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v 650S v 911 GT3

PLUS
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JAGUAR XFR-S SPORTBRAKE

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AUGUST 2014

Ed Speak



EXPERIENCE OR POSSESSION? IT'S A RELATIVELY simple question, but when aimed at anyone with an interest in cars it has a number of possible answers. I started thinking about this at a recent Vmax200 event at Bruntingthorpe, where supercar club Auto Vivendi loaned me a Lamborghini Aventador Roadster for a blast down the runway. To see video of this, visit youtube.com/evotv.

The experience was sensational, even for someone as lucky as me who has driven an Aventador before. And judging by the length of the queue of people lined up to have a go themselves, and their faces when emerging from under the Lambo's scissor door after a 200mph run, the experience was similarly off the scale for them. I asked a few of the drivers present if, given the choice, they would want to *possess* the Lambo or occasionally *experience* it, and around 50 per cent, surprisingly perhaps, said the latter. These people, the majority of whom were not short of a bob, cited the hassle of garaging costs, the servicing, the insurance or the tyres, or perhaps most significantly, the depreciation. 'I don't have the time to drive a car like this all the time,' explained one, 'so why pay for it to be sat in the garage doing nothing?' Why indeed?

As someone who has spent a little more money than their wife would've liked on an old Porsche that, if it explodes, will require a secondary mortgage to fix, and as someone who drives said Porsche no more than once a week, this question has been occupying my mind. Apply logic to the dilemma, and there's one outcome: join a supercar club and erase the concept of ownership entirely from your thoughts.

Although it's not as simple as that, is it? I simply can't explain what it is about seeing my 911 sat on my drive, or hearing that slightly mournful six-cylinder wail, but I get a very real emotional reaction to it and I get a buzz from knowing that it is mine. A psychologist might dig around my past and discover a connection with a memory of an uncle's impact-bumper 911 Lux, but all I know is that for me it goes to the very core of my automotive being. And status? The majority of people think my 911 is a noisy old shed with slightly rusty bumpers, so it's not that...

I'm happy owning my 911, but I'd love to join a supercar club. And I can't work out which route to take until I answer the question at the beginning of this Ed Speak. Simply put, how much do you or I really want (or need) to own a car? What do you think?

Nick Trott Editor (@evoNickTrott)



evo app: major update

The **evo** app has been improved. You can now download content for offline reading, new icons show which articles are unread, you can delete old content to free up space and we've redesigned the look. More videos, sound and interactive features are also being rolled out, and all app subscribers get access to the *entire* uploaded **evo** archive. Prices start from just £1.49.

evo track evenings

Watch brand TW Steel is partnering **evo's** track evenings this year. Join the **evo** team on June 27 and August 29 for brilliant on-track action at the Bedford Autodrome. Book at evo.co.uk/shop



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FERRARI 458 SPECIALE v RIVALS

Forget the World Cup, bookies all over the land are fretting about what odds to draw up for eCoty 2014. The result of this group test might give them guidance, as one of the most exciting Ferrari sports cars ever – the 458 Speciale – battles the new McLaren 650S and the freshly fixed Porsche 911 GT3. We've a full performance test on the Fezza too...

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MORGAN v CATERHAM

These two cars share just seven wheels and five cylinders. It may not be as glamorous as the story above, but 3 Wheeler v Seven 160 could be just as much fun

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GOODWOOD MONSTERS

The return of the Goodwood Members' Meeting means more relaxed and exclusive access to some truly exceptional racing cars. David Vivian takes advantage



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When you have finished with this magazine please recycle it.


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Thought the headlights of the Alfa Romeo 4C were unusual? Here's a closer look at the equivalents from its 1989 forebear, the SZ

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PORSCHE



VW Group's Wörthersee originals

Stunning carmaker-prepared concepts mix with owner-modified motors at Austrian GTI festival

Words: Matthew Hayward
Main image: Si Gray

ONCE A SIMPLE enthusiast gathering, the annual Wörthersee GTI festival in Austria seems to have become Volkswagen Group's own personal motor show, where the usually straight-laced companies get the chance to let their hair down. VW, Audi, SEAT and Skoda were all out in force this year, with some head-turning concepts to entertain the crowds.

Fuelled by the ever-popular, all-encompassing VW scene, Wörthersee 2014 was, as always, a mecca for fans of VW Group products, featuring Golfs with stretched tyres, Lupos with inappropriately huge wheels and Passats struggling to negotiate the smallest speed bumps. Although the show still has its roots in owner-modified cars and the desire to cruise around a small Austrian lake, it has increasingly moved into the spotlight for different reasons.

The supported manufacturers have taken to muscling in on the festival, using it as a platform to display some lairy concepts, new production models and the latest exciting tech. Performance cars have not always been the focus, but big-power concepts and one-offs always shine – with some even making limited production after debuting here.

This year, Volkswagen headlined its stand with the GTI Roadster concept (see right), although there were plenty of other interesting, powerful and plain wacky exhibits from the depths of the Wolfsburg factory. Audi's offerings were perhaps more significant, with the next RS3 heavily previewed in the A3 Clubsport concept. Skoda showed a couple of quirky concepts – the convertible Citijet and the Yeti Xtreme – while SEAT was busy celebrating 30 years of the Ibiza with the Cupster, a two-seater roadster based on the three-door hatchback. ☒



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DRIVEN**

We sample an early E10, and get an update from director Ansar Ali



**p20 TECH:
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Open, Torsen, viscous or clutch-type – here's our guide to how they work



**p23 BENTLEY
CELEBRATES
FIRST GT3 WIN**

Racing Continental scores podium top step on only its third outing



AUDI A3 CLUBSPORT QUATTRO

This prototype boasts a 518bhp version of the 2.5-litre TFSI engine currently seen in the RS Q3 and which previously powered the RS3 and TT RS. Here that means 0-62mph in 3.6sec and top speed of 193mph.

Audi's fantastic five-cylinder unit gets a healthy power increase from a larger turbocharger, modified intercooler and a rise in boost pressure levels to 1.5bar. The concept is fitted with a seven-speed S-tronic gearbox,

which drives the familiar Haldex four-wheel-drive system, albeit one upgraded to handle the extra torque.

Manually adjustable coilover suspension drops the ride height by 10mm, while the use of lightweight carbon-ceramic brakes reduces the unsprung weight. These sit behind 21-inch wheels with wide 275-profile tyres, and to help with high-speed deceleration, this A3 Saloon is also endowed with an air brake.

VW GTI ROADSTER VISION GRAN TURISMO

Amongst Volkswagen's many exhibits, the GTI Roadster concept was easily the wildest, bringing to life the virtual concept originally destined for a *Gran Turismo* game update.

It's effectively a roadster version of the Design Vision GTI, shown at Wörthersee last year, albeit with slightly shorter and much lower proportions. Under the skin it's powered by a 3-litre twin-turbo V6 engine producing 496bhp.

Like the Audi A3 Clubsport, power is sent to all four wheels via a seven-speed DSG transmission. It matches the A3's performance too, with 0-62 in 3.6sec, although top speed is slightly down at 190mph. Unlike the Audi, this car is likely to remain a pipe dream.



VW GOLF GTI WOLFSBURG EDITION

Built by a team of Volkswagen apprentices, this Mk7 GTI Wolfsburg Edition grabbed our attention thanks to its 374bhp modified Golf R engine. Lowered suspension, a subtle body kit and OZ wheels make it look rather good, too.



SKODA CITIJET

Another one from the hands of apprentices, this time Skoda's. The Citijet is a true speedster, with two seats and no roof. Based on the likeable 74bhp Citigo Sport model, there's even a large rear spoiler and twin exhaust pipes.



SEAT IBIZA CUPSTER

This year celebrates the 30th anniversary of the Ibiza, and this two-seater Cupster is part of SEAT's celebration of the small hatch. The rear deck has a hint of Renault Wind about it, although that 'chopped' windscreen is truly eye-catching.



SKODA YETI XTREME

With a beefed-up look and extreme name, this Yeti is customised for tough off-road rally use. Sadly, the only thing borrowed from the Octavia vRS is the brake set-up, meaning we'll have to keep wishing for that proper high-performance Yeti 'vRS'.

A POSTCARD FROM VMAX200

Bruntingthorpe Proving Ground, May 2014



Some of the most powerful performance cars ever made converge on a Leicestershire runway with one aim: to reach the highest speed they can

Words: Nick Trott Pictures: Stephen Ward (LS3-Photography) and Steve Hall With thanks to: autovivendi.com



1

Above: Auto Vivendi's Lamborghini Aventador Roadster leads the Vmax200 pack. **1:** Rare and wildly desirable Ruf CTR3 features a turbocharged flat-six engine with 777bhp. Unlike the 911 with which it shares many parts, this exquisite Ruf is mid-engined.



3

2: Koenigsegg CCX ran all day long, and reached the highest speed of the day at 211mph. **3:** The only car that makes riveted-on wheelarches look cool – the sublime Porsche 993 GT2. **4:** One of the first customer McLaren 650Ss out for a pleasant drive in



2

the country. **5:** Similar V12 engine, but in a different location – Ferrari F12 meets Enzo. **6:** Ferrari Speciale (sans racing stripes) made an extraordinary noise. See evo.co.uk for the video. **7:** Vmax200 organiser Craig Williams doing his best Shakira impression



5



6



4



7

Top speeds

- 211mph**
Koenigsegg CCX
- 210mph**
Nine Excellence 9E GT2
- 209mph**
McLaren P1
- 207mph**
Ruf CTR3
- 205mph**
Audi R8 V10 twin-turbo
- 204mph**
Lamborghini Aventador Roadster
- 202mph**
Ferrari F12
- 202mph**
Ferrari Enzo
- 201mph**
Porsche 991 Turbo
- 201mph**
Porsche 993 Turbo S
- 197mph**
Porsche Carrera GT
- 196mph**
McLaren F1

See the video of Vmax200, including a 211mph on-board run in the Koenigsegg, at evo.co.uk

News in brief



New Mégane Trophy

Renault has unveiled its new Mégane 275 Trophy ahead of an attack on the Nürburgring front-wheel-drive record of 7:58, held by the SEAT Leon Cupra 280. The usual RS Trophy attributes are present: Speedline Turini wheels, stickier tyres, clever dampers (this time by Öhlins) – though all these are options. Expect a £29k basic price.



Mercedes-AMG GT

Mercedes' SLS replacement has been christened. The Mercedes-AMG GT is notable not only for dropping 'Benz' from its name, but for being cheaper and more directly aimed at the Porsche 911/Jaguar F-type area of the market. Power is expected to come from a turbocharged 4-litre V8. This first teaser image is all that's been released so far – the GT gets its full reveal in September.



TT record broken

Subaru has broken its own Isle of Man TT car lap record. Mark Higgins achieved the feat in the latest-generation WRX STI, 2014's 19:26 run being 30.7sec quicker than his 2011 effort. His average speed around the 37.7-mile course was 116.4mph – still some way off the bike record, which was Bruce Anstey's 132.298mph as we went to press...

Cosworth works magic on GT86

Famous engineering firm offers range of tuning packages for Toyota/Subaru sports coupe

Words: Matthew Hayward



COSWORTH, ONE OF the country's best-known and loved motorsport and engineering names, has announced a range of upgrade packages for the FA20-engined Subaru BRZ and Toyota GT86.

Last time the Cosworth name graced a production car, it was the 395bhp Impreza CS400, a bespoke model sold at a considerable premium over the base WRX. This time the Northamptonshire-based engineers have decided to offer a range of modification kits to existing owners, promising substantial gains to the

naturally aspirated boxer four.

For £2400 (excluding fitting), the Stage 1.1 upgrade raises power from 197bhp to a claimed 220bhp. This kit comprises a cat-back stainless steel exhaust (a high-quality item produced by Nameless), a free-flowing air filter, a low-temperature thermostat and a 'Power by Cosworth' ECU remap. There's also a badge and a numbered plaque.

The £3240 Stage 1.2 upgrade will release a further 5bhp thanks to an additional section of exhaust with a spherical resonator. For a full 230bhp there is the £4560 Stage 1.3, which includes a rather special heat-treated

4-2-1 exhaust manifold, said to reduce under-bonnet temperatures and overall weight by a considerable amount.

Supercharged packages, Stages 2 and 3, will be offered later in the year. Cosworth quotes a fully validated 325bhp for Stage 3, with an even more extreme 380bhp track-spec option to follow later.

This is the first time Cosworth has offered tuning packages direct to customers. Currently, just the exhaust is covered by a four-year manufacturer warranty, but the aim is to supply fully supported manufacturer-approved upgrades for many cars. **x**



Above: Cosworth-tuned GT86 could be tuned to as much as 380bhp. **Left:** stainless steel exhaust and manifold are among parts on offer

Zenos E10 on track for 2015

Innovative new British sports car undergoes its first test, while cheap repairs and straightforward model line-up are promised

Words: Stephen Dobie **Main image:** Jarowan Power



IT'S NEARLY SIX months ago that the Zenos E10 made its debut at the Autosport show.

Progress has continued apace since: a 75-off Launch Edition is close to sold out, while the company has set up new facilities in Norfolk, hired more full-time design engineers and given the E10 show car a shakedown at Millbrook Proving Ground (see below).

'From a technical perspective we are meeting if not exceeding all the targets we've set ourselves,' Zenos co-founder and director Ansar Ali tells us. Two evaluation prototypes will be built imminently; deliveries of the E10 are expected to start in early 2015.

The E10 wades into a competitive low-volume sports car market with a couple of innovations. One is its central beam structure, which puts torsional rigidity through the car's spine, a benefit being smaller sills (and therefore easier access than offered by rivals) when the E11 roadster and E12 coupe arrive with their respective roofs. The other is a focused approach on low running costs, exemplified by relatively cheap-to-replace materials at the car's corners.

'They're sacrificial panels,' Ali says. 'Customers quickly lose faith with the product if every time they prang something the repair bill is a few thousand pounds. We want a product

that is affordable to play with. That to us is really important.' Similar thinking inspired the use of inboard pushrod suspension. 'Not because we want to replicate being an F1 car,' reveals Ali, 'but because they are out of harm's way, so if you do damage a front corner, you hope you won't be replacing a damper.'

Powered by a 200bhp 2-litre four-cylinder Ford engine and with a five-speed manual gearbox as standard, prices start at £24,995. The £28,995 Launch Edition has a six-speed manual, a limited-slip differential and a heater.

The E10 will be competing primarily against the Caterham Seven and Ariel Atom, so does Ali anticipate following a similar product plan of constant evolution? 'Zenos Cars intends to do three models – E10, E11 and E12,' he says. 'We don't want to be drawn into new engine derivatives every 12 to 18 months just to keep the life cycle going. Our plan is based on three clearly defined models that will grow the customer base beyond just E10 customers.' While options such as sequential gearboxes may come in the future, Ali is keen to keep things simple.

Likewise, though a roll-cage is on the options list, Ali rules out any official Zenos motorsport programme: 'Our engineering model is to stick to small-series type approval. We want to be best in class. No other brand visions beyond that.'



Driving the prototype **Words:** Richard Meaden

Having been a part of the Zenos story since the beginning (see *evo* 193), it's very special to be one of the first people to drive the prototype. As you'd hope, but perhaps not as you'd expect of a car on day one of its shakedown, the E10 runs smoothly and drives well. For a car to feel so together –

structure, drivetrain, driving position, ride and responses – this early in its development bodes very well indeed.

Of course, it needs lots of painstaking detail work before it's finished, but it's a promising first taste of a truly individual car. I can't wait for the next opportunity to drive it.

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Official fuel consumption figures in mpg (l/100km) for the Ford Fiesta range: urban 33.6-76.4 (8.4-3.7), extra urban 58.9-91.1 (4.8-3.1), combined 47.9-85.6 (5.9-3.3). Official CO₂ emissions 138-87g/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. Vehicle shown is the Ford Fiesta Titanium X with optional Candy Blue pearlescent paint and 17" 8-spoke alloy wheels. Ford SYNC with Voice Control works with compatible connected mobile phones only. See ford.co.uk. SYNC standard on Zetec, Zetec S, ST, Titanium and Titanium X. Optional extra on Studio and Style.



Go Further

WHEN A CAR travels around a corner, the outside wheels travel further and faster than the inside wheels. This means that if the wheels were directly connected, stresses would build between the wheels until one skipped, or a driveshaft snapped. A differential gets its name as it allows the two wheels on an axle to rotate at different speeds when cornering.

THE OPEN DIFFERENTIAL

This is the most basic type of diff and what you will find on the vast majority of cars. It allows the two driven wheels to rotate at different speeds whilst splitting drive torque 50:50 either side of the axle. Torque distribution of 50:50 sounds great, doesn't it? Well, it isn't quite that simple. It all boils down to the path of least resistance and the amount of useable traction, which changes by modifying variables in this equation (you can skip this if you want!):

$$TE = \mu \cdot (W + D)$$

$$= \mu \cdot ((m \cdot g) + D)$$

WHERE

- TE = tractive effort (N)
- μ = friction coefficient
- W = weight on wheel (N)
- D = downforce (N)
- m = mass on wheel (kg)
- g = acceleration due to gravity (m/s²)

When you corner at speed, weight is transferred to the outside of the car through lateral acceleration and this lifts weight off the inside wheels. Reducing the weight on the inside wheels means that you have less mechanical grip and therefore require less tractive effort to make the wheel slip. With an open diff, in this situation the inside wheel will start to slip with only a small amount of torque from the engine, and the diff will distribute the same amount of torque to the opposite wheel, which has more grip. The result is one spinning wheel and another that doesn't have enough torque to move the car.

So what can you do if you want to lay down 11s and not 1s on the tarmac? You turn to an LSD.

DIFFS EXPLAINED

Part 1

Don't know your open diff from your viscous LSD? Find out how they work here

Words: Michael Whiteley



Above: Torsen diffs are only fully effective when both wheels are on the road. **Below:** what you'll find inside a clutch-based LSD



THE BENEFITS OF LSD

Compared to an open diff, a limited-slip differential (LSD) can help by splitting the drive torque and biasing one wheel with more torque than the other on split surfaces or when cornering hard. Mechanical LSDs generally come in three main types; Torsen, viscous coupling, and clutch.

Torsen LSDs are torque-sensing diffs that can transfer drive torque from the inside wheel to the outside wheel through a torque bias ratio (TBR). If the inside wheel starts to slip, the outside wheel will receive the torque applied to the inner wheel, multiplied by the TBR. A downfall to the Torsen diff is that if the inside wheel is lifted off the ground, no torque is transferred to the outside wheel (zero torque multiplied by anything is equal to zero), and so the Torsen behaves as an open diff.

Viscous LSDs can be found in cars such as the old Nissan S-platform and the newer 370Z. They operate using two sets of discs corresponding to each driveshaft, which are placed very close to (but not touching) each other. A high-viscosity fluid surrounds the discs and when one wheel slips, the corresponding set of discs spins quickly and drags the fluid around with it. This then applies torque to the opposing side's discs, which rotates the opposing wheel. Instead of being torque-sensitive, this LSD is speed-sensitive and thus takes time to react to the initial wheelspin.

Clutch-type LSDs are generally the types you will find in aftermarket modified cars and higher-end performance cars. They use clutch packs to lock the wheels into a joined rotation. Under normal operation (in a straight line) the clutches aren't really doing much, but when high torque is applied to the diff's internal gears, axial forces push the clutch packs into action. When the clutch packs are pushed and engaged, the wheels are locked in unison. This type of diff is far quicker to react than the viscous type and takes far longer to wear out.

SO NOW YOU know what will stop your car spinning its inside wheel relentlessly when driven hard. Next time, we'll look at the e-diffs and brake-based traction systems that we see in the latest supercars. ☒

8
APRIL
DONINGTON PARK

04-05
MAY
ROCKINGHAM

24-25
MAY
SILVERSTONE

21-22
JUNE
SNETTERTON

24-26
JULY
SPA

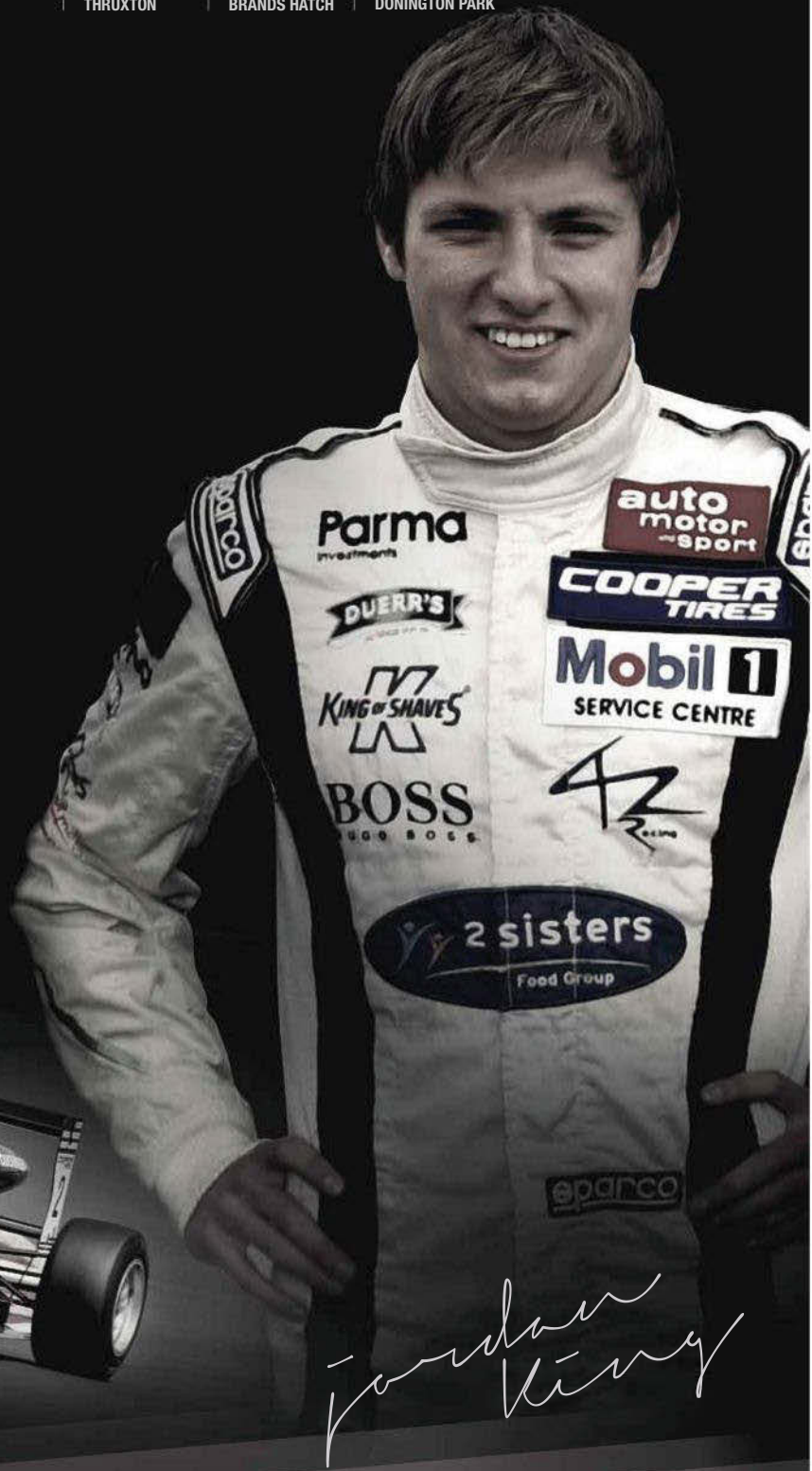
16-17
AUGUST
THRUXTON

30-31
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News in brief



Mini Superleggera

The glamorous Villa d'Este concours event traditionally turns up a BMW Group concept, and this year the Mini Superleggera Vision took its bow in Italy. A pertly proportioned roadster – with an electric drivetrain, no less – it looks a far more convincing MX-5 rival than the current Mini Roadster. Here's hoping the next drop-top Mini looks more than a little like this...



Zagato Lamborghini

Also on display at Villa d'Este was this Lamborghini 5-95 Zagato. Celebrating Zagato's 95th birthday, it takes a Gallardo Superleggera and adds typical Zagato styling cues: double-bubble roof, peculiar angles and circular rear lights. It's currently a one-off for a collector, though rumours suggest a handful could be sold, no doubt expensively.



Kobayashi Caterham

This is perhaps one of the more extreme-looking Seven special editions. The Kamui Kobayashi single-seater takes the Japanese-market Seven 250R – essentially a 125bhp Roadsport – and gives it a makeover that tips its hat to Caterham's F1 livery (and its Japanese F1 driver). Just ten will be made, all of them for Japan.



Bentley's M-Sport partnership blossoms

Continental GT3 wins at Silverstone in only its third-ever race **Words:** Dan McCalla

THE MOOD AMONG the workforce at the Bentley factory in Crewe is sky-high right now. The firm's new Continental GT3, driven by Andy Meyrick, Steven Kane and Guy Smith, won at only its third competitive outing, the three-hour Blancpain Endurance Series event at Silverstone, and hordes of staff and their families were there to see the first race for a factory Bentley in the UK since 1930.

'We had a lot of people from Bentley at Silverstone because we put a travel package together for them and their families,' explains Rolf Frech, Bentley's board member for engineering and head of the motorsport project. 'At Silverstone and at the factory afterwards, where we had the car and the trophy on display in reception, the atmosphere was amazing.'

The quick success of the Bentley

'WORKING WITH A COMPANY FROM A DIFFERENT AREA OF MOTORSPORT HAS LED TO USEFUL GAINS'

GT3 project has come in no small part thanks to a technical partnership with M-Sport, better known for building and running Fords in the World Rally Championship. Frech has found that working with a firm coming from a different area of motorsport has led to some useful gains in the Conti's development: 'In track racing you normally find cars with a very hard chassis and set-up. The M-Sport experience offers another view, and [due to M-Sport's rally background] we have a car with a lot of suspension travel, and so we can really tune the set-up as much as we want. They are not as blindly focused on track racing and so they are asking questions.'

GT3 racing is kept competitive by adjusting cars' power outputs, weights and other parameters, a system known as Balance of Performance. Bentley's Silverstone win means it could be reined in for future events, but Frech is confident that won't be the case. 'If you look at the lap times [at Silverstone], we didn't have the best but we had the most consistent times. I don't think there is a need to change it [BoP].'

Meanwhile, Frech remains coy on the future direction of the Bentley programme, save for confirming that the GT3 programme will continue next year: 'As a company it's important to look at what's coming up, but it's difficult to predict the future.' ❌

Above: Conti GT3's Silverstone win came despite a drive-through penalty early on. **Right:** victory meant a lot to Bentley Motorsport crew





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 **Test location:** Montalcino, Italy **GPS:** 43.04898, 11.49026

Ferrari California T

The first new turbocharged Prancing Horse road car for 27 years combines sleek looks, 552bhp and a retractable hard-top. Does it signal great things to come from Ferrari's forced-induction future?

T

THE PREVIOUS

Ferrari California was, it could be argued, the most important new Ferrari of the last decade. If we consider the 458 Italia and Spider as distinct models, as the factory does, the California stands as Ferrari's best-selling single model ever, with more than 10,000 units shifted during its five-year lifespan. It not only sold in big numbers,



Every new *evo* car that matters, rated

This month

FERRARI CALIFORNIA T

Prancing Horse convertible goes turbocharged

p26



JAGUAR XFR-S SPORTBRAKE

542bhp load-lugger is Jag's answer to RS6 Avant

p32



MERCEDES E400 AMG SPORT PLUS COUPE

329bhp coupe with a sub-£50k price tag

p34



PORSCHE MACAN S

Can it trump the more expensive Turbo?

p36



MASERATI GHIBLI S

404bhp version of Italian 5-series rival

p39



AUDI RS5 TDI CONCEPT

A possible precursor to Audi's first-ever RS diesel

p40



DMS MERCEDES CLS63 AMG

Supersaloon is boosted to 698bhp with ECU remap

p43



The test team

With the retractable hard-top Ferrari California T our lead Driven this month, the team name a selection of their favourite convertibles:



NICK TROTT

Editor

'The humble Lotus Elise. Love the simple roll-up roof, and no structural integrity issues with that clever chassis.'



