needs to be below £60,000 to appear realistic.

'Aventador prices, on the other hand, are now stabilising in the trade at £230,000-240,000 for cars with single-digit miles – although some Murciélago 670s [pictured] are now worth more than Aventadors, with one recently changing hands for £290,000.'

Just looking

The pick of the classifieds this month



Alpina B2

£POA

Classic Heroes, East Sussex

www.classicheroes.co.uk

01825 830227

Built in 1973, this super-cool coupe began life as a 3.0 CS before its Alpina conversion in 1975. The B2 treatment brought an upgrade to 227bhp, with twin-choke Solex carbs, a higher compression ratio and a new 300-degree camshaft. With a renewed appetite for revs, the 0-62 time fell by nearly two seconds, to 7.3sec. The extra power was complemented by a new Alpina suspension tune, front spoiler and wheels.

Records show 192 B2 engines were built, and this B2 for sale at BMW-crazy Classic Heroes looks to be a peach. Around 71,000 miles proves it's been enjoyed, yet it also benefitted from a thorough restoration in 2010, costing a reported 73,000 euros.

Try and imagine another car that could pull off such a large font down the front wings. I know I can't...

Stephen Dobie (@evoStephenDobie)

Maserati GranSport

£21,970

Lawton Brook, Yorkshire

www.lawtonbrook.co.uk

08450 944555



'Maserati has hit the bullseye,' declared *evo's* then motoring editor John Barker when he drove the GranSport in 2004. While the GranSport resembled its 3200GT, 4200GT and Coupe predecessors on the outside, the internals enjoyed a bunch of improvements – power up to 400bhp, stiffer, lower suspension, a faster-shifting Cambiocorsa paddleshift transmission – resulting in a truly transformative change.

Just shy of ten years on, you can buy a GranSport for the cost of a new Fiesta ST if you shop hard enough. This 48,500-mile example at Lawton Brook mixes a Focus ST price tag with a sane mileage and desirable spec, its Blu Mediterraneo paint, grey half-leather and 19in Trofeo alloy wheels combining to create a car that looks a whole heap more beguiling than Maserati's new-generation models. **SD**

Fantasy garage: £30,000 challenge

This month, we found three very different load-luggers for a fictional £30,000, all from the classifieds at forsale.evo.co.uk



1
Mercedes-Benz E200 Estate
£9995

Having covered a mere 44,647 miles, this mint-looking 1996 S124 should easily have another 200,000 miles left in it.



2
Dodge Ram 1500 Pickup
£8995

With a 4.7 V8, this 2003 Ram will have little trouble getting your weekly shop home – if you can find a big enough parking space.



3
Citroën 'H' van
£8750

Citroën's long-lived van was produced from 1947 to 1981 (this one is from 1970). In its native France, it's known as the 'nez de cochon', or 'pig nose'.



Factory Specification: 2.2 Litre 4 Cylinder Diesel Engine, 6 Speed Manual Gearbox, Air Conditioning, All Terrain Anti-Lock Braking System, Audio System - Single Slot CD & Radio, Driver & Front Passenger Sun Visors, Electric Front Windows, Electronic Traction Control (ETC), Front Axle Two Pin Differential, Front Mudflaps, Heated Front Seats, Heated Rear Screen, Heated Windscreen, Locking Wheel Nuts, Manual Adjustable Exterior Mirrors, Manual Dipping Interior Rear View Mirror, Perimetric/Volumetric Alarm, Power assisted Steering, Rear Door Stowage Net, Rear Folding Step, Rear Mudflaps, Rear Quarter Windows, Remote Central Locking, Side Runners, Standard Duty Suspension, Station Wagon Roof, Tinted Glass Front & Side, Two Cupholders, Underseat Bottle Jack, Windscreen Wash/Wipe System (intermittent Function).

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IMPERIALS



BENTLEY CONTINENTAL FLYING SPUR SALOON AUTO 56 REG. Moonbeam Silver, Portland and Beluga Hide. 38,000 Miles, F/B/S/H. Sat Nav, Phone Prep, Climate, E/G/ Solar Sunroof, E/H/M/Ventilated Massaging Seats, H/V/Rear/Seats, Multi CD, Dark Stained Burr Walnut, Adj Susp, 20" 7 Spoke Alloys.
Was £37,995
Now £34,995



BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GT MULLINER COUPE AUTO 06 REG. Moonbeam Silver, Beluga Hide. 31,000 Miles, Bentley History, Diamond Quilted Leather inc Embossed Logo, Aluminium Sports Pedals, Sports Gear Shift, Keyless Go, Sat Nav, Bluetooth, Climate, Cruise, E/H/M/Seats with Lumbar, Multi CD, Soft Close Doors, Xenons, PDC, Dark Burr Walnut, 20" Mulliner Alloys.
Was £39,995
Now £37,995



BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GT COUPE AUTO 54 REG. Umbrin Red, Ochre and Beluga Hide. 58,000 Miles, F/B/S/H. Sat Nav, Phone Prep, Keyless Go, Climate, Cruise, E/H/M/Massaging Seats, Multi CD, Xenons, PDC, Adj Susp, F/Mirrors, M/F/S/Wheel inc G/S/Paddles, Piano Black Wood, 19" Alloys. Opt Speed Alloys Available at £1,495+Vat.
£31,995



BMW M3 CAB DCT AUTO 61 REG. Alpine White, Black Leather. 36,000 Miles, F/ BMW/S/H. Sat Nav, Bluetooth, Voice Input, Climate, Cruise, H/ Seats, USB Audio Interface, Xenons, Daytime Lights, PDC, P/ Hood, M Double Spoke Alloys. Bal of 5 Year Service Pack. Bal of Man Warranty.
Was £34,995
Now £33,995



BMW M3 CAB WITH EDC AUTO DCT 11 REG. Jerez Black, Fox Red Leather. 25,000 Miles, F/B/S/H. EDC Electronic Damper Control, Sat Nav, Bluetooth, Start/ Stop Function, Climate, Cruise, E/H/M/Seats, DAB, USB Audio Interface, Xenons, PDC, P/Hood, M Sport Styling and Alloys. Opt 19" Competition Alloys at £995+Vat. Bal of Man Warranty.
Was £34,995
Now £33,995



BMW 635D SPORT CAB AUTO 10 REG. Alpine White, Cream Leather. 60,000 Miles, F/BMW/S/H. Sat Nav, Phone Prep, Climate, Cruise, H/M/S/Seats, USB Audio Interface, Xenons, PDC, Lane Deviation Warning, Climate Comfort Laminated Glass, P/ Hood in Black, S/Suspension and LA Star Spoke Alloys.
£26,995



JAGUAR XF 3.0d V6 S PREMIUM LUXURY AUTO 60 REG. White, Black Leather. 39,000 Miles, F/J/S/H. One Owner. Touch Screen Sat Nav, Reverse Camera, Bluetooth Prep, Keyless Go, Climate, Cruise, E/H/M/Ventilated Seats, DAB Radio, CD Player, IPOD Connection, Bowers and Wilkins Sound, Bi-Xenons, PDC, Piano Black Wood, 20" Alloys.
Was £22,995
Now £21,995



MERCEDES E350 CDI BLUE EFFICIENCY SPORT CAB 7G-TRONIC AUTO 2011. Black, Tan Leather. One Owner. 46,000 Mile, F/M/S/H. Sat Nav, AirScarf Heating, Climate, Cruise, E/H/M/Multi Contour Seats, CD Player, Xenons, PDC, P/Hood, E/S/Column, F/Mirrors, Full AMG Body Styling and 18" AMG Alloys
Was £26,995
Now £25,995



MERCEDES E350 CDI SPORT EDITION 125 BLUE EFFICIENCY SALOON 7G-TRONIC AUTO 61 REG. Palladium Silver, Grey Artico Leather. 20,000 Miles, F/M/S/H. Panoramic Glass Roof, Sat Nav, Climate, E/H/M/S/Seats, DAB, Bi-Xenons, LED Daytime Lights, PDC, AMG Body Styling, 19" AMG Alloys. Bal of Man Warranty.
Was £25,995
Now £24,995



PORSCHE 997 C2 CARRERA 2 GEN 2 PDK AUTO 08 REG. Guards Red, Stone Grey Leather. 33,000 Miles, F/S/H. Sport Chrono Pack Plus, PCM 3.0, Touch Screen Sat Nav, Bluetooth, Climate, Cruise, Sports seats, Guards Red S/Belts, Multi CD, Universal Audio Interface, Bose, PDC, PASM, 19" Shadow Chrome Sport Design Alloys
Was £36,995
Now £35,995



AUDI Q5 2.0 TDI QUATTRO S-LINE PLUS 177 S-TRONIC AUTO 2014. Glacier White, Black Nappa Leather. Del Miles. Sat Nav Bluetooth, Deluxe Climate, Cruise, H/Seats, 40GB HDD Music Storage, AMI Music Interface, Audi Sound System, LED Daytime Lights, Xenons, Audi Parking Plus System, S/Glass, Electric Tailgate, S-Line Styling, 20" Alloys. VAT Q
£37,995



MERCEDES ML 350 BLUETEC DIESEL 7 SPEED AUTO 62 REG. Obsidian Black, Black Artico Leather. Demo + 1 Owner. 12,000 Miles, F/M/S/H. Sat Nav, ECO Start/ Stop Function, Climate, E/Seats, Media Interface, CD, DAB, Xenons, PDC, A/R/Boards, 20" Alloys. Bal of Man Warranty.
Was £39,995
Now 38,995



RANGE ROVER SPORT 3.6 TDV8 HSE AUTO 09 REG. Zermatt Silver, Ebony Leather. 38,000 Miles, S/History. Touch Screen Sat Nav, Phone, Climate, Adaptive Cruise, E/H/M/Seats, H/R/Seats, Multi CD, H/Kardon, Adaptive Xenons, PDC, S/Glass, S/Steps, Black Wood, Black Lettering, 20" Alloys. Opt Autobiography Style Grilles for £395 plus Vat.
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RANGE ROVER 3.6 TDV8 AUTOBIOGRAPHY OVERFINCH GT AERO BODY STYLING AUTO 58 REG. Stormaway Grey Met, Jet/ Ivory Leather. 60,000 Miles, F/S/H. Overfinch Body Styling, Rear Screen Entertainment, TV, Rear Camera, Phone Prep, Climate, Cruise, E/H/M/Cooling Seats, E/G/S/Root, Bi-Xenons, PDC, Deployable Steps. Opt 22" Hawke Alloys for Additional Cost.
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Lamborghini Gallardo
LHD Reverse Camera Calisto Alloys 8,000 miles 2009 **£71,990**



Lamborghini Gallardo V10 Spyder HIGH SPEC
Calisto Alloys, Branding Pack, Heated Seat, 36,000 miles, 2008 **£69,990**



Lamborghini Gallardo
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Lamborghini Gallardo V10 Coupe LHD HIGH SPEC
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Lamborghini Gallardo 2003-2013

Overview



Supercar presence in a compact body combined with 911 Turbo-like all-weather ability – what's not to like? **Words:** Peter Tomalin

ANY LINGERING SHREDS of doubt that Lamborghini was in good hands with Audi were blown away with the arrival of the Gallardo in autumn 2003. It was unmistakably Lambo, but with a thoroughly modern twist. Its taut lines packed real supercar presence into a compact shell. Under the rear deck was a 493bhp, 5-litre V10, enough to power it to 192mph. Transmission was by Lambo's Viscous Traction four-wheel drive with a choice of conventional open-gate six-speed manual or – a first for Lamborghini – a robotised six-speeder with paddles. The latter, dubbed e-gear, would be taken up by around 90 per cent of buyers. And all of this in a light, stiff, extruded-aluminium spaceframe chassis. It was an instant hit. By the time the last Gallardo left Sant'Agata on November 25, 2013, over 14,000 had been built in a ten-year lifespan. So there's plenty to choose from.

Late 2005 saw the first of many variations, the SE (for, erm, Special Edition). Limited to 250, it came with new paint jobs, signature black roof and rear vents, a glass engine cover and a new wheel design. Mechanically there was an extra 20bhp (now 513bhp), shorter gearing and suspension tweaks that made the handling more involving.

These upgrades were then carried through to the regular Gallardo for 2006MY onwards. The same year saw the launch of the Gallardo Spyder, while for those who wanted something more hardcore, 2007 brought the Superleggera: 100kg lighter thanks to extensive use of carbonfibre, slightly more powerful at 522bhp, and a whole lot dearer at £150,000.

