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# evo

THE THRILL OF DRIVING

# McLaren P1

THE CAR OF THE MOMENT – FLAT OUT

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Porsche 911 Turbo v Mitsubishi Evo

Lancia Integrale v Merc A45 AMG

Audi Quattro v Audi RS Q3

Nissan Skyline v GT-R

**PLUS +**  
TURBO FERRARI  
& McLAREN 650S  
DETAILS INSIDE



## Hypercar hype or the real deal?

### EXCLUSIVE!

New Caterham and Radical rival driven. Weird, but wonderful



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MPG figures are achieved under official EU test conditions, intended as a guide for comparative purposes only, and may not reflect actual on-the-road driving conditions. Image shown for illustration purposes only. \*Model shown is a 308 Hatchback Feline 1.2 e-THP 130 6-speed manual stop-start with 18" Saphir alloy wheels and metallic paint at £21,520. Prices quoted are on the road and include delivery to dealership, number plates, 12 months' government vehicle duty and £55 first registration fee. Information correct at the time of going to press. Visit [peugeot.co.uk](http://peugeot.co.uk) for full terms and conditions.

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APRIL 2014

# Ed Speak

L

**LIKE YOU, WE'VE BEEN DESPERATE TO FIND OUT JUST** how good (or bad) McLaren's ultimate performance car would turn out to be. And we were still waiting to find out right up until Dickie Meaden phoned back from Abu Dhabi. Well, we think it was him – all we could hear was something that sounded like a chicken being strangled by a very swearsy and very flustered man.

We discussed the P1 first drive, and the 918 and LaFerrari first drives for that matter, early last year. The cars would be game-changers, so we figured we needed to put ourselves in the best position to be able to judge them. With that in mind, we planned the 'analogue supercars' test last year (*evo* 186) first, where we pitted the McLaren F1 against six of the most driver-focused supercars of the last 20 years or so. Then we agreed that whichever new drive came first – be it the 918, LaFerrari or P1 – the person who tested the first would be the person to drive all three. Naturally, as our most experienced road tester and someone who has not only raced at a very high level but has driven pretty much every supercar ever made, Dickie was the man for the job.

One last element worth mentioning is that we had options to drive the P1 earlier, but we wouldn't have had enough time in the right environment to deliver the professional verdict you expect. So we waited until an opportunity arose to spend 48 hours with the McLaren team in one of the most incredible places for a supercar test. Now, as the subs are putting the final touches to the magazine and we close for press, I'm glad we waited. The P1 demands the very best words and pictures – I hope you think we've done this extraordinary car justice.

Also in this issue is a 4x4 test that investigates the effect all-wheel-drive power has on the driving experience. Well, at least that's how Jethro sold it to me – personally I think he just wanted to drive an Aventador on a very wet racetrack. You'll find the words and the track test revealing, particularly in relation to how the older cars performed.

And speaking of circuit action, put the following dates in your diary for this year's *evo* trackdays: Friday May 30, Friday June 27 and Friday August 29. I'll dig out my 1982 911 for some truly frightening oversteer moments and, who knows, perhaps even Henry's mysterious, lesser-spotted Mk2 Escort rally car will make an appearance...

Finally, we need to give a special thanks to James, Hamish and all at Brynteg Holiday Home Park near Llanberis in north Wales ([brynteg.co.uk](http://brynteg.co.uk)) who hosted us for the 4x4 test. We were truly spoilt by their hospitality and can't recommend the place highly enough. Just don't visit when we're there: the *evo* team relaxing in Brynteg's hot tubs is not a pretty sight...

**Nick Trott** Editor (@evoNickTrott)



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Revisions and updates to the *evo* app continue apace, with more video and more galleries being added. We're also introducing new 360-degree interactive image sweeps, sound effects – including engine notes – are being implemented, and we're backfilling them into the library. Plus we're making general stability improvements.

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# evo

ISSUE 194 APRIL 2014

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050 McLAREN P1



*'Looking at its sculptured form is like trying to learn a new language, as your eyes struggle to interpret the lines'*



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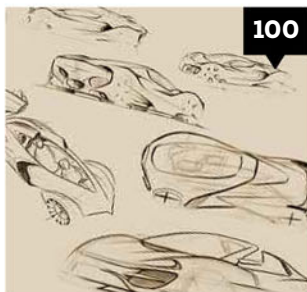
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Fuel consumption in l/100 km (mpg): urban 13.9-11.8 (20.3-23.9), extra urban 7.7-6.9 (36.7-40.9), combined 10.0-8.9 (28.2-32.5), CO<sub>2</sub> emissions: 237-204 g/km. The mpg and CO<sub>2</sub> figures quoted are sourced from official EU-regulated test results, are provided for comparability purposes and may not reflect your actual driving experience.



**PORSCHE**

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## TIME FOR TURBOS AT FERRARI

California T is Maranello's first forced-induction road car in 22 years – and there's more to come

Words: Mike Duff

**W**ELCOME TO our first look at Ferrari's future. The California T is the first turbocharged road car to come out of Maranello since F40 production ceased back in 1992, but it definitely won't be the last.

The T makes its official debut at the Geneva motor show in March, and aside from its new powerplant it doesn't radically transform the formula that's made the California a considerable sales success since it was launched in 2009. Back then the very idea of a Ferrari powered by a front-mounted V8 engine was anathema to some, not to mention the fact that it had a retractable hard-top

roof and the company's first twin-clutch gearbox. Yet the California has proved itself in the market, bringing many new buyers to the brand and explaining why the new car's styling is a gentle evolution of the original's rather than a radical reinvention.

The new engine is the result of a collaboration with Maserati, although the California's 3.9-litre unit is substantially different to the V8s that we've seen in the Maserati Ghibli and Quattroporte. Ferrari's engine is fractionally bigger, has the brand's trademark 'flat-plane' crank and has fractionally more power and torque. It has also been built to rev, delivering its peak 552bhp at 7500rpm, compared to the Maserati Quattroporte S's



**p14 AUDI'S A1 QUATTRO FOR THE MASSES**

S1 to make less power at 228bhp, but price tag is a tempting £25,000



**p16 GOLF R HITS THE ICE**

The hottest version of Volkswagen's famous hatch is unveiled on a frozen lake in Sweden



**p18 4-SERIES GRAN COUPE**

Five-door version of BMW's latest coupe paves the way for an M4 GC in the future



523bhp at 6800rpm. That's 69bhp more than the previous California's naturally aspirated 4.3-litre engine managed. Peak torque is now 557lb ft at 4750rpm – a huge increase on the old car's 372lb ft – with Ferrari promising that 'the torque curve increases constantly across the rev range' thanks to variable boost. So it isn't going to feel like a diesel, then.

The engine uses two small twin-scroll turbochargers, one for each bank of cylinders, to help ensure ultra-quick responses, and we're promised 'virtually zero' turbo lag (a claim BMW

Predictably, the T is quicker as well. The official figures only show fractional improvements – a 3.6sec 0-62mph time compared to 3.8sec for the naturally aspirated car, and 196mph all-out versus 193mph. But the new engine will be far more tractable at everyday speeds and we reckon the difference between the T and the old car in real-road pace will be considerably wider than those numbers imply. The turbo powerplant has also cut the T's official CO2 emissions to just 250g/km on the combined cycle from 299.

## 'The difference between the T and the old car will be wider than the numbers imply'

has also made for the new M3/M4). A revised seven-speed twin-clutch gearbox will help to speed up the powertrain's reactions too.

Ferrari is also keen to emphasise the work that's been done to make sure the California T sounds like a Ferrari, with every part of the new engine's design assessed against the effect it would have on the noise produced. The official release says the engine 'produces a powerful, engaging sound during both the intake and exhaust phases, becoming even more potent as engine speed increases'.

The big visual change comes at the front, with Pininfarina giving the car a far more aggressive grille treatment that seems to channel the spirit of the FF and the F12. There's a far more substantial diffuser at the rear, and a single 'breather' vent from the back of the front wheelarches instead of the old car's rather fussy triple apertures. Overall it's a cleaner, more successful piece of design, and although the rear deck still looks a bit too high – necessary to accommodate the roof once it's folded up – it's a far better-looking car than any other we can think



**Left:** 552bhp twin-turbo V8 is claimed to run without turbo lag. **Below:** new styling is a neat evolution of the old car's

of with a retractable hard-top. The dry weight, with the optional lightweight equipment package, is 1625kg.

Inside there's now semi-aniline leather for the cabin trim and a new central display screen that's part of what's described as the Turbo Performance Engineer system, allowing various performance data screens to be displayed (a bit like in a Nissan GT-R).

Other changes include a new quicker steering rack and new active dampers, which are claimed to respond 50 per cent quicker to inputs

from body motion accelerometers, helping to reduce roll. The T also gets the latest evolution of Ferrari's F1-Trac traction control system to help it find more grip in slippery conditions.

As before, ceramic brakes are standard, but with new discs and pads that we're told have helped cut the distance it takes to stop from 62mph to just 34 metres.

There's no official word on pricing yet, but we're not expecting a big increase on the previous California's £152,154 when the T goes on sale in the autumn. ❌





# Fast Jag estate to take on German rivals

542bhp XFR-S Sportbrake set to rival Audi RS6 and Mercedes E63S AMG. 0-60mph in 4.6sec for just over £80k

Words: Mike Duff



**T**HERE'S ALWAYS BEEN something compelling about a high-powered estate – the appeal of so much performance combined with everyday practicality. And now Jaguar is set to join the party with the new XFR-S Sportbrake.

As the name suggests, this is an estate version of the recently launched XFR-S saloon, complete with the same 542bhp version of Jaguar's 5-litre supercharged V8. As such, it's set to compete head-on with the Audi RS6 and Mercedes' E63S AMG. Jaguar claims a 0-60mph time of just 4.6sec – just 0.2sec slower than the saloon – and the same electronically limited 186mph top speed. And with all that performance, the Sportbrake also features 1675 litres of luggage space if you fold the rear seats down.

It looks great, too, certainly judging by these pictures that we've seen ahead of the car's official unveiling at the Geneva motor show in March. The front end is predictably identical to the saloon's, with a carbonfibre front splitter on the lower edge of the bumper and some gaping air intakes. But at the back the Sportbrake gets a

## 'Jaguar's model plan has tended to stick to very predictable lines in recent years, so it's nice to see it hasn't lost its capacity to throw a curveball'

proper makeover, including a diffuser element under the bumper and a reasonably subtle wing at the top of the tailgate. The car sits on 20in alloys clad with unique Pirelli tyres, designed to take the extra luggage loading that the estate is capable of.

The suspension set-up sticks closely to the saloon's, although Jaguar says the Sportbrake has modified rear suspension with a different anti-roll bar. Adaptive dampers are standard and the Sportbrake uses the electronically locking rear differential that we're already familiar with from other cars fitted with the supercharged V8. Braking is handled by vast 380mm discs at the front and 376mm-diameter rotors at the rear.

The estate XFR-S is a welcome development in another way – it's a genuine surprise from Jaguar. When the Sportbrake was launched the company said it would only offer it with basic diesel engines, and there

isn't even a basic petrol V6, let alone an XFR version. Jaguar's model plan has tended to stick to very predictable lines in recent years, so it's nice to see the company hasn't lost its capacity to throw a curveball. It's a car that we're really looking forward to driving.

There's no official word on pricing

yet, although the XFR-S saloon's £79,995 base price suggests that the Sportbrake will be priced in the low-£80,000s. That will put it between the RS6 Avant (£76,985) and the E63S AMG Estate (£85,880), but with the near-certainty it will be considerably more exclusive than either. ✕



# Merc puts a new slant on the S-class

Luxury Coupe to feature tilting body control. Unveiling at Geneva, circa £100k price tag **Words:** Mike Duff

**I**T'S UNLIKELY TO be the most dynamically focused of beasts, but there's something unarguably appealing about the new Mercedes S-class Coupe, another of the many cars set to make their official debuts at the Geneva motor show.

Mercedes has backed away from the 'CL' badge given to the last two generations of its S-class-based two-door, with a return to the 'S' branding confirming that this really is just a less useful and more expensive version of the recently updated luxury saloon.

Only one variant has been officially confirmed for now: an S500 powered by the 4.6-litre twin-turbocharged V8 engine that we've already seen in the upper reaches of the Mercedes range. The car gets a more advanced version of Magic Body Control that includes

the ability to lean slightly into corners, like a cyclist or a tilting train, to reduce the apparent lateral acceleration acting on occupants.

As with all big Mercs, there's plenty of extra kit aimed at those with more cash than sense or taste. Like the saloon, the Coupe has standard all-LED lighting but can also be specced with headlights carrying 47 Swarovski crystals on each side for extra bling. Or how about Magic Sky Control, which changes the transparency of the optional panoramic glass roof at the touch of a button?

There's no word on prices, but Mercedes likes to whack on a fair supplement for its poshest coupes, so anticipate the S500 kicking the range off at around £100,000. Other models are certain to follow, including '63' and '65' AMG versions. **x**



# Long wait for new Civic Type-R will soon be over

Honda to reveal production-ready concept at Geneva, with extreme aero and 300bhp expected **Words:** Mike Duff



**H**ONDA'S BEEN dropping hints about a new Civic Type-R for so long it feels like it should have gone on sale ages ago. The good news is that we'll finally get to see it – or at least a production-ready concept – at Geneva. The car itself will be here next year, a delay explained by Honda's decision not to start work on a Type-R until the standard car went on sale.

Still, it could be worth the wait. The extreme design evident in this rendered sketch and various prototypes we've already seen shows that the new Type-R is set to move up several leagues on any of its predecessors, with a heavily widened track and a massive rear wing. We know power will come from a newly developed 2-litre turbo VTEC engine that we're promised will have 'more than 276bhp', but company insiders have indicated it will actually produce something like 300bhp. That power will reach the road through the front wheels, with a six-speed manual gearbox the only transmission option.

We'll bring you more details once we've seen the car in Geneva. **x**



# quattro A1 returns

Audi to launch full production 4WD A1, badged S1. 228bhp and c£25k price tag **Words:** Mike Duff



**A** AUDI HAS ALREADY produced a four-wheel-drive version of the A1, namely the limited-

edition A1 quattro from last year. That was a car that, with its £41,020 screen sticker, pushed the pricing envelope even by Audi's standards. Now, with the recently announced S1, Audi looks set to offer similar performance in an A1 for not much more than half the money.

We've had to wait nearly three years for an 'S' version of the A1. There were earlier plans to simply put the branding on a front-wheel-drive version, but these were soon abandoned, with Audi adamant that all S and RS models should send drive to all four of their corners.

**Right:** three- and five-door forms will be offered. **Below:** colour accents inside will be an option



## 'THE S1 IS JUST A TENTH OF A SECOND ADRIFT OF THE A1 QUATTRO FROM 0 TO 62MPH'

That decree resulted in the major re-engineering exercise that brought us the A1 quattro, which used what was basically an S3 powertrain spliced into the supermini's far smaller floorpan. Now the arrival of the S1 proves that the company has managed the same trick to full production standards.

Mechanically, the S1 is near-identical to the A1 quattro, using Volkswagen's familiar 2-litre TSI engine in 228bhp tune (the A1 quattro had 253bhp), with part-time four-wheel drive courtesy of a Haldex clutch on the rear axle. The S1 is

claimed to be capable of 0-62mph in 5.8sec, just a tenth of a second adrift of the quattro's time for the same benchmark. The limited 155mph top speed is actually 3mph quicker.

The S1 gets fully independent rear suspension in place of the standard car's torsion beam, and although the official release doesn't confirm it, we presume it shares the A1 quattro's 'saddle-shaped' fuel tank to accommodate the propshaft. Variable dampers will be standard, as will uprated brakes with 310mm front discs. The S1 will go on sale later in the year, priced around £25,000. **X**



### News in brief



#### Vauxhall Astra VXR Extreme

This more hardcore Astra VXR is set to be unveiled at the Geneva motor show in March. Mechanically it sticks with the standard VXR's 276bhp 2-litre engine, but gets lightweight panels, an integrated roll-cage and standard safety harnesses. More next month.



#### Mercedes C-class prices released...

...or at least for the lower end of the range that's set to be launched first. The four-cylinder petrol-engined C200 will cost a chunky £26,885 with the manual gearbox nobody will specify. It's £28,385 with an auto. The cheapest diesel will be the C220 BlueTec - £29,365 with a manual, £30,865 with an auto.



#### Saleen turns to Tesla tuning

American tuner Saleen has announced plans to build a tuned version of the Tesla Model S. Details are less than sketchy at the moment, but given the Model S already boasts the equivalent of 469bhp in top spec, it's certainly an interesting idea.

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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). CO<sub>2</sub> 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). CO<sub>2</sub> emissions: 114 g/km.



# THE CHILL OF DRIVING

*Up close*

Behind the wheel of a future star car

We get our first exposure to the Mk7 Volkswagen Golf R: four-wheel drive and 297bhp – with more to come

**Words:** Mike Duff



**H**AVING DRIVEN THE new VW Golf R exclusively on a frozen lake in Sweden, we're not in a position to deliver the full dynamic verdict on the most powerful factory Golf just yet. But we can tell you that Volkswagen is planning for it to be the model that will spearhead a dramatic expansion of the 'R' sub-brand.

It's only 12 years since the launch of the first Golf R, the compellingly mad Mk4 R32, which combined a charismatic 237bhp 3.2-litre V6 engine with four-wheel drive and became a bit of an instant classic in the process. It was followed by the mechanically similar Mk5 R32, which disappointed by being barely quicker than its two-wheel-drive GTI sister. The Mk6 came in 2010, now badged simply 'R'. It

kept four-wheel drive but switched to four-cylinder turbo power. And the Mk7 sticks to that script, with an updated version of the Mk6 R's engine and a very similar Haldex clutch-based four-wheel-drive system.

The engine is a substantial reworking of the VW Group's 'EA888' 2-litre TSI turbo, with a new cylinder head, new injectors, a bigger turbo and different pistons. Peak power is now 297bhp, a 31bhp improvement over the old car, accompanied by 280lb ft of torque. Despite the increase, VW claims the new engine is capable of delivering 39.8mpg on the EU consumption test with the standard manual gearbox – an 18 per cent improvement over the old R.

The Haldex all-wheel-drive system is familiar, with an electronically

controlled clutch on the rear axle engaging with a permanently rotating propshaft to divert torque rearwards when slip is detected at the front. As such, it's near-identical to the system that VW Group has been using for the last 17 years, although we're told that the R's 'fifth-generation' system is quicker to react and will also send more power to the rear if it detects the front end running wide.

Like the Performance Pack Golf GTI, the R has a limited-slip differential at the front, and uniquely among modern VWs, the R's stability control can be fully deactivated – useful if you happen to find yourself on a frozen lake...

Suspension modifications are minimal, the R sitting 5mm lower than the GTI, on firmer springs and with a harder 'Race' setting for the optional

switchable dampers. Three-door and five-door versions will be offered, with the choice of manual or DSG gearboxes. The twin-clutch 'box is claimed to offer better acceleration, cutting the 0-62mph time to 4.9sec from 5.3. Both are limited to 155mph.

The Golf R arrives in the UK in April, priced at £29,900. It will be joined later by at least two additional R-badged models. We can expect to see a Polo R next year, built in part to trade on the link with the Polo WRC car. It will use a version of the forthcoming Audi S1's four-wheel-drive system. We'll also be seeing a concept version of a Golf R 'Evo' later this year, complete with an EA888 engine producing around 350bhp, and hinting very clearly that Volkswagen wants to go head-to-head with the Mercedes A45 AMG. ❧

## 'The R's stability control system can be fully deactivated – useful if you happen to find yourself on a frozen lake...'



**Far left and below:** R's styling is understated, bar the quad exhausts. **Left:** sports seats are standard, with leather on the options list



### So what's it like to drive?

Driving a car with studded tyres on a frozen lake doesn't tell you much about how it copes with the real world, but it is enormous fun. And although there are still some major dynamic questions that need to be answered on proper tarmac, it's fair to say that the R shows plenty of promise.

Let's start with the stuff that will stay true on road. The engine pulls noticeably stronger than it does in the GTI, and although at low revs there's a bit of hesitation, once the turbo is spooled up the R is properly rapid, pulling strongly to its 6800rpm limiter. Progress is accompanied by a hard-edged exhaust note, although a fair bit of this is digitally synthesised by a loudspeaker on the front bulkhead.

The steering uses a variable-rate rack, and although the ice denied any meaningful feedback, the

steering weighting is similar to the GTI's and the system coped well with the endless twirling of lock and opposite lock.

The universally slippery conditions gave little chance to test the reaction speeds of the Haldex system, which was taking drive to the back pretty much all the time, but it did prove itself adept at juggling torque between front and rear according to grip. There was also the chance to experience what will almost certainly be a little-used feature of the system, seemingly designed for driving on ice: when it detects both full throttle and full lock it sends more torque rearwards to help counter understeer.

On the basis of this first drive, we can't say anything about ride quality, brakes or what the R feels like above 50mph. That will have to wait until we have a proper drive in the UK.





# 4-series goes Gran Coupe

Five-door saloon-cum-coupe set for Geneva launch. M4 version expected to follow

Words: Mike Duff



**E**NTIRELY PREDICTABLE news comes from Munich, with the release of official pictures of the new 4-series Gran Coupe ahead of its unveiling at the Geneva motor show in March. Given BMW's niche-within-a-niche model strategy of recent years we'd have been more surprised if the company opted *not* to do a version of the 4-series with extra doors.

Unlike the 6-series Gran Coupe, the 4-series GC isn't a saloon – it's got a lifting tailgate instead, meaning it's technically a five-door hatchback. The front end is very similar to the 4-series Coupe and Convertible's, but the side-

## 'GIVEN RECENT TRENDS, AN M4 GRAN COUPE HAS TO BE CONSIDERED A NEAR-CERTAINTY'

on profile is closer to that of a slightly lower, longer 3-series. Despite its supposedly sporty mission, the GC is actually heavier than its saloon sister, with the 420i's 1480kg kerb weight 80kg over that of the 320i saloon.

The powerplants are all familiar from elsewhere in the extended 3-series/4-series clan. The entry-level engine is BMW's newish four-cylinder petrol turbo unit in basic '20i' tune, and this will be sold alongside a more powerful 428i version of the same

motor. The majority of British sales will be diesel-powered, of course – with BMW's ubiquitous 2-litre four-pot diesel in both 418d and 420d states of tune, the latter also available with the option of BMW's xDrive four-wheel-drive system. More powerful diesels will follow, including a four-wheel-drive 435d, and xDrive will also be offered on the range-topping 435i, which has 309bhp in 4WD form, 302bhp without. Given recent trends, an M4 Gran Coupe has to be considered a near-certainty.



**Above:** tailgate comes with a powered open and close mechanism as standard

Prices are set to closely match those of the 4-series Coupe, with the basic 420i costing £29,420, rising to £41,155 for the top-line 435i. The Gran Coupe goes on sale in June. ✕

## RS4 gets Nogaro treatment

**A**UDI IS CELEBRATING the 20th anniversary of its RS brand with a limited-edition RS4.

Named after a paint colour used on the original RS2, the RS4 Nogaro is a tribute to its predecessor, the car that established Audi's ability to combine

estate practicality with ridiculous performance.

The RS2 was mostly engineered by Porsche and used a 2.2-litre five-cylinder turbocharged engine with 315bhp and 302lb ft. With a 4.8sec 0-62mph time and a claimed top speed of 162mph, it's still quick enough to be considered rapid by modern standards. Back in 1994 it was faster than most sports cars.

Sadly, the RS4 Nogaro is just a retro redesign and it's mechanically identical to the standard 444bhp current RS4 Avant. In addition to the Nogaro Blue pearl-

effect paint it also gets black window surrounds, roof rails and exhaust tailpipes. The interior also gains some eye-peeling trim in the same colour as the exterior, in true '90s style.

The RS4 Nogaro will go on sale in mainland Europe after the car makes its official debut at the Geneva motor show in March, carrying a premium of €10,000 (c£8300) over the standard RS4. We're told that Audi is still deciding whether or not to bring a limited number into the UK as well. ✕

**Left:** Nogaro Blue paintwork commemorates Audi's RS2 Avant of 1994



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## This month

**SEAT LEON CUPRA 280**  
The Spanish firm's quickest and most powerful road-car yet



**MINI COOPER**  
First drive of the third-generation BMW Mini



**CHEVROLET CORVETTE STINGRAY**  
The 455bhp seventh-gen Vette lands on UK soil



**BMW 435i CONVERTIBLE**  
Drop-top version of 4-series coupe with 302bhp



**MILLTEK GOLF GTI**  
First major tuner upgrade to Mk7 Golf produces 312bhp



**BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GT V8 S CONVERTIBLE**  
Smaller-engined Conti gets more power and keener chassis



## The test team

With a pair of V8s amongst our first drives this month, we asked our road testers to name the finest V8-engined car they've driven:



**NICK TROTT**  
Editor

'My answer is the same as when asked about the finest turbo car I've driven: 288 GTO. I also adore the SLS Black.'



**MIKE DUFF**  
Motoring editor

'Tricky one. Probably either an E39 BMW M5 or the Mercedes 500E. But the 6-litre Monaro sounded pretty epic, too.'



**HENRY CATCHPOLE**  
Features editor

'Greater power-to-weight ratio than a GP2 car, glorious soundtrack... the Ariel Atom V8 was utterly wonderful.'



**JETHRO BOVINGDON**  
Contributing editor

'The Agera R was V8 brutality at its best; the M3 GTS so sharp, so responsive. Can I have both?'



**RICHARD MEADEN**  
Contributing editor

'I've just driven it: the P1. Prior to that it was a Lola T70. Both deliver extraordinary any-revs, any-gear acceleration.'



**DAVID VIVIAN**  
Contributing road tester

'Maybe not quite the finest V8, but the finest V8-engined car: Audi R8'

# R133 4 246 Driven



📍 Test location: Castelliloli, Spain GPS: 41.58901, 1.68918

## **SEAT** *Leon Cupra 280*

276bhp, 0-62mph in 5.8sec and a mechanical limited-slip diff as standard – all for £27k. Still want that Golf GTI?



**M**ARKETING SHOULD always be regarded with suspicion, but it isn't always a bad thing. After all, it's been the driving force behind meticulously themed mutations of the VW Golf GTI, and that's something the hot hatch landscape always needs. Forget, for the moment, that someone operating an X-ray machine would have trouble telling the

difference between the new SEAT Leon Cupra and the ubiquitous German hatchback. At bone-and-organ depth, they're essentially the same car, something to their mutual benefit. It is to SEAT's advantage, however, that it can play off the sober, sensible, subtle, straight-ahead charms of the seventh-generation version of the seminal hot hatch to produce an alternative that appears, at least, to tap into the spicier Spanish origins of the brand.

The 'Latin factor' is something that has worked well for SEAT since it became part of the VW Group in 1986, the zesty, youthful image portrayed seemingly ramped-up year-on-year to the point where, today, you'd imagine that only paella and flamenco dancing could offer a comparable taste of Mediterranean lifestyle.

But whether you buy into that or not – the years of 'auto emocion' and now





'enjoyneering' – there's perhaps one core formula that accounts for the Leon Cupra's resilient sales performance in these troubled economic times: more bang for your buck. And with the new 276bhp Leon Cupra 280, SEAT appears to have knocked the notion out of the park. Think of it as a distinctively styled three- or five-door hatch powered by the top trumps 2-litre TFSI motor from the all-drive Golf R and Audi S3, but with a price tag within spitting distance of the 59bhp-less-powerful Golf GTI's, and, on paper, you have a compelling, albeit front-wheel-driven, proposition.

Specified with the optional six-speed DSG transmission, SEAT says the Cupra 280 will hit 62mph from rest in 5.7sec; the six-speed manual takes 5.8sec. Either way, it's the quickest and most powerful road-going car the company has ever made. Even the slightly less potent three-door-only Cupra (no '280'), with 261bhp – the same as the last-generation Cupra R, SEAT's previous power champ – dips under 6.0sec by a tenth, and that's without DSG, which isn't offered as an option. The closeness in the times is perhaps explained by the peak torque figure of 258lb ft between 1750 and 5300rpm, which is identical for both versions of the car.

Unsurprisingly, SEAT has drafted in a VAQ

**'It feels lither than a Focus ST, grippier and more agile, partly thanks to the pace it can carry out of bends'**

Haldex-based active locking differential from the Performance Pack Golf GTI, claiming that it can direct up to 100 per cent of the turbocharged engine's output to one wheel if you really lean on it in a tight bend. As well as weighing some 55 kilos less than the previous Cupra R, the combination of the new car's variable-ratio steering (dubbed 'progressive' by SEAT) and the mechanical diff is said to have knocked chunks off lap times round any circuit, not least, inevitably, the Nürburgring. Expect an announcement about this just before March's Geneva motor show.

Alternatively, if you prefer tyre smoke, you can turn the traction electronics off completely,

presumably to the annoyance of chasing Golf GTI drivers, who can't. Both Cupras get three-way adjustable dampers (so-called DCC) with a 'Cupra' mode that sets everything to firm, while suspension is the familiar MacPherson strut/multi-link arrangement.

Those who complain that the latest Golf is too 'reserved' should like the Leon, which substitutes striking for subtle, bristles with assertively angular grilles and breaks up its profile with no fewer than three artfully realised swage lines. In truth, the basic body shape makes more of an impact than the Cupra signifiers, which are typical fare and include larger, aggressively meshed front air intakes and a modestly dimensioned fake rear diffuser. Unique to the 280 are a tailgate lip spoiler, black door-mirror caps, titanium-hued 19- rather than 18-inch wheels and red brake calipers.

Inside, the 'edgy' theme continues, with perhaps a little too much that is framed with bright trim, and a slight disappointment that the tactile quality, while better than you'd find in a rival Ford, Renault or Vauxhall, isn't quite as solid and finely textured as a Golf's. But then no one calibrates build and finish between its brands as meticulously as the VW Group.

Judged on habitability laced with 'sporting

boutique' chic, the Cupra 280 is a model of comfort and good taste. The Audi-esque flat-bottomed steering wheel wrapped in perforated leather with conspicuous stitching hits just the right note of sparingly applied flamboyance, and the bold analogue instruments are pleasingly simple and easy to read. Form-hugging sports seats and a range of adjustment that allows a satisfyingly low-slung driving position further cement the sporting mindset.

As does a sound actuator which, like Ford's sound symposer in the Focus ST, gives the engine more of a 'voice' inside the cabin. It's a good one, too, a cultured growl that cuts through the Cupra's excellent part-throttle refinement but never actually gets noisy. Despite its power, the 280 is anything but a garrulous show-off – much more the shy guy who's handy in a fight. Superfast DSG paddle-actuated gearshifts suit the engine beautifully but, on balance, the snickety precision of the six-speed manual is more satisfying still.

Maybe the Cupra 280 doesn't feel quite as quick as the stats suggest (up to around 100mph, the base 261bhp Cupra doesn't

give an inch) but it never seems less than effortlessly rapid, whatever the road. Perhaps the impression that it's never having to try that hard saps some of the enjoyment. Initially, at least. Where the similarly powerful Astra VXR does its thing in block capitals with a liberal sprinkling of exclamation marks, the SEAT's approach is more chilled and measured and, as an ownership proposition, probably more satisfying. If less playful, it feels a lighter, lither car than the Focus ST, grippier and more agile.

Partly, it comes down to the pace it can carry into and out of bends. The brakes are so good you can tailor an entry speed to perfection, using the extra feel of the new variable-ratio assisted steering – which gains weight as the front wheels' workload increases in a much more progressive way than the old Cupra's – to nail the turn-in without washing wide, then the active diff slingshots you out the other side. Just jump on the power early: it hooks up and goes. Attack the next corner with more heat and commitment, get to the point where you think you've pitched it in just about as hard as it wants to go and, even if the corner starts to tighten,

instead of backing off you keep the throttle wide open and turn the wheel a few degrees more. Again the Cupra drags itself through with seemingly no lost momentum. The diff is working miracles yet you hardly notice it's there. There's mild torque steer, but with it some genuine feel. It's a fair trade-off.

As a package, so is the Cupra 280. Prices start at £26,940. You can't really argue with Golf R pace for GTI money. That it's so well executed, Spanish attitude or not, puts it close to the top of our hot hatch desires. ❌

**David Vivian** (@davidjvivan)

<b>Engine</b>	In-line 4-cyl, 1984cc, turbo
<b>CO2</b>	149g/km
<b>Power</b>	276bhp @ 6000rpm
<b>Torque</b>	258lb ft @ 1750-5300rpm
<b>Performance</b>	5.8sec (claimed 0-62mph), 155mph (limited)
<b>Weight</b>	1320kg (212bhp/ton)
<b>Basic price</b>	£26,940

**evo rating:** ★★★★★

- ⊕ Serious pace and ability for Golf GTI money
- ⊖ Lacks a little excitement



**Above left:** four-cylinder turbocharged engine gets 276bhp in '280' trim. **Above right:** flag badges are amongst the relatively subtle Cupra styling cues. **Below:** Alcantara seats are standard; full-leather is an option



## The rivals



### Vauxhall Astra VXR

It costs £55 more than the SEAT but matches its power and feels more ferocious to drive. The Astra can feel ragged, though. It doesn't have the Cupra's precision or composure near the limit.



### Ford Focus ST

Even in plush ST-3 guise undercuts the 280 by £1445, though it gives away 29bhp and trails by 0.7sec to 62mph. It's arguably a more entertaining steer, with a chassis balance that is more throttle-adjustable.



### Renaultsport Mégane 265

Recently facelifted and just £15 less than the SEAT, the 265 is slightly down on power (by 15bhp), slightly slower to 62mph (by 0.2sec), but remains the most focused and rewarding hot hatch of all.



📍 Test location: Ciales, Puerto Rico GPS: 18.33823, -66.46740

# Mini Cooper

BMW-built hatch reaches its third generation. Turbocharged three-cylinder engine in mid-range Cooper delivers 134bhp and 0-62mph in just 7.9sec



**R**EMEMBER WHEN people used to argue about whether the modern-era Mini was worthy of wearing its famous badge? Or when BMW was reluctant to even imply a connection to the Issigonis-designed original?

How things have changed. Thirteen years on and BMW has managed to sell 2.7million of its 'Minis' over two generations, taking the franchise into several unlikely niches in the process, while no Mini presentation is complete without a brace of the ten-foot-nothing originals in full Union flag regalia. Which is probably all the explanation you need as to why BMW's third take at the hatchback, which is mechanically all-new, looks like a slightly enlarged photocopy of the model it replaces. If it ain't broke, don't try and fix it.

As the Mini clan has grown, it's become easy to lose sight of what a decent car the basic hatchback has always been, even in its less powerful forms. Which is why I arrive in the somewhat unlikely launch venue of Puerto Rico (this for a car that's built 12 miles from my house) keen to drive the new Cooper and experience the three-cylinder engine that BMW has pretty much bet the corporate farm on.

Underneath its familiar-yet-slightly-different form, this Mini has switched to an all-new platform, one that will also underpin the lower cars of the BMW range when they switch to front-wheel drive. And excepting the top-spec Cooper S, the rest of the Mini range—both petrol and diesel—are the first recipients of the new three-cylinder engines that have been spun off BMW's modular powerplant architecture.

That's right, the three is basically just a four with a cylinder lopped off. Or, if you prefer, half of the company's straight-six. All the engines share the same bore centres, and most are designed around a common 500cc displacement cylinder, giving the Cooper 1.5 litres of swept capacity and, with the help of a turbocharger, a sprightly 134bhp. The basic Mini One gets a scaled-down 1.2-litre version of the same engine, and the Cooper S sticks with a turbocharged four, albeit not the 1.6-litre unit of the outgoing Mini, but the new 2-litre engine that we've already seen in 20i, 25i and 28i versions of the BMW 1-, 3- and 5-series.

The new Mini is bigger than its predecessor, although spec-for-spec weight has barely changed, and it's gained a pudgy front overhang that effectively rules out the 'wheel in each corner' claim the company historically loved to make. It looks a bit tubby compared to the



## 'The three-cylinder engine is a cracker, and this Cooper is noticeably quicker than the last one'

first two BMW Minis (which were near-clones in terms of dimensions), but we'll probably get used to it. Getting inside reveals a cabin that feels far higher in quality than the last Mini's, and more sensible too: the speedo is now behind the steering wheel, where you'd expect to find it, and the electric window switches have been moved to the doors, so you no longer have to fiddle with a row of low-mounted toggle switches to locate them.

The important news is that the new engine is a cracker. It fires up to a busy idle but there's none of the lumpiness you might expect given its relative lack of cylinders. Indeed, it revs cleanly and more keenly than most of its small-capacity rivals, and the exhaust note hardens beyond about 4000rpm into a good impression of a six-cylinder snarl. The new Cooper is noticeably quicker than the last one, and on paper it's pretty much jumped from warm to borderline hot, with a 7.9sec 0-62mph time eclipsing the old car's figure by 1.2sec.

OK, it's not quite as exciting as those numbers suggest. Red line missions are discouraged by the way the engine starts to feel progressively tighter above 6000rpm, and the extreme width of its torque band (a peak 162lb ft from 1250 to 4000rpm) means it's best kept in its fat mid-range, while you enjoy the (non-augmented) soundtrack.

Suspension settings are more contentious.



**Top:** third-gen Mini is longer, wider and taller than its predecessor. **Above:** speedo has moved away from the centre console, where an infotainment system now lives. **Below:** ignition switch pulses red when you get in







Puerto Rico turns out not to be the Caribbean driving paradise we were hoping for, but the island's narrow, bumpy roads give a good impression of a poorly maintained British B-road. And on them our Cooper – sitting on upgraded 17-inch wheels (up from 15s), but without run-flat tyres – feels very firm. At lower speeds it's uncomfortably firm, but adding velocity allows the chassis to breathe and gain some much-needed pliancy.

Grip levels are noticeably higher than before, and the new electric power steering system is quicker to react than the old car's and has slightly firmer assistance. At first this Mini feels like it might be a bit over-tyred, but trust builds as you go quicker and discover the back end – and the multi-link axle that sits there – helping you out, with a nice, exploitable balance between front and rear. Turn everything off and the Cooper can still be persuaded to tighten its line progressively on a lifted throttle.

The Cooper S, meanwhile, is pretty much as expected: slightly faster (0-62 in 6.8sec) and slightly harder. The 189bhp four-cylinder engine lacks the compelling soundtrack of the three-pot, but pulls far harder and with minimal lag. Our test car has the optional six-speed torque-converter auto gearbox, which is claimed to boost both economy and straight-line performance, but sluggish changes do little to endear it over the crisp manual 'box.

You can tell that the Cooper S is carrying slightly more weight than the Cooper. Officially

it's 75kg heavier, and almost all of that difference comes from its bigger engine. The S sits on firmer springs and grippier rubber, and the handling balance feels pretty much identical to the Cooper's. Ride quality isn't noticeably worse on the upgraded 17-inch wheels, either. Find an empty bit of road – something of a rarity in Puerto Rico – and the S feels properly quick in a way the Cooper doesn't. Indeed, in slower corners it's powerful enough to feel its lack of a proper limited-slip diff as the front scrabbles for traction. But it's certainly a strong base for the inevitable John Cooper Works and JCW GP versions to build on.

As always, the Mini is going to sell in vast numbers to those attracted by its cutesy styling and its potential to be individualised through the vast options list. But don't assume that means it lacks substance. Behind the hype, this is still a proper little drivers' car. ❌

**Mike Duff**

<b>Engine</b>	In-line 3-cyl, 1499cc, turbo (Cooper)
<b>CO2</b>	105g/km
<b>Power</b>	134bhp @ 4500-6000rpm
<b>Torque</b>	162lb ft @ 1250-4000rpm
<b>Performance</b>	7.9sec (claimed 0-62mph), 130mph (claimed)
<b>Weight</b>	1085kg (125bhp/ton)
<b>Basic price</b>	£15,300 (on sale June 2014)

**evo rating:** ★★★★★

- Punchy engines, good chassis, much-improved cabin
- Tubby styling, indifferent auto 'box



**Above:** Cooper S brings 189bhp, but at a chunkier £18,650 price tag. **Right:** 17in wheels are optional for both Cooper and Cooper S. **Below:** S's engine gets four 500cc cylinders instead of the basic Cooper's three



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**Models Shown:** Civic 1.6 i-DTEC SR Manual in Milano Red Non-Metallic at £24,360 On The Road, CR-V 1.6 i-DTEC SE Manual in optional Passion Red Pearl at £25,560 On The Road, Civic Tourer 1.6 i-DTEC SE Plus Manual in Milano Red Non-Metallic at £22,960 On The Road. **Terms and Conditions:** New retail Civic 1.6 i-DTEC SR Manual, CR-V 1.6 i-DTEC SE Manual and Civic Tourer 1.6 i-DTEC SE Plus Manual registered from 2 January 2014 to 31 March 2014. Subject to model and colour availability. Offers applicable at participating dealers and are at the promoter's absolute discretion. **The 5 Year Care Package includes:** **Servicing:** All scheduled servicing, as detailed in the vehicles service book, will be covered for 5 years or 62,500 miles, whichever comes first. **Warranty:** In addition to the standard 3 year warranty the customer will receive a complimentary 2 year extended guarantee taking the warranty to 5 years or 90,000 miles, whichever comes first. **Roadside Assist:** In addition to the standard 3 years roadside assistance package the customer will receive complimentary Hondacare Assistance for a further 2 years, taking it to 5 years or 90,000 miles, whichever comes first. **The 5 Year Care Package:** The 5 Year Care Package is optional. **It is being offered for £500 including VAT** (usual value £1,845 including VAT) and is available to finance or non-finance customers. Please note, should you sell the vehicle during the period of cover, the package remains with the vehicle.



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📍 Test location: Ffestiniog, Gwynedd, UK GPS: 52.95954, -3.93277

## Chevrolet Corvette Stingray

The 455bhp slice of V8 American muscle makes its debut on UK roads

Photography: Dean Smith

**I** I HAVE TO ADMIT I'VE been looking forward to driving the new Corvette Stingray here in the UK. In these chaste times, the big US guns have stuck to their heavy artillery, so much so that the 'entry-level' Stingray has a 6.2-litre V8 with 455bhp and 460lb ft. Isn't that great? I've heard the new Stingray is more 'international' than its ancestors, but it clearly hasn't abandoned its principles along the way. There's plenty of sophistication to discuss, but that can wait. For now, a stonking V8, lightweight construction, heaps of character and a generous dollop of humour seem more appealing than ever.

We already know that this Stingray has more than a fighting chance of cutting it in Europe. In *evo* 192 Mike Duff found it sensationally fast and extremely well balanced on US roads. But this is Wales and the rain is coming down hard. Inside – despite all the stuff I've read in US reviews – the Vette is still plainly not from round these parts. The seats look great, the TFT central rev counter is cool and the feeling of snug support is appealing, but the overall vibe is more Walmart than Waitrose. It's not an interior that quite fits the UK price of £61,495. Although the performance isn't what you might expect for that money, either. It's way better...

The GM LT1 motor is immense. You might expect it to be deep-chested and luxurious but lacking in bite, but instead it's sharp and angry with terrific throttle response and a ferocity that sets your heart thumping by the time the V8 hammers into the limiter. The noise is great too, not manufactured in the way an F-type or a 991 with the sports exhaust can sometimes feel; just honest, scowling power spitting out in great sharp licks. The four tailpipes might be in



dubious taste but the delivery is pure class.

Other surprises? This is a supple car, even with the standard-in-Europe Z51 package of larger wheels (19in front, 20in rear), firmer suspension, an electronically controlled LSD, dry-sump lubrication, shorter gear ratios and larger brakes. Furthermore, the steering is responsive, accurate and provides real confidence, although the Corvette hasn't resisted the trend for highly configurable chassis/drivetrain settings. Rotate a little dial on the transmission tunnel to scroll through Weather, Eco, Tour, Sport and Track, and the steering weight, stability control, throttle response and magnetic suspension ramp up with each click. Even on knobbly Welsh roads I find myself in Sport or Track. The latter has slightly too much steering weight but you can mix and match if you delve into the menus. Tour and below take all the tension out of the Stingray, so ignore them.

Locked in Track, with the stability control off and precision-robbing but grippy winter tyres cutting through the spray, it's impressive. The seven-speed manual gearbox is hefty but satisfying (save for the annoying habit of shifting from fourth straight to seventh), the ride is well controlled and the balance

is brilliantly transparent – the Vette either oversteers a little or a lot. You can ride the line just before it gets too wild and revel in its predictable nature to your heart's content. But the best thing is that the C7 feels more compact, better tied down and just keener to respond cleanly to the road surface and the driver's inputs than its predecessors. It's not a hyper-alert car like an F-type, but the calmness of the steering and chassis is appealing.

Go really hard and the body control starts to fray at the edges: the body floats a little as the dampers jiggle, which knocks your confidence. Then the car bottoms out with a crack and you have to slow down. The brake pedal is inconsistent and by the end of a day of filming, the stoppers were howling in protest (although other mags had used and abused this car before us). In combination these things start to make the Stingray feel a bit heavier than it really is. A 991 is on another planet in ultimate composure, and an F-type V6 S slightly sharper and more intense, but the Stingray is thoroughly enjoyable. Will it sell in Blighty? Hardly at all. But we're glad it's here and we look forward to trying it on summer tyres with rivals in tow. ❌

**Jethro Bovingdon** (@JethroBovingdon)

<b>Engine</b>	V8, 6162cc
<b>CO2</b>	TBC
<b>Power</b>	455bhp @ 6000rpm
<b>Torque</b>	460lb ft @ 4600rpm
<b>Performance</b>	3.8sec (claimed 0-60mph), 190mph (claimed)
<b>Weight</b>	1496kg (309bhp/ton)
<b>Basic price</b>	£61,495

**evo rating:** ★★★★★

⊕ Performance, chassis balance, supple ride

⊖ Body control could be better, can feel heavier than its 1496kg



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



## FORD KUGA

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[ford.co.uk/kuga](http://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 CO<sub>2</sub> 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).



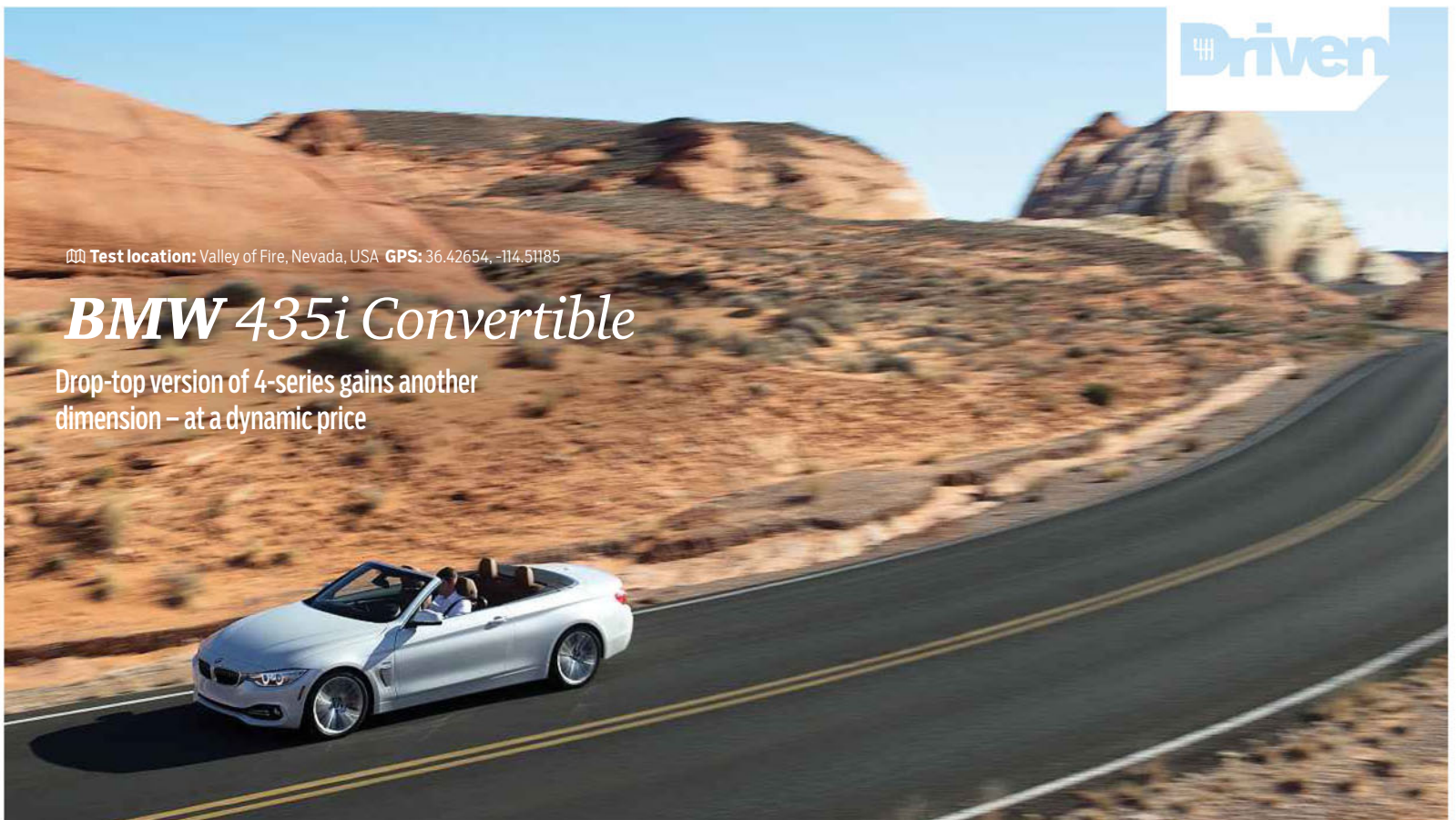
**Go Further**



📍 **Test location:** Valley of Fire, Nevada, USA **GPS:** 36.42654, -114.51185

## BMW 435i Convertible

Drop-top version of 4-series gains another dimension – at a dynamic price



**C**'CLAP ALONG IF YOU FEEL like a room without a roof.' So sings Pharrell Williams, the man at number one in the UK singles chart as I write this. His hit song, if you haven't heard it, is essentially a new take on the playschool ditty 'If you're happy and you know it... clap your hands' but with a bit more hip and an added dose of hop. Based on his lyrics I assume that Mr Williams sees the ceilingless room as a joyful construction worthy of applause, but I'm not so sure. Personally I think a kitchen or bedroom that lets the rain in is just dilapidated, unfinished or a garden. A car without a roof, however... now that's potentially something to smile about.