HENRY CATCHPOLE

Features editor

'I've never driven one, but I'll take an original Ferrari California 250 GT in black.'



DAN PROSSER

Road tester

'Aston Martin DBS. Yes, it was wobbly, but the sound and styling made it work so well as a drop-top.'



JETHRO BOVINGTON

Contributing editor

'Ferrari F50 or Porsche Carrera GT. With the hard-tops fixed firmly in place, obviously.'



RICHARD MEADEN

Contributing editor

'The Aston V8 Vantage Roadster is one of the very few convertibles I enjoy driving more than the equivalent coupe.'



DAVID VIVIAN

Contributing road tester

'Ferrari 458 Spider. Drives the same as the hard-top; wind rush and noise make it even more exciting.'

it also opened Ferrari up to a whole new market sector and attracted a great many new buyers to the brand: 70 per cent of California owners had never before owned a car with a Prancing Horse on its nose.

Despite its significance for the marque, the California never really registered on the radars of an *evo* demographic, for it was neither pretty to behold nor exceptional to drive. Parallels could be drawn with Porsche's

Cayenne: the California was, in relative terms, the mass-market model that deviated from the decades-old core brand attributes, meeting with an indifferent reception among the die-hards as a result, but appealing to the lucrative wider market at the same time.

Its replacement, therefore, is an interesting car to approach. On the one hand the California T is not the Ferrari that you or I would be naturally drawn towards, but its



‘The power and torque curves have been mapped so that the engine builds to a crescendo at the top end’

importance to Ferrari as a business proposition makes it a car that we mustn't overlook. This new model also has a deep technological significance: it's the first new turbocharged Ferrari since the F40 of 1987, and it'll be the first of many. A new era of forced induction has dawned at Maranello and the California T is our earliest glimpse of it.

The 3855cc twin-turbo V8 is all-new and bespoke. It's been in development for four years and Ferrari makes bold claims about its class-leading response times. Peak power is 552bhp at 7500rpm; that's 63bhp up on the old normally aspirated 4.3-litre V8, arriving 250rpm earlier. Ferrari limits the torque through the gears using its new Variable Boost Management system so that peak twist, 557lb ft, is only delivered in seventh gear. It's an intriguing system and we'll consider it in more detail later on.

The switch to turbocharging is, of course, an effort to improve fuel efficiency. Through downsizing and the use of longer gear ratios, made possible by the significant increase in torque output, Ferrari has apparently reduced consumption by 15 per cent over the previous model. The engineers are insistent, though, that the familiar Ferrari DNA values of immediate engine response, a thrilling soundtrack, progressive acceleration and high maximum revs have not been lost. The power and torque

curves have been mapped so that the engine builds to a crescendo at the top end, rather than dumping all its worth in the lower reaches like a turbodiesel.

Only the folding hard-top roof is carried over from the previous California's body, but the basic architecture is still a transaxle layout within an aluminium bodysell, suspended by double wishbones at the front and a multi-link set-up at the rear. The gearbox is a twin-clutch item, and its torque is sent to the rear wheels through a locking differential.

To understand where Ferrari might have pitched the T, it's worth considering how the previous model was used by its owners. In comparison to the average new Ferrari, the California covered 30 per cent more miles per annum and its daily usage was 50 per cent higher. This, then, is a Ferrari that trades on its useability as much as outright performance.

That being so, the California T rides superbly. Road surface imperfections are rounded off so that there isn't a jarring sharpness to the way it travels down a road at low speeds. The cabin, both faultless in its quality and attractive in its design, is plenty spacious enough for two, although the laughable rear seats are much better folded down to create a stowage shelf and a useful load space through into the boot.

The California T's pervading sense of

useability is a reminder that it needs to be approached as a GT car rather than a full-on sports car. Expect 458 levels of immediacy and agility and you'll think the California T lazy and imprecise, but keep in mind that it instead targets the likes of Bentley's Continental GT Convertible and you'll find very much to commend about its dynamic performance.

As is the way with new Ferraris, the steering initially feels unnaturally quick. It's actually not quite as hyperactive as a 458's helm, for instance, but for the first few miles as an unfamiliar driver you will find yourself dialling in a little too much lock for a given corner, feeling as though you're unsettling the car at each turn-in point. The familiarisation period is no greater than that of any other car, though, and very soon you recalibrate to the steering's rate of response and it becomes natural and intuitive. The ratio of the rack also means you needn't remove your hands from a comfortable quarter-to-three position to negotiate tighter turns, nor to correct a little exit oversteer. The steering always feels a little remote, however, with only a vague sense of connectivity once the chassis is really loaded up.

With 53 per cent of its weight over the rear axle, the California T doesn't feel anything like as front-heavy as the layout and dimensions might suggest. That gives it both a sense of agility on turn-in and a neutral balance mid-

corner. He who complains of too much natural understeer on the road is driving badly.

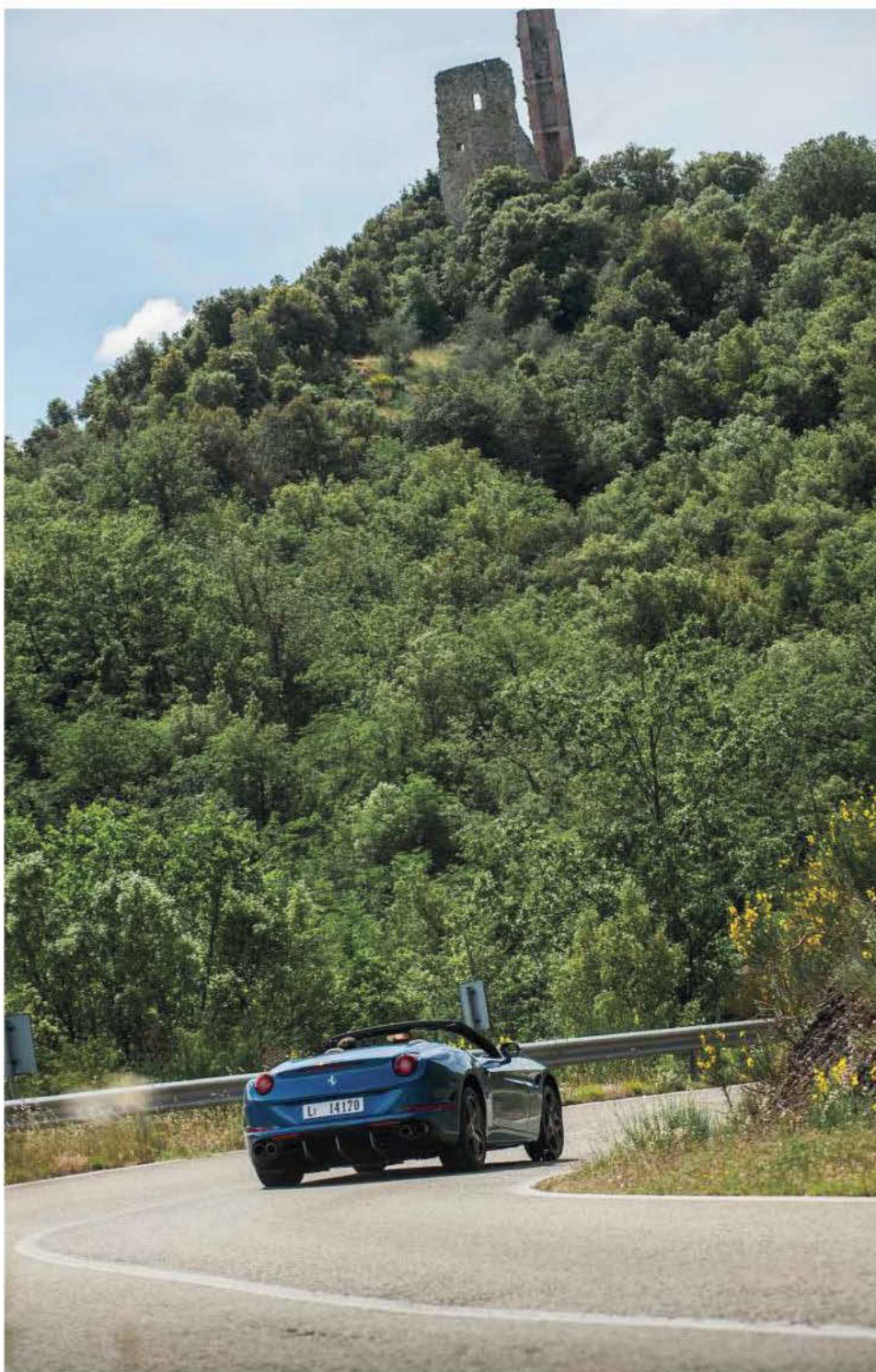
Rather than pushing on at turn-in, the car instead collapses a little onto its rear axle. The rear anti-roll bar is soft, which gives the California T huge traction at corner exit, but it also means the driver must dial back a little to accommodate that initial roll. The firmer chassis mode of the optional magnetorheological dampers corrects this slightly, though not entirely. This is, as we know, a GT rather than a true sports car.

The dampers can also be switched to an intermediary 'bumpy road' mode when the manettino is set to Sport. This gives the chassis a truly impressive secondary ride over smaller lumps and bumps, isolating the occupants from the road surface while still retaining enough body control when the corners come thick and fast. That mode will work superbly in the UK.

Left: hard-top folds into the rear of the T in just 14sec. **Below left:** brakes are carbon-ceramic; 19in wheels are standard, 20s are an option. **Bottom left:** manettino settings alter throttle, gearshift, damping and stability control. **Bottom right:** 3.9-litre twin-turbo V8 is claimed to manage 26.9mpg combined



'It'll only be provoked into modest slides away from the apex under full throttle in second'



As mentioned, torque through the gears is limited to give the T an impression of non-linear, building acceleration, it claims, but there are also benefits for traction and driveability. Unleashing the full amount of torque in second gear at corner exit would simply bonfire the rear tyres and make the California T an uncontrollable animal. Instead, it'll only be provoked into modest slides away from the apex under full throttle in second, giving the car that delightful waxing and waning interplay between grip and gentle slip that we expect of sports cars, but perhaps not of GTs. The torque-limiting in lower gears does rob the California T of the brutal, straight-line accelerative hit of a Porsche 911 Turbo, for instance, but it never feels anything less than effortlessly rapid.

This new V8 is as impressive as forced-induced engines come and the gearbox is remarkable; each new gear seems to bang in before you've even fully pulled the paddle. There is no discernable turbo lag and the top end is just as useable as the mid-range, but there aren't, as you'd expect, the top-end fireworks we so love Ferrari's normally aspirated engines for. There isn't the same aural excitement either, despite the flat-plane crank and the equal-length exhaust header pipes, although at very low engine speeds the T does emit a crisp, hollow exhaust note that calls to mind a 458.

In the context of the California T, the twin-turbo V8 is a triumph; it's both a class-leading turbo engine and it suits the car's GT nature. This engine doesn't, however, allay all fears that under a new forced-induction regime the drama and excitement of Ferrari's normally aspirated engines will become a thing of the past. Ferrari CEO Amedeo Felisa insists, though, that his engineers will capture that excitement when a similar engine is used in a sports car installation. Time will tell.

The California T is a more complete package than the car it replaces, not least for being prettier, and it's as engaging around the limit as any car in the class. It does remain, however, a Ferrari for the driver who places daily useability ahead of outright thrills. ❌

Dan Prosser (@TheDanProsser)

Engine	V8, 3855cc, twin-turbo
CO2	250g/km
Power	552bhp @ 7500rpm
Torque	557lb ft @ 4750rpm
Performance	3.6sec (claimed 0-62mph), 196mph (claimed)
Weight	1729kg (324bhp/ton)
Basic price	£154,490
Finance	£18,500 deposit, 48 x £2623.47, £70,000 final payment. No mileage limit. Oracle Finance

evo rating: ★★★★★

➕ A brilliant GT, impressive turbo V8

➖ We'd sooner have a 458

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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. The model shown is the all-new Mazda3 120ps Sport Nav featuring optional Soul Red metallic paint (£660). OTR £19,895. OTR price includes 20% VAT, number plates and 3 years' European Roadside Assistance. Prices correct at time of going to print.



Test location: near the Nürburgring, Germany GPS: 50.33728, 6.96882

Jaguar XFR-S Sportbrake

Handsome estate XF gets Jaguar's most potent, 542bhp supercharged V8 and a host of Ring-developed chassis upgrades

THERE'S NO MAGIC formula for making an irrationally desirable and deeply cool performance car... but a big, brooding estate with 500-plus bhp, steamroller-wide tyres and a ride height at odds with the utility of the shape floating above it nearly always delivers, doesn't it? So this is Jaguar's take on the superestate, the XFR-S Sportbrake. And I'm guessing it's already got you slightly weak at the knees.

The specification only heightens the sense of anticipation. Like the XFR-S saloon (evo 187), the Sportbrake is powered by Jaguar's top-spec 5-litre supercharged V8 and produces 542bhp at 6500rpm and 502lb ft from 2500 to 5500rpm. All that torque gets to the rear axle via the superb ZF eight-speed automatic gearbox and an electronically controlled

limited-slip differential. It's perhaps not the most subtle getaway car but should you need an emergency start it'll achieve 0-60mph in 4.6sec (0.2sec slower than the saloon) and is limited to 186mph. Of course, we've got hot hatches these days that dip below 5sec to 60. However, when you feel the engine's grip on this huge car at speeds between, say, 80 and 160mph, you know it's a real big-hitter. The torque is monumental.

I can say this because the Sportbrake launch is in Germany and the route takes in some quiet Autobahn. Sadly, I never trouble the limiter but there's no question that the Sportbrake is a fabulous car in which to munch through a long journey at high speed. The gearbox is smooth and very fast, the engine sounds deliciously potent and has that any-rev flexibility that conveys a sense of omnipotence, and the stability at high speed is superb. Add

to that the typically Jaguar smooth, consistent steering weighting and a ride that is firm but still breathes with the surface and you can only conclude that the XFR-S Sportbrake is a very tasty proposition indeed.

The big test is yet to come, though. At the end of the Autobahn the road swoops through dense forest and then familiar names start to appear on road signs. Names like 'Adenau' and 'Nürburg'. Yep, this near-two-ton estate car is going to be subjected to the Ring in order to prove its credentials and highlight Jaguar's ongoing development and durability testing at the circuit. It seems a bold move but then the Sportbrake has been comprehensively revised in its transformation to XFR-S and, on paper at least, it should be up to the job. Front and rear spring rates are up 30 per cent, the dampers – which adjust 100 times per second

– are retuned and there’s been a whole host of hardware changes on both axles, too. At the rear there’s a new anti-roll bar, stiffer bushes and revised geometry, and the axle itself has been strengthened to help contribute to a 30 per cent increase in lateral stiffness, which should create a much more accurate experience. At the front there are new suspension knuckles to improve camber and castor stiffness, new wheel bearings, and the steering has been re-valved, all said to increase agility and control.

It all sounds very impressive but at the Ring the Sportbrake feels exactly what it is – big and heavy. Body control is good but the combination of 1967kg and 502lb ft means you’re always busy managing the weight transfer, traction and the sheer momentum of a car so fiercely accelerative. It is no trackday car, which won’t come as a surprise to anyone. Having said that, the Sportbrake is a lot of fun. The balance is admirably neutral but the added weight at the rear of this estate XFR-S means the back end is always willing to swing around to cancel any understeer you might encounter and there’s enough power to slide the car at will in the slower corners. The brakes stand up to the task well, although the pedal travel is too long and on the mushy side. We also have the opportunity to try the XFR-S saloon and that car is definitely a little lighter on its feet, has more responsive steering and just feels a few percentage points more accurate in every department.

This is great fun but all largely meaningless. Fortunately the roads near the Ring are very good indeed and the Sportbrake feels much more at home when we point it along them. The ride is on the firm side but the damping is very good indeed. Wheel control is assured



‘The added weight at the rear means it’s always willing to swing around to cancel any understeer’

and although you can feel ragged surfaces, the Sportbrake remains composed. Through long, medium-speed corners it feels terrific. There’s perhaps more body roll than I’d expected and less grip than a BMW M5, but you can feel the limits very clearly and work around them with real accuracy. There’s tons of oversteer to be had if you want it, but actually the Sportbrake is at its best when it’s hooked up and just teetering on the edge of a slide.

So the XFR-S Sportbrake is a seriously

desirable superstate. The engine has just the right combination of smooth manners and brutality (although the delivery lacks a bit of top-end sparkle) and the chassis is controlled but can get down and dirty when you fancy it. It hasn’t quite got the control of an E63 AMG, nor the sharpness of steering response, and it’s a slightly less aggressive proposition than the saloon version. Even so, I’d like to spend a lot of time in this car. ❌

Jethro Bovington (@JethroBovington)

Above: XFR-S can oversteer on demand, of course, but it’s at its best when kept just on – or around – the limit of grip.
Left: interior is starting to show its age (the XF was launched in 2007)



Engine	V8, 5000cc, supercharged
CO2	297g/km
Power	542bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque	502lb ft @ 2500-5500rpm
Performance	4.6sec (claimed 0-60mph), 186mph (limited)
Weight	1967kg (280bhp/ton)
Basic price	£82,495
Finance	£7500 deposit, 48 x £1029.76, £30,218 final payment. No mileage limit. Oracle Finance

evo rating: ★★★★★

- ➕ Looks fantastic, huge performance, nice balance
- ➖ Not as sharp as the saloon, brake feel, dated interior

📍 **Test location:** B660, Cambridgeshire, UK **GPS:** 52.40112, -0.37386

Mercedes E400 AMG Sport Plus Coupe

E-class Coupe range-topper combines sleek looks with 329bhp and 0-62mph in 5.2sec

Photography: Andrew Whyte



W

WHAT'S THIS? AN AMG

Benz without the ball-tearing performance to match the beefed-up looks? Kind of, but don't hold that against it. The

E-class Coupe is a handsome device and the AMG styling trinkets that adorn the E400 – the current range topper, and available only in 'AMG Sport Plus' trim – certainly enhance its ability to turn heads without looking OTT. Sports seats and a chunky steering wheel continue the pumped and (mildly) pimped theme, while the switchable Dynamic Handling Package allows you to toggle through assorted ride and handling settings.

Beneath the bonnet, a 3-litre twin-turbo V6 supplies 329bhp and 354lb ft of torque to the rear wheels via Merc's familiar 7G-tronic Plus seven-speed automatic transmission. With 1650kg to propel it's not the fiercest of Mercedes (think around 5sec to 60mph), but as ever with these sub-psycho-spec Benzes, it's the overall experience that appeals to buyers, rather than the potential for fourth-gear oversteer.

First thoughts are that it looks and feels like a lot of car for £46,275 basic. The fit and finish is high and the level of standard kit is huge. It's spacious too, with more than enough head and legroom in the back for kidults. If you're nudging 6ft you'll struggle, but compared to most coupes it's impressive.

Spending most of your life in hardcore sports cars does tend to skew your reference points a little, so it takes a while to dial into the E400's behaviour. At first it feels aloof, its responses soft and reluctant, the brake pedal not giving



you the initial confidence you'd get from a more overtly sporting car. It's an appropriate level of isolation, but if you're used to sharper cars you'll feel a bit lost. It does waft well, but you have to submit to it and let the journey wash over you. In this sense it all feels a bit middle-aged, but then I guess that's the point of cars like this.

To inject some life into the driving experience you need to work through the dynamic settings, which sharpen the steering and enliven the throttle, as well as tweaking the suspension. Each stage is a bit contrived, the steps between Comfort and Sport suspension and Efficient, Sport and Manual transmission modes feeling distinct but never quite what you're after. Generally speaking the sporty settings tend to give you a bit too much of what you're after, the Comfort settings not quite enough.

The engine is a curious one. It's appropriately hushed and effortless at low speed, and as you work into the throttle's travel you get hints of an appealing, gruff note and promising performance, but when you decide to really go for it the engine actually feels a bit uninspiring. It's effective and you'll soon be carrying

significant speed, but there's little joy to be had from the process. It's not a bad lump by any means, but it's not that special, either.

Handling-wise the E400 is polished, but much like the engine, nothing about the way it steers or corners stands out or makes you want to seek a great road. It isolates you from more than it connects you to, so you feel more inclined to guide it than hustle it. The balance is inherently neutral, and with the suite of ESP systems engaged it's a stable, secure and straight-laced machine. To be brutally honest, you don't feel the urge to disengage them, either. I'm sure you could make it do something silly, but it's just not that kind of car.

This area of the market isn't *evo's* heartland, but the E400 is an impressive and accomplished car. Appealing too, if you don't want or need a full headbanger-spec Benz, but precisely because of that it seems disingenuous of Mercedes to apply the AMG name to it. ❌

Richard Meaden (@DickieMeaden)

Engine	V6, 2996cc, twin-turbo
CO2	176g/km
Power	329bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque	354lb ft @ 1400-4000rpm
Performance	5.2sec (0-62mph), 155mph (limited)
Weight	1650kg (203bhp/ton)
Basic price	£46,275
Finance	£4600 deposit, 48 x £675.91, £17,531.25 final payment. No mileage limit. Oracle Finance

evo rating: ★★★★★

- ⊕ Striking looks, high quality, decent performance
- ⊖ Driving experience doesn't deliver on AMG name



Defectors willkommen

The Volvo V40 R-Design



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SEARCH VOLVO V40

Official fuel consumption for the Volvo V40 D2 R-Design (manual) in MPG (l/100km): Urban 74.3 (3.8), Extra Urban 91.1 (3.1), Combined 83.1 (3.4). CO₂ Emissions 88g/km. MPG figures are obtained from laboratory testing intended for comparisons between vehicles and may not reflect real driving results. Finance subject to status. 5.9% finance available on all V40 models registered by 31st July 2014. *At participating dealers. Example based on mileage of 8000 per annum, excess mileage charge 14.9p per mile. At the end of the Personal Contract Purchase there are three options: (i) pay the Final Payment/GFV (Guaranteed Future Value) to own the vehicle; (ii) part exchange the vehicle, where equity is available; or (iii) return the vehicle. Further charges may be made subject to the condition of the vehicle. Terms and conditions apply. 18s or over. Guarantee/Indemnity may be required. Volvo Car Credit RH1 ISR.

PERSONAL CONTRACT PURCHASE REPRESENTATIVE EXAMPLE: V40 D2 R-DESIGN

36 monthly payments	£249
Customer deposit	£1,999
On the road price*	£21,080
Total amount of credit	£18,581
Interest charges	£2,752
Total amount payable	£23,832
Final Payment	£12,369
Finance Deposit Contribution	£500
Duration of agreement (months)	37
Fixed Rate of interest p.a	3.04%
Representative APR	5.9% APR



📍 Test location: Goodwood, West Sussex, UK GPS: 50.89168, -0.74299

Porsche Macan S

Sub-Turbo version of new mid-size SUV produces 335bhp and hits 62mph in 5.4sec. Could it be the pick of the range?

O **ON THE INTERNATIONAL** Porsche Macan launch in Germany earlier this year, circuit driving was a significant part of the schedule. It's the same at this regional event at Goodwood. I won't do anything more irrelevant in a car this year than pick out the line through Lavant in a Macan S, but I can at least now give you some idea of how it behaves around its dynamic limit.

The Macan, as we already know, is Porsche's first foray into the mid-size SUV market. It shares its underpinnings with Audi's Q5, although more than two-thirds of all components have been replaced or redesigned. At the top of the line-up sits the Turbo model, costing £59,300, and until the inevitable four-cylinder engines arrive some time next year, the entry-level versions are the petrol and diesel S models, both costing £43,300. The Turbo earned itself a four-star rating when we first tried it in Leipzig (*evo* 194), but the petrol

S, tested here, could prove to be the pick of the range given that it's some £16,000 cheaper.

The 3-litre V6 twin-turbo (to confuse the S and Turbo model designations somewhat) generates 335bhp and 339lb ft, enough to shuffle the four-wheel-drive Macan S to 62mph in 5.4 seconds. Quick enough, then, to give a Cayman S a fright away from the lights, despite a 500kg weight penalty.

On the road the Macan's straight-line performance is brisk rather than earth shattering, and despite that big lump of torque being available from 1400 to 5000rpm, the engine does need to be worked fairly hard to get the car moving at a decent pace; there isn't the same level of effortless, wall-of-torque thrust that Panamera Turbo owners will be familiar with. The seven-speed PDK transmission (a conventional manual isn't offered) is superb in both automatic and manual modes, with quick, clean shifts and none of the unpleasant elasticity of a torque-converter auto.

The cabin will be familiar to all owners of modern Porsches. The layout is logical and the quality of materials very good for the most part, although there isn't quite the same sense of solidity as in a Cayenne; the central tunnel flexes quite significantly when pressed with your knee, for instance. The seating position is excellent, however, with nothing to remind you of the fact that the Macan is an SUV rather than a sports saloon other than the ground being a little further away beneath you.

The dynamics are much more sports saloon than sports utility vehicle, too. Even in the default suspension setting, but particularly with the optional Porsche Active Suspension Management (£785) set to Sport or Sport Plus, there is a level of agility and body control that has never before been known in this sector of the market. Ultimately, the near two-ton kerb weight and the tall ride height prevent the Macan from feeling as well tied down as a sports coupe or saloon, and it doesn't reward with the

Right: handling around Goodwood is impressive – for an SUV. **Below:** Macan S's twin-turbo V6 is 607cc smaller than the Turbo's, and produces 59bhp and 67lb ft less



'There is a level of agility and body control that has never before been known in this sector of the market'

same tactility and immediacy of response, but it certainly doesn't wallow or float over the road surface in the way that the exterior dimensions suggest it might.

The steering is sharp and direct, if devoid of any real feel, but what really impresses is the ride quality. The car feels pliant and fluid over a lumpy surface, rather than being knocked around or unsettled by the endless bumps of these West Sussex back-roads. Combined with the refined drivetrain and good wind- and road-noise suppression, the Macan is a very capable long-distance or day-to-day machine.

A Macan Turbo with Porsche Torque Vectoring will power oversteer under extreme provocation, as Porsche is very keen to express,

but more nonsensical contemplations are difficult to imagine. PTV, which includes a locking rear differential, is optional on the S models (£1012), but in the realms of reason and logic the Macan simply grips hard before settling into gentle and progressive understeer, and then gets its power down with a completely neutral attitude and unimpeachable traction come corner exit. The factory wants the world to know that a mid-size Porsche SUV remains a Porsche at its heart and that it can slither around like a sports car, but it is well aware, one suspects, that none of its customers will ever actually indulge in such behaviour.