In summer 2008 the second-gen Gallardo arrived in the form of the LP560-4. Capacity was up to 5204cc, power to 552bhp (560PS) and top speed to 202mph. E-gear, suspension and brakes were all enhanced, and there was a more chiselled look. A Superleggera version followed, along with a correspondingly hardcore Spyder, the Performante. And in 2009 came the variant a lot of us had been hoping for – the LP550-2 – the '2' indicating it was rear drive only. It was a corker. But then every Gallardo is an event. Let's help you find a good one.

Checkpoints

Engine

Dan Pixton, technician at Lamborghini Manchester, describes the all-alloy V10 as 'pretty bulletproof' – but only if maintained correctly (oil changes every year, or 7500 miles if sooner). It does use oil – a litre every 1000 miles is not unusual – and being a dry-sump system needs careful checking and replenishing. It should run smoothly, with oil pressure in the middle of the gauge; if it's in the lower quarter you could be looking at an (extremely) expensive rebuild. Cat failures are not unknown and very occasionally catastrophic if chunks of honeycomb are sucked back into the engine (a new V10, by the way, is c£30k), so listen for rattles from the exhaust. Avoid jet-washing the rear deck; water in the electrics causes misfires.

Gearbox

The gearbox is essentially the same for manual or e-gear versions and is itself robust. On e-gears, check for fluid leaks from the hydraulic system. The pump primes when you open the driver's door so listen for a crisp whirring sound; if it's laboured, it's on the way out. You can run through all the gears with the ignition on and engine off; any prolonged hesitation points to big bills ahead. Clutch life is all

down to driving style – anything from 5000 to 20,000 miles. A specialist can ascertain how much clutch life is left via diagnostics. Replacement will cost c£3000, and if you need the release bearing on a manual car you can add another £2500 at dealer prices.

Suspension, steering, brakes

Any clonks could mean the anti-roll bar bushes – or the ARB itself – need replacing. Worn dampers will rattle. The front lower balljoint is another area where mileage eventually takes its toll; wiggling a wheel will show any play. On cars built after August '05 check the suspension lifting system (to clear speed bumps) is working. Carbon-ceramic discs can be snatchy and are ferociously expensive (£2760 a disc!). Check the tyres are the correct Lambo-spec P Zeros (they've got an 'L' on them).

Body, interior, electrics

No serious corrosion issues, but check the rear edge of the front wheelarch for bubbling, and examine the body carefully for signs of accident damage.



1: ensure Lambo-spec tyres are fitted for the best handling. **2:** engine is robust if well maintained. **3 & 4:** bodywork should be rust-free, but check electrics work

What we said

August 2003



'You soon feel at home in the Gallardo. There's less intimidation that is part and parcel of sitting at the pointy end of a seven-foot-wide monster like the Murciélago. It feels tailored for the purpose of driving fast (and slow) on real roads. In this respect it combines the instinctive, go-for-the-gap 911 wildness with a genuine sense of occasion.

'Paddleshift gearchanges make for an uncannily refined low-speed Lambo. No calf-busting clutch pedal to pump, no recalcitrant gearlever to stir around until the gearbox oil is warm. Just slick, finger-flippin' short-shifts. The damping is tolerant of urban lumps and bumps, soaking up road shocks with a minimum of fuss... What's obvious from the outset is that the Gallardo is built to be used regularly, not just for high days and holidays.

'The first opportunity to floor the throttle is one to savour, for the noise is unlike that of any other road car. The response is instant, hardening from a mellow, slightly distant warble to a sharp-edged no-nonsense bellow.

'It might be the baby of the Lamborghini range, but the Gallardo has grown-up muscle.' (evo 058)



Above: check body for damage – aluminium panels and structures are costly to repair



Above: interior benefits from Audi components; most cars have e-gear paddleshift

'I bought one' John Wilson

'My car is a 2007 5.2-litre e-gear coupe in Nero Osyris – black – with carbon-ceramics. It had 21,000 miles on the clock when I bought it and came with every consumable renewed, including the clutch. I've since done 11,000 miles in it, and at the last service they said I'd only used seven per cent of the clutch!

'It's absolutely great to drive. Acceleration is pretty much on a par with my 1100kg, 500bhp TVR race car. Of

course, it's a bit more sophisticated, but it still has a wild feel and really handles. I've done a trackday, been to Switzerland on holiday, even commuted into the City in it. The only bad thing is that it's terrible to reverse-park.

'It doesn't like really bad M25 stop-and-start – the e-gear gets hot – but it's never let me down. A bit of play in the steering was fixed under warranty, and there was a recent recall to check

the bolts on the ceramic discs, but otherwise it's been faultless. Servicing isn't cheap, but it seems to be kind on tyres. It has cost me £3000 in its first year, with another service due soon.

'For me it's well worth the outlay – I love to look at it in the garage at night with a glass of wine, knowing it's mine. And the best thing is it puts a smile on the face of everyone who sees it – except for Ferrari drivers!'

In the classifieds



2006 Gallardo SE
 59,000 miles Grigio Proteus with Nero and grey leather manual gearbox full service history two former owners vsuk.co.uk

£54,990



2007 Gallardo
 18,000 miles e-gear pearlescent yellow with black leather heated seats full dealer history redlinespecialistcars.co.uk

£74,995



2007 Gallardo Spyder
 16,000 miles Midas Giallo with Nero leather with yellow stitching black alloys, yellow calipers manual gearbox FSH topgear-cars.co.uk

£74,990

The rivals

Ferrari F430

Closest match for the Gallardo, the 483bhp V8-engined F430 was built from 2004-2010. Now from £65k.

Porsche 911 Turbo

For £60k you can buy a mint '09/'10 second-gen 997 with 493bhp and peerless cross-country pace.

Aston Martin V12 Vantage

With a strapping 510bhp, the V12 Vantage built from 2009 to 2013 is our favourite recent Aston. Prices now slowly edging down towards £70k.

Specification

Gallardo (2004MY)

Engine V10, 4961cc
Max power 493bhp @ 7800rpm
Max torque 376lb ft @ 4500rpm
Transmission Six-speed manual or e-gear semi-auto, four-wheel drive
Weight 1520kg
Power-to-weight 329bhp/ton
0-60mph 4.4sec
Max speed 192mph (claimed)
Price new £124,600 (2004)

Parts prices

(Prices supplied by Lamborghini Manchester, hrowen.co.uk/lamborghini. Tyre prices from blackcircles.com. Prices include VAT but exclude fitting charges)

Tyres (each) £172.21 front, £272.56 rear (Pirelli P Zero)

Front pads (axle set) £372

Front discs (iron, pair) £960

Damper (front, single) £720

(with lifting system £1800)

Suspension bottom arm £1560

Clutch £2040

Release bearing £480 (e-gear), £2520 (manual)

Catalytic converter £2700

Set of spark plugs £228

Servicing

(Prices supplied by Lamborghini Manchester, hrowen.co.uk/lamborghini, including VAT)

Servicing is every 7500 miles or 12 months, alternating 1 and 2

Service 1 £876

Service 2 £2022

What to pay

High-mileage early cars start around £55k. £60,000 gives you a decent choice of '04/'05 manual coupes with average miles, but similar cars with exceptionally low mileage can command up to £70,000. Spyderys start at around this point, too. The cheapest second-gen 5.2-litre cars, both coupes and Spyderys, start around £80k. Superleggeras are rare and command a premium, LP550-2s are rarer still, the vast majority of Gallardo buyers apparently preferring the security of four driven wheels (and e-gear).

Useful contacts

hrowen.co.uk/lamborghini sales and service

bhpm sport.com independent specialist

lamborghiniclub.co.uk

events, forums, advice

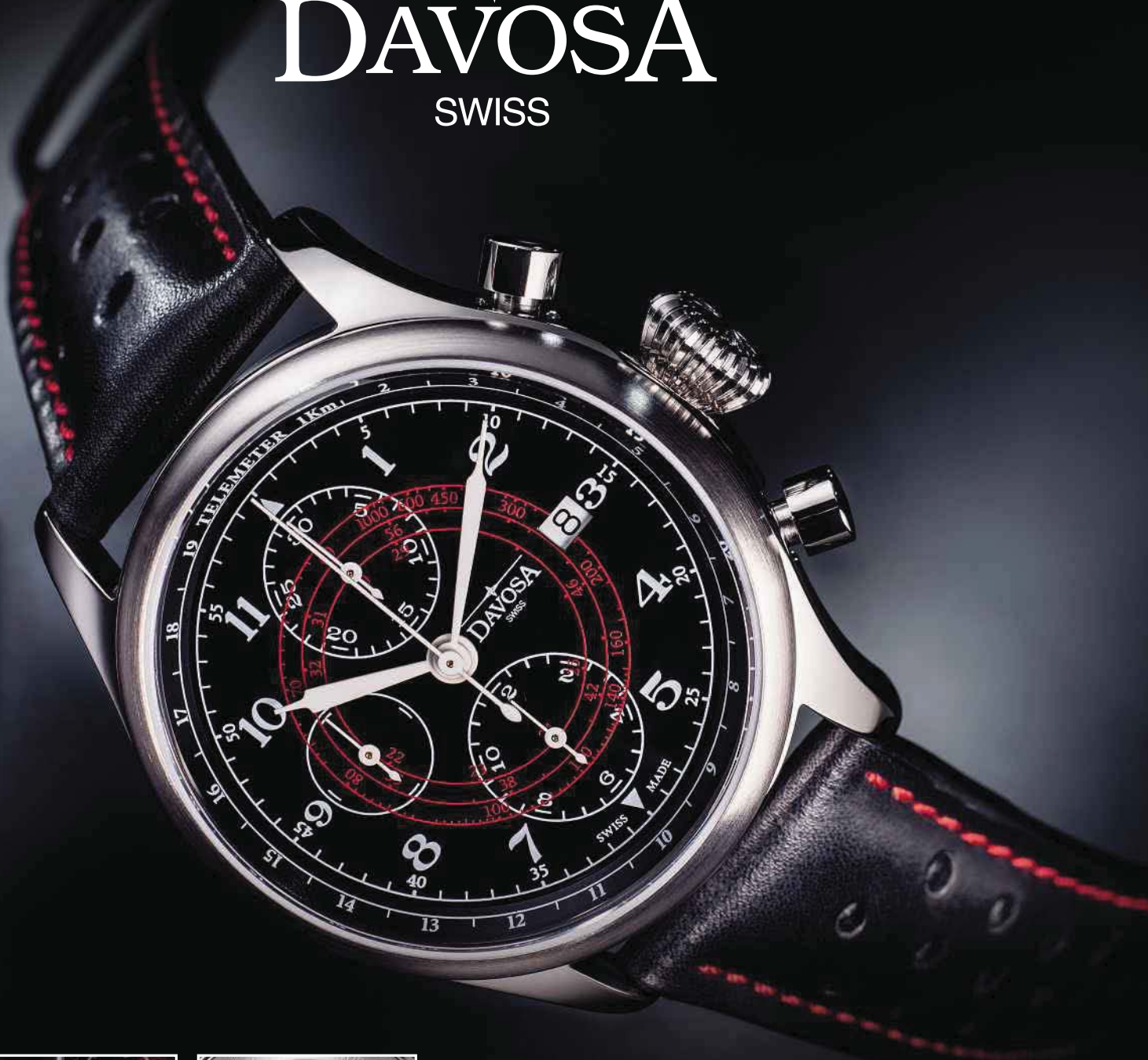
lamborghini-talk.com

forums, advice, events

forsale.evo.co.uk cars for sale

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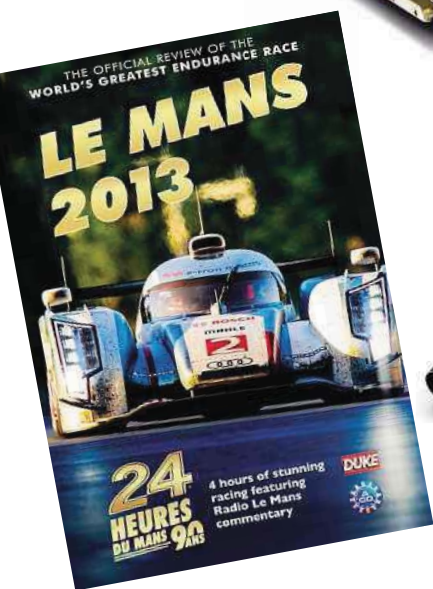
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evo Essentials Top 3: T-shirts

2 Left Tightens
£17.24 redbubble.com



Nothing says rallying like a big blue Subaru Impreza and words that you have to say in a Welsh accent to emulate Nicky Grist.