Driving through the Valley of Fire, a spectacular national park about an hour east of Las Vegas, it certainly feels good to be in the open, rather than shut up inside a metal box. The air in the cabin might be impressively still, the slipstream sliding overhead without even slightly ruffling the eyebrows, but you feel exposed to the landscape you're cruising through rather than detached from it, and that's invigorating. You drink in the sights and smells of your surroundings a little deeper. The feeling of speed is usually heightened too, although at the moment the numerous police patrols lurking in the colour-saturated Martian landscape are keeping the head-up display registering a measly 35mph. But in short, exposure to the elements can add quite a bit to the thrill of driving.

Sadly, however, it can also take away.



For example, this new 435i Convertible is a whopping 230kg heavier than its coupe sibling, tipping the scales at a hefty 1740kg. As a result, the performance of the lovely 302bhp turbocharged straight-six under the bonnet feels slightly dulled, with acceleration merely brisk rather than punchy. And while BMW claims that the torsional rigidity of this new convertible body is up 40 per cent on the old 3-series Convertible's, with the roof down there is still a very noticeable shimmy that resonates through the car on bumpy roads.

To be fair, the 435i Convertible feels solid and secure when loaded up through the corners, and underneath there's a lovely balanced chassis that feels fluid and easy to adjust, too (once away from the lurking state troopers). It also feels fine over larger bumps (although you can sense that extra weight), so it's just high-frequency imperfections that seem to set off the disconcerting gentle shudder.

Top up or down, the 4-series Convertible is a handsome car and the fully automated metal folding roof feels like a very practical option for

the UK climate. If you're caught in a shower, the switch from roof down to roof up takes 19 seconds, which is OK, but it's a manoeuvre that can only be executed at speeds up to 8mph – a limit that feels rather too easy to exceed.

The eight-speed auto is as good as ever and I've no doubt that the standard manual gearbox would be a delight to use as well. What's more, the 435i bucks the notion of BMWs having standard specifications meaner than a Dickensian aunt: amongst other things you get as standard are heated front seats, parking sensors, a 6.5in colour screen, xenon headlights, DAB radio and metallic paint.

Ultimately, however, you simply can't ignore the weight and rigidity issues that come with lopping the roof off. The 435i Convertible is certainly capable of instilling a sense of hand-clapping well-being with the roof down on a sunny day, but the rest of the time, if driving dynamics are what really make you happy, you'll take the coupe in every instance. ❌

**Henry Catchpole** (@HenryCatchpole)

<b>Engine</b>	In-line 6-cyl, 2979cc, turbocharged
<b>CO2</b>	190g/km
<b>Power</b>	302bhp @ 5800rpm
<b>Torque</b>	295lb ft @ 1200-5000rpm
<b>Performance</b>	5.6sec (claimed 0-62mph), 155mph (limited)
<b>Weight</b>	1740kg (176bhp/ton)
<b>Basic price</b>	£45,970

**evo rating:** ★★★★★

- ➕ Impressive chassis, smart looks, neat roof
- ➖ Extra weight, not as composed as the coupe



📍 **Test location:** Bruntingthorpe, Leicestershire, UK **GPS:** 52.50320, -1.11505

## Milltek VW Golf GTI

Tuning specialist boosts Mk7 Golf to 312bhp with raft of upgrades

**Photography:** Dean Smith



**Y**OU HAVE TO ADMIRE (OR pity) a company that decides to tune a car as complete and polished as the new Mk7 Golf GTI. It is one of the best all-round performance packages a realistic amount of money can buy. Granted, it's not the most exciting hot hatch out there, but in truth it never has been. To try and give it some teeth would be to totally miss the point. Wouldn't it?

All of which explains why the prospect of this Milltek Golf GTI fills me with a certain amount of dread. Don't get me wrong, the idea of 312bhp and 332lb ft (up 85bhp and 74lb ft on a Performance Pack GTI) is compelling to say the least, but when it comes with aftermarket suspension, a turbo-back exhaust with a high-flow sports catalyst, bigger wheels and tyres and VW Racing brakes, it smacks of trying to turn a Golf into a Ford Focus RS.

So imagine my surprise when, decals aside, Milltek's Mk7 – to our knowledge the first in the UK to receive seriously uprated performance – turns out to be an extremely well-judged machine. Looks-wise, it sits a modest 15mm lower and has its arches filled by 19in BBS 'CH' alloys shod with 235/35 Dunlop Sport Maxx tyres. This suits the GTI, adding attitude without going too far, but it comes at a price: £1920 for the rims and tyres, and a more affordable £570 for the Eibach springs and front/rear anti-roll bar kit (the standard dampers are retained).

Behind the BBS wheels lurks Volkswagen Racing's six-pot brake kit, complete with 352mm floating front discs. Again it's a sizeable investment at a little over £2000, but adding so much power and torque would leave the



standard brakes uncomfortably stretched, especially if you occasionally venture on track. This being Milltek's test and development car it naturally features the company's 3in turbo-back exhaust system, complete with Cerakote Black tailpipes for a more contemporary look. It's a very impressive system that finds around 20bhp and gives the GTI a slightly beefier exhaust note without unpleasant boom at urban or motorway speeds. At £1924 it'll have you befriending your bank manager, but the all-stainless steel system has been extensively tested and carefully developed so that it's lighter than the standard exhaust and fits perfectly, with no clonks or clearance issues. If you've ever experienced the misery of an ill-fitting aftermarket system, you'll appreciate Milltek's attention to detail.

Ironically the ECU work, which is where the biggest power gains are found, is one of the cheapest elements of the car, the Shark Performance/DTUK system (which uses a piggyback ECU to get around the Mk7's currently 'uncrackable' management system) costing £695. When installed in conjunction with the Milltek exhaust, it makes a significant difference to the GTI's performance. Where the

standard car goes flat above 6000rpm, this one pulls hard and smooth to the red line. In fact it has more muscle everywhere, particularly from 4500rpm onwards, making the Golf a mighty point-to-point tool on give-and-take A-roads.

The suspension mods trade a little compliance for a greater sense of connection and more enthusiasm for attacking driving. The brakes don't have quite the progression, feel or response of the OE items, but that's largely down to the pad material. However, there's no dead travel nor any squeaking, so you don't lose any refinement and the upside is that there's greater outright power when you get further into the pedal.

Meddling with a Golf GTI could so easily end in disaster, but this effort is thorough, sympathetic and enjoyable. Crucially, it's not trying to be too hardcore, preferring instead to retain much of the GTI's civility so that you have a hot hatch that's still a better all-rounder than anything else in the class. The only difference is that it now has the performance to tempt you out of your Focus RS or Astra VXR. ❌

**Richard Meaden** (@DickieMeaden)

<b>Engine</b>	In-line 4-cyl, 1984cc, turbo
<b>CO2</b>	n/a
<b>Power</b>	312bhp @ 5100rpm
<b>Torque</b>	332lb ft @ 4600rpm
<b>Performance</b>	5.9sec (estimated 0-62mph), 160mph (est)
<b>Weight</b>	1351kg (estimated) (163bhp/ton)
<b>Basic price</b>	See text

**evo rating:** ★★★★★

- ➕ Intelligent package of upgrades delivers big performance boost
- ➖ Significant money to spend on an already premium hot hatch





# 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.

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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). CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions 194 – 99g/km. MPG figures are obtained from laboratory testing intended for comparisons between vehicles and may not reflect real driving results.

Volvo Personal Contract Hire. 18s and over. Subject to status. Model shown Volvo V40 Cross Country D2 SE with Styling Kit. Load Carrier and Ski Holder not included in monthly lease payment. Load Carrier £185.00, Ski Holder £190.00. Skis not sold. Prices inclusive of fitting and VAT. 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.





📍 Test location: Julian, California, USA GPS: 33.08133, -116.60084

# Bentley Continental GT V8 S Convertible

New V8 S models bring very real improvements to the overall driving experience, making them the best of the Continental GTs – W12s included

Photography: Pete Gibson

**I**F BENTLEY'S RANGE of Continental convertible models were priced according to dynamic excellence and not the number of cylinders under the bonnet, the V8 would cost £149,350 and the W12 £136,250. In reality, you need to swap those prices around to reveal the truth.

The W12-engined GTC costs £13,100 more than the more agile, more communicative, better-balanced, better-sounding and more driveable GTC V8. Does the V8 outsell it in the UK, then? No. The W12 version accounts for approximately 60 per cent of sales.

According to Bentley there are two reasons for this. The official one is that customers tend to be seduced by the ultimate configuration: the draw of 12 cylinders cannot be underestimated, we're told. The unofficial one is that potential customers find the V8 model lacking in attitude. It is a safe and sensible option, but this, it seems, can be a turn-off.

The Continental GT V8 S Convertible, a

harder-edged, more powerful, quicker and more focused car than the standard V8, is in part a response to this. And perhaps tellingly, it costs £3550 more than the W12 soft-top...

The basic engine remains the same as the standard V8: a compact and cleverly engineered 4-litre with two turbos within the valley and a cylinder-cut that imperceptibly switches the engine to a V4 when cruising. Power is up 21bhp over the V8 model to 521, torque rises 15lb ft to 502 (from just 1700rpm), and acceleration improves. Indeed, at 4.7sec (0.3sec quicker than the V8), the S sprints to 62mph as quickly as the W12. Top speed is up 4mph to 191.

The eight-speed ZF automatic transmission remains arguably the best of its breed. Low-speed manoeuvring is effortless and switching to manual mode results in sharp, punchy shifts. The S model also holds on to its gears for longer.

Outside, there's a new front splitter, a new rear diffuser and a set of side skirts, all in Beluga Black and all conspiring to reduce lift and improve overall high-speed stability. The

chassis has received the greatest attention, however, with 10mm chopped from the ride height, spring rates increased by 45 per cent at the front and 33 per cent at the rear, and the rear anti-roll bar stiffened by 54 per cent. Bush stiffness is also improved, the continuous damping system has been recalibrated and the stability control has been relaxed.

Those expecting the S to feel something like a 911 GT3 will be disappointed. The improvements are subtle and in terms of outright engine performance they're virtually undetectable. Nonetheless, the signature wallop of torque remains impressive and the throttle response excellent, and there's very little in the way of lag.

In terms of handling, the steering matches a reassuring heft around the dead-centre with decent speed and response, and while the messages from the road surface are inevitably dulled by nearly 2.5 tons of aluminium, leather and wood, the V8 S's rack allows you to place the car with surprising accuracy. The S hasn't





'Drive a Porsche 911 Turbo or Nissan GT-R? Think twice before taking on a well-driven Bentley Continental GT V8 S...'



suddenly been turned into a sideways superstar – oversteer just isn't accessible or even relevant on the road – but overall grip and agility is impressive, particularly through quick S-bends. For all-weather confidence, the four-wheel-drive system is a key advantage over many of the Continental V8 S's rivals.

Overall, the portly V8 S Convertible disguises its weight well. It can't match an Aston Martin DB9 for delicacy and adjustability, but across a slippery mountainside it would walk away from it, and almost any other car for that matter. Drive a 911 Turbo or a GT-R? Think twice before taking on a well-driven GT V8 S...

So the S is a more focused and more enjoyable car than the standard V8. It also stirs the soul more than any other Bentley in recent history, especially when fitted with the bellowing sports exhaust. The noise it makes is simply epic. For everyday liveability it also excels, with more personalisation options than you can shake a walnut-veneered stick at. The optional, and pricey, Mulliner Driving Spec (pictured)

is appealing, or you can create a truly unique-to-you version. All this makes it a very real candidate for being the best grand tourer on the planet. And, yes, there's a coupe too.

The only problem for the driving enthusiasts among us is that it still feels a little reined-in. The engine delivers its performance with such effortlessness that you can't help but think there's another 80-100bhp hiding within it somewhere. And while it's entirely laudable that the suspension is still compliant enough for everyday driving when wound to its stiffest Sport setting, there's also a feeling that it could go a step further – Sport Plus, perhaps – to bring in even greater chassis control.

Of course, with sales of the 12-cylinder models still strong, any attempt at creating a V8 S with even more attitude and pace could potentially create confusion in the range. However, the GT V8 S reveals what potential there still is in the chassis.

Continental GT3 road car, anyone? ☒  
**Nick Trott** (@evoNickTrott)

**Top left:** ZF auto is swift and slick. **Top right:** 4-litre twin-turbo V8 puts out 521bhp, but feels like it could produce more. **Above left:** test car has Beluga Black hide with Monaco Yellow contrast stitching

<b>Engine</b>	V8, 3993cc, twin-turbo
<b>CO2</b>	254g/km
<b>Power</b>	521bhp @ 6000rpm
<b>Torque</b>	502lb ft @ 1700rpm
<b>Performance</b>	4.5sec (claimed 0-60mph), 191mph (claimed)
<b>Weight</b>	2470kg (214bhp/ton)
<b>Basic price</b>	£152,900
<b>Finance</b>	£56,000 deposit, 25 x £888, plus optional final payment, 5000 miles per year. Bentley Financial Services

**evo rating:** ★★★★★

- ➕ Best drivers' Bentley, fantastic engine note
- ➖ Excessively heavy, potential withheld?



# Watches

This month, an affordable British piece, a modern take on a classic and a sportscar racing special

**Words:** Simon de Burton

## 1 Elliot Brown Bloxworth

**Price:** £600 **From:** [elliottbrownwatches.com](http://elliottbrownwatches.com)

Established by horologist Alex Brown and design agency boss Ian Elliot – who created the 'unbreakable' Velcro strap in the 1980s with his successful Animal brand – Elliot Brown's ethos is to make affordable, good-looking but tough watches. They feature 2.8mm hardened mineral crystals, triple-sealed winding crowns, 'motion-damped' housings for the quartz movements and 44mm marine-grade steel cases with bolt-down backs. With a gunmetal finish, the Bloxworth looks especially heroic.

## 2 Omega Speedmaster MkII

**Price:** £3950 **From:** [omegawatches.com](http://omegawatches.com)

The original 'Speedy' was launched in 1957 and quickly became popular as a drivers' watch before fully establishing itself in 1969 when Buzz Aldrin wore one on the moon. Also in '69, Omega extended the range with a 'MkII' version, which featured a more ovoid case and a different dial design. The MkII will be relaunched at the Baselworld show in March, from when buyers can choose from a 'racing' version with orange dial highlights, or a more sober design with black and white markings.

## 3 Tudor Grantour

**Price:** £3400 **From:** [tudorwatch.com](http://tudorwatch.com)

Rolex is known for backing race events such as the 24 Hours of Daytona, but its more affordable sister brand Tudor is also entrenched in motorsport with links to the United Sportscar Championship and the FIA World Endurance Championship. To mark its role as official timing partner of the latter, Tudor has produced the Grantour, a flyback chronograph in a 42mm steel case which can be supplied with a matching steel bracelet or a punched leather 'driver's' strap. The flyback function enables the chronograph to be stopped, reset and restarted with one press of the (lockable) push piece at four o'clock.

### Now & Then



#### NOW Richard Mille RM36-01

**Worn by:** Sébastien Loeb

Richard Mille loves making complicated watches and throwing them into tough situations – hence why rally legend and Pikes Peak record holder Loeb has been signed to wear Mille's new masterpiece, incorporating a G-sensor. The watch costs £459,000!



#### THEN Girard-Perregaux Scuderia Francorchamps

**Worn by:** Jacques Swaters

The Belgian racer of the 1950s collaborated with friend and Girard-Perregaux owner Luigi Macaluso in 2001 to create a limited run of 'Scuderia Francorchamps' watches to mark 50 years since Swaters founded the Ecurie Francorchamps race team.



### Watch tech

#### Breitling Emergency transmitter watch

When launched in 1995, Breitling's 'Emergency' was the first watch to contain an SOS transmitter operating on the international air distress frequency. The original Emergency (40,000 of which were sold) has now been replaced with the all-new, £12,040 Emergency II, featuring a more effective, dual-frequency transmitter.

The high-tech unit is built to the specifications of the Cospas-Sarsat international satellite alert system and will broadcast for 24 hours on both 121.5MHz and 406MHz frequencies, enabling the watch to send an alert that the wearer is in distress and to act as a homing device for rescue teams to track. It's activated by unscrewing a large knurled crown at the bottom-right of the case, releasing a secondary cap on the other side and allowing two wire antennae to be drawn out to activate the beacon.

The Emergency II's transmitter is powered by a specially developed rechargeable battery, and each watch is supplied with a docking station that serves as a charger and as a device for testing that the device is fully operational.

The watch contains a high-end quartz movement combining digital and analogue displays. Functions include 12- and 24-hour readouts, a 1/100th of a second chronograph, an alarm, a countdown timer and a secondary time zone display. There is also a multilingual calendar and a battery condition indicator, although the watch and transmitter use separate power sources.

But this isn't a toy, and there are big penalties for deploying the transmitter without good reason...



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[MAZDA.CO.UK](http://MAZDA.CO.UK)

The official fuel consumption figures in mpg (l/100km) for the Mazda6 range: Urban 36.2 (7.8) - 60.1 (4.7), Extra Urban 57.6 (4.9) - 83.1 (3.4), Combined 47.9 (5.9) - 72.4 (3.9). CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (g/km) 136 - 104.

The mpg figures quoted are sourced from official EU-regulated test results obtained through laboratory testing. These are provided for comparability purposes only and may not reflect your actual driving results. Retail sales only, subject to vehicle availability for vehicles registered between 01.02.14 and 31.03.14 at participating dealers. T&C apply. \*0% finance available on all Mazda6 models with no minimum deposit on Mazda Personal Contract Purchase. At the end of the agreement there are 3 options: (i) Renew: Part exchange the vehicle, where equity is available, (ii) Retain: Pay the Optional Final Payment to own the vehicle or (iii) Return the vehicle. Further charges may be made subject to the condition of the vehicle. Finance subject to status. 18s or over. Guarantee/Indemnity may be required. Mazda Financial Services RH1 1SR. Model shown: Mazda6 Saloon 165ps Sport, OTR from £23,495. Model shown features optional Soul Red Metallic paint (£660). OTR price includes VAT, number plates, delivery, 12 months' road fund licence, first registration fee, 3-year or 60,000-mile warranty and 3 years' European roadside assistance. Test drives subject to applicant status and availability. Details correct at time of going to print. Not available in conjunction with any other offer unless specified.



# Simulations

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

Words: Matthew Hayward



## iRACING

**Formats:** PC (online) **Price:** from \$49.50 (c£30) **From:** iracing.com

FAMED FOR ITS accurate physics and its loyal online racing community, iRacing is perhaps one of the most serious simulations on the market. Launched in 2008, the online service has grown and developed over the years, now boasting more than 45,000 active users. Quite a few, as it happens, are real racers too. It's an interesting business model, and without going into too much detail, it allows for a much more in-depth online racing experience. It's pretty much self-governed, with the more committed drivers building up points and levels through good results and clean driving.

A basic \$49.50 annual subscription comes with a few starter cars and circuits. Extra content is then available for one-off fees. Ranging from around \$10-15 (£6-9) a pop, the circuits are top-class, with a decent selection of international courses like Spa and

Silverstone and a huge number of legendary US tracks such as Mid-Ohio and Daytona. All are laser-scanned to ensure millimetre-perfect accuracy, and although they perhaps aren't as pretty as on the latest console games, they look impressive nonetheless.

There's also a great selection of racing cars from a variety of differing series and eras. Each additional car costs \$12 (around £7), with some very cool machinery to purchase, including a 2009 Williams F1 car and the McLaren 12C GT3 racer. Of course, the more powerful your PC the better, but thanks to iRacing's unique browser-based user interface the whole process of buying cars and tracks and selecting a series to race in is a cohesive one (assuming you have a fast internet connection).

After some basic steering wheel calibration and configuration, you can

hit the track. We started off by keeping things simple with a Mazda MX-5 Cup racer at Laguna Seca (both are in the start-up package). While it didn't take long to get into a rhythm, it's clear that iRacing is not something for the casual gamer as it requires concentration and focus to put in decent lap times. Driving the Williams F1 car at Suzuka was a joy, although it again took a while to learn how the car behaves, with cold tyres initially catching us out. Interestingly, there is no option to race against AI racers, meaning every race you'll ever take part in will be against real human drivers from around the world.

If you have the time and resources to commit to iRacing, then it could prove to be a lot of fun. We certainly enjoyed our first taste, and we'll likely revisit the sim to try out new cars and tracks when they become available. ✕



## Peripherals



### OCULUS RIFT

**Price:** c£300

**From:** oculusvr.com

Due to go on sale in the autumn, the Oculus Rift looks like the first step towards a full-on virtual-reality set-up and is cheap and effective enough to be a viable prospect. Expect support for racing games within the next couple of years...



### LOGITECH G27

**Price:** £269

**From:** logitech.com

The G27 might be a few years old, but it's also many racing sim enthusiasts' entry into the world of modding. With a number of unofficial off-the-shelf upgrades available, it's perfect if you're starting out in the daunting world of full-on simulators.



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The figures provided are as a result of official manufacturer's tests in accordance with EU legislation. A vehicle's actual fuel consumption may differ from that achieved in such tests and these figures are for comparative purposes only.

# Outside Line

by RICHARD MEADEN



Meaden recalls the adventures that got him hooked on motoring, but worries that the next generation may not be so lucky

**W**HAT ARE YOUR EARLIEST CAR-related memories? If you're anything like me, that question unleashes a kaleidoscope of flashbacks from childhood and adolescence: warm, nostalgic snapshots of people and moments that shaped a young, malleable heart and mind into the car-obsessed person I am today.

The clatter of a petrol nozzle and the waft of head-swimming fumes take me back to watching my dad fill up his Triumph TR6 with five-star (the deathly lead-rich V-Power of its day) for just a few quid. A blink and I'm poring over the spec details of a Porsche 928 and a Maserati Khamsin in *Motor* magazine, copying them by hand into an exercise book. No, I don't know why either. Nor do I know why when other kids were indoors watching *Space: 1999*, I found it so magical to sit outside on the kerb for hours on end watching my uncle John adjusting the carbs on my dad's Alfasud. Perhaps it was the promise of riding shotgun during the post-tune-up ritual: a spirited 'test drive' to make sure the little 1.5-litre flat-four was singing sweetly. He could drive, my uncle John.

Then there was Andy, one of my parents' best friends and the coolest bloke my 12-year-old self had ever known, who introduced me to the hard stuff by taking me out in his new Jaguar XJS HE and accelerating from a standstill to well into three figures more rapidly than I'd ever experienced before. To this day, whenever I drive a car that resets my own internal accelerometer, it's images of that lusty Jag that pop into my head.

I can recall my desperation to take my first driving lesson and the trepidation with which I released the clutch pedal to take control of a car on the public road for the first time. I also remember how from that instant the only lessons I was bothered about were those in the car and not the college classroom. The sinking feeling on opening my frankly dismal A-level results (sorry, Mum and Dad) was more than erased by the joy of passing my driving test. I know which piece of paper has subsequently played the more pivotal role in my life...

What unites all these decades-old frames that document our formative motoring years? The fact that they're all real, sensory, emotional experiences so powerful they have been saved into our cerebral hard drives, never to be forgotten. Compare this with what our roads have to offer today's impressionable youth and I fear those unforgettable moments and determining rites of passage are going to be thin on the ground.

Bluntly, driving no longer feels like the carefree activity it once was. I appreciate this sentiment comes with the benefit of maturity and a consideration for the consequences of actions

youthful exuberance would have you overlook, but there's no doubt general attitudes to driving – in particular driving quickly for pleasure – have changed. Cars are seen as environmental enemies, not passports to unlimited personal freedom, expression and escapism. These days the mobile phone is the key to a teenager's (anti-)social life, providing instant and constant connection to friends via FaceTime, Twitter and Snapchat. Going out of the house, getting in a clapped-out old snorter and driving to see your mates is probably unbelievably crude by comparison.

Cars also cost an absolute fortune to run. Even if you can afford to buy one you can't pay for the insurance, and when a gallon of fuel costs more than your part-time job's hourly rate, only those with access to a generous overdraft facility with The Bank of Mum and Dad have the means to become drivers. No

## 'Cars are seen as environmental enemies, not passports to unlimited personal freedom and escapism'

wonder passing the driving test and becoming a car owner sits so far down your average teenager's list of priorities. Personal transport is the property price trap in microcosm.

When I was growing up, if you cut me I'd bleed petrol. Nothing was going to stop me owning a car, even when it meant buying an Austin Metro van rather than the souped-up Mini I dreamed of having (and eventually got a few years later). Would I do the same now if I had my time again? I honestly don't know. I'd like to think I would, but even casting bleak economics aside, if I could immerse myself in racing a McLaren P1 around Spa against my mates on my Xbox, I'm not sure I'd have much of an appetite to spend every penny I had on driving a turgid 1-litre hatchback fitted with an insurance tracker to monitor my driving.

It's a sad irony that in providing car-obsessed youngsters with a pixel-perfect virtual driving environment, the makers of *Forza* and *Gran Turismo* are inadvertently robbing them of their innocence by suppressing the urge to drive a real car – any car – on real roads. I've sunk enough hours into a PlayStation to know that what it delivers is better than no driving experiences at all, but I also know lasting memories come from getting out there and doing it, no matter how lowly the vehicle. ✕

@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 says that a few telltale signs in unexpected places can be the marks of a true petrolhead

**D** DO YOU REMEMBER THE SUZUKI IGNIS Sport? Came out about ten years ago, bit of a rallying homologation special, looked like a portaloos had toppled onto a set of white alloys. It was generally quite well regarded, not least by this very magazine, and had a tasty set of Recaro seats with Escort RS2000-esque mesh headrests.

Given that it was a bit obscure and not especially attractive, it must have sold in tiny numbers. But the other day, walking the dog down my local high street, I saw one. It was yellow, except for the wheels, which were factory-spec white. It still wasn't a looker and I wouldn't have been surprised to learn it had been bought by a functioning simpleton who had gone blundering into a Suzuki garage looking for a replacement for their X-90.

Except for one thing. As this particular Ignis Sport slowed for a set of lights, the driver did a perfectly timed and delightfully unnecessary heel-and-toe rev blip. Ponder on that for a second. He didn't strictly need to do it, since he was coming up to a red light. He wasn't showing off because there wasn't anyone around to impress and, besides, unless he'd just spotted Gwynndaf Evans coming out of the fishmonger, who was going to be wowed by it?

No, this chap in the Ignis was doing a covert bit of Tuesday morning rev-matching just because he could. And because it gave him some satisfaction. It really could have gone either way with this car. Its owner could have been a local idiot who just liked yellow cars, but the brief flare of revs tells us otherwise. This bloke clearly had an interest in driving and a determination to do it well. He was, I like to think, one of us.

I enjoy spotting these signs of like-minded people out on the roads. I think I saw one last week when, whilst slicing through the underparts of North London, an Audi S7 drew up alongside at some lights. Often this would be the prelude to some world-class bellendry and yet, as we moved on, I watched the way the driver steered his massive hatchback through the claggy traffic towards Swiss Cottage. He was brisk yet discreet, moving decisively between lanes when needed without cutting anyone up or making any sudden moves.

It was an object lesson in pressing on which, on its own, would have been fine. But there's a detail I've left out which truly convinced me that this Audi-ist was one of us: I only knew his car was an S7 because I'm a terrible nerd, I don't get out much and I spotted the wheels and the exhausts. I couldn't tell from the tailgate badge because there wasn't one. This bloke had ordered

from the serious end of the model range but he'd de-badged it. Respect, sir. Respect.

Someone who speaks softly but carries a big stick is surely on our side. It's like people in grumpy cars being scrupulous about moving to the left on the motorway whenever possible. It's like people who've ordered a Mini Cooper S without a contrast roof and resisted the lumpen fun-killer of the largest wheels. It's about having your wipers on the right speed and your headlights on at the right times. It's about hearing a car almost always powered by diesel, be it a new-shape non-M BMW 5-series or a Land Rover Discovery 3, and realising with joy that the owner plumped for the petrol engine. It's about parking in a tight spot and yet still only turning the steering wheel when the car is moving. These

**'He could have been a local idiot who just liked yellow cars, but the brief flare of revs tells us otherwise. This bloke clearly had an interest in driving and a determination to do it well'**

are the signs of people who care about cars and care about driving them. People, in other words, that we can do business with.

Conversely, when I was in a car not so long ago with a chap I know, he elected to get into a moderately tricky parking space with a combination of track rod-torturing static wheel-twirling, and two deliberate forays up the pavement, finishing it off with some light wheel-kerbing. I was horrified. I thought this chap liked cars, but clearly he doesn't like them that much. Mechanical sympathy is as much a sign of people who really get cars as grabbing an Audi dealer by the arm as he goes to process your order and firmly intoning into his brain the words: 'Remember, no badges.'

It's horrible to think less of someone for treating their car like cack whilst trying to manoeuvre into a space, but there you go. If you can't be bothered with that simple task, what other things are you not doing? Certainly not heroically heel-and-toeing an Ignis Sport up to the lights, that's for sure. ✘

 @sniffpetrol

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





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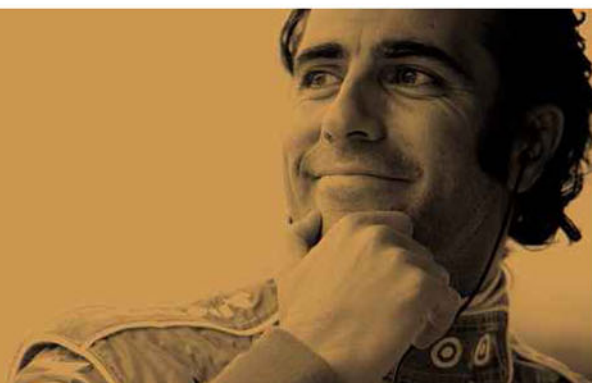
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# Champ

by DARIO FRANCHITTI



Back up to speed with driving for leisure, Dario rates his latest acquisition and considers the importance of seating positions

**T**HE OTHER DAY, TURNING OFF THE A74(M) in Scotland and heading cross-country for the last 30 miles home, I had my first proper drive since the accident at Houston last October. Along with the time I broke my back in 2003 it's the longest period I've had away from driving and I've certainly missed it. Since the accident I've actually spent quite a bit of time thinking about driving an IndyCar on a road course. I can almost replay laps in my head because that's what I used to do when I was pondering how to solve issues we might have had at a test or something. But recently I've found myself reliving laps and then thinking: 'Oh, I'm not going to get to do that any more.' So it was wonderful to get in a car and, without even going especially quickly, just enjoy the sensations that driving gives you.

The journey was doubly enjoyable as it was my first proper drive in my new car. I'd been thinking for a while that I needed something a bit more practical as a daily smoker, because I don't like getting stuff out of the garage when it's raining and there's salt all over the roads. I'd looked at an Audi RS6 and a new Range Rover and then I did the sensible thing and bought... an Aston Martin Vanquish. I've never owned an Aston before and I kind of swore that I never would. But then I've probably said that about most of the cars I've owned – right up to the point where I've driven them and handed over the money! That's what worries me about the Aventador – I've always said I'd never own a Lambo...

Anyway, when the new Vanquish came out and I went to see it at a launch event in Edinburgh, I thought it was nice but still wasn't convinced. Then I was looking around at sensible wagons when I saw a Vanquish in a colour called Kopi Bronze and I just fell in love. I was down in London so I went to see it, took it out for a wee drive and that was it. I just thought, sod the depreciation, sod the practicality, I'll buy something to have some fun with.

I haven't regretted it for a moment. Apart from the gearbox being pretty slow-witted on the upshifts, it's great to drive and a proper GT, so it's fantastic for doing miles, as I've discovered. It only had 3000 on the clock when I bought it, but I've done 1200 miles in ten days because I can't stop driving it, so it's getting used.

One of the things that has really impressed me is the driving position. From being in race cars, I'm very particular about my driving environment and how I sit in a car (just ask any of the mechanics that have worked with me and they'll tell you how fussy I am). It's important because whether you're driving on the road or doing trackdays, the way you sit in a car can have a huge effect on the driving experience. I like to get as low as possible and

to get some rake on the base of the seat, so that when you brake, it supports you a little bit and you're not holding yourself in the seat. I've actually got rid of two cars – a 458 and a 3.8 GT3 RS no less – simply because I wasn't able to get the seats the way I wanted them.


Of course, some cars you make exceptions for, such as the F40. It's interesting when you get in one of those because it really gives you no option. In that instance – and it's something which the F40 highlights because of the truck-like angle to its steering wheel – above everything else you've got to get close enough so that you can reach your arm round the top of the wheel. Particularly if you're going to be grabbing any opposite lock.

Anyway, you sit in the Vanquish and it just feels right. The seats aren't the most supportive under side load, but that aside it's an exciting place to be and that almost-square steering wheel

**'Whether you're driving on the road or doing trackdays, the way you sit in a car can have a huge effect on the driving experience'**

from the One-77 is fantastic. I have to sit a little closer to the pedals at the moment than I used to because the talus bone in my right ankle was compressed in the accident. The doctors stretched it out again and then put scaffolding round it to hold it in position and strengthen it up (it's got enough metalwork to double as a roll-cage in a GT3 RS 4.0!), but there are still some limitations. Swapping from brake to throttle was tricky at first, as was getting the full travel on the pedals, but I've managed to adapt pretty well and I can left-foot brake if I really need to.

Niggles aside, the actual fun of driving and of having a spirited blast again was a truly wonderful feeling after four months away. Just having a ball on a road that I used to drive all the time and hearing the Aston breach that rev barrier where the exhausts open left me buzzing for hours afterwards. It was wet, it was dark and yet those 30 Scottish miles summed up why I buy cars and why I love driving so much. It's good to be back in a (low, slightly raked) driver's seat. **✕**

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





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F10 530D » 296 BHP  
F10 535D » 358 BHP  
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# Inbox

What's floating your boat this month?



Letter of the Month

## Fast Jag flanker

I am a fan of classic Jaguars, having owned ten and raced several, and I still possess a much-modified road E-type. I rather lost interest as the marque got softer, but am naturally delighted to read your glowing accounts of both the XKR-S GT and the F-type R (evo 193).

That said, I'm rather surprised at your questioning the limited production run of the former. I think you might find a clue in the specifications for each car: power, torque, weight, power-to-weight ratio and the number of seats are either the same or very similar. And then you see the prices: XKR-S GT £135,000, F-type R £85,000.

On the whole, it would seem pretty sensible to shift a limited run of the XKR-S GT before the F-type R Coupe becomes available.

Chris Wood



### The Letter of the Month wins an Elliot Brown watch

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### Open the 'box

I have read with pure unadulterated glee that the facelifted VW Polo GTI will come with a manual gearbox and the option of a seven-speed DSG. I am so happy I almost feel like self-combusting with excitement!

Now, I don't particularly want a Polo GTI, nor do I intend to buy one, but this news represents a massive shift in VW Group's thinking for its sporty models. I watched with incredulity as the new Audi RS4 was launched with DSG only. As a previous owner of two B7 RS4 manuals, that news made me cringe, as the gearbox was (and is) a delight on that car. Then you have the new RS Q3 and the new S4, which are both DSG-only as well. I don't have a problem with DSG but I do want to have the choice.

Perhaps this is VW Group's answer to all the criticism it gets from the motoring press and customers alike about a lack of interaction in its sporty products? Have they realised that interaction is the key to enjoying your sports car? Here's hoping.

Neil Crayford

### Folly Sprint

The McLaren 12C Sprint (evo 193) is a lovely looking car, but what sane person is going to spend £234,000 on a trackday car? I'm sure it's a great drive; I don't have that kind of money so I can only dream about what it's like. But what I do know is that at a trackday, someone there with a £30k single-seater will be lapping it. If that was me being lapped I would be wondering why I had spent over £200k on a car that isn't the quickest thing on the track and needs trailering home! Might as well save the money, buy the road-going 12C, still go very fast and then drive it home.

Peter Garforth



Above: Peter Garforth is struggling to see the point of the McLaren 12C Sprint

### Gearing genius

I was reading the brilliant article about the Porsche 959 and the Carrera GT (evo 192), and noted your explanation about the G-gear in the 959, which you described as existing for creeping through open country (G stands for Gelände, which is German for terrain).

The truth is that the G-gear was a brilliant move by Porsche to pass noise emissions tests. By numbering the gears that way, the noise emissions could be certified one gear higher than would otherwise be required, meaning the revs would be considerably lower at the speed specified by the test.

Björn Nommensen, Germany

### Living the dream

I'd like to thank Richard Meaden for the outstanding article on the TWR Jaguar XJS (evo 192). What a car! The Jag was from an era I didn't know a lot about, so I thoroughly enjoyed being educated.

Immediately after reading, I just had to watch the YouTube footage of Tom Walkinshaw manhandling the thing around Bathurst, which just set motion to the mental image Dickie had painted with his words. Having read the article, I felt I was in the car with Tom; I knew what it was like and how it would feel. It targeted exactly why I love cars and driving.

Totally scintillating stuff. It was wonderful to be introduced to such a great area of motorsport.

Andy Sykes

### Al-can't-ara

Apropos your E63/RS6 twin test in evo 193 (E63: a fine car, incidentally). Alcantara steering wheels are an abomination. Where is people's self-respect? My God, you wouldn't wear suede loafers, would you?

Hywel Rees



Above: the fascinating story of the TWR Jaguar XJS was new to Andy Sykes





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## Talking Point



## Zenos v Caterham

The Zenos E10 packs 200bhp, weighs 650kg and costs just £25,000. Should Caterham be worried?

**NO** It would be a better car with a roof and windows. As it is it will have its work cut out to nick sales from Caterham, Westfield, etc, who have been around a wee while. I am far more interested in what Caterham may be able to produce in the near future.

**Daddydadbo**

**YES** I think they are taking aim at the Elise as much as the Caterfield market. If they can keep the price and weight down then they might be in with a chance of selling a few. My only slight concern is that Lotus has struggled to make a profit on the Elise and its variants in all the time it has been making it. But enthusiasts should give Zenos a pat on the back for trying to take this segment on.

**FaceFirst**

**NO** It looks interesting, but if I were going to get one I'd be in the second wave so that any unreliability gremlins have been ironed out. Plus, they might get the development wrong and it could end up handling like a pig. With the experience of the team developing it you'd hope not, though.

**Duncs500**

**YES** I think there's a certain amount of understandable cynicism, given the endless parade of 'one man in an industrial unit' British sports car 'manufacturers' that announce glorified kit cars with stupid performance claims only to disappear without trace after 18 months of excuses. That said, the Zenos seems to be a credible project with credible aims. If it drives as well as it looks, I

think they could be on to a winner.

**Delphi**

**YES** Looks brilliant and seems very well priced. I assume it isn't road-legal... It is? Bargain!

**Eric Pisch**

**YES** I have to say I am massively reassured knowing who the people behind this venture are. If any team can make this work, they should be able to. I just hope they can get production costs down enough to make a working profit at the low stated price. Very interesting that they have plans for a hard-top coupe too.

**David Yu**

**YES** At this power-to-weight and at this money, if it's as good as I hope it will be it would be a very tempting proposition – if there was a windscreen option, which it appears there isn't. I just couldn't see myself wearing a helmet on public roads.

**RBG78**

**YES** £25k, with the first 75 priced at £28k with everything extra thrown in. Massive want... Would happily swap a Caterbreak for this.

**Nutty**

**NO** I'd rather put my £25k in a Hondalise. The Zenos looks just plain ugly compared to an Elise.

**Mike RT4**

**YES** Do want. It looks like a bargain, but it seems too good to be true... at the moment.

**djchoice**

## Next month

You can read our first drive of the McLaren P1 in this month's *evo*. Will you be adding one to your fantasy hypercar garage, or are the Porsche 918 or the LaFerrari – or something else – higher on your list?

Email your thoughts to [letters@evo.co.uk](mailto:letters@evo.co.uk), or join the discussion at [community.evo.co.uk](http://community.evo.co.uk)

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

## Thread of the Month

ZONDA

# What does a lack of a garage stop you buying?

Personally I'd be looking at a finance package on the Zenos tomorrow if I could, but no garage makes it a no-go. What would you buy if you had a garage free?

### JACKLEG

I'd love a TVR, but the Canadian winter makes that a complete no-go with no garage to store it in.

### DUNCS500

If not having a garage is preventing you from getting what you want you should do what I did – get a garage! I'm sure there's something for rent in most places.

### MONTYCHRISTO128

I reckon anything you need to work on yourself or which will be off the road for long periods of time. I waited until I had a garage to get a Mk2 Escort and a TR6.

### DADDYDADBO

If I had a garage it would have a lathe in it and probably a classic Saab 900 T16S convertible. If and when we move again I want a double garage and space for a workshop in the garden.

### PAULJ

A house! Thirty years ago I had a Marcos 3-litre GT with very little ground clearance. We arranged to meet an estate agent at a house we were interested in at the time. Noticing the extreme angle of the road camber/pavement interface (by my standards) I rejected the house before looking inside as I couldn't even get to the garage with my Marcos. The idiot agent suggested I change the car – he wasn't a petrolhead...

### HABANERO

I have a garage. But the Rolls-Royce Corniche I'd like wouldn't fit in it.

### JONMAD

My garage is currently housing one of my father-in-law's Morris Minors. Hopefully something slightly faster will replace it at some point. Though that's not saying a lot.



Thread of the Month wins a Road Angel safety camera & blackspot alert device worth £159.99



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# P1

FLAME ON!

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by RICHARD MEADEN | PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH

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*It's been a long, agonising wait, but finally the time has arrived to find out what McLaren's 903bhp hybrid hypercar, the P1, is like to drive. Can it live up to the promises?*





**Above:** the wheel every petrolhead wants to be behind right now. **Right:** signature dihedral doors present and correct

**Y**

**YOU'VE READ THE DEVELOPMENT STORIES, WATCHED THE** Nürburgring video, pondered the mystery of its 'sub-7 minute' lap time, seen the *Top Gear* segment and perhaps even driven it in *Forza 5*, but none of this prepares you for the moment you finally get your audience with the McLaren P1.

Confidence is often confused with arrogance, especially when you're McLaren, but claiming you've built 'the best drivers' car in the world on road and track' is punchy to say the least. Uncharacteristically emotional too, considering McLaren's other current model, the 12C, trades so heavily on its savant-like empirical superiority, yet lacks the emotional connection that all the greatest drivers' cars have in abundance. By putting the 'hype' into 'hypercar' with that ballsy mission statement, McLaren has ensured even the P1's claimed 600kg of downforce is nothing compared to the weight of expectation that sits squarely on its shoulders. Only a truly miraculous driving experience will deliver on that unequivocal promise.

Things get off to the best possible start when 'our' P1 splashes through the puddles and arrives outside the Viceroy Yas Marina hotel. Yes, we've flown to Abu Dhabi and yes, it's bloody raining, but any disgruntlement at the rotten weather in this (allegedly) desert state evaporates in the presence of this truly jaw-dropping machine. Black with a hint of purple, with dark graphite wheels and exposed carbon highlights, it brings a sinister slice of Gotham City to Yas Island's sci-fi backdrop.

Looking at its sculptured form is like trying to learn a new language, as your eyes struggle to interpret the lines and how they manage the flow of air over, into, out of and under the car. It looks like nothing else for good reason, for in aerodynamic terms it performs like nothing else. Reconciling the conflicting demands of generating that famed 600kg of Race-mode downforce with less drag than the 12C in Road mode, not to mention feeding and cooling a hybrid powertrain good for 900bhp, must have been a monumental challenge. That it's been met with such an expressive and original shape suggests that, when executed to the nth degree, there's









## 'THE ELECTRIC DRIVING EXPERIENCE IS HUSHED AND ULTRA-RELAXING, AND MAKES URBAN DRIVING A CINCH'

**Above:** steering wheel features DRS and IPAS buttons. **Below, far left:** button at bottom-middle engages Race mode, which comes with a warning (below, far right). **Below:** flaps reveal fuel filler and plug-in point. **Bottom left:** Paul Mackenzie, McLaren's P1 programme director, shows our man Meaden around the firm's new hypercar



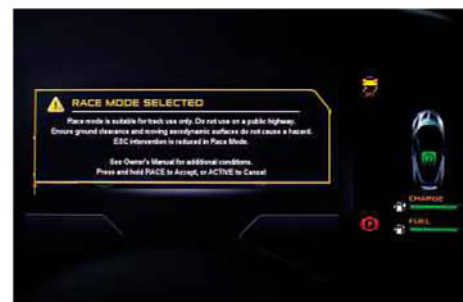
truth in the hackneyed 'form follows function' marketing mantra.

Reach into the hungry air intake slot that slices into the top of the swooping flanks and you'll find the release button for the dihedral door. Press it and the door swings up and out like an insect's wing. Unlike on the 12C, there's lots of exposed carbon. The big, chunky weave of the sill section looks just like that of an F1 car's tub, while the more familiar fine weave of the body panels hints at the mix of materials (six different types of carbon alone) used in the P1. Getting in is a bit awkward, as you have to duck your head and shoulder beneath the erect door, while simultaneously posting your leg into the footwell and twisting as you drop your bum into the seat, before finally tucking your trailing leg up and in. It's worth the contortion.

As the door drops shut you appreciate just

how special the P1's interior feels. There's a great sense of occasion and more exposed carbon, which has a lovely satin finish and forms beautiful organic curves that flow up from the dashboard into the stout-looking windscreen pillars, then up into the roof. The cockpit has a more tightly tailored feel than the spacious 12C's. Actually it would feel quite claustrophobic were it not for the two glass panels in the roof, which create a dramatic canopy effect and offer increased headroom.

If you've spent any time in a 12C you'll notice the shared Active Dynamics Panel's rotary controls that switch between Road, Sport and Track modes for the chassis and powertrain. Above these is a green button that allows you to switch to electric-only propulsion, more of which later. The steering wheel fills your palms perfectly, while the carbonfibre paddles (which



like in the 12C operate via a rocker so you can use either for up- or downshifts) are just a finger flick away. I normally detest buttons on steering wheels, but I'll make an exception for ones marked 'DRS' and 'IPAS', for they get to the heart of the P1's more extrovert features, and its extreme dedication to performance.