For the role that a Macan-shaped vehicle will actually fulfil in daily use, the sporty chassis

options do little to improve the overall package. By the same reasoning, the Turbo, though slightly faster in a straight line and sharper in extremis, is no more compelling as an SUV than the significantly cheaper Macan S. ❌

Dan Prosser (@TheDanProsser)

Engine	In-line 6-cyl, 2997cc, twin-turbo
CO2	204-212g/km
Power	335bhp @ 5500-6500rpm
Torque	339lb ft @ 1450-5000rpm
Performance	5.4sec (claimed 0-62mph), 157mph (claimed)
Weight	1865kg (183bhp/ton)
Basic price	£43,300
Finance	£4500 deposit, 48 x £486.34, £26,869 final payment. No mileage limit. Oracle Finance



evo rating: ★★★★★

⊕ The best mid-size SUV on sale

❌ Lacks speed and ultimate agility of Turbo



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📍 Test location: B1090, Cambridgeshire, UK GPS: 52.41971, -0.24812

Maserati Ghibli S

Range-topping 404bhp 5-series rival arrives in the UK. Has it got what it takes to tackle its established German rivals?

I IS THERE A MORE chameleonic car brand than Maserati? Students of motorsport will associate the trident badge with Juan Manuel Fangio, hipsters will think of the magnificent Maserati-powered Citroën SM (see p114), while fans of forced induction and gilt carriage clocks will go weak at the thought of boxy Biturbos.

Since the turn of the 21st century, Maserati has been something of a pawn in the Fiat Group's strategic reshuffling, but despite the machinations behind the scenes, the glamorous Quattroporte and GranTurismo re-established Maserati as a distinctive, desirable and boldly individual brand. Unfortunately, while lots of us liked the idea of a Maser, few of us bought one. This prompted a root-and-branch reinvention and a bold – some said crazy – intent to ramp up production to 50,000 cars a year by 2015. The new Quattroporte was the first product of this new era, but the mid-sized Ghibli was always to be the force behind that retail explosion.

We drove the 325bhp petrol and 271bhp diesel Ghiblis back in *evo* 186. Now here is the range-topping S, powered by a 404bhp twin-turbo 3-litre V6. That small-capacity, big-boost recipe will resonate with fans of the last-generation Ghibli, but where that car was a 3-series rival, this one is aimed squarely at the 5-series and E-class in size and stature. It's an imposing machine with some unmistakable Maserati styling cues, but there's also a whiff of Infiniti about it that doesn't sit comfortably with this most Italian of brands. There's plenty of space inside, but the ambience is a bit shiny and



try-hard. It's closer in look and feel to a Jaguar XFR than the more sombre offerings from Audi, BMW or Mercedes, but it lacks not only their assured confidence, but the Jag's warmth, too.

The Ferrari-built V6 starts with a snarl and displays super-sharp throttle response from the off. The eight-speed automatic transmission works well with the strong, overboost-fed low- and mid-range torque and you quickly find yourself snapping through the gears. It's a crisp, keenly responsive drivetrain, but a plodding 6500rpm red line isn't exactly thrill-a-minute. Traction is strong thanks to a standard mechanical limited-slip diff, but the Ghibli's 1810kg bulk is noticeable above 70mph, both in a straight line and on quick A- and B-roads. It certainly doesn't disguise its size like an M5.

This test car has optional Skyhook suspension (£2045), which gives you a choice of Comfort and Sport settings, but neither feels organic or especially well matched across the dynamic settings for steering, throttle and transmission. If you're sensitive to a car's responses, this always niggles, for you can't quite switch off from its shortcomings, particularly in damping

and steering. Optional 20in Urano rims (£1960) fill the arches nicely, but don't help the ride.

There's no question Maserati appears to have its house in order business-wise, but to my mind the biggest challenge is not tempting people into models like the Ghibli, but retaining them when the time comes to trade their car for a new one. These days that's as much down to attractive finance deals and strong customer service as it is dazzling metal. Maserati needs the former attributes in place, because on the evidence of this Ghibli S, the product falls short of its rivals in every key area, save perceived value.

I don't doubt there's greater kudos in telling people you drive a Maserati rather than a BMW or Benz, and this certainly accounts for the booming global sales, but the inconvenient truth is a similarly priced M5 or E63 knocks the Ghibli S well into next week for entertainment and all-round engineering polish. ❌

Richard Meaden (@DickieMeaden)

Engine	V6, 2979cc, twin-turbo
CO2	242g/km
Power	404bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque	406lb ft @ 4500-5000rpm
Performance	5.0sec (0-62mph), 177mph (claimed)
Weight	1810kg (227bhp/ton)
Basic price	£63,435
Finance	£6000 deposit, 48 x £964.25, £18,275 final payment. No mileage limit. Oracle Finance

evo rating: ★★★★★

- ➕ Styling stands out from the crowd, sounds good
- ❌ Steering and chassis lack finesse, engine lacks reach



📍 **Test location:** Neuburg an der Donau, Germany **GPS:** 48.75236, 11.22257

Audi RS5 TDI Concept

Preview of possible first diesel RS, with 553lb ft 'e-boosted' twin-turbo engine and RS6-bothering pace

A AUDI HAS DROPPED ITS biggest hint yet that a high performance 'driver's diesel' aimed squarely at the likes of *evo* readers will figure in its model line-up before too long. It's called the RS5 TDI Concept and, among other things, it showcases the 'e-boost' electric turbo assist technology slated for the next-generation 3-litre V6 TDI biturbo engine. Said motor debuts in the facelifted A6 and A7 from the summer in 215 or 268bhp tune. However, the big news is that a 380bhp oil-burning 'RS5' thus equipped, and wielding 553lb ft of torque from just 1250rpm, has step-off acceleration that almost beggars belief, a soundtrack that wouldn't disgrace a bassy, large-capacity petrol V8, and enough raw pace to keep an RS6 Avant honest.

Described as a work in progress by Audi's head of TDI development, Ulrich Weiss, it nevertheless clearly signposts Audi's chosen future direction. Weiss remains tight-lipped for the moment about when we can expect to see this truly hot diesel Audi in the showrooms and whether it will wear an 'RS' badge or, less controversially, join the 'S' ranks. Officially, the go-ahead for such a car and its nomenclature hinges on customer reaction to the concept.

The 'e-booster' is a small electrically driven blower plumbed in between the intercooler and the induction system that gets the smaller of the V6's twin turbos spinning rapidly before the hot exhaust gases can do the job effectively, giving more immediate throttle response away from rest and what Weiss calls a 'pressure kick' that eliminates off-boost lethargy when you get



back into the throttle at the exit of a bend. The system operates up to 3000rpm, at which point it's no longer needed and is bypassed entirely.

The handling circuit at Audi's new Driving Experience Centre near Munich is just 2.1 miles long and, it has to be said, peppered with enough slow turns to hand an advantage to a car endowed with serious amounts of low-end punch and the traction to deploy it. The RS5 TDI Concept is that car and, presumably to ram the point home, a 552bhp RS6 Avant piloted by one of the driver training school's pro drivers is waiting at the start line for the diesel to chase.

Diesels don't sound good? Think again. Artificially hyped it may be, but this one has a warm, expansive, low-octave burble that swamps the low-rev sonic repertoire of the RS6 and builds to a satisfying, if somewhat muted, bellow at maximum effort. This, admittedly, is reached at a modest 4200rpm and there's little point in venturing beyond that. But if you simply leave it in Drive and don't touch the paddles, the automatic transmission's brain knows this and does have eight rapid-fire ratios with which

to sling the engine revs back into the heart of another mighty, torque-rich heave.

It isn't quite seamless but it doesn't seem to matter. There's no straight long enough for the RS6 to pull away more than a car's length and, with each successive lap, it becomes increasingly apparent that the lighter and torquier TDI has the fast estate's number, more than clawing back any lost ground under braking and exiting the tighter turns. Audi claims a 0-62mph time of 'around four seconds', just a nominal tenth shy of that claimed for the RS6. It's vindicated by a drag race along the main straight. The TDI's initial push is simply brutal and, amazingly, it leaves the RS6 for dead off the line. The speedo's showing a little over 70mph before the big estate overtakes, and it doesn't exactly waltz past. I'd love to know what the 0-30mph time is.

At the very least, Audi has demonstrated that 'RS' and diesel power aren't incompatible and the e-booster really works. The upshot is a car I'd have happily jumped in and taken the long road home. ❌

David Vivian (@davidjvivan)

Engine	V6, 2967cc, biturbo diesel
CO2	n/a
Power	380bhp @ 4200rpm
Torque	553lb ft @ 1250-2000rpm
Performance	4.0sec (claimed 0-62mph), 174mph (claimed)
Weight	n/a
Basic price	n/a

evo rating: ★★★★★

- Entirely convincing as an RS model
- You can't buy it (yet)



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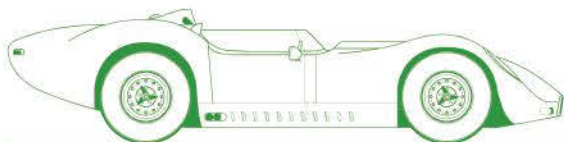
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 Cambridge
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📍 **Test location:** Beaulieu Road, New Forest, UK **GPS:** 50.86512, -1.53128

DMS Mercedes CLS63 AMG

ECU upgrade lifts output of AMG's 5.5-litre twin-turbo V8 to nearly 700bhp

Photography: Andrew Whyte



WITH 5.5 LITRES OF swept capacity, eight cylinders, and two turbochargers boosting at a gentle 0.8bar, Mercedes' M157 V8 is dripping with latent potential. For tuners such as DMS, the industry's widespread adoption of turbocharging is very good news, for it enables them to achieve punchy power upgrades with nothing more than an ECU remap. While the manufacturers are beholden to a higher standard of emissions regulations, not to mention the need to protect delicate model hierarchies, the aftermarket tuners can simply rewrite the stifling OEM engine maps and unleash all that untapped potential (just as long as the passcodes continue to slip out the back door).

The M157 serves in various high-end AMG models, including the rather attractive CLS63. To demonstrate the performance gains available, DMS founder Rob Young first runs this demo car on the dyno with the standard map. The resulting 559bhp is impressive enough as it is, bettering Mercedes' claim by 10bhp. An hour later, with the new map installed, the car records 698bhp.

Along with the considerable increase in peak power, the curve itself is smoother. With the standard map, power almost levels off from 5500rpm, whereas with the new map it keeps on climbing to the peak at 6700rpm, just before the limiter. It's also interesting to note that the DMS map matches the standard one's peak power figure at just 4300rpm.

Torque rises substantially, too. Peak output on the dyno is lifted from around 600lb ft to



almost 700, still at 4000rpm, and this near-100lb ft advantage continues all the way to the red line. Given that the engine is so unstressed in standard form, the DMS upgrade is simply unleashing its potential rather than wringing unhealthy levels of performance from it.

DMS charges £3000 for the upgrade, which, for very good reason, is more than other tuners might ask. Whereas some will simply drill a hole in the ECU casing to access the correct strip of silicon, DMS will painstakingly prise the ECU open. The process can take up to 11 hours, but the benefits are worthwhile. For one thing this method doesn't leave a twist of swarf rattling around inside the ECU casing, which can short out on the transistors and cause quite significant issues, and for another there are no outward signs that the ECU has been fiddled with (which could perhaps lead to warranty issues). Having accessed the ECU, DMS reveals it with a different type of bonding agent than can be unstuck in a fraction of the time, so the map can be re-uploaded in just an hour, free of charge, should the manufacturer unwittingly flash it away with a software update.

A near-700bhp CLS63 AMG is a seriously rapid machine. The extra performance over and above the standard car really is quite significant on the road, and the manner in which it's delivered is vastly improved. The tidal wave of torque is staggering, but it's the way in which it sustains itself into the higher reaches of the rev range that gives the DMS car so much more real-world performance. When the torque does eventually begin to subside, the engine switches onto the power band, pulling hard to the red line.

The CLS seems to get the power down without too much trouble, but it's only when you retrace your steps that you realise it has actually been smearing its tyres into thick black lines on the road surface from standstill. It never feels wayward or out of control, though. In fact, the upgraded car is more fun and more characterful for its extra performance.

The M157 is a brilliant engine as it is, but only aftermarket tuners such as DMS will truly realise its full potential. ✖

Dan Prosser (@TheDanProsser)

Engine	V8, 5461cc, twin-turbo
CO2	n/a
Power	698bhp @ 6700rpm
Torque	697lb ft @ 4000rpm
Performance	4.1sec (estimated 0-62mph), 155mph (limited)
Weight	1795kg (395bhp/ton)
Basic price	£3000 (conversion price)

evo rating: ★★★★★

- ⊕ Engine upgrade adds huge performance and real character
- ⊖ Pricey for an ECU upgrade

Watches

A multi-functional Casio bargain, a twin-time throwback and a dashboard-based curio are this month's star pieces **Words:** Simon de Burton

1 Casio Edifice ERA-300

Price: £300 **From:** casioonline.co.uk

Casio, the long-standing watch partner of Infiniti Red Bull Racing, has just announced the arrival of this new high-tech, low-cost drivers' watch. Despite its bargain price, it features a 29-zone world time function, five separate alarms, a perpetual calendar programmed until 2099, a 1/20th of a second stopwatch and a 'data memory' capable of storing up to 100 lap times. There's also a built-in compass and a thermometer, plus a so-called 'Neon Illuminator' button which allows the dial and hands to be seen in the dark.

2 TAG Heuer Carrera Twin Time

Price: £2395 **From:** tagheuer.com

This year's Baselworld watch show featured the launch of an upgraded version of TAG's neat Twin Time model, which features an extra hour hand to provide a second time zone reading. Based on a watch introduced in 1955 (eight years before the first Carrera), the new Twin Time simply features a 24-hour outer scale which works with the auxiliary hand to provide the extra reading. Inside the 41mm case you'll find TAG's Calibre 7 self-winding movement, and there's a choice of black or white dials, and alligator straps or metal bracelets.

3 CT Scuderia Dashboard Automatic CS10212

Price: £1250 **From:** classic-time.co.uk

UK watch distributor Terry Cordy has an eye for interesting new dial names, such as the CT Scuderia collection. Designed by an Italian, made in the US and incorporating Swiss movements, CT Scuderia watches are heavily inspired by cars and motorcycles, not least the CS10212 pictured here, which is based on the look of a '50s-style tachometer. An inverted stopwatch vibe has the crown positioned at six o'clock on this model, which is supplied on a high-quality leather strap. There are several more subtle versions in the 13-model line-up, which starts at £845.

Now & Then



Watch tech

Rolex Cerachrom 'Pepsi' Bezel

When Rolex developed its original GMT Master dual time-zone watch for pilots flying the first trans-Atlantic passenger jets for Pan Am in 1955, it divided the 24-hour bezel into blue and red halves to differentiate between the hours of night and day. Creating the colours was easy enough when the bezel was Plexiglas (and later anodised aluminium) and the 'Pepsi' look became a Rolex signature.

But when the brand switched to scratch-resistant, ceramic-based 'Cerachrom' bezel inserts in 2005, the distinctive colour scheme was lost because, apart from the fact that it was decidedly difficult to incorporate two colours in a single ceramic moulding, no method existed for creating red ceramic.

Now, however, Rolex modestly claims to have 'achieved the impossible'. Having mastered the art of combining two colours last year (blue and black), it has now managed to recreate the GMT Master's original colour scheme by using a 'secret, patented process' to colour the entire bezel red, after which a solution is added to one half. When heated to 1600deg C, the solution reacts with the red Cerachrom and turns it blue.

To finish it off, the ultra-hard bezel must be machined with diamond-tipped tools, after which the engraved numerals get a micron-thick layer of platinum PVD coating before the job is finished with a diamond polishing process.

And that, remember, is just to make the bezel...

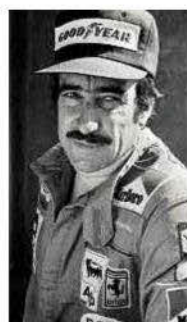
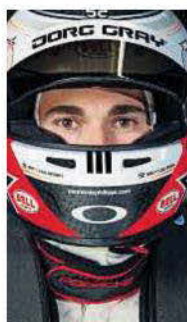


NOW

Jorg Gray G8300-24

Worn by: Connor de Phillippi

The young Californian, last year's Porsche Carrera Cup Deutschland 'rookie of the year' and ex-Formula Ford Walter Hayes Trophy winner, has just been signed by affordable US watch brand Jorg Gray as its latest motorsport ambassador.



THEN

Heuer Silverstone

Worn by: Clay Regazzoni

The Swiss F1 star, who died at the wheel of a people carrier in 2006, was a devotee of Heuer chronographs and an early adopter of the brand's unusual Silverstone model, a 'rounded square' watch introduced in 1974 and phased out in 1977. The Silverstone was relaunched in a limited run in 2010.



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Simulations

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

Words: Matthew Hayward



Game

FORZA MOTORSPORT 5 CAR UPGRADE PACKS

Formats: Xbox One

Price: £5.99-39.99

From: forzamotorsport.net

Love it or loathe it, the era of downloadable content is here to stay. Getting used to the idea of paying full price for a game and then having to shell out even more for the cars you really want is perhaps the hardest part to swallow, but regular injections of new content can really help to extend the shelf life of a game.

Since *Forza 5*'s launch just before Christmas, there have been around eight new car packs, all of which feature a selection of ten cars. Each pack generally contains a varied selection too, with thoroughbred classics such as the Renault 5 Turbo

and Ferrari 250 California appearing alongside modern supercars and full-on competition machinery.

The latest, called the Bondurant Car Pack, marks the introduction of the new Corvette Stingray, the Alfa Romeo SZ, a couple of classic Fiats and our favourite hot hatch of 2013: the Mini John Cooper Works GP. Although each pack can be bought separately – fine if you've just got a hankering to drive a Mk2 Escort RS1800 – there's also the option of buying the Car Season Pass for £39.99, which gives instant access to all of the additional cars for a one-off fee.

As the Xbox One and *Forza 5* package represents a significant outlay, squeezing some extra enjoyment out of the game is certainly not unwelcome. Downloading extra cars has been part of the *Forza DNA* since the second instalment, but it has never been quite so ingrained into the fabric of the experience.

While we're looking forward to the Ferrari 458 Speciale and Lamborghini Huracán being made available, we're really excited that our own Stephen Dobbie's Clio Williams will soon make the jump into the digital world. Now that should be a lot of fun...

News

FORZA HORIZON 2 IN THE PIPELINE

Fans of the original *Forza Horizon* game will be pleased to hear that Microsoft's next-generation sequel is currently in the works.

Horizon was always considered to be the light-hearted cousin of the previous track-based *Forza* games, rather than a true simulator-style experience. Thanks partly to the fact that the game was actually developed by Playground Games rather than Turn 10, it opened up a fully explorable public road network. Due to much of what we love about the sim making

it across to the open-world racer, however, it was definitely worthy of the name.

The second in the series is set to take place in the south of France, and we're hoping it will recreate some of our favourite stretches of the N85, or as it's better known, Route Napoléon. From what has been revealed so far, we know that it will be pushing the boundaries of the Xbox One's graphical capabilities. Even more impressive is the fact it will also be available on the ageing Xbox 360.



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Outside Line

by RICHARD MEADEN



Meaden says a car doesn't necessarily have to possess **evo** qualities to be loved

F **FLICK THROUGH THE PAGES OF EVO AND** you (hopefully) escape to a utopian world where the roads are always empty, the cars are always clean and Jethro always has his Prada sunglasses on. Indeed you could be forgiven for thinking none of us get out of bed for less than 500bhp and a mid-mounted V10. Actually that's just me, but don't let that distract you from the thrust of this column, which for this issue I've dedicated to The Real World and the cars that inhabit it.

'What would you know about that?!' I hear you cry. To be honest it's a fair call, but when the sun has set and the dust settled on the last cornering shot of the day, the immaculate artifice of the magazine road test evaporates and normal life is resumed. With normal life comes normal cars, yet far from coming out in a rash at the prospect of driving – perish the thought – an ordinary car, I find something joyous and unfailingly extraordinary about the average family wagon.

Take Mrs M's Land Rover Freelander 2. Bought new as an ex-dealer demo, it's now a little over four years old with just under 90,000 miles on the clock. It's perennially filthy, perpetually in motion, invariably dragging a trailer, carrying a pair of scruffy dogs in the boot and some kind of animal feed or garden implement across the rear seats, and has a passenger footwell filled with empty Evian bottles and discarded Jelly Baby packets. Tireless, tough as old boots and reliable as the tide, it's a much-loved member of the Meaden household.

It was much the same with our previous chariot, a rather fine non-turbo Subaru Forester that gave us ten years and 180,000 miles of loyal service. Our final journey together was to the Land Rover dealer to collect the Freelander. The poor old Sube was on its last legs, but I can still feel the pangs of guilt as we excitedly signed on the dotted line and took the keys to our new car, while our faithful friend forlornly surveyed its betrayal from the customer car park. I couldn't look it in the headlights as we drove away.

I'm sure the ownership of the Freelander will be the same. Like respecting an ageing pet by only contemplating a replacement once he's scoffing Bonios in the big kennel in the sky, I'm certain that even if we won the Lotto tomorrow our lightly scuffed Land Rover would be with us till death or uneconomic repair do us part.

And that's the thing. Fast and exotic cars are wonderful, fabulous, frivolous, intoxicating and irrelevant things. If you love cars they're the pinnacle, the ultimate aspiration or expression of the daft passion we share for things with four wheels. Yet for all that, there's something righteous and enduring about a great everyday car that totally gets under your skin. Where fast cars tend to pass their neuroses on to you, making you fret about tyre

pressures and stone chips and whether the service station has V-Power, the family car is a pragmatist, resiliently sucking up the cold starts, tip runs, IKEA missions and smelly dogs without complaint and with a fitness for multi-purpose that's every bit as impressive as a GT3 RS flat-out at the bottom of the Foxhole.

I know some of you revel in applying ruthless 'it's just a car' logic to anything, no matter how expensive or unsuited they are to the rigours of daily use, but I've never been able to bring myself to do that, even in press cars. The only time I ever left my own 911 in a public car park someone opened their door on it, and when hunger forces me to venture to the supermarket in the Fast Fleet R8 I spend longer scouring the car park for the 'right' space than I do shopping for food. By contrast the Freelander

'The Freelander proudly bears a lurid nose-to-tail keying courtesy of the local psycho in our old village'

proudly bears a few car park skirmishes and a lurid nose-to-tail keying courtesy of the local psycho in our old village (yes, every village has one). We're not careless about where we leave it, but we treat it like a car, not a Ming vase.

I love every minute I spend in the R8 and all the other precious metal I get to drive, but that pleasure comes with a latent, simmering stress rooted in nothing more than my reverence for fine cars. By contrast, driving the Freelander is totally liberating. It's not that I don't care about it, far from it, but I love its apparent invulnerability, its cloak of invisibility and its willingness to roll its sleeves up and get stuck in. That it's enjoyable to drive is a major factor, but the overall satisfaction I get from it and my bond with it transcends mere dynamic and engineering qualities.

So by all means worship, preen and pamper your weekend wheels or trackday toy. Treat it to the finest-grade synthetic oils, slather it in some fragrant carnauba-based potion and take it on expensive holidays to fabulous roads in far-flung, exciting places. But when you return home to The Real World, spare a thought for your dependable, all-weather, 24/7 friend that's doubtless parked out on the street in the rain. Without these noble, uncomplaining, unsung heroes we'd all be lost. And our driving lives would be much the poorer. ☒

@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 suggests that the mass proliferation of automatic gearboxes doesn't mean our left legs should become redundant

EARLIER THIS YEAR, YOU MIGHT HAVE seen an online video of Texan speed merchants Hennessey running their Venom GT up to 270mph on the 3.2-mile runway at Kennedy Space Center. It's a remarkable piece of footage, not least because they found someone with the solid brass kahunas to max a 7-litre, twin-turbo, 1244bhp V8 in the middle of a hacked-about Exige. In case you're wondering, this extraordinary man went by the extraordinary name of Brian Smith.

The Americans claimed Brian's heroic endeavour as a Bugatti-baiting world record, but a Guinness entry requires an average from two runs in opposite directions and NASA wouldn't let Hennessey turn around and go t'other way. This was because there was expensive hardware at that end of the tarmac and they didn't want it damaged by flying bits of ex-Exige. It's embarrassing to cancel a mission because the lander has been compromised by a burning Vauxhall column stalk.

The most striking thing about the Hennessey vid isn't the sheer speed, however. It's what happens on the way there. The Venom GT has no double-clutch paddleshift or torque-converter auto. It has six on a stick and a pedal to the left of the brake. And when you watch the footage of its high-speed run you're struck by how long and painfully slow each gearchange seems. The engine blares towards the red line, the speed builds at a breathless rate and then there's a pause and a gap so achingly long and loaded it could be dropped into a Scandinavian crime drama. In 2014, when we're accustomed to whip-snap paddleshifts, a car with an old-fashioned manual 'box sounds strange. In fact, it sounds like ancient history.

Ferrari doesn't make anything with foot-operated clutches any more. Nor does Lamborghini. All Porsche's really juicy stuff is paddle-only from now on. And Jaguar, another carmaker that's lost the phone number for its clutch pedal supplier, has proven there's life in the true automatic 'box with some masterful tuning of the eight-speed ZF 8HP in the XJR and F-type. The two-pedal trend is going to spread at the other end of the car spectrum too, because double-clutchers are getting cheaper and can be tuned to benefit headline emissions ratings. Give it ten years, never mind 20, and DIY gearchanging will seem like a lost art.

I'm not going to argue the pros and cons of this. There are plenty of cars that are ghastly with a dual-pedal system and plenty that are very excellent with paddles behind the wheel. I'm merely here to report the facts. In the future, more and more cars of all types will have only two pedals. And this leaves me wondering what we can do with our superfluous left legs during driving. I'm starting to think it's time to give them other jobs.

After all, there's precedent for this. In the middle of the 20th century many cars had their windscreen washer buttons or headlight dip switches on the floor, designed to be operated with a tap of the left foot. How this worked if you suddenly needed to change gear, I'm not sure. Perhaps heel-and-toeing in the 1950s meant something entirely different. Or the same, but for both feet. Maybe Paddy Hopkirk got his drive in a works Mini for his uncanny ability to brake, de-clutch, rev-match and flash the headlights all at the same time.

Anyway, if people in old Triumphs and Hillmans could use a clutch and operate some additional function, I'm sure as hell we can manage this. Not the main beam or the screen washers – we're all used to those on stalks these days. What I'm thinking of

'I'm thinking of a programmable, floor-mounted button that can be assigned to simple tasks'

is a programmable, floor-mounted button that can be assigned to simple tasks. No more fumbling for the recirculate button when a van parps a black cloud into your intakes. No more dabbing for that tiny rectangle on the wheel that answers your phone. It's all underfoot. Or, better yet, what about a Sport button?

Imagine a moment when you break free of the suburbs and find yourself on an unexpectedly lovely piece of sweeping A-road. You're in an AMG Mercedes or a 911 Turbo, something that's going to make the next few minutes worthwhile. But normally you'd have to look down to find the various buttons that switch the car's systems into full helmsmithery mode. Not any more. Instead, you casually pivot your left foot to the button in the top corner of the footwell and you're ready to give it some welly.

And then, when you come to a village, you'll no longer need to follow a firm smudge of the brakes with a frantic search for the buttons that kill the strident exhaust noise and stop the 'box hanging on to second at 30mph. A quick tap of the left foot and the car is all calm again.