Pagani exhaust
£16.99 shotdeadinthehead.com



It may look like a clothes button, but this quad exhaust will only ever be associated with one manufacturer.

Flugwagen '99
£20 slickattire.co.uk



Mark Webber said he'd never go back to sportscars after his Mercedes CLR-GT1 flipped at Le Mans in 1999. Funny, that...

Art

eCoty 2013 prints
From £24.99
shotdeadinthehead.com

1 Here's your chance to have some of the very best pictures captured by **evo** photographer Dean Smith adorning your wall. A selection of images from last year's **evo** Car of the Year test in France have been singled out and made available on prints in three different sizes and on three different materials. And if you don't like Porsches, there's no need to fear: they don't all include the 911 GT3...

Slot car

Scalextric Delta S4
£39.99 scalextric.com

2 A flame-spitting Group B car is virtually unrivalled when it comes to rekindling old rally passions. The black-and-gold Grifone livery on this Lancia Delta S4 may not be the most famous of paint jobs, but it follows that on the car Fabrizio Tabaton took to the 1986 European Rally crown. It'll look great haring around your living room floor.

DVD

Le Mans 2013
£14.99 dukevideo.com

3 With Allan McNish confirming his retirement from full-time racing just before Christmas, there's no better time to relive the third and final victory at La Sarthe for a true British sportscar hero. All the drama, action and intrigue of the famous 24-hour race is condensed into this informative four-hour review. With no motorsport to keep your Sunday afternoons occupied for a couple of months, this provides the ideal diversion.

Modification

Litchfield 102mm Nissan R35 GT-R exhaust
From £2394 litchfieldmotors.com

4 R35 Nissan GT-R owners need look no further for an exhaust upgrade than this state-of-the-art system from renowned tuner Litchfield. It's made from non-magnetic 304-grade stainless steel and is designed to cope with the enormous 1000bhp+ produced by some of Litchfield's wilder conversions. There's a choice of tailpipes and the system can also be ordered with a resonated centre section (for an extra £186).

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Dyson DC59 Animal Digital Slim

£349.99 dyson.com

After using a Dyson DC44 cordless vacuum in-car and around the workshop for the last year and being impressed, I was doubtful the DC59 could be much of an improvement, but it is. Just a few back-to-back tests were enough to show the newcomer had more suction and required fewer sweeps to clean mats and carpets.

Both units are undoubtedly bulky and the DC59 is a touch taller with its 'two-tier cyclone' suction, but they are well balanced. Use the tools well and progress is swift (you get car-friendly crevice, combination brush and small motorised attachments), although really grubby

cars may need more than the 20 minutes battery life. There's a temptation to run at max suction permanently, which halves battery life, but the normal rate is more than adequate. The DC59 also comes with a floor head and an extension, which helps justify the hefty price as it can be used in the garage as well as in-car.

The whole set-up is convenient too, sitting ready to go in its charging dock, taking the grind out of keeping cars or workshops clean. They're great for use in the home, too, but you may find it difficult to wrest it back if you take it in there...

Kim Adams (@cargadgetguru)



Continental ContiPremiumContact 5

From £41.50 (per tyre, 14-17in) www.continental-tires.com

Much as I'd like to have kept my track-biased Yokohamas on my Clio over the winter, I also wanted no excuses not to use it, whatever the weather. Therefore my previously positive experience with a set of ContiPremiumContact 2s led me to try the newer, Contact 5 iteration.

Changes for this latest model include reduced rolling resistance, courtesy of a tyre carcass developed from Continental's eco tyres, with an improved fuel economy rating (up from E to C) the result. Elsewhere, newly developed '3D edges' aim to prevent the tread blocks deforming during braking, providing more linear brake pressure and cutting stopping distances (wet grip and braking rise from a B to an A rating).

The sharpness of an out-and-out performance tyre is missing, but the Contact 5s otherwise have an impressive breadth of talents. I've encountered mild conditions and wintry roads down to freezing point, as well as patches of standing water that would ordinarily be pretty daunting. All have been dealt with without a qualm.

My old PremiumContact 2s lasted over 12,000 miles, including admirable performances on three trackdays, so I've no reason to doubt Continental's successor will provide a similar amount of life. And at just £3 extra per corner (£69 in the Clio's 185/55 x 15 size), the 5 looks excellent value too.

Stephen Dobie (@evoStephenDobie)

CoPilot Premium app

From £19.99 (UK & Ireland)

copilotlive.com



Unless nothing less than a 6-inch screen will do and you have around £300 to spare for a top-spec model, the case for buying a standalone satnav rather than an app for your smartphone is hard to make. I've been trying the latest version (v9.5) of CoPilot's Premium app, which has all my satnav essentials like live traffic and safety cam alerts, all for less than £20, or £34.99 with full European mapping (Active Traffic is free for 12 months then £7.49 a year).

This latest version is fully iOS7 compatible (there are versions for Android and Windows Phone 8 too) and includes a motion lock to stop you fiddling with the satnav on the move. That's good for safety but you can turn it off and also adjust the speed at which it locks. There are precious few compromises over a standalone unit: the interface is uncluttered and intuitive, and the display can be tailored to the elements you want to see. Instructions are clear and I particularly like the adjustable speeding alerts. There are several ways of entering a destination, including from the phone's contacts, although we got some odd results when searching points of interest near our destination.

This is a proper satnav at a keen price, although you will need to invest in a holder and some way of charging the handset.

Kim Adams (@cargadgetguru)

Musical Fidelity MF-100 headphones

£119 www.musicalfidelity.com

There are plenty of reasons why a petrolhead should make room in his or her life for a decent pair of headphones. They're ideal for those late-night, don't-want-to-disturb-the-family sessions on *Forza* or *Gran Turismo* (other driving games are available), and they'll do much better justice to the sound of a 458 Speciale's V8 revving out to 9000rpm on *evoTV* than your laptop, phone or tablet's built-in speakers.

These on-ear 'phones from long-established UK-based hi-fi specialist Musical Fidelity make a strong case for themselves from the off. They have a form-follows-function stylishness and their relatively light weight (190g) helps ensure they remain comfortable even over long periods of use, as do the nicely squidgy ear

pads – especially the complimentary extra pair, which are clad in super-soft Alcantara.

Sound-wise, the MF-100s don't disappoint, either. Games and YouTube videos are brought to life in a way that internal speakers or cheap earphones simply cannot match, the audio gaining previously unheard layers of depth and detail. Meanwhile, good old-fashioned CDs played on a decent hi-fi sound pleasingly natural – no artificially heavy bass, no face-scrunchingly harsh treble, just clean, clear reproduction across the frequency range.

There is some tough competition in the headphones market at this price level, but if you plump for the MF-100s, you're unlikely to be disappointed.

Ian Eveleigh



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Great for: an Aston Martin or a Mini



F

FOR A LONG time, the A701 was my favourite road. It's still right up there, both in esteem and geographically. I first found it when I was travelling back and forth to university in St Andrews in Fife. One day, while poring over a map trying

to devise a more interesting route between home and halls, I noticed that the 701 cuts an obvious corner off the M74/M8 route to Edinburgh via Glasgow. It certainly looked a lot more fun than the motorway, but when I turned off the motorway at Moffat in my Mini the next day I wasn't prepared for just how stunning it was going to be.

Once you're out of the town (where you can fill up with fuel at the Esso if you're running low), the road climbs quickly through trees and a couple of tightish turns. It then both opens and straightens out as it heads for the hills across stunning moorland. As you run up towards the Devil's Beef Tub section, which is a succession of left handers with a barrier striped like a humbug on the outside, you can see the magnificent rolling hills of the Borders stretching away to your right. If it's not foggy, of course.

From here you descend gradually until you find the road is running along a valley floor in parallel with the River Tweed. The landscape never seems to stay the same for more than a few miles from here all the way to Edinburgh, but you always get this wonderful feeling of space and it's never dull. Before you reach the town of Penicuik at the top you could try to switch across to the A702, which lies just to the north of the 701, then you'll have a quicker final run into Scotland's capital city.

If you fancy an even longer drive, the A701 is also good south of Moffat, all the way to Dumfries, so you could start from there. There are, however, some even better options if you want to explore the area to the west of the A74(M), but I'll leave those for another time.

Henry Catchpole
Features editor



The route



Start **Finish**

Distance: 68 miles

Time: 1 hour 47 minutes

Where to stay

All four hotels in Moffat get good reviews. I stayed in the Annandale Arms a few years ago and it was jolly good. If you're looking to spend some time exploring the Borders in general (it would make a cracking driving holiday) and you're feeling flush then we'd recommend the Roxburghe Hotel over near Kelso (it's where we stayed for eCoty 2012).

Watch out for

The A701 isn't the first road to get gritted in winter so you need to keep a wary eye on the weather. Even if it looks clear when you set out, be sure you've got blankets, a shovel and other essentials because the snow obviously worsens the higher you go and turning round may not be easy. Whatever the weather or time of year, make sure you drive slowly through Broughton and the other settlements on the route.

Reader road trip Panda to Monaco

It was during a drunken night in a dodgy bar in Utrecht that we made plans for our summer vacation. After some pints, we decided that the destination would be Monaco. And after a couple more pints we decided on our transportation: a Fiat Panda 1000 Fire.

The next day, the plan still looked good, so we had to decide on a nice route and, as an **evo** fan, I knew it had to be Route Napoleon. One of the hardest things was finding a Fiat Panda, but we got one for a steep 280 euros.

After leaving the Netherlands, we headed to Grenoble in the south of France and the



start of the Route Napoleon. The road was as thrilling as **evo** has described it and we had great fun exploring it. After a while we started to trust the Panda's 'handling' more and more, so we turned up the pace. I never expected we could have so much fun with 44bhp, but the nimble Panda was a blast, especially downhill. Uphill it could have used a little more power...

On roads used for the Monte Carlo Rally, we really pushed the car to its limits, so much so that even the locals made way for us. It was the perfect car for the job: low running costs, compact but with plenty of space inside, and we could park it anywhere without worry.

After the trip the Panda was done and we had to put her to rest... although we've since bought another one and are now planning another road trip!

Mark V Heuvink

Email your road trip story to henryc@evo.co.uk

Events calendar

FEBRUARY

February 2

Run What Ya Brung, SantaPod
www.santapod.co.uk

February 5-8

Rally Sweden, Karlstad
www.rallysweden.com

February 15

Wydean Forest Rally, Chepstow
www.wydeanrally.com

February 23

Silverstone GP Circuit trackday
www.silverstone.co.uk/track

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). Call 0844 844 0039 to order a back issue. **Price** is on-the-road including VAT and delivery charges. **Engine** is the car's main motor only - additional hybrid tech isn't shown. **Weight** is the car's kerb weight as quoted by the manufacturer. **bhp/ton** is the power-to-weight ratio based on manufacturer's kerb weight. **0-60mph** and **0-100mph** figures in bold are independently recorded, all other performance figures are manufacturers' claims. **CO2 g/km** is the official EC figure and **EC mpg** is the official 'Combined' figure or equivalent.