Press your foot on the brake, push the starter button, and the P1 comes to life. McLaren's biturbo V8 has always had a tendency to sound a bit industrial, but in the P1 there's more depth and complexity to what you're hearing. It's no accident, McLaren's engineers having agonised over whether to eradicate, accentuate or leave untouched the motor's more eccentric utterances. Consequently for the first time you can hear the V8's respiratory system; at low speed this means a breathy hubbub of induction noise as air gets sucked in through

the roof-mounted snorkel, followed by gentle sneezes from the wastegates as you ease off the throttle and pent-up boost is softly bled away. With each downshift an eerie murmur tickles back up through the air intake, like Darth Vader whispering in your ear. I can see why McLaren considered filtering this out, but I think it is an essential part of the P1 experience, for it's these anthropomorphic sounds that keep you in tune with the car's rhythms and connect you to it even at very low speeds.

Much has been made of the P1's minimal zero-emission range (a claimed minimum of just over six miles), and while it's true to say it doesn't have the silent-running capability of the 918 Spyder, it remains a useful distance. There are similarities to the electric driving experience – namely hushed, ultra-relaxing propulsion that makes urban driving a cinch –

but because the P1's batteries drive through the regular gearbox, not hub-mounted motors, you get a sense of your speed building in smooth steps, rather than the endless elastic surge of the Porsche. It's not as accelerative as the 918 on batteries alone, but it's more than brisk enough considering you're most inclined to use the function in town, villages or traffic jams.

Switch to hybrid propulsion, with the chassis and powertrain modes both set to Normal, and the P1 is totally docile. There's some road and wind noise, plus the aforementioned inhalations and exhalations of the V8, but while there's a bit more noise than you get from a 12C, it remains a civilised environment. You could do big distances in this car, no trouble at all.

It's ultra-alert, responding to the lightest squeeze of the throttle and the merest nudge of steering input. The steering rack is quicker



McLaren P1







**Left:** Meaden disengages the stability and traction controls, takes a brave pill, and gets the P1 sideways

than the 12C's, but it stops short of Ferrari's hair-trigger style of steering response. In the more relaxed modes, the suspension (with a development of the 12C's interconnected hydraulic roll control system) has McLaren's unique mix of tight, muscular body control and a lissom, loose-limbed pliancy. It's not saloon-car pillowy by any means, but it's a very long way from unyielding.

It all adds up to an imperious, unflappable feel as you mix it with other traffic. When left in D the double-clutch gearbox makes point-and-squirt progress laughably smooth and simple, shuffling incisively up and down the gears, and the super-trick Akebono carbon brakes have intuitive feel, consistency and progression even at low speeds and from cold. We can thank McLaren's decision to swerve regenerative braking for that. In a nutshell, you don't have to think about how you drive the P1 slowly, nor do you have to compensate for any deficiency in feel or response. It feels natural, which for a car that's so reliant on cutting-edge technology – and that has been designed to excel on track – is quite an achievement.

Driving along the endless motorway that runs through the desert between Yas Island and downtown Abu Dhabi, the P1 draws incredulous stares, even from drivers on the opposing carriageway. The driver of a matt black G63 AMG is particularly taken with the McLaren, mimicking the neck articulation of an owl in an effort to keep our alien craft in sight. Even in a land where supercars are commonplace, the P1 is clearly something else.

We're getting a half-decent sense of how the P1 feels at sane speeds on normal roads, but to be totally honest Abu Dhabi is not the place to come for a detailed, definitive appraisal of any car's on-road behaviour, let alone one with 903bhp and neck-bending levels of downforce. Furtive exploration of the throttle's travel – in an intermediate gear on a clear stretch of the motorway – suggests it will be insane on the right road. The day will come when we'll find out, but for now we need a racetrack. Fortunately Abu Dhabi does those rather well...

**WE HAVE A WHILE TO WAIT UNTIL** the Yas Marina Circuit is ours to enjoy. Like most modern circuits it can be divided into different configurations. This evening we're using the South circuit, which skirts the marina and includes the instantly iconic ninety-right-ninety-left-ninety-left complex that cuts its way around (and beneath) the Viceroy Yas Marina hotel and its glowing chameleon carapace. Unlike most modern circuits it also has floodlighting that turns night into day.





**'IT'S LIKE PRESSING  
FAST FORWARD  
WHILE WATCHING  
A VIDEO, EXCEPT  
IT'S YOU THAT'S  
MOVING AT  
DOUBLE SPEED'**

Given the value and performance of the car, and the proximity of the barriers, you might expect the drive of a new and frankly bonkers near-£1million McLaren hypercar to be the ultimate exercise in control freakery, but nothing could be further from the truth. We also have the luxury of time: no less than four hours of uninterrupted track time to grab as much video footage and as many stills images as we can. Ferrari, please take note.

We could have piled in on an earlier drive opportunity, but with three times the number of journalists attending (there are just two of us here today, and two P1s) and a small fraction of the time to get to know the car, we made the unfashionable decision to take the later (better) slot so we stood the best chance of bringing you the most comprehensive coverage of what could well be the most significant new high-performance car since the McLaren F1. Perhaps

ever. We hope you think we made the right call.

Driving down the Yas Marina pitlane in a P1 is a real 'pinch me' moment, even after two decades in the business of driving astonishing cars in exotic locations. Before being let loose solo we have a handful of acclimatisation laps in the company of a professional racing driver, in our case GT ace Tim Mullen, who also heads up McLaren's customer driver training programme. It's an enlightening process because it takes you through the chassis and powertrain settings in turn, until finally you get your first taste of the P1's Race mode, which takes the road-legal supercar to a whole new dimension of iron-fisted body control and uncompromising aerodynamic downforce.

The seriousness of the switch from Track (the last of the road-suitable modes) to Race (technically illegal on the public highway) is underlined by a warning and disclaimer that





**Left:** several hours on a quiet, floodlit Yas Marina circuit meant plenty of time and space to explore the P1's limits



appears on the instrument display panel. It's a sobering moment, but one that also serves to intensify the excitement as you confirm your decision, then wait in the pitlane for the 40 seconds or so it takes for the suspension to drop by 55mm and the massive rear wing to elevate upwards to its maximum height of 300mm and assume its most aggressive angle of attack.

You have two further decisions to make. The first is whether to run in Boost mode or full Race mode. The former restricts your propulsion to the 727bhp V8, but gives you the remaining 176bhp of battery power on demand via the steering wheel-mounted IPAS (Instant Power Assist System) button; with the latter you have the combined 903bhp on tap at all times. The second decision is whether to completely disable the traction and stability control.

It seems prudent to ramp things up steadily, so once Mullen has bailed out for the safety of

the pit garage, I head back out on petrol power alone. With the space to keep your right foot pinned, the V8 feels pretty darned ferocious, but well within the capabilities of the chassis, which feels as though its bespoke Pirelli P Zero Corsas have been sneakily exchanged for slicks. Roll is literally non-existent, thanks to a 350 per cent increase in roll stiffness in Race compared to Normal, and this means you can exploit the steering's immediacy to the full.

Those Akebono brakes retain their brilliant progression and feel, but as you work them harder not only do they effortlessly soak up the additional load, but they actually seem to relish the task, drawing you deeper and deeper into the braking areas and imploring you to hit the pedal harder and later than you did the lap before, like some exercise in weird mechanical masochism.

Once your head has begun to get used to the

V8's potency, it's itching to command your right thumb to push the IPAS button and unleash the heart-pounding kick in the pants that comes from the battery's instant torque. It's harder than you think to go there, especially as you really want to have the front wheels as straight as you can before playing out your F1 driver fantasies, but the reward is a surreal punch of acceleration. It's like pressing fast forward while watching a video, except it's you that's moving at double speed.

Once you've tasted that exquisite rush between the corners you want to feel it every time you push down on the throttle. And so, inevitably, you exit Boost mode and gorge yourself on 903bhp as often as you can. To be honest it does rather render the IPAS button redundant, though there's no doubting it would be a novelty, not to mention a guaranteed means of making your passenger squeal. Likewise the



## Specification

### McLAREN P1

**Engine** V8, 3799cc, twin-turbo,  
plus 131kW electric motor  
**CO2** 194g/km

**Power** 903bhp (combined) @ 7500rpm

**Torque** 664lb ft (combined) @ 4000rpm

**Transmission** Seven-speed dual-clutch gearbox, rear-wheel drive, Brake Steer

**Front suspension** Hydro-pneumatic proactive suspension, adaptive roll control

**Rear suspension** Hydro-pneumatic proactive suspension, adaptive roll control

**Brakes** Carbon-ceramic discs, 390mm front, 380mm rear, ABS, EBD

**Wheels** 9 x 19in front, 11.5 x 20in rear

**Tyres** 245/35 ZR19 front, 315/30 ZR20 rear

**Weight (dry)** 1395kg

**Power-to-weight (dry)** 658bhp/ton

**0-62mph** 2.8sec (claimed)

**Top speed** 217mph (limited)

**Basic price** £866,000

**evo rating:** ★★★★★

DRS (Drag Reduction System) button should be a source of endless amusement, for it allows you to flatten the rear wing to reduce drag and increase your speed. However, unlike the slow-motion game of folding the mirrors in on your hire car to eek out another few mph, the P1 doesn't exactly run out of puff down the straights, so not only are you unlikely to find the time to press the blue button, you'd have to be Jenson Button (or Chris Goodwin) to notice any additional uplift in acceleration. Still, it looks cool in your mirrors on the road, when you wave at cars behind before leaving them dazed and slightly singed in your wake as the gas-blue exhaust flame flickers like an afterburner.

When working at its maximum angle of attack, the rear wing (together with the complex front aero) endows the P1 with superhero levels of stick. You simply can't believe you're running on road tyres. Crucially, the P1 walks

you through the downforce, providing feel and feedback all the way. It's not like making a big leap of faith as it can be with a high-downforce race car, rather you keep pushing as you would in a grippy road car, the only difference being through fast corners the grip never seems to bleed away. This means you're carrying massive speed into the tightening sequences of turns that most modern tracks feature, but the stability stays with you under braking. It makes a Huayra or 918 Spyder feel a bit bus-like.

As my fingers disable the stability control it seems like an absurd thing to do, but such are the demands of the YouTube audience it's now become compulsory. I vow to come back from the brink the moment I frighten myself – assuming the P1 doesn't just spit me disdainfully into the Yas Marina Armco without a second chance. But having felt the progressive way in which the stability control calibration

in Race mode allows the rear tyres to break traction and the back end to slide enough to require steering correction before nudging softly into the brilliantly judged electronic talent enhancer, I'm hopeful the P1 won't be too spiky. There's only one way to find out.

With the front end absolutely nailed to the tarmac it's easy to agitate the tail into losing grip, but the way you can dish out so much power and torque from two separate, perfectly integrated propulsion sources truly beggars belief. Don't get me wrong, you need to be right on top of your game to summon the confidence to initiate the process, but once you do it feels totally natural. No, it's not the most scientific of tests, but you simply shouldn't be able to poke a car like this into such indulgent slip angles. It certainly shouldn't feel so composed when you do. The fact that you can suggests there's been a subtle shift in attitude at McLaren, a welcome






letting down of the hair and a resolution to make cars that are mind-blowingly fast and capable, but also wild and fun if you're that way inclined.

Part of me thinks this is the car McLaren should have built first, but as chief test driver Chris Goodwin is quick to acknowledge, it simply wouldn't have been possible to create the P1 without learning from the process of developing the 12C. There's certainly a family resemblance in the way the two cars feel and perform, but the P1 is a mature and more completely resolved machine. It has an aura of assurance and natural confidence that leaves the pathfinding 12C feeling a bit try-hard. Its feel, performance and dynamism are quite simply on another level. Goodwin says he wanted to create a road car that mimicked the raw, ballistic thrills of a Can Am racer and gave a strong hint of the precision, sophistication and

extraordinary downforce of a contemporary F1 car. The fact that some three hours after our track session is over I'm still wide awake, buzzing with a rush of adrenalin that simply won't subside, suggests he's been successful.

With meaningful wheeltime in everything from a Ferrari F40 to a Porsche 918 Spyder, I thought I knew my way round the supercar landscape pretty well, but after driving the P1 I honestly feel a bit lost. Its breadth of ability is truly freakish, the fusion of petrol and electric propulsion totally seamless, the ferocity of its performance utterly corrupting. Like watching David Blaine skewer his arm and trying to work out whether what he's just done is real or magic, I'm still struggling to wrap my brain around what the P1 does and how it does it. What I do know is that McLaren has delivered on that extraordinary promise. And the LaFerrari has its work cut out. 

**'ITS BREADTH OF ABILITY IS TRULY FREAKISH, THE FEROCITY OF ITS PERFORMANCE UTTERLY CORRUPTING'**

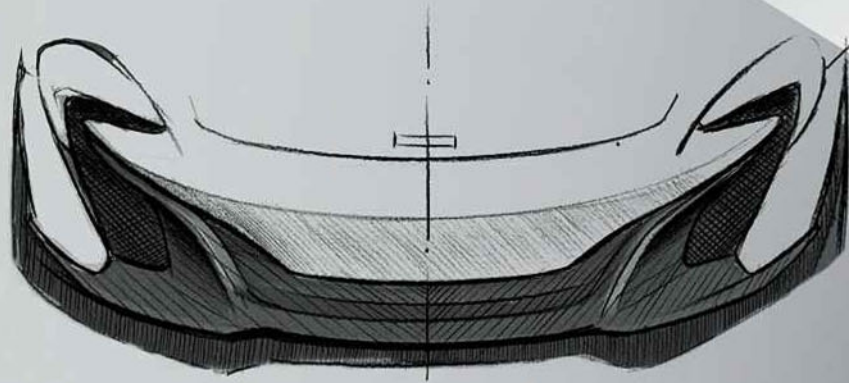


**VIDEO**

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# McLAREN 650S

# SON OF P1

*With sketches exclusive to **evo** by McLaren design director Frank Stephenson, we take a sneak peek at the car intended to bridge the gap between the P1 and the 12C – the 650S*

**W**

#### **WITHIN FIVE MINUTES**

of walking into a vast photographic studio in a particularly unglamorous part of Wembley in London, a McLaren representative tells us that the car we've been invited to see 'is not, and is not meant to be, a stripped-out 12C'. Erm, OK.

There's a mild sense of disappointment: the 12C went into production back in 2011 and we've seen two extreme track versions (the Can-Am and the Sprint) but no road equivalent. A 12C 'RS', it would seem, is not on the radar.

So what is this car? Another five minutes later, we're faced with charts, graphs and data that tell us that it's faster, more involving, more comfortable, more balanced, more accelerative and more responsive. It's also expected to cost around £20,000 more (in coupe guise) than the £176,000 12C. The teasing continues when we're told a Spider version will be available from launch, but we won't see it until the Geneva motor show on March 4 (make a note in your diary to visit [youtube.com/evotv](http://youtube.com/evotv) that day).

The new car shares its aesthetic with the P1, but it's based on the 12C and shares 75 per cent

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by NICK TROTT

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of the latter car's components. However, 12C badging is conspicuous by its absence: instead the car will be known as McLaren 650S, the '650' part relating to the engine's power output (in PS – it's 641 of your old bhps). The 'MP4' moniker is gone – perhaps forever. Why? 'It was never that easy to say,' deadpans Jamie Corstorphine, McLaren's head of product.

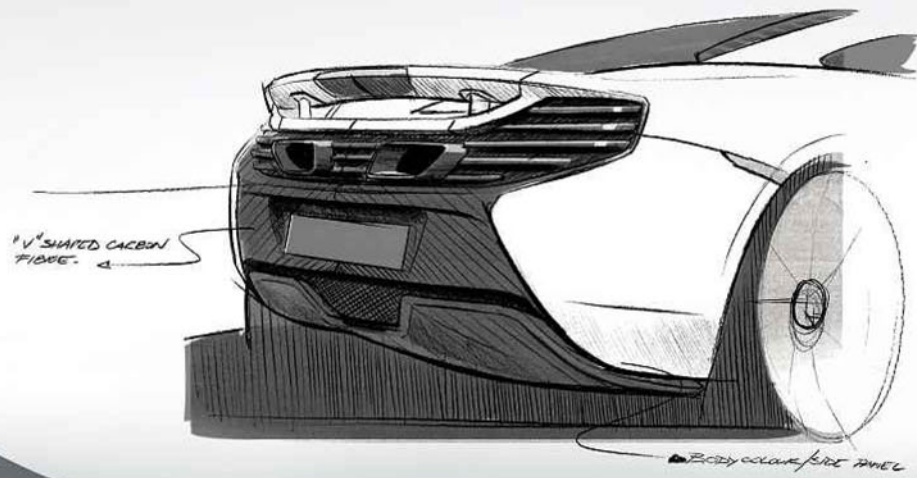
At the end of the fascinating if headache-inducing technical presentation summarised over the page, we're introduced to the car by McLaren's design director, Frank Stephenson. In the flesh, it's still recognisably 12C – the roof and rear wings remain the same – but the front aspect takes on the P1 look with virtually identical LED headlights. Also at the front is a new lower bumper and splitter arrangement, plus a pair of ankle-skimming 'aero-blades' positioned below the doors. The rear end receives bodywork inspired by the GT3 race car.

As you would expect from McLaren, the styling revisions aren't purely cosmetic but,

for me at least, while the new treatment is consistent and neatly resolved, the bodywork can't quite hide its hybridised nature. Inside, Alcantara is draped over almost every surface and the steering column now receives electric assistance for reach and rake. Carbon door inserts and a pair of fixed-back bucket seats are now an option. There's also a rear parking camera.

Curiously, engine power is 'only' increased by 25bhp; any more and it may have perhaps stolen the headlines from the considerably more thorough under-the-skin revisions. The key technical points relating to the chassis and drivetrain follow overleaf – and if (like me) you're disappointed that the bodywork revisions don't go far enough, you'll be interested to read just how meticulous the suspension, stability control and transmission changes are.

Remarkably, as the presentation steers towards the dynamic behaviour of the car, the phrase 'driftability' is used by chief designer Dan Parry-Williams, and technical director Carlo Della Casa introduces his talk with the phrase 'let's talk about feeling'. For fans of the Thrill of Driving, that's music to our ears.





## ENGINE

It's the same M838T 3.8-litre V8 engine found in the 12C, but ten per cent of the components are new, including the pistons, cylinder heads, cam timing, exhaust valves and exhaust system, increasing power from 616bhp at 7500rpm to 641bhp at a slightly lower 7250rpm. However, torque is up an impressive 58lb ft to 500lb ft, with 95 per cent of that available between 3000 and 7000rpm, and peak torque at 6000rpm. McLaren also claims improved driveability and response across the rev range.

## PERFORMANCE

The 0-62mph dash takes 3.0sec and 0-124mph 8.4sec. That's 'faster than many stripped-out track-focused road cars', according to McLaren in a not-so-subtle reference to the Ferrari 458 Speciale (which clocks 3.0sec and 9.1sec respectively for those speeds). These figures are achieved on the standard-fit, but unique to the 650S Pirelli P Zero Corsa tyres. The Speciale, for reference, is fitted with Michelin Pilot Cup 2 tyres. Top speed is 207mph (same as the 12C) and the standing quarter-mile is achieved in an impressive 10.5sec at 139mph.

## SUSPENSION

The springs are 22 per cent stiffer at the front and 37 per cent stiffer at the rear compared to the 12C's, but the damper valves and mounts have been adjusted to maintain ride comfort. McLaren claims body roll is significantly reduced in all three suspension modes and that yaw damping has been improved, something which apparently shows itself with increased body control, particularly when the car is in a transitional drift.

## BRAKES

Carbon-ceramic brakes are standard (they're a £12,000 option on the 12C), but there's a new

booster and the ABS has been recalibrated. The 12C's ceramics have a terrible dead spot at the top of the pedal, or as McLaren describes it, 'a non-linear relationship between what your braking foot is doing and what the brakes are doing'. We're told the recalibrated 650S system is more predictable and easier to modulate, particularly at low speeds.

## STYLING AND AERODYNAMICS

The 12C's styling didn't 'punch', according to Frank Stephenson, who went on to say: 'I'm proud of the 650S – we had more time on it than the 12C.' It is thought that the majority of the 12C's styling was complete before Stephenson joined McLaren in September 2008, which means the 650S is closer to his vision for the car.

Clearly influenced by the P1, the new treatment of the front end creates a larger low-pressure zone under the nose, helping create 40 per cent more downforce at 150mph. Other changes include the door blades, larger side intakes and a revised rear end. The roof, rear wings and doors remain the same as on the 12C.

Active aerodynamics are banned in Formula 1 (save for the Drag Reduction System), but the 650S has an active rear airbrake that deploys when rear traction is limited, for instance over crests, or when braking hard. The rear wing now trims out at high speed in a straight line, like with DRS.

## CHASSIS

The now-familiar carbonfibre MonoCell is, according to McLaren, 'stiffer, lighter and less prone to flexing than rival chassis'. You'd never guess that Ferrari and McLaren have 'previous', would you? In a similar vein, a Spider version of the 650S, using the same MonoCell and folding hard-top roof as the 12C Spider, will be offered from launch: 'Rivals do not offer super-sports versions of their convertibles – the chassis rigidity does not allow it.' Ferrari did

offer a convertible version of the 430 Scuderia (the 16M), but there's no sign of an open-top Speciale, for now at least. The 650S's kerb weight is 1428kg, which is lighter than the 12C but only by 6kg. Much of the saving comes from a new lightweight forged wheel design.

## ESC

Certainly the most exciting of the revisions, the 650S promises to be more adjustable and more controllable during oversteer scenarios. Brake Steer is said to be more efficient and there's more slip in Track mode. Combine this with the improvements to the yaw damping and the 650S promises to be less spiky and more controllable on track, and when everything is switched off. 'We were criticised for the lack of "driftability" with the 12C,' explains Dan Parry-Williams. 'This is the response.'

## TRANSMISSION

The same seven-speed dual-clutch 'box remains, but McLaren has made significant revisions to the electronics in-house. It promises smoother getaways and low-speed shifting in Auto mode, while in Sport mode two cylinders are cut under part-throttle, giving a noisy parp from the exhaust. Sport mode gives the 'best sound and the best feeling,' says Carlo Della Casa.

However, in Track mode, what can most simply be described as 'inertia push' delivers greater acceleration. When approaching an upshift, the SSG transmission has already primed the following gear using the second clutch. As the shift is made, the engine revs are not allowed to drop fully in order to utilise the inertia from their kinetic energy. This in turn provides a torque impulse as the next gear is engaged, aiding acceleration and maximising performance. Outside of 'inertia push', when maximum performance is not called for, the engine and transmission speeds are aligned for a smooth, seamless shift.

## evo comment

It's all about the drive, isn't it? The suspension, ESC, gearshift and brake revisions promise to cover the 12C's dynamic failings and potentially reveal a storming drivers' car. That McLaren claims to have upped the excitement factor whilst maintaining the 12C's comfort and refinement is tantalising.

For me, the car looks better in the flesh than in pictures but the aesthetic relationship is too close to the 12C and the interior is virtually identical. The reasons are obvious – it's unlikely McLaren would get a return on investment if it redesigned and

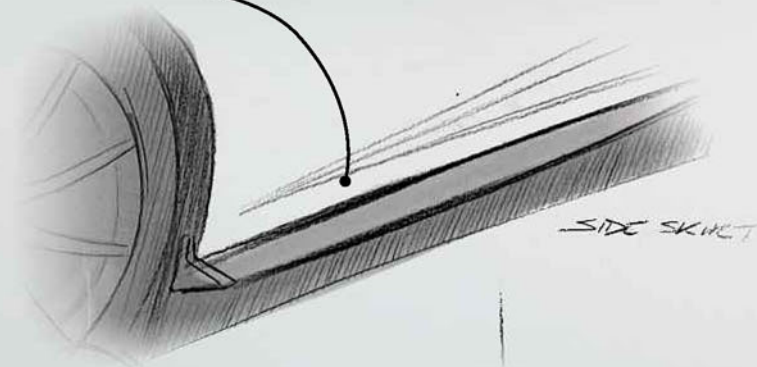
manufactured larger panels just for the 650S.

But this does beg the question: what next for the 12C? The 12C starts at £176,000 and that can soon escalate to well over £200,000 if you fit some choice options such as the carbon-ceramic brakes, as I discovered with our long-term test car last year. McLaren aims to sell around 1300 12Cs and 650Ss combined over the next 12 months. Some 1300 12Cs were sold over the past year, so this means McLaren expects potential 12C customers to graduate to the 650S – and I can see that happening.

Longer-term, it remains to be seen if the 12C will be phased out and replaced by the 650S. This would leave the new P13, due next year at £120-140k, as the entry-level McLaren, with sales targets of 2500 per year. Assuming the P13 does not cannibalise 12C/650S sales, that means annual McLaren sales (excluding the P1) would hit 3800 – pretty much bang on McLaren's target to see a return on its road car investment. But even with improved UK and US market conditions and expansion into China, that remains a challenging target. **NT**



**Top:** lightweight wheels contribute to 6kg weight saving compared to 12C. **Top right:** air intakes are larger than 12C's. **Above:** P1-inspired headlight design is set to feature on future McLarens. **Right:** door blades help increase downforce









by HENRY CATCHPOLE &  
JETHRO BOVINGDON

PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH  
& DREW GIBSON

# THE FOURTH DIMENSION

*Cold, wet and grim weather doesn't have to put a hold on the Thrill of Driving – especially when you have a car with four-wheel drive. We head to a sufficiently murky north Wales to examine what 4WD can offer in its various forms, past and present*

**T**

**TEMPTING, ISN'T IT? THAT SNAKING** stretch of empty asphalt wriggling off into the mountains. All that's missing is a car and a suitably raucous soundtrack. But the siren call of those bewitching bends is tempered by their surface – cold, wet and slipperier than a greased eel. A sopping contact patch betwixt tyre and tarmac changes everything, because as  $\mu$  (mu, the coefficient of friction) plummets, so steering becomes lighter, braking distances increase, traction decreases and cornering grip diminishes.

But there is a group of cars that revels in these conditions. As the salt goes down and the water table rises, so four-wheel-drive cars come into their own. Two-wheel drive is always seen as the 'purist' option, and some people would probably even go so far as to think that four-wheel drive means boring, but the 11 cars that we've gathered would certainly beg to differ. Varied in their ages, silhouettes, layouts and philosophies, both mechanically and dynamically, they showcase all that can be wonderful about four-wheel drive. And in the sort of conditions that prevail across much of the northern hemisphere in autumn, winter and spring (and frequently summer), these might just be the very best options to keep you enjoying driving all year round on roads like these...





**Above:** group of 11 includes three Audis – Quattro (near left), R8 V10 Plus (centre) and RS Q3 (rear, fourth from right). **Left:** Quattro's fabulously retro display. **Below:** Delta Integrale Evo still looks perfect all these years on





## DAY 1 --- by HENRY CATCHPOLE

**OF COURSE IT'S TYPICAL THAT THE** one time we head to Snowdonia hoping for a bit of rain and rancour from the weather, we draw the curtains on the first morning to be greeted by bright sunshine. It's not really too much of a worry as there are some lovely high winds and torrential downpours forecast during our three days in north Wales, but at least one voice suggests we might have been better off visiting the beleaguered residents of Somerset.

The majority of our driving will be on the road, but we'll also be heading up to Anglesey Circuit, where we will put some figures on the cars and also find out how they behave when they finally relinquish their grip. This morning, though, I'm settling back into the new 911 Turbo that I drove across in, late last night. It seems an appropriate place to start the test because Ferdinand Porsche can lay claim to having produced the first four-wheel-drive car.

The Lohner-Porsche, built in 1900, was designed as an electric vehicle with a hub motor on each wheel. Ironically, however, its electrical status and hub motor design (technology now being touted as next-generation) has meant that most people see a car built three years later as the first true 4x4. In 1903 the Spyker 60 HP, a two-seater sports car built for the Paris-Madrid race, was not only the first car to have a six-cylinder engine – a huge 8.8-litre in-line unit – but also the first internal-combustion car to have a permanent four-wheel-drive system (with three diffs).

The 991 Turbo, with its electro-hydraulically actuated Generation V Haldex clutch, torque vectoring and rear-wheel steer, is a technological world away from that Spyker. As PDK shuffles the gears seamlessly, it feels like a very calm way to travel extremely quickly down to our base for the day. Pulling into the car park, it's a wonderful conglomeration of box arches, blunt noses, sharp angles and some big wings. I decide that the only way to approach this is to take each car out for an exploratory run, starting with the oldest.

So it is that I'm hit by the thick, heady smell of old fabrics as I get into the Audi Quattro. This is a late 'RR' 20v, so the oblong instrument binnacle houses a fantastic set of orange LCD digital dials. It feels soft and not very performance-orientated initially, but once you get used to the amount of lean in corners and start pushing

harder, you begin to realise just how much grip it's capable of. I can't resist using an empty gravel car park to turn round in, at which point it's easy to feel the Torsen centre diff deviating from its standard 50:50 torque split.

From Group B to Group A. The beautiful, bright red Lancia Delta Integrale that Stan Hughes has brought along is a completely standard Evo 1. Lying across the back seats is a genuine Martini umbrella, which just adds to the sense of occasion. After the clarity of the Audi's bold digital dash, the Lancia's six dials with their tiny yellow lines and needles seem almost indecipherable. It feels so small and light compared to the bigger, more robust German, too. Keep the 16-valve engine revving above 3000rpm and it has surprising pace when you wind it up, and although the short, square stance makes it feel like it might be unruly in the corners, it's actually quite manageable. The suspension is firm and busy through vertical movements, but like the Audi there's quite a bit of lean in the corners. Interesting.

Next it's the R34 Nissan Skyline, here in V (for Victory) spec, and the initial feeling is that this must be the only GT-R to have left Japan with no more than its agreed 276bhp! It's just not particularly fast. The chassis is curious too, because it generally feels quite heavy-footed, but then in corners where you can commit early it gives glimpses of the supreme agility offered by ATTESA E-TS (deep breath... Advanced Total Traction Engineering System for All-terrain with Electronic Torque Split). It certainly struggles to keep up with the gunmetal slice of Lamborghini Aventador that goes howling past spitting flame at one point.

You sit high in the Evo IX's grippy Recaro, but somehow it suits the whole tiptoe feeling of the ever-alert Mitsubishi. It's a while since I've driven an Evo, but going just a few yards down the road reminds me why I would want one in any fantasy garage – the way its quick steering and S-AYC (Super-Active Yaw Control) let it dance through bends makes the Evo a driving experience completely unlike anything else.

Where the Evo skips lightly, there's a certain amount of bludgeoning with the menacingly black R35 GT-R. But while the older GT-R seems a little down on power, the current one feels in very rude health, giving its ATTESA E-TS a much more vigorous workout. It hunts and weaves over bumps and cambers but it's phenomenally exciting to drive as it punches out of corners, with a definite rearward bias

*'PULLING INTO THE CAR PARK, IT'S A WONDERFUL CONGLOMERATION OF BOX ARCHES, BLUNT NOSES, SHARP ANGLES AND BIG WINGS'*





to the torque split (up to 2:98 front/rear). It's certainly a very different experience to the 991 Turbo, which Jethro Bovingdon is following me in for some of my drive.

Up next is lunch, during which there is a demonstration of torque splits using sausage rolls and a central clutch pork pie. After that, it's time for the big Ferrari FF with its clever 4RM system that takes power off the front of the engine via a small gearbox. Or it would if it was here, but it's apparently arriving later, with the rain, so it's on to the riotously angular Aventador.

With the GT-R still fresh in my mind, it's hard to imagine that anything will feel much more brutal than the Nissan, but as the Lambo yowls its way to the red line moments later, it's vividly apparent that the savagery of the Aventador's 6.5-litre V12 is on another level. Its torque split, electronically distributed via a central Generation IV Haldex, is as uneven as 10:90 front/rear in Sport mode and it certainly feels it, yet the bit of added traction and security eggs you on to drive in a way you couldn't possibly imagine doing if it was purely rear-wheel drive.

Sending the scissor door skywards back in the car park, it's hard to fathom much more of

a contrast to the Lambo than the two remaining cars. The Mercedes A45 AMG is essentially a front-wheel-drive car that can engage the rear wheels when it feels it's necessary. This A45 is on winter tyres and as I climb into the rather lovely interior I'm wondering if they will let the über-hatch move around a little more than it does on standard tyres. By the time I turn round on my test route, however, it's clear that's not the A45 way. If you want an automotive safety blanket that will give you the ultimate feeling of security at speed, then this is it. Perhaps the wet weather will make a difference.

Back in the car park I realise that there's not just one but two Audis left to drive, because I've forgotten about the R8. Nevertheless, I go for the RS Q3 first as I've never driven one before and to be honest I'm still a bit sceptical about its RS worthiness. The climb into the driver's seat feels very odd, but when you fire up the five-cylinder engine it sounds even more like a Quattro than the Quattro, which makes me smile. Despite its lofty profile it probably rolls less than the old car too, and although there's some understeer when you lean on the front end into a corner, you can also feel the power being launched enthusiastically to the rear axle by its

Haldex clutch (note it isn't a 'traditional' quattro Torsen diff) when you get on the throttle hard at the exit. It certainly deserves a place here.

As does the R8 V10 Plus. The R8 still looks so sleek and so good after more than six years with only a minimal facelift. For pure theatre only the Lambo betters the low-slung driving position in this company, and the Audi's A-pillars are an awful lot easier to see past. Because of the mid-engined layout, the quattro system is also different in the R8 (giving us our third version of quattro) with a viscous coupling doing the shuffling. It's wonderfully unobtrusive and although there's a bit of push to play with in the fast corners, the R8 feels predominantly rear-wheel driven, as you would expect with a 15:85 torque split. As ever, a slow-in, fast-out approach seems to get the best from it and I'm enjoying it so much that I decide to stick where I am for the journey 'home'.

On our way back to Brynteg, where we're staying, I can see the clouds gathering and slowly hiding the snowy peaks of the mountains from view. As our four-wheel-drive dots of noise and colour stretch out ahead along the single-track road across the moor, it looks like rain is finally being blown our way...





*'WHILE THE OLDER  
GT-R SEEMS DOWN  
ON POWER, THE  
CURRENT ONE FEELS  
IN RUDE HEALTH'*



**Opposite page:** A45 AMG's rear drive engages when front wheels start to slip. **Top:** 991 Turbo chases Skyline GT-R. **Above:** new GT-R's technology can send 98 per cent of torque to the rear wheels. **Far left:** R34 Skyline's outlet vent for oil cooler. **Left:** Aventador's fighter jet-style ignition button



# DAY 2: ANGLESEY CIRCUIT

by JETHRO BOVINGDON



**A**

**A BLUE SKY. A BLOODY** blue sky *again!* The nice lady on the BBC this morning might have predicted unbroken torrential rain for Anglesey and north Wales

for the next week or so, but the windscreen wipers of the Quattro aren't called into action a single time on the way to the circuit. The photographers are all smiles, of course, but today is all about investigating the progression of four-wheel-drive technology over the years, and to make clear judgements we need puddles and shiny kerbs.

We're using a 0.66-mile circuit at Anglesey, the twistiest layout it has to offer, because we want a quick, repeatable lap that isn't too hard on the cars (the Quattro and Integrale deserve and get kid-glove treatment) but which involves lots of direction changes, traction-testing zones and tricky areas where you're asking the car to

perform multiple tasks. It's all relatively low-speed, so the big-power cars won't get to simply annihilate the others with straight-line pace, and we're hoping it's a configuration that might spring a few surprises.

Time, and some restrictions by lenders, mean that not every car will get tested on track, but our head-to-head pairs are seriously intriguing. First up, the Quattro 20v takes on the RS Q3, a car championed in these pages by one Dickie Meaden (and boy do I remind him about that every time I can!). Then the gorgeous Lancia Integrale Evo 1 takes on the rabid Mercedes A45 AMG. After that we have a fascinating face-off between the Skyline GT-R and the all-conquering GT-R of today. And finally the incredibly sophisticated four-wheel-drive, four-wheel-steer, torque-vectoring 911 Turbo will take on the Mitsubishi Evo IX FQ-320, a car that uses 4WD and Active Yaw Control to stunning effect. Right on cue, the heavens open...





*'WE'RE HOPING  
THE TWISTIEST  
ANGLESEY  
CONFIGURATION  
MIGHT SPRING A  
FEW SURPRISES'*

**All pics:** eight of the 11 cars were tested at Anglesey, and there was time for a bit of showboating, too – all in the name of dynamic assessment, you understand...

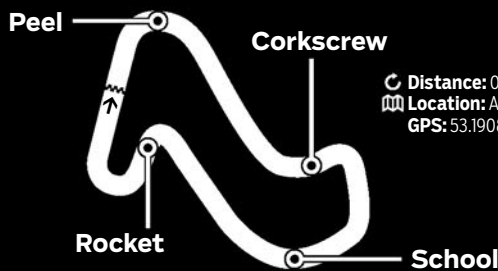




## THE LAP

A SHORT STRAIGHT leads into Peel, a tricky cresting right-hander taken in second or third gear. Now sweep right across the track before braking and turning left for the entry to Corkscrew. The Corkscrew right-hander falls away sharply and then the track flattens out, turns right (School) and starts to climb – a great test of constant-throttle

balance and then traction towards the end of this long turn. Just as you get the car straight, you're climbing rapidly and braking into the tight, completely blind left-hander, Rocket. Now instantly turn the car hard right for the long hairpin and back across the line. Around 45sec of frantic action and a real test of composure, agility and body control.



Distance: 0.66 miles  
Location: Aberffraw, Anglesey, Wales  
GPS: 53.19086, -4.49754

## AUDI QUATTRO 20v ● v AUDI RS Q3 ●

THE QUATTRO FEELS nothing short of vintage these days: narrow, soft, quiet and relatively slow. However, a sopping wet track allows the old magic to shine. The Quattro is predominantly an understeerer, but with the freedom to brake into turns and use weight transfer to help balance the car, it reveals a degree of adjustability. It washes wide through the first, hellishly slippery right-hander (we'll later discover most cars do) but it's terrifically agile into the tricky downhill braking zone that follows, the rear stepping out and then holding a lovely angle as you get gently back on the power to balance the car.

Through the Corkscrew the Quattro again falls into understeer, but it isn't speed-destroying and the line tightens under power through the long following right at School, the Quattro taking full throttle pretty early and staying really neutral. Into the tight left of Rocket with a lift and the rear steps out just a little, meaning you can give it the full Scandinavian flick into the hairpin and pin the throttle to make the most of the tight line. It's actually superb through here and

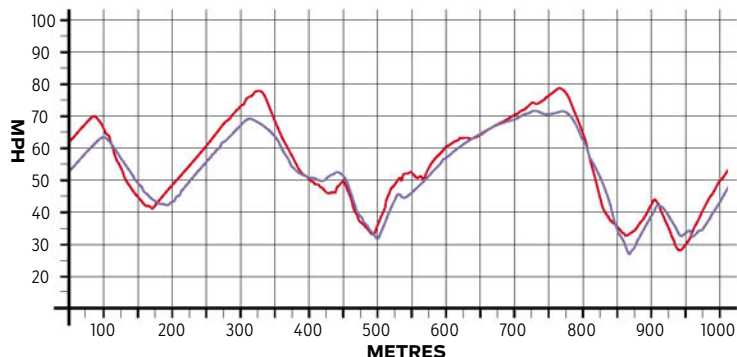
it's a great end to a tidy lap. It sets the benchmark at 47.6sec.

In comparison, the RS Q3, which is a surprisingly fun machine out on the road, feels rather leaden. It flatters to deceive, at first feeling neat and agile, but it gets more resolutely understeery the harder you try. Like most Haldex-equipped cars it feels more like a front-driver with excellent traction than a full-blown four-wheeler, and the result is that the lap is largely an exercise in restraint. Push too hard and you'll get understeer. Brake deep into a corner and things neutralise, and the tail will even swing wide, but the ESP system never fully turns off and rather than trimming time, the resultant panic-braking adds whole seconds.

Strangely enough, it's a four-wheeler that seems to work better in the dry, where the front tyres can really find grip and bring the rear axle alive just enough to sneak under the ESP's fun radar. But despite all this it registers 45.4sec in ESP Sport and a highly impressive 45.1sec with ESP disabled. Just how impressive that time is will soon become apparent.



Audi RS Q3: 45.1sec Audi Quattro 20v: 47.6sec



## LANCIA DELTA INTEGRALE ● v MERCEDES-BENZ A45 AMG ●

THE INTEGRALE, I'M relieved to report, makes really good use of its four-wheel-drive system. Whereas the RS Q3 and to a certain extent the Quattro feel rather one-dimensional in terms of balance, the 'Grale's amazing pedigree comes to the fore on the wet circuit. In fact it does pretty much everything you ask of it: tightening its line under power, hooking an apex and holding it with just a sense that the rear tyres are rotating slightly faster than the fronts. It can even be backed into a corner virtually on the lockstops before dragging itself straight.

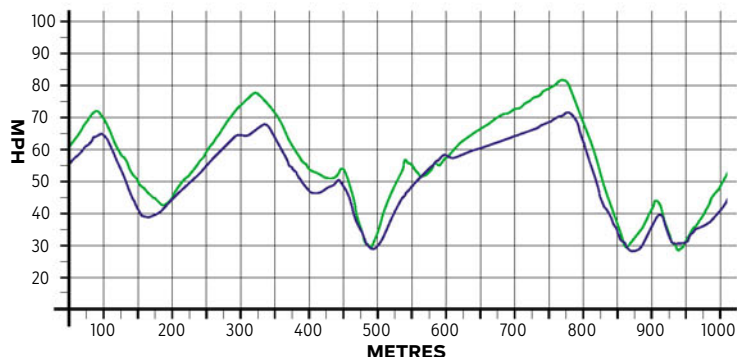
Of all the cars here it negotiates the incredibly tricky first corner with the most consistency and the most flair: sideways from entry to exit but always driving forwards. Through the quick direction change at Rocket it exhibits a knife-edge balance between stability and agility that feels anything but; you feel you could walk that line all day and never slip over the edge. It's an absolute blast and refuses to be wrong-footed. If I could I'd drive this thing straight into a forest and see how it copes with mud and gravel...

Sadly this superb display doesn't translate in terms of raw speed. At all. Perhaps due to its age and (perceived) fragility I was changing up through the gears a bit early, or maybe the Pirelli P6000s just don't generate that much grip compared to modern rubber... but the time the Integrale records is a disappointing 49.8sec. It hardly seems to matter, however – here's a four-wheel-drive system that gives the driver options and entertainment in equal measure.

The A45 AMG is at completely the other end of the spectrum. It is remarkably stable, clinically fast and very impressive, particularly through School, but it relegates the driver to no more than a bit-part player. You never seem to manage the traction and you certainly have almost no hope of managing the nose-led balance, so instead you just hit your braking points and steer. Like I said, impressive, but no fun at all. With the ESP in Sport mode or disabled altogether, it registers exactly the same time – a scintillating 44.8sec. But my dictaphone notes are devastating: 'The most boring car here by some margin.'

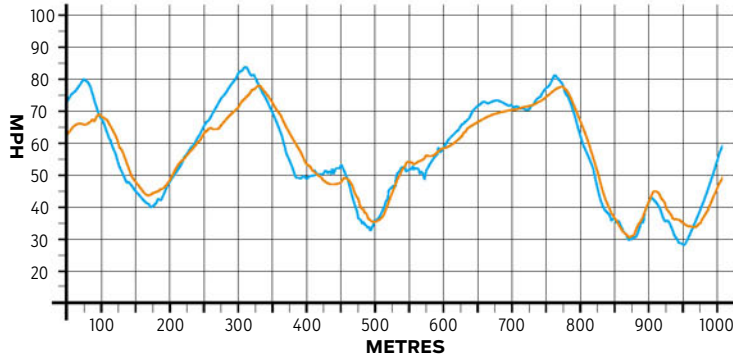


Lancia Delta Integrale Evo: 49.8sec Mercedes-Benz A45 AMG: 44.8sec

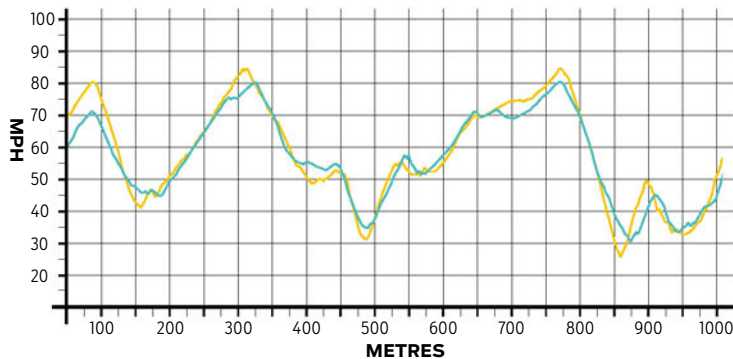




Nissan GT-R: 44.6sec Nissan Skyline GT-R (R34): 44.6sec



Porsche 911 Turbo: 43.9sec Mitsubishi Evo IX FQ-320: 44.1sec



Mini JCW GP: 46.5sec BMW M135i: 45.1sec

## NISSAN SKYLINE GT-R (R34) v NISSAN GT-R (2013MY)

THIS IS WHERE things start to get serious, where it's oversteer that you're trying to tame and exploit rather than understeer, and where big tyres, big boost and sheer size could potentially mean sharper edges to work around. I take the Skyline first.

By the exit of Peel I know these conditions and this circuit will highlight the very best of a sophisticated chassis as it locks onto the apex and drives through the corner with just a little flare of oversteer. The Skyline isn't as exuberant as the Integrale but it feels about twice as fast, and then it properly attacks the downhill braking zone into the Corkscrew. Through the right it slips into a large angle of oversteer that stabilises as the track flattens and requires not an ounce of lift to lock on to line for the never-ending School. Here the Skyline treads the line between under- and oversteer with poise, allowing real commitment.

Into Rocket and it oversteers helpfully on the way in and then tolerates a nice flick into the long right hairpin before doing that lovely 4WD drift with the front wheels pointing straight that I thought Evos had a

trademark on. Its 44.6sec lap represents a fantastic showing by the old stager.

The GT-R should monster it, but the first lap barely gets into the 48s and already I'm sweating. The GT-R is deeply unhappy, snapping from understeer to vicious oversteer and skimming over the wet surface rather than digging into it. It feels huge, spiky, overpowered and a handful. These Dunlop runflats plainly don't like the combination of a wet surface and low cornering speeds. In fact, getting the time down requires completely new lines in some parts of the track and lots of short-shifting. It simply won't tolerate the downhill braking-while-turning entry to Corkscrew so I have to stay left and brake in a straight line along the kerb.

Through the long right-hander, School, it spits sideways in an instant unless you short-shift to third and barely tickle the throttle. It ploughs clumsily into Rocket and then requires a mid-corner upshift through the final right-hander to avoid a wild, oversteering end to the lap. Finally I manage a clean lap and it posts an identical 44.6sec to the Skyline.

## MITSUBISHI EVO IX v PORSCHE 911 TURBO

THIS LITTLE CIRCUIT has already shown that big power and wide tyres aren't necessarily good things, but it seems inconceivable that the Evo IX could topple the mighty 911 Turbo. However, it takes half a lap to know that the Evo and this track is a marriage made in heaven.

The key to the Evo's speed is an incredible front end, which can be made even better with a bit of judicious left-foot braking. Through Peel you can put the inside-front wheel just where you want it and that means you can get on the power very early. Get it right and you'll get a hint of oversteer up over the exit kerb. The rest of the lap follows the same pattern – left-foot brake to get the nose onto the apex, jump on the power, feel the rear axle set its angle and then drive the car hard onto the next short straight. The Active Yaw Control rear diff really is effective – it uses a planetary gear set to actively accelerate the outside-rear wheel (true torque-vectoring rather than just nipping at an inside brake) and that means the Evo is always pointy, accurate and willing to turn. It feels born to flick from one direction to

the next. This FQ-320 has been tuned by its owner to more like 380bhp, but even so, a lap time of 44.1sec is a real result.

Initially the 911 Turbo feels too powerful and hemmed in. With the PSM systems on it stutters and hesitates, barrels into understeer and then spits into oversteer before being clumsily restrained. The big tyres seem to give up quickly and with little warning, and it's an altogether unhappy experience.