It's a simple idea but I like to think it might work, especially in high-performance cars. Although maybe not in the Hennessey Venom. On the evidence I've seen on YouTube, you'll need your left leg entirely for clutch work. And probably for bracing. ☒

 @sniffpetrol

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

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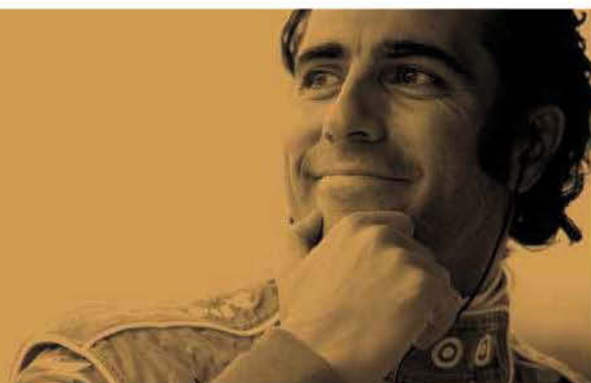


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Champ

by DARIO FRANCHITTI



Dario's racing career took him off the beaten track to some truly unique race circuits. He shares some of his favourites

I **I WAS BORED. IT WAS THE CHRISTMAS** holidays, I think it was snowing outside and I thought: 'What am I going to do?' So I went on Google Earth and marked every track I'd ever raced on from day one in karting. It was pretty interesting actually, but the shocking thing was realising that despite a career spanning over 20 years, there are a lot of classic tracks I haven't raced on, like Le Mans, Spa or Monza – I feel a little left out! But I have been lucky enough to race at some incredible and unusual places, so I thought I'd share a few with you.

Something DTM did really well was street courses, and I think those early years of my career were where I got my love of that kind of racing. The first one I ever did was Macau in an F3 car, which was absolutely mind-blowing. On what used to be the waterfront there is a mighty long straight, over a mile in length, with two flat-out kinks. Then you brake into a sort of tight second-gear corner before heading up the hill and I remember it just getting narrower and narrower. There was a series of esses where the cars would pitch from one bump to the next and if you got it wrong you were like a pinball bouncing between the barriers. It was so difficult to get right, but with so many corners it was one of those places that if you gained a couple of tenths at every corner you were seconds ahead of the field. Sadly, that's not something I ever managed to do!

I used to get up early at Macau (which anybody that knows me will confirm is unheard of!) just to watch the bikes running. Steve Hislop on a 500cc Grand Prix bike around there was ridiculous. It was like he spent his whole time trying to keep the front wheel down, it was so fast. I was reminded of that while watching the Isle of Man TT coverage this year. The talent, commitment and bravery needed to do what guys like Michael Dunlop and John McGuinness do is just in a different class. The Mountain Course has to be the ultimate street circuit, though. I mean, can you imagine how cool it would be to take an IndyCar round there...?

DTM also went to curious places you'd never heard of like Singen, down in the very south of Germany. That was a really tight street course (by lap two I'd taken both mirrors off) with just eight turns, all 90 degrees except for a hairpin. Oh, and a chicane – I've got a picture in the office here in Scotland of the car at the chicane with no wheels on the ground after I'd launched it over the kerbs. It was a really spectacular line and quite quick, but I think we ended up getting two punctures in the race by doing that.

Helsinki Thunder was another temporary circuit that I loved. Great crowd, but also just a really interesting track. I learned a massive amount about driving street courses in the two years I

drove there. Although I do believe I crashed both times... within two laps of the finish... while leading. Did not go down well with the bosses. One time wasn't my fault because there was oil on the track, but the first time was definitely my fault. I was just going too quickly because I thought I had to catch the car in front. Understeered into the wall and took the right-front off.

Weirdly, although you could be driving past skyscrapers (like you did at Surfers Paradise) or hotels or a football stadium, I was oblivious to it all when I was in the car. To me the walls always just formed a tunnel ahead and it didn't matter where in the world it was. Walls and road surface – that was all I noticed. The latter of those was incredibly important because dealing with bumps and surface changes is actually one of the keys to street courses. Not so much with the ones used for Formula 1, like

'I loved Helsinki Thunder. Although I crashed both times... within two laps of the finish... while leading'

Valencia or Monaco perhaps, but certainly in DTM and IndyCar if you could find the fastest way across three or four different surfaces within a corner you'd gain a big advantage. I always liked to get the car set up so that it would float a little bit over the bumps, so you were off the brakes and almost felt like you were a little bit out of control. It was just fantastic.

Other weird and wonderful ones in Germany included Diepholz on a military airfield (simple track, but a pretty big commitment place) and Avus near Berlin. The iconic bankings had gone by the time I raced at Avus, so it wasn't the most interesting place. We'd come honking down the Autobahn, take a hard left through the central reservation, honk up the other side, through a right kink, round a long left and that was about it!

I was also lucky enough to race at Suzuka and even in the DTM car it was mighty. The 130R corner was flat in a DTM car but it took getting used to. I always remember hitting the barrier on the outside of Turn One in 1996 and rolling. When I got out I took the Mercedes star off the bonnet (I've still got it) because I knew it was the last time that I was going to drive the car because I was leaving. After that it was off to America... but I'll leave those circuits (including my all-time favourite) for next month. ✕

 @dariofranchitti

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



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What's turbocharged your M-car this month?



Letter of the Month

Lose the force

In his final Fast Fleet report on the M6 Gran Coupe (evo 196), Nick Trott comments on the rapid depreciation of the new-generation M-cars and asks whether or not it is to do with their turbocharged engines.

I for one was disappointed to learn that the new M3 and M4 are turbocharged. Thing is, I don't see why anyone would buy an M3/4 or M5/6 in these days of mpg and CO2 emissions madness. You can get similar power delivery from a big diesel engine in the same car, particularly when remapped.

Of course, in terms of handling, braking, etc, they would be leagues apart, but I think M-cars have now lost their appeal to many due to their less-exotic power delivery. The E92 M3 and the E60 M5 were slower than their replacements, but there was more excitement about them in general. I know they needed their own oil well and you had to spend most of the time in the upper 25 per cent of the rev range to make M-car speeds possible – but surely that's the point?

Tom Broome



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i8 the way it sounds

I'm utterly amazed that Jethro Bovingdon can write about the BMW i8 (evo 197): 'it's not exactly a heinous crime that BMW has given its sports car a proper voice, even if it is largely digitally delivered!' There can be no room for audio speaker-delivered engine sounds in a sports car and I'm relying on evo to ensure that manufacturers option it at worst and properly delete it at best! I can't believe that any proper petrolhead wants digital engine noise...

John Gunn

Make some noise

I have been following the recent 'debate' about the future of internal combustion. The truth is: there is no future for it.

The new generation of hybrid supercars appears to be very exciting and I have no doubt that soon we will see similar technology in 'evo-worthy' affordable sports cars. But I feel this is a transitional phase and that sports cars will soon lose their petrol-powered components. And with this, they will lose their music.

I completely appreciate that these cars will be better, faster, cleaner and quieter, but I cannot help feeling nostalgic about the glorious sounds we are slowly losing as we transition to newer technologies. And make no mistake: these sounds are part of what makes a great sports car a piece of art, and a vital part of what constitutes an unforgettable driving experience.

Tax Kourelis, Minnesota, USA

Finance Fiesta

I've been a reader and subscriber to evo since issue 003 – before I could

even drive – and this is my first letter, just to say thanks.

I've based all my performance car purchases on your reviews and have never gone wrong (Octavia vRS Mk1, Panda 100HP, Clio 200 Cup, Fabia vRS, Honda Civic Type-R and Suzuki Swift Sport). Ever since I saw the new Ford Fiesta ST I hankered after one (in that shade of blue), but never thought it'd be affordable.

That was until your Mini Cooper S v Fiesta ST article in issue 196, where you included a finance quote in the new-look spec box. After seeing that, I visited my local dealer and I am now the proud owner of a Fiesta ST2 (in that shade of blue) and can enjoy the thrill of driving that little bit sooner without having to wait for a second-hand one to come along.

Richard Doris

Bypass the EPAS

I have read consistently over these past few years that electrical power assisted steering is signalling the death knell for true feel for the road conditions and limits of grip coming back through the steering wheel.

I get that the big manufacturers are trading feel for efficiency and mpg, although I do not agree with it in the type of cars that grace these pages, but in the absence of good sense from the big guys, why are tuners not offering retrofit hydraulic PAS upgrades to true enthusiasts' cars?

Perhaps there is a big PAS tuning scene that I'm not aware of...

Alex Pitt

Hip to be square?

I enjoyed the evoTV video on the LaFerrari, but it left me with one big question: why the Austin Allegro steering wheel?

Chris Grice



Above: John Gunn thinks we shouldn't condone the i8's synthesised engine note



Above: LaFerrari's steering wheel recalls the Allegro's 'quartic' item, says Chris Grice



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Talking Point

P1, 918 or LaFerrari?

Last month we finally drove the LaFerrari. So our big question to you was which do you lust after most: 918, P1 or LaFerrari?

The P1 [above] is my choice. The LaFezza only has a big engine because the Italians couldn't master the leccy bit. The 918 is good but just not on the scale of the P1, with all its downforce. I genuinely think the P1 would leave them all for dead on a racetrack.

Ron Burgundy

In the videos it seems the P1 has the grin factor that I look for in a car, and it has it in spades. However, it is aurally weak compared to the LaFerrari, which sounds wonderful. But the LaFerrari's front is very ugly. Whilst the 918 looks iconic, I do not get why you would need to blunt a hypercar's performance for the sake of EV range with the hundreds of kilos of extra batteries. So the P1 gets my vote.

Philomena Cunk

LaFerrari – looks, performance and noise. Nailed it.

tazsura

P1 for me. It's a look at the future of supercars and probably regular cars as well, at least in the medium term. The Ferrari is just a 'normal' supercar with a nod to the electric thing and doesn't really move the game on much. Not sure about the Porsche, technically brilliant though it certainly is...

_Andy

Only one of them has a 789bhp V12 that revs to 9250rpm, so it's a no brainer for me. Just the same as it was with '90s supercars because of the epic V12 in the McLaren F1.

speedingfine

In 20 years' time all three are going to be worth £15million-20million each, so you can't go wrong with any of them. Personally, though, it's the McLaren for me, as I prefer the way its hybrid system works.

CCC4U

The 918 seems like it's from last year, the LaFez from this year and the P1 from ten years in the future. Thus, P1.

phut

The 918 looks everyday useable. I like the mixture of insane performance and 'car of the future' electric gubbins, but by far the most important thing is that you can get it with a Martini paint job. 918 for me please.

Bunta

The P1 and 918 seem more interesting as technical exercises. The LaFerrari seems to just be a V12 Ferrari with some electrical gubbins thrown at it for effect because everyone else is doing it. That V12 doesn't sound all that great either, frankly. P1 or 918? Close call.

Beany

After spending a few hours at McLaren yesterday and seeing the P1 production line, definitely the P1.

Secret Supercar Owner

P1 for me, but I really love the other two. I love how they've each done the same concept in such varied ways. It'll be interesting to see in 20 years which one was the most relevant.

Cfinglas

Next month

This month we've taken a look at some of the classic competition cars present at the recent Goodwood Members' Meeting (see p84). If you could own (and drive) any race or rally car, what would it be, and why?

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

From the forums: community.evo.co.uk

Thread of the Month

Markcoopers

Bizarre car issues

Back in the day, my first ever new car purchase was a Skoda Favorit. Mine was supposedly a post-VW-takeover car, but the list of issues was just hilarious. One day on the M3, I suddenly could not see out. Mild panic and bewilderment ensued until it was clear that the roof lining had just fallen out. On another occasion, racing a Cavalier GSi (well, I thought so anyway) on the M271, I was surprised to see him disappear in a cloud of white smoke and drop back, just like 007 does to a baddie. However, in this case a heater hose had come loose on the Skoda and dumped coolant over the exhaust. Anyone else got a story or two?

I thought a wheel had come loose on my Mini Minor. I stopped to check and found the wheel had broken around three of the bolt holes. I also thought the accelerator cable had snapped on my Scirocco. Turned out the pedal had.

nuttinnew

One of my Minis had a leaky master cylinder, so every time I needed to brake I had to pump the pedal like hell and eventually I'd get some braking on the driver's side rear wheel...

NotoriousREV_

Had a dicky starter motor on my old Citroën ZX Volcane [below], which meant sometimes to start it I had to tap the motor with an old golf club I had to keep in the boot!

Harry Hasser

I had a valve issue on an old car that meant every time the clutch was depressed the engine would stall after a few seconds. I drove for months just blipping the throttle every time I stopped and re-engaging the clutch to restart the engine if I was braking without the assistance of the motor.

Orange Cola

The throttle return spring on the carb had a tendency to snap on my old Polo. Which was interesting when you lifted off and the engine was still revving away. Thankfully it only had about 20bhp left so the (unservoed) brakes could hold it. Another interesting feature was that occasionally the heater blower would stop working. The fix was to flash the headlights!

scotta



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



The originator of the best **evo** forum thread wins a Road Angel Gem+. The Gem+ automatically updates its camera database as you drive and allows users to share the locations of 'live' camera vans.

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by JETHRO BOVINGDON

PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH

They're the supercars of the moment: the Ferrari 458 Speciale, McLaren 650S and Porsche 911 GT3. We bring them together for the first time to find out which is the pick of the bunch, before putting the Speciale through its paces on track

FERRARI SPECIALE

Holy Trinity

v r i v a l s



Above: GT3 is 129bhp down on Speciale – but is over £100k cheaper. **Right:** 4.5-litre V8 in the Speciale has 597bhp; short gearing only heightens its impact



T

THIS IS IT, THEN. THE big one. Ferrari, Porsche and McLaren on the same roads on the same day. One way or another each has got something to prove.

The GT3 is the reigning *evo* Car of the Year, but much soul-searching ensued when we totted up the votes to last year's eCoty competition and we realised yet *another* 911 had just stolen it. We didn't quite love the engine as much as the old one, we missed the six-speed manual 'box, we wondered if you had to go too damn fast to enjoy it on the road, but still it dusted F12, SLS Black Series and R8 V10 Plus. And then there would be the inevitable conspiracy theories. The GT3 as Car of the Year – for some – will always be a smoking gun. Did someone say smoke? Oh dear. Don't worry: this particular GT3, kindly loaned to us by long-term reader, trackday junkie and all-

round good egg Kavi Jundu, is freshly fitted with the new non-flammable engine.

The McLaren 650S has much to prove, too. Its predecessor, the 12C, promised to detonate an atom bomb on the supercar establishment when it was launched back in 2011: faster, cleverer, all-carbonfibre, a McLaren to evoke the intensity of the F1 for a new age. In some respects it delivered on the brief and its cool understatement was the perfect tonic for those who just can't abide the boisterousness of Ferrari (there are plenty of them). However, despite things you may have read that divide arch-enemies 458 Italia and 12C with words like 'character' and 'emotion', know that the Ferrari also had some real and tangible advantages. In no particular order: better throttle response, more consistent brake feel, more intuitive body control, finer balance. It was a lot more than 'it's red and noisy and makes us feel ten again'. So the 650S has a reputation if

not to rebuild, then to enhance. The sensational P1 proves beyond doubt that McLaren can build a car to blow minds and pull at heart-strings... Pray God that the 650S brings that thunderous level of excitement to the 12C formula.

If it doesn't, then it will be obliterated by the Speciale. I know this because I drove Ferrari's new contender on the international launch (*evo* 191) and I was shocked by its abilities. Beforehand I wasn't alone in wondering just how much better this new lighter, more focused and more powerful 458 could really be, but my doubts were blown clean away in just a few minutes and seemed naïve a few hours later. By some margin it's the best new car I've driven in months. So much so that I've wondered lately if I just fell into 'new car euphoria' syndrome that wonderful sunny day. It can happen, and when you're driving a supercar in isolation on superb roads, it's easy to get swept up in the moment – I guess that's the very point



of the breed. Anyway, we're back on superb roads here but this time they're more familiar, more challenging and there's formidable company. In other words, nowhere to hide.

MORE THAN EVER THE 'NUMBERS' OF these sorts of cars feel almost meaningless. We can run through them in a moment, but let me assure you that these cars are faster than you'll ever need, they have more grip than you'll use in 99 per cent of (on-road) situations and they're all way faster than you or I around the Nürburgring. Apologies, Mr Lieb, should you be reading this. So no justification for including the 991 GT3 in this test is required, I hope. Even so, when I see it running on the road with Speciale and 650S for the first time, it's a relief that it doesn't just evaporate. In fact it looks sensational – more purposeful than the McLaren and less contrived than the head-banging Speciale. If you had to

**'Ferrari,
Porsche and
McLaren on
the same roads.
Each has got
something
to prove'**

define that old 'racer for the road' adage, a picture of the GT3 spearing across a wide, fast mountain road might just be perfect.

For the record, though, the GT3 is very much the 'baby' of the group. It costs a not insubstantial £100,540, but that's less than half the price of the Speciale or 650S. Its 3.8-litre flat-six produces 468bhp at 8250rpm and 324lb ft at 6250rpm and it utilises a seven-speed PDK gearbox, adjustable dampers, an electronically controlled limited-slip diff and four-wheel steering to devastating, scintillating effect. But it will need all its magical talent-enhancing powers to run for long with these two. The Speciale is actually 35kg lighter than the GT3 at 1395kg, but its 4.5-litre V8 is in a whole different league, spitting out 597bhp at 9000rpm and 398lb ft at 6000rpm. The McLaren is positively in the stratosphere: 641bhp at 7500rpm and 500lb ft at 6000rpm from a 3.8-litre twin-turbocharged V8. Apparently the 650S can



‘When I see GT3 running with Speciale for the



first time, it's a relief it doesn't just evaporate'



achieve 0-100mph in 5.7sec. That's 0.6sec *faster* than an F1. The baby supercars are all grown up.

But for now, we'll start with GT3. Like all 911s it feels like an old friend. I love the stance as you approach it, the metalwork filling the rear and the fact that you drop so low into the seats. And although the new 'screamer' flat-six hasn't got the chunter and fizz of the brilliantly rattly Mezger, the lightweight flywheel still gives it an authentic ugliness at idle that is deeply appealing. Within one revolution of its Cup 2 tyres the GT3 feels sensational, too. The engine note suggests an edge that the PDK transmission backs up beautifully. It's not silky smooth to manoeuvre like a Carrera but jolts forward, clutch biting and then releasing with the sharpness you might expect of a racer exiting the pitlane. Of course it's mainly well mannered, but there's just enough awkwardness to signal that this 'box is honed for performance rather than just as a solution to the

old car's very heavy clutch and short, physical H-pattern shift.

That energy is matched by a kind of rock-solid control that you wouldn't believe could be imparted at a crawl but is palpable in the GT3's every movement. The combination of firm damping, weighty and beautifully located steering, the correspondingly hefty but super-short paddle motion and the first engineered thud as the 'box hits second is enough to know that we weren't wrong about the GT3. I think it's going to conquer these roads just as it unravelled the south of France with a tension and fluidity that was breathtaking. Then the rear wheels roll into a deep rut as I exit our favourite gravel car park (we've spent many, many days here sitting out the rain and mist over the years) and the offside front wheel paws at the air a good six inches clear of the uneven surface. Stiffly suspended 911s have always done this little trick and it's just another

clue that this 991 has more of the old traits than any other we've tried up until now.

In fact there's so much that's familiar. The sensations come thick and fast – the spookily effective, almost surreal traction, the way the tyres seem to *squeeze* into the surface through each corner, and the short, sharp split-seconds where the tyres slip then grip. It happens in the blink of an eye and there's no need for correction, but bound up in those little spikes you feel the GT3's lateral stiffness and how hard it's working its tyres. This is unmistakable GT3 stuff, but it's overlaid with new sensations, too. The way the front end reacts and then holds its line is quite incredible. Ultimately the GT3 will still understeer, but you'll be travelling very, very fast before it gives up and you'll need to be on your toes because you'll be in the zone where understeer and oversteer almost overlap, so you'll need to manipulate the car with confidence.



Above and below: aero deflects air away from Ferrari's wheels. **Bottom:** 458 revs to 9000rpm. **Right:** Speciale has tons of dry grip, but can feel a little dicey in the wet



‘Incredibly, the 650S elevates the 12C’s speed to the next level’

However, for the most part it turns where you point it, faster than you think it should, and then hooks up at the rear even when you’re buzzing the new engine right out to 9000rpm.

To start with, the grip – front and rear – and the engine when it hits that sweet patch of crazy resonance between 8000 and 9000rpm is all-consuming, but in time the detail starts to tell. The standard steel brakes are superb, so progressive and offering such accuracy. The damping is simply flawless, the body control is so flat and composed, and there’s such control in every facet of its dynamic make-up. It’s not perfect, of course. The steering is by any normal standards very good indeed and I love the pinpoint precision it offers, but that texture that flowed back in the 996 and 997 GT3s is lost. Some will find that a relief, those who found the busyness of the old rack too much, but for me it’s something to mourn. Even so, this is a mighty car – so fast, agile

and controlled that it’s hard to imagine the 650S and Speciale could offer more, never mind justify their vast price premiums.

THERE’S SOMETHING DEEPLY seductive about the 650S, though. The dihedral doors need a good tug to raise, but as they sweep up and away from the car to expose the slim MonoCell carbonfibre structure beneath, the sense of anticipation spikes. It’s easiest to sit on the sill and reverse into the optional fixed-back carbonfibre seats, before swinging your legs into the footwell and reaching out for the elegant carbonfibre-spoked Alcantara-trimmed steering wheel. The seats are gorgeous, as well they might be for £5000, and the reclined driving position is perfection. The view through the windscreen is unmatched, like the world is being poured into the cabin, and the brake pedal is directly ahead of your left leg to suit left-foot brakera (in a McLaren

it'd be wrong not to at least try). It's pure class.

That word keeps bubbling up to describe the light, clean, sweetly responsive steering, or the instant sense of absolute rigidity and all the benefits created by the carbon tub in terms of suspension tuning, even in this Spider version. It's a silky, effortless introduction to the 650S. But just how different does it feel to the 12C? Well, many of the sensations remain the same but there's definitely a new edge. The ride is still very good indeed, but with spring rates up 22 per cent at the front and 37 per cent at the rear there's certainly a greater connection with what's going on down at surface level. Even so, the suppleness doesn't seem to suffer at all when you dial the Handling mode from Normal to Sport, and there's instantly more urgency to the way the 650S responds to inputs. For fun road driving I think Handling mode in Sport and Powertrain in Track is about right... I still wish you could get the more lenient stability control setting without switching the Handling to Track, though. It's too stiff for most roads in this full-on setting but it's

tempting to use it just because it brings so much more adjustability to the experience.

One thing never lacking in the 12C was pure speed, either of the straight-line variety or in terms of covering ground. Incredibly, the 650S elevates both to the next level. From about 3500rpm – when the 3.8-litre engine's twin turbos really start to work – to 8500rpm it is obscenely, eye-wideningly, face-deformingly rapid. It's a big step up from the GT3. More shocking still is how much of the speed generated you can carry into corners and how much of the torque you can deploy cleanly on the way out. Here the big win over the 12C is the front-end grip. You can really lean on the car before there's any understeer at all and the 650S seems better able to tolerate turning and braking hard, too. There's no limited-slip differential but that is merely a fact rather than something that impinges on the driving experience – there's so much traction and you never feel just one wheel spinning up.

This 650S is on normal P Zero rubber, not the Corsas that you can choose (at no cost) to

'There's a deep-seated quality to everything it does and the driver is absolutely at the core of every move it makes'



have fitted and I suspect they're the right choice, offering masses of security but – hallelujah – some sense that you as the driver can play the 650S's balance your own way. It's not been transformed into a wildly expressive machine that dances to the throttle's every whim, but just the ability to turn in hard, get on the gas and then balance the car with the torque brings a new dimension to the experience. The stability control is also clearly more expertly judged to give a sense of control without the fear of wicked reprisal. In fact 'expertly judged' might just sum up the 650S over the 12C. The now-standard carbon-ceramics are so much more linear in their response (although for me the pedal travel is still too long), the gearbox is faster, keener to instantly carry out requests, and the body control has less of that odd float that could afflict the 12C all of a sudden.

Niggles remain and they're exposed by the absolute precision of the GT3. The engine, while almost shockingly powerful, does suffer from lag in slower corners and the throttle response just isn't as sharp as with a great normally

aspirated engine. The innovative ProActive Chassis Control, with its adjustable dampers and hydraulic roll stiffness control, is at times simply awe-inspiring and then suddenly it will do something unexpected, like float over a bump on the way into a corner and upset the balance... Somehow it doesn't feel wholly intuitive. And while the balance is much more enjoyable than the 12C's it's still a car you tend to admire and be amazed by rather than one you feel you're fully connected with and dictating to.

BRIGHT RED KEY, BRIGHT YELLOW CAR

with stripes and carbonfibre bits everywhere, bare metal floors and a dash that might give you a headache if you look at it for too long... The Speciale really is the anti-McLaren. There's a school of thought that says these two are so different that they're not really rivals at all. However, of the 12C owners I've met, many have a Ferrari of some description, too. Indeed Kavi, our GT3-owning friend, has a freshly delivered Speciale at home and a 12C tucked up next to it...

Opposites they might be but they are gunning for the same audience, just by different means.

I think I'll avoid the colourful striptease where I gradually unpeel the Speciale's dynamics, hinting along the way at how well or badly it compares to its rivals. It. Is. UNBELIEVABLE. Where the 650S has just a little 'squish' in every control, the Speciale is so instantaneous it seems to react even before you've issued a command. The response from engine, brakes, steering and the grip and balance is nothing short of astonishing. Clichéd or not, the Speciale is a vivid, captivating, all-consuming assault on the senses... Not only that, there's a deep-seated quality to everything it does, and despite all the technology thrown at it – from the magnetic dampers to the e-diff, the crazily complex stability and traction control systems, and the dual-clutch gearbox – the driver is absolutely at the core of every move it makes. Each element has been created and tuned to allow you to express yourself as precisely as you wish and that amazing focus has produced a breathtaking machine.





'It's the Speciale's instant response that defines the experience'



Above: feedback to all the Speciale's controls is something quite special. **Left:** 650S bottoms out on occasion on lumpy north Welsh roads

So let's rewind to when you thumb the start button on the thick-rimmed, smoothed-off hexagonal steering wheel (which feels great, by the way). The 4.5-litre V8 pukes out its angry, flat blare and the whole car fizzes and vibrates. The Speciale is loud. Too loud, I'd say, but there will be an optional quieter exhaust for people who want to attend trackdays and don't like tinnitus. Turn the manettino to Race (or CT Off when you're a bit more dialled in, giving access to the Side Slip Control mode), flick the long paddle for first, take a little moment to compose yourself and then go.

Immediately the car feels stiff, light and extremely reactive. The steering is weightier than a 458 Italia's and still super-direct, but because it's so in tune with the chassis it doesn't feel nervous at all. Even so, it might take a corner or two before one steering input creates the perfect arc. The brakes take some adjustment too, as they're even more reactive than the GT3's and if you've been practising left-foot braking in the McLaren you'll

stand the Speciale on its nose the first time you try the same. So for just a few seconds the Ferrari can make you feel clumsy, but it's a momentary thing and within a mile you feel completely dialled in and you know good things can only follow.

And they do, streaming back at you in a blur of noise and agility. The engine has the reach of the GT3's and nearly matches the brutal thump of the 650S's, and its throttle response shames both. Rarely do you call upon the full 9000rpm but from 4500 to 7000rpm the Speciale produces a deep wave of power. Upshifts are lightning and downshifts even better – as I said on the first drive in Italy, it seems to bang in the gear just before the threshold where it might lock the rear axle, almost dragging the car backwards as you brake late into a corner. On UK roads you'll need 'bumpy road mode' (press the button marked with an outline of a damper), but once selected the body control is superb and the ride is almost a match for the 650S in Handling Sport mode.