Knowledge

Superminis / Hot Hatches

	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating	
Abarth Punto Evo	149 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	7.2	20.4	131	155	43.5	+ A properly fun, old-school hot hatch - Favours fun over finesse	★★★★☆
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	£30,006	6/3179	247/6200	221/4800	1360kg	185	6.0	15.5	153	-	23.3	+ Mk1 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	1425kg	125	5.7	-	152	199	32.8	+ Polished 253bhp all-wheel-drive A1 - Just 19 for UK, Porsche Cayman price	★★★★☆
Audi S3	188 R	£31,260	4/1984	296/5500	280/1800	1395kg	216	5.4	12.5	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	£16,102	4/1984	261/6000	1455kg	183	5.6	13.6	155	198	33.2	-	+ Very fast, very effective, very... err... quality - A little too clinical	★★★★☆
Audi RS3 Sportback	156 R	£11,122	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	4.8	12.9	155	188	35.3	+ Powertrain, noise, chassis, price - Ordinary styling; a limited-slip diff would be nice	★★★★☆
BMW 123d M Sport	122 R	£17,107	4/1995	201/4400	295/2000	1420kg	144	6.5	17.4	148	138	54.3	+ Economical and no slouch - Doesn't feel special enough	★★★★☆
BMW 130i M Sport	106 R	£16,102	6/2996	261/6650	232/2750	1450kg	183	6.1	15.3	155	-	34.0	+ Fantastic engine - Suspension can still get a little boingy	★★★★☆
Citroën C1/Peugeot 107/Toyota Aygo	126 R	£17,995	3/998	68/6000	68/3600	790kg	87	14.2	-	98	103	61.4	+ Full of character and insurance-friendly - Insurance friendly power	★★★★☆
Citroën Saxo VTS	020 R	£9,703	4/1587	120/6600	107/5200	935kg	130	7.6	22.6	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	£11,122	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	★★★★☆
Fiat Panda 100HP	132 R	£16,102	4/1368	99/6000	97/4250	970kg	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	£13,008	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	7.4	18.4	137	138	47.9	+ Chassis, price, punchy performance - Not as powerful as key rivals	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST Mountune	188 D	£17,594	4/1596	212/6000	236/2750	1088kg	198	6.6	-	140	138	-	+ One of the best mid-sized hatches made even better - Badge snobbery	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta Zetec S	123 D	£13,008	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	£13,008	4/1596	138/6750	125/4250	1080kg	130	7.9	-	120	134	48.7	+ As above, with a fantastically loud exhaust... - If you're 12 years old	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST	075 D	£13,008	4/1999	148/6000	140/4500	1137kg	132	7.9	-	129	-	38.2	+ Great looks, decent brakes - Disappointing chassis, gussy engine	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST185 Mountune	115 R	£13,008	4/1999	185/6700	147/3500	1137kg	165	6.9	-	129	-	-	+ Fiesta ST gets the power it always needed - OTT exhaust note	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta Zetec S	020 R	£10,002	4/1596	102/6000	107/4000	976kg	106	10.2	-	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	188 R	£21,995	4/1999	247/5500	265/1750	1362kg	184	6.5	16.8	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 feellike as that of some rivals	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST	119 R	£10,510	5/2522	222/6000	236/1600	1392kg	162	6.7	16.8	150	224	30.4	+ Value, performance, integrity - Big engine compromises handling	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST Mountune	137 R	£13,008	5/2522	256/5500	295/2500	1392kg	187	5.8	14.3	155	224	-	+ ST takes extra power in its stride - You probably still want an RS	★★★★☆
Ford Focus RS	188 R	£29,711	5/2522	300/6500	324/2300	1467kg	208	5.9	14.2	163	225	30.5	+ Huge performance, highly capable fwd chassis - It could be the last RS...	★★★★☆
Ford Focus RS500	181 R	£10,111	5/2522	345/6000	339/2500	1467kg	239	5.6	12.7	165	225	-	+ More power and presence than regular RS - Pricey	★★★★☆
Ford Focus RS	053 R	£13,008	4/1998	212/5500	229/3500	1278kg	169	5.9	14.9	144	-	-	+ Some are great - Some are awful (so make sure you drive plenty)	★★★★☆
Ford Escort RS Cosworth	157 R	£29,962	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	£9,702	4/1679	123/6300	116/4500	1041kg	120	8.6	27.6	122	-	38.2	+ Everything - Nothing. The 1.4 is worth a look too	★★★★☆
Ford Racing Puma	128 R	£13,008	4/1679	153/7000	119/4500	1174kg	132	7.8	23.2	137	-	34.7	+ Exclusivity - Expense. Standard Puma does it so well	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type-R	102 R	£17,107	4/1998	198/7800	142/5600	1267kg	158	6.8	17.5	146	215	31.0	+ Looks great, VTEC more accessible - Steering lacks feel, inert balance	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type-R C'ship White	126 D	£13,008	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	£13,008	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	£13,008	4/1998	197/7400	145/5900	1204kg	166	6.8	16.9	146	-	31.7	+ Potent and great value - Looks divide opinion, duff 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	£8,993	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 2.1 S Sport	132 R	£13,495	4/1498	102/6000	101/4000	1030kg	107	10.4	-	117	135	48.7	+ Fun and funky - Feels tinny after a Mini	★★★★☆
Mazda 3 MPS	137 R	£23,995	4/2261	256/5500	280/3000	1385kg	188	6.3	14.5	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	188 R	£37,845	4/1991	355/6000	332/2250	1480kg	244	4.3	10.6	155	161	40.9	+ Blisteringly quick everywhere - Not as rewarding as some slower rivals	★★★★☆
MG3 Style	190 D	£9,999	4/1498	104/6000	101/4750	1155kg	91	10.4	-	108	136	48.7	+ Decent chassis, performance and price - Thrashy engine, cheap cabin	★★★★☆
MG Metro 6R4 Clubman	181 R	£8,487	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	7.0	-	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	7.2	16.7	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	190 R	£28,790	4/1598	215/6000	206/2000	1160kg	188	6.3	-	150	165	39.8	+ Bravely hyperactive - Too much for some roads and some tastes	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S Works (Mk2)	111 R	£17,107	4/1598	189/6000	199/1750	1130kg	170	7.6	18.0	145	-	-	+ Cracking hot Mini - Expensive with option packs included	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S Works GP	144 R	£14,900	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	£12,006	4/1598	168/6000	155/4000	1140kg	143	7.8	19.9	135	-	33.6	+ Strong performance, quality feel - Over-long gearing	★★★★☆
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	★★★★☆



* Volvo Personal Contract Hire. 18s or over. Subject to status. Initial payment of £1,794, followed by 35 monthly rentals. Based on 8,000 miles per annum. Vehicles returned at contract end must be within contracted mileage and in good condition to avoid further charges. Subject to availability at participating dealers for vehicles registered between 1st January 2014 and 31st March 2014, or while stocks last. Not available with other promotions. Volvo Car Leasing Contract Hire is provided by Lex Autolease Ltd, trading as Volvo Car Leasing.



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

The Fiesta ST (left), is now the default affordable hot hatch choice. We'd have ours with the Mountune upgrade. The £29k Mini GP may sound expensive, but you won't find a more focused front-driver. BMW's rear-drive M135i, meanwhile, feels like a bargain at £30k.

Superminis / Hot Hatches

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating
Nissan Juke Nismo	184 R	£20,395	4/1618	197/6000	184/2400	1306kg	153	7.7	19.5	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	7.4	22.2	127	-	34.9	+ Fine handling supermini - Looks its age
Peugeot 208 GTI	184 R	£18,895	4/1598	197/5800	203/1700	1160kg	173	6.8	17.9	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	7.2	20.1	140	-	30.1	+ One of the great GTIs - They don't make them like this any more
Peugeot 306 Rallye	095 R	'88-'99	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1199kg	141	6.9	19.2	137	-	30.1	+ Essentially a GTI-6 for less dosh - Limited choice of colours
Renaultsport Twingo 133	175 R	'08-'13	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	6.9	17.9	143	144	44.8	+ Faster, more refined, easier to drive - We miss the revvy nat-asg engine and manual 'box
Renaultsport Clio 200 Cup	154 R	'09-'13	4/1998	197/7100	159/5400	1204kg	166	6.6	16.7	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	6.6	17.5	139	-	34.9	+ Took hot hatches to a new level - Flawed 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	6.6	17.3	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	6.5	17.7	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	5.8	17.0	145	-	23.0	+ A diesel with a genuinely sporty chassis - Could take more power
Renault Clio Williams	095 R	'93-'96	4/1988	148/6100	126/4500	981kg	153	7.6	20.8	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	188 R	£25,245	4/1998	261/5500	265/3000	1387kg	191	6.4	14.8	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	6.1	14.6	156	190	34.4	+ Fantastic chassis... - partially obscured by new-found maturity
Renaultsport Mégane dCi 175 Cup	119 R	'07-'09	4/1995	173/3750	265/2000	1470kg	119	8.3	23.5	137	-	43.5	+ A diesel with a genuinely sporty chassis - Could take more power
Renaultsport Mégane Trophy	087 R	'05	4/1998	222/5500	221/3000	1355kg	166	6.7	17.3	147	-	32.1	+ Mega grip and traction - Steering needs a touch more feel
Renaultsport Mégane 230 R26	102 R	'07-'09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1345kg	171	6.2	16.0	147	-	-	+ Best hot Mégane... until the R26 R - F1 Team stickers in dubious taste
Renaultsport Mégane R26.R	181 R	'08-'09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1220kg	189	5.8	15.1	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	6.1	14.0	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 (Mk3)	187 D	£22,990	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1350kg	163	6.8	-	154	142	45.6	+ Quick, agile, roomier than a Golf - Ride is harsh for what could be a family car
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 calipers?
Smart Fortwo Brabus	110 D	£15,000	3/999	97/5500	104/3500	780kg	126	9.9	-	96	119	54.3	+ Telling people you drive a Brabus - Them realising it's not a 720bhp S-class
Subaru Impreza STI CS400	146 R	'10-'12	4/2457	395/5750	400/3950	1505kg	267	4.6	10.7	155	-	-	+ Cosworth kudos. One of the fastest hatches we've tested - Pricey. Lifesless 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 Nürbring	164 R	£22,295	4/1598	202/5750	206/2250	1166kg	176	6.5	-	143	178	-	+ VXR gets more power and a limited-slip diff - But it's over £3K more expensive
Vauxhall Astra GTC 1.6T SRi	164 D	£20,215	4/1598	178/5500	169/2200	1393kg	130	7.8	-	137	168	39.2	+ Three-door Scirocco rival looks good, drives well - Non-VXR petrol engines lack zing
Vauxhall Astra VXR (Mk2)	173 R	£26,995	4/1998	276/5500	295/2500	1475kg	190	5.9	-	155	189	-	+ Better than the car it replaces. Loony turbo pace - Lacks RS Mégane's precision
Vauxhall Astra VXR (Mk1)	102 R	'06-'11	4/1998	237/5600	236/2400	1393kg	173	6.7	16.7	152	221	30.7	+ Fast and furious - Lacks a little composure and precision
VW Up/SEAT Mii/Skoda Citigo	171 R	£7630+	3/999	59/5000	70/3000	854kg	70	14.1	-	99	105	62.8	+ Accomplished city car is dynamically sound... - but predictably slow
VW Polo GTI	154 R	£18,935	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1184kg	153	6.8	-	142	139	47.9	+ Modern-day mk1 Golf GTI gets twin-clutch DSG - It's a little bit bland
VW Golf GTD (Mk7)	188 D	£25,285	4/1968	181/3500	280/1750	1377kg	134	7.5	-	143	109	67.3	+ Pace, fuel economy, sounds good for a diesel - Lacks the extra edge of the GTI
VW Golf GTI (Mk7)	188 R	£25,845	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1351kg	163	6.5	-	152	138	47.1	+ Brilliantly resolved - Mégane 265 beats it as a pure drivers' car
VW Golf GTI (Mk6)	172 R	'09-'13	4/1998	207/5300	207/1700	1318kg	160	6.4	16.5	148	170	38.7	+ Still a very accomplished hot hatch - 207bhp isn't a lot any more
VW Golf GTI Edition 35	168 R	'12-'13	4/1984	232/5500	221/2200	1318kg	179	6.5	-	154	189	34.9	+ Mk6 GTI gets the power it craves - Expensive compared to the standard car
VW Golf R (Mk6)	140 D	'10-'13	4/1984	266/6000	258/2500	1521kg	178	5.5	-	155	199	33.2	+ Great engine, tremendous pace and poise - High price, ACC only optional
VW Golf GTI (Mk5)	102 R	'05-'09	4/1984	197/5100	207/1800	1336kg	150	6.7	17.9	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	5.8	15.2	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	6.4	16.3	154	-	24.6	+ Charismatic - Boomy engine can be tiresome
VW Golf GTI 16v (Mk2)	'88-'92	4/1781	139/6100	124/4600	960kg	147	7.9	-	129	-	26.6	+ 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 unmolested one
Volvo C30 1.5 R-Design	122 R	'08-'12	5/2521	227/5000	236/1500	1347kg	165	6.6	16.9	149	203	32.5	+ Good-looking, desirable Volvo - Lacks edge of best hatches. Avoid auto



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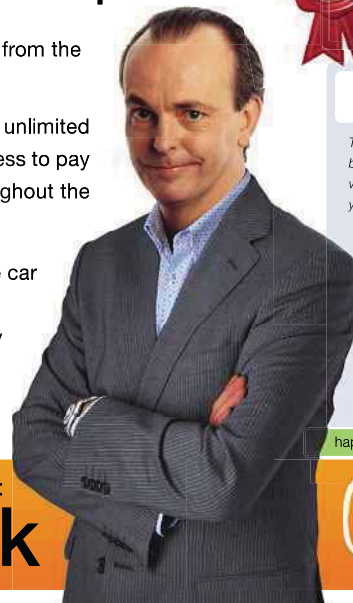
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Our Choice

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. Jaguar's showy XFR-S (left) has a particularly impressive chassis, while the latest Alpina D3 Biturbo is not only the world's fastest diesel production car, but a great handler too.