With PSM disabled things improve dramatically and the Turbo starts to flow. However, unlike the Evo – which couldn't be anything but four-wheel drive – the Turbo feels pretty much like a rear-drive 911. There's oversteer almost everywhere and although it feels beautifully progressive once you've warmed up and dialled into its responses, that means you're often making corrections and feathering the throttle where the Mitsubishi would be sending everything it's got to its wheels. Eventually the grip and power tell and the 911 Turbo shades the Evo with a 43.9sec lap. But the moral victor here is the Evo.

## THE BENCHMARKS

WE BROUGHT ALONG front-drive and rear-drive benchmarks to see how they'd cope with the tight, wet circuit. The Mini JCW GP was superb fun due to its aggressively pointy front end and it was great into corners, but traction was an issue and it felt reined in. It posted a 47.1sec lap with the stability in GP mode

and 46.5sec with it disabled.

The M135i was impressive, the rapid direction changes allowing great use of weight transfer to keep the tail swinging and negating the lack of a limited-slip differential for the most part. With stability systems disabled it managed a superb 45.1sec lap.





## DAY 3 by JETHRO BOVINGDON

**THERE'S STILL A BUZZ AROUND THE** group on the morning after the track shenanigans. The GT-R might be licking its wounds but the Skyline and Evo seem to be pulling back their shoulders ready for a celebratory strut. Of course, we might have sneaked out on track in the Aventador, too. My God, what a car. All the plough-on understeer of the early versions is gone and although it's not as playful as an R8 over the limit, when you get it right there's no more satisfying feeling. It's quite fast, too. Oh, and it shoots a permanent blue flame out of its giant modernist didgeridoo exhaust...

It takes a great deal of willpower not to just jump into the Aventador and disappear into the drizzle even in this company, but there are a few cars I need to get my head around first. Starting with the A45 AMG. This thing has been celebrated in some quarters for its speed, composure and desirability – none of which are in doubt. However, on the track it was considerably less fun than the Audi RS Q3. In fact if I had been blindfolded (which admittedly would have been quite dangerous) I would have sworn the A45 AMG was something from the VW Group – an Audi S3, perhaps. Same efficiency of performance, same resolutely pushy balance, just a slightly more rousing soundtrack with all the upshift crackles and boomy hollering.

The narrow, dry stone wall-lined Llanberis Pass demands caution, so ultimate security and predictability are welcome traits. If the A45 is to shine, then this is its stage. It's wet and cold, while the road is corrugated from frost damage and the lumbering buses that chug up and down this stretch all day long. And the A45 is deeply impressive here. The 355bhp 2-litre turbo four-cylinder engine is almost lag-free despite its 178bhp-per-litre, the balance remains neutral at road speeds where many of the corners are blind or simply too narrow to really fling the car into, and the grip and traction provide the sort of cross-country pace that might worry a 911 Turbo driver who isn't right on his game. The GT-R in the rear-view mirror has a little wobble out of one of the tight rights and then recedes out of sight. It might not fit the script, but I bet 85 per cent of drivers would be quicker in this thing than the big Nissan.

However, even in the context of this celebration of four-wheel-drive performance machines, speed isn't everything, and there are areas where the A45 is frustrating. The dual-clutch gearbox always seems to need a few tenths to think about every request, the incredibly tough ride at low speed doesn't quite

**'WITH A DRIVETRAIN THAT MAKES LIGHT WORK OF 1880KG, IT DOESN'T TAKE LONG TO EASE YOURSELF INTO THE FF'**

**Above:** FF and 2013 GT-R are the two heaviest cars in the group. **Right:** Evo IX FQ-320 was kindly loaned by owner Chris Dooks. **Opposite page:** Audi's RS Q3 compact SUV offers a surprising amount of fun







turn into the iron-fisted body control that you have the right to expect when you really start to push, and the one-dimensional balance soon becomes a bore. If you like going *really* fast then the A45 AMG might be the car for you, but I can't help thinking that a drivers' car should be more nuanced than this.

At the top of the pass the cars are pinging and ticking, with hot tyres steaming, and I think it's fair to say we've all woken up. 'Bloody hell, that's a monster,' says Kenny P (who we've coaxed out of semi-retirement for this test, if only to help with the driving), pointing at the GT-R. 'Unbelievable engine and gearbox but feels edgy,' he adds. Henry has been in the vast Ferrari FF, a car that really shouldn't work on this particular road. 'Super-impressive,' he says. 'You can feel the car starting to slide and then pulling itself clear. Imagine an F12 along here today...' He's got a point. The F12 is a wonderful car but on a narrow and sodden road in Wales it could be something of a handful. In fact I'm not sure the rear wheels would ever stop spinning.

Our next rendezvous point is on the good old *evo* Triangle and I make sure I'm in the R8 V10 Plus. I don't mind admitting that I adore this car. Any R8 is a truly great thing (unless it's specced with the horrific old R-tronic automated manual gearbox, a crime that warrants a custodial sentence), but the Plus just ups the intensity and the control, injecting a little edge but without sacrificing the car's delicious poise. After the almost bludgeoning feel of the A45, the R8 is a revelation. Every ingredient is so polished, so linear in its response and so intuitive. The 542bhp engine revs with sharpness but remains creamily smooth, while the dual-clutch S-tronic transmission is freakishly fast and its seamlessness matches a dynamic fingerprint that has a rare lightness of touch. I guess the car always feels within itself, be that the damping, the drivetrain or the balance.

The R8 barely notices the wet surface, cutting through the water to find astonishing grip and communicating its limits with absolute clarity. Through slow corners it tends to understeer

just a little and then drive through that phase to a natural oversteering balance. In the quicker turns you feel the front edging wide but then it holds its angle of attack and allows the V10 to just keep on revving. Its one dynamic weakness is a surprising instability on the brakes, a trait shared with every R8 I've driven. It really can squirm around if you dig deep into the stopping power and that comes as quite a shock as the rest of the performance is so controlled. Even so, by the time I arrive at our meeting point I'm deeper still in love with the Plus. What a car.

Naturally, the Audi Quattro is something of a disappointment after the R8. I think it looks better with every passing day and the view out, with its spindly A-pillars and near-flat side windows, is superb, but dynamically the game has moved on so far that the rules seem unrecognisable. The first thing you notice is how quiet the 2.2-litre five-cylinder engine is. All those warbly fantasies fuelled by Hannu Mikkola in a flame-belching S1 are dashed in seconds. You might just about tell







it has five cylinders and there's a bit of whooshing and chirruping from the turbo, but it's a pretty underwhelming and deflating soundtrack. Next you'll marvel at how soft it feels, how much body roll it adopts and how many bites the dampers need to take care of a single big bump.

Even so, there's some good stuff underneath the sponging of the suspension and hidden by the whispering exhaust. Grip itself remains very good, the 220bhp engine has plenty of lag but also a wide power band up above 3500rpm, and the performance itself feels well matched to the grip available. It's a car you float over the road surface in, maintaining momentum, feeling the steering weight build up and then gently ease as the front wheels start to push wide. Find a long corner and that understeer is gradually trimmed away and the Quattro leans on its outside-rear wheel. Of course, it lacks the sheer fizz of the newer cars, but the Quattro can still cover ground. With fresh dampers and just a little more boost, I bet it'd be a very rapid car indeed. It's one you might have in your collection, then, but not a one-stop shop for excitement and feedback.

The big-hitting Ferrari FF is very much a different story. If ever one car could be 'all the car you'll ever need' then surely a four-seater V12-engined Ferrari with 642bhp, a top speed of 208mph, a decent boot and four-wheel-drive security is it? It's a magnificent concept and the execution is awe-inspiring. This is a *huge* car, but with the signature superfast Ferrari steering and a drivetrain that makes light work of 1880kg, it doesn't take long to ease yourself into hustling the FF. The engine and twin-clutch gearbox deserve special mention because they are nape-prickingly good. The noise is sharp and scowling but so smooth it almost sounds like a recording of an old F1 car is being piped into the cabin. The FF doesn't quite have the top end of an F12 (what does?), but this 6.3-litre V12 is truly one of the world's great engines. The gearbox also lacks the aggression of the F12 or Speciale set-up but its slightly less ferocious actuation fits the character of the FF perfectly.

However, the FF is a victim of its own brilliance. That might sound daft, but so sharp is the drivetrain and the steering that you start to drive it like you would an F12. Do so and the amazing composure starts to melt away and the unique four-wheel-drive system feels a little clumsy. The FF runs out of suspension travel on these wickedly bumpy roads, clattering into its bumpstops and then taking time to recover its composure. It might only be a split second, but when you're travelling quickly in nearly two tons of Ferrari and need it to brake hard and then turn sharp left in a hurry, it's enough to make you feel like a rug's been pulled rapidly from under your feet. Furthermore, the ingenious four-wheel-drive system doesn't have the same invisibility of the best here. You feel the rear slide and then the front wheels engage to pull you straight again. That two-part process is tangible, almost disjointed. It feels to me like the front and rear axle are connected by bungee cord, the front accelerating straight and the





rears hesitating before following behind. Don't get me wrong, when the FF is striding across the landscape it's something to behold, but if this is a test of four-wheel drive, there are better, more intuitive systems.

Henry disagrees: 'It's an awesome thing, isn't it? OK, so it's not quite an F12, but as a GT car... I'm not sure anything else could do that.' He's right that a Bentley Continental GT, for example, would feel clumsy by way of comparison. But in the company of cars as ruthlessly controlled as an R8 or a 911 Turbo, the FF is left exposed. Other stuff winning rave reviews? The Evo leaves everyone grinning, the 911 Turbo could have been made for these roads by all accounts and the 2013MY GT-R has rediscovered its irresistible status. Every time I see somebody hand the keys to the next eager punter they're shaking their head in disbelief and their hands are trembling. The word 'monster' is oft-repeated.

I'm keen to drive the Evo because, to me, it's unique. Whereas the FF and to a certain extent the R8 and Turbo try to hide their four-wheel-drive underpinnings, the Evo revels in it. And unlike the RS Q3 or A45, which use four-wheel drive almost exclusively to aid stability, for the Evo it's all about creating hyper-agility and then managing that response with four-wheel-drive traction. It's at its best on relentlessly twisting roads where it always seems up on its toes with

the throttle as effective at steering the car as the wheel in your hands. Yet even on this fast, bumpy section of road, with rapid turns and nasty braking zones that all seem to plunge downhill and carry the scars of sumps and splitters, the Evo's mesmerising adjustability and control comes to the fore.

Initially it feels a tall, narrow, nervous car, with surprising amounts of body roll and disconcertingly light steering. A period of acclimatisation is necessary. But as the miles build, you come to appreciate the steering's unerring accuracy and the way its speed instantly agitates the rear of the car. At first you'll just feel the odd wiggle on corner exit. You might even panic. Then it'll happen again and again, your commitment will creep upwards and soon that little wiggle will become the perfect amount of yaw from turn-in to exit, allowing you to pin the throttle and let the rasping four-cylinder turbo engine run to 7800rpm. Pretty soon you feel like the Evo is dancing precisely to your tune, at once tense to your inputs and relaxed in the way it deals with surface changes. And the hyper-agility actually provides a sense of calm control because the car needs such subtle, measured inputs. It really is a magical feeling when you get an Evo flowing.

The Integrale can't match the Evo's control nor its appetite to change direction. However, it feels so much more alive than the Quattro, and

its disappointing lap time now seems even more baffling because it's a very rapid way to traverse these roads. It feels more front-biased than it did on the wet handling circuit, but the Integrale still gives the driver options, particularly on the way into corners, where you can set the tail swinging and then drive through the slide onto the next straight. I'm not talking huge angles here, but enough to make the car feel alert to the driver's inputs and to cut the steady-state understeer you'd otherwise push into. I love the way the 207bhp engine pulls gruffly to the red line, the long-throw but light gearshift and the delicacy of the steering. It's an enticing little package and although values are rising rapidly, the Integrale feels every inch up to its iconic status. Just don't go baiting RS Q3s in it...

So here it is, Dickie's favourite RS Audi. And you know what? It's pretty bloody good. The 306bhp five-cylinder turbo engine is a real fire-cracker. The RS Q3 also rides well, has good body control and strong grip, but not at the expense of any feedback or adjustability. Pour it across the Denbigh Moors Road and it does what the RS4, RS5 and RS6 rarely do – it flows. Instead of pummeling the road and leaping off-line, it breathes with the surface. Feel the car start to understeer, back off to lock the front tyres back on line and then reapply power, and it adopts a neutral stance, all the while chomping through revs and popping in lovely positive





**Opposite page:** Integrale's road performance makes up for sluggish track form.  
**Below:** R34's digital telemetry readout was ahead of its time.  
**Bottom:** Quattro feels old compared to its younger R8 stablemate

*'THE INTEGRALE FEELS SO MUCH MORE ALIVE THAN THE QUATTRO'*











## Ultimate 4x4 test

gearshifts from its S-tronic 'box. Start to drive it like a giant hot hatch and it really can be made to throw some pretty wild shapes and it feels up for it, keen to entertain as well as deliver secure traction. I almost daren't say this, so I'll let Henry do it instead: 'Well, it's a lot more fun than the A45 AMG.'

Speaking of fun, it's time I tried the GT-R on the road. Climb into the soft, overly padded seats, ignite the 542bhp 3.8-litre twin-turbo V6, pull the stunted gearlever back, right and back again to select Drive, then nudge it left for manual actuation. Then relax for a moment, clear your head of any notion that this car is some sort of giant computer game, and get ready to work. Within a gearshift the GT-R feels extreme in every sense. The ride is stiff, the front end hunts around for cambers and the big runflat tyres wriggle over white lines or those shiny tar squiggles that mark patched-up surfaces. The V6 sucks, wheezes and then roars as the revs build and the gearshift has an engineered-in ferocity that almost makes you wince. People often compare the GT-R to the 911 Turbo but to me it feels closer to a GT2. It's pure aggression.

With the dampers in Comfort, the four-wheel-drive system in Race and the traction and stability systems also in Race mode, it's a wild, intoxicating ride. There's so much performance to unleash, such superb front-end response to work with and always the threat of the rear axle snapping wide on corner exit. No question, the GT-R keeps you busier than any other car here and your every input becomes crucial because of the raw speed that this thing generates. In these conditions I'd wager that the R8 and the 911 have a little more grip – just because their tyres are less dry road/track-optimised – and they're certainly calmer things to exploit, but the excitement that pours back at you with the GT-R is something else. It seems that every corner, fast or slow, requires technique to master and usually a correction to help smooth progress. I know there's a general sense that the GT-R is a bit dull, but when you're attacking a great road in one, that perception is laughable. It is a proper monster.

The R34 Skyline is in some ways everything that the GT-R isn't: deliberate, calm and almost traditional to drive. The legendary RB26 motor just doesn't have the boost in standard 276bhp form to spring any great surprises, so instead of short-shifting to lessen the hammer-blow of torque, you have to wring every last rev out of it to make the Skyline start to shake off its torpor. The gearshift is long of throw and weighty, the brakes have lovely progression and feel and the damping is top-notch. Back when this car was launched it seemed impossibly stiff, but today the ride feels almost perfectly judged. At low speeds it can seem unyielding, but once free from towns and villages the control of the dampers is positive and the car always feels completely supported. That means you can really lean on the chassis and as you do so, the Skyline becomes ever more convincing.

It's very stable on corner entry – at road speeds a throttle lift has no effect on the balance at all but





*‘AS AN ADVERT FOR FOUR-WHEEL DRIVE, THE 911 TURBO IS PRETTY DAMN CONVINCING’*



**Above:** 911 Turbo feels almost indomitable on wet roads. **Right:** switch allows the Quattro's rear diff to be locked for gravel work

drops you out of the power band. So you must commit early to a corner and jump on the gas well before the apex. Now you feel the rear bias working for you as the outside-rear wheel digs in and the inside-front unloads. If there's room and the surface is glistening, you eventually find proper oversteer and the Skyline stays poised even beyond the limit. It's not a wholly natural feeling, as the first phase of oversteer doesn't seem to need correction and if you react to do so, the car bobbles around uncomfortably. So you have to train yourself to let the Skyline work with that little angle of slip, almost like you might the Mitsubishi. Boy does it need more power, though. It feels like it's breathing through a peashooter at times and I suspect with a sensible 400bhp or so it'd be a different and more thrilling animal.

Unsurprisingly, the 911 Turbo eats the R34. In fact it eats everything – the road, the rain, loose gravel, muddy tractor prints, birds, sheep and probably buildings if they dared to get in the way. It's not so much a car as a force of nature, harnessing great power (513bhp) and directing it with shattering, deadly accuracy. Where it scores over the GT-R is in low-down torque and because it feels so much smaller and narrower than the big Nissan. The figures say they're not dissimilar in that regard, but once you're sat low in the Turbo and you feel the amazing shrinking wheelbase facilitated by the four-wheel steer, you'd swear it was half the size of its adversary. It changes direction with amazing security, and combining rear-engined traction with a driven front axle makes for corner exits that threaten to suck your eyeballs back into your skull.

As an advert for four-wheel drive, the 911 Turbo is pretty damn convincing. The edges present in the GT-R are buffed away, liberating the driver to use every ounce of performance almost at will. There's no understeer to speak of – in fact the four-wheel-drive system probably gives the Turbo an even more secure front end than the GT3 in these conditions, and when the car does run out of grip it never seems to run out of ideas. I'm sure the diffs are juggling torque like crazy, but the driver would barely know it. It all feels quite natural. This Turbo doesn't have the clever but feel-robbing PDCC active anti-roll system and it is more forgiving at the limit. Or perhaps the lower grip levels just suit the chassis better. Either way, it's quite a clinical performance. You know what's next, right? Yes, it lacks steering feel and because it's so composed, the sweat-inducing thrills of the GT-R are completely absent.

And then there was one. The mighty Aventador. All 690bhp of it. In a rather subdued shade of grey it still manages to look outrageous. Incredibly, even in the company of the R8, GT-R

and Turbo it still feels outrageous, too. In fact the sheer scale of its performance towers over the rest. Where you'd be headbutting the limiter in the 911, the Aventador is just getting going, and the final rush from 5500 to 8000rpm is shocking in its violence. It feels every one of those 690bhp and a few more, and with just 1575kg to push (and pull), the 6.5-litre V12 always seems to have an over-abundance of mumbo to hurl at all four tyres.

If the engine is all fire and brimstone, the Aventador's chassis has a good degree more subtlety. Yes, it's very stiff at low speeds and on roads with surfaces as ragged as these it never truly smooths out, but the sheer traction afforded by the Haldex four-wheel-drive system is immense and at speed the balance is pretty extraordinary, too. Unlike the R8, which builds up a security blanket of push in high-speed corners, the Aventador instead gets ever more neutral. Pour it into a turn and you might feel a hint of understeer, but as soon as the car is driving again that disappears and you have to unwind lock in direct correlation to the throttle opening. That means this big, wide supercar feels light and agile in third- and fourth-gear corners and gets your heart thumping as the rear-mounted V12 threatens to overtake you.

**Opposite page:**

Quattro and Evo were both bred for rallying.

**Below:** the V12 engines of the FF and the Aventador reverberate across the Welsh countryside

But the sting in the tail never arrives – just total neutrality and forearm-burning lateral Gs.

Slower corners reveal a little more understeer, but it hardly detracts from the drama of guiding and setting free that magnificent V12 whenever possible. The brakes are strong but a frustrating dead spot at the top of the pedal travel persists and even 400mm ceramic discs eventually start to feel the burden of wiping away the speed generated by the Aventador. However, the once-brutal gearbox is much improved. It's still rather clunky at low speeds but improves hugely at high revs in Corsa mode, snapping in gearshifts with a measured brutality that matches the overall shock-and-awe tactics employed by this wild, wicked supercar. If the wonders of four-wheel drive only gave us this one exploitable 690bhp madman, then its place in motoring lore would be assured...





## Ultimate 4x4 test



### FERRARI FF

**Engine** V12, 6262cc  
**Power** 642bhp @ 8000rpm  
**Torque** 504lb ft @ 6000rpm  
**0-62mph** 3.7sec (claimed)  
**Top speed** 208mph (claimed)  
**Weight (kerb)** 1880kg  
**Power-to-weight** 347bhp/ton  
**Basic price** £227,142

**evo rating:** ★★★★★



### LAMBORGHINI AVENTADOR LP700-4

**Engine** V12, 6498cc  
**Power** 690bhp @ 8250rpm  
**Torque** 509lb ft @ 5500rpm  
**0-62mph** 2.8sec (claimed)  
**Top speed** 217mph (claimed)  
**Weight (dry)** 1575kg  
**Power-to-weight (dry)** 445bhp/ton  
**Basic price** £260,040

**evo rating:** ★★★★★



### PORSCHE 911 TURBO

**Engine** Flat-six, 3800cc, twin-turbo  
**Power** 513bhp @ 6000-6500rpm  
**Torque** 524lb ft @ 2100-4250rpm  
**0-62mph** 3.2sec (claimed)  
**Top speed** 195mph (claimed)  
**Weight (kerb)** 1595kg  
**Power-to-weight** 327bhp/ton  
**Basic price** £118,349

**evo rating:** ★★★★★



### AUDI R8 V10 PLUS

**Engine** V10, 5204cc  
**Power** 542bhp @ 8000rpm  
**Torque** 398lb ft @ 6500rpm  
**0-62mph** 3.5sec (claimed, S-tronic)  
**Top speed** 197mph (claimed, S-tronic)  
**Weight (kerb)** 1570kg  
**Power-to-weight** 351bhp/ton  
**Basic price** £129,710

**evo rating:** ★★★★★



### NISSAN SKYLINE GT-R (R34)

**Engine** In-line 6-cyl, 2568cc, twin-turbo  
**Power** 276bhp @ 7000rpm  
**Torque** 289lb ft @ 4400rpm  
**0-60mph** 4.7sec (tested)  
**Top speed** 165mph (claimed)  
**Weight (kerb)** 1560kg  
**Power-to-weight** 180bhp/ton  
**Price new** £52,000 (1999)  
**Value today** £20,000-30,000

**evo rating:** ★★★★★



### MITSUBISHI EVO IX FQ-320

**Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1997cc, turbo  
**Power** 326bhp @ 6700rpm  
**Torque** 306lb ft @ 4300rpm  
**0-62mph** 4.5sec (claimed)  
**Top speed** 157mph (claimed)  
**Weight (kerb)** 1400kg  
**Power-to-weight** 237bhp/ton  
**Price new** £29,999 (2005)  
**Value today** £10,000-15,000

**evo rating:** ★★★★★



### AUDI QUATTRO 20v

**Engine** In-line 5-cyl, 2226cc, turbo  
**Power** 220bhp @ 5900rpm  
**Torque** 228lb ft @ 1950rpm  
**0-60mph** 6.2sec (claimed)  
**Top speed** 143mph (claimed)  
**Weight (kerb)** 1329kg  
**Power-to-weight** 168bhp/ton  
**Price new** £32,995 (1989)  
**Value today** £12,000-20,000

**evo rating:** ★★★★★



### LANCIA DELTA INTEGRALE EVO

**Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1995cc, turbo  
**Power** 207bhp @ 5750rpm  
**Torque** 220lb ft @ 3500rpm  
**0-62mph** 5.7sec (claimed)  
**Top speed** 137mph (claimed)  
**Weight (kerb)** 1300kg  
**Power-to-weight** 162bhp/ton  
**Price new** £23,249 (1992)  
**Value today** £9000-18,000

**evo rating:** ★★★★★



### NISSAN GT-R (2013MY)

**Engine** V6, 3799cc, twin-turbo  
**Power** 542bhp @ 6400rpm  
**Torque** 466lb ft @ 3200-5800rpm  
**0-62mph** 2.8sec (claimed)  
**Top speed** 196mph (claimed)  
**Weight (kerb)** 1740kg  
**Power-to-weight** 316bhp/ton  
**Basic price** £76,610

**evo rating:** ★★★★★



### MERCEDES-BENZ A45 AMG

**Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1991cc, turbo  
**Power** 355bhp @ 6000rpm  
**Torque** 332lb ft @ 2250-5000rpm  
**0-62mph** 4.3sec (tested)  
**Top speed** 155mph (limited)  
**Weight (kerb)** 1480kg  
**Power-to-weight** 244bhp/ton  
**Basic price** £37,845

**evo rating:** ★★★★★



### AUDI RS Q3

**Engine** In-line 5-cyl, 2480cc, turbo  
**Power** 306bhp @ 5200-6700rpm  
**Torque** 310lb ft @ 1500-5200rpm  
**0-62mph** 5.5sec (claimed)  
**Top speed** 155mph (limited)  
**Weight (kerb)** 1655kg  
**Power-to-weight** 188bhp/ton  
**Basic price** £43,000

**evo rating:** ★★★★★



**Far left:** photographer Dean Smith gets our 4x4 heroes together at Anglesey. **Left:** Jethro discovers Dickie was right about the RS Q3. **Right:** snapper Drew Gibson straps himself aboard the Skyline



# THE CONCLUSION

by JETHRO BOVINGDON



**I** **IT HAD TO END** sometime and that one final drive in the Aventador rammed home the point we hoped this test would, namely that when four-wheel drive is done well it can add another layer of excitement to a dynamic package; that it doesn't have to dilute an experience but instead can define it. You don't need £260,000 to experience that revelation, either – a £12,000 Mitsubishi Evo IX arguably makes the most convincing argument of all for harnessing four-wheel-drive technology to increase both driving enjoyment and ultimate ability.

Each of these 11 cars feels distinctly different,

each is in some way enhanced by having four driven wheels and each came to Wales and took on the toughest roads we know in nasty conditions with a degree of composure that would elude all but the very best two-wheel-drive machines. What's really exciting is the sheer scope of possibilities that four-wheel drive brings, from the rock-solid composure of the Mercedes A45 AMG to the extreme agility of the 2013MY GT-R.

Think of four-wheel drive as a tool to deliver driving thrills. It's a tool that's gaining momentum, too – 911 Turbo, R8, GT-R, Aventador... all remarkable cars. What we hope is that these machines are only just scratching the surface of what's possible. ✕

*'THINK OF FOUR-WHEEL DRIVE AS A TOOL TO DELIVER DRIVING THRILLS'*



# MACAN

by MIKE DUFF

## IS IT ALL DOWNHILL FROM HERE FOR PORSCHE?

*The launch of the Macan means that Porsche will now produce more SUVs each year than sports cars. But are there thrills to be found in this compact SUV, or does it offer little for driving enthusiasts?*

**I**T'S HARD TO KEEP YOUR perspective when on a private jet. Maybe that's why the motor industry loves them so much, using them to teleport their god-like executives between meetings with minions in different time zones. Or even, on rare occasions, to lug unwashed journalists around the place. Flying non-commercial offers a fleeting glimpse of a beautiful parallel universe, one where there are no queues, passport inspectors are polite and you don't need to rummage through your pockets to find £5.80 in change if you fancy a sandwich mid-flight.

Porsche flew us here to Leipzig today on a private jet, which was lovely (and must have put a substantial dent in the corporate credit card). It was a far more convenient way to travel than the BudgetAir alternative, but it also helped to instil some of that sense of being in an alternative reality. Maybe even the sort of parallel universe where a new, sub-Cayenne Porsche SUV isn't just a commercial necessity, but a good idea.









## Porsche Macan

Within the next year, the world's biggest sports car maker is going to become an SUV manufacturer that produces Boxsters, Caymans and 911s as a profitable sideline. Porsche sold 80,000 Cayennes last year – half its global production – and we're told that the car you can see here, the Macan, will add at least another 50,000 to that figure. For a whole generation of young car fans growing up in the colder, dustier and bumpier parts of the world, a Porsche is going to be a car with five doors and 18 inches of ground clearance.

Of course, when the Cayenne was launched, Porsche justified it as a necessary evil, a car built in response to customer demand but also to effectively cross-subsidise the more interesting bits of the range. No longer: we get to Leipzig to be told by senior executives that the Macan is 'as much of a Porsche as a 911 or a Cayman'. Really?

OK – the basics. The Macan is closely related to the existing Audi Q5 and sits on the same 'MLB' platform, Porsche engineers cheerfully admitting that the two cars share about a third of their under-body components. The Macan launches with three engines, all V6s, with twin-turbo petrols in 3-litre 335bhp S and 3.6-litre 394bhp Turbo forms, and the same single-turbo 3-litre 254bhp Audi diesel that we've already seen in the Cayenne and the Panamera. All have seven-speed PDK twin-clutch gearboxes as standard and 'proper' four-wheel drive through a permanent Torsen system.

From launch, the Macan is priced hard against posher versions of cars like the BMW X3 and even the Range Rover Evoque – both the petrol and diesel S versions are £43,300 before options. But its appeal will be broadened in the future by cheaper versions, probably with four-cylinder engines and possibly even just front-wheel drive. If anything, that estimate of 50,000 sales a year worldwide looks grossly pessimistic.

To put a surreal edge on things, our first experience of actually driving the Macan is going to be on a racetrack. Or rather, a pretend racetrack. Porsche has flown us to Leipzig partly so we can check out the space-age factory where the Macan gets built alongside the Panamera and Cayenne, but we're also here because of the Sport Driving School on the same site. It includes a dinky little 1.5-mile circuit that has (allegedly) been built from replicas of famous corners from tracks around the world, including the Lesmos from Monza and a decent attempt at Laguna Seca's famous Corkscrew.

At risk of calling my own evoness into question, the Macan looks pretty good when first encountered in the metal. A fair bit of the styling is downsized Cayenne, with a slightly more compact version of Porsche's trademark





**Right:** button-activated off-road mode raises Macan's ground clearance by 40mm to 230mm.

**Left (from top):** Macan is 186mm shorter than Cayenne; interior finish is typical Porsche quality; Macan proves better on track than you might expect



falling bonnet line. But the Macan's proportions are tighter, its stance is lower and it's a far more dynamic-looking thing than the lumpy Q5 it's based on. It's the interior that will really sell this car, though – inside it's basically a Cayenne with a huge saving, with the same instruments, driving position and (assuming you've paid for enough extras) switch-stacked centre console. Quality feels on a par with anything else Porsche produces.

We start off in the petrol S, heading onto the track behind an instructor in a 911, who warns us that the surface is cold, greasy and very slippery. This presumably explains why the cars are wearing Michelin Latitude winter tyres. The car is in full kitchen-sink spec, meaning there is a battery of driving aids and settings, including variable dampers and both Sport and Sport Plus modes. I opt to leave all these things

in their default settings for the first lap.

The engine is good and feels brawnier than it probably should do given the S's 1865kg kerb weight. The V6 doesn't have the most inspirational soundtrack, but there's no lag, it pulls hard and it seems to enjoy being revved. It's in a fairly relaxed state of tune – the Panamera S makes 414bhp from the same motor, after all – but on the Sport Driving School's straights it doesn't lose that much ground to the Macan Turbo in front.

The corners, however, are a different matter. Our instructor wasn't kidding about the lack of grip and the first slow turn has the S scrabbling for grip on the slippery surface. With so little friction to play with, there's little discernable resistance through the steering, but at least the Macan seems to be equally short of traction at both ends. On the second lap, switching to the

## **'THE MACAN LOOKS PRETTY GOOD WHEN FIRST ENCOUNTERED IN THE METAL'**



## Porsche Macan



**Below:** Turbo easily reaches 150mph on Autobahn. **Right:** seven-speed PDK gearbox is standard; 3.6-litre V6 produces 394bhp in Turbo

**‘THE MOST IMPRESSIVE THING ABOUT THE MACAN ON REAL ROADS IS THE FACT THAT IT DOESN’T FEEL LIKE AN SUV AT ALL’**



more permissive Sport Plus mode proves there’s a nicely exploitable balance, with the rear-biased torque distribution helping to counter understeer or even tip the car into a well-controlled rear-led slide.

This is all carefully chaperoned, of course, with the guiding 911 moderating the pace. And although switching to the Turbo for a few laps proves that it is indeed faster, sounds better, finds noticeably more traction on the slippery surface and feels happier under hard braking, it isn’t really proving much beyond the fact that the Macan feels better-suited to life on track than you’d expect it to.

Time for the road. This is a personal theory – so feel free to throw stones – but I’ve always reckoned that a fair chunk of the Cayenne’s guilty-secret appeal is how good it is at not being a Porsche. Sure, when you up the pace it does a decent impression of the company’s other products, albeit one which weighs nearly twice as much as a Boxster and has a centre of gravity at least two feet higher than a 911’s. It’s not a sports car, but it’s far more sports car-like than its rivals while being noticeably better at doing the duller stuff like trundling around town or carrying flat-pack furniture. And with its Cayenne-lite styling, I was expecting the Macan to pretty much do the same trick.

It doesn’t. Categorically the single most impressive thing about the Macan on real roads is the fact that, from the driver’s seat, it doesn’t feel like an SUV at all. The driving experience is what you’d get from a decently sorted hatch or saloon, the only difference being that it’s slightly taller. It’s well damped and rides nicely on both the standard steel and the optional air springs, and keeps its mass under tight control when asked to change direction quickly. It rolls more than something lower would when pushed hard – even Porsche can’t defeat the basic rules of Newtonian motion – but that doesn’t stop it from sticking to whichever line you’ve chosen. When grip does fade, the Macan stays as predictable as it did on track: neutral and sensible. The PDK gearbox is excellent, in either its automatic or manual modes, the brakes are strong and the Turbo has a nice, hard-edged soundtrack when you unleash it.

What it doesn’t provide is driving excitement, at least not beyond the thrills that come from blurring the scenery. Taking the Turbo down a derestricted Autobahn confirmed it would reach the 150mph limit of its winter tyres in impressively short order, and with plenty left in reserve (Porsche claims a 165mph top speed). But on narrower and twistier roads there’s a marked absence of the sort of go-harder vibes you associate with Weissach-derived products. Having a go in the S Diesel confirmed that its fat, flat torque curve is arguably better suited to the sort of rapid, effortless progress the Macan seems built for. Within the Porsche



## The Mercedes rival

ONE OF THE Macan's key competitors is likely to be the new Mercedes-Benz GLA45 AMG. It will undercut the 'S' versions of Porsche's new SUV with a price tag of £42,000 and is set to arrive in the UK in June, but we've already driven it.

It's the third AMG model to get the tuning arm's 355bhp four-cylinder 2-litre turbo and is billed as a high-performance small SUV. But really there's very little of the off-roader about it. Standing 1494mm tall, the standard GLA is already slightly lower than a Vauxhall Astra. The AMG version rides 15mm lower still. Really the GLA45 looks more like an over-inflated hot hatch than a performance SUV, and you get the same impression when you slide into the supportive AMG sports seats. The bonnet may seem raised up, but you never feel as though you're sat above normal traffic, even though you are higher than in its A45 AMG hatchback relation.

At least this means the GLA45 is only some 30kg heavier than its little brother. It's also why the 0-62mph time of 4.8sec is just 0.2sec slower. This number does feel conservative though, as the fast-shifting seven-speed dual-clutch transmission and 4matic all-wheel-drive system – which can send up to 50 per cent of the torque to the rear – allows you to easily make full use of the performance on tap.

As with the A45, the GLA45 gets beefed-up anti-roll bars, and stiffer steering knuckles to cope with the extra force generated by a degree more camber on the front wheels, added for improved agility. And the AMG-tuned speed-sensitive steering certainly is responsive, with a pleasant, natural feeling for an electrically assisted system. If only the chassis was more adjustable on the limit...

Still, the GLA45's uprated brakes are mightily impressive. They feature cross-drilled ventilated discs all round and do a fantastic job of hauling the car's 1510kg to a halt, the pedal providing plenty of feel and allowing you to accurately moderate your braking. And this is reassuring to know, because the GLA45 covers ground pretty much as fast as the A45. The slightly taller ride height does mean there's a tad more roll in the corners, but point-to-point few people would be quicker in the A45 – in fact AMG's engineers say at 8min 11sec the GLA45 is just a few seconds slower round the Nürburgring.

The thing is, by sitting higher you don't feel quite as connected to the road and so are a little more isolated from the action. But by way of recompense, comfort is improved. And this plus the improved practicality makes the GLA45 easier to live with every day for very little trade off in terms of fun.

**Mat Watson**



family it feels closest to the Panamera, a tool for travelling quickly rather than a car that encourages you to really drive it hard.

We already know that SUVs divide opinion among *evo* readers like nothing else. A substantial number of you hate them with an unbridled passion and resent every page in the magazine that we give them. But we also know that the increase in demand for cars like the Macan doesn't just come from the less-developed parts of the world – people in the UK who consider themselves performance car enthusiasts are going to buy this new SUV in sizeable numbers, too.

Porsche's genius move has been to create something that looks like an SUV but which doesn't drive like one. Granted, it doesn't drive like a pure-blooded sports car either: it's no 911, Cayman or Boxster. But it's closer than anything else has got to date. You're looking at the future of the Porsche brand right here, like it or lump it. ☒

## Specification

### PORSCHE MACAN TURBO

<b>Engine</b>	V6, 3604cc, twin-turbo
	CO2 208g/km
<b>Power</b>	394bhp @ 6000rpm
<b>Torque</b>	406lb ft @ 1350-4500rpm
<b>Transmission</b>	Seven-speed PDK twin-clutch gearbox, four-wheel drive, PTM
<b>Front suspension</b>	Multi-link, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
<b>Rear suspension</b>	Multi-link, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
<b>Brakes</b>	Ventilated discs, 360mm front, 356mm rear, ABS
<b>Wheels</b>	8 x 19in front, 9 x 19in rear
<b>Tyres</b>	235/55 R19 front, 255/50 R19 rear
<b>Weight (kerb)</b>	1925kg
<b>Power-to-weight (kerb)</b>	208bhp/ton
<b>0-62mph</b>	4.8sec (claimed)
<b>Top speed</b>	165mph (claimed)
<b>Basic price</b>	£59,300
<b>On sale</b>	Now

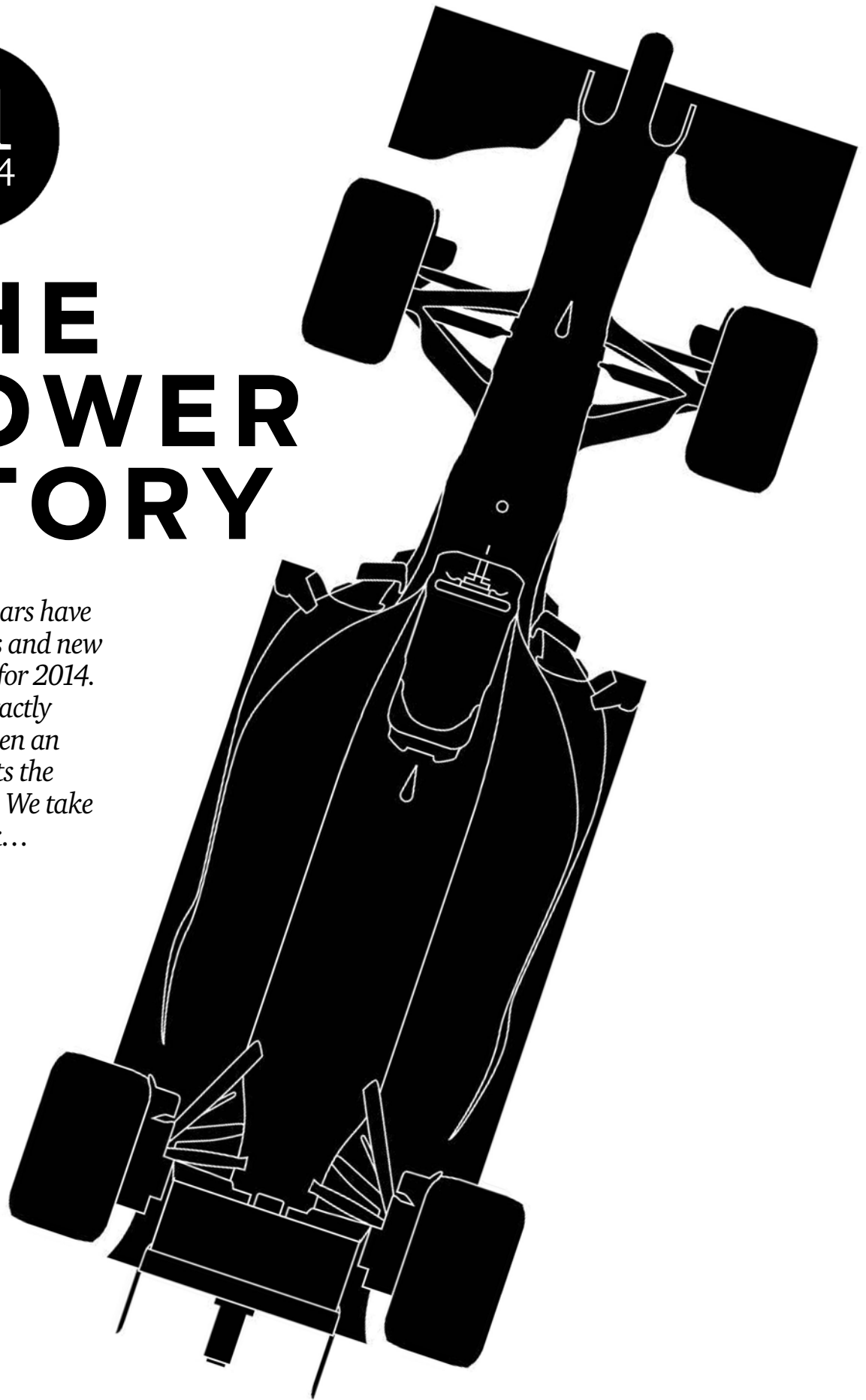
**evo rating:** ★★★★★





# THE POWER STORY

*Formula 1 cars have new engines and new hybrid tech for 2014. But what exactly happens when an F1 driver hits the accelerator? We take a closer look...*



by MICHAEL WHITELEY

AUTOMOTIVE RESEARCH  
SCIENTIST



**THE NEW FORMULA 1** season is about to begin, with the first race in Melbourne, Australia, in mid-March. There's lots of anticipation about what this year will

bring, especially with the much-talked-about regulation changes being imposed by the FIA. Turbocharged engines are returning, KERS are becoming more powerful, and there is even a new method of recovering energy.

So how do these changes affect the way in which power is delivered from F1 cars in 2014? Here we'll find out, by examining exactly what happens from the instant the driver presses the throttle pedal with his right foot, to the moment the desired amount of torque is delivered to the tarmac, via the mass of complex systems inbetween.

And for those who want to go to greater depths, we've even got formulas to help explain some of the relationships involved. But if you didn't pay attention in your physics classes at school, don't panic – these are purely optional!

## HIT THE GAS

Today, the only mechanical control systems in an F1 car are the steering and brakes. When the throttle pedal is pressed, a fully mapped drive-by-wire system interprets driver demand using a pre-determined strategy based on the pedal's position and the engine speed (taken from the ECU). A position control actuator connected to the throttle plate determines the extent of the opening of the throttle body, which allows air into the engine. This air makes its way to the intake valves of the internal combustion engine through the intake manifold.

## THE ENGINE

For 2014, the engines used in F1 will be 1.6-litre turbocharged V6s, rather than 2.4-litre naturally aspirated V8s as before. The V6s are still four-stroke units, with each piston working through the four stages that should be familiar to any petrolhead. Often referred to as 'suck, squeeze, bang, blow', the four stages are:

**Intake:** air is sucked through the inlet valves via the piston moving from top dead centre to bottom dead centre, whilst fuel is injected directly into the cylinder.

**Compression:** the air/fuel mixture is compressed with the up-stroke of the piston with the valves closed.

**Ignition:** a spark ignites the mixture to cause the exothermic combustion reaction, the energy released pushing the piston into another down-stroke, generating power and causing the crankshaft to rotate.

**Exhaust:** the product gases of the combustion process are dismissed through the exhaust valves on the piston's reciprocating upstroke.

This process continues at a rate that can turn the crankshaft up to 15,000 revolutions per minute, producing power.

### The formula

The amount of brake power produced can be calculated from:

$$P_b = \frac{\dot{m}_a \cdot LCV \cdot \eta_{th,b}}{AFR}$$

Where:

$P_b$  is the brake power (W)  
 $\dot{m}_a$  is the mass air flow rate (kg/s)  
 $LCV$  is the lower calorific value for the fuel (J/kg)  
 $\eta_{th,b}$  is the brake thermal efficiency  
 $AFR$  is the air to fuel ratio

## TURBO BOOST

The final stage of the four-stroke cycle presents an opportunity to up the power output from the engine using turbochargers. We have not seen turbos in F1 since 1988, after which they were banned. Now pressure-charged engines have been reintroduced to compensate for the downsizing of the engines by vastly increasing the volumetric efficiency through forcing more air (and therefore more fuel) into the engine.

The residual heat energy in the product exhaust gases spins a turbine on the hot, exhaust side of the turbo (see illustration, overleaf). This is connected to a compressor on the cold, intake side of the unit. This forces more air into the engine through the intake manifold, giving more power for a given displacement.

Due to the turbine rotating at speeds of up to 125,000rpm, the turbocharger unit can 'overboost' and force too much air into the engine if not controlled. Modern turbochargers therefore utilise a wastegate, which diverts exhaust gases from the turbine blades.

### The formula

Volumetric efficiency is the amount of air (at ambient pressure and temperature) entering the cylinder, expressed as a percentage of the cylinder's swept volume. In the case of turbocharged cars, this can exceed 100 per cent. The formula to calculate this for an engine is:

$$\eta_v = \frac{\dot{m}_a}{Q_{a,ref} \cdot V_s \cdot N_c}$$

Where:

$\eta_v$  is volumetric efficiency  
 $Q_{a,ref}$  is the reference air density (kg/m<sup>3</sup>)  
 $V_s$  is the engine swept volume (m<sup>3</sup>)  
 $N_c$  is the engine speed (rpm/120)



## SAVING ENERGY

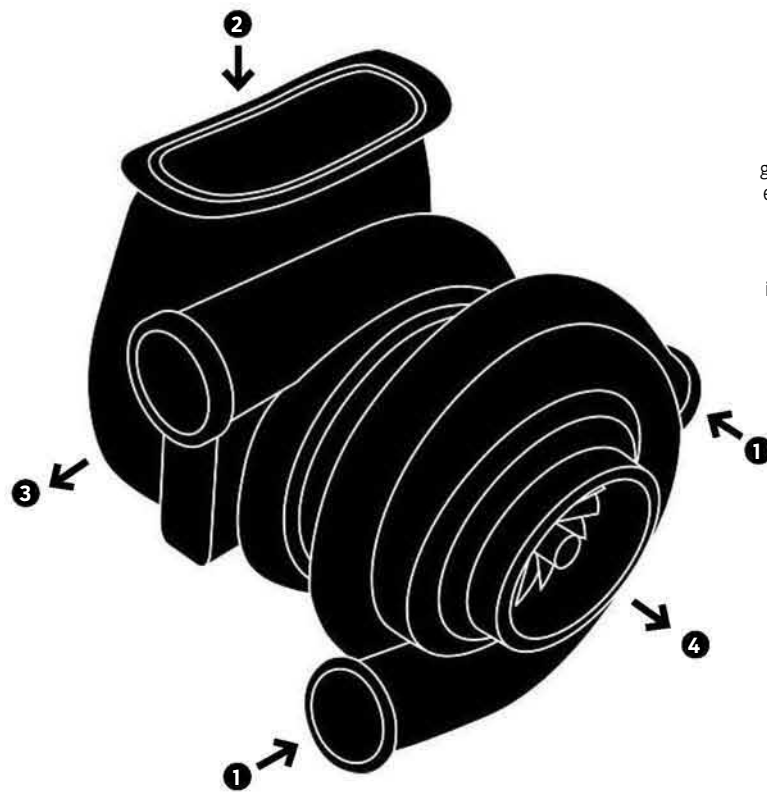
The latest F1 power units have a very clever trick up their sleeves to harvest some energy usually wasted in the system. A new unit called an MGU-H (Motor Generator Unit – Heat) can harvest wasted heat from the turbocharger and convert this into electrical energy that is either stored in batteries or used to directly drive the electric motor on the chassis. The system is so clever that it can also work in reverse and use some of the stored electrical energy to spin up the turbo at low revs, eliminating turbo lag. Big turbos suffer from big lag, where the gases coming out of the engine at low rpm are not enough to get the turbo spinning. Getting rid of this lag will make the engines behave more like the V8s, with low-down torque and a more linear power delivery.