It's the Speciale's instant response that defines the whole experience. It never, ever makes you wait. Not for gearshifts or engine, and certainly not for the chassis to make real your inputs. At road speeds there is no understeer, and oversteer comes fast but is easily controlled by that pinpoint steering and throttle response. The car just seems to react in real-time, compressing the phase between input and output until your brain can't register the gap. On these roads, on any roads, it's just more exciting than the 650S and has greater capacity to entertain than even the GT3. Take your brain out and the Porsche can shadow the Speciale, mainly because it has much greater traction and the slightly slower steering gives you more confidence in fast corners. Bring price into the equation and it's simply unbeatable. But... the Speciale is just more intense, more involving and it literally makes you whoop with delight. That sunny day in Italy wasn't just new car euphoria gone mad. The Speciale is the real deal. ✕

McLAREN
650S SPIDER

Engine	V8, 3799cc, twin-turbo
CO2	275g/km
Power	641bhp @ 7500rpm
Torque	500lb ft @ 6000rpm
Transmission	Seven-speed dual-clutch, rear-wheel drive, Brake Steer, ESC
Front suspension	Double wishbones, coil springs, adaptive dampers, roll control
Rear suspension	Double wishbones, coil springs, adaptive dampers, roll control
Brakes	Carbon-ceramic discs, 394mm front, 380mm rear, ABS, EBD
Wheels	8.5 x 19in front, 11 x 20in rear
Tyres	235/35 R19 front, 305/30 R20 rear
Weight	1370kg (dry)
Power-to-weight	475bhp/ton
0-62mph	3.0sec (claimed)
Top speed	204mph (claimed)
Basic price	£215,250
On sale	Now

PORSCHE
911 GT3 (991)

Engine	Flat-six, 3799cc
CO2	289g/km
Power	468bhp @ 8250rpm
Torque	324lb ft @ 6250rpm
Transmission	Seven-speed dual-clutch gearbox, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip diff
Front suspension	MacPherson struts, coil springs, PASM dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension	Multi-link, coil springs, PASM dampers, anti-roll bar
Brakes	Ventilated drilled discs, 380mm front and rear, ABS, EBD
Wheels	9 x 20in front, 12 x 20in rear
Tyres	245/35 ZR19 front, 305/30 ZR19 rear
Weight	1430kg (kerb)
Power-to-weight	332bhp/ton
0-62mph	3.5sec (claimed)
Top speed	196mph (claimed)
Basic price	£100,540
On sale	Now

FERRARI
458 SPECIALE

Engine	V8, 4497cc
CO2	275g/km
Power	597bhp @ 9000rpm
Torque	398lb ft @ 6000rpm
Transmission	Seven-speed dual-clutch gearbox, rear-wheel drive, E-diff
Front suspension	Double wishbones, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension	Multi-link, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar
Brakes	Carbon-ceramic discs, 398mm front, 360mm rear, ABS, EBD
Wheels	9 x 20in front, 11 x 20in rear
Tyres	245/35 ZR20 front, 305/30 ZR20 rear
Weight	1395kg (kerb)
Power-to-weight	435bhp/ton
0-62mph	3.0sec (claimed)
Top speed	202mph+ (claimed)
Basic price	£208,000
On sale	Now





by RICHARD MEADEN

PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH

F E R R A R I 4 5 8

9 **Speciale** 10

v t h e c l o c k

*It's done battle with its rivals
on the road. Now it's time to
put the 458 Speciale through a
thorough track examination*

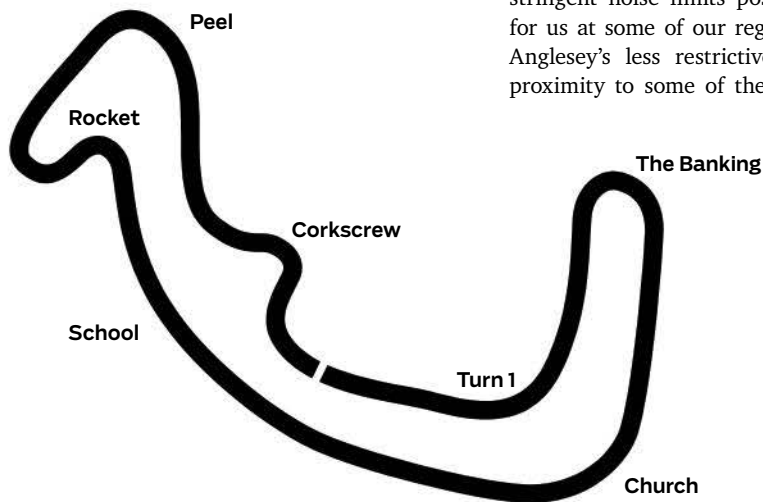
THE TRACK: ANGLESEY (COASTAL)

Direction: Clockwise

Distance: 1.55 miles

Location: Aberffraw, Anglesey, UK

GPS: 53.18833, -4.49639



WE'VE VISITED ANGLESEY NUMEROUS times over many, many years, but it's always been on an irregular and rather informal basis. With our use of circuits increasing, and with stringent noise limits posing more problems for us at some of our regular testing venues, Anglesey's less restrictive noise policy and proximity to some of the UK's finest driving

roads make it ideal for testing and filming.

When Ferrari confirmed that we would be the first UK publication to performance test the 458 Speciale on track, and against rivals on the road, it was the perfect opportunity to cement Anglesey's place as one of *evo's* front-line testing facilities, and to set a benchmark time against which future laps can be compared.

The Coastal Circuit is the second-longest of Anglesey's four track configurations. It's compact, but still packs plenty of challenges into its 1.55 miles. Indeed, the lap is a relentless mix of ballsy high-speed curves, deceptively technical low-speed corners and significant elevation changes that have you aiming at the sky one minute, the ground or Irish Sea the next. With a long enough straight (well, straight-ish!) to stretch the legs of a powerful supercar, big braking areas, testing traction zones and a requirement for stability *and* agility, it's a comprehensive test of any drivers' car, from hot hatch to supercar.



Left: technicians ensure Speciale is fighting fit for Anglesey's Coastal Circuit.

Below left: van full of renewables, fresh tyres and a test driver accompany the Speciale today. **Below:** Speciale is in lightest spec, but isn't stripped out





THE TEST

‘The only options fitted are those that pare weight from the already lean Speciale’

YOU CAN’T FAIL TO BE IMPRESSED, and yes, a little bit flattered by the lengths Ferrari goes to in order for its car to deliver the best possible lap time in your hands, even though it’s not quite the race transporter full of spares and technicians it was a few years back. When a hire car arrives bearing factory test driver plus technician, engineers and a dude with a laptop, followed by Ferrari North Europe’s PR manager driving a red Iveco van filled with five sets of wheels and tyres, jerry cans of fuel, toolboxes and other gear – all to support the car that’s been delivered to the pit garage from Italy – you know things have got serious. More so when you know the same team was here testing for a day the week before...

Much has been written about what level of optimisation these track-use test cars have. When quizzed, Ferrari responds with: ‘We’re a race team. We only know one way to approach this kind of thing: very seriously,’ which is an attitude that’s hard to argue with. And before anyone suggests we use a ‘civilian’ Speciale instead, it’s simply too great a liberty (and liability) to subject someone’s £200k car to the kind of driving required for lapping, photography and filming. Don’t believe me? Watch the track test video at youtube.com/evotv, then decide.

Besides, just how much help can a track-honed, 1395kg, 597bhp mid-engined Ferrari need to cut a fast lap round a small racetrack in

north Wales? Prior experience of the Speciale at its launch in Italy (*evo* 191), plus a rudimentary understanding of the basic laws of physics, suggests the conclusion is ‘not a lot’. Yes, a look around this test car shows it’s the lightest possible spec, with no options like satnav or a stereo or leather. Indeed, the only options fitted are those that pare weight from the already lean Speciale, such as a few carbon bits and titanium wheel nuts. Then there’s the optional North American Racing Team (NART) stripes, known to be at least four-tenths quicker than a regular paintjob.

And so to the driving. Perhaps against expectations, the Speciale is an inherently approachable car, but like any modern Ferrari



it takes a little while to get yourself acclimatised to its responses and delivery, and to get a feel for its balance. The much-lauded Slide Slip Control system is a big help in this early phase, simply because it allows you to probe the limits of adhesion with a little reassurance that you won't fire the car off on your first lap. The system is very clever, analysing your inputs and cross-referencing them against the car's speed and trajectory to decide whether you're in over your head or deliberately provoking the car and taking the appropriate measures to control and extend the slide. The cleaner and more precise you are with throttle and steering inputs, and the greater accuracy with which you can match the two, the freer the system feels. There are limits to the excesses it'll allow you to indulge, but as a means of getting yourself dialled in, or a tool for less experienced hands to learn car control and to get a feel for where the sweet spot lies, it's very impressive.

For our timed laps we're running with everything switched off to give us a fully transparent picture of the Speciale's limits. The difference between this analogue mode and those with some electronic assistance is marked. Only now do you appreciate how subtle and refined the electronics are and how much they are juggling to maintain a neutral handling stance. You're also struck by just how driveable the Speciale is when you really go for it. It totally sucks you in, drawing you ever deeper into its reserves of turn-in response,

mid-corner grip and apex-to-exit traction. Likewise the brakes, which borrow technology from the LaFerrari to deliver increased stopping power with smaller calipers and pads than the regular 458, and stop you like a brick wall.

The steering feels calmer and less pointy than in the standard car, though you still need to be mindful not to use overly aggressive steering inputs, for the front end will respond rapidly enough to agitate the tail on turn-in. Conversely, if you try to carry too much speed in and through the corner you'll feel the front end push a little. It's a fine balancing act, but the car gives you the feedback to at least identify your mistakes.

Ultimately you're in search of two things in the Speciale: a neutral balance through the fast stuff and traction out of the tighter corners. The quick Turn 1 left and Church right-hander need commitment and precision; the former to preserve minimum speed, the latter to scribe a clean trajectory that loads front and rear ends equally. Through the tighter stuff you can light the rear Michelin Pilot Sport 2s up, but finding that point where they're *just* over-rotating requires real discipline and finesse.

The almost-flat-in-sixth entry to the compression at School is wide-eyed stuff at nearly 140mph. Summon maximum bravery and the braking area into the tight left at Rocket rushes at you, so it actually pays to give a little into the incline so you can nail your braking point at the top. You never need anything lower

'You're in search of two things in the Speciale: a neutral balance through the fast stuff and traction out of the tighter corners'

than third gear in the Speciale, which hints at how tractable the 9000rpm screamer of a V8 is in the low- and mid-range. Downhill braking into the Corkscrew is tricky, as it's easy to find yourself running wide having triggered the ABS. And innocent though it looks, the final left-hander onto the start-finish straight is infuriatingly tricky to master.

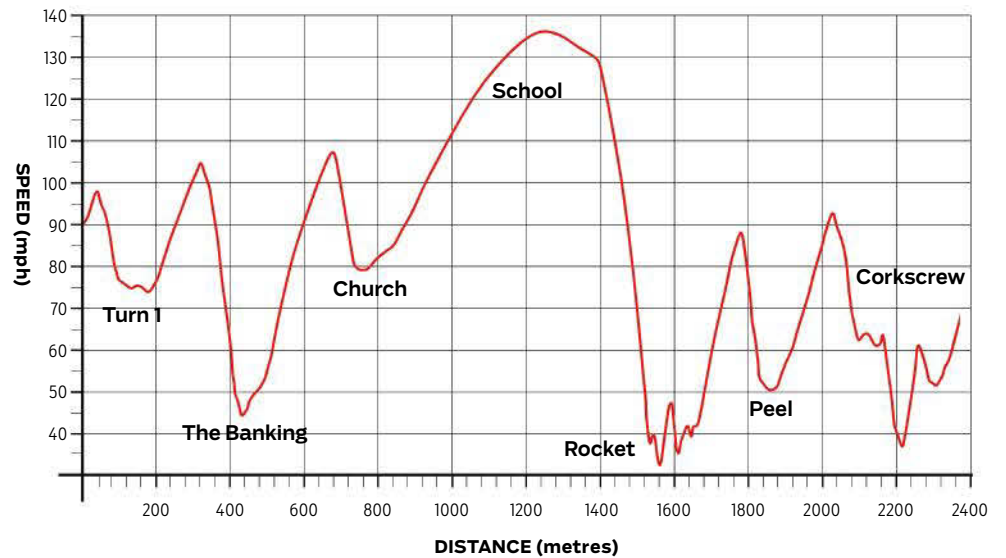
The VBox reveals I quickly get down to a 1:14.7 lap, but the tenths shaved beyond this are hard-won. After three runs on two sets of tyres (two further sets were cremated showboating for YouTube), a 1:14.2 is the best I can manage. More laps would find more time, but our aim is always to set a repeatable benchmark, not slog away for days. In any case, lap times make for great bragging rights and pub banter, but count for rather less on a trackday, where enjoyment and the car's consistency and stamina are the all-important qualities you look for.

Building a league table of Coastal Circuit lap times over the coming months will give the Speciale's time some context (our hunch is it'll take some beating), but the fact it thrives on merciless track use and is a surprisingly cerebral machine to learn, yet never less than thrilling, ensures it more than lives up to its name. ❌

Thanks to Anglesey Circuit (angleseycircuit.com)



The trace below shows the speed of the 458 Speciale throughout its fastest lap (1:14.2). Exceeding 135mph on the curved straight to Rocket, it also impresses in taking the preceding Church right-hander at nearly 80mph



The Caterham Seven 160 and Morgan 3 Wheeler represent performance motoring at its simplest. We pit them against each other on the winding English lanes where they excel

Bare thrills

by HENRY CATCHPOLE

PHOTOGRAPHY by MALCOLM GRIFFITHS

R

RIPPING ALONG IN THE OUTSIDE

lane of the M54, life feels good. It feels a little tenuous as well if I'm honest, but that's part of the exhilaration. Some children in the back of an elderly green minibus all press their faces against the glass to look down on the small upturned silver bathtub as it goes hammering past. I imagine it's quite an incongruous sight. Sleeves rolled up, the sun has been tanning my forearms for the last couple of hours and, despite crouching low behind the little semi-circle of Perspex, the Beaufort equivalent of a hurricane is still smashing into my forehead and then rushing through my unruly mop of hair. There's a harsh white noise from the slipstream filling my ears but my brain seems to have long since tuned out of the frequency so that it's become more of a background roar in my head. In front, the Caterham looks like an oasis of pampered luxury, what with its fancy third cylinder, fourth wheel and fabric doors...

What we have in this pair really is back-to-basics motoring. The thrill of driving stripped bare. The Caterham Seven 160 is the company's cheapest and least powerful model. The narrow track and slim tyres make it look incredibly dainty even next to the Morgan 3 Wheeler (or M3W to use the factory abbreviation. Very social media). Things aren't any more muscular under the Seven's bonnet, either. Take the louvered aluminium panel off and you find the space half-filled like a British Rail sandwich. Lurking in a corner, however, is a 660cc three-cylinder turbo Suzuki engine putting out a dinky 80bhp and 79lb ft of torque.

The Morgan, of course, dispenses entirely with such frivolities as bonnets, although the updated 2014 car has added a little metal cowl over the top of the engine to aid cooling. Its S&S Cycle V-twin is comparatively well endowed, however, with a swept volume of 2 litres and outputs of 82bhp and 103lb ft, all of which is transferred through a belt drive to the single rear wheel. A five-speed 'box and a fly-off handbrake complete the 525kg picture.

Almost imperceptibly, the M54 morphs into the A5 and halfway round Shrewsbury I stick an arm out into the breeze,







Right: 2-litre V-twin sits at very front of Morgan. **Below:** pair of centre console buttons operate heated seats(!). **Bottom:** modern double-wishbone front suspension supersedes Morgan's sliding pillar technology of old



waggle it in a circular motion and we hang a left onto the A49 south. The Morgan has indicators, but hand signals just seem more appropriate. Gradually, as the road's corner quotient increases, so the hills also begin to rise up around us, looking far steeper and more impressive than you might expect given that we're not in Snowdonia or Scotland. At Church Stretton I stick an arm out again. We bumble slowly through the small town and out the back, where the road begins climbing. There's a quiet, leafy lane between some nice detached houses, then it narrows, there's the clatter of a cattle-grid, the trees recede and you're released onto the remarkable strip of land known as the Long Mynd.

It's stunning. I've wanted to come here for a photoshoot for a long time, but the roads are sufficiently narrow and bumpy that I've had to wait for the right cars to come along. The Morgan and Caterham fit perfectly. The road feels like barely more than a tarmac shelf as it clings to the side of the valley and as we're driving along, the lack of doors on the Morgan means I can glance over the vertiginous edge down to the river far below. You can't linger on the view, though, as the Morgan doesn't feel the most precise car to pilot quickly down such a narrow road and you need to concentrate. The steering wheel is big and the three spokes form a Y-shape that puts your hands at ten to two. Throughout my many hours with the car I've never quite decided whether it's easier to tuck my elbows inside the bodywork or stick them out like I might be attempting flight. It just comes down to personal preference and how theatrical you're feeling, I suspect.

Curiously, even if I stick my head above the parapet into the breeze I can only see the skinny front wheel on my side of the car, as the bull-nosed bodywork obscures the other one. But the fact I can see the road below the offside wheel is interesting and makes picking a line into right-handers easier. The unassisted steering is surprisingly slow and those slim front tyres do not make for very incisive turn-in, which can feel unnerving as you start to drive more quickly. The sensation of the relatively low-geared steering rack added to the hugely tall tread blocks deforming on the 4-inch wide tyres means it feels like you're understeering almost before you are. Push through this initial phase and the grip seems to come back to you, or at least stabilise a bit before the sidewalls start to wilt with the pressure and you understeer for real. On wider roads you can lean on the front end harder as the vagueness isn't so much of a problem, but the best way is not to be too greedy on entry and then use the healthy torque and surprisingly good traction early on to fire you out.

We stop in a small, sandy car park up on a heathery plateau and as soon as I've switched off the throbbing V-twin and silence has washed over us, I instantly feel the enervating effects of more than two hours of open-air motoring. My hair is stiff and swept back with bits of grit and small insect trapped deep in the tangle, and when I take off my glasses I feel (or perhaps hope) my face might have grimy panda eyes as though I'd been battling with Birkin and Barnato on the banking at Brooklands. Avoiding the exhaust (I've no desire to emulate Sir Henry in that regard) I clamber out and then sit on the grass for a while as Malcy Griffiths sets about taking some static photos of the gently ticking cars.

After a short kip in the sun I awake to find the tinnitus has receded to the level of an intimate rock concert and the urge to go exploring has returned. New boy Prosser has been

‘Those slim front tyres do not make for very incisive turn-in, which can feel unnerving as you drive more quickly’



“The Caterham feels so precise that it lets you confidently use every last inch of the road”



enjoying life in the Caterham, it seems, but Dan is keen to sample the beetle-bummed Morgan and I like the look of the Seven's 14-inch steelies, so we swap.

You feel much more tightly packed in the Caterham, with the transmission tunnel and bodywork holding you in place as much as the seats. The steering wheel feels tiny too, about a third of the size of the Morgan's, and when you get to a corner the rate of response feels astonishing by comparison with the 3 Wheeler. Barely a twitch of the wrists and the nose darts in: no flying elbows here. Even by Caterham standards the whole front end feels incredibly light and inertia-free – the palpable benefits of only half-filling the engine bay.

There's a fork in the road and I plump for the right turn. I can see the road ahead snaking off through the heather and it's empty, so there's no excuse not to unleash all 80bhp. The surface is bumpy but somehow the Seven seems to breathe with the road so that you always have confidence in where all four wheels are, even if they're momentarily not in contact with the tarmac. I'm genuinely surprised by just how fast and fun the 160 is. The road hasn't actually got any wider since switching from the Morgan, but the Caterham feels so precise that it lets you confidently use every last inch of width available between the heather and grass. It feels like there's never the need to back off until you reach a corner, at which point it's brake late, down to third (second is very short), flick the front in and then get straight back hard on the throttle to steer the rear wheels round. It's brilliant.

With no LSD in the live rear axle, there aren't long slides to be had in the dry but there are little ones that are easily controlled and generally help straighten a corner. You find scant reward in pushing the tyres too far beyond their limits because things just get scrappy, with an inside-rear spinning and ruining the flow, or the fronts washing out after the initial incisiveness. Much better to focus on keeping the balance of grip right on the edge and then enjoy the lithe agility of the chassis as it jinks this way then that like a startled hare.

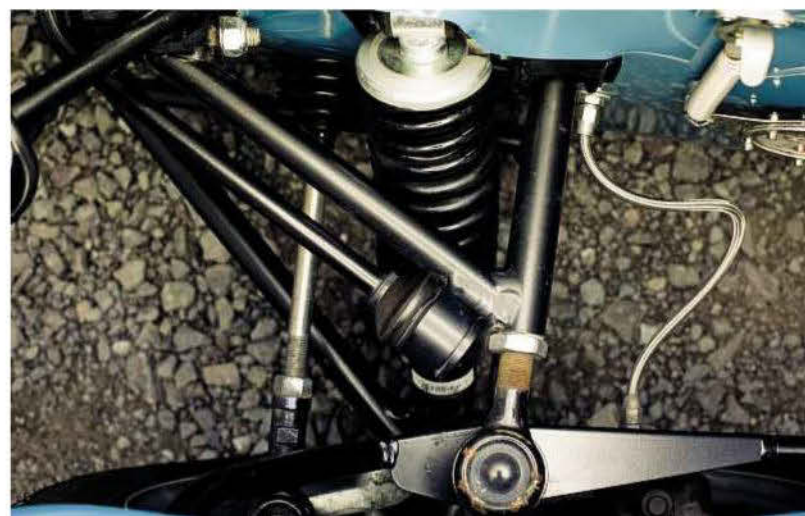
The Seven is not perfect with this new drivetrain: the stubby gearlever looks good in matt black but the actual shift feels a little more rubbery in the way it slots home, which is a shame. If you stick to the central third/fourth plane then it's a bit better, but it's still not helped by a clutch pedal that has very little resistance, meaning the biting point is a bit indistinct. The engine is fun though, its three cylinders doing their best work in the mid-range, which as Prosser points out is a kind way of saying that it feels a bit of a limp lettuce as the revs near their limit. You wouldn't know it was turbocharged from the way it responds to the throttle, though.

AFTER A LITTLE WHILE, DAN AND I SWAP CARS again. He's enjoyed the 3 Wheeler, but admits he wouldn't have relished doing the journey to get here without a helmet. It's fair enough – I'm still sweeping half a new driveway out of my sideburns. Getting back into the Morgan you can certainly see where some of your extra money goes compared to the Caterham. Sparse it may be, but it only takes a touch like the lovely aircraft-style dials in their square cases to really lift the whole ambience of the cockpit. You pull the seatbelt from the centre, just like in a Diablo, then twist the key with your right hand before reaching out with your left to lift a small metal cover between the dials and push the starter button beneath.

What is expelled from the exhausts is a noise more



Opposite page (from top): narrow Long Mynd road is ideal for such diminutive sports cars; Catchpole finds rewards from keeping the Caterham's narrow tyres at their limits. **Left:** 660cc turbo engine is fitted with room to spare. **Below:** short-throw manual lacks a little precision. **Bottom:** double-wishbone front suspension is exposed





Left: driver's clear view of front-right wheel makes Morgan easy to place through right-handers. **Below:** Caterham's optional full windscreen offers (relative) protection



'The cheapest, most accessible Seven still has the character and chassis to put a huge grin on your face'

flatulent than I have heard from a car before. The Harley-Davidson-sourced V-twin has a distinctively lumpy beat at tickover that swells to a sound that's probably best described as 'thrummy' once the revs are up. Even more than the Caterham's three-cylinder, it's not an engine that you feel the need to rev hard, as it starts to feel a bit coarse when you wind it up too much. Instead you change up early, letting the revs drop back into a satisfying well of torque that makes it feel surprisingly quick, and certainly capable of its claimed 6.0sec 0-60mph time.

The gearbox is from an MX-5 and it's a good shift, albeit much longer of throw than the Caterham's. However, it's the sensations underfoot that are really pleasing, with a good weight to all three of the floor-hinged pedals and no slack in their responses. There is something about an alert pedal with a decent bit of resistance that imbues the whole car with a feeling of solidity and creates a connection that can be every bit as reassuring as decent steering. Talking of which, the Morgan and its 19-inch wire wheels feel about as accurate as trying to serve tea with a sprinkler after the Seven.

There is one more surprise too. Through a section of sweeping bends up on the moor the Morgan suddenly slews sideways. It's actually quite fun and controllable, thankfully, but nonetheless it's a bit of a shock until I realise what a blithering fool I've been. Heading into the first corner I'd seen the strip of gravel in the middle of the road and been sure to guide the front wheels either side of it... forgetting completely that the single rear wheel would run straight over the loose surface and spin up the instant the throttle was applied. It would be even more interesting down a Cornish or Irish lane with grass down the middle.

With the sun setting I hop back into the Caterham 160 for the drive down to the pub in Church Stretton – The Bucks Head comes with the coveted *evo* seal of approval. You sit lower in the Seven than in the Morgan, and it instantly feels happy being flung down the road with abandon. Turn-in is carefree instead of careful. Through the windscreen I love watching the front wheelarches constantly bobbing up and down relative to the body as the suspension soaks up the bumps. When I pull in to let a car pass, I also notice the wildly distorted

image of the world reflected in the mirror-like backs of the headlights.

In its own way the little Suzuki engine has as distinctive a note as the Morgan too. There's no barking K-series crescendo at the top end but, like the best three-cylinders, it sounds like half an air-cooled 911, which is rather appealing. For its part, the turbocharger also adds various characterful chuffs and whistles, which seem to emanate from the left-hand side of the car. I'm sure some of the time, or after a while, you would crave a more powerful Seven, but that obviously comes at a price and it's exciting to know that the cheapest, most accessible Seven still has the character and chassis to put a huge grin on your face.

Wild and beautiful, but bumpy and narrow, the Long Mynd is a very British sort of road and I'm so pleased we brought the cars here. Rather like these two very British cars, it feels slightly like it belongs in a different era. The Morgan and Caterham have of course been considerably updated since their distant origins, but not so much that their original characters are diminished. As standard, the 160 actually comes with aero screens rather than our test car's full windscreen, so you can get the same sensory assault as in the Morgan. But in driving dynamics, interesting though it is grappling with the 3 Wheeler, the Caterham is in a different league. If you build it yourself then the 160 is half the price of the Malvern marvel too, so objectively it's the winner by several lengths. Somehow, though, I suspect that most 3 Wheeler purchases err slightly more to the subjective end of the spectrum.