Saloons / Estates / 4x4s

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft /rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating	
Alfa Romeo 156 GTA	045 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 Biturbo (F30)	192 D	£46,950	6/2993	345/4000	516/1500	1510kg	232	4.6	-	173	139	53.3	+173mph from a 3-litre diesel! Brilliant chassis, too - Auto only	★★★★★
Alpina B3 Biturbo (F30)	188 D	£54,950	6/2979	404/5500	442/3000	1535kg	267	4.2	-	190	177	37.2	+ Understated appearance, monster performance - E90 M3 is better on the limit	★★★★★
Alpina D3 (E90)	120 R	'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	538/2800	1845kg	293	4.5	-	198	244	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 Biturbo	134 D	£98,800	8/4395	533/5200	538/2800	1965kg	276	4.6	-	194	230	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	332	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	355	-	+ Better than its DB9 sibling - More a 2+2 than a proper four-seater	★★★★★
Audi S3 Saloon	192 D	£33,240	4/1984	296/6500	280/1800	1430kg	210	5.3	-	155	162	26.4	+ On paper a match for the original S4 - In reality much less interesting	★★★★★
Audi S4 (B8)	166 D	£39,020	6/2995	328/5500	324/2900	1685kg	198	4.9	-	155	190	34.9	+ Great powertrain, secure chassis - The new RS4 is here now...	★★★★★
Audi S4 (B7)	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 (B8)	192 R	£54,925	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1795kg	251	4.5	10.5	174	249	26.4	+ Looks and sounds the part, thunderously fast - Harsh ride, unnatural steering	★★★★★
Audi RS4 (B7)	088 R	'06-'08	8/4163	414/7800	317/5500	1650kg	255	4.5	10.9	155	-	-	+ 414bhp at 7800rpm! - Busy under braking	★★★★★
Audi RS4 Avant (B7)	192 R	'07-'08	8/4163	414/7800	317/5500	1710kg	246	4.6	-	155	-	20.6	+ Superb engine, with a chassis to match - Everyone thinking you're married with kids	★★★★★
Audi RS4 (B5)	192 R	'00-'02	6/2671	375/6100	325/2500	1620kg	236	4.8	12.1	170	-	17.0	+ Effortless pace - Not the last word in agility. 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	299	22.4	+ Even faster, and discreet with it - Very muted V10	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant (C7)	183 D	£76,985	8/3993	552/5700	516/1750	1935kg	290	3.6	8.2	155	229	28.8	+ A mighty ground-coverer - Is that all you want?	★★★★★
Audi RS6 (C6)	124 D	'08-'10	10/4991	572/6250	479/1500	1985kg	293	4.5	-	155	331	20.3	+ Looks and drives better than estate version - M5 still looks tempting	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant (C6)	116 R	'08-'10	10/4991	572/6250	479/1500	2025kg	287	4.3	9.7	155	333	20.2	+ The world's most powerful estate - Power isn't everything	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant (C5)	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	190 D	£83,495	8/3993	552/5700	516/1750	1920kg	292	3.9	-	155	229	28.8	+ Stonking performance, great looks - Numb driving experience	★★★★★
Audi S7	171 D	£62,300	8/3993	414/5000	406/1400	1945kg	216	4.6	-	155	225	-	+ Looks and drives better than S6 it's based on - Costs £8000 more	★★★★★
Audi S8	164 D	£78,225	8/3993	513/5800	479/1700	1975kg	264	4.1	-	155	237	27.7	+ Quicker and much more economical than before - But still underwhelming to drive	★★★★★
Audi Q7	190 D	£43,000	5/2480	306/5200	310/1500	1655kg	188	5.5	-	155	206	32.1	+ More enjoyable than many RS Audis - Used Cayennes and ML63s are similar money	★★★★★
Audi RS3	124 D	'08-'12	12/5934	493/3750	737/1750	2635kg	190	5.1	12.2	155	298	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	343	19.0	+ More power than old Flying Spur Speed - Feels its weight; engine sounds dull	★★★★★
Bentley Continental Flying Spur Speed	141 R	'06-'11	12/5998	600/6000	553/1750	2440kg	250	4.6	-	200	396	16.6	+ 600bhp; surprisingly fun handling - Could look a bit more like it goes	★★★★★
Bentley Mulsanne	178 F	£225,900	8/6752	505/4200	752/1750	2585kg	198	5.1	-	184	393	16.7	+ Drives like a modern Bentley should - Shame it doesn't look like one too	★★★★★
BMW 320d (F30)	168 R	£28,410	4/1995	181/4000	280/1750	1495kg	123	7.4	-	146	120	61.4	+ Fleet-friendly new Three is economical yet entertaining - It's a tad noisy	★★★★★
BMW 328i (F30)	165 D	£29,400	4/1997	242/5000	258/1250	1430kg	172	5.8	-	155	149	44.8	+ New-age four-pot 328i is great all-rounder - We miss the six-cylinder soundtrack	★★★★★
BMW 330d M Sport (F30)	180 D	£36,610	6/2993	254/4000	413/2000	1540kg	168	5.6	-	155	129	57.6	+ Great engine, fine handling, good value - Steering confuses weight with feel	★★★★★
BMW M3 (E90)	123 R	'08-'11	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1605kg	262	4.9	10.7	165	290	22.8	+ Every bit as good as the 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	295	-	+ Saloon chassis + weight savings + GTS engine = best E90 M3 - Just 67 were made	★★★★★
BMW 335i M Sport (E90)	134 R	'05-'11	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1535kg	200	5.6	-	155	196	31.0	+ Stunning drivetrain, controlled chassis - Looks a bit steady	★★★★★
BMW 328i (F10)	164 D	£34,020	4/1997	242/5000	258/1250	1710kg	144	6.2	-	155	152	41.0	+ Four-pot 528 is downsizing near its best - You'll miss the straight-six sound effects	★★★★★
BMW 535i (F10)	141 D	£39,370	6/2979	302/5800	295/1200	1685kg	182	6.1	-	155	185	34.9	+ New 5-series impresses... - But only with all the chassis options ticked	★★★★★
BMW M5 (F10M)	165 R	£73,375	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1870kg	300	4.3	-	155	232	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 R	'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	190 D	£97,700	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1875kg	299	4.2	-	155	232	28.5	+ Enormous performance, stylish looks - Price tag looks silly next to rivals, M5 included	★★★★★
BMW X5 M50d	191 D	£68,715	6/2993	376/4000	546/2000	2190kg	155	5.3	-	155	177	42.2	+ Straight-line pace - Driving experience identical to standard X5, despite the M badge	★★★★★
BMW X6 xDrive 50i	118 D	£58,420	8/4395	408/5500	442/1750	2190kg	186	5.4	-	155	292	22.6	+ Stuningly 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	325	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	199	-	+ Well specced, impressively refined - Lags far behind the Mercedes S-class	★★★★★
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	365	18.1	+ It'll stand out among M-cars and AMGs - But the novelty might wear off	★★★★★
Ford Mondeo 2.0 EcoBoost Titanium X		£28,115	4/1999	237i n/a	251i n/a	1569kg	153	7.5	-	153	179	36.7	+ Terrific chassis, sweet engine - People will still want an Audi	★★★★★
Ford Mondeo ST220	043 D	'02-'07	6/2967	223/6150	204/4900	1550kg	146	6.8	-	151	-	27.7	+ Muscular engine, fine chassis - Hotted-up reprobable image	★★★★★
Ford Sierra RS Cosworth 4x4	141 R	'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	1252kg	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	235	27.7	+ Stands out from the crowd - Not as involving as some rivals	★★★★★
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	★★★★★

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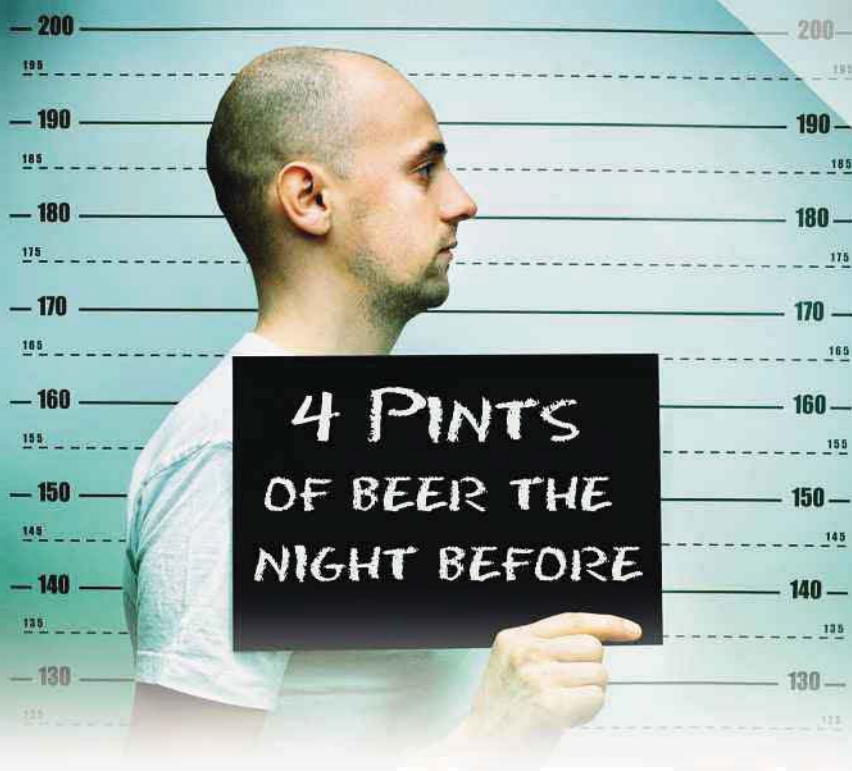
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Saloons / Estates / 4x4s

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating
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	4.8	10.2	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	£56,865	6/2993	271/4000	442/2000	1700kg	162	6.0	-	155	167	46.3	+ A great Jaguar - But not as great as the XJR... ★★★★★
Jaguar XJR	191 D	£92,370	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1805kg	302	4.4	-	174	270	24.4	+ Hot-rod vibe, fine cabin - 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	417/6600	372/5200	1714kg	247	4.7	10.9	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	4.8	10.6	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	5.1	12.1	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	5.1	-	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	201/6750	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	277	4.4	9.7	160	280	23.5	+ Monstrous pace and extremely engaging - M3's just a little better... ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C55 AMG	088 R	'04-'08	8/5439	367/5250	376/4000	1653kg	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	531/1700	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	1765kg	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	4.8	10.2	155	-	21.9	+ M5-humbling grunt, cossetting ride - Speed limits ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG	'98-'02	8/5439	354/5500	390/3000	1642kg	219	5.5	-	155	-	23.0	+ Dragster disguised as a limo - Tyre bills ★★★★★	
Mercedes-Benz S63 AMG L	191 D	£119,575	8/5461	571/5500	664/2250	1955kg	294	4.4	-	155	237	27.9	+ Monster pace - Average steering feel ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz S63 AMG	148 D	'10-'13	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	'06-'13	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	+ Monster 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 - £85K 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	5.2	13.9	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	4.3	10.9	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	5.0	13.0	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	4.5	11.8	145	-	-	+ Lighter, keener, quicker than regular Evo - A little uncommensalising ★★★★★
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	3.6	8.9	188	270	24.6	+ Fast, refined and dynamically sound - It still leaves us cold ★★★★★
Porsche Panamera Turbo S	159 D	'11-'13	8/4806	542/6000	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	2215kg	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	4.7	11.4	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	5.9	-	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	'10-'13	4/2457	296/6000	300/4000	1505kg	200	5.1	-	158	243	26.9	+ Fast Subaru saloon returns - Without the blue paint and gold wheels ★★★★★
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	5.2	12.9	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	4.3	11.1	160	-	-	+ Best Impreza since the P1 - Lost its throbby flat-four voice ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WR1	067 R	'04-'05	4/1994	316/5800	310/4000	1470kg	218	5.3	13.1	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	5.4	14.6	144	-	27.2	+ Destined for classic status - Thirsty ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza P1	067 R	'00-'01	4/1994	276/6500	260/4000	1283kg	219	4.9	13.3	150	-	25.0	+ Ultimate old-shape Impreza - Prices reflect this ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza RB5 (PPP)	187 R	'99	4/1994	237/6000	258/3500	1235kg	195	5.0	14.1	143	-	-	+ Perfect blend of poise and power - Limited numbers ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza 22B	188 R	'98-'99	4/2212	276/6000	265/3200	1270kg	220	5.0	13.1	150	-	-	+ The ultimate Impreza - Doesn't come cheap ★★★★★
Vauxhall Insignia VXR SuperSport	189 D	£29,749	6/2792	321/5250	321/5250	1825kg	179	5.6	-	170	249	26.6	+ A 170mph Vauxhall - Should be a more



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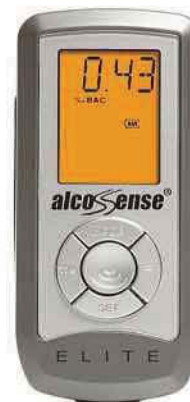
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** 17.1% of drink drive accidents are between hours of 5am and 1pm (Source: Dept. for Transport, Road Accidents and Safety Annual Report 2010)

* 4 Pints of Abbot Reserve contain 14.8 units of alcohol (Source: Greene King) and each unit takes 1 hour to leave the body (Source: NHS). Therefore 14.8 hours after 9pm the alcohol will have passed from the body.