## BATTERY POWER

Power can also come from the same type of hybrid system used last season. This year the name has changed from KERS to MGU-K (Motor Generator Unit – Kinetic), but it operates in the same fashion, albeit with a higher capacity. In simple terms, the unit is connected to the crankshaft of the engine and can either absorb energy to slow the vehicle, or add power output (up to 120kW/160bhp under 2014 regulations). When braking, the unit is a generator, reducing load on the brakes and supplying electrical power to the battery store. When accelerating, the unit powers the vehicle solely (in the pits) or adds to output from the engine (on track).

## TRANSMISSION

Wherever the torque comes from, the kinetic energy from the rotating crankshaft is sent through the eight-speed straight-cut sequential gearbox without the use of a clutch. The clutch is only required for setting off. The differential transfers the torsional and shear stresses produced by the engine to two driveshafts connected to the wheel hubs. The diff is of the limited-slip variety, so is able to lock up to help prevent the inside wheel spinning up. The characteristics of the diff can be changed through the electro-hydraulic control system to actively steer the car through a corner. As long as the settings are set and unchanged once on track, this system is allowed under the 2014 regulations.



**Left:** turbocharging at a glance... **1:** exhaust gases enter, spinning a turbine. **2:** the turbine drives a compressor, drawing in cool air through the air inlet. **3:** the compressed air is fed to the engine via the intake manifold. **4:** the exhaust gases are expelled

## TYRES

The job of the tyres is to transfer the torque to the ground with the highest amount of grip, with as much life as possible (without catastrophically exploding). The basic science involved here is related to rolling resistance.

Rolling resistance comes from two main processes: hysteresis losses due to cyclic deformation of the tyre as it passes through the contact patch account for around 90 per cent, then slipping against road friction accounts for the balance. It is influenced by normal load, tyre pressure, temperature, applied torque, speed and road surface material.

## CONCLUSION

As you can see, from the moment a driver presses the loud pedal, numerous complex systems interact to deliver torque to the racetrack. Some of these systems will make their way into the road cars of tomorrow (see below). So the next time you're watching F1, take a minute to appreciate the science behind the latest crop of chassis. Because you never know, you might be using something like them sooner than you think.

*Keep reading to find out what happened when 2014's F1 cars attended their first pre-season test.*

### The formula

Rolling resistance can be calculated as follows:

$$Rr = M_g (A_d + e^{X_d(v-v_0)})$$

Where:

$Rr$  is the rolling resistance

$M$  is the mass of entity

$s$  is acceleration due to gravity

$A_d$  is the coefficient of friction for the road surface

$e^{X_d(v-v_0)}$  is an exponential term to show that  $Rr$  gets a lot greater at higher speeds

## TECH TRANSFER

There were road-going cars with energy recovery systems long before KERS arrived in F1 in 2009 (e.g. Honda Insight, Toyota Prius). These were mainly so equipped to enhance their sustainability credentials. However, as the tech matured, with lighter, more powerful systems, the makers of high-end supercars realised new potential.

McLaren developed a steroid-injected version of the old F1 KERS for its P1 chassis. It ups the power output from the system to 131kW (176bhp) and with very clever control electronics uses the stored power to sharpen throttle response as well as increase overall power and provide a limited battery-only mode.

As yet there are no MGU-H-style units in road cars, but it's only a matter of time.



F1  
2014

# THE FIRST TEST

by HENRY CATCHPOLE

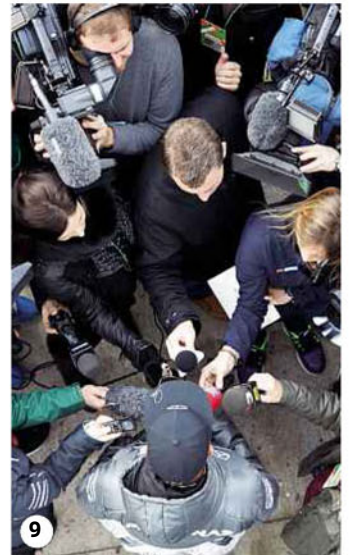


*After months of preparation, F1's technical revolution has finally reached a race circuit. evo was at Jerez in Spain as ten teams unleashed their 2014 creations for the first time*





1: Red Bull unveils its RB10.  
 2: Ferrari's F14 T manages half a lap before breaking down.  
 3: Hamilton will race as 44, his original karting number, in 2014.  
 4: lower nose section is mandated as a safety measure.  
 5: support for ill Schumacher.  
 6: Nico Rosberg debriefs the press.  
 7: Toro Rosso cunningly disguises rear diffuser.  
 8: new Force India.  
 9: Hamilton explains crash to the media





**IT'S 7:30AM AND JUST** getting light as we arrive at Jerez. The gleaming trucks are all lined up, but the F1 circus feels quieter and smaller when it's just testing and there isn't the public buzz of a race.

**7:45** Breakfast in Mercedes hospitality. Team executive director Paddy Lowe is wandering around with a coffee. Lewis Hamilton is playing with his bulldog Roscoe.

**8:20** There's a loud fluttering of shutters, like a flock of small birds taking off, as Mercedes takes the covers off its new car in front of a bank of photographers and cameramen in the pitlane. I find myself standing next to F1 design guru Gary Anderson, who reckons it's the neatest design he's seen so far. Lewis and Nico Rosberg take shots of each other with BlackBerrys.

**8:30** At the other end of the cold pitlane, the Red Bull is unveiled. Adrian Newey looks tired, Christian Horner is laughing and both Sebastian Vettel and Daniel Ricciardo seem confident and smiley. The colour scheme is bright, but there's a surprising lack of gimmicks.

**8:40** Photographers jostle outside the Force India garage. Another nose that looks like Gonzo's snuffler. Not good. The whole snout saga has distracted everyone from the fact that the cars' front wings are a significant 150mm narrower this year. However, from the amount of complexity near the end-plates, it looks as though one of the main aims is still to get air around and away from the front wheels.

**8:50** Engines warm up behind garage doors. Different noises. Interesting noises.

**9:00** Bang on time, the Mercedes goes out on track. We rush to the back of the paddock to find a good view. It's just an installation lap and it sounds very odd, like there's a 4500rpm rev limit and Lewis is a novice who keeps forgetting to change up. After one lap he's back in the pits.

**9:32** After half an hour with an empty circuit, Lewis goes back out. Another single lap, feeling his way round. A few more revs this time. Sounds much better. You can hear the turbo spinning when he's off the throttle on the way into a bend too. It feels very strange with so little track activity.

**9:40** The Ferrari comes out to a flurry of flash bulbs from the assembled photographers.

**9:40 (and 30sec)** I'm waiting for the sound of Kimi Räikkönen re-emerging from behind a small hill. Silence. A marshal runs across some open tarmac a little distance away and a radio crackles into life. Half a dozen corners in and the car's come to a halt. Red flags. Five Ferrari engineers pile into a scruffy white SEAT Altea and head off to find their stricken car.

**10:00** The Ferrari arrives back on a trailer. At least they tried. No one else even looks like coming out of their garage.

**10:10** Man in a Caterham jacket wanders down the pitlane. With nothing else happening, photographers pap him half to death.

**10:21** Lewis goes out again. The mechanics stand in the pitlane revving their air blowers waiting for him to return. Mercedes are just showing off now – they've done 600 per cent more laps than anyone else. Lewis returns and, as he pulls into the box, the car sounds like a jet fighter coming to rest with its engines spinning down. There's a lovely wastegate *tchi-tchiuuu* as well. The air blowers cool the brakes and the car is wheeled back into the garage (with covers over the rear end). Silence once more.

**10:35** I'm allowed into the pit garage-cum-operating theatre (once I've jettisoned

## 'THE FERRARI ARRIVES BACK ON A TRAILER. AT LEAST THEY TRIED'

any cameras) and it's fascinating. Standing immediately behind the W05 I can see how open the back of the car looks now without the lower element to the rear wing. The upper element is ten per cent smaller too and there's just a single central exhaust. The exhaust can have between 0 and 5 degrees of elevation and can sit either above or below what's known as 'the monkey cradle'; no aero pieces are allowed behind its airflow. No blown diffusers this year either, so people are saying that the maximum rear downforce they can generate is similar to the low-drag settings at Spa or Monza last year.


There's a hollow sound when the car starts (it seems odd with so many batteries on board that the regulations still don't insist on self-starting), more like an F1 engine from the '80s, and your ears can easily stand the noise at idle. Everyone waits while one man looks at screens and holds his hand up. They wait. There's a conversation I can't hear going on over the headphones. Then the flat palm becomes a thumbs-up, the tyre warmers are removed, the garage door goes up, the revs build to a level that resonates your stirrup and anvil uncomfortably and Lewis is gone. The previously calm screens start to look like Etch-a-Sketches gone haywire as data floods in.

**11:10** A Force India goes out and stops on track. I'm standing by some bins and fall into conversation with an engineer from Pirelli. He says the tyres are more conservative this year to deal with the extra torque, so the 2014 supersoft is like a 2013 soft. They were planning big changes in size but then decided against it. Hoping for a quieter year, no doubt.

**11:30** Interview with Nico. He has a cool air of nonchalance about him but a good sense of humour beneath it. He says it's like going back to school learning all the new stuff, but he doesn't like the new cars being slower. He then explains the fly-by-wire rear brakes, which sound terrifyingly complicated: the energy recovery system is in action most of the time while braking, but on downchanges the normal brakes have to cut in seamlessly to cover the transition through neutral.

**12:20** Lewis crashes at Turn 1. A snapper tells me his friend saw it and thought it was rear suspension failure and that Lewis was limping. Lewis bounds into hospitality a few minutes later and the team announces it was a front wing failure. Such is the F1 rumour-mill.

**13:45** It seems as though most people have wandered off for a siesta. Red Bull are apparently struggling with cooling issues (the 2014 sidepods have to house an intercooler as well as the normal radiators). I notice the Ferrari garage door slowly rising behind their privacy screens. I wander over. Sure enough, the F14 T starts up and a couple of minutes later Kimi selects first gear with a clunk (eight speeds this year and the ratios are chosen by each team and fixed for the whole season, while the five power units rule also applies to gearboxes and the cogs inside them). No doubt hoping to get a full lap in this time, he drives out of the pits, nearly running over my feet in the process. I'm the only one there. The Ferrari engine doesn't sound quite as nice as the Mercedes' – a bit more blare, but still good. The Renault engine has a constant high-pitched whistle, which is curious. When Kimi comes back in after a handful of laps there are a couple more photographers and we all comment on the curious smell. Sweet but slightly noxious at the same time.

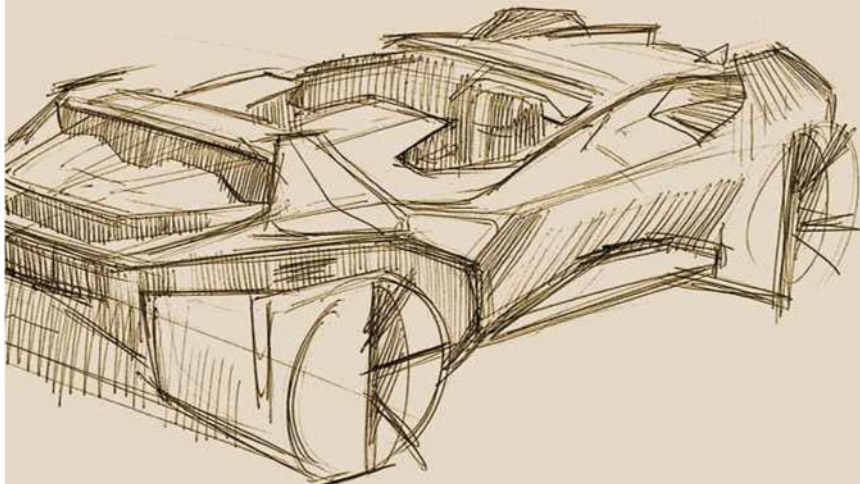
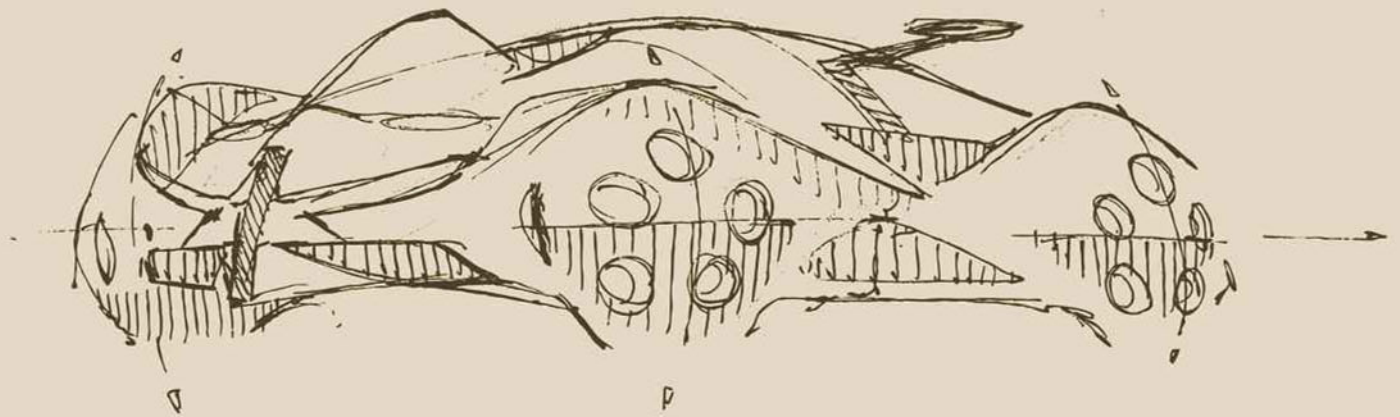
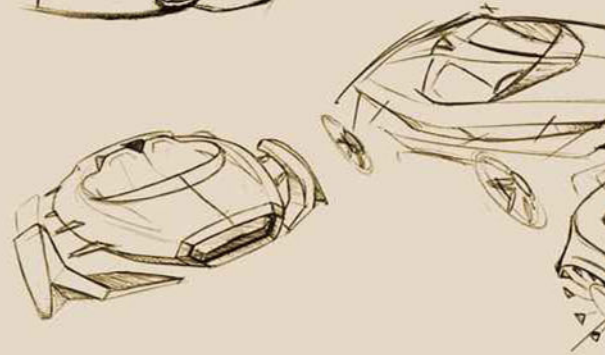
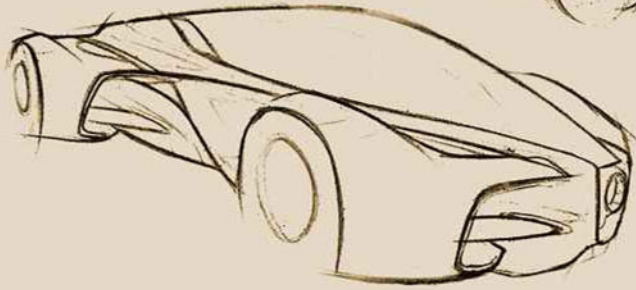
**14:30** Time to leave for the airport. On the way back we calculate that with the mandatory 100kg fuel (about 140 litres) and a 305km race distance, the cars will be doing about 6mpg. Better than some road cars round a track. It's a great relief to know that the new F1 cars sound good, too. Really good, actually. The big question after the first day of testing, however, is whether any of them will actually complete 305km in Melbourne. Has F1 finally overstretched itself? 



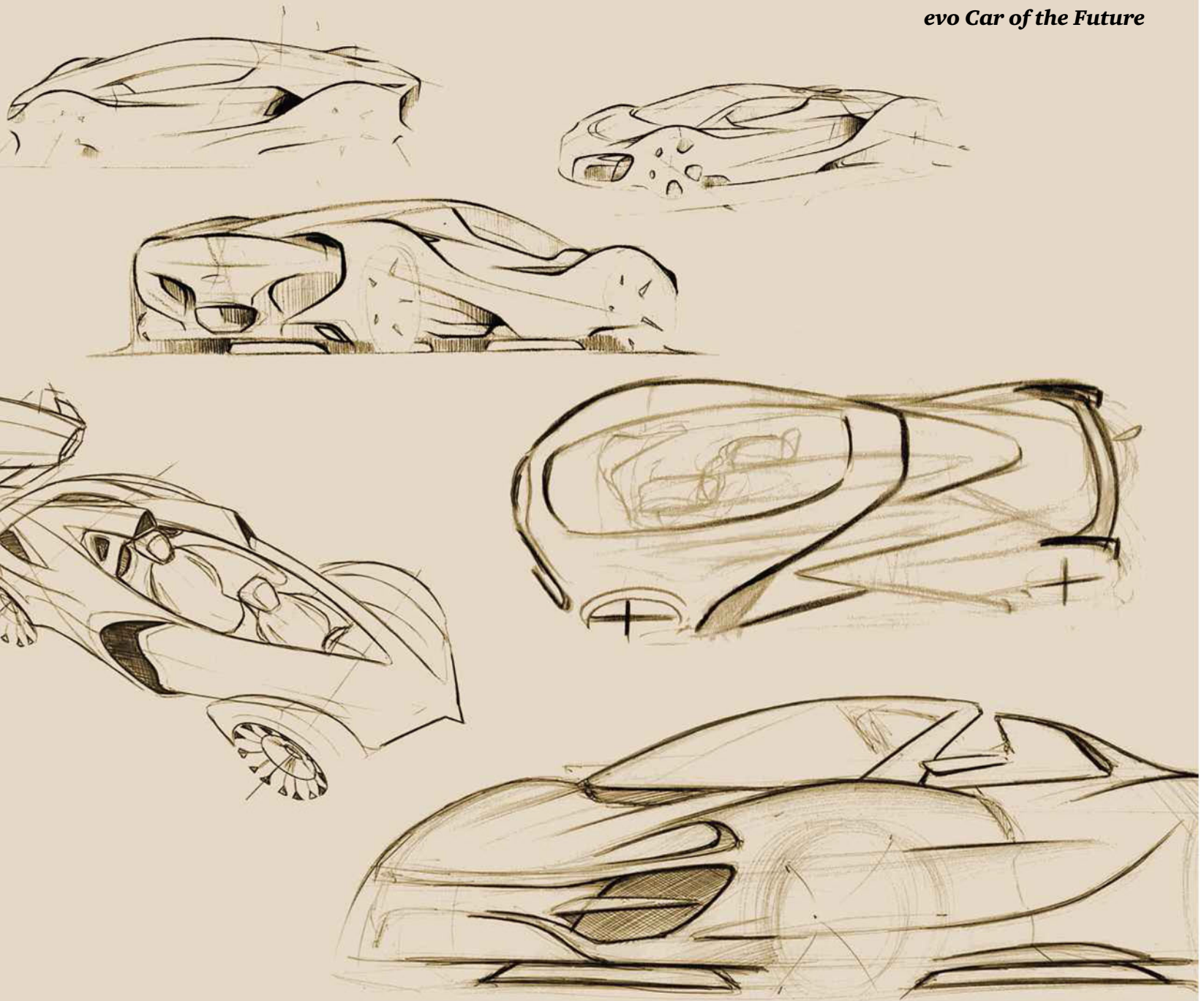
evo

# CAR OF THE FUTURE

by NICK TROTT



*The MA students on the Royal College of Art's Vehicle Design course could be designing your next car. Earlier this year, they responded to a brief set by evo readers to design a car that epitomised the Thrill of Driving. Here are the results*



**T**

**THIS PROJECT BEGAN AFTER WE RAN** a feature called '2020 vision' in *evo* 192. At the same time we were already in discussions with the Royal College of Art's Vehicle Design department about a collaboration with *evo* and the decision was made to link the two

together. With input from Bridgestone, we came up with a project for the RCA's first-year Vehicle Design students. The task was effectively: what would an 'evo' car of 2020 look like?

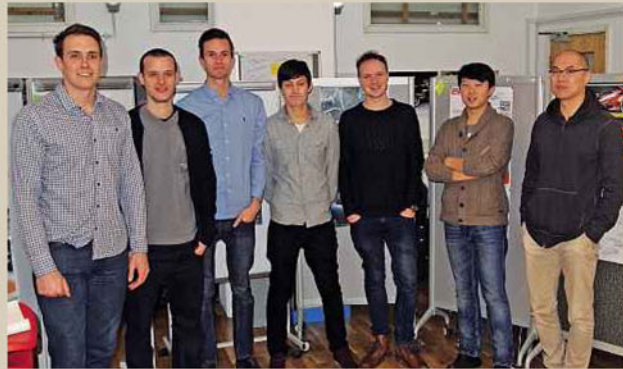
We then asked you, via our forum at [evo.co.uk](http://evo.co.uk) and our Facebook page, what you would like to be driving in 2020. We received some remarkable thoughts and ideas on both the body styling and engineering sides. Ultimately, it was clear that you wanted a car that was styled and engineered to excite, and a car

where the goal was not ultimate speed in the form of lap times or performance data, but a car that epitomised the Thrill of Driving. You requested a minimum of two seats, sufficient luggage space for a long weekend road trip, and compact dimensions. And you wanted something lightweight – both physically and in appearance, with the designer demonstrating the areas in which the car adheres to lightweight principles. You also suggested that visibility should be paramount and that the car should make the driver feel part of the driving experience and environment. Oh, and of course, the tyres should be by Bridgestone...

All 29 first-year students submitted designs, after which myself and RCA tutors Cynthia Charwick and Matt Humphries whittled them down to seven finalists. Then, via a unique app on the *evo* Facebook page, you picked the overall winner...



# The finalists



**S** **SO HERE WE HAVE IT – SEVEN BRILLIANT** interpretations of the *evo* car of 2020 by seven talented Royal College of Art students who will undoubtedly go on to great things within the vehicle design industry.

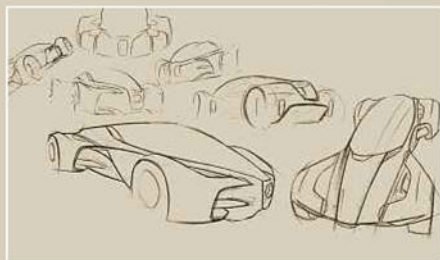
The variety impressed, as did their thinking behind the designs. To hear different interpretations of what amounts to the ‘Thrill of Driving’ was particularly fascinating from our perspective, as was seeing the evolution of the designs. Some strayed a little too far from the brief, with shapes perhaps more achievable in 2030 than 2020, and some of the dimensions looked like they were nearer Countach territory than Caterham.

It wasn’t us that ultimately picked the winner, though – it was you. Turn the page to reveal all...



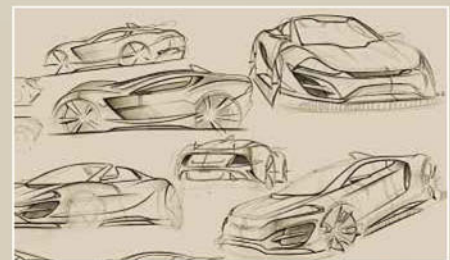
## Simon Haynes

‘The design is a road and track car drawing inspiration from ‘60s and ‘70s F1 cars,’ explains Haynes. We loved the extreme approach, and the way the front end was inspired by the *evo* logo, plus the tandem seating impressed – the brief only determined a minimum number of seats, not the arrangement. The length of the car raises some compactness questions, but overall this was a stunning design.



## Alex Fernandez

A clean but distinctive take on the brief from Fernandez who, in his words, created a design where ‘the wheelarches are independent from the main body and are attached to the suspension, so they react and move with the wheel as the car brakes, accelerates and turns, giving the car viewer a closer experience to what the driver is feeling.’ We loved the simplicity and beauty of the shape.



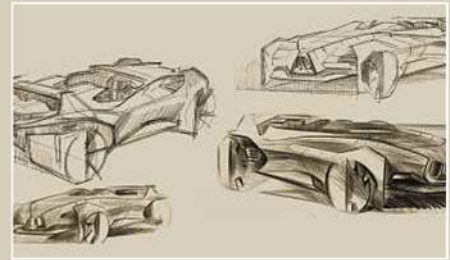
## Tom Henwood

Henwood resisted the temptation to look beyond 2020, creating a shape that could be productionised very easily, and he scored well with the judges because of it. We love the open top, the joined headlight and grille opening and the low driving position. ‘The aesthetic of the perfect performance car should be a balance of intimidation and confidence-inspiring looks,’ he explains.



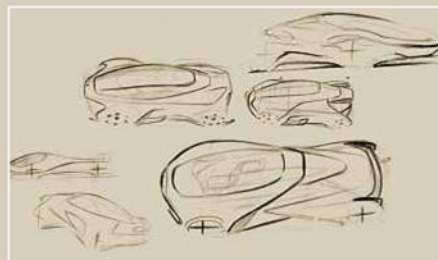
**Yibo Wu**

Chinese student Yibo says that he 'tried to bring sharp surfaces conflicting with each other to create a sculptural styling language,' and he certainly achieved that with this brilliantly eccentric design. Tutor Charwick congratulated Yibo for the surfacing and the alternative take on the brief, although productionising it by 2020 would be difficult.



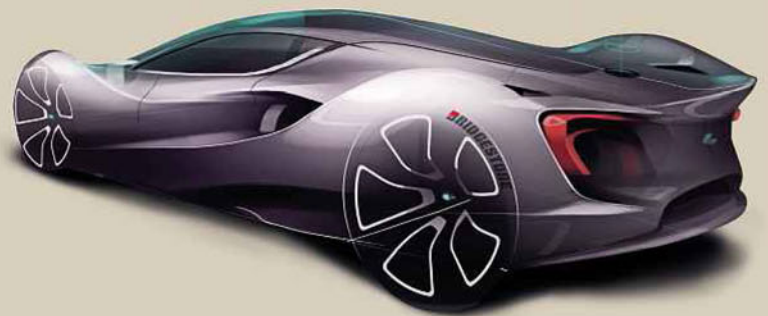
**Dai Ye**

'The inspiration is taken from the sharp edge of a knife, so I intended to make the surfaces of my design sharper and harder,' says Dai. We loved the modernity, the novel approach to materials and the open top, but we wondered if those forward blades would ever pass a pedestrian crash test. A great shape overall, from a clearly very innovative designer.



**David Harding**

'I wanted to apply the theme of "the Thrill of Driving" to other areas of travel, so I looked at gliding, the most analogue experience of flying,' says Harding. 'I applied lots of design cues from a glider, including staggered seating to focus in on the driver, and cockpit-style access.' We loved the compact shape, the stance, and the glider inspiration.

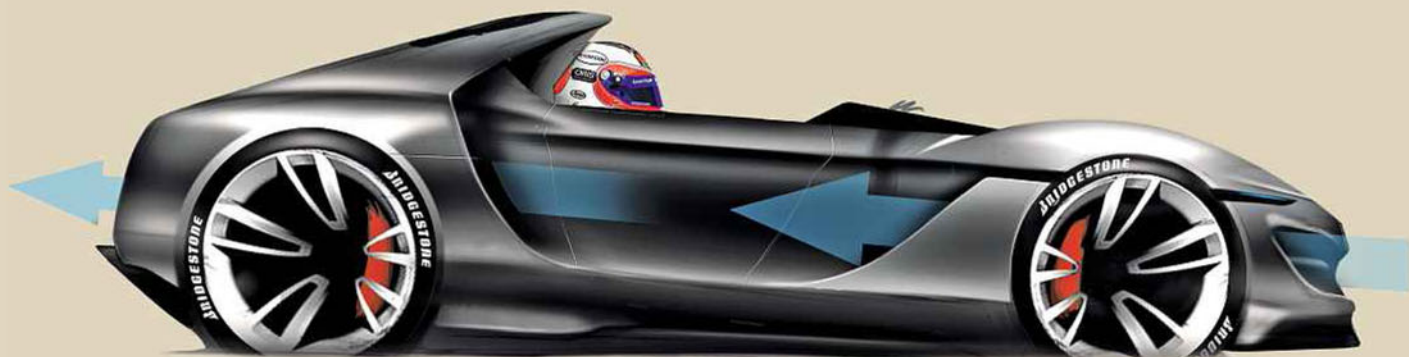


**Richard Price**

Richard's design, a particular favourite of tutor Matt Humphries, impressed with its sheer visual impact, its fluid lines and its stunning surfaces, although the dimensions suggested supercar rather than compact sports car. 'I wanted to capture the feeling of power between the wheels, influenced by 1950s Le Mans car proportions,' explains Price.



# And the winner is...



## Tom Henwood

AS VOTING CLOSED IT WAS CLEAR THIS was going to be tight – but we didn't expect it to be this tight. David Harding took 21 per cent of the votes to finish third and Simon Haynes 24 per cent to finish second. But with 25 per cent, Tom Henwood is the winner of the *evo*/Bridgestone Royal College of Art Car of the Future competition.

Henwood is a deserving winner. A committed petrolhead and former S2000, 350Z, MX-5 and RX-7 owner, he spent many a weekend thrashing around on the Black Mountain road, an *evo* favourite, while studying at Cardiff University. This experience, plus the memory of being a passenger in his dad's Caterham as a child, led his design, which is inspired by air flowing around the driver. He constantly aims to improve his designs,

so much so that he reshaped the front of his car post-competition (see below, front).

Tom has nothing but positive things to say about the Vehicle Design course at the RCA: 'Originally, I didn't think I'd fit in being from more of a petrolhead than artistic background, but being surrounded by people who think differently to me has been a great experience. It really takes your thinking onto a different level. And the people you meet are incredible: we had dinner with [ex-BMW design chief] Chris Bangle, and [McLaren F1 designer] Peter Stevens is one of our lecturers.'

Tom has another year of his MA to go, but he says his dream is to work for McLaren: 'It feels like a company that takes its design as seriously as its engineering.' Tom Henwood – a name to watch. ✕



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Praga R1

by HENRY CATCHPOLE

PHOTOGRAPHY by MATT HOWELL

# PRAGA R1

*It has a carbonfibre monocoque, weighs less than 600kg and produces genuine downforce – and there could soon be a road-going version, too. We drive Slovakia's new £100,000 mini-LMP racer*

I

**I'M SHOCKED BY HOW NERVOUS**

I sound. Usually throughout the day of a test I'll scribble notes in a pad, jotting down feelings, poor metaphors and the odd detail I don't want to forget. But just occasionally I turn up ill-prepared

with neither pen nor pencil, and at times like these I generally mumble into the dictaphone on my mobile to trap some thoughts for future reference. It was the dictaphone I used when I drove the Praga R1 at Donington Park and I've just listened back to the first recording.

I remember I had retreated to the warmth and safety of our long-term Audi RS6 Avant to do the recording because I didn't want to admit just how nervous I'd felt merely sitting in the R1. It wasn't the bald statistics that were worrying me – although 210bhp and 162lb ft in a car weighing 592kg are not numbers to be sniffed at – it was the feeling in the cockpit...









**Above:** Catchpole acquaints himself with overhead buttons. **Below:** rear wing contributes to over 600kg of downforce. **Right:** 210bhp 2-litre engine is sourced from Formula Renault racer



**I'VE ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT THE MODERN ENCLOSED LE Mans Prototype racers like the Audi R18 look horribly claustrophobic, and the Praga looks like a futuristic three-quarter-scale version of one of those. Lift the tiny carbonfibre cat flap of a door and the opening into the dark hole of a cockpit looks foreboding. You remember the child at school who managed to get their head through the gap in the railings but found life trickier when attempting to reverse the procedure? I fear I'm about to become that child. Feet first, hand on the roof, then wriggle the torso down... and I'm in.**

Amazingly, all 194cm of me fits, and despite a lack of any appreciable padding, it actually feels quite comfortable reclined in a non-tap-end-of-bathtub type position. Looking around, there isn't a lot to distract you. There's a row of buttons and switches above the windscreen, which is quite cool, and the removable Cosworth steering wheel is currently sitting on the top of the dashboard. I pick it up and jiggle the gold-coloured collar onto its splines, realising that I'm trapping my knees behind it in the process, so it will have to come off again if I want to get out.

A mechanic shuts the door. It feels even darker now. If I ever wake up in a pillar box I imagine it will feel something like this. I mentally go through what the routine will be if I need to get out of this cocoon of bare black carbonfibre in a hurry. Then I slowly put the whole procedure into practice – wheel release with both hands, harness release by my belly button, door release by my head, execute manoeuvre like getting out of a fully zipped

**'WITH A HEART TRYING TO BEAT ITS WAY OUT OF YOUR RIBCAGE, YOU HAVE TO OVERRIDE YOUR NATURAL IMPULSES AND TRUST THE AERO'**

sleeping bag. Once back in daylight, I retreat to the comforting Audi to speak nervously into my dictaphone and put on every bit of Nomex I own.

When I return to the pit garage suitably toggled up, the Praga's rear is exposed and it's a beautiful sight. The engine is a fairly humble four-cylinder Renault unit displacing 1998cc, but surrounded by anodised suspension pick-ups, a carbon air intake and the snaking single-exit exhaust, it looks almost exotic. The custom-made Hewland six-speed sequential sticking out the back adds to the sense of purpose too. It perhaps shouldn't be a surprise that it all looks so beautifully neat and professional, because Praga isn't new to this sort of thing.

Although over the last century and a bit the company has built everything from motorbikes to buses, aircraft to artillery tractors,



trolleybuses to tanks, Praga started out building cars. They had wonderful names like Mignon, Golden, Baby, Lady, Grand Eight, Piccolo and even Alfa. The company name Praga is Latin for Prague, so it's no surprise to discover that when it was founded in 1907, it was based in what would, a few years later, become Czechoslovakia. Now a Slovakian enterprise, the Praga empire largely focuses on private planes and karts. On the racing car front, in addition to the R1, which it introduced last year, Praga also has the R4 (an open class GT car developed from the old K-1 Attack coupe) and partners Lotus in its LMP2 programme. Praga hasn't abandoned the idea of road cars, however, and its most likely candidate to wear a tax disc in the immediate future is the R1, which is partly why we're testing it.

No road driving today, of course: just the slightly intimidating surroundings of a bitterly cold test day at Donington, complete with very loud and very serious machinery in the adjoining garages. Eventually I can prevaricate no longer and slot myself back into the cockpit. Wheel, belts, ignition. There are lots of buttons, but thankfully I only need to remember a couple. Right thumb on the orange button, pull back on the right-hand paddle; you hear and feel the jolting *thunk* behind you as the pneumatic shift selects first, while in front of you the yellow pixels on the Game Boy-sized screen on the wheel flash from 'N' to '1'. Unsurprisingly the clutch is quite abrupt, but once you've judderingly let it in, you simply switch your left foot to the brake pedal and flat-shift.

Like a guest in an unfamiliar house looking for the loo at night, the

first lap is very tentative as I feel my way around the cold tarmac. Despite feeling like I'm crawling, there's still the odd slide in the first couple of corners, the hard tyres skating across the surface with the lateral stability of a shopping trolley. When your first sensations are of almost zero mechanical grip it doesn't encourage you to push harder and drive faster, but you just have to give yourself a lap or so to warm things through and trust the slicks to get better. Then, once you can feel more edge and resistance as you turn the wheel, it's time to start trusting the aero to push everything into the ground.

I've driven a few cars with proper downforce in the past, but not enough to make it feel anything other than incredibly unnerving as I try to build up speed. The legendary Craner Curves are the best places to experience it initially. You accelerate out of the right-handed Redgate in third gear, changing up with the paddle to fourth, foot hard on the throttle as you sweep right into a blind crest, then fifth as you gather speed downhill. It's what happens next that takes the leap of faith. As the track unfurls in front of the car, you can see that you need to turn left. The trouble is that your eyes and mind are telling you, very forcefully, that the shift of lateral G from one direction to the other is beyond what should be possible. Your mind has done the calculations on what it knows from experience and it's simply not used to cars generating enough grip to complete that left turn.

So, with a heart trying to beat its way out of your ribcage and a right foot that is instinctively trying to lift off the throttle, you have to override





all your screaming natural impulses and just trust the aero. You turn left. It sticks. Your body squeezes into the carbonfibre seat like someone's suddenly sitting on your lap. Still flat on the accelerator, you change up to sixth as the blue and white kerbing flashes past on the left. Then you brake, hard, and the G-forces switch orientation in a slightly giddy flood.

It takes a while to reach this point. At first I was braking and changing down before the left-hander. Then I was just lifting. Then I was only lifting a little bit. And then after six laps I grew a pair. Of course, after you've done it once, you wonder what the fuss was about. You realise that it's not only flat, but easy flat, taking whichever line you want up the inside or round the outside of slower traffic. You feel so silly for your timid earlier self.

Retreating to the pits, I relax a little and let the world filter back into my tunnel vision, realising in the process that I've been gripping the wheel like I wanted to strangle it. It occurs to me that the car didn't feel in the least bit claustrophobic. Despite the huge A-pillars, visibility was great, probably helped by the well-placed mirrors, which instill confidence in traffic.

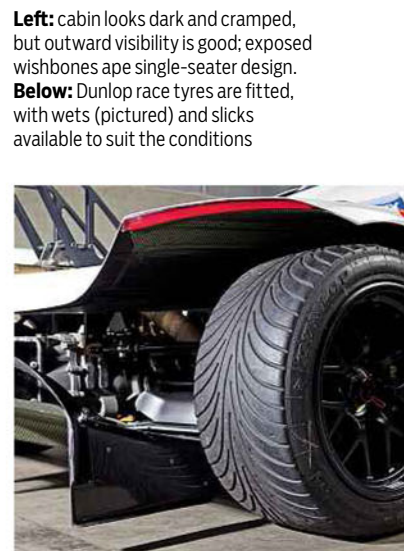
The R1 was built to be reliable and its race record backs that up, but the mechanics want to check the car over so I go and record a considerably cheerier message into the dictaphone (listening back later, I can almost hear the huge smile on my face). After a few more photos and the lunch break, I head back out on track and promptly spend the best part of an hour lapping it up. Those of you that read the magazine regularly will know that, generally speaking, I leave the racing to Jethro and Dickie.

## 'YOU BECOME OBSESSED WITH BRAKING LATER AND CORNERING HARDER, UNTIL YOU'VE GOT A LAP YOU'RE HAPPY WITH'

There's a reason for this – I prefer the excitement of dodging trees and someone reading to me whilst I drive. But with Donington and the Praga I become engrossed. Normally the limits of the cars we test are relatively easy to find on track, but in the R1 I am continually chipping away and finding greater depths as I explore the aero.

The enclosed nature of the car actually makes everything seem quite serene after a while. Yes, it's very noisy and if my Stilo helmet touches the side protection on the seat then my brain buzzes with the vibrations, but with no wind buffeting to contend with, you can concentrate and focus more intently. You become obsessed with braking later and cornering harder, gradually building up speed in different corners, then piecing it all together until you've got a lap you're happy with. And the car just shrugs





**Left:** cabin looks dark and cramped, but outward visibility is good; exposed wishbones ape single-seater design.  
**Below:** Dunlop race tyres are fitted, with wets (pictured) and slicks available to suit the conditions

it all off. The AP Racing brakes are phenomenally strong, but also have a lovely depth of feel in the pedal, while the Koni dampers seem perfectly happy for me to abuse the kerbs through the Goddards chicane. The only let-down (after a while) is the engine, which doesn't feel strong enough to really drive through the huge pressure of the downforce (at 130mph the R1 will generate the same downforce as the weight of the car plus driver), nor to trouble the traction of the hot slicks. Fortunately Praga has already built a prototype R1 T, where the T stands for turbo...

At 119,000 euros (about £100,000) the Praga R1 is not cheap, but everyone in the pitlane at Donington is intrigued by it and says how gorgeous it looks. And they're generally a hard crowd to impress. As a road car, I fear it might be too extreme – I certainly don't want to be charging down the B660 wondering if the aero will be working enough to take the next corner flat – although ironically the turbo will no doubt make it more lively and fun at lower speeds. We'll have to reserve judgement until we get the chance to try it. For the moment we'll treat it simply as something to go racing in, or for trackdays. Compared to a Caterham or even a Radical it's not as dynamically malleable, but it does feel more serious, and you're obviously paying for the carbon monocoque too. As you can probably tell, I also found that there's something deeply satisfying about exploring the magical world of downforce, and with its enclosed cockpit and relatively safe power-to-grip ratio, the R1 feels like the perfect car to do that in. There's certainly no need to be nervous. ❏

## Specification

### PRAGA R1

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc

CO2 n/a

Power 210bhp @ 7250rpm

Torque 162lb ft @ 4500rpm

Transmission Six-speed sequential semi-automatic, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential

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

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

Wheels 8 x 15in front, 10.5 x 16in rear

Tyres 200/580 R15 front, 265/605 R16 rear

Weight (dry) 592kg

Power-to-weight (dry) 360bhp/ton

0-62mph 4.0sec (claimed)

Top speed 140mph+ (claimed, gearing dependent)

Basic price c£100,000

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evo rating: ★★★★★



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# Fast Fleet

Living with evo's long-term test cars

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

## VW GOLF GTI

by Mike Duff

Motoring editor

NEW

A Mk7 GTI arrives on our fleet, sporting a classic VW hue. Duff explains how he managed to resist going mad with the options list. Sort of...



## AUDI RS6 AVANT

by Mike Duff

Motoring editor

OUT

The super-fast, super-capable four-wheel-drive super-estate has departed. Our VAG correspondent, Mike Duff, looks back at its best bits.



## RENAULT CLIO TURBO

by Richard Meaden

Contributing editor

The wintry weather has allowed the hot Clio to demonstrate its strengths, a happier Meaden reports.



## McLAREN 12C SPIDER

by SSO

Contributor

The Secret Supercar Owner's Spider has been in for its first service and an IRIS upgrade. There's a game of spot the difference, too.



## VAUXHALL VXR8

by David Vivian

Road test contributor

Vivian explains why he's a fan of the classic (and in no way contrived) sound of the big estate's supercharged V8.



## TOYOTA GT86

by Henry Catchpole

Features editor

With a little over 10,000 miles showing on the Japanese coupe's clock, it was time for a service this month. But why so pricey?



## LAMBO MURCIÉLAGO

by Simon George

Contributor

As repairs on the quarter-million-mile Murciélago edge closer to completion, Simon makes some plans for it for the year ahead.



## FERRARI 458 ITALIA

by Simon George

Contributor

After having its electrical problems rectified, the 458 is back to full health – just in time for Bovingdon to borrow it for some sideways video action.



## MINI JCW GP

by Ian Eveleigh

Production editor

Some say the GP2 could have had more power. Eveleigh puts forward his argument for why this wasn't necessary.



## PORSCHE 996

by Jethro Bovingdon

Contributing editor

There's no hibernation for this old 911. Instead Bovingdon has overhauled the brakes on his classic-in-waiting – and has more upgrades planned.



## PEUGEOT 208 GTI

by Sam Riley

Film-maker

Peugeot makes a big deal about its cabin ergonomics, but Riley's not sure that everything it has done in the 208 is an improvement.



## BMW M6 GC

by Nick Trott

Editor

The challenges of piloting the big, torquey M-car on wintry tarmac have been keeping Trott on his toes. He's also tried the M6 from a different seat.



## FORD FOCUS ST

by Dean Smith

Staff photographer

The ST meets a rival in the form of Skoda's Octavia vRS estate. Snapper Smith compares their practicality and performance.



## JAGUAR F-TYPE V6 S

by Jethro Bovingdon

Contributing editor

Everybody loves Jaguar's newest sports car, it seems. So why, wonders Bovingdon, aren't there more of them around?



## TOYOTA GT-FOUR

by Matthew Hayward

Staff writer (website)

The electric gremlins have paid a visit to Hayward's homologation special. And as if that wasn't bad enough, it's MOT time, too...



## BMW 2002

by Will Beaumont

Designer

Beaumont's been trying to lower the 2002's front end, with not entirely successful results.



## Also on the evo fleet:

Mazda MX-5 Mk2, Nissan GT-R, Renault Clio Williams, Mercedes 190E 2.5-16, Ferrari F40, Ferrari F50, Porsche 911 SC, Jaguar XJR-15, Aston Martin DBS, Ferrari 430 Scuderia, Peugeot 106 Rallye, Ford Escort RS2000

## Coming soon:

Audi R8 V10 Plus





## VW Golf GTI

### NEW ARRIVAL

227bhp, 0-62mph in 6.4sec and tartan cloth seats – the seventh generation of a hot hatch icon joins the fleet

**S**O I'VE SWITCHED to another VW Group product, one with half the driven wheels, half the cylinders and just over 40 per cent of the power of my erstwhile RS6 (see overleaf). But at least it's a familiar colour. On the plus side, even after a big helping of options my new Golf GTI is under a third of the price of the fully loaded Audi.

We've been big fans of the new GTI since we first drove it. And although, in time-honoured fashion, it finished second to an RS Mégane when we group tested a bunch of hot hatches in *evo* 188, it lost by a closer margin than any other foe. As always, the Golf is nice enough to make you suspect it's not quite a proper hot hatch, but there's also a properly impressive drivers' car beneath its glossy surface.

Spec'ing it was simple, although my determination not to tick option boxes quickly went astray. I prefer the looks of the more practical five-

door, so that was a given, as was the Performance Pack that brings an extra 10bhp (227bhp in all), bigger brakes and a proper limited-slip diff for £995. Tornado Red paint looks great – and is non-cost – so I went for that and also stuck with the standard 18in alloys and cloth trim (who doesn't like tartan seats?).

Keeping the six-speed manual 'box instead of opting for DSG also 'saved' me £1415 by my man-maths reckoning, justifying a bit of a splurge. So I went for the winter pack (£355 for heated front seats, heated washer jets and a 'low washer fluid' warning light), the electrically heated windscreen (£295), rear side airbags (£270), adaptive dampers (£815) and 'advanced telephone preparation', which uses an extra aerial to boost phone reception (£315). Finally, I caved in to temptation and specced the Pro nav and audio upgrade (£1765) and the Dynaudio speakers (£530). Total cost: £32,120.

The GTI arrived fresh off the boat

from Deutschland, with just 28 miles on the odometer. Unsurprisingly the engine felt super-tight at first, but has freed up noticeably after just 700 miles. There's no official running-in period, but I've been told it's a good idea to avoid fixed-revs cruising for the first 1000 miles. That's given me an excuse for a couple of weeks of commuting cross-country and on first impressions this GTI is comfortable, rapid and respectably economical.

The big question over the next few months will be which side of the GTI's character wins out over longer exposure – well-finished niceness or dynamic prowess? **✉**

**Mike Duff**

#### Driver's log

Date acquired	January 2014
Total mileage	768
Mileage this month	740
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	31.2



# Audi RS6 Avant

After six months living with the 552bhp all-weather estate, Duff looks back at the highs and lows

**END OF TERM**



**F**EW CARS ARE as easy to own as an Audi RS6, providing your pockets are deep enough. Big bills are part of the territory, but as long as you can afford them you'll find this estate is an utterly effortless way of going very quickly – pretty much whatever the weather.

This doesn't imbue it with an excess of **evoness**, of course. Indeed, during the six months with our RS6 I frequently found myself wishing that it would show more evidence that it enjoyed making faster progress – that the steering had more feel, the throttle a bit more finesse; that the car's limits were graded in grey rather than the black and white of its chassis' dedication to total adhesion. But I'd also be lying if I didn't admit the Audi's no-nonsense warp-speed approach

didn't go a fair way towards winning me over as well. As a genuine, paid-for RS6 owner said to me, at the sort of trackday where everything arrives on a trailer: 'If you've got one of these then you're going to have something more interesting as well. Probably lots of more interesting somethings.'

Just as well, because the RS6 definitely isn't a track star itself. At the Bedford Autodrome the 552bhp 4-litre twin-turbo V8 felt almost as prodigious as it did on the road, but the rest of the experience stayed distant and aloof. The steering never lost its artificial feel and the chassis' enormous adhesion foiled my best attempts to play at the limit of grip. After five laps the brakes and tyres were properly cooked, with the former developing a low-speed squeak that remained throughout the car's time

**'On road, it was mighty: safe and composed when you wanted to travel quickly, but also impressive at everyday speeds'**

with us, and a disintegrating tyre resulting in a £375 replacement.

On road, the RS6 was always mighty: safe and composed when you wanted to travel quickly, but also impressive when stuck at everyday speeds thanks to compliant suspension and a well-finished cabin packed with toys. As our RS6 had a previous life on Audi's press fleet we didn't get to spec it, and it's fair to say that many of the extras seemed to be along for nothing more than the ride. The options I'd tick again would be the 21in alloys (£1900) and

the carbon styling package (£4250), which includes the 'quattro' branded front grille. The Bang & Olufsen audio sounded brilliant, but I struggled with its £6300 price tag. I'd avoid the night vision (£1510), head-up display (£1240) and the 'Dynamic' pack, which raises the speed limiter to 174mph (£2255). Adaptive cruise was useful, but it feels wrong to be charged £2255 for something that's standard on a mid-spec VW Golf these days...