What's certainly true is that motoring in either is something to be relished as far as I'm concerned. Modern cars have the capacity to cocoon their occupants and shrink the world as a result – everything from a Sandero to a Speciale is sanitised enough to make a 200-mile journey feel like a stroll to the shops. The Morgan and Caterham, on the other hand, really make you appreciate the miles you're travelling. It's a bit like jet compared to prop in air travel terms. I understand it's not for everyone, or at least not for everyday, but there's a curious sense of freedom and enlightenment to making a journey by Seven or M3W. Staring into the hurricane, ground skimming past your elbows. It makes you feel good to be alive and I love it. ✖

**CATERHAM
SEVEN 160**

Engine In-line 3-cyl, 660cc, turbocharged
CO2 114g/km
Power 80bhp @ 7000rpm
Torque 79lb ft @ 3400rpm
Transmission Five-speed manual, rear-wheel drive
Front suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension Live axle, coil springs, dampers
Brakes 245mm solid discs front, drums rear
Wheels 4.5 x 14in front and rear
Tyres 155/65 R14 front and rear
Weight (kerb) 490kg
Power-to-weight 166bhp/ton
0-60mph 6.5sec (claimed)
Top speed 100mph (claimed)
Basic price £17,995 (fully built)
On sale Now

evo rating: ★★★★★**MORGAN
3 WHEELER**

Engine V-twin, 1976cc
CO2 215g/km
Power 82bhp @ 5250rpm
Torque 103lb ft @ 3250rpm
Transmission Five-speed manual, rear-wheel drive
Front suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers
Rear suspension Swing beam, coil springs, dampers
Brakes Ventilated 270mm discs front, drum rear
Wheels 19in front, 16in rear
Tyres 4.0 S19 65S front, 195/55 R16 rear
Weight (dry) 525kg
Power-to-weight (dry) 159bhp/ton
0-60mph 6.0sec (claimed)
Top speed 115mph (claimed)
Basic price £31,000
On sale Now

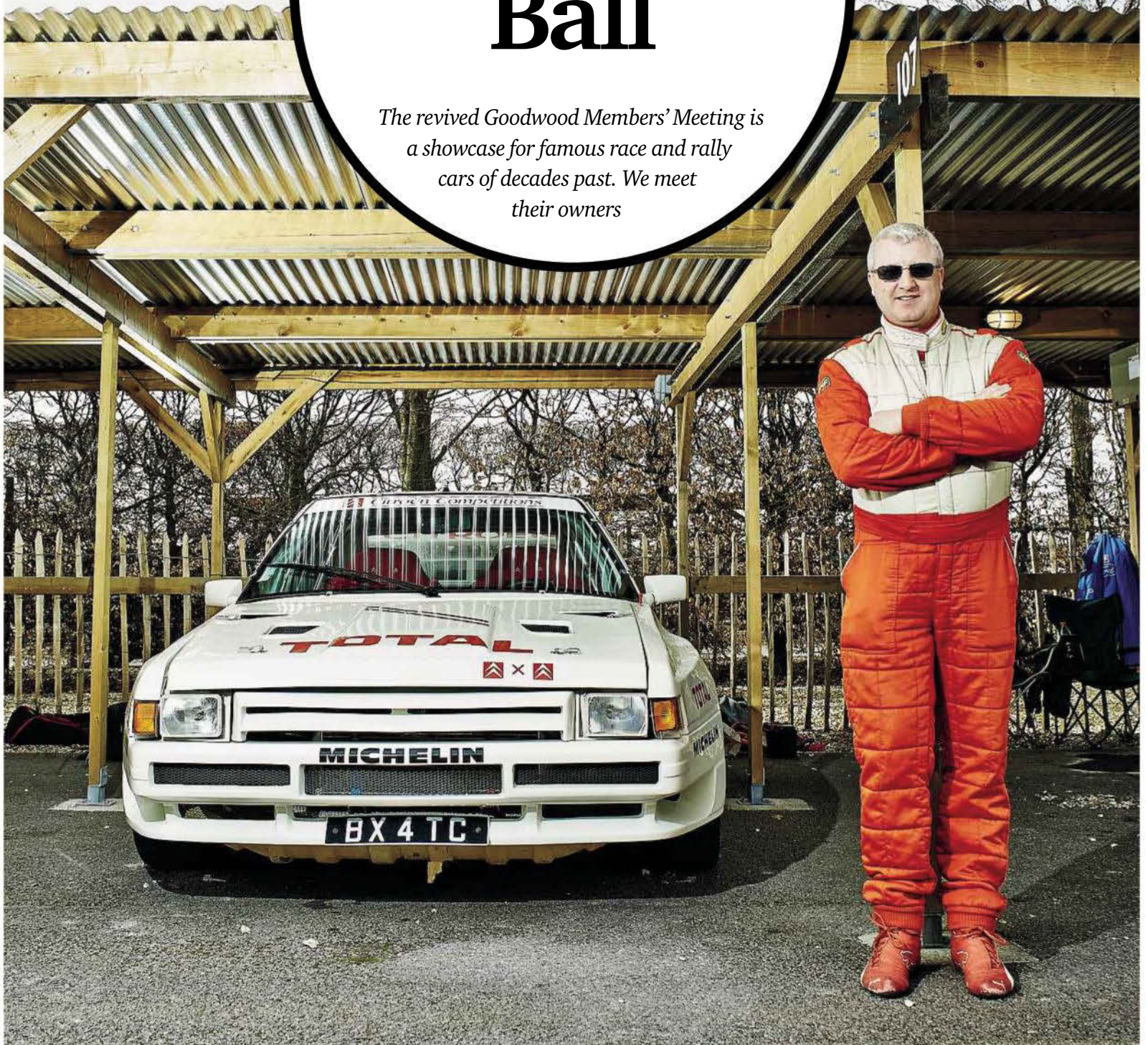
evo rating: ★★★★★

by DAVID VIVIAN

PHOTOGRAPHY by GUS GREGORY

Monsters' Ball

*The revived Goodwood Members' Meeting is
a showcase for famous race and rally
cars of decades past. We meet
their owners*



D

DAFFODILS. LORD MARCH clearly has a thing about Morrissey's one-time back-pocket accessory. Even adding together the two-day headcount for the 'inaugural' 72nd Members' Meeting, they outnumber humans ten to one:

300,000 versus 30,000. It's late Sunday morning and, just as yesterday, the 2.4-mile Goodwood race circuit, artfully daubed with strips of gently swaying yellowness and random blooms of tyre smoke, has probably never looked more telegenic. It helps, of course, that the late March sun is shining hard and, away from the paddock's own unique brand of dark-roasted high-octane aromas, spring is in the air. Along with the odd vibration-battered butterfly.

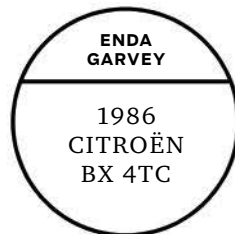
There are nine hours to go before the firework finale, but Lord March's good humour perhaps says more about the preceding day and a half than his slightly hushed serial-interview voice does. Goodwood's latest gig for those addicted to motor racing's past glories certainly seems to have the ingredients and proportions measured and mixed, even by Lord March's meticulous standards, to a hitherto unrealised pitch of fine-tuned 'just right'.

In many ways, the first members' meet since 1966 is a world removed from the sell-out blockbuster the Festival of Speed has become or the mannered, retro-dress-code Revival. The only drawback is also its biggest delight. Unless you're a member of the Goodwood Road Racing Club, or one of the four guests each member is allowed to invite, you can't attend. Which means that, for the time being, the admittance of 15,000 per day gives everyone

that most precious of all commodities at a race meeting: space. The irony, of course, is that with the Members' Meeting as a recruitment tool for GRRC membership, numbers will inevitably swell year-on-year – but to nothing like those experienced at the FoS or the Revival. It's what allows the informality and the relaxed atmosphere. 'Real luxury is about simplicity,' says Lord March. 'So the drivers and the members socialise, eat together and so on. There are no blocked-off areas, there's no branding, no corporate hospitality. I'm really pleased that, already, people "get" what we're trying to do.'

Immaculately choreographed as it is, and two years in the planning, it's a canny steer by His Lordship because for the most part it takes over where the 71st Members' Meeting left off in 1966. And it means that, for the first time ever, cars produced after 1966 are dicing at Goodwood – not least Group 1 touring cars from the '70s and '80s. There's full-noise tin-top action taking place as I leave Lord March to his next interview. A lone, screaming, pale green Mini is steadily pulling away from the chasing pack of Mk1 Lotus Cortinas, slightly less fleet Minis and a straggling assortment of saloons, including one heroically piloted Vauxhall VX4/90. Slow down the straight but sideways at every turn, the Mini eventually laps a third of the field.

Later there'll be high-speed demos with 1500bhp turbo F1 cars, long-tail Le Mans racers and, best of all, a timed sprint for a dozen ridiculously intimidating Group B rally cars. In search of the backstories to some of these Goodwood newbies and their owner-drivers, it's to the Group B cars that photographer Gus Gregory and I head first.



BOTH PREVIOUS OWNERS OF

16-valve Citroën BX GTIs, Gus and I walk straight past the Metro 6R4s, Lancia Delta S4s and Ford RS200s lined up in the paddock to stare, mouths agape, at the rarest and most unlikely Group B car ever to participate in the World Rally Championship. It's absolutely huge and rather magnificent. 'There are only five that I know of that are still complete,' says Enda Garvey, pleased but slightly bemused that we've homed in on his car, which makes even the Audi Sport Quattro parked next to it look positively petite.

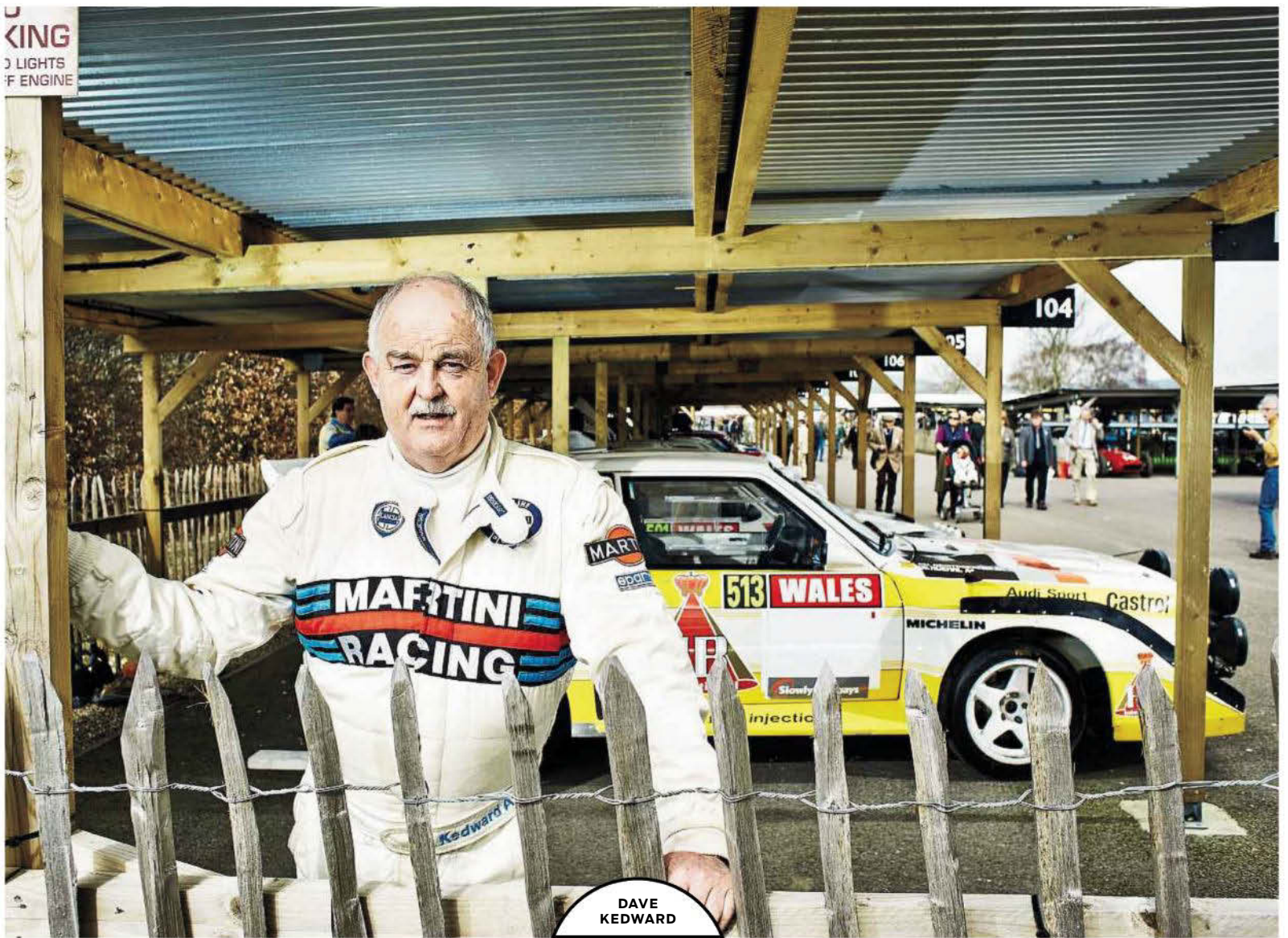
'It's almost a forgotten car,' Garvey laments. 'It only took part in three WRC events. If you read the history magazines, it didn't do very well, but look more closely and it certainly wasn't uncompetitive. Two cars went to Monte Carlo. Both crashed. It wasn't really the car's fault. One car went to Sweden and finished sixth, about seven or eight minutes behind the winner. If you were seven or eight minutes behind Loeb today you'd be a hero. At one stage on the Acropolis Rally, they were actually beating the Peugeot 205 T16s, but then the suspension broke and both cars were out.'

He walks me around the BX 4TC and explains why the proportions are so wacky. 'The engine, good for about

400bhp, is completely in front of the four wheels with the radiators at the back of the car. As you can see, it still has its aluminium roll-cage, which isn't really good for anything, but they were the regulations at the time. It's four-wheel drive and had a carbonfibre propshaft at a time when other manufacturers hardly knew what carbonfibre was. In some ways it was quite ahead of its time and probably, with a little more development, it could have been a semi-successful car had Group B continued. In the end, it was all about crowd control. It wasn't that the cars were too powerful because the cars today are just as fast.'

Born and still living in Northern Ireland, Garvey has owned the Citroën for seven years. He's got some other rally cars, too. When I ask how many, he smiles: 'Too many.' In the sprint he finishes sixth out of 11 in practice and, perhaps channelling his car's international rallying career, retires before the main event. But the man can clearly drive.

He's an avid spectator, too. 'For my age group, early 40s, the Revival doesn't interest me as much. I love watching the Capris, the Opel Asconas, the Group C cars. Historic racing's all pre-'66, and then you've got the modern stuff, but nothing in between. This is fantastic.'



DAVE
KEDWARD

1984 AUDI
SPORT
QUATTRO
S1 E2

SERIAL EX-WORKS RALLY CAR

collector and driver Dave Kedward has brought a Peugeot 205 T16 and a Ford RS200 to Goodwood, but is tackling the sprint in the Sport Quattro built by his late close friend and fellow competitor Gary Midwinter. It's a car Kedward part-owns but he admits to being relatively unfamiliar with it when used in anger.

'After Gary passed away in 2007 I took on the Quattro to look after it, use it and promote it,' explains Kedward. 'I've only driven it properly once before, at a rally in Italy. Gary and I used to go to Italy regularly. They did a memorial for him at the Rally Valpantena and invited his wife. And they asked me if, instead of taking my car, I'd bring his Quattro to drive on the event, which I did. That was 18 months ago and was the last time I drove it competitively until I jumped in it yesterday.'

Not that this should prove too much of a drawback. Kedward's rallying exploits stretch back 41 years, during which time he's competed on several continents in countless different cars: 'I've done the Safari three times, been to Australia,

driven a lot in lots of different cars, and managed to keep a fair few of them. I've got two Lancia 037s, works Escorts, a works Chevette. And I've just bought an ex-works Group A Sierra Cosworth, a Russell Brookes car.' Some garage. And then some.

So when he says, with a degree of trepidation in his voice, that the stubby Sport Quattro is 'bloody quick', I don't feel inclined to doubt him. 'It's an awesome car, a real credit to Gary,' he adds. That being the case, I wonder if there's anything else in the paddock that will give the 550bhp Audi a hard time in the sprint. Kedward is quick to play down his chances. 'Yeah, the Ford RS200 definitely,' he says. 'If Gary had been driving the Quattro he'd be the quickest here, but I've not had enough time in the seat yet. We definitely won't be last but, to be honest, the 205 T16 is just about as quick. It's a lot lighter and chucking out around 500bhp.'

Come the sprint, he finishes a creditable fourth, behind two Metro 6R4s and the predictably untouchable RS200 but, in a fitting reversal of the old Group B WRC days, ahead of a Lancia Delta S4.

'WHAT'S THAT? THERE ARE AN embarrassing number of 'what's that?' moments as Gus and I stroll round the paddock (Lotus 11 Breadvan, anyone?), but a Ferrari that doesn't look remotely like a Ferrari yet might plausibly be described by Will.i.am as 'super-mega-dope'? We simply have to wheel it out into the sunshine and ask its owner the question of the day.

'It's a 512BB LM,' replies Paul Knapfield, perhaps sensing that we're looking little the wiser. 'Or, in other words, a silhouette-bodied Ferrari Berlinetta Boxer that competed at Le Mans in 1980 and finished tenth overall. And it's just a really amazing car.'

From just about any angle it looks supersonic, though things are a little more prosaic underneath. Thing is, you can see most of the innards through the fine mesh grille that stretches across the impossibly wide tail. 'The engine's the 5-litre flat-12 that started off in the Boxer and lived on in the Testarossa,' Knapfield explains. 'It makes about 500bhp and is mated to a five-speed gearbox that's mounted under the engine. Amazingly, it's got really good balance. I've got a BB road car as well and it's great. I don't think the higher centre of

gravity caused by having the transmission beneath is a problem, they handle so well. And this car handles really well. Five hundred horsepower might not sound that much but it only weighs about 1100kg.'

It's enough for Knapfield, who's owned the car since 2002, to have won the Ferrari Challenge with it twice. But the car's history is more illustrious still. And as unlikely as the plot in a Wes Anderson film. Apparently there was a student at the European University in Antwerp, Belgium, who somehow managed to raise sponsorship from the university to run two 512BB LMs at Le Mans in 1980. A Parisian Ferrari dealer, a racer himself, provided the cars and the drivers.

Around 30 512BB LMs were homologated to comply with the racing regulations. 'But they didn't all race,' explains Knapfield. 'A lot went to America. There were probably about half a dozen that did really serious racing. I've done numerous historic challenge races and Classic Le Mans with the LM. Really, with cars like this, you enter them for whatever they're eligible for.' No racing today for the BB but, in the demonstration run, it looks even more stunning in motion than it does at rest.

PAUL
KNAPFIELD

1980
FERRARI
512BB LM





JOAQUIN
FOLCH

1985
LOTUS
97T

SEEING A LINE-UP OF

Formula 1 cars from a time when F1 cars were beautiful is special enough. Knowing they have turbocharged engines that could deliver up to 1500bhp re-ignites a deep respect for their drivers, past and present. But reading the words 'Ayrton Senna' on the tub of the F1 car in which he won his first Grand Prix, gold letters gleaming out from a black background, truly stirs the soul. Especially when you're standing next to it.

Driving this car today is 2012 Historic Formula One champion Joaquin Folch. He's just back from the parade lap in Senna's JPS Lotus and, obvious frustrations apart, looks just a little bit elated. We try to find a quieter part of the paddock so he can tell me why.

'Personally,' he begins, 'I was overwhelmed. I was there at the Portuguese Grand Prix in Estoril the year it all happened [1985], the year Senna won for the first time. Won in this car, in the rain. It now belongs to Clive Chapman [Colin's son] and he was kind enough to lend it to me for the parade. I own a sister car which is in the workshop, but it

wasn't ready in time, so he said, "Drive mine," one of the most iconic GP cars in motoring history.'

It isn't as if Folch is strapped for famous steers. He also owns an ex-Keke Rosberg Williams FW08, an ex-Elio de Angelis Lotus 91 and an ex-Carlos Reutemann Ferrari T3, which, being a Spaniard, Folch has something of a soft spot for.

'My sister car was an earlier JPS Lotus driven by Nigel Mansell. Those were the years of Mansell and de Angelis. Senna came into the team two years later. Mine has the first evolution of the Renault engine. I'm still very proud to own a car of Nigel Mansell, of course. I've had it about four years.'

A parade lap sounds a bit pedestrian, I suggest. What was the pace car? 'A Ferrari F40,' Folch says with a smile. 'It's a very quick car, but you cannot compare it with these single-seaters. We used a little bit of boost, but only on the straights.' Must have been a pain. A hint of a frown wrinkles Joaquin's brow. 'Some people tend to believe that we are not racing as hard as we can in Historic F1. When I sit in the car, I don't think about the history. I just want to be as quick as possible.' ❌

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ARIEL ATOM 3.5R



RAIN STARTS PLAY

by RICHARD MEADEN

PHOTOGRAPHY by DREW GIBSON

A soaked circuit isn't the ideal setting for a first drive in a lightweight sports car with 647bhp per ton. But when that car is the new Ariel Atom 3.5R, it's a different story...



T

THERE ARE FEW CERTAINTIES IN LIFE, but when you've got a circuit booked and a roofless, doorless and windscreen-less sports car to test, you can guarantee it will rain like there's no tomorrow. Which brings us neatly to Bedford Autodrome and our first taste of the Ariel Atom 3.5R.

It may sound like a software update for your laptop, but the Atom 3.5R is actually one of the most comprehensive upgrade packages since Ariel switched to Honda power. Much of what you see, and plenty of what you can't, has come courtesy of the insane Atom V8, one of the wilder chapters in Ariel's brief but impressive history. This, then, is the new flagship of the Somerset carmaker's range; an already extraordinary recipe intensified to deliver an even bigger hit of adrenalin.

The specification and execution of the 3.5R is enough to make you go weak at the knees. The skeletal and uniquely distinctive lattice-frame tubular chassis looks identical, but benefits from changes made to increase strength, as well as new mounting points for the optional Sadev six-speed pneumatic paddleshift sequential gearbox, originally seen on the Atom V8 and which costs £20,000 alone!

This brilliant 'box of tricks' is hooked up to Honda's familiar 2-litre four-cylinder engine, which Ariel supercharges to glorious effect. In the 3.5R power leaps to 350bhp (up from the non-R 3.5 Supercharged's



‘NO CAR GIVES YOU A SENSE OF EXPOSURE LIKE AN

310bhp) and torque to 243lb ft (up from 169). Those are big numbers for a small car weighing just 550kg. As we know from previous Atom experience, the acceleration figures – 0-60mph in 2.6sec, 0-100mph in 6.0sec – barely do the head-scrambling experience justice.

Other changes are more obvious, especially on this fully loaded press car. Beautiful gold anodised Öhlins TTX spring/damper units shine from each corner of the car. With a massive amount of adjustment for bump and rebound it's possible to quickly change settings to suit road or track use without compromising either. Larger wheels (made from magnesium) shod with Kumho Ecsta tyres are taken from the V8, as are the bigger Alcon discs and calipers. The (optional) front and rear aero kit also comes from the V8, and is made from carbonfibre. The sidepods are also optional,

housing a chargecooler on one side and an oil cooler on the other, giving the 3.5R a beefier, broader-shouldered look that's appropriate considering its increased performance.

In total this Atom 3.5R costs £95,000, but as we've already mentioned, the Sadev gearbox accounts for a £20k chunk of that. As standard – that's to say without the sequential 'box, Öhlins suspension, sidepods, carbon aero kit, etc – a 3.5R is £65,000. That's a great deal of money, but the car looks worth every penny. Besides which, Ariel is finding many of its customers are coming from the top end of the trackday market, perhaps coming out of a 911 GT3 or similar. Ariel and the Atom have certainly come a long way since the early days of the original car and its standard Rover K-series engine.

There's never been much ceremony to climbing into an Atom and the 3.5R is no

different. Swing your left leg over the fat tubing that forms the side structure of the chassis, while holding the roll bar for balance. Then pop your right leg in and drop down into the moulded seat. I appreciate the efficiency and neatness of the one-piece seat's design, but there's too much flex in its structure, and it's not supportive enough for the Atom's braking and cornering capabilities. I'd have to fit a pair of proper seats if this was my car.

No car gives you a sense of exposure like an Atom, yet few deliver such a sense of strength and security, either. The skeletal structure has an inherent visual and physical strength, and because you're tucked down low in the car you don't feel vulnerable. Consequently, it's one of the great driving environments.

One ergonomic glitch with the manual Atom is the location of the gearlever, which is tucked



Far left: Meaden exploits 350bhp on a cold Bedford track. **Left:** paddleshift 'box makes changing gear easier. **Below:** optional Öhlins dampers greatly aid 3.5R's balance



ATOM, YET FEW DELIVER SUCH A SENSE OF SECURITY'

a little too far back to be entirely comfortable. With the Sadev gearbox's paddles mounted on the steering wheel, you don't even need to remove your hands from the wheel to shift. Flick a few toggles, push the starter button and the 350bhp Honda motor kicks into life. Mounted just behind your shoulders, it sends vibrations through the car, but whereas older Atoms used to feel a bit resonant, the unpleasant frequencies appear to have been tuned out, so you don't rattle around like a pea in a whistle.

You need to use the clutch pedal to pull away and for downshifts, but once you're on it, upshifts are clutchless. The Sadev 'box has a pneumatic shift, so it makes a delicious *hiss-thwack* when you engage a gear. The clutch is smooth and light and the engine devoid of truculence despite the potent state of tune. Ariel doesn't meddle with the internals, and has

never had any issues. These motors are tough in the finest Honda tradition.

The weather is atrocious, so I've donned a one-piece dry suit. For some reason I decide against wearing gloves, the folly of which is apparent halfway round the first lap as ice-cold water rockets up my right sleeve then slowly begins to flow up my arm and over my shoulder, before trickling down my back and chest and settling in a puddle beneath my shivering butt cheeks. Do I consider pulling in? Not a chance!

It always takes a while to dial your head into how an Atom drives. At first it feels jumpy and overly urgent, but if you can relax your shoulders, arms and wrists and let the car talk to you, the sense of edginess fades, replaced by the revelation that this car is every bit as willing and driveable as that paragon of playfulness, the Caterham Seven. Still, you struggle to

imagine it will be able to put anywhere near all of its 350bhp and 243lb ft into the cold, sodden tarmac, yet as your right foot explores more and more of the ultra-precise throttle's travel, you find a ton of traction to call upon.

Big throttle openings elicit the most sensational noise from the supercharged engine: a kind of sped-up, serrated whine that sounds like a bench saw cutting through steel. There's a great induction roar too, which resonates around in the airbox by your ears, and with each 40-millisecond downshift, a solitary high-velocity gunshot report leaves the tailpipes. As the rear wheels break traction and the revs rise, the exhaust note, supercharger whine and induction noise all rise an octave or two. It's as if the Atom is whooping with delight from apex to corner exit.

The shock and awe of the 3.5R's performance



Left: optional sidepods aid cooling; wing increases front grip.
Below: Atom's 'naked' look remains its hallmark

ARIEL ATOM 3.5R

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc, supercharger
CO2 n/a

Power 350bhp @ 8400rpm

Torque 243lb ft @ 6100rpm

Transmission Six-speed sequential manual (option), rear-wheel drive

Front suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers

Rear suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers

Brakes Ventilated discs, 290mm front and rear

Wheels 6 x 15in front and rear

Tyres 195/50 R15 front and rear

Weight (kerb) 550kg

Power-to-weight 647bhp/ton

0-60mph 2.6sec (claimed)

Top speed 155mph (claimed)

Basic price £64,800

On sale Now

evo rating: ★★★★★

and aural pyrotechnics is something truly remarkable, but so too is the balance and poise of its chassis. Ariel has learned a great deal from the Atom Cup race series, both in terms of camber and castor settings, but also from the quality of the Öhlins TTX36 dampers, which have such a range of adjustment that Ariel has been able to come down on spring rates and support the car through damper settings. Though we don't get to try the 3.5R on the road, there's no reason to doubt Ariel's assertion that once you've wound a few clicks off the damper settings, these softer springs mean it works as well on the road as it does on track.

To say the 3.5R revels in these conditions is a huge understatement. There's so much feel and progression from both ends of the car, so much

precision in the power delivery and just the right rate of response from the steering, you're always prepared for what the car is doing. And if you like to drift, well, the Atom will do it to your heart's content. The big brakes also have great feel (not something earlier Atoms were noted for), so you never get that horrible sensation of a numb pedal and grabby lock-ups. The final element is the excellent Kumho Ecsta tyres, which are available in a multitude of compounds and work outrageously well.