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 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	CO2 g/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 - Boot is useless for touring
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	3.0	5.8	170	-	-	+ An experience unlike anything else on Planet Car - £150k for an Atom
Ariel Atom 3 245	113 D	'08-'12	4/1998	245/8200	155/5200	500kg	498	3.2	-	150	-	33.0	+ The Atom just got a little bit better - Can still be a bit draughty...
Ariel Atom 3 Supercharged	138 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	3.3	-	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 TT RS Roadster	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	6.9	20.0	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 - Wibble wobble, wibble wobble, jelly on a plate
Audi R8 V8 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	4.1	-	194	349	19.0	+ Sensational for the money - Not quite a rival for the 458 and 12C Spiders
BAC Mono	189 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	199/1250	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	4.8	11.1	155	-	14.4	+ M5-powered super-sportster - M5's more fun to drive
Caterham Seven 160	190 R	£17,995	4/1660	80/7000	79/3400	490kg	166	6.5	-	100	-	-	+ The fabulous Seven formula at its most basic - Gets pricey with options
Caterham Seven 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 Seven Roadsport SV 175	140 D	£30,995	4/1999	175/7000	139/6000	555kg	321	4.8	-	138	-	-	+ The Caterham for everyday use, R300 engine - Loses intensity of R300
Caterham Seven 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 Seven 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 Seven 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 Seven Superlight R500	123 R	£44,495	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 Seven CSR 260 Superlight	094 R	£44,995	4/2261	256/7500	200/6200	565kg	460	3.8	-	155	-	-	+ Brilliant for high days, holidays and trackdays - Wet Wednesdays
Caterham Seven 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 Levante	131 R	'09-'10	8/2398	550/10000	300/8500	520kg	1074	4.8	8.2	150	-	-	+ Twice the power-to-weight ratio of a Veyron! - Not easy to drive slowly
Caterham Seven 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 Seven R300	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 Seven R400	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 Seven R500	068 R	'99-'06	4/1796	230/8600	155/7200	460kg	510	3.6	8.8	146	-	-	+ Fine for the Nürburgring - Hard work around the Bullring
Caterham Seven R500 Evolution	069 R	'04	4/1998	250/8000	190/4000	460kg	552	3.9	8.1	150	-	-	+ Madder than Mad Jack McMad - Er, it's a bit mad
Chevrolet Corvette C6	083 D	'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 Convertible	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 S Convertible	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 Convertible	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		£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 XKR	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	414/6250	413/4000	1705kg	247	5.0	-	155	-	-	+ First Jag sports car for years - Overworked detailing
Jaguar XKR	004 R	'97-'06	8/3996	370/6150	387/3600	1750kg	215	5.4	12.8	155	-	15.6	+ Hurricane-in-the-hair motoring - A danger to toupees everywhere
KTM X-Bow GT	183 D	£574,000	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

The E60 M5 packed a V10 engine with a 500bhp punch. Richard Meaden was shocked by its ferocity

BMW M5 (E60) Issue 073, November 2004

'The sheer savagery of the launch takes me completely by surprise. A split-second before unleashing the M5 I intended to glance across and say, "This should be a laugh," but my head's smacked into the headrest before I've uttered any more than "Thi...". The launch is as physical as a brutally administered knuckle sandwich to the chin, but an absolute

peach in road-testing terms: revs maintaining a solid blare as the wheels spin just enough to keep the engine from bogging down, then hardening to a feral shriek as the fat rear 285/35 ZR19 Continentals bite and the engine hits its stride.

Of course, hitting the 155mph speed restrictor will be a mere formality...



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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	CO2g/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 price for a stripped-out Elise
Lotus Elise S	172 R	£37,150	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	924kg	239	4.2	-	145	175	37.5	+ New supercharged Elise boasts epic grip and pace - £37K before (pricey) options...
Lotus Elise S Club Racer	189 D	£35,600	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	905kg	244	4.2	-	145	175	37.5	+ Purist approach intensifies ability - Lightest, option-free spec requires commitment
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	5.6	13.9	150	196	34.4	+ Most thrillsome Elise yet - Blaring engine note
Lotus Elise SC	131 R	'08-'11	4/1794	218/8000	156/5000	870kg	254	4.5	11.4	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	6.3	18.7	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	4.7	12.1	135	-	-	+ Fabulous trackday tool - Pricey
Lotus Elise S1	126 R	'96-'00	4/1796	118/5500	122/3000	731kg	164	6.1	18.5	126	-	39.4	+ A modern classic - A tad impractical?
Lotus 2-Eleven Supercharged	107 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	4.5	12.5	126	-	-	+ Hardcore road-racer... - that looks like a dune buggy from Mars
Lotus Elan SE	095 R	'89-'93	4/1588	165/6600	148/4200	1022kg	164	6.7	-	137	-	21.0	+ Awesome front-drive chassis - Rather uninvolved
Lotus Elan Sprint	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 (Mk3 v2)		£18,495	4/1798	124/6500	123/4500	1075kg	117	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 (Mk3 v2)	170 R	'09-'13	4/1999	158/7000	139/5000	1098kg	146	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	-	-	+ Gearchange, interior - Lost some of the charm of old MX-5s
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk2)	017 R	'88-'05	4/1839	146/7000	124/5000	1065kg	140	8.6	-	123	-	32.5	+ Affordable ragtop doesn'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	4.9	11.2	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	+ Warty 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-'13	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	4.6	10.2	155	-	-	+ As fast as a Murciélago - Not as much fun
Mercedes-Benz SL55 AMG	071 D	'04-'10	12/5980	604/4800	737/2000	2035kg	302	4.1	-	155	-	-	+ Gob-smacking performance - Gob-smackingly pricey
Mercedes-Benz SL65 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)	188 R	'10-'12	6/3436	316/7200	273/4750	1275kg	252	5.0	-	166	221	29.1	+ Lighter, more driver-centric Boxster - Collapsed-broly roof not the most 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	5.0	14.3	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	7.2	21.2	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	307	4.8	11.2	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	4.8	11.2	167	-	22.1	+ Gruff diamond - A few rough edges
Vauxhall VX220	023 R	'00-'04	4/2198	145/5800	150/4700	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



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Our Choice

Porsche 911 GT3. You might think the GT3's win at *evo* Car of the Year 2013 was a foregone conclusion, but neither of the last two GT3s (the 997.2 and 997.1) claimed an *eCoty* title. Yet the 991 managed it, and in a vintage year too (Ferrari F12, Merc SLS Black). Yes, it really is that good.



Best of the Rest

Aston's V12 Vantage S (left) is a deeply well-sorted drivers' car. Audi's updated R8 is still a real gem, especially in V10 Plus form. Porsche's second-gen Cayman S is a truly great all-rounder, while for similar money the Lotus Evija S is a proper road racer and was our joint 2012 Car of the Year.

Coupes / GTs

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating
Alfa Romeo 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 4C	190 R	£45,000	4/1742	237/6000	258/2200	895kg	269	4.5	-	160	157	41.5	+ Carbonfibre tub, mini-super cars look - Hot hatch engine, clunky gearbox ★★★★★
Alfa Romeo 8C Competizione	120 R	'07-'09	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1855kg	288	4.1	-	181	-	-	+ Looks, exclusivity, noise, balance - They're all sold ★★★★★
Alpina B3 Biturbo (E92)	108 R	'07-'13	6/2979	355/5500	369/3800	1570kg	230	4.8	-	177	-	29.1	+ Alpina's M3 alternative - Too refined for some ★★★★★
Alpina B3 GT3 (E92)	176 D	£66,950	6/2979	402/6000	398/4500	1535kg	266	4.4	-	186	224	-	+ Alpina's M3 GTS alternative - Auto gearbox frustrates when pressing on ★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage	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	'09-'13	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1680kg	308	4.4	9.7	190	388	17.3	+ The car we hoped the V8 Vantage would be - Erm, a tad thirsty? ★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage S	190 R	£138,000	12/5935	565/6750	457/5750	1665kg	345	3.7	-	205	-	-	+ The best car Aston Martin currently makes - Old-school automated 'box ★★★★★
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 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	'07-'12	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-super car 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	£36,960	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	189 D	£43,395	6/2995	328/5500	325/2900	1675kg	199	4.9	-	155	190	34.9	+ Supercharged V6 makes S5 cleaner and faster - Poor body control ★★★★★
Audi RS5	188 R	£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	424/7900	317/4500	1560kg	276	4.1	9.9	188	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	190 D	£125,810	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	27.0	+ A proper drivers' Bentley with decent economy - W12 suddenly seems pointless ★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT	152 D	£135,760	12/5998	567/6000	516/1700	2320kg	248	4.6	-	198	384	17.1	+ 200mph in utter comfort - Weight, thirst ★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT Speed	177 D	£151,000	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 ★★★★★
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	188 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	189 D	£41,435	6/2979	302/5800	295/1200	1510kg	203	5.4	-	155	169	35.8	+ Better balance than 3-series saloon - Can feel characterless at lower speeds ★★★★★
BMW 335i M Sport Coupe (E92)	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 GTS (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 CSL (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 CS (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	+ Great engine and economy, excellent build - Numb steering, unsettled B-road ride ★★★★★
BMW M6 (Mk2)	191 D	£82,820	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1850kg	303	4.2	-	155	232	28.5	+ Mighty ability, pace, technology - You'll want the Competition Package upgrade too... ★★★★★
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	'05-'13	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	'05-'13	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	187/8000	131/7300	1101kg	173	6.2	17.9	145	-	28.9	+ Arguably the greatest front-drive car ever - Too raw for some ★★★★★
Honda NSX	188 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	-	-	+ <i>evo</i> 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	168 R	'98-'06	8/4196	400/6100	408/3500	1735kg	234	5.2	-	155	-	22.9	+ Extra grunt of 4.2-litre motor - Lacks feedback ★★★★★
Lotus Evija S (V6)	171 R	£53,850	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1176kg	298	3.8	-	170	236	-	+ Breathtaking road-racer; our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Doubts over Lotus's future ★★★★★
Lotus Evija V6 Cup	191 R	£62,994	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1110kg	316	3.7	-	170	-	-	+ Half a roll-cage short of being a race car - Regular Evija S is better for road work ★★★★★
Lotus Evija 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 Evija Cup 260	139 D	'10-'11	4/1796	256/8000	174/6000	890kg	293	4.0	-	152	199	31.1	+ Feels like a race car, yet works on the road - Pricey for a four-pot Evija ★★★★★
Lotus Evija (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

Aston Martin DB9
Years 2004- Engine V12, 5935cc
Power 450bhp @ 6000rpm Torque
420lb ft @ 5000rpm 0-60mph 5.0sec Top
speed 186mph (spec is for '04-'07 model)



WHY WOULD YOU?
The entry point into Aston's current range of V12 models, the DB9 is a proper GT car that you can drive across Europe and back without you or it even breaking sweat.