Depreciation was predictably steep, with a tame Audi dealer bidding just £82,000 on the RS6 as a





**Above right:** an average fuel consumption of 22mpg meant hefty petrol bills.  
**Below:** twin-turbo V8 provided an immense shove by way of compensation



trade-in, against the optioned new price of £101,020. But other running costs were surprisingly light, with no scheduled servicing or notable faults to report. Fuel economy varied dramatically according to use. Driven gently, the big V8 was remarkably frugal and a couple of longer journeys showed the trip computer reporting over 27mpg. But enthusiastic progress sent the figure tumbling into the mid-teens. Overall we averaged 22mpg, which is still an improvement on the 18.9mpg Harry Metcalfe got from the previous-generation RS6 he ran back in 2012 (*evo* 179).

The RS6's extra width takes some getting used to, with anything less than an A-road feeling quite narrow when you face oncoming traffic. The wide flanks also seemed depressingly easy to scrape, picking up a couple

of parking dings in our time together. Those vast alloys also seem to scuff easily and the car went back to Audi with two serrated rims (sorry).

Overall, I liked the RS6. It's the sort of car you can fill with passengers and luggage and drive flat-out across Europe. But if I owned one, I'd need to have something more interesting as well. ☒

**Mike Duff**

#### Driver's log

<b>Date acquired</b>	July 2013
<b>Duration of test</b>	6 months
<b>Total test mileage</b>	6574
<b>Overall mpg</b>	22.0
<b>Costs</b>	£375
<b>Purchase price</b>	£101,020
<b>Trade-in value</b>	£82,000
<b>Depreciation</b>	£19,020

## Renaultsport Clio 200 Turbo

A change of weather, roads and attitude have given Meaden a new appreciation for the turbo hatch

**A** A 650-MILE pre-Christmas round trip to visit my parents, followed by the first week of the new year spent commuting to Coventry for the recent Zenos E10 story, means I've covered more than my usual mileage this month. And even though many of those journeys were on motorways, this month has been my most enjoyable yet in the RS Clio.

I attribute this breakthrough to a number of critical factors. The rotten weather has consistently served up conditions that make the Clio's limits feel more tangible and exploitable. When not plying the motorway network I've made a conscious effort to seek fun on fast, empty B-roads. I've also grudgingly come to accept that unless you drive like a saint, the 1.6-litre turbo motor simply won't return the promised fuel economy.

The upshot of all this is that if you can park your longing for a

manual gearbox and a fizzier motor and simply drive the socks off the thing, you'll find it very hard not to be impressed. Dig deep enough and you'll also find yourself becoming immersed in the 200 Turbo's performance and sheer point-to-point pace. All of which suggests that if Renaultsport takes the criticism constructively and can somehow make the paddleshift gearbox more incisive and the motor a bit ballsier, there's a great new-age hot hatch waiting to reveal itself. ☒

**Richard Meaden**

(@DickieMeaden)

#### Driver's log

<b>Date acquired</b>	August 2013
<b>Total mileage</b>	10,171
<b>Mileage this month</b>	1790
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	29.1







## McLaren 12C Spider

The Secret Supercar Owner likes his McLaren so much that he's gone and bought another one

**G**IVEN THE RATHER putrid weather at the moment, the only supercar in my garage that is seeing any road time is a very dirty McLaren 12C Spider. Ever since my initial test drive in the rain, I have had a huge amount of confidence in the 12C Spider's ability to handle wet and nasty with a minimum of drama.

Aside from a cross-country jaunt on Christmas Day, just about every other run out has got quite damp at some point and so my appreciation for the ability to put the roof up while on the move has grown considerably. The heated seats have been another worthy option as they have allowed for continued open-sky motoring even when the temperature gauge has dipped into the low single digits.

In my last report I mentioned that the 12C Spider had just come back

from its first service. It also had the IRIS infotainment system upgraded to v2.0, and having lived with it for several weeks now, I'm very glad we had the updated system installed. The phone connectivity and satnav are hugely improved, to the point where the Garmin has been removed from the Spider and we're comfortable relying on IRIS for directions.

This year I'll be spending a lot of time on the continent, and this development provided the perfect rationale for adding something left-hand drive to the fleet that's useable on a very regular basis. After a couple of long discussions the options were narrowed down to a Ferrari 599 GTB HGTE, a Ferrari 430 Scuderia or possibly another McLaren, given how much we've enjoyed the 12C Spider.

The first round of searches turned

up a very promising 599 GTB at a Ferrari dealer in Germany, several good Scuderias but none with quite the right spec, and nothing promising on the McLaren front. A couple of emails and a phone conversation later, I'd got a bit of basic information on the 599, but the car was in the dealer's warehouse and the more detailed questions would need to wait for two weeks as they were about to close for Christmas. As of late January, I still hadn't heard back.

In parallel, I also decided to send an email to a friend at McLaren in the faint hope that he might know of a car that would fit the brief. My email got an instant response indicating that they would take a look and get back to me shortly. Despite it being the festive season, within a week I was told two cars had been identified, with details

# Vauxhall VXR8 Clubsport Tourer

The sound of Big Blue's supercharged V8 is proving to be music to Vivian's ears

**I** DON'T PARTICULARLY like the smell of burned hydrocarbons in the morning (reversing the VXR8 out of the driveway from cold often ushers a pungent whiff of exhaust fumes into the cabin), but there's a sense of occasion about the way Big Blue fires up. It's all the more satisfying because it sounds honest. There's none of the contrived theatre of an Italian exotic that sequences the dentist's drill shriek of starter motor with a crack of throttle-blipped combustion into a blaring, effectively silenced, exhaust.

No. Big Blue's starter motor kind of groans when you twist the key and proceeds to emit three or four convulsive wheezes as it engages the compression of the (now) supercharged 6.2-litre Corvette pushrod V8 beneath that amply vented expanse of bonnet. The engine catches lazily with a little torque-twitch before flooding the

cabin with visceral, burbling bass as it quickly settles to a 900rpm idle.

It's a gloriously old-school sound, devoid of synthesised effects and slightly industrial. There's an interesting new layer – something to do with the supercharger, I guess – that sits above the soft rumble: a

**'It's a gloriously old-school sound, devoid of synthesised effects'**

hollow whirring that again suggests raw mechanical force rather than the romantic sonorous stylings of, say, an Alfa 8C or Maserati GranTurismo.

Above 2000rpm it disappears and, with light throttle openings, the engine's soundtrack for the first time sounds a bit ordinary; a muffled, amorphous, atonal woofle that, I have

no doubt, woos passengers into an overly relaxed state of mind.

You choose your moments with Big Blue because it's too big, too fast and too conspicuously blue to hoon around in. Yet I'm not sure I've driven a car in which my right foot has felt more itchy. Find that lonely stretch of straight tarmac – preferably at night when the air is cool – slot third or fourth and what tends to follow has so many parallels with a fairground ride, previously sleepy passengers wake up and scream. As the wailing supercharger winds up, I take it as a sign they want to go faster. Sorry. ❧

**David Vivian** (@davidvivian)

## Driver's log

Date acquired	Sept 2013
Total mileage	12,004
Mileage this month	542
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	19.7

to follow. Pictures, specs and pricing all arrived shortly after and a deal was quickly agreed on one of them.

As variety is the spice of life, this 12C is quite a bit different: an LHD coupe with red calipers and ceramic brakes. The roof doesn't retract however hard you try. I am very much looking forward to collecting 12C no. 2 at the McLaren dealer in Porsche's home town shortly. ❧

**Secret Supercar Owner**  
(@SupercarOwner)



**Above:** 12C Spider continues to impress the SSO... **Left:** ...so much so that he's bought a coupe to accompany it

## Driver's log

Date acquired	April 2013
Total mileage	3855
Mileage this month	315
Costs this month	£3330
mpg this month	17.0



# Toyota GT86

Catchpole takes the Japanese coupe in for a decidedly slick and efficient service

**N**AGGING FEELINGS: DID I leave the oven on? Is it some sort of anniversary today? Is the car due a service at 10,000 miles? The GT86 doesn't prod you with reminders so it was out with the service book to discover that, yes, it was due a fettle. I rang the local dealership (Steven Eagell in Milton Keynes), who were extremely helpful and polite (no, they didn't know I was from a magazine), and I booked it in for eight o'clock the following morning. For no extra cost I had the choice of a courtesy car, pick up and return from my home or a lift to the station, but I chose the 'while you wait' option and was on my way by nine.

All in all, I came away understanding why Toyota did so well in the last JD Power Dealer Satisfaction survey (fifth overall, 80 per cent saying they'd buy from their Toyota dealer again, 88 per cent saying they'd recommend to friends). The only puzzling thing was why the 'Intermediate Service' for the GT86 should cost £169 when for an MR2 or Celica it's just £129. In fact, a Land Cruiser is the only Toyota that's dearer (even the hybrids cost less).

Anyway, it's done now. Have I missed Valentine's Day yet? ❧

**Henry Catchpole**  
(@HenryCatchpole)

## Driver's log

Date acquired	May 2013
Total mileage	11,126
Mileage this month	976
Costs this month	£169
mpg this month	33.1





**Left and above:** bodywork has been repaired and the respray is all but complete.

**Below:** upgraded brakes await fitment of fresh discs



# Lamborghini Murciélago

Over a year since its accident, repair work on the orange Lambo is picking up pace

**I** I'M PLEASED TO report that progress on 'Trigger's Broom' has accelerated dramatically over the winter. With the paintwork now finished (bar the final polishing) and all the outstanding bits awaiting fitting, SG54 is well on schedule for a return to the tarmac in the spring.

Bearing in mind its huge mileage and its argument with an oak tree in late 2012, I've finally decided not to let the Murciélago anywhere near a track from now on. Ironically, its retirement from supercar experience duties doesn't mean it will cover less ground; far from it: my Range Rover and 458 will be looking at the inside of a garage while the big Lambo starts hammering up and down the M1 and M42 on the daily trip to the office and back. Totting up the mileage involved, plus a planned road trip back to Sant'Agata in the summer, I might hit 300,000 miles by Christmas.

Regular readers will remember the aforementioned incident in November

2012 (evo 178), which caused severe damage to the chassis, warped the roof and drastically rearranged the front end. Had it gone through as an insurance claim, there's no doubt an assessor would have written it off as an uneconomic repair. So bearing in mind its recent gearbox and engine rebuilds, and not forgetting its sentimental value, the decision was taken to put the car back together 'in-house' where possible and when time allowed, courtesy of 6th Gear Experience's enthusiastic team of technicians and body shop bods.

Well, it's been an eye-opener, that's for sure! First up, early last year the chassis was straightened, an intricate and time-consuming process contracted to Chartwell of Derby, who did a sterling job. At around £3500, this also had the welcome effect of straightening the roof, enabling the scissor doors to shut perfectly once again. A list was then made of the parts still required to finish the repair, which included all the front offside

suspension components (including the driveshaft), the offside door glass and the windscreen, plus replacement airbags for both the passenger and the driver's sides, both of which had discharged and which came in at an eye-watering £3000 each.

As the wheels were off the car, I also thought it worthwhile to have the factory Koni dampers reconditioned. A known weak spot on early Murciélagos, they often leak, and although the ones on this car hadn't, Sod's Law practically guaranteed that they would once everything went back together, so SP Suspension in Lincolnshire took this on.

On top of all that, a set of new brake discs was ordered from Mode Performance at Silverstone. Murciélagos built between 2001 and 2004 essentially had the brake set-up from the Diablo, but after the Gallardo came along, Lamborghini started to fit that car's much improved system to Murciélagos from 2005 onwards. Mode supplies these later

components for the front axle to retrofit to early Murciélagos; it isn't a cheap upgrade, but it does totally transform stopping power.

Interestingly, the tree impact had been severe enough to twist the back of the driver's seat. That went to an upholsterer to be stripped back to its frame to see if it could be straightened. The jury's still out on this, but if it can be it'll avoid us having to fork out for a new seat, which would cost about the same as one of the airbags. This project has been a Pandora's box so far, but there's light at the end of the tunnel... ❌

**Simon George**  
(@6gearexperience)

### Driver's log

<b>Date acquired</b>	Sept 2004
<b>Total mileage</b>	258,098
<b>Mileage this month</b>	0
<b>Costs this month</b>	£7664.67
<b>mpg this month</b>	n/a



## Ferrari 458 Italia

George's Prancing Horse has had its electrics attended to, returning the car to its noisy best

**W** X11 IS JUST back from a visit to Graypaul Ferrari Nottingham, where they have been looking into the faulty electrical gizmos that have plagued the car for the last couple of months. These included repeated traction control failure warnings and a loud, incessant ticking noise (traced to a pump in the engine compartment) that left me wondering if Chinese water torture would be preferable.

Having covered 300 miles since, there's no doubt the new exhaust valves, brake switch and purge pump valve (all fitted under warranty) have returned the car to the devastating machine it was previously. Its sheer pace is astonishing, especially for an 'entry-level' Ferrari, and has me trying to stifle a grin whenever I give in to my right foot's urges.

Having recently lent the 458 to Jethro Bovingdon for an *evo*TV video at Blyton Park (where it seemed to spend more time going sideways than forwards) I have also reacquainted myself with how it sounds from the outside at full chat – stunning. ☒

**Simon George**  
(@6gearexperience)

### Driver's log

Date acquired	May 2011
Total mileage	46,112
Mileage this month	522
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	13.0



## Mini JCW GP

After speaking to other owners, Eveleigh ponders whether the GP's 215bhp is enough

**O** VER THE PAST few months I've spoken to, exchanged emails with and bumped into several fellow JCW GP2 drivers. It's been interesting discovering through these encounters how the same car is occupying different roles for different people. They range from the owner who runs a diesel Clubman on a daily basis and saves his GP for best, to someone who has already racked up 19,000 miles (and counting) in his GP. It neatly illustrates the flexibility of this ultimate Mini: it could easily be your weekend and trackday special, but you can quite comfortably live with it every day, too.

Tyres have inevitably come up in conversation quite a bit. I won't repeat what's already been said about the pros and cons of the



OE trackday-spec Kumhos, but it seems that I made the right decision switching to some 'regular' performance tyres (Dunlop Sport Maxxes) for the colder months – I'm told full-on winter rubber takes too much precision out of the GP's handling, spoiling the enjoyment of the car's chassis somewhat. I also quite liked the high-mileage owner's idea of keeping a full-size spare in the load bay. There's ample space in there for it, after all...

Another talking point has been the GP's engine. Some have questioned why it has 215bhp – just 7bhp more than the regular JCW – when the new Peugeot RCZ R, which shares the same basic 1.6-litre turbo unit, manages to produce 266bhp. I suspect part of the answer comes down to the cost of that extra power.

Amongst other changes, the RCZ R's engine has unique pistons designed by Mahle Motorsport, and conrod bearings with a newly developed polymer coating to withstand the extra demands being placed upon them. But I reckon the other part of the answer is that 215bhp is plenty. Any further increase would likely make the GP's front end more unruly, and even if it didn't, I doubt it could make the car any more fun. ☒

**Ian Eveleigh**

### Driver's log

Date acquired	July 2013
Total mileage	13,556
Mileage this month	1435
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	39.0



**T**HE 996 HASN'T really been treated to a winter hibernation. In my first year with a 911 there was no way it was going to stay tucked up for months on end, and as it's a pretty modern car the fears of rust and degradation are less pressing than they are for Nick's SC or Dickie's 964 RS. The latter only comes out when its precisely 24.4deg C and the day begins with P. I think that's the rule, anyway.

Having said that, my 911 has been accruing miles pretty slowly of late. Mostly that's because a few laps at *evo*'s last track evening of 2013 pretty much finished off the brakes and I hadn't got around to getting new discs and pads. I was exploring bigger brake options and had a good chat with Alcon about what could be done to create a trackday set-up that just wouldn't fade. My old M3 had such a system and it liberates you to enjoy the car to its full without feeling abusive. Alcon offered such a system back in the early 2000s but it turns out the parts are no longer available, so a major upgrade is on hold for now.

So it was back to simpler solutions, namely uprated pads and slightly more durable discs. You can go completely mad on pads – GT3 owners have babies about Pagid RS-29s, for example. I'm sure they're great, but they're also getting on for £400 for a set of fronts (where front OE-type pads for a 996 Carrera are

around £65). So I settled for a slightly more affordable solution – EBC Yellowstuff pads at £194.51 for front and rear, and four EuroCup GT discs from porscheshop.co.uk at £328.80.

The old discs were knackered so the result was always going to be an improvement, but the leap in performance was a pleasant surprise. The drilled discs look great behind the OZ Racing rims, and the Yellowstuff pads – which are of a track-focused but road-useable compound – provide that typical Porsche feel, namely a solid brake pedal and instant, reassuring bite. It's still early days and I haven't been on track with the 911 since the upgrade, but the few times I've got into them the brakes have been truly impressive and absolutely consistent. I can't wait to see how they hold up on a track. Perhaps this affordable solution will preclude a full-on caliper upgrade?

So what next? I've still got to tidy the bodywork, particularly the front and rear bumpers, and then maybe I'll start thinking about some juicy upgrades. I want a GT3-style half-cage just because it looks cool. Does that make me shallow? Probably. I'd also love to investigate rebuilding the limited-slip diff. However, mostly I just want to enjoy the car. So I'm going to get the Bilstein PSS10 suspension set up for the new 18s and then hopefully start doing a lot more miles. ☒

**Jethro Bovingdon**  
(@JethroBovingdon)

## Porsche 996 Carrera

Keen to up the winter mileage in his '90s 911, Bovingdon has invested in new (and much-needed) brakes



**Above:** rather than getting a full brake system upgrade, Bovingdon limited himself to Eurocup GT discs (right) and EBC Yellowstuff pads (below)



### Driver's log

<b>Date acquired</b>	May 2013
<b>Total mileage</b>	141,362
<b>Mileage this month</b>	206
<b>Costs this month</b>	£523.31
<b>mpg this month</b>	22.7

## Peugeot 208 GTI

Despite enjoying the French hatch's dynamics, Riley finds its ergonomics leave something to be desired



**A**FTER A FEW months living with the 208, I think it's about time I mentioned one of its major flaws. The dash instruments are positioned right below the windscreen, the idea being that they are perfectly positioned in the driver's eyeline when viewed over the top of the unusually small steering wheel. The steering wheel itself is great, being tiny in diameter, almost like it came from an arcade game. It has a red tab at the top of the rim, like a rally car's wheel, highlighting when the wheels are pointing straight. It's nicely weighted and feels well positioned, too. The problem is that, for me, it's right in the way of the dials.

I find myself having to either lean forward to see the speedo or sit

high and position the steering wheel unnaturally low. When attempting the latter, my head is almost bouncing off the panoramic roof (I imagine I must look pretty silly, too).

This fault aside, when set up for comfort the driving position is far superior to the standard 208's. I just wonder if I could use the excuse of not being able to see the speedo if I get caught speeding... ☒

**Sam Riley** (@samgriley)

### Driver's log

<b>Date acquired</b>	Sept 2013
<b>Total mileage</b>	15,225
<b>Mileage this month</b>	1708
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	35.3

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## Ginetta Racing Drivers Club offers bargain all-inclusive package to budding race drivers

**O**VER THE PAST FIVE YEARS British-based sports car maker Ginetta has supported more than 240 drivers through their first steps in motor racing. And now, new for 2014, the Ginetta Racing Drivers Club aims to help even more budding racing drivers realise their dream with its bigger, better and greater value all-inclusive race package.

Created exclusively for drivers with limited track experience, the GRDC is the only complete ladder from starting racing through to GT3 class. Seen effectively as a hand-held route into professional motorsport, the Ginetta Racing Drivers Club offers a great value all-inclusive package from start to finish.

All-in, your hard-earned cash equips you with a fully assembled and British manufactured Ginetta G40R Drivers Club car – yours to keep, road registered, with 12 months' road tax. As well as this, you'll get two tutored track days and ARDS race licence package, plus four UK race

weekends including practice, qualifying and two races at each event.

On top of that, all members will benefit from personal invites to exclusive lifestyle events throughout the year, while the first ten sign-ups bag themselves an all-expenses trip to the 24 Heures Du Mans in June – quite simply the trip of a lifetime.

The front-engined rear-wheel-drive Ginetta G40R is instantly recognisable and weighs just 820kg thanks to its lightweight construction. It comes with an FIA five-point race harness and seat, as well as a quick release steering wheel and factory-fitted fire extinguisher. You can even add sound deadening, carpets and air-con if you plan on driving to race meets rather than towing.

However, you're not on your own when you get there – the GRDC will provide technical assistance at all events, as well as factory spare parts and support should you ever find yourself window deep in the gravel trap on turn two. The G40R, of course, is a world-renowned specialist

sports car designed for both the road and the track, and uses a 175bhp, 1.8-litre four-cylinder engine. It gets a limited slip diff, a super stiff GT chassis, front and rear adjustable dampers and a full FIA-approved roll cage. Attainable racing has never sounded so good, right?

But that's not all. The Ginetta team can even kit you out with race suits, helmets, boots and gloves, as well as a HANS head and neck support, Ginetta race car cover and even a V-BOX to enable you to log and chart your lap data as you progress through the season.

Ginetta prides itself on its great-value, high-quality lifestyle and racing package – and offers all the above for just £27,250, plus VAT. When you consider the car is yours to keep at the end – either as a fully-prepped race car or as a usable road car – the GRDC package really comes into its own.

Never before has motorsport looked so attractive – and with the Ginetta Racing Drivers Club, never before has it looked so affordable, either. ☒



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# BMW M6 Gran Coupe

Editor Trott has been exploring the M6's cold-weather limits, and has also enjoyed a spell as a chauffeured passenger

**A**S THE WEATHER in the UK turned for the worse, the M6 Gran Coupe's operating window narrowed dramatically. It now seems like any attempt at spirited driving results in fierce intervention from the stability system; on a number of occasions the front-end has struggled to bite into a

corner, while the rear tyres frequently fight a losing battle with the twin-turbocharged V8 engine.

The Michelin rubber has survived the last few months relatively well, with 4mm of tread remaining, but the tyres offer little defence against the M6's torque curve and overall weight – both of which are fat. The M6 GC weighs 1875kg, and its V8 delivers 501lb ft. On your typical greasy winter B-road in England, this can translate into rather clumsy progress.

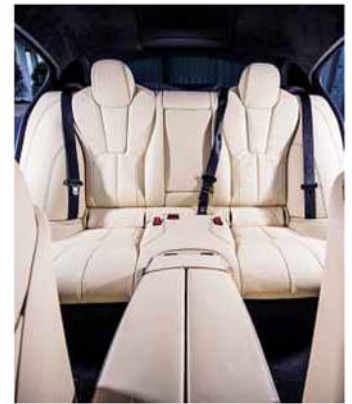
The weight results in front-end push that the steering (lifeless between zero and around 30 degrees) struggles to communicate, and if you deploy the tiniest bit too much torque the car feels like it has been hit by an electromagnetic pulse. The M6 recovers quickly if you reduce your speed with either the brakes or the accelerator pedal, but every journey at present feels like walking a tightrope.

The solution? I can hear you screaming 'fit winter tyres!' and you're right. They're a no-brainer if you've

got a powerful front-engine rear-drive car for the extra grip and confidence they provide. However, as I write, an unusually mild winter has meant we haven't quite reached the tipping point in terms of temperature for winter tyres, so I've resorted to driving around with the M Dynamic Mode switched on, which gives just the right amount of rear steer to combat the understeer. You still have to be wary of barrelling into corners too quickly, but get it right and frustration turns to joy.

In less exciting news, the M6's oil consumption has settled. After consuming 3 litres in 3000 miles, the M6 hasn't touched a drop recently. Oh, and I took a ride in the back recently: a perfectly pleasant experience with good sized and grippy seats, and my own heater controls to tweak. Also, the car's exhaust note sounded 100 times better in the rear, with a genuine barrel-chested V8 roar reaching my ears rather than the synthesised din you get when sat up front. ❌

**Nick Trott** (@evoNickTrott)



**Above:** Trott tried the back seats of the Gran Coupe for the first time this month and found the experience plentiful in space, comfort and aural pleasure

### Driver's log

<b>Date acquired</b>	Sept 2013
<b>Total mileage</b>	6874
<b>Mileage this month</b>	1224
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	19.0



## Ford Focus ST Estate

Smith compares and contrasts his Blue Oval load-lugger to a major rival – the Skoda Octavia vRS Estate



**W**ITH AN OIL change due on the Focus and over 1000 miles to cover, I thought it was a good opportunity to try out one of the ST Estate's rivals: the Skoda Octavia vRS Estate.

In a game of Top Trumps, the 217bhp vRS gets an initial pasting from the ST by being 30bhp down on power. This results in it taking longer to get to 62mph – 7.1sec for the DSG vRS that I tried (6.9sec for the manual) versus 6.5sec for the manual-only Focus – while the Skoda tops out at 150mph compared to 154 for the Ford.

It's when you look past the performance figures that the Octavia starts to claw back the deficit. At £27,570 when specced similarly to our ST, the vRS is £1630 cheaper. It also costs £60 less per year to tax, there's an extra 130 litres of luggage space, and where I can't reach 30mpg in the ST, I managed over 35mpg in the DSG vRS. The Skoda also uses nicer materials inside, has superior build quality and feels a more grown-up place to while away the miles.

However, the ST is undoubtedly the more thrilling of the two when you up the pace. Where the vRS tends to filter

everything out and can make driving quickly seem clinical and unexciting, the ST comes alive, with its front wheels scrabbling for traction, the rear end arcing round at the slightest lift, and a much harder-edged engine that sounds far more performance-orientated than the vRS's asthmatic unit. The only things letting the Focus down are the torque steer and the lack of traction in the wet.

It's fair to say that both cars suffer from image problems amongst the short-sighted. The ST will always be a chav-chariot and the Skoda, well: 'It's a Skoda.' With the huge number of motorway miles I do, I'd find it hard to resist the Octavia's superior interior, easier-to-use entertainment system and better ergonomics. I'd sure miss those exciting B-road blasts in the Ford, though... ❌

**Dean Smith** (@evoDeanSmith)

### Driver's log

<b>Date acquired</b>	August 2013
<b>Total mileage</b>	15,226
<b>Mileage this month</b>	1279
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	29.0



# Jaguar F-type V6 S

It seems the F-type has plenty of admirers, but Bovington wonders if that's translating into sales

**S** SO YOU ALREADY know that I'm really enjoying the F-type. But this month I thought I'd talk about how other people feel about it. You see, the F-type has been charged with changing the perception of Jaguar. We've heard that before, haven't we? About a dozen times. However, I think that finally a new Jaguar is genuinely changing the way people look at the company as a whole. Because everyone – from young lads to school-run mums and well-informed enthusiasts – loves the F-type.

Everywhere I go people ask what it's like, or want to hear the engine or have a sit behind the flat-bottomed steering wheel. I've had emails asking whether to go for an F-type or a 991, Aston owners genuinely interested in whether it's worth consideration. These things never happened with the XK, no matter how many spoilers have

been thrown at it or what lairy paint job it might be sporting. Of course the big question remains if this interest is being translated into sales. My gut feeling (Jaguar isn't announcing numbers) is that, for now, it isn't. I've seen very few F-types on the road and despite lots of conversations with potential owners, I've had no contact with anyone who's actually written that cheque. Are you out there? And if not, is the gorgeous, cheaper, lighter, stiffer Coupe going to tip you over the edge? Get in touch at [fastfleet@evo.co.uk](mailto:fastfleet@evo.co.uk) ✉

**Jethro Bovington**  
(@JethroBovington)

Driver's log	
Date acquired	September 2013
Total mileage	9388
Mileage this month	705
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	26.3



## BMW 2002

**A** AS WELL AS my 2002, I own another BMW. The 323i Touring was cheap, it's scruffy and it isn't my pride and joy, but it does have one redeeming feature – coilovers. They were appropriately inexpensive: £180 for the front coilovers, the rear dampers, and the rear springs with adjustable spring plates. They aren't the last word in ride comfort or handling, but they are easily adjustable.

So you can imagine how annoying it was when I wanted to lower the front of my 2002 and had to buy a new pair of springs, remove the front struts, change the springs and put it all back together, rather than simply winding down a spring plate like I can on my other, crappy BMW. What's worse is that the new springs, which should have lowered the front of the '02 by 20mm, appear to have made no difference at all.



The springs were £70, which seemed good value. Buying another pair that will almost definitely achieve the result I want (now I have this set as a reference) would be the next logical stop, rather than having my front struts modified into adjustables, which would seem like a complete over-reaction. But I've decided that coilovers are essential... ✉

**Will Beaumont** (@WillBeaumont)

Driver's log	
Date acquired	July 2008
Total mileage	145,420-ish
Mileage this month	120-ish
Costs this month	£70
mpg this month	15-ish

## Toyota Celica GT-Four WRC

**I** I WAS PLANNING on writing about some fairly mundane things this month, including the need for new tailgate badges and how I've fitted proper UK-size number plates. If only life was that simple!

MOT day was looming, so the GT-Four was booked in for a test I thought would be a formality. The first problem came when I tried to start the car that morning. Thanks to a couple of weeks without use, the battery had been drained by the constantly active alarm. Despite trying to jump start the Celica off another car, it still failed to come alive, but a call to the AA soon had it going again. The helpful AA man spotted the blown fuel-injection fuse in moments, and thinking nothing more of it, I headed off to the MOT.

It failed. Nothing particularly scary, but enough to warrant a trip to Lewis Rally Sport for some fettling. With a



small piece of the complex multi-link front suspension replaced and a new power steering fluid cap to cure a leak, the car was ready to go again.

Since getting it back, however, it's decided to start popping that fuse on a regular basis, now leaving the car pretty much immobile. Some further investigation is definitely needed... ✉

**Matthew Hayward**  
(@evoMatthew)

Driver's log	
Date acquired	August 2013
Total mileage	46,799
Mileage this month	150
Costs this month	£250
mpg this month	20.0



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# Market Watch

Knowledge

Insights into the used-car market



## Market watch

# THE £23k VANTAGE

Why a low offer on an early V8 could bag you a real bargain

**T**HERE WAS A time when the idea of Aston Martin ownership was nothing more than pie in the sky to most of us, but anyone who keeps a weather eye on the classifieds will have noticed that membership of that once most exclusive of clubs appears to be getting more affordable by the month.

It seems hard to believe, but it is now almost a decade since the V8 Vantage was launched – meaning early cars are now, officially, old. The upshot is that there are dozens for sale at around the £40,000 mark, and almost as many available in the low 30s. Which means, in reality, there are cars out there waiting to be bought for even less.

One of the cheapest (or should that be 'most affordable'?) I have seen recently belonged to south London property dealer Martin Jordan, who put his 55,000-mile, 2006 example up for sale at a tempting £29,500. A 4.3-litre model, with a full service history, it was a great looking and thoroughly honest car that, other than having the odd stone chip and wheel scuff, was difficult to fault.

But instead of being besieged by private buyers beating a path to his door, all Jordan

got was an endless stream of phone calls from dealers trying to 'chip' him on the already reasonable price.

'Before advertising it I did visit a couple of dealers to get an idea of the value. The best offer I got was £20,000, and even that was made reluctantly,' says Jordan. 'When I put it up for sale, I had only one call from a private buyer, which leads me to think that private transactions in that price range are quite rare.' In the end, Jordan sold his car to a dealer, who haggled the price down to £23,000.

'Experiencing the true state of the market as a seller helped me considerably when it came to buying a replacement car,' says Jordan. 'I wanted a newer V8 Vantage with the 4.7 engine – and managed to pick up an absolutely immaculate 2009 convertible with only 15,000 miles on the clock for £47,000.'

But if you're willing to slum it with an early 4.3 and have just over £20k to blow, it looks like Aston ownership could be within your grasp.

**Simon de Burton**



## Auction watch

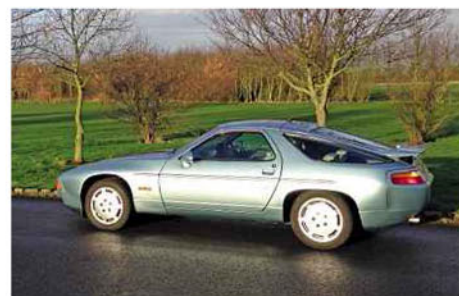
Modern classics for under £10k at Historics of Brooklands sale

Historics at Brooklands' first sale of 2014 is scheduled to take place on March 8, at the auction house's Surrey base. Amongst the lots is a 1997 E36 M3 Evo. The E36 M3 is currently one of the cheapest ways into a 'proper' M-car, and the evolution models are often bought with the sole intention of going on track. As one of the best-handling cars of its era, and with a huge amount of aftermarket motorsport parts available off the shelf, it's easy to understand why. This particular example comes in black with a matching leather interior, no sunroof and rare lightweight aluminium doors. With an estimate of £4500-6500, it's not one of the cheapest E36s out there, but it has a desirable spec and has been meticulously serviced over its 119,000-mile life. With a few modifications it would make a perfect track toy, or simply be one to enjoy for the next few years while values inevitably rise.

Porsche's 928 lived a surprisingly long production life – 18 years in total – but remains one of the marque's more unloved models, forever in the shadow of the 911. By 1987, the 928 was in S4 form and its 5-litre V8 engine was pumping out 316bhp. The 928 was designed as a grand tourer, not a sports car, and the 2+2-seat coupe still makes a lot of sense in this regard. Being sold directly from a private collection, this S4 being offered by Historics has been the recent subject of a bare-metal respray, which is an expensive job to do well on any alloy-bodied car. At the same time the car's electrical systems were fully overhauled and the interior was re-trimmed in leather. The car is currently estimated to sell for £5000-8000.

Other interesting lots include a heavily modified wide-bodied Jaguar XJS (£22-26k), a 1991 Mercedes 500E (£15-19k) and a fun-looking Jaguar D-type replica (£36-£42k).

**Matthew Hayward** (@evoMatthew)



**Top:** E36 M3 Evo should fetch £4500-6500. **Above:** restored 928 S4 is expected to go for £5000-8000



# Market Watch

Knowledge

Insights into the used-car market

## Ask the expert



**Q** I have a dilemma. The impending arrival of child number two has put me in a bit of a bother. I currently own an Alfa 159 2.4 Lusso and love it. It's not the ultimate drivers' car, but it's pretty, well specced, reliable (surprisingly) and did I say pretty? But there is a downside: it's quite cramped and not the most practical car.

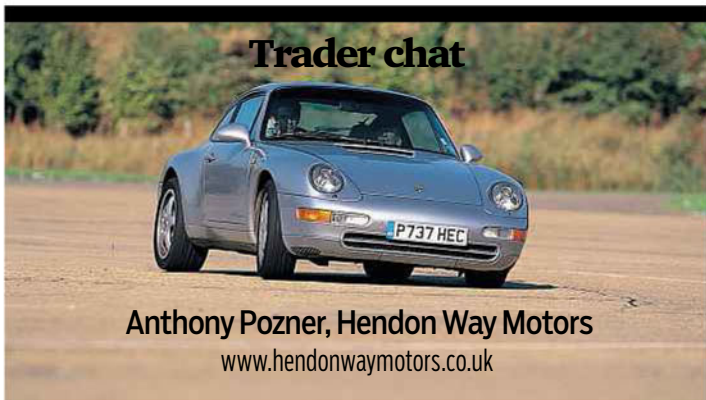
I'd like to replace it with a sporty estate but, if I can help it, I'd rather not go German. I have a budget of £15-18k. What can you recommend? Oh, and people carriers are out!

**John Woodward**

**A** No German cars? It looks as though you'll have to go for the default wagon of the committed family man – a Volvo estate. Were it not for your healthy budget, I'd suggest a 'modern classic' 850R or T5R (pictured). But as £3k currently buys a good one, even an absolute, low-mileage minter wouldn't cost you more than twice as much.

Your £15k would, however, get you a recent V60 Drive R-Design estate, which you could keep for a couple of years and then trade for a V60 Polestar estate (the 21st century answer to the 850R), which goes on sale this summer. **SdB**

## Trader chat



**Anthony Pozner, Hendon Way Motors**  
[www.hendonwaymotors.co.uk](http://www.hendonwaymotors.co.uk)

'Business was brisk towards the end of last year, and there's no sign that there's going to be a downturn in 2014, especially with one particular model in which we specialise – the Porsche 911 993 [pictured]. These are particularly good news at the moment, partly, I think, because people have recognised that they really were the last of the hand-built, air-cooled 911s and, as such, still have plenty of character about them.

'It's often said that Porsche lost money on every 993 it built. That is because it is a quality car, and that quality is now being appreciated by people who want something which is a genuine classic, but also modern in terms of useability.

'Until recently, the Tiptronic cars were relatively unpopular and sold for less than the manuals, but that's changing now, particularly with people who intend to use a 993 as a daily driver. Mileage is becoming less critical, too. People are more interested in overall condition, maintenance history and evidence that money has been spent when necessary.

'The problem is, however, getting hold of the cars – people are laying them down like fine wines, so there are fewer and fewer good ones available for sale.'

## Just looking

The pick of the classifieds this month



### Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Black Series

£104,950

Romans International, Surrey

[www.romansinternational.com](http://www.romansinternational.com)

01737 742808

Sharing most of its forged 6.2-litre V8 with the SLS, aside from the SLS's dry sump lubrication, the C63 Black is as close as you'll get to a DTM racer for the road. With 510 tyre-shredding bhp on offer, and far from subtle extended wheelarches, the Black Series is a truly special bit of kit.

This particular Iridium Silver example at specialist dealer Romans International comes with a mere 1710 miles on the

clock. It's kitted out with the pricey AMG carbonfibre trim and £7k aerodynamic packages, making the £105k price tag somewhat more understandable.

Despite the Black's hardcore pretence, it never quite had the razor-sharp edge of its M3 GTS and 911 GT3 RS rivals. That's not an altogether bad thing if you intend to use the car on the road, though.

**Matthew Hayward** (@evoMatthew)

### Renault Sport Spider

£24,995

Meridien, Lyndhurst

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

02380 283404



Despite the relative affordability, availability and track suitability of the Lotus Elise, there's still something seriously cool about the slightly more oddball Renault Sport Spider. Especially a track-prepared version like this one at Meridien in Lyndhurst.

Even though it's fully track-ready, this Spider has apparently never been raced, which seems a shame. Its engine – a version of the Clio Williams' F7R, remember – has

some spikier cams and other modifications from well-known Renault tuner K-Tec Racing, boosting power to 200bhp.

There are also lightweight 18-inch alloy wheels, an alloy rollover bar, Bilstein racing dampers and Recaro leather seats. Despite all this, this car comes with a windscreen, something the more hardcore early Spiders did without. It's also, somewhat surprisingly, fully road-legal... **MH**

## Fantasy garage: £30,000 challenge

This month, we found three Japanese classics for just £30,000, all from the classifieds at [forsale.evo.co.uk](http://forsale.evo.co.uk)



**1**  
**Mitsubishi Evo VIII**  
£6995

The Evo 8 was one of the most successful Evolution incarnations. This is a genuine UK car showing a relatively low 83,000 miles.



**2**  
**Nissan 300ZX**  
£7995

Nissan's quintessential '80s wedge succumbs to rust. This one, however, looks fresh, having recently arrived from a sun-soaked part of the US.



**3**  
**Subaru Impreza RB320**  
£14,950

A tribute to Richard Burns and a cult car in its own right. This low-mileage example might prove a decent investment.



# IMPERIALS



**BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GT MULLINER COUPE AUTO 56 REG.** Silver Tempest, Full Beluga Hide 66,000 Miles, F/R/S/H, Mulliner Drivers Spec Inc Diamond Quilted Leather, Sat Nav, Bluetooth Prep, Voice Control, Climate, Cruise, E/H/M/Seats, Multi CD, Xenons, PDC, Door Closing Aids, Power Boot, Adjust Susp, F/Mirrors, Piano Black Wood, 22" Kahn Alloys. Opt 20" Speed Style Alloys for Additional Cost.  
**Was £37,995**  
**Now £34,995**



**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 £32,995**



**BMW M3 CAB WITH EDC AUTO DCT 11 REG.** Jerez Black, Fox Red Leather. 25,000 Miles, F/R/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+Val. Bal of Man Warranty.  
**Was £34,995**  
**Now £32,995**



**JAGUAR XKR 5.0 S/ CHARGED V8 COUPE AUTO 10 REG.** Ultimate Black, Ivory Leather. 25,000 Miles, F/S/H. Touch Screen Sat Nav, Bluetooth Prep, Keyless Go, Climate, Cruise, E/H/M/S/ Cooling Seats, CD, IPOD, Bowers and Wilkins Sound, Xenons, PDC, Piano Black Wood, R Body Styling, 20" Nevis Alloys.  
**£35,995**



**JAGUAR XF 3.0d V6 S PREMIUM LUXURY AUTO 60 REG.** White, Black Leather. 39,000 Miles, F/R/S/H. One Owner. Touch Screen Sat Nav, Reverse Camera, Bluetooth Prep, Keyless Go, Climate, Cruise, E/H/M/Cooling Seats, DAB Radio, CD Player, IPOD Connection, Bowers and Wilkins Sound, Bi-Xenons, PDC, Piano Black Wood, 20" Alloys.  
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**MERCEDES C250 CDI SPORT EDITION 125 COUPE AUTO 61 REG.** Diamond White, Red Antico Leather. 39,000 Miles, F/R/S/H. Command, Sat Nav, Linguatronic, Start / Stop Function, Climate, Cruise, Media Interface, DAB Radio, PDC, Bi-Xenons, LED Daytime Lights, Active Blind Spot Assist, S/ Suspension, AMG Styling and AMG Alloys. Bal of Man Warranty.  
**£22,995**



**PORSCHE 997 C2S 3.8 COUPE WITH GT3 STYLING 2006.** Cobalt Blue Metallic with Metropole Blue Leather 45,000 Miles, F/S/H. Full GT3 Styling, PCM, Sat Nav, Climate, E/S/Seats, Multi CD, Bose Sound, Xenons, S/ Glass, Switchable S/Exhaust, PSM, PASM Adjustable Suspension, Computer, RWiper, Red Calipers and 19" Carrera Alloys.  
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**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.  
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**AUDI Q7 3.0 TDI S-LINE PLUS 245 QUATTRO 7 SEATER 8 SPEED AUTO 13 REG.** Ibis White, Black Leather. One Owner. 5,000 Miles. 7 Seats, Tech Pack, Panoramic Roof, Sat Nav, Rear View Camera, Bluetooth Prep, Start / Stop Function, Climate, Cruise, E/H/S/Seats, CD, IPOD, Daytime Lights, Xenons, PDC, Electric Tailgate, S/Steps, S/Glass, 21" Shadow Grey Alloys. Bal of Man Warranty.  
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**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/R/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.  
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**RANGE ROVER EVOQUE 2.2 SD4 DYNAMIC PLUS 5 DOOR AUTO 12 REG.** Santorini Black w/ Silver Roof. Pimento Red Leather. 1 Owner. 23,000 Miles, F/R/S/H. Panoramic Roof, Park Assist, Sat Nav, Rear Camera, Bluetooth, Voice Input, Climate, E/H/M/Seats, DAB, HiLine Audio 600W, Bi-Xenons, PDC, Daytime Lights, Power Tailgate, S/ Glass, Full Dynamic Body Styling, 20" Alloys. Bal of Man Warranty.  
**£37,995**



**RANGE ROVER SPORT 3.0 TDV6 HSE AUTOBIOGRAPHY STYLING AUTO 10 REG.** Zenral Silver, Black Leather. 42,000 Miles, F/R/S/H. Full Autobiography Styling, Touch Screen Sat Nav, TV, Rear View Camera, Personal Telephone Integration, Voice Control, Climate, Cruise, Portable Audio Connectivity, DAB Radio, Harman Kardon, Bi-Xenons, PDC, Piano Black Wood, 20" Alloy Wheels. Optional 22" Alloys Available at Additional Cost.  
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**RANGE ROVER SPORT 3.0 TDV6 HSE LUXURY AUTOBIOGRAPHY STYLING AUTO 11 REG.** Fuji White, Ebony Leather. 11 Owner. 41,000 Miles, F/R/S/H. Full Autobiography Styling, Rear Screen Entertainment, LUX Pack, Touch Screen Sat Nav, TV, Rear View Camera, Personal Telephone Integration, Climate, Adaptive Cruise, E/H/M/Seats, H/Rear/Seats, DAB, CD, Bi-Xenons, PDC, S/Glass, Terrain Response, 20" 5 Spoke Alloys. Bal of Man Warranty. Optional 22" Alloys Available at Additional Cost.  
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**RANGE ROVER SPORT 3.0 TDV6 HSE WITH AUTOBIOGRAPHY STYLING AUTO 10 REG.** Stormaway Grey, Ivory Extended Leather. 1 Owner. 49,000 Miles, F/ L/R/S/H. Full Autobiography Styling, Sat Nav, Rear View Camera, Personal Telephone Integration, Voice Input, Climate, Cruise, E/H/M/Seats, H/Rear/Seats, E/G/S/ Roof, DAB, CD, Harman Kardon, Bi-Xenons, 20" Alloys.  
**£34,995**



**RANGE ROVER 5.0 SUPERCHARGED AUTOBIOGRAPHY AUTO 10 REG.** Alaska White, Duo Tone Leather. 1 Owner. 36,000 Miles. F/L/R/S/H. Rear Entertainment, Surround Cameras, Climate, Adaptive Cruise, E/H/W/ Cooling Seats, E/G/S/Roof, DAB Radio, H/Kardon, Bi-Xenons, Extended Burr Maple Wood Trim, Autobiography Styling, 20" Alloys. 22" Optional Alloys Available at Additional Cost.  
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**RANGE ROVER SPORT 3.0 SDV6 HSE DYNAMIC LUMMA DESIGN CLR-RS AUTO VAT Q 13 REG.** Santorini Black, Ebony Leather. Delivery Miles. Full Lumma CLR-RS Conversion which is far too much to list here along with the great land rover spec, please see our website for full details. Currently only 3 of these stunning conversion in the world.  
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**RANGE ROVER SPORT 2.7 TDV6 HSE 2010 AUTOBIOGRAPHY STYLING AUTO 57 REG.** Java Black. Full Tan Leather. 70,000 Miles, F/S/H. 2010 Autobiography Styling, Touch Screen Sat Nav, Reverse Camera, Climate, Cruise, E/G/S/Roof, E/H/M/Seats, H/Rear/ Seats, CD Player, Harman Kardon, PDC, S/Glass, S/Steps. Optional 22" Alloys Available at Additional Cost.  
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Seal Grey Metallic, 68,000 Miles **£18,450**



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# Buying Guide

Knowledge

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## SEAT Leon Cupra (Mk2) 2007-2012



### Overview

Quicker and edgier than a Golf GTI, the Mk2 Leon Cupra and its even hotter 'R' sibling are well worth a look **Words:** Peter Tomalin

**T**HE SECOND-GENERATION Leon, based on the Mk5 Golf and distinguished by its sharp-edged, almost MPV-like bodyshell, had been launched in 2005, but it wasn't until the spring of 2007 that the Cupra version arrived. Up till then, the hottest version had been the 197bhp Leon FR, a close relative to the Mk5 Golf GTI and a decent enough hot hatch in its own right. But the Cupra took the Leon's performance to another level.

Under the bonnet was a 237bhp version of the VW Group's 2-litre four-pot TFSI petrol engine, with a beefier turbo, larger injectors and a new cylinder head. At the time it was the most powerful engine ever fitted to a SEAT. A 0-62mph time of 6.4sec was around a second quicker than the FR's, while top speed was just over 150mph.

Distinguishing features included standard 18in alloys, red brake calipers and an oval exhaust tailpipe. It looked suitably purposeful inside, too, with predominantly black trim and decent bucket seats, while the sub-£20k list price included bi-xenons, climate control and an MP3-compatible CD player as standard. For 2008 a facelift – known as the K1 – brought restyled bumpers and side skirts and a more pronounced tailgate spoiler.