The weather should have ruined this test, but instead it made it. Not because you'd necessarily want to drive an Atom in weather more suited to filming *Noah*, but because even in these conditions it shone like the sun. Understandably some of you may struggle to get your heads around the price (heavily optioned or not), but like any car at this level it can only justify the figure if it delivers a unique, intense experience, engineering of the utmost integrity and off-the-scale desirability. Whether you're stood admiring it, or in the eye of the storm driving it, the Atom 3.5R is worth every penny. ☒

'THERE'S SO MUCH FEEL AND PROGRESSION FROM BOTH ENDS OF THE CAR, SO MUCH PRECISION IN THE POWER DELIVERY'





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PORSCHE BOXSTER GTS



by HENRY CATCHPOLE

PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH

EDGE OF HEAVEN

*Equipped with the new 325bhp
Porsche Boxster GTS, the deserted
mountain roads of Majorca and a
cloudless sky, we go in search of a
day of driving perfection*

SOMEWHERE IN MAGALUF A tattooist is no doubt just finishing up the last inappropriate inking of the night. In eight hours' time, the drunken human canvas will

wake up and wonder who Geraldine is and more to the point why her name is now indelibly circling his belly button. It's a tableau that no doubt sums up what many people imagine when they think of Majorca. And yet... right now, despite standing in the dark on the same Balearic island as Geraldine's beau, it feels like we're in a totally different world.

I'm standing under a picturesque white lighthouse watching a pastel sunrise slowly materialise over the inky sea. The view and the quiet isolation are enough by themselves to make it the sort of moment that you want to bottle and keep, but add in the fact that I've just driven one of the most brilliant roads in the world to get here and life really does seem exceptionally good.

I'm sure that preconceptions about 'Brit-abroad Majorca' are what keep most people from discovering the incredible roads that I know we are going to drive today. I came here on holiday a couple of years ago full of just such prejudices,

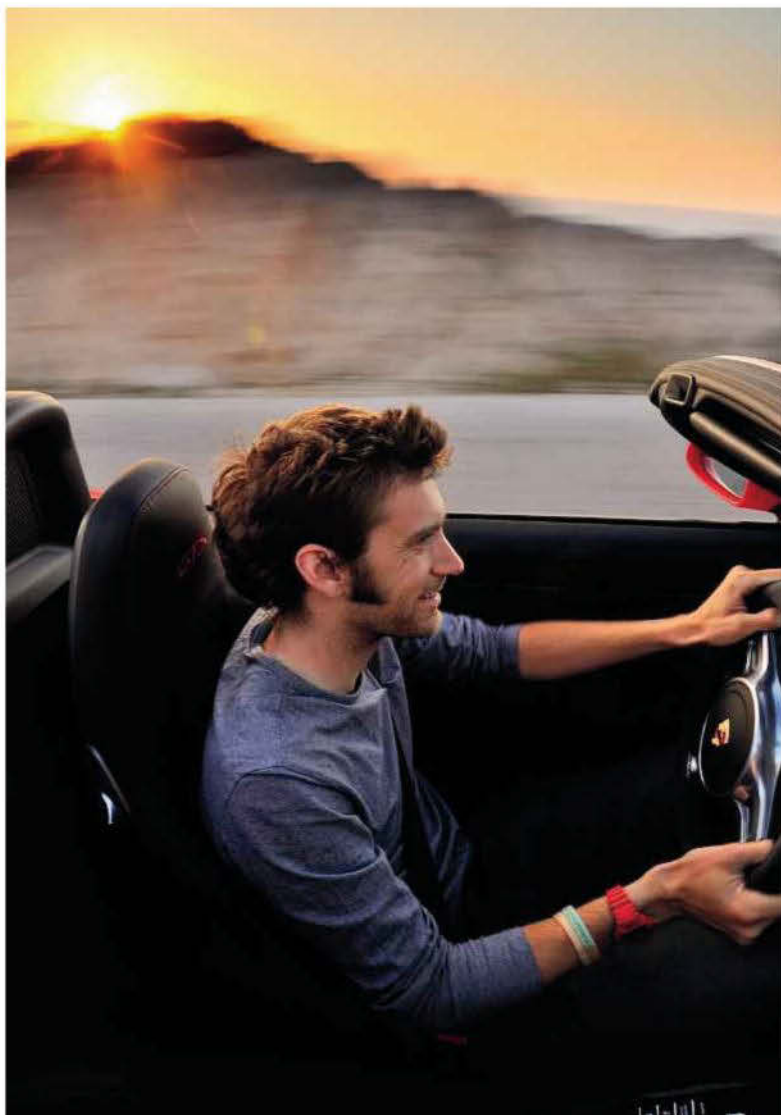
but also lured by stories of warm-weather cycling. The roads and the scenery that I found over the subsequent week left me slack-jawed in amazement and wishing that I had something more than a Pinarello (lovely though it was) and a Renault Scénic at my disposal. I vowed to come back and now here I am, with arguably the perfect car for the roads.

The Porsche Boxster GTS, like the Cayman GTS that we reviewed last month, is essentially a Boxster S with a value pack of the greatest hits from the options list. Amongst other things, you get a sports exhaust, Sport Chrono (complete with dynamic transmission mounts), 20-inch wheels, PASM adaptive dampers (or a no-cost optional sport chassis), Sport Plus seats and an Alcantara-covered Sport Design steering wheel. However, to distinguish it as a GTS you also get a few visual tweaks around the nose and bum, largely wrought in matt black, plus an extra 14bhp and 8lb ft from the 3.4-litre flat-six, which produces 325bhp and 273lb ft. Complete with wonderful six-speed manual, it is a truly lovely thing and very close to the Boxster S that was my personal favourite at eCoty 2012. No matter what the roads bring, it should be a pretty good place to spend the day, roof down, bathed in sunlight or moonlight.

Standing directly below the lighthouse we're too close to see its four flashes every 20 seconds, but eerily I can see them reflected in the white cliff opposite. There still isn't a soul about, except for a friendly ginger tomcat who pads out to investigate the Boxster GTS and then purrs round my legs hoping for some fuss and food. We watch the first curve of sun glint into view above the horizon and then, with the road now bathed in a warm glow, I decide it's time to go for another drive. Cap de Formentor is a peninsula jutting out from the north-east corner of Majorca towards Menorca, and one of the great advantages of the road that weaves out to its lighthouse at the end is that it's a dead end with no houses. I know that there's no one at the lighthouse apart from Tiddles, so as long as I don't meet anyone coming the other way as I retrace my steps inland, I know that I'll have a clear run at the road on the way back to the lighthouse.

The whole road from beginning to end is 11 miles long, but for the moment I'm just sticking to the last four miles or so. The road is wide enough to have a dotted white line down the middle, but only just. It's bumpy (unlike the first few miles which are billiard-table smooth) and begins amongst pine trees at the end of a long straight. You climb up through a couple of tight turns and quite abruptly the pines recede, opening up the sky above. Tufty clumps of marram grass replace the tree trunks and then you see the sea far below. Almost miraculously you seem to have arrived high up on the side of a beautiful coastal inlet. Crane your neck to look over the edge of the road

Below: Catchpole makes the most of the light traffic at dawn. **Right:** Cap de Formentor has everything: high cliffs, challenging twisty roads, and stunning sea views



A high-angle, wide shot of a dramatic coastal landscape. A winding asphalt road is carved into a steep, rocky cliffside. A small red sports car is driving along the road. The cliff face is rugged and light-colored, with sparse green vegetation. In the background, a dark blue sea is visible, framed by more rocky terrain and mountains under a clear blue sky with a few wispy clouds.

'I VOWED TO COME
BACK AND NOW HERE
I AM, WITH ARGUABLY
THE PERFECT CAR FOR
THE ROADS'

**‘AS THE BOXSTER’S
NOSE HOOKS
IN, THE REAR
BRIEFLY CUTS
LOOSE, LEAVING
ME WITH A SLIDE
TO GATHER UP ON
THE EXIT’**

and you’ll see turquoise water crashing into white foam as it hits the rocks on the beach.

To the right is a huge, vertical rock face towering above you, the pale stone seeming to crowd you towards the drop on the other side of the road. A couple of blind right-handers and then the cliffs actually begin to overhang the Boxster’s open roof until the road gives up the fight and is consumed by the island, the tarmac disappearing into the black mouth of a small tunnel. The xenons automatically flicker into life as you peer round the curved entry, then the road straightens so you can see the shining exit floating in the darkness dead ahead – and there is only one thing to do.

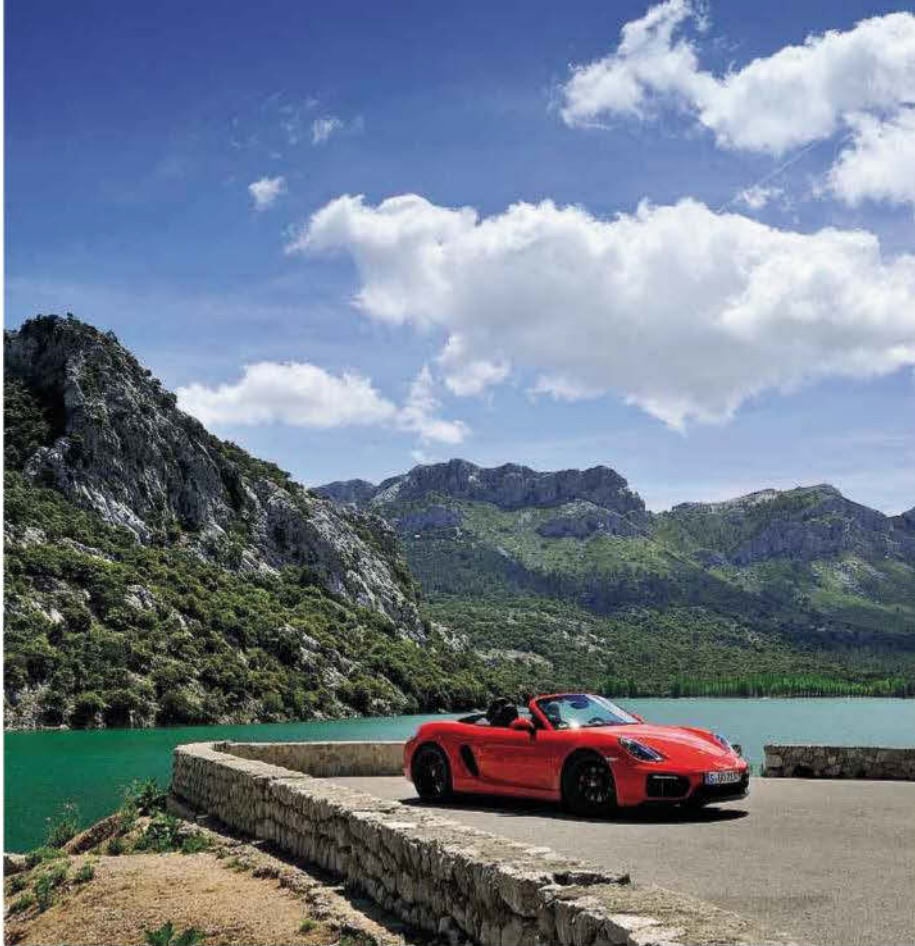
I could spend most of this article eulogising about the sound of the Boxster GTS, and no doubt I’ll be moved to mention it again, but throttle pinned in this tight tunnel, it’s something close to an aural elixir. The hollow howl, condensed, amplified and reverberating, makes my whole body tingle and there’s something wonderful knowing that it’s your right foot orchestrating it. Halfway through I wonder what it must sound like for anyone outside the tunnel and then imagine the tube of rock acting like a trumpet and projecting the sound out, waking up the rest of the

slumbering island like some automotive reveille.

Once you’re back into the light, the road carries on straight for a few hundred metres, still climbing, then it dives right through a couple of well-sighted turns. There’s a bit of positive camber and as the Boxster’s nose hooks in towards the apex, the rear briefly cuts loose, leaving me with a bit of a slide to gather up on the exit. Then it’s a long left and you emerge above another small valley, this time filled with brown-green vegetation. Ahead you can see the long 160-degree corner that doubles back just before you reach the sea and then the road striking a clean line up the far side of the valley.

The tarmac is pocked and broken in places here, but not so much that you have to slow down, and after sprinting along the opposite straight it’s back down to second or even first gear as the road contorts back and forth once more. There’s a bit of shade as the pines have returned, although they’re smaller out here, stunted by the greater exposure to the winds. Chocolate brown goats wander among the trees and rocks, occasionally pottering onto the road or just dislodging chunks of stone from above, so you still need to drive with care here, keeping your eyes peeled and trying not to get distracted by the vista across the bay to Alcúdia



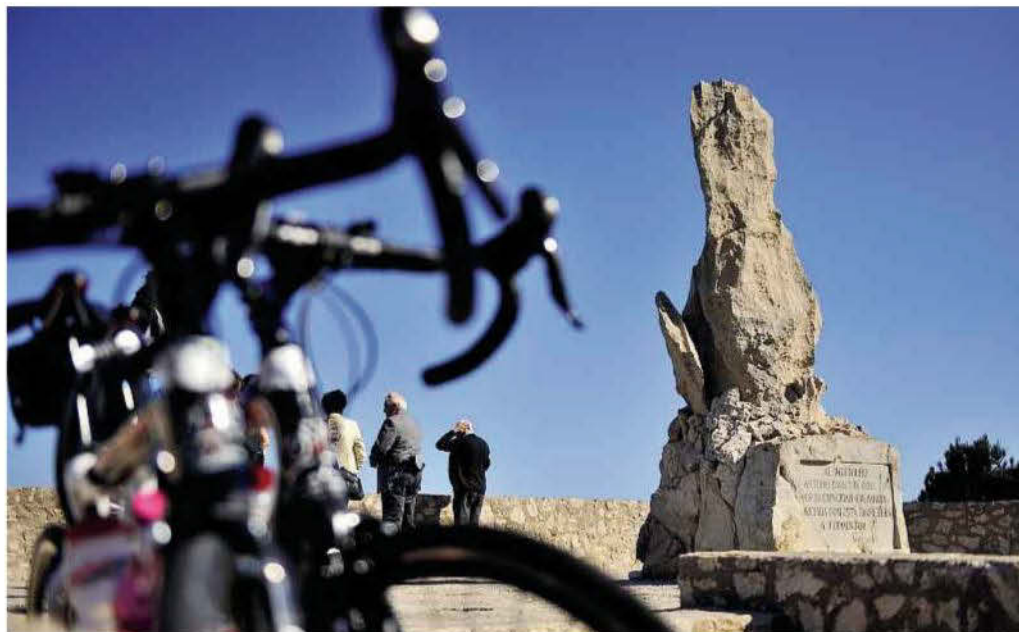


and the mountains beyond. It's hard to remember where you are on the road and what comes next. Armco appears and disappears like a silver thread leading you tantalisingly through the landscape. Then there's another valley, rockier and treeless this time, with the road again scribing a big U down one side and back up the other.

The final mile is arguably the best of the lot. You rise up over a blind crest so that all you can see is blue sky, then the road plunges downhill, cutting a corridor between two rock faces that frame the sea beyond. The Armco reappears just in time to guide you round a precipitous hairpin and then as you turn back on yourself, you see the final bit of empty road stretching out towards the lighthouse. Fast corners unfurl with cliffs to your left and nothing to your right, the rising howl and falling crackle of the exhaust rending the silence and the slipstream dancing in your eyebrows. Just as the waves are nearly lapping at the sidewalls, the road turns hard right, jinks left around an outcrop, then scrabbles up through a few frantic hairpins to the finish line at the lighthouse. It's breathless, beautiful stuff and we spend the next three hours getting photos and video and occasionally stopping just to marvel.

AT ABOUT 9AM THE METAMORPHOSIS begins. It seems hard to believe really, but what at 7am is one of the best roads in the world has by 10am become one of the worst roads in the world. The hordes of hire cars begin crawling along the peninsula, like ants along a log. It begins as a dribble, then becomes a steady flow and it only gets worse once the first few reach the lighthouse

Opposite page: Boxster's accurate handling is a joy to exploit on Formentor's many hairpins. **Above:** GTS gets lunchtime breather at the Gorg Blau. **Above right:** exclusive test of the new baby 911. **Right:** Coll dels Reis is the official name of the peak commonly known as Sa Calobra, which is frequently used on Majorcan classic car rallies. **Below:** monument on the Formentor peninsula commemorates Italian engineer Antonio Paretti, who devised the Formentor and Sa Calobra roads





and then start battling back the other way. Mix in some cyclists that no one seems quite sure how to overtake and you have hell on a highroad. Oh, and to top it all there is the occasional coach, which squeezes down the narrow road like a rhino down a snake's digestive tract.

Heading away from the advancing masses, we stop briefly at a lookout point where there is a small monument. Hewn from a jagged lump of white rock, it is a tribute to Antonio Paretti. Why, you might be thinking, should Majorca pay homage to 'Tony the Shoemaker', the New York gangster sent to the chair in 1927? Well, it isn't. This Antonio Paretti is the Italian engineer who in the 1930s designed the road we've been driving this morning and the one we will drive this evening.

Continuing down towards Port de Pollença (pronounced 'poyensa'), the bright white buildings stand out box-fresh in the morning sunlight, but brooding behind them are the dark grey and green peaks of the Tramuntana mountains. Declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2011, the range stretches right along the northern coast of the island and there are miles and miles of spectacular roads running through them. The most obvious way to climb up into them from Pollença is the Coll de Femenia, but as we're staying in Alcúdia I know we'll come back that way tonight, so instead we skirt around the southern boundary of the mountains. We could go up the Coll de sa Batalla but instead decide to go over the Coll d'Orient into Bunyola and then (ignoring the more-direct toll tunnel route) tackle the 53 hairpins (24 up, 29 down) of the Coll de Sóller. Once in the town of Sóller itself, you can head up Puig Major, the island's highest mountain at 1445m, on a slightly wider and more flowing road. There is a tunnel at the top which then leads down to our resting point for a few hours – the Gorg Blau (Blue Gorge).

All this has to be tackled with a certain amount of circumspection, because it's not only Formentor that attracts the cyclists and tourists. It's still worth doing, because the roads and views are wonderful, but you just need a bit of patience. The evening will come soon enough. Of course, if you can't beat them then you could join them – ditch the car, don some Lycra for the middle part of the day – but perhaps that's just me.

I haven't got a bicycle with me this time, so instead I opt to join photographer Dean Smith and film-maker Sam Riley in sandwiches and a siesta by the artificial shores of the Gorg Blau reservoir. Slowly the hours pass. We potter down to the petrol station and café near Lluc to fill up on unleaded and ice cream. Another hour or two slips lazily by. Dean and I ponder that the Boxster in its exclusively two-tone red and black colour scheme looks vastly better than the blue, black and silver Cayman GTS we photographed in Germany. More time trickles by. Eventually, the traffic begins to thin and the stupefying heat of the middle of the

day begins to cool, so we head off towards our second Paretti road of the day.

From Lluc, you take the turning right just after passing under the three arches of what I assume is a disused aqueduct. From here you've got a couple of kilometres on a beautiful little road that leads you up to a summit with an obvious cutting through the rock. Then the fun really begins. Descending the ridge you'll instinctively look left over the low strip of Armco and what you'll see will take your breath away. The tarmac tumbles down the rocky valley in an almost cartoonish jumble of hairpins and curves, weaving in and out of the landscape so that you only see snippets of switchbacks and straights. It looks like a theme park ride for cars and as if to confirm this vibe, you then approach a corner that turns 270 degrees right, back and underneath itself. Welcome to Sa Calobra.

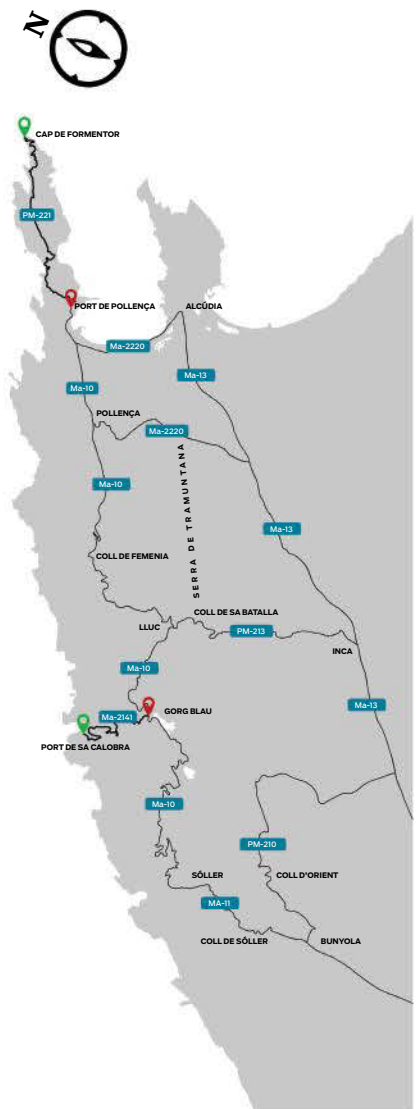
Like Formentor, it is a dead-end road and as I descend for the first time, the last few dribs and drabs of traffic are heading in the opposite direction, leaving the spectacular bay below. The road drops almost 700m in its 10km length and much of that seems to be done in the first half, where the corners cascade down the side of cliffs. Built in 1932, the road was constructed almost entirely by hand and the reason for its serpentine nature is that Paretti disliked tunnels and wanted to avoid blasting away too much of the mountainside. Where rock had to be extracted, it was used again elsewhere to build the road up and as a result they only needed to bring in tar to bind the surface together.

Today, climbing Sa Calobra is a must-do for any cyclist that comes to Majorca. Plenty of professional teams use the island as a base for winter training and as I turn around at the bottom, I know that I'm about to do something that many of the pros have dreamed about while pedalling up.

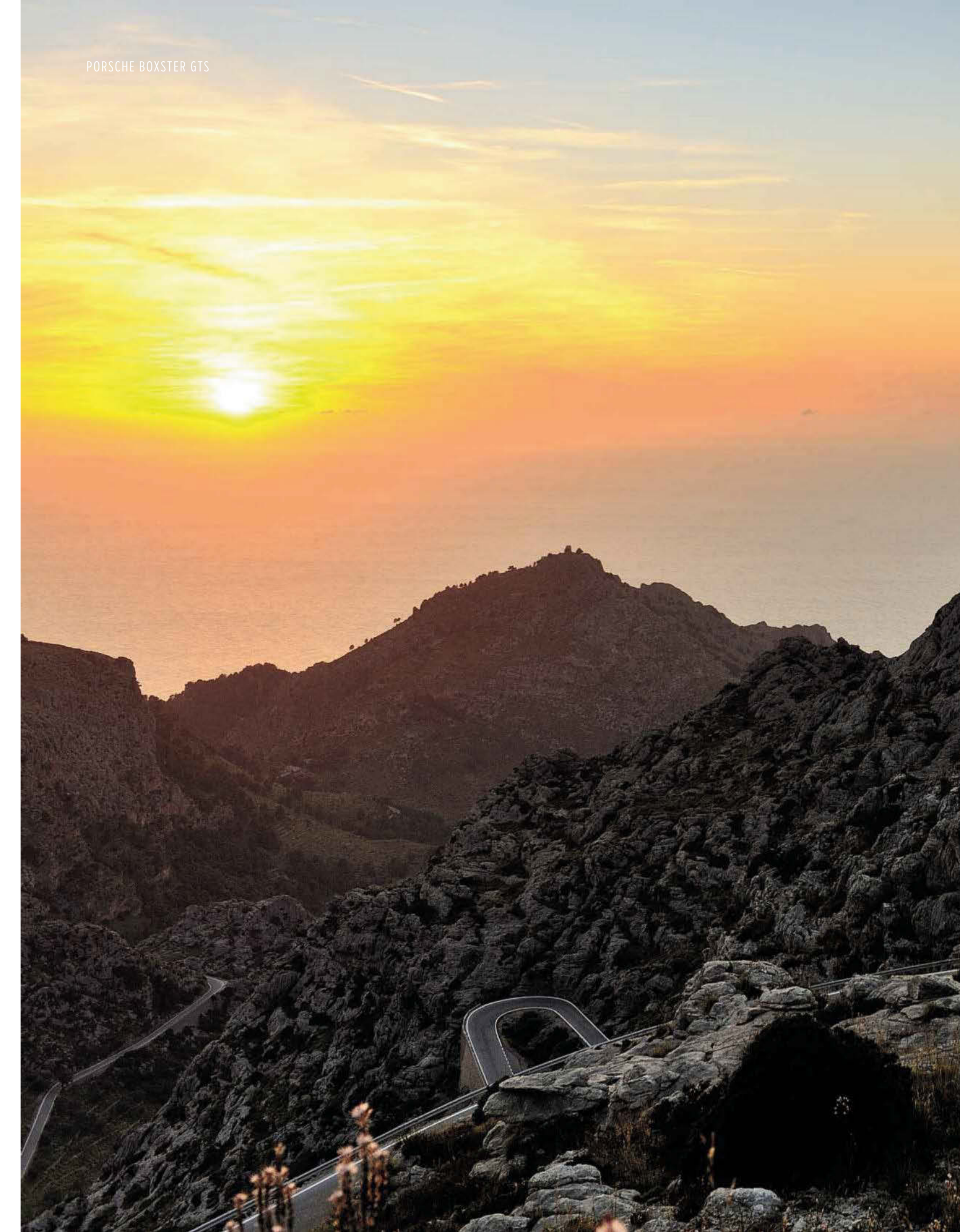
The road starts out quietly, wending its narrow way through the bottom of the steep valley but climbing steadily all the time. Stumpy, densely planted trees initially obscure your view of what's to come, but this changes after a long left-hand bend. First you squeeze between two towering slabs of rock that almost form a tunnel (cue trailing throttle for amplified overrun crackles), then you head into a couple of gentle hairpins that seem like nursery slopes preparing you for the big ones above. Up next is a boulder garden that looks like giants have been playing marbles among the trees, followed by a rare straight section that allows you to open the car up a bit as the trees recede.