WHAT TO PAY
Early 2004 cars begin at just £30,000. In 2008 power rose from 450 to 470bhp; prices for these cars start just north of £50k.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR
Early cars may be tempting, but ensure they have a thorough service history and that there are no



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Coupes / GTs

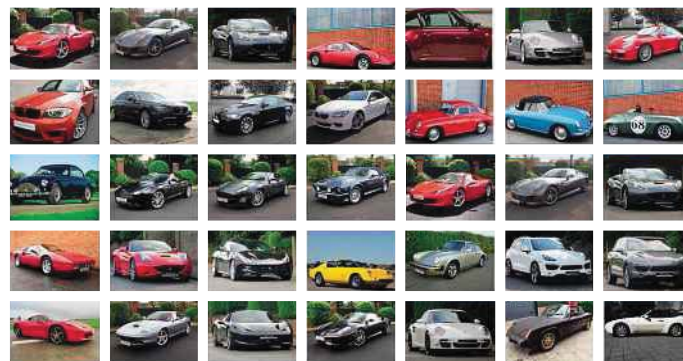
Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cv/lcc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating
Lotus Exige (series 1)	067 D	'00-'01	4/1796	192/7800	146/5000	780kg	247	4.6	-	136	-	-	+ Looks and goes like <i>Elise</i> racer - A tad lacking in refinement ★★★★★
Lotus Evora	138 R	£52,500	6/3456	276/6400	258/4700	1382kg	203	5.6	162	217	30.3	-	+ Sublime ride and handling. Our 2009 car of the year - Pricely options ★★★★★
Lotus Evora S	168 R	£61,500	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1430kg	245	4.6	-	172	229	28.7	+ A faster and better Evora - But one which spars with the Porsche 911... ★★★★★
Lotus Esprit Sport 350	005 R	'99-'00	8/3506	350/6500	295/4250	1299kg	274	4.3	9.9	175	-	22.0	+ Designed for track work but brilliant on the road - Limited edition ★★★★★
Maserati GranTurismo	114 R	£82,190	8/4244	399/7100	339/4750	1880kg	216	5.5	12.7	177	330	19.8	+ Striking, accomplished GT - Doesn't spike the pulse like an Aston or 911 ★★★★★
Maserati GranTurismo Sport	188 R	£90,750	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1880kg	245	4.8	-	185	331	-	+ The best everyday GranTurismo yet - Starting to get long in the tooth ★★★★★
Maserati GranTurismo MC Stradale	160 R	£110,045	8/4691	444/7100	376/4750	1770kg	255	4.6	-	187	337	19.6	+ Brilliant blend of road racer and GT - No rear seats ★★★★★
Maserati Coupe	064 R	'03-'07	8/4244	390/7000	333/4500	1680kg	237	4.8	-	177	-	17.6	+ Glorious engine, improved chassis - Overly sharp steering ★★★★★
Maserati GranSport	073 R	'04-'07	8/4244	400/7000	333/4500	1680kg	239	4.8	-	180	-	-	+ Maser Coupe realises its full potential - Very little ★★★★★
Mazda RX-8	122 R	'03-'11	2R/1308	228/8200	156/5500	1429kg	162	6.5	16.4	146	299	24.6	+ Never mind the quirkiness, it's a great drive - Wafer-thin torque output ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupe	162 R	£57,165	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1655kg	277	4.4	10.3	186	280	23.5	+ Mercedes makes a proper two-door M3 rival - C63 saloon looks better ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Black	171 R	£98,765	8/6208	510/6800	457/5200	1635kg	317	4.2	-	186	286	-	+ The C63 turned up to 11 - Too heavy, not as fiery as Black Series cars of old ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG	092 D	'06-'09	8/6208	481/6800	464/5000	1755kg	278	4.6	-	155	-	19.9	+ Power, control, build quality - Lacks ultimate involvement ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG Black	106 R	'07-'09	8/6208	500/6800	464/5250	1760kg	289	4.2	-	186	-	-	+ AMG goes Porsche-hunting - Dull-witted gearshift spoils the party ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CL63 AMG	150 D	£115,660	8/5461	536/5500	590/2000	2010kg	271	4.5	-	155	244	26.9	+ Presence, pace, monster engine - Stiff ride, stiff competition ★★★★★
Morgan AeroMax	097 D	£110,000	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1180kg	312	4.1	-	170	-	-	+ Weird and utterly wonderful - They're all sold ★★★★★
Nissan 370Z	180 R	£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	186 D	£36,995	6/3696	339/7400	274/5200	1535kg	224	5.2	-	155	248	26.1	+ More controlled, more polished, more fun - More expensive ★★★★★
Nissan 350Z	107 R	'03-'09	6/3498	309/6800	264/4800	1523kg	205	5.5	13.0	155	-	24.6	+ Huge fun, and great value too - Honestly, we're struggling ★★★★★
Nissan GT-R (2012MY/2013MY)	187 R	£76,610	6/3799	542/6400	466/3200	1740kg	316	3.2	7.5	196	275	24.0	+ GT-R is quicker and better than ever - But over £20k more than its launch price ★★★★★
Nissan GT-R (2010MY)	152 R	'10-'12	6/3799	523/6400	451/3200	1740kg	305	3.0	-	194	279	23.5	+ More powerful version of the original - But they're not worlds apart to drive ★★★★★
Nissan GT-R (2008MY)	125 R	'08-'10	6/3799	473/6400	434/3200	1740kg	276	3.8	-	193	-	-	+ Our 2008 Car of the Year, now from just £35k - You won't see 20mpg often ★★★★★
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R34)	009 R	'99-'02	6/2568	276/7000	289/4400	1560kg	180	4.7	12.5	165	-	20.1	+ Big, brutal, and great fun - Very firm ride ★★★★★
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R33)	019 R	'97-'99	6/2568	276/6800	271/4400	1540kg	182	5.4	14.3	155	-	22.0	+ Proof that Japanese hi-tech can work (superbly) - Limited supply ★★★★★
Noble M400	089 R	'04-'06	6/2968	425/6500	390/5000	1060kg	407	3.5	-	185	-	-	+ Devilishly fast - Demon Tweaks interior ★★★★★
Noble M12 GTO-3R	070 R	'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	155 R	£26,635	4/1598	191/5500	202/1700	1421kg	141	7.3	18.1	147	155	42.1	+ Distinctive looks, highly capable handling - Could be a bit more exciting ★★★★★
Peugeot RCZ R	191 D	£31,995	4/1598	266/6000	243/1900	1355kg	199	5.9	-	155	145	44.8	+ The best RCZ yet - 1.6-litre engine needs to be worked hard ★★★★★
Porsche Cayman (981)	185 F	£39,694	6/2706	217/7400	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)	190 R	£48,783	6/3436	321/7400	273/4500	1320kg	247	5.0	-	176	206	32.1	+ The Cayman comes of age - Erm... ★★★★★
Porsche Cayman (987)	131 R	'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)	132 R	'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)	158 R	'11-'13	6/3436	325/7400	273/4750	1295kg	255	4.7	-	175	228	29.1	+ Total handling excellence - Styling additions not to all tastes ★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera (991)	168 R	£71,449	6/3436	345/7400	288/5600	1380kg	254	4.7	-	179	212	31.4	+ 911 becomes cleaner and cleverer - Feels a bit clinical ★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera S (991)	168 R	£81,242	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1395kg	287	4.4	-	188	224	29.7	+ As above, but with supercar pace - Electric steering robs it of some tactility ★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera 4S (991)	177 D	£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)	179 R	£87,959	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1445kg	277	4.5	-	185	234	28.5	+ The best 991-generation Carrera - Choose your spec carefully ★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera (997.2)		'08-'11	6/3614	341/6500	288/4400	1415kg	245	4.9	-	180	225	29.4	+ Faster and greener than the mki 997 - Lost a little of the 911 magic ★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.2)	121 R	'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)	070 R	'04-'08	6/3824	350/6600	295/4600	1420kg	246	4.6	10.9	182	-	24.5	+ evo Car of the Year 2004; like a junior GT3 - Tech overload? ★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera 4S (996)	051 R	'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)	008 R	'98-'01	6/3387	300/6800	258/4600	1320kg	230	4.6	-	173	-	28.0	+ evo Car of the Year 1998; beautifully polished - Some like a bit of rough ★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera (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)	190 R	£100,540	6/3799	468/8250	324/6250	1430kg	332	3.5	-	196	289	23.0	+ evo Car of the Year 2013 - At its best at licence-troubling speeds ★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.2)	182 R	'09-'11	6/3797	429/7600	317/6250	1395kg	312	4.2	9.2	194	303	22.1	+ Even better than the car it replaced - Give us a minute... ★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.2)	152 R	'10-'11	6/3797	444/7900	317/6750	1370kg	329	4.0	-	193	314	-	+ evo Car of the Year 2010 - Looks and noise are slightly OTT ★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS 4.0 (997.2)	187 R	'11-'12	6/3996	493/8250	339/5750	1360kg	368	3.8	-	193	326	-	+ evo Car of the Year 2011 - Unforgiving on-road ride ★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.1)	182 R	'07-'09	6/3600	409/7600	298/5500	1395kg	298	4.3	9.4	192	-	-	+ Runner-up evo Car of the Year 2006 - Ferrari 599 GTBs ★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.1)	105 R	'07-'09	6/3600	409/7600	298/5500	1375kg	302	4.2	-	193	-	-	+ evo Car of the Year 2007 - A chunk more money than the brilliant GT3 ★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.2)	082 R	'03-'05	6/3600	375/7400	284/5000	1380kg	272	4.3	9.2	190	-	-	+ evo Car of the Year 2003 - Chassis is a bit too track-focused for some roads ★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (996.2)	068 R	'03-'05	6/3600	375/7400	284/5000	1330kg	286	4.2	9.2	190	-	-	+ Track-biased version of above - Limited supply ★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.1)	182 R	'99	6/3600	360/7200	273/5000	1350kg	271	4.5	10.3	187	-	21.9	+ evo Car of the Year 1999 - Porsche didn't build enough ★★★★★
Porsche 968 Club Sport	019 R	'93-'95	4/2990	240/6200	225/4100	1335kg	183	6.1	15.7	149	-	-	+ One of the all-time greats - Lots have been driven very hard ★★★★★
Renault Alpine A610	187 D	'91-'95	6/2975	247/5750	258/2900	1420kg	177	5.4	13.8	166	-	-	+ Overlooked, bargain-price French 911. Try one - R5 interior ★★★★★
Rolls-Royce Wraith	189 D	£237,111	12/6592	624/5600	590/1500	2360kg	269	4.4	-	155	327	20.0	+ Brilliant at wafting; quicker than you'd expect - Not the most engaging drivers' car ★★★★★
Subaru BRZ	170 R	£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	174 R	£24,995	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	187 R	'94-'99	4/1998	239/6000	223/4000	1496kg	162	5.2	-	143	-	-	+ Criminally overlooked homologation special - Finding one ★★★★★
TVR T350C	057 R	'03-'07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1100kg	318	4.7	10.0	175	-	-	+ Looks, engine - Unsupportive seats; chassis lacks ultimate polish ★★★★★
TVR Sagaris	099 D	'05-'07	6/3996	406/7500	349/5000	1078kg	383	3.7	-	185	-	-	+ Looks outrageous - 406bhp feels a touch optimistic ★★★★★
TVR Tuscan S (Mk2)	076 R	'05-'07	6/3996	400/7000	315/5250	1100kg	369	4.0	-	185	-	-	+ Possibly TVR's best ever car - Aerodynamic 'enhancements' ★★★★★
TVR Cerbera Speed Six	004 R	'98-'04	6/3996	350/6800	330/5000	1130kg	315	5.0	11.4	160+	-	-	+ Accomplished and desirable - Check chassis for corrosion ★★★★★
Vauxhall Monaro VXR 6.0	079 D	'05-'07	8/5967	398/6000	391/4400	1677kg	241	5.1	-	180+	-	-	+ Improved chassis and steering, 180mph - Looks a bit snouty ★★★★★
VW Scirocco GT 2.0 TSI	155 R	£24,705	4/1984	207/5300	207/1700	1373kg	153	6.1	15.8	149	172	38.2	+ Golf GTI price and performance - Interior lacks flair ★★★★★
VW Scirocco R	181 R	£31,135	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1352kg	196	5.8	-	155	189	34.9	+ Great engine, grown-up dynamics - Perhaps a little too grown-up for some ★★★★★
VW Corrado VR6	095 R	'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 ★★★★★

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Our Choice

Ferrari 458 Speciale. The regular 458 Italia is amazing enough in itself – in fact it used to occupy this very space – but the Speciale follows in the tradition of the 360 Challenge Stradale and 430 Scuderia and makes the car fit based on even more, well, special. The supercar to buy.



Best of the Rest

Pagani's awesome Huayra (left) was our joint Car of the Year in 2012, while Ferrari's incredible F12 was runner-up in 2013. The Mercedes SLS AMG Black also surprised by being an impressively adept machine. Lamborghini's Aventador still has it licked for visual drama, though...