In January 2010 came the superheated R version, with a stonking 261bhp 2-litre engine (new intercooler, exhaust and ECU) shared with the Audi S3, Golf R and Scirocco R. In the Leon, it further trimmed the 0-60 time (we recorded 6.1sec) while top speed was now a limited 155mph. The suspension was marginally lower – though no harsher than the already-firm standard Cupra's thanks to some bushing tweaks – and it had the XDS electronic pseudo-diff to help it put its prodigious power down.

Some overseas markets had their own limited-edition Cupras with even more power – the Dutch Cupra 310 squeezed 306bhp (310PS) from the 2.0 TFSI engine – and many owners in the UK have sought similar boosts. AmD Tuning's Stage 1 remap gives a claimed 60bhp hike for £499, and a Revo remap gives similar gains for £598. Properly maintained, these cars should hold no fears, as a thriving Cupra community will affirm.

### Checkpoints

#### Engine

The Cupra's 2.0 TFSI benefitted from reinforced pistons and conrods and is generally robust, though it can sound rattly on start-up (due to the larger injectors, say the guys at seatcupra.net). A common issue is that the fuel pump cam follower can wear prematurely: the Teflon coating breaks up and can cause serious scoring to the camshaft. It should be checked annually for wear, but replacing the follower is cheap. Plenty of cars remapped to over 300bhp have remained reliable over high mileages when properly serviced. Check which are the reputable modding firms and take extra care checking service histories.

#### Transmission

The six-speed manual (no DSG for Mk2 Cupras) was beefed up for the higher torque of the Cupra engine. Standard cars should have light, quiet clutches and smooth gearchanges – check second engages easily. The R had a slightly shorter throw, and some modified cars have had a quick-shift fitted; these can feel notchy when set up incorrectly. Also watch for clutch slip on highly tuned cars: ideally they should be running an uprated clutch.

#### Suspension, steering, brakes

Compared to the standard Leon, the Cupra boasts lowered suspension with some use of aluminium to lower unsprung weight. The ride can thump over potholes but should be free from clonks and rattles. The brakes are fine (if a little over-servoed) for road driving in standard tune, though many remapped cars will have uprated discs and pads. The speed-variable electrically assisted steering should be light at low speed, firming up as speed increases. Check the alloys for kerbing and also for signs of corrosion on early cars. Check the tyres for uneven wear and listen for excessive road noise – the alignment could be out. On high-mileage cars also check for worn suspension bushes and CV boots.

#### Body, interior, electrics

No serious corrosion issues yet. The cabin is unremittingly dark and features some hard plastics but is proving resilient, though the side bolsters on the seats are prone to wear and losing their shape. The central locking can play up on older cars, so check it's fully functional.



1: 2-litre engine can be tuned to over 300bhp, but check for frequent servicing. 2: cabins hold up well. 3: R has 261bhp. 4: 18in alloys came as standard

## What we said

January 2007



'As we negotiate a typical Spanish town, the Cupra gives a few low-speed jiggles over broken asphalt. Although the ride is firm, the suspension is very well damped. As speed increases, the Cupra reveals the Golf GTI's ability to smooth over a surface in ruthlessly efficient fashion.'

'The TFSI engine is as fantastic as ever and you still wouldn't know there was a turbo nestled under the bonnet. At first it doesn't feel much quicker than the 197bhp version, but as the road gets interesting and you start holding on to a few more revs, you soon realise that it spins harder and faster at the top of the rev-range than any Golf GTI or Leon FR.'

'Through a sequence of hairpins the Leon is too big a car to three-wheel round, its weight meaning you have to exercise restraint and wait for the road to open out again. When it does, the Cupra is blinding through the faster corners, the mass of the car feeling as if it has all been placed low down between the wheels. Grip is huge, yet easily trimmed on the limit. The Cupra corners flat and hard, a little slip at the front bleeding out before it grips again and sets about the next straight. It's a steely display of dynamic control.' (evo 100)



Above: six-speed manual 'box is tough; check quick-shift upgrades operate smoothly



Above: cornering grip is a Cupra strong point; check for worn bushes on high-milers

## 'I bought one' Scott Fulton

'I bought my Mk2 Leon Cupra new in 2007 from my local dealer, Holders of Congressbury. I had owned a Mk1 Cupra R – an excellent car at the time – but moving to the Mk2 was a significant step up: the handling was so much better and the power delivery much smoother.'

'I help run seatcupra.net so I hear the views of plenty of owners. The Mk2 Cupra and the R certainly have a strong following and there is a very active

modding community. I decided after a year to remap my car to Revo Stage 1 and fit a Milltek cat-back exhaust. Whilst the car is excellent from stock with 237bhp, this took it over the 300bhp mark and now it just flies. It still handles well and it continues to put a smile on my face after nearly seven years.'

'The car has covered just under 50,000 mostly trouble-free miles. Most of those have been clocked up with

a spirited daily commute and longer trips at the weekends. I have had the cam follower replaced every year as a precaution, and other than a stereo that wouldn't spit out my CDs – replaced under warranty – and it consuming spark plugs relatively quickly, probably not helped by the remap, it's been as good as gold. I had more problems with the Mk1 Cupra R in three years than I have had with the Mk2 in nearly seven.'

## Specification

### SEAT Leon Cupra (Mk2)

**Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1984cc, turbo  
**Max power** 237bhp @ 5700-6300rpm  
**Max torque** 221lb ft @ 2200-5500rpm  
**Transmission** Six-speed manual, front-wheel drive  
**Weight** 1375kg  
**Power-to-weight** 175bhp/ton  
**0-62mph** 6.4sec (claimed)  
**Top speed** 153mph (claimed)  
**Price new** £19,595 (2007)

## Parts prices

(Prices supplied by [amdtuning.com](http://amdtuning.com), [ebcbrakeshop.co.uk](http://ebcbrakeshop.co.uk) and [blackcircles.com](http://blackcircles.com). Prices include VAT but exclude fitting charges)

**Tyres (each)** £107.21 (Goodyear Eagle F1)  
**Front pads (axle set)** £123.76 (EBC Redstuff)  
**Front discs (pair)** £451 (EBC Turbo Groove)  
**Coilovers** £946 (KW Street Comfort, full set)  
**Clutch** £975 (LOBA-Sachs upgrade clutch kit)  
**Release bearing** £66  
**Exhaust** £624 (Milltek, cat-back)  
**Air filter** £36 (Pipercross performance filter)

## Servicing

(Prices supplied by [amdtuning.com](http://amdtuning.com), including VAT)

**Recommended intervals:**

10,000 miles/12 months

**Oil change service** £120

**Full service** £234

**Cambelt and water pump service** £312

## What to pay

Regular Cupras are much more common than their R siblings. Expect to pay somewhere in the region of £8000 for a 2007 Cupra with average miles and a full service history. Further up the price ladder, £10,000-12,000 gives you a wide choice of 2010-11 cars with good provenance. At the top end, an end-of-the-line 2012 Cupra R can be yours for about £17k.

## Useful contacts

✚ [seatcupra.net](http://seatcupra.net) forums, features, events  
✚ [seat-forum.co.uk](http://seat-forum.co.uk) forums, advice, events  
✚ [amdtuning.com](http://amdtuning.com) specialist (Essex/Norhants)  
✚ [revotechnik.com](http://revotechnik.com) tuning  
✚ [pistonheads.com](http://pistonheads.com) cars for sale, forums  
✚ [forsale.evo.co.uk](http://forsale.evo.co.uk) cars for sale

## In the classifieds



**2007 Cupra**  
✚ 57,000 miles ✚ Manual  
✚ Black ✚ Standard 240PS  
✚ Full service history  
✚ Cambelt at 30k  
✚ [svautomotive.co.uk](http://svautomotive.co.uk)

£7995



**2010 (59) Cupra**  
✚ 46,247 miles  
✚ Candy White ✚ FSSH  
✚ Touchscreen DVD/satnav  
✚ Multimedia interface  
✚ [williamsmotor.co.uk](http://williamsmotor.co.uk)

£10,495



**2010 Cupra R (265)**  
✚ 30,310 miles ✚ Crono Yellow  
✚ Quilted leather  
✚ FSH ✚ Immaculate  
✚ Satnav, Bluetooth, etc  
✚ [petervardy.com](http://petervardy.com)

£13,999

## The rivals

### Volkswagen Golf GTI

There's a wide choice of Mk5 GTIs under £10k, and if you've got £12k you'll have your pick of early average-mile Mk6s.

### Audi S3

Sharing the Cupra R's 261bhp engine, the S3 (2006-2012) is a class act, but you pay a premium for those four rings. Good choice of early cars around £13k.

### Renaultsport Mégane 250 Cup

Another 2-litre turbo four, the 2009-2012 model offers 247bhp, 0-60 in 6.1sec and an excellent chassis from £12k.



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# Essentials

## Knowledge

The best books, models, clothing, games, garage kit and tuning gear



1



2



4

3



5



### Model

#### Pocher 1:8 Aventador

£499 [www.hornby.com](http://www.hornby.com)

1 Pocher is well known within model-making circles as a creator of some of the most detailed and high-quality mass-produced kits ever seen. This stunningly accurate 1:8-scale Lamborghini Aventador comprises over 600 individual parts and weighs a hefty 7kg when complete.

### Wheels

#### Wolfrace JDM

£89.95 (per wheel)

[www.wolfrace.com](http://www.wolfrace.com)

2 Wolfrace has relaunched its range of simple Japanese-inspired six-spoke wheels, but they aren't just for JDM products – they also suit European cars. The wheels are available in black, silver or gunmetal, and in 7.5 x 17in or 8 x 18in sizes. All come with the standard Wolfrace 12-month warranty.

### Model

#### Airfix Quick Build

£12.99 (each) [www.airfix.com](http://www.airfix.com)

3 Don't let the Airfix name scare you into thinking these kits are complicated – they are made up of 35 parts that are already painted and simply clip together. The Bugatti Veyron and Lamborghini Aventador are available alongside a fleet of military aircraft.

### Navigation

#### Garmin Essential satnavs

From £89 [www.garmin.com](http://www.garmin.com)

4 Available with 5in or 6in touchscreens, Garmin's 'Essential' satnavs are aimed at the budget end of the market but get a refreshed interface and features previously found on more expensive models. The 'Up Ahead' function shows a stream of points of interest next to the map view to make finding fuel or food easy, plus there's lane assist and safety camera alerts.

### In-car accessory

#### Patrona Connector Face

£30 [www.patrona.com](http://www.patrona.com)

5 This minuscule mount enables you to put your phone pretty much wherever you want it in your car. A tiny 45x35mm plate is affixed to your dash with a non-marking adhesive, while another small disc sticks to your device. The former can then magnetically hold your phone, giving you versatility that few other phone mounts can offer.





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Gloss Retention	★★	★★	★★	*	★★★★★
Scratch Resistance	*	★★	*	*	★★★★★
Dirt Repellency	★★★	★★★	★★★	*	★★★★★
Stone chip resist				★★★★★	*
Durability	≈ 3 months	≈ 6 months	≈ 6 months	≈ 6 years	≈ 5 years

\* C1 Crystal Lacquer tested by Q-Lab Corp against market leading paint protection products

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# Tried & Tested

Knowledge

The best motoring products, put through their paces by the evo team



## Gerber GDC Zip Blade and Light

£12.99 (each) [gerbergear.co.uk](http://gerbergear.co.uk)

Tools small enough to carry with you all the time usually aren't up to much, but these two from Gerber are exceptions. They are part of the new Gerber Daily Carry (GDC) range and are designed to loop through the zip pull on a coat or bag, but they work just as well on a key ring.

Both tools have a strong braided strap with a quick-release clip that is seriously tough and easily resists being pulled apart, while the securing loop is also robust. The single-LED Light puts out eight lumens, which is no match for the latest LED torches, but good for a tool powered by just two CR1616 batteries

(included). Run-time is claimed to be 3.5 hours. The beam is wide and smooth, and well suited to roadside repairs. The only drawback is that the light can't be locked on – you have to hold the button down.

The Blade is the pick of the pair thanks to its super-sharp edge, which locks into place so can't fold onto fingers. It may only be 17mm long but it can strip 17-amp automotive cable and, thanks to a wide upper edge that allows pressure to be applied, cut through it too. Both these products are handy and easy to carry as they weigh just half an ounce each.

**Kim Adams** (@cargadgetguru)

## Richbrook Combo Digital Tread Depth & Tyre Pressure Gauge

£18.95 [richbrook.co.uk](http://richbrook.co.uk)

If you've ever squinted at a tiny digital display trying to read tyre pressures then you'll love this new addition to the Richbrook range. Instead of a minuscule screen you get a large, 35mm-wide high-contrast LCD display that's a breeze to read.

There's a choice of four scales, including the essential bar and psi readouts, plus metric and imperial options for the tread-depth gauge. The large rounded shape takes a little getting used to but it sits comfortably in the palm to leave the display highly visible, although the reading also stays on-screen for around 10 seconds after you remove the gauge from the valve. Tested against a calibrated gauge, the Richbrook was remarkably accurate, never more than 0.5psi out over a range of pressures. Unlike many rival gauges, it also has a neat air-release function to adjust pressures.

The depth gauge also works well, with a slider on the rear of the casing pushing the measuring probe into the tread. To back up the clear measurement, there's a colour-coded display that goes red when the result is at the legal 1.6mm minimum or below.

It may be a little more expensive than some alternative gauges, but the clear display, accuracy, tread depth measure and neat storage bag make the Richbrook worth the extra money.

**Kim Adams** (@cargadgetguru)



## EBC Yellowstuff Brake Pads

£84.67 (axle set) [ebcbrakeshop.co.uk](http://ebcbrakeshop.co.uk)

I usually change the brake pads on my BMW 2002 in my yard, where there's a small incline, so once my car is back on its wheels with its new pads fitted and I start to manoeuvre it, it rolls forward. As it does so, I press the brake pedal to stop and, inevitably, nothing happens. I know brand-new pads barely work and the pedal is going to be extremely long thanks to the pads being nowhere near the discs, but I always forget and sail terrified and helpless toward the nearest valuable chunk of metal until I yank on the handbrake. I'm yet to actually hit anything, but I have shortened my life significantly.

Thanks to EBC, I may never have this problem again. Its road-car pads feature a red 'break-in' surface coating that gives you immediate stopping power. I was anxious about putting more effective pads on a car that would easily lock up under braking with OEM pads, but I shouldn't have been. The Yellowstuff pads are very progressive and, although you can still lock the wheels if you stamp on the middle pedal, you're much less likely to, because you can more accurately judge when they start to lock.

**Will Beaumont** (@WillBeaumont)

## Hunt vs Lauda: Grand Prix's Greatest Racing Rivals

£9.99 (DVD) [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk)

Having missed this documentary when it was first broadcast on the BBC last summer, but having seen Ron Howard's movie *Rush* in the interim, I had my doubts about whether it would add anything to the story of one of the most epic rivalries ever to grace Formula 1.

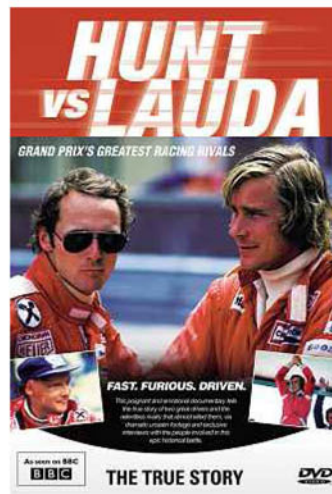
Seven minutes in and with barely 20 seconds of on-track action shown, my doubts remained intact. However, as the season review properly began, things began to pick up, with the sounds of roaring 12-cylinder engines and archive footage of Hunt claiming his speed is down to 'big balls'.

Focusing on the passion, anger and pride of the protagonists and their teams,

the documentary really gets into its stride with commentary from the team managers and journalists of the day, as well as from Lauda himself. The real footage of burning cars and an injured Lauda ensures we don't slip into a world of rose-tinted glasses and the danger of 1970s F1 is starkly displayed.

With such in-depth coverage of the title challengers' battle, *Hunt vs Lauda* can make it feel as though only two drivers were competing in that 1976 championship, but if a narrowly focused review of these two wildly different characters is what you want, you need look no further.

**Sam Sheehan**





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# Trips & Travel

Knowledge

The best destinations to visit in your car

## Great drives: A702, Scotland



**Start point:** 55.50238, -3.69604 (A74(M), Junction 13)

**The roads:** A702, B797, B740

**Great for:** a hot hatch or an Impreza



**L**AST MONTH I talked about the A701 to the east of the A74(M) in Scotland. However, at the end I suggested that if you wanted to head west of the motorway, then there were other roads you should look at. These three roads all extend roughly south-west of Junction 13 of the motorway and all of them end (for our purposes) when they meet the A76. It's a network of roads we used during the 'real world' part of eCoty 2005, and although the weather wasn't particularly kind to us, the scenery was spectacular nevertheless.

The largest and smoothest of the roads is the A702, which you can initially follow along the side of the A74(M) and which then leads naturally south-west-ish all the way to the A76 (a quick diversion along the single-track road to Daer Reservoir might be worth it if you're in a hot hatch).

Once you reach the A76, you can turn right and then eight miles later turn right again onto the B797. If I had to pick a favourite road from the trio (always makes me think of the biscuit) then this would be it. It sweeps along the narrow base of a dramatic valley, winding between the sides of heather-covered hills. When you reach the village of Leadhills you have a choice: stay on the 797 or branch right onto the B7040 towards Elvanfoot. Both are great, so if you have the time you might as well explore both (the 7040 has a curious pinkish-red surface).

Whichever road you take, you will eventually meet the A702 again and this time you want to turn left and head back towards Junction 13 of the A74(M). Heading back over the motorway, take the B7078 towards Douglas, then after 2.6 miles turn left onto the B740. This will take you on a 14-mile journey through farmland and moorland, back to the A76 from whence you can pick your favourite route back to the motorway.

**Henry Catchpole**  
Features editor



### The route



**Start** **Finish**

Distance: 62 miles

Time: 1 hour 45 minutes

### Where to stay

First choice would seem to be the Hopetoun Arms situated conveniently in Leadhills. It gets great reviews and is the highest residential hotel in Britain. Other choices include the Abington Hotel just off the A702. It generally gets good reviews on TripAdvisor and a room for two is about £65 a night. Slightly further afield, The Old Church B&B in Muirkirk gets incredibly good reviews and if you're a *Great British Bake-Off* fan, you can even try their bread-making school.

### Watch out for

As always, the weather in Scotland can be challenging and the B-roads probably won't be the first to get gritted in winter, so take care. There's also likely to be a small amount of farm traffic (with associated mud from tyres) and it should go without saying that care needs to be taken, as well as speed limits strictly adhered to, through villages such as Leadhills.

## Reader road trip Ferrari golden ticket

Last year I won a competition for which the prize was a week for my wife and myself in Italy, including a two-day adventure at Ferrari, touring the factory and the museum and driving a Ferrari on the Fiorano test track.

Touring the factory, my senses were overloaded. I was blessed with a rare sighting of two LaFerraris being tested, and blessed again at the Formula 1 building, where we lingered for just five minutes before seeing the cars that had just returned from the Japanese GP. The tour ended at Corse Clienti, where rows of F1 thoroughbreds were on display.

The next morning at Fiorano, gleaming red Ferrari 458s – ours for the day – were waiting for us. My first lap behind the wheel



was sensational. My biggest memory is of my instructor saying 'Go! Go!' before I saw the world go by in a blur. The transition from street driver to circuit driver took a few laps, but with the instructor's encouragement my confidence began to build and I started to push the car harder. I confess to a healthy dose of fear surrounding me at all times as I explored my driving boundaries.

The highlight was driving a lap after which our telemetry was printed so we could compare our driving to our instructor's. I got a 'Bravo!' from my instructor, which I was proud of, and felt even prouder when the telemetry showed my average speed of 155kph was faster than my wife's 153kph! We finished our experience with a private dinner in the Victory Hall at the Ferrari Museum, surrounded by seven title-winning F1 cars. Glorious!

**Jason Grunsell**

Email your road trip story to [henryc@evo.co.uk](mailto:henryc@evo.co.uk)

## Events calendar

### MARCH

#### March 6-16

Geneva motor show  
[www.salon-auto.ch](http://www.salon-auto.ch)

#### March 8

Malcolm Wilson Rally, Cumbria  
[www.malcolmwilson.co.uk](http://www.malcolmwilson.co.uk)

#### March 14-16

Australian Grand Prix, Melbourne  
[www.grandprix.com.au](http://www.grandprix.com.au)

#### March 16

Open pitlane trackday, Spa-Francorchamps  
[www.spaopenpitlane.com](http://www.spaopenpitlane.com)



# 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	<b>7.2</b>	<b>20.4</b>	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	03-06	6/3179	247/6200	221/4800	1360kg	185	<b>6.0</b>	<b>15.5</b>	153	-	23.3	+ Mk1 Focus RS pace without the histrionics - Slightly nose-heavy	★★★★☆
Audi Al 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 Al quattro	181 R	£41,020	4/1984	253/6000	258/2500	1420kg	181	5.7	-	152	199	32.8	+ Polished 253bhp all-wheel-drive Al - Just 19 for UK, Porsche Cayman price	★★★★☆
Audi S3	188 R	£31,260	4/1984	296/5500	280/1800	1395kg	216	<b>5.4</b>	<b>12.5</b>	155	162	40.4	+ Lots of grip and one of the best-sounding four-pot turbos - Still a little too clinical	★★★★☆
Audi S3	106 R	06-12	4/1984	261/6000	245/2000	1455kg	183	<b>5.6</b>	<b>13.6</b>	155	198	33.2	+ Very fast, very effective, very... err... quality - A little too clinical	★★★★☆
Audi RS3 Sportback	156 R	11-12	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1575kg	216	4.5	-	155	212	31.0	+ Above, with added five-pot character - Again, see above...	★★★★☆
BMW 125iM Sport	176 D	£26,020	4/1997	218/5000	228/1350	1420kg	156	6.4	-	155	154	42.8	+ Performance, price, running costs - Dull four-pot soundtrack	★★★★☆
BMW 1M35i	186 R	£30,835	6/2979	316/5800	332/1300	1425kg	225	<b>4.8</b>	<b>12.9</b>	155	188	35.3	+ Powertrain, noise, chassis, price - M235i looks nicer, and has an LSD on its options list	★★★★☆
BMW 123d M Sport	122 R	07-11	4/1995	201/4400	295/2000	1420kg	144	<b>6.5</b>	<b>17.4</b>	148	138	54.3	+ Economical and no slouch - Doesn't feel special enough	★★★★☆
BMW 130i M Sport	106 R	05-10	6/2996	261/6650	232/2750	1450kg	183	<b>6.1</b>	<b>15.3</b>	155	-	34.0	+ Fantastic engine - Suspension can still get a little boingy	★★★★☆
Citroën C1/Peugeot 107/Toyota Aygo	126 R	£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 Saxa VTS	020 R	97-03	4/1587	120/6600	107/5200	935kg	130	<b>7.6</b>	<b>22.6</b>	127	-	34.9	+ Chunky, chuckable charger - Can catch out the unwary	★★★★☆
Citroën DS3 1.6 THP	142 R	£16,800	4/1598	154/6000	171/1400	1240kg	126	7.2	-	133	155	42.2	+ A proper French hot hatch - Petrolheads might find it too 'designed'	★★★★☆
Citroën DS3 Racing	153 D	11-12	4/1598	204/6000	203/2000	1240kg	167	6.5	-	146	149	-	+ Faster, feistier version of above - Not as hardcore as its 'Racing' tag suggests	★★★★☆
Fiat Panda 100HP	132 R	06-11	4/1368	99/6000	97/4250	975kg	103	9.5	-	115	154	43.5	+ Most fun per pound on the market - Optional ESP can't be turned off	★★★★☆
Fiat Punto Evo Sporting	141 D	£14,500	4/1368	133/5000	152/1750	1155kg	117	8.5	-	127	129	50.4	+ Great engine, smart styling - Dynamics don't live up to the Evo name	★★★★☆
Ford Sportka SE	084 R	03-08	4/1597	94/5500	100/4250	934kg	102	9.5	-	108	-	37.2	+ Big fun in a little package - Could handle even more power	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta 1.0T EcoBoost 125PS	181 D	£15,445	3/999	123/6000	125/1400	1091kg	115	9.4	-	122	99	65.7	+ Three-pot engine is surprisingly feisty - Struggles to justify the premium price	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST	184 R	£16,995	4/1596	179/5700	214/1500	1088kg	167	<b>7.4</b>	<b>18.4</b>	137	138	47.9	+ Chassis, price, punchy performance - Not as powerful as key rivals	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta 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	08-13	4/1596	118/6000	112/4050	1045kg	115	9.9	-	120	134	48.7	+ Genuinely entertaining supermini - Growth up compared to Twingo/Swift	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta Zetec S Mountune	132 R	08-13	4/1596	138/6750	129/4250	1080kg	130	7.9	-	120	134	48.7	+ As above, with a fantastically loud exhaust... - if you're 12 years old	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST	075 D	05-08	4/1999	148/6000	140/4500	1137kg	132	7.9	-	129	-	38.2	+ Great looks, decent brakes - Disappointing chassis, gussy engine	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST185 Mountune	115 R	08	4/1999	185/6700	147/3500	1137kg	165	6.9	-	129	-	-	+ Fiesta ST gets the award it always needed - OTT exhaust note	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta Zetec S	020 R	00-02	4/1596	102/6000	107/4000	976kg	106	<b>10.2</b>	-	113	-	38.2	+ Better than you'd ever believe - No-one else will believe it	★★★★☆
Ford Focus 1.6T Zetec S	165 D	£20,695	4/1596	179/5700	199/1900	1333kg	136	7.8	-	138	139	47.1	+ The fastest, keenest Mk3 Focus yet - The Mk1's sparkle is still absent, though	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST	188 R	£21,995	4/1999	247/5500	265/1750	1362kg	184	<b>6.5</b>	<b>16.8</b>	154	169	-	+ All-round cracking hot hatch. Good value, too - There's a bit of torque-steer	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST Mountune	187 D	£23,220	4/1999	271/5500	295/2750	1362kg	202	5.7	-	154+	169	-	+ Great value upgrade - Steering still not as feesome as that of some rivals	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST	119 R	05-10	5/2522	222/6000	236/1600	1392kg	162	<b>6.7</b>	<b>16.8</b>	150	224	30.4	+ Value, performance, integrity - Big engine compromises handling	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST Mountune	137 R	08-11	5/2522	256/5500	295/2500	1392kg	187	<b>5.8</b>	<b>14.3</b>	155	224	-	+ ST takes extra power in its stride - You probably still want an RS	★★★★☆
Ford Focus RS	188 R	09-11	5/2522	300/6500	324/2300	1467kg	208	<b>5.9</b>	<b>14.2</b>	163	225	30.5	+ Huge performance, highly capable fwd chassis - It could be the last RS...	★★★★☆
Ford Focus RS500	181 R	10-11	5/2522	345/6000	339/2500	1467kg	239	<b>5.6</b>	<b>12.7</b>	165	225	-	+ More power and presence than regular RS - Pricey	★★★★☆
Ford Focus RS	053 R	02-03	4/1998	212/5500	229/3500	1278kg	169	<b>5.9</b>	<b>14.9</b>	144	-	-	+ Some are great - Some are awful (so make sure you drive plenty)	★★★★☆
Ford Escort RS Cosworth	157 R	92-96	4/1993	227/6250	224/3500	1304kg	176	5.8	-	143	-	24.5	+ The ultimate Essex hot hatch - Ultimate trophy for tea leaves	★★★★☆
Ford Puma 1.7	095 R	97-02	4/1679	123/6300	116/4500	1044kg	120	<b>8.6</b>	<b>27.6</b>	122	-	38.2	+ Everything - Nothing. The 1.4 is worth a look too	★★★★☆
Ford Racing Puma	128 R	00-01	4/1679	153/7000	119/4500	1174kg	132	<b>7.8</b>	<b>23.2</b>	137	-	34.7	+ Exclusivity - Expense. Standard Puma does it so well	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type-R	102 R	07-11	4/1998	198/7800	142/5600	1267kg	158	<b>6.8</b>	<b>17.5</b>	146	215	31.0	+ Looks great. VTEC more accessible - Steering lacks feel, inert balance	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type-R C'ship White	126 D	09-10	4/1998	198/7800	142/5600	1267kg	158	6.6	-	146	-	31.0	+ Limited-slip diff a welcome addition - It's not available on standard car...	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type-R Mugen	144 R	09-11	4/1998	237/8300	157/6250	1233kg	195	5.9	-	155	-	-	+ Fantastic on road and track - There'll only be 20, and it's a tad pricey...	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type-R	075 R	01-05	4/1998	197/7400	145/5900	1204kg	166	<b>6.8</b>	<b>16.9</b>	146	-	31.7	+ Potent and great value - Looks divide opinion, 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	88-93	4/1995	210/5750	220/3500	1350kg	158	5.7	-	137	-	23.9	+ One of the finest cars ever built - Demands love, LSD 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	<b>6.3</b>	<b>14.5</b>	155	224	29.4	+ Quick, eager and very good value - The steering's iffy	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz A250 'by AMG'	173 D	£29,025	4/1991	208/5500	258/1200	1370kg	154	6.5	-	149	148	46.3	+ Mercedes builds a proper hot hatch - But denies it a manual gearbox	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz A45 AMG	188 R	£37,845	4/1991	355/6000	332/2250	1480kg	244	<b>4.3</b>	<b>10.6</b>	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	84-87	6/2991	250/7000	225/6500	1000kg	254	4.5	-	140	-	-	+ The most extreme hot hatch ever - Engine noise, heat soak, five mpg	★★★★☆
Mini One		£13,460	4/1598	97/6000	113/3000	1070kg	92	10.5	-	116	127	52.3	+ Perfect power-to-grip ratio - HUGE speedo, slow car	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper	185 F	£14,900	4/1598	120/6000	118/4250	1075kg	113	9.1	-	126	127	52.3	+ Brilliant ride and composure; could be all the Mini you need - You'll still buy the 'S'	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S	149 R	£18,180	4/1598	181/5500	177/1600	1140kg	161	<b>7.0</b>	-	142	136	48.7	+ New engine, Mini quality - Lacks old car's direct front end	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper SD	158 D	£18,870	4/1995	141/4000	225/1750	1150kg	125	8.0	-	134	114	65.7	+ A quick diesel Mini with impressive mpg - But no Cooper S alternative	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works	184 R	£22,460	4/1598	208/6000	206/2000	1160kg	182	<b>7.2</b>	<b>16.7</b>	148	165	39.8	+ A seriously rapid Mini - Occasionally just a little unruly	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works Coupe	164 R	£23,800	4/1598	208/6000	206/2000	1175kg	180	6.3	-	149	165	39.8	+ The usual raucous Mini JCW experience - But with a questionable 'helmet' roof...	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works GP	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	07-08	4/1598	189/6000	199/1750	1130kg	170	<b>7.6</b>	<b>18.0</b>	145	-	-	+ Cracking hot Mini - Expensive with option packs included	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S Works GP	144 R	06	4/1598	215/7100	184/4600	1090kg	200	6.5	-	149	-	32.8	+ Storming engine, agility - Tacky styling 'enhancements'	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S (Mk1)	077 R	02-06	4/1598	168/6000	155/4000	1140kg	143	<b>7.8</b>	<b>19.9</b>	135	-	33.6	+ Strong performance, quality feel - Over-long gearing	★★★★☆
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 and over. Subject to status. Model shown Volvo V40 Cross Country D2 SE with Styling Kit. 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	<b>7.7</b>	<b>19.5</b>	134	159	40.9	+ More than the sum of its parts - Not enough to add up to a pukka hot hatch
Nissan Sunny GTI-R	'92-'93	4/1998	220/6400	197/4800	1269kg	176	6.1	-	134	-	25.1	+ Nissan's Escort Cossie - Make sure it's a good one	
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 2)	'97-'98	4/1587	103/6200	97/3500	865kg	121	8.8	-	121	-	34.0	+ Bargain no-frills thrills - Not as much fizz as original 1.3	
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 1)	095 R	'94-'96	4/1294	100/7200	80/5400	826kg	123	9.3	-	118	-	35.6	+ Frantic, thrashy fun - Needs caning to extract full potential
Peugeot 106 GTI 16v	034 R	'97-'04	4/1587	120/6600	107/5200	950kg	128	<b>7.4</b>	<b>22.2</b>	127	-	34.9	+ Fine handling supermini - Looks its age
Peugeot 208 GTI	184 R	£18,895	4/1598	197/5800	203/1700	1160kg	173	<b>6.8</b>	<b>17.9</b>	143	139	47.9	+ Agile chassis works well on tough roads - Could be more involving
Peugeot 205 GTI 1.9	095 R	'88-'91	4/1905	130/6000	119/4700	910kg	145	7.9	-	124	-	36.7	+ Still scintillating after all these years - Brittle build quality
Peugeot 306 GTI-6	020 R	'93-'01	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1215kg	139	<b>7.2</b>	<b>20.1</b>	140	-	30.1	+ One of the great GTIs - They don't make them like this any more
Peugeot 306 Rallye	095 R	'88-'99	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1199kg	141	<b>6.9</b>	<b>19.2</b>	137	-	30.1	+ Essentially a GTI-6 for less dosh - Limited choice of colours
Renaultsport Twingo 133	175 R	'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	<b>6.9</b>	<b>17.9</b>	143	144	44.8	+ Faster, more refined, easier to drive - We miss the revvy nat-asp engine and manual 'box
Renaultsport Clio 200 Cup	154 R	'09-'13	4/1998	197/7100	159/5400	1204kg	166	<b>6.6</b>	<b>16.7</b>	141	190	34.5	+ The hot Clio at its best - Why the long face?
Renaultsport Clio 197 Cup	115 R	'07-'09	4/1998	194/7250	158/5550	1240kg	161	6.9	-	134	-	33.6	+ Quick, polished and capable - Not as much sheer fun as 182 Cup
Renaultsport Clio 182	066 R	'04-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	110kg	165	<b>6.6</b>	<b>17.5</b>	139	-	34.9	+ Took hot hatches to a new level - Flawed driving position
Renaultsport Clio 182 Cup	187 R	'04-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	168	6.5	-	139	-	34.9	+ Full of beans, fantastic value - Sunday-market upholstery
Renaultsport Clio Trophy	095 R	'05-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	168	<b>6.6</b>	<b>17.3</b>	140	-	34.9	+ Most fun you can have on three wheels - Just 500 were built
Renaultsport Clio 172 Cup	048 R	'02-'04	4/1998	170/6250	147/5400	1011kg	171	<b>6.5</b>	<b>17.7</b>	138	-	-	+ Bargain old-school hot hatch - Nervous in the wet, no ABS
Renaultsport Clio V6 255	057 R	'03-'05	6/2946	255/7150	221/4650	1400kg	182	5.8	-	153	-	23.0	+ Supercar drama without the original's edgy handling - Uninspired interior
Renaultsport Clio V6	029 R	'99-'02	6/2946	230/6000	221/3750	1335kg	175	<b>5.8</b>	<b>17.0</b>	145	-	23.0	+ Pocket supercar - Mid-engined handling can be tricky
Renault Clio Williams	095 R	'93-'96	4/1988	148/6100	126/4500	981kg	153	<b>7.6</b>	<b>20.8</b>	121	-	26.0	+ One of the best hot hatches ever - Can be fragile like an Integrale
Renault 5GT Turbo	123 R	'87-'91	4/1397	120/5750	122/3750	831kg	146	7.8	-	120	-	28.4	+ Clio Williams' grand-daddy - Most have been thrashed
Renaultsport Mégane 265 Cup	188 R	£25,245	4/1998	261/5500	265/3000	1387kg	191	<b>6.4</b>	<b>14.8</b>	158	190	34.4	+ Same power as limited-edition Trophy; chassis still superb - Not a lot
Renaultsport Mégane 250 Cup	139 R	'09-'12	4/1998	247/5500	251/3000	1387kg	181	<b>6.1</b>	<b>14.6</b>	156	190	34.4	+ Fantastic chassis... - partially obscured by new-found maturity
Renaultsport Mégane dCi 175 Cup	119 R	'07-'09	4/1995	173/3750	265/2000	1470kg	119	<b>8.3</b>	<b>23.5</b>	137	-	43.5	+ A diesel with a genuinely sporty chassis - Could take more power
Renaultsport Mégane Trophy	087 R	'05	4/1998	222/5500	221/3000	1355kg	166	<b>6.7</b>	<b>17.3</b>	147	-	32.1	+ Mega grip and traction - Steering needs a touch more feel
Renaultsport Mégane 230 R26	102 R	'07-'09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1345kg	171	<b>6.2</b>	<b>16.0</b>	147	-	-	+ Best hot Mégane... until the R26 R - FI Team stickers in dubious taste
Renaultsport Mégane R26 R	181 R	'08-'09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1220kg	189	<b>5.8</b>	<b>15.1</b>	147	-	-	+ One of the true hot hatch heroes - Two seats, plastic rear windows
SEAT Ibiza FR 2.0 TDI	144 R	£16,715	4/1968	141/4200	236/1750	1265kg	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 FTI	163 D	'11-'12	4/1984	208/5300	206/1700	1334kg	158	7.2	-	145	170	38.7	+ As quick as a Golf GTI 5dr but £4K cheaper - Misses the VW's completeness
SEAT Leon Cupra R	139 R	'10-'12	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1375kg	193	<b>6.1</b>	<b>14.0</b>	155	190	34.9	+ Bold car, blinding engine - Lacks the character of its rival mega-hatches
SEAT Leon Cupra	105 R	'07-'11	4/1984	237/5700	221/2200	1375kg	175	6.3	-	153	190	34.0	+ Great engine, composure - Doesn't have adjustability of old Cupra R
SEAT Leon Cupra 20v T	020 R	'00-'06	4/1781	178/5500	173/5000	1322kg	137	7.7	-	142	-	33.2	+ Terrific value - Lacks sparkle of very best hatches
SEAT Leon Cupra R 225	067 R	'03-'06	4/1781	222/5900	206/2200	1376kg	164	6.9	-	150	-	32.1	+ Cross-country pace, practicality, value - Not as thrilling as some
Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk2)	146 D	£16,915	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1218kg	148	7.3	-	139	148	45.6	+ Well priced, well made, with great engine and DSG 'box - Dull steering
Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk1)	077 R	'04-'07	4/1896	130/4000	229/1900	1315kg	100	9.6	-	127	-	55.4	+ Fascinatingly fun and frugal hot hatch - A little short on steering feel
Skoda Octavia vRS (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 S	125 D	'08-'10	4/2457	251/5400	288/3000	1395kg	180	5.5	-	130	270	-	+ An improvement over the basic WRX - Still not the WRX we wanted
Subaru Impreza STI 330S	124 R	'08-'10	4/2457	325/5400	347/3400	1505kg	219	4.4	-	155	-	-	+ A bit quicker than the STI... - but not better
Suzuki Swift Sport (Mk2)	175 R	£13,499	4/1586	134/6900	118/4400	1045kg	130	8.7	-	121	147	44.1	+ The Swift's still a great pocket rocket - But it's lost a little adjustability
Suzuki Swift Sport	132 R	'05-'11	4/1586	123/6800	109/4800	1030kg	121	8.9	-	124	165	39.8	+ Entertaining handling, well built - Lacking in steering feedback
Vauxhall Corsa VXR	154 R	£18,900	4/1598	189/5850	192/1980	1166kg	165	6.8	-	140	172	38.7	+ Looks snazzy, punchy engine - Lacks feel, uncouth compared with rivals
Vauxhall Corsa VXR Nürburgring	164 R	£22,295	4/1598	202/5750	206/2250	1166kg	176	6.5	-	143	178	-	+ VXR gets more power and a limited-slip diff - But it's over £3k more expensive
Vauxhall Astra GTC 1.6T SRi	164 D	£20,215	4/1598	178/5500	169/2200	1393kg	130	7.8	-	137	168	39.2	+ Three-door Scirocco rival looks good, drives well - Non-VXR petrol engines lack zing
Vauxhall Astra VXR (Mk2)	173 R	£26,995	4/1998	276/5500	295/2500	1475kg	190	5.9	-	155	189	-	+ Better than the car it replaces. Loony turbo pace - Lacks RS Mégane's precision
Vauxhall Astra VXR (Mk1)	102 R	'06-'11	4/1998	237/5600	236/2400	1393kg	173	<b>6.7</b>	<b>16.7</b>	152	221	30.7	+ Fast and furious - Lacks a little composure and precision
VW Up/SEAT Mii/Skoda Citigo	171 R	£7630+	3/999	59/5000	70/3000	854kg	70	14.1	-	99	105	62.8	+ Accomplished city car is dynamically sound... - but predictably slow
VW 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	1315kg	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	4/1984	207/5300	207/1700	1318kg	160	<b>6.4</b>	<b>16.5</b>	148	170	38.7	+ Still a very accomplished hot hatch - 207bhp isn't a lot any more
VW Golf GTI Edition 35	168 R	'12-'13	4/1984	232/5500	221/2200	1318kg	179	6.5	-	154	189	34.9	+ Mk6 GTI gets the power it craves - Expensive compared to the standard car
VW Golf R (Mk6)	140 D	'10-'13	4/1984	266/6000	258/2500	1521kg	178	5.5	-	155	199	33.2	+ Great engine, tremendous pace and poise - High price, ACC only optional
VW Golf GTI (Mk5)	102 R	'05-'09	4/1984	197/5100	207/1800	1336kg	150	<b>6.7</b>	<b>17.9</b>	145	-	-	+ Character and ability: the original GTI is back - Lacking firepower?
VW Golf R32 (Mk5)	087 R	'06-'09	6/3189	246/6300	236/2500	1510kg	165	<b>5.8</b>	<b>15.2</b>	155	-	26.4	+ Tractor's great and you'll love the soundtrack - We'd still have a GTI
VW Golf R32 (Mk4)	053 R	'02-'04	6/3189	237/6250	236/2800	1477kg	163	<b>6.4</b>	<b>16.3</b>	154	-	24.6	+ Charismatic - Boomy engine can be tiresome
VW Golf GTI 16v (Mk2)	'88-'92	4/1781	139/6100	124/4600	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 T5 R-Design	122 R	'08-'12	5/2521	227/5000	236/1500	1347kg	165	<b>6.6</b>	<b>16.9</b>	149	203	32.5	+ Good-looking, desirable Volvo - Lacks edge of best hatches. Avoid auto



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### Our Choice

**BMW M5.** The turbocharging of BMW's M-cars met with scepticism, but the 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	296/5500	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	444/7800	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	444/7800	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	099 D	'01-'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)	193 D	£76,985	8/3993	552/5700	516/1750	1935kg	290	3.6	8.2	155	229	28.8	+ Performance, foolproof powertrain, looks - Torque converter gearbox, gloopy steering	★★★★★
Audi RS4 (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	£62,330	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	1955kg	264	4.1	-	155	237	27.7	+ Quicker and much more economical than before - But still underwhelming to drive	★★★★★
Audi RS Q3	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 RS6 V12 TDI	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 528i (F10)	164 D	£34,020	4/1997	242/5000	258/1250	1710kg	144	6.2	-	155	152	41.5	+ 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 (E28)	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 (E24)	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	£63,715	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	+ Stunningly good to drive - Will you want to be seen arriving?	★★★★★
BMW X6M	134 D	£86,220	8/4395	547/6000	502/1500	2305kg	241	4.7	-	171	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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## Saloons / Estates / 4x4s

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft./rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating
Jaguar XF Sportbrake 3.0 V6 Diesel S	177 D	£44,360	6/2993	271/4000	443/2000	1695kg	153	6.1	-	155	163	46.3	+ Looks and drives better than the saloon - Pity there's no Sportbrake R... ★★★★★
Jaguar XF 3.0 V6 Supercharged	178 D	£47,570	6/2995	335/6500	332/3500	1695kg	201	5.7	-	155	224	29.4	+ Fast, comfortable, refined - Bland engine, poor economy compared to diesel V6 ★★★★★
Jaguar XFR	181 D	£65,415	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1800kg	284	<b>4.8</b>	<b>10.2</b>	155	270	24.4	+ Brilliant blend of pace and refinement - Doesn't sound as special as it is ★★★★★
Jaguar XFR-S	187 R	£79,995	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1912kg	288	4.4	-	186	270	24.4	+ XF gets turned up to 12 - Except for the soundtrack ★★★★★
Jaguar XJ 3.0 V6 Diesel	148 D	£56,865	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	<b>4.7</b>	<b>10.9</b>	173	270	24.4	+ Shockingly good Lexus - The M3's available as a (second hand!) four-door too ★★★★★
Lotus Carlton	170 R	'91-'93	6/3615	377/5200	419/4200	1658kg	231	<b>4.8</b>	<b>10.6</b>	177	-	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	361/4700	1990kg	216	<b>5.1</b>	<b>12.1</b>	174	365	18.0	+ A QP with the bhp it deserves - Grille is a bit Hannibal Lecter ★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte Sport GTS	141 R	'08-'12	8/4691	433/7000	361/4700	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	<b>4.4</b>	<b>9.7</b>	160	280	23.5	+ Monstrous pace and extremely engaging - M3's just a little better... ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C55 AMG	088 R	'04-'08	8/5439	367/5250	376/4000	1635kg	228	5.2	-	155	-	23.7	+ Furiously fast, commendably discreet - Overshadowed by M3 and RS4 ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG	187 D	£73,745	8/5461	549/5500	531/1750	1770kg	315	4.2	-	155	230	28.8	+ Power, response and accuracy in spades - A little lacking in originality ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG	165 R	'11-'13	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	1765kg	298	4.2	-	155	230	28.8	+ Turbo engine doesn't dilute E63 experience - Sometimes struggles for traction... ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG	096 D	'06-'09	8/6208	507/6800	464/5200	1765kg	292	4.5	-	155	-	19.8	+ Brilliant engine, indulgent chassis - Vague steering, speed limits ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG	052 R	'03-'06	8/5439	476/6100	516/2650	1760kg	271	<b>4.8</b>	<b>10.2</b>	155	-	21.9	+ M5-humbling grunt, cossetting ride - Speed limits ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG	'98-'02	8/5439	354/5500	390/3000	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	1995kg	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	+ Owner performance, 549bhp an option - Not as desirable as a Bentley or Aston ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG	099 R	'06-'11	8/6208	507/6100	464/2650	1905kg	270	4.5	-	155	345	19.5	+ Beauty, comfort, awesome performance - M5 has the edge on B-roads ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz ML63 AMG	177 R	£83,655	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	2270kg	232	4.7	-	155	276	23.9	+ Great engine, surprisingly good dynamics - E85K buys a Boxster and an ML350... ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz G63 AMG	172 D	£123,140	8/5461	537/5500	560/2000	2475kg	220	5.4	-	130	322	-	+ It exists; epic soundtrack - Ancient chassis, silly price ★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-300 SST	118 R	£31,349	4/1998	290/6500	300/3500	1590kg	185	<b>5.2</b>	<b>13.9</b>	155	256	26.2	+ Evo gets twin-clutch transmission - Not as exciting as it used to be ★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-360	122 D	£38,559	4/1998	354/6500	363/3500	1560kg	231	4.1	-	155	328	19.9	+ Ridiculously rapid new Evo - A five-speed gearbox?! ★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-330 SST	134 R	'08-'12	4/1998	324/6500	322/3500	1590kg	207	4.4	-	155	256	-	+ Great engine and gearbox combo - It still lives in the shadow of the Evo IX ★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-400	181 R	'09-'10	4/1998	403/6500	387/3500	1660kg	262	3.8	-	155	328	-	+ Most powerful factory Evo ever... - about X grand too much when new ★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo IX FQ-340	088 R	'05-'07	4/1997	345/6800	321/4600	1400kg	250	<b>4.3</b>	<b>10.9</b>	157	-	-	+ Gives Porsche drivers nightmares - Points. Lots of ★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo IX MR FQ-360	181 R	'05-'07	4/1997	366/6887	363/3200	1400kg	266	3.9	-	157	-	-	+ Well-executed engine upgrades - Prison food ★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VIII	055 R	'03-'04	4/1997	276/6500	289/3500	1410kg	199	5.1	-	157	-	-	+ The Evo grows up - Brakes need beefing up ★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VIII MR FQ-300	057 R	'03-'05	4/1997	305/6800	289/3500	1400kg	221	4.8	-	157	-	20.5	+ Extra pace, extra attitude - Extra money ★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VII	031 R	'02-'03	4/1997	276/6500	282/3500	1360kg	206	<b>5.0</b>	<b>13.0</b>	140	-	20.4	+ Terrific all-rounder - You tell us ★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VII RS Sprint	041 D	'02-'03	4/1997	320/6500	327/2600	1260kg	258	4.4	-	150	-	-	+ Ruthlessly focused road weapon - For the truly committed ★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VI RS Sprint	011 R	'99	4/1997	330/6500	323/3000	1255kg	267	<b>4.5</b>	<b>11.8</b>	145	-	-	+ Lighter, keener, quicker than regular Evo - A little uncommensal ★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VI Makinen Edition	181 R	'00-'01	4/1997	276/6500	275/2750	1365kg	205	4.6	-	150	-	-	+ Our favourite Evo - Subtle it is not ★★★★★
Porsche Panamera 4S	186 D	£85,721	6/2997	414/6000	383/1750	1878kg	225	4.8	-	177	208	31.7	+ Strong performance and typically fine Porsche chassis - Misses characterful V8 of old 'S' ★★★★★
Porsche Panamera GTS	168 D	£91,239	8/4806	430/6700	383/3500	1920kg	228	4.4	-	179	251	26.4	+ Sharper chassis, more urgent and vocal V8 - A BMW M5 is £17K less... ★★★★★
Porsche Panamera Turbo	137 R	£104,758	8/4806	493/6000	516/2250	1970kg	254	<b>3.6</b>	<b>8.9</b>	188	270	24.6	+ Fast, refined and dynamically sound - It still leaves us cold ★★★★★
Porsche Panamera Turbo S	159 D	'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	371/3750	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	<b>4.7</b>	<b>11.4</b>	171	-	19.0	+ Appears to defy physics - Still cracks mirrors at 50 paces ★★★★★
Range Rover Evoque Coupe S14	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	2335kg	219	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	1490kg	192	5.2	-	143	-	-	+ Fitting final fling for 'classic' Impreza - End of an era ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza STI	090 R	'05-'07	4/2457	276/6000	289/4000	1495kg	188	5.3	-	158	-	25.9	+ Stunning to drive - Not so stunning to look at ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza STI Spec C *	084 D	'05-'07	4/1994	320/6730	311/3500	1350kg	240	4.3	-	157	-	-	+ Lighter, faster, fiercer - The need for self-restraint ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza RB320	105 R	'07	4/2457	316/6000	332/3750	1495kg	215	4.8	-	155	-	-	+ Fitting tribute to a rallying legend - Too hardcore for some? ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WRX STI PPP	073 R	'03-'05	4/1994	300/6000	299/4000	1470kg	207	<b>5.2</b>	<b>12.9</b>	148	-	-	+ A Subaru with real edge - Bit too edgy in the wet ★★★★★
Subaru STI Type RA Spec C *	067 R	'03-'05	4/1994	335/7000	280/3750	1380kg	247	<b>4.3</b>	<b>11.1</b>	160	-	-	+ Best Impreza since the P1 - Lost its throbby flat-four voice ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WR1	067 R	'04-'05	4/1994	316/5800	310/4000	1470kg	218	<b>5.3</b>	<b>13.1</b>	155	-	-	+ Most powerful official UK Impreza until RB320 - Spec C is better ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza Turbo	011 R	'98-'00	4/1994	215/5600	214/4000	1235kg	177	<b>5.4</b>	<b>14.6</b>	144	-	27.2	+ Destined for classic status - Thirsty ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza PI	067 R	'00-'01	4/1994	276/6500	260/4000	1283kg	219	<b>4.9</b>	<b>13.3</b>	150	-	25.0	+ Ultimate old-shape Impreza - Prices reflect this ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza RB5 (PPP)	187 R	'99	4/1994	237/6000	258/3500	1235kg	195	<b>5.0</b>	<b>14.1</b>	143	-	-	+ Perfect blend of poise and power - Limited numbers ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza 22B	188 R	'98-'99	4/1994	276/6000	265/3200	1270kg	220	<b>5.0</b>	<b>13.1</b>	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 engaging steer ★★★★★



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## Our Choice

**Audi R8 Spyder.** The Spyder boasts supercar looks, presence and performance, yet you really could drive one every day. The V8 has a sweet engine and great dynamics, but if money's no object, we'd be seriously tempted by the equally brilliant V10.



## Best of the Rest

The mk3 Porsche Boxster S is a brilliant all-rounder, while the Lotus Exige S Roadster counters with a more focused driving experience. Jaguar's F-type also impresses in both S (left) and V8 S forms. Mazda's MX-5 is best for budget rear-drive fun, but for the ultimate thrills, get a Caterham 620R or Ariel Atom.

# Sports Cars / Convertibles

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2g/km	EC mpg	evo rating	
Alfa Romeo 8C Spider	161 R	'09-'11	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1675kg	273	4.5	-	181	-	-	+ Beauty meets beast. They hit it off - 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	<b>3.0</b>	<b>5.8</b>	170	-	-	+ An experience unlike anything else on Planet Car - £150k for an Atom	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3 245	113 D	'08-'12	4/1998	245/8200	155/5200	500kg	498	3.2	-	150	-	33.0	+ The Atom just got a little bit better - Can still be a bit draughty...	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3 Supercharged	138 R	'09-'12	4/1998	300/8200	162/7200	550kg	554	3.3	-	155	-	-	+ It's brilliant - It's mental	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 2 300 Supercharged	123 R	'03-'09	4/1998	300/8200	162/7200	550kg	554	<b>3.3</b>	-	155	-	28.0	+ Makes your face ripple - ...like Clarkson's	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 1	015 R	'99-'03	4/1796	125/5500	122/3000	496kg	256	5.6	<b>18.0</b>	115	-	-	+ Amazing styling, huge fun - As practical as a chocolate teapot	★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage Roadster	130 R	£95,080	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1710kg	250	4.7	-	180	328	20.4	+ Sportiest, coolest drop-top Aston in years - Starting to feel its age	★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage S Roadster	161 R	£105,080	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1690kg	258	4.6	-	189	299	21.9	+ Sounds amazing, looks even better - Still not the best drop-top in its class	★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage Roadster	175 R	£151,080	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1760kg	294	4.4	-	190	-	-	+ As good as the coupe, with amplified V12 rumble - Just a smidgen shakier	★★★★★
Aston Martin DB9 Volante	150 D	£143,080	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1815kg	263	4.6	-	190	368	18.2	+ Consummate cruiser and capable when pushed - Roof-up wind noise	★★★★★
Aston Martin DBS Volante	133 D	'09-'12	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1810kg	286	4.3	-	191	388	17.3	+ A feelgood car par excellence - It's a bit of a heavyweight	★★★★★
Audi TTS Roadster	122 D	£38,025	4/1984	268/6000	258/2500	1455kg	187	5.6	-	155	189	34.9	+ Effortlessly quick - Long-term appeal open to question; not cheap either	★★★★★
Audi R8 V8 Spyder	133 D	£48,140	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1510kg	225	4.7	-	155	212	31.0	+ Terrific engine... - ...is the best thing about it	★★★★★
Audi TT Roadster (Mk1 225bhp)	016 R	'00-'06	4/1781	225/5900	206/2200	1395kg	164	<b>6.9</b>	<b>20.0</b>	150	-	30.4	+ Winner on the King's Road - Trails Boxster on the open road	★★★★★
Audi S5 Cabriolet	130 D	£46,500	6/2995	328/5500	325/2900	1875kg	178	5.6	-	155	199	33.2	+ Gets the S4's trick supercharged engine - Bordering on dull	★★★★★
Audi RS5 Cabriolet	179 D	£68,985	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1920kg	235	4.9	-	155	249	26.4	+ Pace, looks, interior, naturally aspirated V8 - Not the last word in fun or involvement	★★★★★
Audi RS4 Cabriolet	094 D	'06-'08	8/4163	414/7800	317/5500	1845kg	228	4.9	-	155	-	-	+ That engine - Wibble wobble, wibble wobble, jelly on a plate	★★★★★
Audi R8 V10 Spyder	186 D	£101,360	8/4163	424/7900	317/6000	1660kg	259	4.8	-	187	337	19.6	+ More delicate and subtle than the V10 - The V10 sounds even better	★★★★★
Audi R8 V10 Spyder	185 R	£122,460	10/5204	518/8000	391/6500	1720kg	306	<b>4.1</b>	-	194	349	19.0	+ Sensational for the money - Not quite a rival for the 458 and 12C Spiders	★★★★★
BAC Mono	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	199/1520	1470kg	125	6.8	-	142	159	41.5	+ The Z4 has grown up... - ...and got fat	★★★★★
BMW Z4 sDrive 35i (Mk2)	186 D	£39,935	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1505kg	204	5.2	-	155	219	30.1	+ Looks, hard-top versatility, drivetrain - Clumsy chassis is upset by ragged surfaces	★★★★★
BMW Z4 3.0si (Mk1)	094 D	'06-'09	6/2996	265/6600	232/2750	1310kg	205	5.7	-	155	-	32.9	+ Terrific straight-six - Handling not as playful as we'd like	★★★★★
BMW Z4 M Roadster	091 R	'06-'09	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1410kg	244	4.8	-	155	-	23.3	+ Exhilarating and characterful, that engine - Stiff suspension	★★★★★
BMW M Roadster	002 R	'98-'02	6/3246	325/7400	258/4900	1375kg	240	5.3	-	155	-	25.4	+ Fresh-air M3, that motor, hunky looks - M Coupe drives better	★★★★★
BMW 335i SE Convertible	102 D	£40,580	6/2997	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	440/6600	369/3800	1585kg	256	<b>4.8</b>	<b>11.1</b>	155	-	14.4	+ M5-powered super-sportster - M5's more fun to drive	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 160	190 R	£17,995	4/1660	80/7000	79/3400	490kg	166	6.5	-	100	-	-	+ Looks good, great to drive, fantastic engine - Your missus will leave you	★★★★★
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 - Losses 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	£42,495	4/1999	263/8500	177/7200	506kg	528	2.9	-	150	-	-	+ Better power-to-weight ratio than a Veyron - Until you add the driver	★★★★★
Caterham Seven CSR 260 Superlight	094 R	£44,995	4/2261	256/7500	200/6200	565kg	460	<b>3.8</b>	-	155	-	-	+ Brilliant for high days, school holidays and trackdays - Wet Wednesdays	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 620R	187 R	£49,995	4/1999	311/7700	219/7350	545kg	580	2.8	-	155	-	-	+ Banzi 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	<b>4.8</b>	<b>8.2</b>	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	<b>3.6</b>	<b>8.8</b>	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	<b>3.9</b>	<b>8.1</b>	150	-	-	+ Madder than Mad Jack McMad - Er, it's a bit mad	★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette C6	083 D	'04-'13	8/6162	430/5900	424/4600	1460kg	300	<b>4.3</b>	-	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	171 R	£71,465	8/5000	380/6500	380/3500	1621kg	238	5.3	-	155	264	25.2	+ Basic XK gets extra power... - ...but loses some of its GT refinement	★★★★★
Jaguar XKR Convertible	130 R	£84,965	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1725kg	296	4.6	-	155	292	23.0	+ Gains Jag's fantastic new V8 - Loses sporting ground to its main foes	★★★★★
Jaguar XKR-S Convertible	167 R	£103,465	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1725kg	319	4.2	-	186	292	23.0	+ Loud and mad; most exciting Jag in years - It's also the most expensive in years	★★★★★
Jaguar XK	089 R	'06-'09	8/4196	294/6000	303/4100	1635kg	183	6.6	-	155	-	25.0	+ Every bit as good as the XK coupe - 294bhp still only just enough	★★★★★
Jaguar XKR	004 R	'97-'06	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	<b>5.4</b>	<b>12.8</b>	155	-	15.6	+ Hurricane-in-the-hair motoring - A danger to toupees everywhere	★★★★★
KTM X-Bow GT	183 D	£674,000	4/1984	281/6400	310/3200	875kg	326	4.1	-	144	189	34.0	+ Extraordinary ability, now in a 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	★★★★★

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## Ferrari Scuderia Spider 16M Issue 133, August 2



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## Sports Cars / Convertibles

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft./rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating
Lotus Elise 1.6	144 D	£29,050	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	876kg	155	6.0	-	127	149	45.0	+ New 1.6 Elise is light and fantastic - Smaller engine could put some off
Lotus Elise 1.6 Club Racer	183 R	£28,450	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	852kg	160	6.0	-	127	149	45.0	+ Even lighter, even more focused - A touch pricey for a stripped-out Elise
Lotus Elise S	172 R	£37,150	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	924kg	239	4.2	-	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	<b>5.6</b>	<b>13.9</b>	150	196	34.4	+ Most thrilling Elise yet - Blaring engine note
Lotus Elise SC	131 R	'08-'11	4/1794	218/8000	156/5000	870kg	254	<b>4.5</b>	<b>11.4</b>	148	199	33.2	+ All the usual Elise magic - Supercharged engine lacks sparkle
Lotus Elise S 1.8	104 R	'06-'10	4/1794	134/6200	127/4200	860kg	158	<b>6.3</b>	<b>18.7</b>	127	-	37.2	+ Brilliant entry-level Elise - Precious little
Lotus Elise S2 IIIS	049 R	'02-'04	4/1796	156/7000	129/4650	860kg	197	5.1	-	131	-	40.9	+ A genuinely useable Elise - Air-con? In an Elise?
Lotus Elise S2 Sport 135	040 D	'03	4/1796	135/6200	129/4850	726kg	189	5.4	-	129	-	-	+ One of our fave S2 Elises - Brakes need more bite and pedal feel
Lotus Elise S2 Sport 190	044 R	'03	4/1796	190/7800	128/5000	710kg	272	<b>4.7</b>	<b>12.1</b>	135	-	-	+ Fabulous trackday tool - Pricey
Lotus Elise S1	126 R	'96-'00	4/1796	118/5500	122/3000	731kg	164	<b>6.1</b>	<b>18.5</b>	126	-	39.4	+ A modern classic - A tad impractical?
Lotus 2-Eleven Supercharged	123 R	'07-'11	4/1796	252/8000	179/7000	670kg	382	3.8	-	150	-	-	+ Impressive on road and track - Not hardcore enough for some
Lotus 2-Eleven GT4	138 R	'09-'11	4/1796	266/8200	179/7200	670kg	403	3.7	-	155	-	-	+ evo Track Car of the Year 2009 - It's a 76-grand Lotus with no roof
Lotus 2-Eleven	126 R	'07-'11	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	720kg	267	4.3	-	140	-	-	+ Not far off supercharged car's pace - Pricey once it's made road-legal
Lotus 340R	128 R	'00	4/1796	190/7800	146/5000	650kg	293	<b>4.5</b>	<b>12.5</b>	126	-	-	+ Hardcore road-racer... - that looks like a dune buggy from Mars
Lotus Elan SE	095 R	'89-'95	4/1588	165/6600	148/4200	1022kg	164	6.7	-	137	-	21.0	+ Awesome front-drive chassis - Rather uninvolved
Lotus Elan 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	337/4750	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	'98-'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	<b>4.9</b>	<b>11.2</b>	174	-	-	+ AMG gets serious - Dull-witted TG-Tronic auto box, uneven dynamics
Mercedes-Benz SL500	169 D	£83,490	8/4663	429/5250	516/1800	1710kg	255	4.6	-	155	212	31.0	+ 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	731/2300	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	<b>4.6</b>	<b>10.2</b>	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	332	4.2	-	170	-	-	+ As above, with a V8 and target 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-brolly 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	<b>5.0</b>	<b>14.3</b>	120	-	-	+ If this is the future, it's going to be fun - Limited range, high price
Toyota MR2	187 R	'00-'06	4/1794	138/6400	125/4400	975kg	141	<b>7.2</b>	<b>21.2</b>	130	-	38.2	+ Tight lines, taut dynamics - Minimal luggage space
TVR Tamora	070 R	'01-'07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1050kg	338	4.5	-	160	-	-	+ Well-sorted soft-top TVR - Awkward styling
TVR Tuscan Convertible	091 R	'05-'07	6/3996	365/6800	315/6000	1100kg	337	3.8	8.1	195+	-	-	+ Spirit of the Griff reborn - Over 195mph? Really?
TVR Chimera 5.0	007 R	'93-'03	8/4988	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	4.6	-	167	-	26.4	+ Gorgeous noise, tarmac-ripping grunt - Details
TVR Griffith 4.3	068 R	'92-'93	8/4280	280/5500	305/4000	1060kg	268	<b>4.8</b>	<b>11.2</b>	148	-	-	+ The car that made TVR. Cult status - Mere details
TVR Griffith 500	009 R	'93-'01	8/4988	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	<b>4.8</b>	<b>11.2</b>	167	-	22.1	+ Gruff diamond - A few rough edges
Vauxhall VX220	023 R	'00-'04	4/2198	145/5800	150/4000	875kg	168	5.6	-	136	-	34.4	+ Absurdly good Vauxhall - The badge?
Vauxhall VX220 Turbo	066 R	'03-'05	4/1998	197/5500	184/1950	930kg	215	4.7	-	151	-	-	+ Nothing comes close for the money - Marginal everyday usability



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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. Porsche's second-gen Cayman S is a truly great all-rounder, or for similar money the Lotus Evija S is a proper road racer and was our joint 2012 Car of the Year. BMW's M235i, meanwhile, could be the perfect real-world M-badged car.

## Coupes / GTs

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine c/y/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	eVO rating
Alfa Romeo Brera 3.2 V6	120 R	'08-'11	6/3195	256/6300	237/4500	1532kg	170	6.9	-	155	260	-	+ Brera made better for UK roads - Steering lacking some feel ★★★★★
Alfa Romeo 4C	120 R	£45,000	4/1742	237/6000	258/2200	895kg	269	4.5	-	160	157	41.5	+ Carbonfibre tub, mini-super-car looks - Hot hatch engine, clunky gearbox ★★★★★
Alfa Romeo 8C Competizione	120 R	'07-'09	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1585kg	288	4.1	-	181	-	-	+ Looks, exclusivity, noise, balance - They're all sold ★★★★★
Alpina B3 Biturbo (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	'12-'13	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	£86,080	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	£96,080	8/4735	420/7000	361/5000	1610kg	271	4.5	-	189	299	21.9	+ Keener engine, V12 Vantage looks - Slightly sluggish auto only ★★★★★
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 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 Zagato	181 F	'13	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1680kg	308	4.2	-	190	388	17.3	+ The looks, the noise, the way it drives - It's several times the price of a V12 Vantage ★★★★★
Aston Martin DB9	178 R	£133,080	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	£27,700	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 TTS	193 R	£36,045	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	£46,300	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	£49,385	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	189 D	£59,350	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	£93,710	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	£114,810	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 R	£126,810	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	£151,100	12/5998	616/6000	590/2000	2320kg	258	4.0	-	205	338	19.5	+ 205mph in utter comfort - Feels nose-heavy in slow corners ★★★★★
Bentley Continental Supersports	137 R	£170,100	12/5998	621/6000	590/2000	2240kg	282	3.7	-	204	388	17.3	+ A thoroughly impressive car... - rather than a fun and involving one ★★★★★
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 135i M Sport	113 R	'08-'12	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1455kg	211	5.3	-	155	198	33.2	+ Fast, fun, lots cheaper than an M3 - You really want the 1-series M Coupe ★★★★★
BMW M235i	193 R	£34,250	6/2979	321/5800	332/1300	1470kg	222	4.8	-	155	176	34.9	+ Powertrain, chassis, looks, size - Limited-slip diff is an option, not standard ★★★★★
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	395/3900	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	1550kg	295	4.3	-	193	295	-	+ Offensively exclusive, one of the most focused M-cars ever - Good luck trying to find one ★★★★★
BMW M3 (E46)	066 R	'00-'07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1495kg	230	5.1	12.3	155	-	23.7	+ One of the best BMWs ever - Slightly artificial steering feel ★★★★★
BMW M3 CS (E46)	088 R	'05-'07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1495kg	230	5.1	-	155	-	23.7	+ CSL dynamics without CSL price - Looks like the standard car ★★★★★
BMW M3 CSL (E46)	060 R	'03-'04	6/3246	355/7900	273/4900	1385kg	260	5.3	12.0	155	-	-	+ Stripped-down road-race M3 - Standard brakes barely adequate ★★★★★
BMW M3 (E36)	148 R	'93-'98	6/3201	321/7400	258/3250	1460kg	223	5.4	12.8	157	-	25.7	+ Performance, image - Never quite as good as the original ★★★★★
BMW M3 (E30)	165 R	'86-'90	4/2302	212/6750	170/4600	1165kg	185	6.7	17.8	147	-	20.3	+ Best M-car ever! Race-car dynamics for the road - LHD only ★★★★★
BMW Z4 M Coupe	097 R	'06-'09	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1420kg	242	5.0	-	155	-	23.3	+ A real drivers' car - You've got to be prepared to get stuck in ★★★★★
BMW M Coupe	005 R	'98-'03	6/3246	325/7400	258/3250	1375kg	240	5.1	-	155	-	25.0	+ Quick and characterful - Lacks finesse ★★★★★
BMW 640d	165 D	£63,125	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	£94,605	8/4395	552/6000	501/2500	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	£35,320	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	£660,000	8/5812	662/6500	631/4000	1747kg	385	3.5	-	202	-	-	+ Huge performance for the money - Putting it to use takes nerve ★★★★★
Ginetta G40R	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	£23,275	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	-	-	+ evo Car of the Year 2002 - Honda never brought it to the UK ★★★★★
Hyundai Veloster Turbo	176 D	£21,995	4/1591	184/5500	195/1500	1313kg	142	8.2	-	133	157	40.9	+ The usual Hyundai value, with added fun - Styling might be too quirky for some ★★★★★
Infiniti G37S Coupe	127 R	'09-'13	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	£65,465	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	£78,965	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1678kg	305	4.6	-	155	292	23.0	+ Fast and incredibly rewarding XKR - The kids will have to stay at home ★★★★★
Jaguar XKR-S	168 R	£97,465	8/5000	542/6000	502/2500	1678kg	328	4.2	-	186	292	23.0	+ Faster and wilder than regular XKR - The F-type R Coupe is coming ★★★★★
Jaguar XKR-S GT	193 R	£135,000	8/5000	542/6000	502/2500	1638kg	336	3.9	-	186	292	23.0	+ The most exciting XKR ever - It's £135,000, and a very limited edition ★★★★★
Jaguar XKR	193 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 ★★★★★

## POCKET buying guide

**Audi R8 V8**  
 Years 2007-present Engine V8, 4163cc  
 Power 414bhp @ 7800rpm  
 Torque 317lb ft @ 4500rpm  
 0-62mph 4.6sec Top speed 187mph

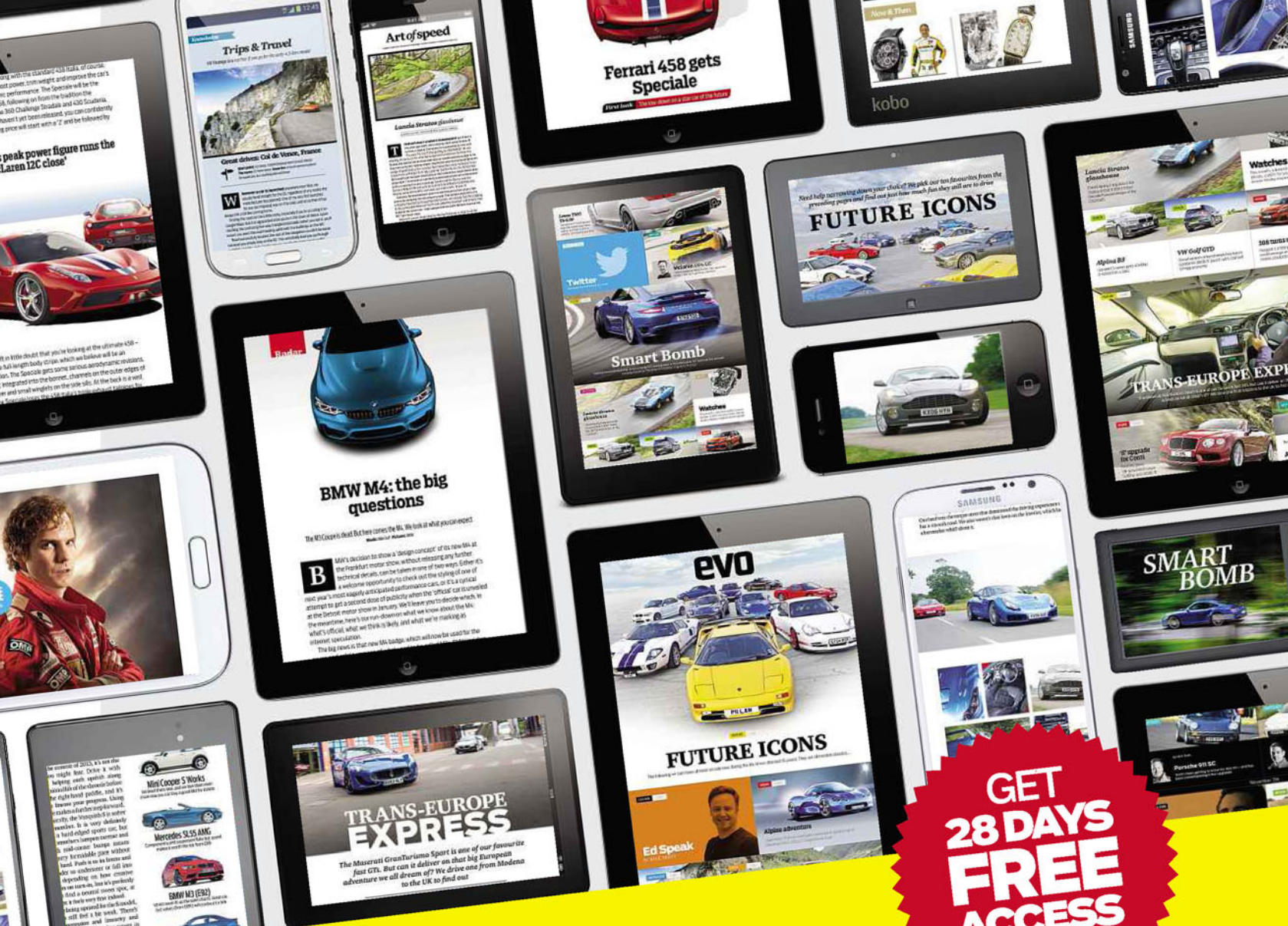


**WHY WOULD YOU?**  
 Because it's beautifully built, properly quick and deliciously feelsome at any speed. For a blend of supercar thrills and everyday usability, nothing comes close to an Audi R8.

**WHAT TO PAY**  
 £40k-50k is where you'll find most early V8s, with price dependent on mileage, condition and spec. Approach sub-£40k cars with caution.

**WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR**  
 High miles aren't a problem, but check for regular servicing. The semi-auto R-tronic transmission wears the clutch quickly if you do a lot of low-speed manoeuvring; replacement will cost c£2.5k. Brakes are expensive -





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## Coupes / GTs

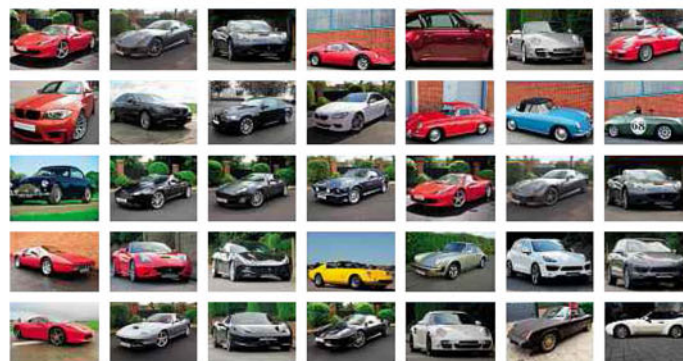
Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/vcc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max.mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating
Lotus Evige Cup 260	139 D	'10-'11	4/1796	256/8000	174/6000	890kg	293	4.0	-	152	199	31.1	+ Feels like a race car, yet works on the road - Pricey for a four-pot Evige
Lotus Evige (series 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
Lotus Evige (series 1)	067 D	'00-'01	4/1796	192/7800	146/5000	780kg	247	4.6	-	136	-	-	+ Looks and goes like Elise racer - A tad lacking in refinement
Lotus Evora	138 R	£52,500	6/3456	276/6400	258/4700	1382kg	203	<b>5.6</b>	<b>13.6</b>	162	217	30.3	+ Sublime ride and handling. Our 2009 car of the year - Pricey 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	<b>4.3</b>	<b>9.9</b>	175	-	22.0	+ Designed for track work but brilliant on the road - Limited edition
Maserati GranTurismo	114 R	£82,255	8/4244	399/7100	339/4750	1880kg	216	<b>5.5</b>	<b>12.7</b>	177	330	19.8	+ Striking, accomplished GT - Doesn't spike the pulse like an Aston or 911
Maserati GranTurismo Sport	188 R	£90,785	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	193 R	£110,110	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1800kg	256	4.5	-	188	337	19.5	+ Brilliant blend of road racer and GT - Gearbox takes a little getting used to
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	<b>6.5</b>	<b>16.4</b>	146	299	24.6	+ Never mind the quirks, it's a great drive - Wafer-thin torque output
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupe	162 R	£58,475	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1655kg	277	<b>4.4</b>	<b>10.3</b>	186	280	23.5	+ Mercedes makes a proper two-door M3 rival - C63 saloon looks better
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Black	171 R	'12-'13	8/6208	510/6800	457/5200	1635kg	317	<b>4.2</b>	-	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	£118,865	8/5461	536/5500	590/2000	2010kg	271	4.5	-	155	244	26.9	+ Presence, pace, monster engine - Stiff ride, stiff competition
Morgan AeroMax	120 R	'08-'09	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1180kg	312	4.1	-	170	-	-	+ Weird and utterly wonderful - Only 100 were made
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	193 R	£36,995	6/3696	339/7400	274/5200	1535kg	224	5.2	-	155	248	26.6	+ More controlled, more polished, more fun - More expensive
Nissan 350Z	107 R	'03-'09	6/3498	309/6800	264/4800	1532kg	205	<b>5.5</b>	<b>13.0</b>	155	-	24.1	+ Huge fun, and great value too - Honestly, we're struggling
Nissan GT-R (2012MY/2013MY)	187 R	£76,610	6/3799	542/6400	466/3200	1740kg	316	<b>3.2</b>	<b>7.5</b>	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	<b>4.7</b>	<b>12.5</b>	165	-	20.1	+ Big, brutal, and great fun - Very firm ride
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R33)	019 R	'97-'99	6/2568	276/6800	271/4400	1540kg	182	<b>5.4</b>	<b>14.3</b>	155	-	22.0	+ Proof that Japanese hi-tech can work (superbly) - Limited supply
Noble M400	089 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 exotics - Flawed driving position
Peugeot RCZ 1.6 THP 200	155 R	£26,895	4/1598	197/5500	202/1700	1421kg	141	<b>7.3</b>	<b>18.1</b>	147	155	42.1	+ Distinctive looks, highly capable handling - Could be a bit more exciting
Peugeot RCZ R	193 R	£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	271/7400	214/4500	1310kg	210	5.7	-	165	192	34.4	+ Very enticing for the money in basic spec - You might still want the power of the 'S'
Porsche Cayman S (981)	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	£73,413	6/3436	345/7400	288/5600	1380kg	254	4.7	-	179	212	31.4	+ 911 becomes cleaner and cleverer - But some of its character's gone AWOL
Porsche 911 Carrera S (991)	168 R	£83,448	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 4 (991)	177 D	£78,269	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	£88,304	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1445kg	277	4.5	-	185	234	28.5	+ The best 991-generation Carrera - Choose your spec carefully
Porsche 911 Carrera (997.2)	-	'08-'11	6/3614	341/6500	288/4400	1415kg	245	4.9	-	180	225	29.4	+ Faster and greener than the mk1 997 - Lost a little of the 911 magic
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.2)	121 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 (997.1)	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	<b>4.2</b>	<b>9.2</b>	194	303	22.1	+ Even better than the car it replaced - Give us a minute...
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.2)	152 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	<b>4.3</b>	<b>9.4</b>	192	-	-	+ Runner-up evo Car of the Year 2006 - Ferrari 599 GTBs
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.1)	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	<b>4.3</b>	<b>9.2</b>	190	-	-	+ evo Car of the Year 2003 - Chassis is a bit too track-focused for some roads
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (996.2)	068 R	'03-'05	6/3600	375/7400	284/5000	1330kg	286	4.2	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	<b>4.5</b>	<b>10.3</b>	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	<b>6.1</b>	<b>15.7</b>	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	<b>5.4</b>	<b>13.8</b>	166	-	21.0	+ Overlooked, bargain-price French 911. Try one - RS interior
Rolls-Royce Wraith	189 D	£237,111	12/6592	624/5600	590/1500	2360kg	269	4.4	-	155	327	20.2	+ Brilliant at waffing; quicker than you'd expect - Not the most engaging drivers' car
Subaru BRZ	170 R	£24,995	4/1998	197/7000	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	197/7000	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	<b>4.7</b>	<b>10.0</b>	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	<b>5.0</b>	<b>11.4</b>	160+	-	-	+ Accomplished and desirable - Check chassis for corrosion
VW Scirocco GT 2.0 TSI	155 R	£26,760	4/1984	207/5300	207/1700	1373kg	153	<b>6.1</b>	<b>15.8</b>	149	172	38.2	+ Golf GTI price and performance - Interior lacks flair
VW Scirocco R	181 R	£31,985	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

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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 as 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	<b>4.9</b>	<b>10.1</b>	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-endowed these days	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron Grand Sport	133 R	£1.4m	16/7993	1000/6000	922/2200	1990kg	510	2.6	-	253	596	11.4	+ Warp speed and ferocious noise sans-roof - Ridiculous brology/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	£1.7m	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	<b>2.8</b>	<b>5.8</b>	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	<b>3.8</b>	<b>6.2</b>	205	-	-	+ Absolutely staggering performance - Absolutely staggering price tag	★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette ZR1	133 R	'09-'13	8/6162	638/6500	603/3800	1528kg	424	<b>3.8</b>	<b>7.6</b>	205	355	18.8	+ Huge pace and character - Take plenty of brave pills if there's rain	★★★★★
Ferrari 458 Italia	183 R	£178,526	8/4497	562/9000	398/6000	1485kg	384	<b>3.2</b>	<b>6.8</b>	202	307	20.6	+ An astounding achievement, looks fantastic - There'll never be a manual	★★★★★
Ferrari 458 Spider	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	<b>3.5</b>	<b>7.7</b>	198	-	15.7	+ Successful F1 technology transplant - Likes to shout about it	★★★★★
Ferrari Scuderia Spider 16M	133 D	'09	8/4308	503/8500	347/5250	1440kg	355	3.7	-	196	360	18.0	+ A hardcore soft-top Ferrari - Earplugs recommended	★★★★★
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	+ 730bhp 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	<b>3.5</b>	<b>7.4</b>	205	415	15.8	+ <i>evo</i> 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	<b>4.2</b>	<b>9.6</b>	202	-	12.3	+ Fiorano pack makes 575 truly great - It should have been standard	★★★★★
Ferrari 550 Maranello	169 R	'97-'02	12/5474	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	<b>4.3</b>	<b>9.8</b>	199	470	13.8	+ Awesomely capable grand tourer - See above	★★★★★
Ferrari Enzo	156 R	'02-'04	12/5998	650/7800	485/5500	1365kg	484	<b>3.5</b>	<b>6.7</b>	217+	-	-	+ Intoxicating, exploitable - Cabin detailing falls short of Zonda or F1	★★★★★
Ferrari F50	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 288GTO	064 R	'84-'85	8/2855	400/7000	366/3800	1160kg	350	4.9	-	189	-	-	+ Painfully beautiful, rarer than the F40 - You are joking?	★★★★★
Ford GT	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 CCR	094 R	'06-'10	8/4700	806/6900	678/5700	1180kg	694	<b>3.9</b>	<b>7.7</b>	241	-	-	+ Sweden's greatest supercar - Sweden's only supercar	★★★★★
Koenigsegg 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	<b>3.5</b>	-	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	<b>4.3</b>	<b>9.4</b>	196	-	-	+ On a full-bore start it spins all four wheels. Cool - Slightly clunky e-gear	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo Superleggera	104 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	<b>3.2</b>	<b>7.3</b>	212	-	-	+ A supercar in its truest, wildest sense - Be prepared for stares	★★★★★
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	<b>4.2</b>	<b>10.0</b>	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	+ Staggering 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	6.3	240+	-	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	<b>4.0</b>	<b>8.1</b>	199	-	-	+ Bonkers looks, bonkers speed - Bonkers £250K price	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG	159 R	£168,395	8/6208	563/6800	479/4750	1620kg	335	<b>4.1</b>	<b>8.4</b>	197	308	21.4	+ Great engine and chassis (gulling doors 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	<b>3.8</b>	<b>7.7</b>	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	-	-	+ <i>evo</i> 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
<b>Radical SR8LM (fastest car)</b>	<b>1:13.6</b>	<b>127.8</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>Dry</b>
<b>Caparo T1 (fastest supercar)</b>	<b>1:14.8</b>	<b>130.9</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>Dry</b>
Ferrari 458 Italia	1:19.3	120.0	159	Dry
Gumpert Apollo S	1:19.4	120.4	119	Dry
McLaren MP4-12C (Corsa tyres)	1:19.6	121.2	159	Dry
Caterham Levante V8	1:19.6	118.6	131	Dry
Porsche 997 GT2 RS	1:19.9	122.3	158	Dry
Lotus 2-Eleven GT4	1:20.1	113.2	138	Dry
Caterham Superlight R500	1:20.2	115.7	119	Dry
McLaren MP4-12C	1:20.6	120.9	159	Dry
Noble M600	1:20.8	121.8	159	Dry
<b>Porsche 997 GT3 RS 4.0 (fastest coupe)</b>	<b>1:21.0</b>	<b>118.2</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>Dry</b>
Lamborghini Murciélago LP670-4 SV	1:21.3	121.1	134	Dry
Ariel Atom 3 Supercharged	1:21.5	113.6	119	Dry
KTM X-Bow (300bhp)	1:21.5	112.7	138	Dry
Ferrari 430 Scuderia	1:21.7	112.7	121	Dry
Porsche 997.2 GT3 RS (3.8)	1:21.9	116.8	150	Dry
Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4	1:22.5	119.1	122	Dry
Brooke Double R	1:22.5	113.2	119	Dry
Lamborghini Murciélago LP640	1:22.9	116.7	143	Dry
Porsche Carrera GT	1:23.3	115.2	119	Dry
Porsche 997.2 GT3	1:23.3	114.5	138	Dry
Porsche 997 Turbo S	1:23.5	117.5	146	Dry
Porsche 997 GT2	1:23.5	115.1	119	Dry
Nissan GT-R (2008MY)	1:23.6	113.1	119	Dry
Porsche 991 Carrera	1:23.6	112.5	182	Dry
Porsche 991 Carrera Cabriolet	1:23.9	112.3	183	Dry
Porsche 997 Turbo	1:24.1	113.5	136	Damp
Lotus 340R (190bhp)	1:24.2	110.0	135	Dry
Porsche Boxster S (981)	1:24.2	109.3	183	Dry
Caterham Superlight R300	1:24.3	101.5	138	Dry
Maserati GranTurismo MC Stradale	1:24.5	115.1	160	Dry
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG	1:24.6	115.7	146	Dry
Porsche Boxster Spyder (987)	1:24.7	107.7	167	Dry
Ferrari California	1:25.0	111.8	134	Dry
KTM X-Bow	1:25.0	105.0	123	Dry
BMW E92 M3 Coupe	1:25.1	109.1	162	Dry
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG Black	1:25.2	108.6	131	Dry
Jaguar F-type V8 S	1:25.2	111.2	183	Dry
Audi RS5	1:25.4	108.8	162	Dry
Audi R8 Spyder V8	1:25.5	107.0	167	Dry
Porsche Cayman R	1:25.5	106.8	158	Dry
Aston Martin V8 Vantage Roadster	1:25.6	109.1	183	Dry
<b>BMW M5 (F10) (fastest saloon)</b>	<b>1:25.7</b>	<b>112.0</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>Dry</b>
Aston Martin V12 Vantage	1:25.8	110.9	146	Dry
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-400	1:25.9	107.5	138	Dry
BMW 1-series M Coupe	1:25.9	106.4	158	Dry
Mitsubishi Evo X RS 360	1:26.1	106.6	153	Dry
<b>Renaultsport Mégane 265 Trophy (fastest hot hatch)</b>	<b>1:26.1</b>	<b>105.3</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>Dry</b>
Audi TT RS	1:26.3	107.2	149	Dry
Aston Martin DBS	1:26.4	109.5	143	Dry
Porsche Panamera Turbo	1:26.5	109.2	137	Dry
Jaguar XJ220	1:26.7	111.7	131	Dry
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG	1:26.8	104.9	165	Dry
<b>Porsche Cayenne Turbo (fastest 4x4)</b>	<b>1:26.9</b>	<b>107.4</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>Dry</b>
Lotus Evora	1:27.1	104.2	145	Dry
Nissan 370Z	1:27.1	104.0	158	Dry
Porsche Panamera S	1:27.3	102.4	165	Dry
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupe	1:27.7	111.0	162	Dry
Lotus Elise SC	1:27.7	104.6	131	Dry
Vauxhall VXR8 Bathurst S	1:27.8	106.1	131	Dry
BMW E46 M3 CSL	1:27.8	105.4	153	Dry
Renaultsport Mégane R26.R	1:27.8	103.3		
<b>Audi RS6 Avant (C6) (fastest estate)</b>	<b>1:27.9</b>	<b>111.0</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>Dry</b>
Jaguar XFR	1:27.9	108.1	137	Dry
Lexus IS-F	1:28.1	106.4	151	Dry
Porsche Boxster S (987)	1:28.1	105.4	120	Dry
Subaru WRX STI	1:28.3	101.6	157	Dry
SEAT Leon Cupra R	1:28.7	102.4	162	Dry
Bentley Continental Supersports	1:29.2	105.8	149	Dry
Lotus Elise Club Racer	1:29.2	95.5	162	Dry
Renaultsport Mégane 250 Cup	1:29.9	101.4	156	Dry
Honda NSX	1:30.1	101.3	145	Dry
Nissan 370Z Roadster	1:30.3	100.1	173	Dry
VW Scirocco 2.0 TSI	1:30.4	98.9	155	Dry
Ford Focus RS (Mk2)	1:30.8	101.8	131	Dry
Vauxhall Astra VXR (Mk2)	1:31.4	100.9	174	Damp
Renaultsport Clio 200 Cup	1:31.9	97.2	144	Dry
VW Golf GTI (Mk6)	1:32.4	99.3		

### TRACK MAP



### West Circuit facts

- Location Bedford Autodrome
- Opened 1999
- Length 1.85 miles (2.98 kilometres)
- Direction Anti-clockwise
- Left turns 9
- Right turns 6



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# Art of speed

Camera: Nikon D3. Focal length: 38.0mm. Exposure: 2.0sec at f/2.8 (ISO 200)



## Shelby Mustang GT500 racing stripes

by DAVID VIVIAN | PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH

**R**ACING STRIPES: FERRARI CHARGES A SMALL fortune for them, Shelby Mustangs and Cobras don't look quite right without them and some people stick them on with a hair dryer. They've fallen in and out of fashion and, today, are desired and derided with competing conviction. But perhaps the least contentious thing about them is this: whatever may be going on in the minds of drivers who've ticked the appropriate option box (or self-appended them), racing stripes don't make your car go faster – at least not in any sense that relates to modern motoring on public roads.

Sixty or so years ago when they first started appearing on closed-wheel racers, however, they could in theory mean the difference between a podium finish and mid-field anonymity. In fact, they served two purely practical but disparate functions, the first being that they provided a means to make it easier for spectators to identify a particular team's car in the heat of battle. More intriguingly, two broad stripes running longitudinally up the bonnet on the driver's side also claimed the benefit of being the first thing seen as the fog of rubber smoke and dust began to clear after a spin or shunt, enabling the driver

to reorientate more quickly and get the car pointing in the right direction again. That said, finding a quote from a racing driver attributing a storming-through-the-field win to the presence of racing stripes proved fruitless.

US race legend Carroll Shelby is often cited as the inventor of racing stripes. He certainly helped popularise them, but as a fan rather than a founder. Back in the early '50s, Shelby was driving for Aston Martin at Le Mans and couldn't have failed to notice that the rival Cunningham team's cars, the first with bodywork that enclosed the frame rails, sported blue stripes where the exposed rails would otherwise have been visible, thus enhancing the distinctive blue-on-white international livery used by American teams. Later, as boss of his own concern, Shelby adopted the idea and the colours, but flipped them (white stripes on blue bodywork) for his race entries. The stripes have since become a signature of all Shelby road cars up to and including the Mustang GT500 pictured here.

Stripes have become image accessories that seek to denote an affiliation to motorsport: in some cases aspirational, in some cases deserving, in some cases comically inappropriate. Having said that, one notably square-cut early adopter, the Renault 8 Gordini, did look unfeasibly cool. Blue with white stripes. Perfect. ☒

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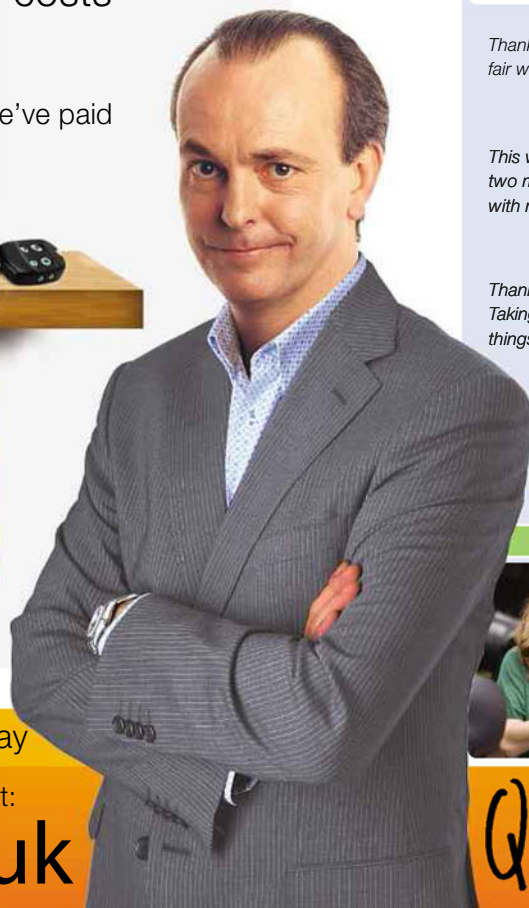
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35 monthly payments of:	<b>£169.00</b>	Retail cash price:	<b>£16,970.00</b>	Option to purchase fee²:	<b>£60.00</b>	Representative APR:	<b>4.9% APR</b>
Customer deposit:	<b>£3,661.37</b>	Acceptance fee¹:	<b>£125.00</b>	Total amount payable:	<b>£18,361.56</b>	Rate of interest:	<b>4.10% fixed</b>
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Standard EU Test figures for comparative purposes and may not reflect real driving results. Model shown is the new Leon 5DR SE 1.2 TSI 105PS at £16,970 RRP with optional metallic paint at £495 RRP, electric sunroof at £695 RRP, 17" Dynamic alloy wheels at £375 RRP and full LED headlights at £995 RRP. Offer may be varied or withdrawn at any time. Retail Sales only. ¹Payable with first payment. ²Payable with optional final payment. 4.4p per mile excess mileage charges apply. †£1,000 deposit contribution is available to customers who purchase their car with Solutions personal contract plan. Terms and conditions apply. Finance examples include technology pack. Further charges may be payable if vehicle is returned. Indemnities may be required. Subject to vehicle availability. Subject to status. Available to over 18s in the UK from participating dealers only. SEAT Finance, Freepost SEAT Finance. Subject to each model specification and cost option fitment. Pricing and finance valid from 1st January to 31st March 2014. \*\*Offer available on SE and FR models when ordered before 31st March 2014 from participating dealers only. \*£1,915 RRP refers to optional specification if priced individually.



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