Supercars

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	
9ff GT9R	127 D	£450,000	6/4000	1120/7850	774/5970	1346kg	845	2.9	-	260	-	-	+ Above 100mph eats Veyrons for breakfast - Eats M3 dust at traffic lights	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vanquish (Mk2)	182 R	£189,995	12/5935	565/6750	457/5500	1739kg	330	4.1	-	183	335	19.6	+ A much better car than the DBS it succeeds - Shame it looks little different, then	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vanquish S (Mk1)	110 R	'05-'07	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 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-endorsed these days	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron Grand Sport	133 R	£61.4m	16/7993	1000/6000	922/2200	1990kg	510	2.6	-	253	596	11.4	+ Warp speed and ferocious noise sans-roof - Ridiculous brolly/roof thing	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron Super Sport	151 R	£2.0m	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 Veyron 16.4	134 R	'05-'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 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	'09-'13	8/6162	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	8/4497	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	8/4497	562/9000	398/6000	1530kg	373	3.3	-	198	275	23.9	+ A 458 that sounds and feels more organic - Er, 4mph slower than the Italia?	★★★★★
Ferrari 458 Speciale	191 R	£208,000	8/4497	591/9000	398/6000	1395kg	435	3.0	-	202+	275	23.9	+ Makes the regular 458 feel outmoded - If you don't own a regular 458, nothing	★★★★★
Ferrari F430	163 R	'04-'10	8/4308	483/8500	343/5250	1449kg	339	4.0	-	196	-	18.6	+ Just brilliant - Didn't you read the plus point?	★★★★★
Ferrari 430 Scuderia	121 R	'07-'10	8/4308	503/8500	347/5250	1350kg	378	3.5	7.7	198	-	15.7	+ Successful F1 technology transplant - Likes to shout about it	★★★★★
Ferrari 360 Modena	163 R	'99-'04	8/3586	394/8500	275/4750	1390kg	288	4.5	9.0	183	-	17.0	+ Worthy successor to 355 - Not quite as involving as it should be	★★★★★
Ferrari 360 Challenge Stradale	068 R	'03-'04	8/3586	420/8500	275/4750	1280kg	333	4.1	-	186	-	-	+ Totally exhilarating road-racer. It's loud - It's very, very loud	★★★★★
Ferrari F355 F1 Berlinetta	163 R	'97-'99	8/3496	374/8250	268/6000	1350kg	281	4.7	-	183	-	16.7	+ Looks terrific, sounds even better - Are you kidding?	★★★★★
Ferrari F12 Berlinetta	190 R	£239,736	12/6262	730/8250	509/6000	1630kg	455	3.1	-	211	350	18.8	+ F300hp isn't too much power for the road - Super-quick steering is an acquired taste	★★★★★
Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano	101 R	'06-'12	12/5999	611/7600	448/5600	1688kg	368	3.5	7.4	205	415	15.8	+ ev0 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	'02-'06	12/5748	508/7250	434/5250	1730kg	298	4.2	9.6	202	-	12.3	+ 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	-	12.3	+ 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	'04-'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	'02-'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	'87-'92	8/2936	471/7000	426/4000	1100kg	437	4.1	-	201	-	-	+ Brutally fast - It's in the dictionary under 'turbo lag'	★★★★★
Ferrari 288GT0	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	188 R	'04-'06	8/5409	550/6500	500/3750	1583kg	353	3.7	-	205	-	-	+ Our 2005 Car of the Year - JC had one. Reckoned it didn't handle...	★★★★★
Gumpert Apollo	110 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 CCX	094 R	'06-'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	'08-'10	8/4800	1004/7000	796/5600	1280kg	797	2.8	-	254+	-	-	+ One of the world's fastest cars - Spikey power delivery	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo 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	'06-'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	'07-'08	10/4961	522/8000	376/4250	1420kg	373	3.8	-	196	-	-	+ Lighter, more agile - Grabby carbon brakes, clunky e-gear	★★★★★
Lamborghini Aventador LP700-4	182 R	£247,000	12/6498	690/8250	509/5500	1575kg	445	2.9	-	217	370	17.7	+ Most important new Lambo since the Countach - 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	'01-'06	12/6192	570/7500	479/5400	1650kg	351	4.0	-	205	-	-	+ Gorgeous, capable and incredibly friendly - V12 feels stressed	★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago LP640	093 R	'06-'11	12/6496	631/8000	487/6000	1665kg	385	3.3	-	211	-	21.3	+ Compelling old-school supercar - You'd better be on your toes	★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago LP670-4 SV	186 R	'09-'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-'00	12/5992	575/7300	465/5500	1490kg	392	4.1	8.3	211	-	12.5	+ Briefly the world's fastest production car - They made only 80	★★★★★
Lamborghini Diablo 6.0	019 R	'00-'02	12/5992	550/7100	457/5500	1625kg	343	3.8	-	200+	-	-	+ Best-built, best-looking Diablo of all - People's perceptions	★★★★★
Lamborghini Countach 5000 QV	184 R	'88-'91	12/5167	455/7000	369/5200	1488kg	311	4.2	10.0	182	-	13.7	+ Still the definitive supercar - Visibility, pract-oh hell, who cares?	★★★★★
Lexus LFA/LFA Nürburgring	161 R	'10-'12	10/4805	552/8700	354/6800	1480kg	379	3.7	-	202	-	-	+ Absurd and compelling supercar - Badge and price don't quite match	★★★★★
Maserati MC12	079 R	'04-'05	12/5998	621/7500	481/5500	1445kg	437	3.8	-	205	-	-	+ Rarer than an Enzo - The Ferrari's better	★★★★★
McLaren 12C	187 R	£176,000	8/3799	616/7500	442/3000	1434kg	435	3.1	-	207	279	24.2	+ Stagging performance, refinement - Engine noise can be grating	★★★★★
McLaren 12C Spider	185 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	-	204+	-	19.0	+ Still the most single-minded supercar ever - There'll never be another	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG Black	131 R	'09-'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 tool) - Slightly tardy gearbox	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG Black	190 R	£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	'04-'07	8/5439	617/6500	575/3250	1693kg	370	3.7	-	208	-	-	+ Zonda-pace, 575-style drivability - Dreadful brake feel	★★★★★
Noble M600	186 R	£200,000	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	'01-'05	12/7291	555/5900	553/4050	1250kg	451	3.6	-	197	-	-	+ ev0 Car of the Year 2001 - Values have gone up a fair bit since then	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda F	186 R	'05-'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	'09-'10	12/7291	669/6200	575/4000	1400kg	485	3.4	-	217+	-	-	+ The best Zonda ever - Doesn't come up in the classifieds often	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo (991)	191 D	£118,349	6/3800	513/6000	542/2100	1595kg	327	3.4	-	195	227	29.1	+ Incredible pace, whatever the weather - More involvement would't go amiss	★★★★★

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
Radical SR8LM (fastest car)	1:13.6	127.8	138	Dry
Caparo T1 (fastest supercar)	1:14.8	130.9	131	Dry
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
Porsche 997 GT3 RS 4.0 (fastest coupe)	1:21.0	118.2	160	Dry
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	121	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
BMW M5 (F10) (fastest saloon)	1:25.7	112.0	165	Dry
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
Renaultsport Mégane 265 Trophy (fastest hot hatch)	1:26.1	105.3	166	Dry
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
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (fastest 4x4)	1:26.9	107.4	158	Dry
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		
Audi RS6 Avant (C6) (fastest estate)	1:27.9	111.0	121	Dry
Jaguar XFR	1:27.9	108.1	137	Dry
Lexus IS-F	1:28.1	106.4	151	Dry
Porsche Boxster S (987)	1:28.1	105.4	120	Dry
Subaru WRX STI	1:28.3	101.6	157	Dry
SEAT Leon Cupra R	1:28.7	102.4	162	Dry
Bentley Continental Supersports	1:29.2	105.8	149	Dry
Lotus Elise Club Racer	1:29.2	95.5	162	Dry
Renaultsport Mégane 250 Cup	1:29.9	101.4	156	Dry
Honda NSX	1:30.1	101.3	145	Dry
Nissan 370Z Roadster	1:30.3	100.1	173	Dry
VW Scirocco 2.0 TSI	1:30.4	98.9	155	Dry
Ford Focus RS (Mk2)	1:30.8	101.8	131	Dry
Vauxhall Astra VXR (Mk2)	1:31.4	100.9	174	Damp
Renaultsport Clio 200 Cup	1:31.9	97.2	144	Dry
VW Golf GTI (Mk6)	1:32.4	99.3		

TRACK MAP



West Circuit facts

- Location Bedford Autodrome
- Opened 1999
- Length 1.85 miles (2.98 kilometres)
- Direction Anti-clockwise
- Left turns 9
- Right turns 6

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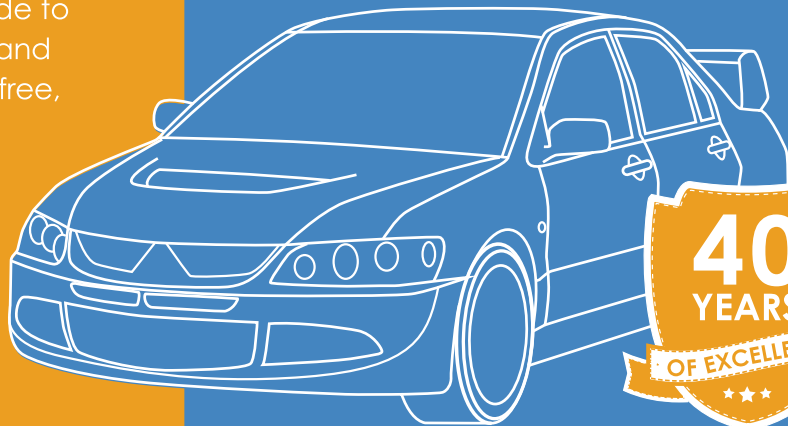
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Art of speed

Camera: Nikon D3. Focal length: 32.0mm. Exposure: 1/3 sec at f/22 (ISO 100)



Ferrari Testarossa side strakes

by DAVID VIVIAN | PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH

THE EIGHTIES. A DECADE OF CONSPICUOUS consumption, padded shoulders, Elton John's supersized specs and cheesecloth shirts. A decade that spawned a supercar so attuned to the era of excess that it starred alongside the rolled-up sleeves of Don Johnson's jacket in TV's *Miami Vice* and was considered visually extravagant enough to earn its slot in the Rocket Man's garage.

The Ferrari Testarossa, launched in 1984, made its predecessor, the outrageously pretty Boxer, look almost prim. Italian styling house Pininfarina was responsible for both but the width and flattened surfaces of the Testarossa could hardly have contrasted more dramatically with the beautifully contained curves of the Boxer. The new 'redhead' was clearly dressed to impress and carried the automotive equivalent of padded shoulders. Even by the OTT standards of the time the move was controversial but, to a degree, it was born of necessity.

The Boxer's mid-mounted flat-12 engine had been cooled by a single radiator situated in the nose of the car. This it did more or less successfully. The front-to-rear plumbing, however, had the unfortunate habit of heating up the cabin and its occupants. To circumvent the problem, the Testarossa's mid-mounted

4.9-litre flat-12 had twin radiators packaged in situ behind the cabin bulkhead. This required a rearward flaring of the bodywork to accommodate the angled radiators and two gaping vents to channel airflow onto them.

But in several of the markets where the Testarossa would be sold, gaping holes in cars were outlawed. Ferrari's solution was to convert the large apertures into collections of much smaller ones by dressing the holes with long, flowing strakes that extended into the doors and tapered off to a point just shy of their front shutlines. As well as being the flagship Ferrari's signature design feature (mirrored by the decorative slats running across the width of the tail), the strakes lent a little aero to the job of directing air onto the radiators. They also looked pretty cool in the door mirrors, where they were clearly visible.

Nicknamed 'cheese graters', the Testarossa's side strakes weren't perhaps the purest styling detail ever to leave the pen of Pininfarina, but they were easy to copy. Soon the Pontiac Trans Am had them, as did a glut of Japanese sports cars. You could even buy stick-on versions over the counter. But then that was the copycat '80s. The side strake trend may have died with rolled-up jacket sleeves, but the appeal of the Testarossa is still very much alive. ☒

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1951 Aston Martin DB2 Vantage ● 1957 Maserati 200Si (ex-Franco Cornacchia/Carroll Shelby)
1966 Austin Healey Le Mans prototype (ex-Works Sebring 12 Hours/Le Mans 24 Hours)
1967 Ferrari 275GTB/4 (ex-Roman Polanski) ● 2008 Pagani Zonda Clubsport F Coupé
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