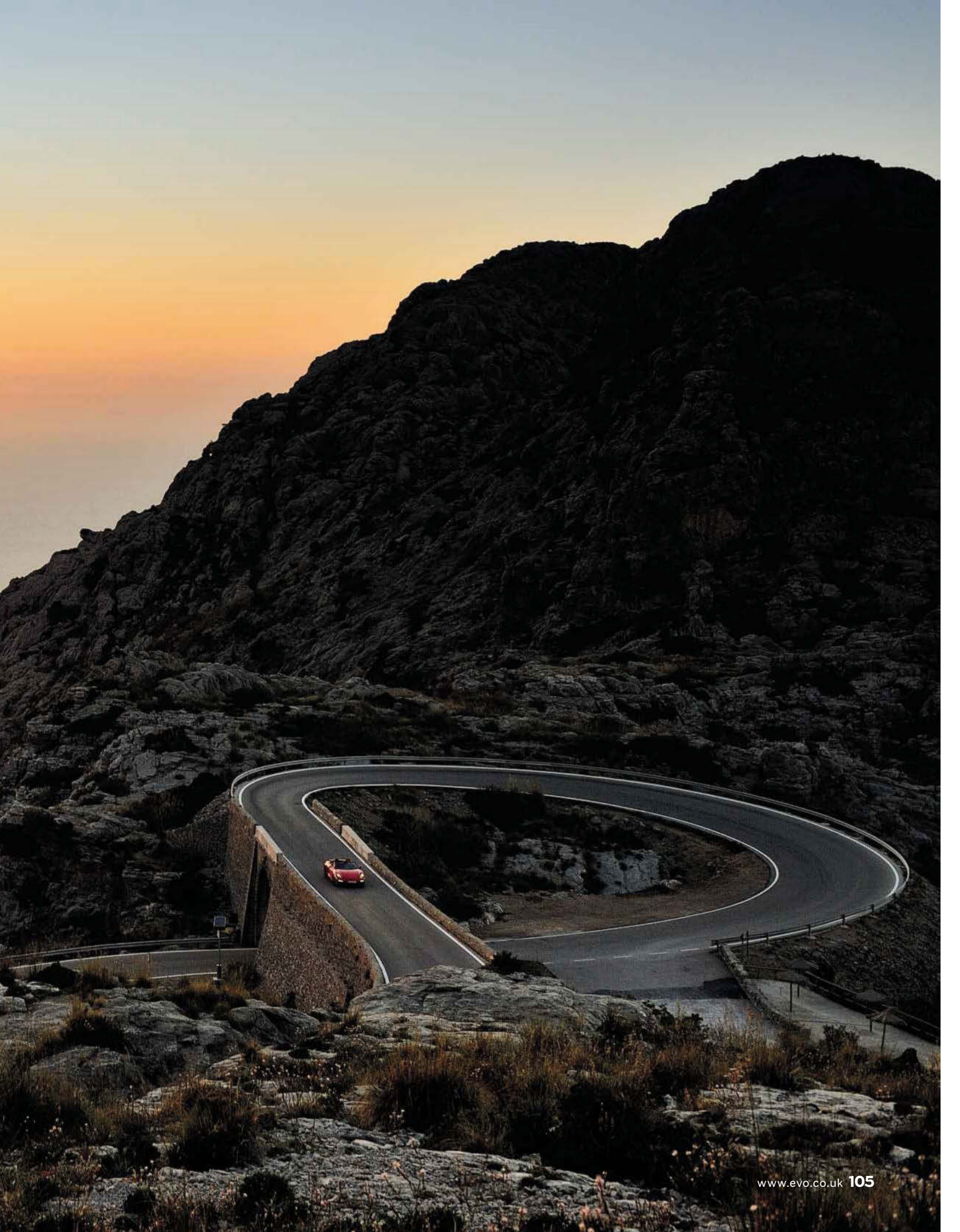
Now things really get interesting as the road loops round an outcrop and suddenly you become aware of the height you've gained and the climbing still to come. There's just an inadequate-looking low stone wall for protection on the outside; if you get it wrong it looks like you'd barely kerb an alloy before plummeting off the edge. From here on up the landscape is largely the same grey rock,

'THE TARMAAC TUMBLES DOWN THE ROCKY VALLEY IN AN ALMOST CARTOONISH JUMBLE OF HAIRPINS AND CURVES'



PORSCHE BOXSTER GTS







‘THROUGH THE
FINAL LADDER
OF HAIRPINS
THE BOXSTER
SOUNDS
INCREDIBLE
FROM THE
DRIVER’S SEAT’

speckled with green grass (Formentor’s marram having been replaced by the waving fronds of pampas).

The Boxster GTS really is perfect for the road. I certainly can’t imagine wanting any more power and the drivetrain is so precise in terms of gearshift and throttle response that you can even change satisfyingly smoothly back down to first for the steeper hairpins. Although the road surface still has the heat of the sun on it when we first arrive, it’s surprisingly slippery, almost like it’s been polished. Helping the Boxster’s tail round the hairpins with the throttle is easy, while things even get a bit loose through the odd quicker corner if you stay committed. I’d been worried that Sa Calobra would feel too narrow to be able to enjoy driving it, but it feels wider than I remember, perhaps because the Boxster feels so accurate and easy to place. Despite the writhing nature of the tarmac, the road also offers really good sightlines: look ahead and above you and you can frequently spot any upcoming traffic quite a long way off.

They’ll probably hear you coming, of course. Through the final ladder of hairpins the Boxster sounds incredible from the driver’s seat, repeatedly ripping through first and a brief moment of second before blipping back down as you turn back on yourself again. I just can’t imagine getting bored

of it. Arguably though, it sounds even better from Dean and Sam’s vantage point on the cliff above, where they can hear the exhaust note bouncing off one rock face onto the opposing one, filling the valley with yowling echoes.

After a couple of hours going back and forth for photographs and video, we all stop at the top. The sun is setting and shadows are chasing the golden light uphill towards us like the tide coming inexorably in. There’s no one around and with the Boxster parked up it is utterly peaceful and silent in this remote part of Majorca’s mountains. Much as I revel in driving the road, it feels good to spend a while just sitting and gazing at it, drinking it all in. It would never fit in a gallery, but there is true artistry in Antonio Paretti’s design.

Eventually the first stars begin to glint in the heavens and I decide to go for one last drive down and back up the final few kilometres. You might have to restrict yourself to the very ends of the day to enjoy driving in Majorca, but that in itself has its benefits in terms of atmosphere. As the flat-six cuts through the silence once more, it seems strange that right about now in Shagaluf, the human canvas is probably thinking he’s just about sober enough to get on it again. And his friends are all pointing out that when his beer belly sags, the tattoo around his navel just reads ‘Gerald’. ❏

PORSCHE BOXSTER GTS

Engine Flat-six, 3436cc

CO2 211g/km

Power 325bhp @ 6700rpm

Torque 273bhp @ 4500-5800rpm

Transmission Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip diff

Front suspension MacPherson struts, coil springs, PASM dampers

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

Brakes Ventilated discs, 330mm front, 299mm rear, PSM

Wheels 8 x 20in front, 9.5 x 20in rear

Tyres 235/35 ZR20 front, 265/35 ZR20 rear

Weight (kerb) 1345kg

Power-to-weight 246bhp/ton

0-62mph 5.0sec (claimed)

Top speed 175mph (claimed)

Basic price £52,879

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M4

M4 Coupé

Safety Car
Official Car of MotoGP

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BMW M Performance Parts
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PERFORMANCE PARTS

BMW's new M4 Coupe is responsible for keeping MotoGP riders safe at races all over the world. But a drive of it in safety car spec on track in Qatar confirms that 'safe' doesn't mean 'tame'...

by DAVID VIVIAN

Safety dance

M

MAYBE I WAS

mesmerised by the novelty of perspiring for the first time in months as the morning Qatari sun burned through 30deg C. Maybe I nipped to the loo at the wrong moment. But I wasn't the first journalist in the world to drive the new BMW M4. I'll be the second. I would be third but my German media colleague seems happy to chat to BMW M boss Friedrich Nitschke under the shade of the pitlane garages. Meanwhile, I'm tussling with the straps of a stubbornly uncooperative four-point harness and settling myself in for six laps of Qatar's Losail International Circuit in the car that, in 24 hours, will lead out Marc Márquez et

al for the first MotoGP race of 2014.

It doesn't matter in the grand scheme. I won't be able to write about my early-doors M4 experience until the general M4 embargo lets me – by which time, well, scoops aren't retrospective, are they? What matters this March 28 (all that really matters for our hosts, to be frank) is that we three lucky souls don't stack the one and only BMW M4 MotoGP Safety Car. Angry bikers after our blood will be the least of our problems if we do. The message is reinforced at the impromptu driver briefing in the pitlane: no drifting, please. The plea is served up with a nervous half-laugh, signifying either genuine concern or a sly wink wrapped up in a contractual obligation. Keeping things neat round the bends doesn't seem such a trial but, as I am



Left: Recaro seats and four-point Schroth belts are amongst the modifications. **Right:** discreet carbon spoiler is one of a range of M Performance tweaks. **Below right:** marketing message is prominently displayed; gold calipers look less conspicuous amongst lurid BMW M livery





Above: switches to operate safety lights are additions to carbon centre console. **Below:** rear seats make way for half-cage and fire extinguisher



about to discover, the M4 Safety Car has other ideas.

BMW and MotoGP have been a successful double act since 1999, the year Valentino Rossi won the 250cc (now Moto2) class title in what was then called the Motorcycle World Championship. Known since 2006 as maker of the 'Official Car of MotoGP', the Bavarian company has exercised the kind of marketing leverage magazine ads just can't buy. 'It's the perfect showcase for presenting our cars to motorsport enthusiasts around the globe,' says Thomas Schemera, director of sales and marketing for BMW M GmbH. He isn't kidding. The burgeoning brand offensive includes the additional presences of Safety Car 2 (new M3), Safety Car 3 (M5), two HP4 Safety Bikes and a couple of M550d xDrive Touring Medical Cars. Then there's the BMW Experience that takes punters behind the scenes of MotoGP and for a taxi ride in the M4 Safety Car, the M Award for 2014's most successful qualifier (not so much a shiny trophy as a brand new M4), and the ambassadorial services of ex-world champ Loris Capirossi to dole out insider info and field questions.

The first MotoGP Safety Car was the BMW X6 M, which, like the M4, made its track debut before its official launch (in 2009). Largely unloved by the motoring press, the hulking twin-turbo V8 SUV 'coupe' was plenty quick enough for the job and must have been plainly visible even to riders hanging off the back of the field. Last year's M6 looked good, but the 2014 M4 is clearly BMW M's optimum weapon of choice, 'the beating heart of M' as Nitschke puts it. And of course there's the choreographed symmetry that, at the end of the 18-race season, the year's top qualifier gets to drive home in one.

It's unlikely to be quite as conspicuous and loaded as the dazzlingly liveried and optioned Safety Car, though. A roof-mounted flashing LED light bar is a given for any modern Safety Car, but BMW has grabbed the opportunity to throw almost the entire M Performance Parts catalogue at the M4 – as much to advertise its existence, one suspects, as to tweak the 425bhp coupe's suitability for the role. A 'BMW M Performance Parts – Retrofitted Adrenaline' logo is plastered immodestly across the rear bumper, just above the remarkably loud retrofitted titanium exhaust system with its very cool-looking carbon finishers for each of the four pipes. Other external M Performance cosmetic and aero add-ons include a black front

grille, a front splitter, a rear diffuser, special side skirts, and a carbonfibre rear spoiler and door mirror caps. In this company, glossy black alloys and gold calipers look relatively subdued.

Inside, the regular and more than adequately supportive M4 perches are swapped for pukka, rib-squeezing Recaro racing seats, while inertia-reel belts are sidelined for Schroth four-point harnesses. Alcantara swathes the steering wheel rim, alongside carbon for the double-clutch

'BMW has thrown almost the entire M Performance Parts catalogue at this M4'

transmission's centre console selector and the handbrake. The pedals and footrests are stainless steel and the bonnet has a motorsport lock. It all looks and feels suitably serious. There aren't any mods to the all-new 3-litre twin-turbocharged straight-six, but with 425bhp, 406lb ft and a claimed 0-62mph time of 4.1sec, following riders are unlikely to nod off.

And neither, I will soon surmise, would this particular Safety Car's driver. For the owner with the time and inclination to experiment, the plethora of mix 'n' match dynamic settings accessed via the iDrive controller can modify the M4's driving feel and responses to give a high degree of personalisation. But there isn't time for any of that here today. Pressing the 'M1' button on the steering wheel twice kills the electronic traction and stability regimes – just as it should be for circuit driving – and, with every intention of keeping things neat and tidy, I trundle off down the pitlane in first on a whiff of throttle, short-shifting into second before rousing the engine in anger.

What happens next is unexpected to say the least. The previously burbling

Right: quad exhausts make for plenty of noise. **Below:** the results of Vivian's flooring it out of the pitlane. **Opposite page:** 3-litre twin-turbo in-line six produces the same 425bhp as in the standard road-going M4



‘The rear tyres smear 50 metres of expensive rubber across the pitlane exit’

exhaust noise erupts to a hard, throaty blare that ricochets around the empty grandstands and the rear tyres simply light up, smearing at least 50 metres of expensive Michelin Pilot Super Sport rubber across the pitlane exit in a slew of revs and snaking corrective lock. It's going to be... interesting.

Being a desert circuit barely a stone's throw from the nearly finished donut-shaped stadium that is intended to host the 2022 World Cup Final, Losail is spirit-level flat and, apart from the long pit straight, properly twisty and challenging. Six laps aren't enough to learn it – for me, at any rate – and, to be honest, the M4 Safety Car isn't making life any easier. An M-car that won't go sideways isn't any kind of M-car at all, but on turn two of the first sighting lap, driving with what I presume is a sensible degree of circumspection, the back sails wide. I might as well have been treated to a big old NASCAR nudge by a crazed Losail employee in the Medical Car.

From that moment, the need to get with the programme seems rather pressing. In short, the M4 Safety Car seems to have front wheels locked to the track by a witch's curse and a rear end that lets go almost before the idea I might want it to enters my head. It's not that the tail's transition to mobility is vicious or snappy but, like the burnout, it is a surprise. So for most of the lap I find myself attempting to mitigate the time spent on opposite lock rather than having on-demand fun. On turn eight, a fast, sweeping, third-gear left, I have to back out of the throttle altogether and stab the brakes to recover a slide that has taken on a lurid life of its own.

I will later drive a production M4 in Portugal (evo 197), and it will hardly seem credible that the two cars are essentially



identical, let alone products from the same manufacturer. On the road, the standard car's powers of adhesion and poise are remarkable and its natural cornering state beguilingly neutral unless otherwise required. The stability electronics can be over-zealous if you're brutal with the throttle, but switch them off and precision hooning is one of the things the M4 does best. So who knows what's going on today in Qatar. Maybe Losail isn't the grippiest of circuits. Maybe undisclosed set-up subtleties are exerting their influence. But I can't remember a driver briefing that was harder to stick to, and after I've sampled the production car, I'll be glad I wasn't the first journalist in the world to drive the new M4 (and write about it). ❌



BMW M4

Engine In-line 6-cyl, 2979cc, twin-turbo
CO2 194g/km
Power 425bhp @ 5500-7300rpm
Torque 406lb ft @ 1850-5500rpm
Transmission Seven-speed dual-clutch (option), rear-wheel drive, LSD, ESP
Front suspension MacPherson struts, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension Multi-link, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar
Brakes Carbon-ceramic discs (option), 400mm front, 380mm rear, ABS, EBD
Wheels 9 x 19in front, 10 x 19in rear (option)
Tyres 255/35 ZR19 front, 275/35 ZR19 rear
Weight (kerb) 1537kg
Power-to-weight 281bhp/ton
0-62mph 4.1sec (claimed)
Top speed 155mph (limited)
Basic price £56,635
On sale Now

evo rating: ★★★★★

Safety cars through the ages

IN THIS YEAR of whispering turbocharged F1 cars, Merc's full-noise 6.2-litre V8 SLS AMG Safety Car, driven by former touring car racer Bernd Mayländer since its 2010 introduction at the Bahrain GP, has probably never been more popular – not least because it seems to be the only car that can get in front of fellow Mercedes drivers Lewis Hamilton and Nico Rosberg.

Hard to believe, then, that the first official F1 safety car, introduced at the 1993 Brazilian Grand Prix, was a 2-litre Fiat Tempra with roughly a fifth of the AMG's horsepower. The race was won by Ayrton Senna, who, to the delight of his adoring fans, did a lap of honour hanging out of the boxy Fiat saloon's front passenger window.

For the very first safety car (or rather pace car) of all, however, we have to spool back to the inaugural Indianapolis 500 in 1911, when Carl G Fisher took to the oval in a Stoddard-Dayton. The Indy 500 has run pace cars ever since (usually Chevrolets),



selected two months before the race so that limited-run replicas can be made and sold to race fans at a premium. Over the years, the Pontiac Trans-Am, Chevrolet Corvette and Camaro, Oldsmobile Cutlass and Ford Mustang have proved the most enduringly popular.

Arguably the most exciting safety cars of all, however, were seen at the recent 72nd Goodwood Members' Meeting, where a brace of Ferrari F40s led out a field of the most powerful F1 cars the world has ever seen for a demonstration lap of the circuit. And, according to one historic F1 driver we spoke to, they simply weren't fast enough. **DV**



Top: SLS AMG is current F1 safety car. **Above left:** F40s acted as safety cars at recent Goodwood Members' Meeting. **Above, from top:** Stoddard-Dayton was the very first safety car; Mustang and Camaro are popular pace car choices at Indy 500. **Left:** Senna celebrates his 1993 Brazilian GP win in a Fiat Tempra safety car



Family affair

Jethro Bovingdon's grandfather ran a new Citroën SM in its 1970s heyday, while his father owns one today. Fascinated by the front-drive Maserati-engined GT since childhood, a third generation of Bovingdon goes on a voyage of family discovery

by JETHRO BOVINGDON

PHOTOGRAPHY by DREW GIBSON

M

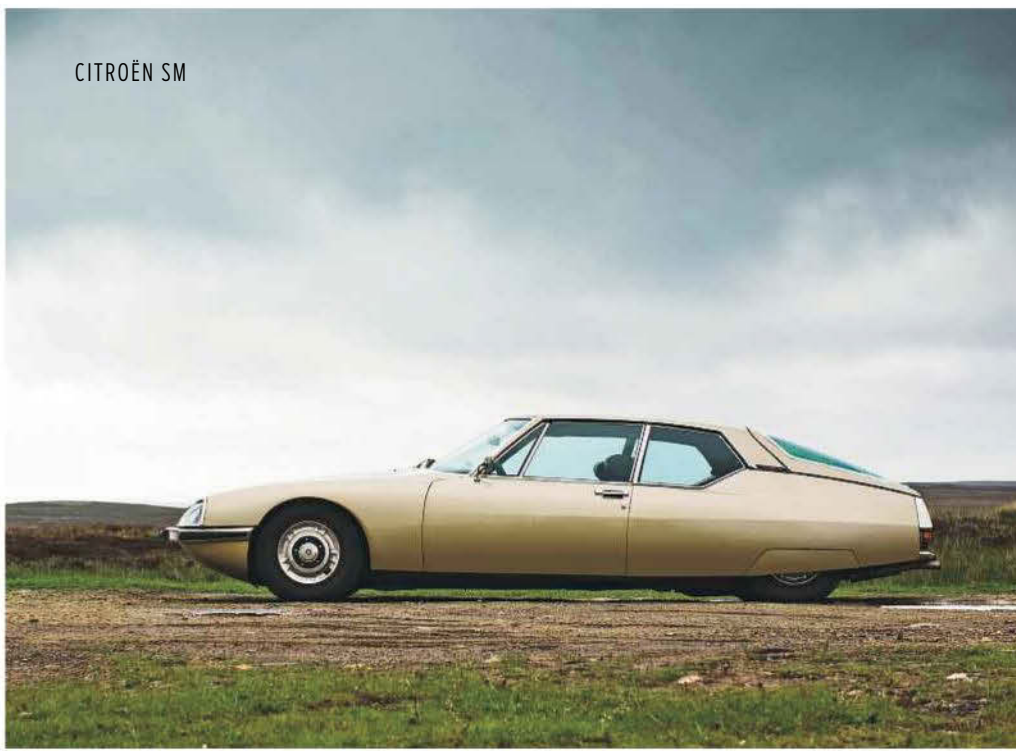
MY GRANDFATHER, NOW 92, IS A BIT OF A DUDE.

After serving on HMS Viscount and Empress, he came back from the war to his basement flat in Hammersmith and enrolled in an architecture course taken at night once he finished working at the council drawing office. Later, he made a few quid and – like most architects – he became

something of a Citroën man. In fact he had four DSs in succession, much to the delight of my dad, who was car-mad. But what came next really shaped my dad's love of cars for the rest of his life.

In 1972 my grandfather arrived home in a brand-new SM in brilliant white with bottle green velour trim. *White with green*, in the early '70s. Can you imagine what that must have looked like? From that moment on, Dad always promised himself an SM, and the '74 car pictured here has been in his possession for 17 years now. For some reason I've barely driven it more than





Above: SM has three ride height settings. **Below:** Bovingdon's grandfather's SM was regularly taken abroad. **Bottom:** Maserati V6 was also used in the middle of the Bora-based Merak sports car

a few miles in all that time. Today I'll put that right and maybe fall in love with this bizarre and majestic car that has captivated my family since before I was born...

In fact that's an exaggeration. Despite the impeccable pedigree of my grandfather's car choices, he has precisely zero interest in anything with four wheels. He remembers his DSs simply by colour: 'Was that the yellow one or the green one?' And the SM is only ever 'the white one'. But it led the life, travelling across the UK and Europe on business trips and holidays. The thought of my grandfather sweeping down to St Tropez in it puts a huge smile on my face. Here was a bloke who was born in 1922, left school at 14, was called up to the navy, joined the North Atlantic convoys and later had kamikaze pilots to contend with ('That really wasn't playing the game,' he remembers), living it up in the early '70s in a Maserati-engined GT that might well have just landed from outer space. For all those who lived through the stupefying horror of the war, every positive experience afterwards must have seemed all the sweeter. It might always be 'the white one' to him, but I know he loved using it to cover big distances and see places that as a kid he could have only dreamt about.

So let's put the SM into context and into its place within these pages. This is no simple task because in many ways the SM is a car of contradictions, as perplexing as it is beguiling.





The simple facts and figures paint a distinctly un-*evo* picture. It was unveiled to the press on March 10, 1970, received electronic fuel injection in 1972, and its life was over in the middle of 1975, after 12,920 had been produced. It weighs 1520kg (the earlier carb model is 1480kg) and its 2670cc V6 develops 178bhp at 5800rpm and 171lb ft at 4000rpm. That power is transmitted through the front wheels via a five-speed 'box and back in '72, *Motor* magazine managed to coax the car from 0 to 60mph in 8.3sec. Citroën claimed a top speed of 142mph thanks to a super-slippery drag coefficient of 0.26. Using a revised version of the DS structure and a development of that car's hydropneumatic suspension, it's definitely more GT than out-and-out sports car. However, the devil is in the detail with the SM...

The killer ingredient is that all-alloy 90-degree V6, modest in capacity – due to the peculiarities of French tax law – but developed

by a giant in engineering terms, Maserati's Giulio Alfieri. His back catalogue includes the 2.5-litre straight-six in the 250F Grand Prix car and the design of the glorious Birdcage endurance racer in its entirety. He actually began working on this 'C114' engine back in 1963, soon after 'Project S' was conceived by Citroën. To deliver a world-class sporting GT, Citroën knew it desperately needed a world-class engine and somehow a courtship with Maserati began. Ultimately Citroën bought the firm in 1968, but this engine project predated that arrangement. It's a compact four-cam unit with sodium-filled valves, aluminium pistons and an all-up weight of 140kg. It sits well inside the front axle with the five-speed transaxle mounted ahead of it. It sounds glorious – snarly and busy, a sweet cacophony of gnashing chains, howling exhaust and thrashy valvegear. It's a sports car engine, no doubt.

It could have been hooked up to a very

**'IT SOUNDS GLORIOUS –
A SWEET CACOPHONY
OF GNASHING CHAINS,
HOWLING EXHAUST
AND THRASHY
VALVEGEAR'**



Above right: stop light indicates hydraulic failure – the steering always fails first, followed by suspension and braking assistance. **Right:** self-centring steering even straightens the front wheels after you park up and walk away. **Below:** Bovingdon's father tracked down his own father's SM and scavenged it for stainless steel front trim

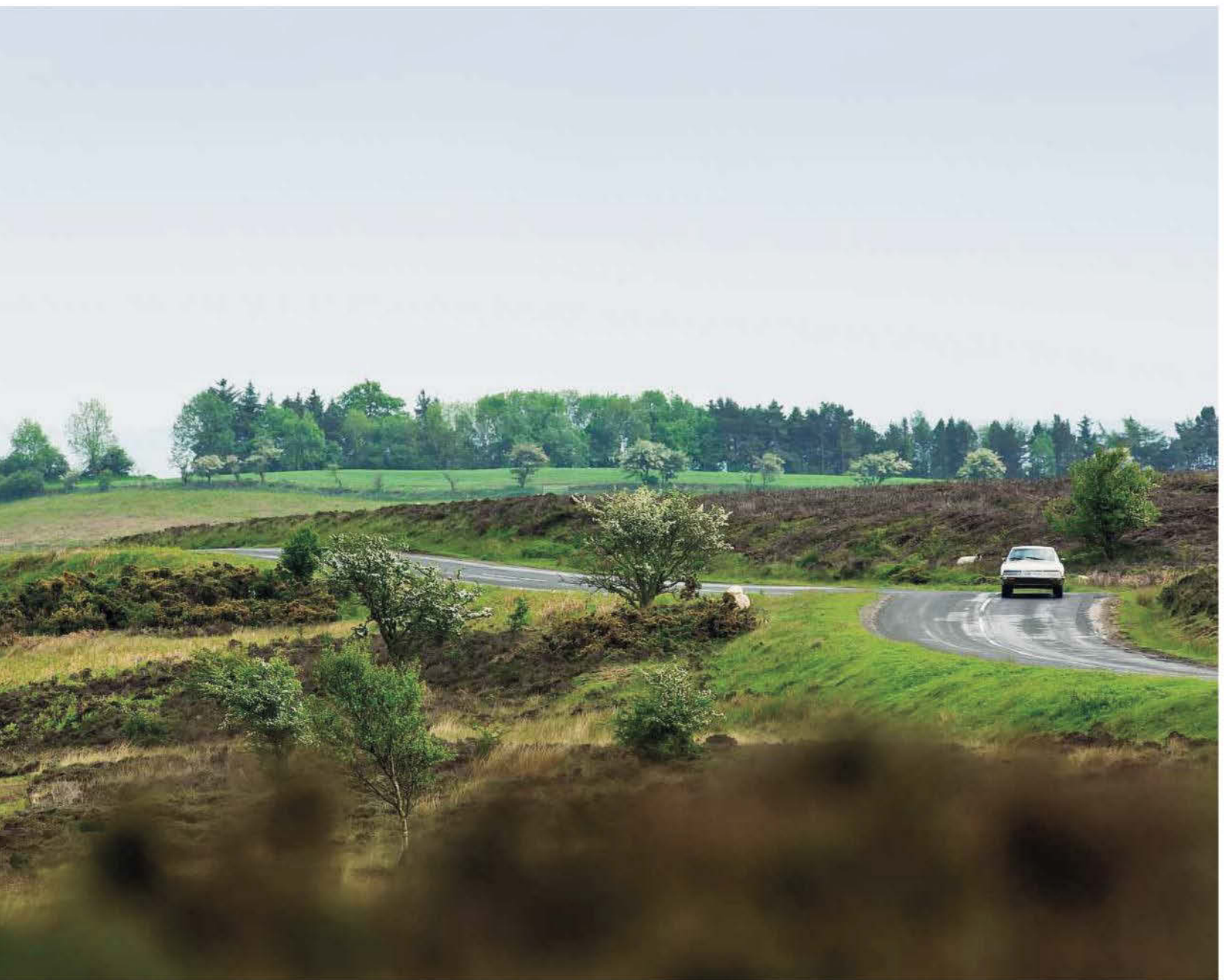


'YOU REALISE THIS ISN'T A SUPER-AGILE SPORTS CAR, BUT THEN WONDER IF A GT CAR SHOULD REQUIRE SUCH EFFORT JUST TO TRICKLE ALONG AT EVERYDAY SPEEDS'

sporting chassis too, if engineer Jacques Né had been allowed to tread his own path. He wanted to push the boundaries of front-drive dynamics and handling, but Citroën chairman Pierre Bercot insisted that this should be a fast, luxurious and comfortable machine in the great French tradition of marques like Delage and Delahaye. Even so the SM really did push the boundaries in many respects. It had ferociously fast steering (just two turns lock-to-lock despite a tiny turning circle) with powered self-centring and variable assistance depending on road speed; there were high-pressure hydraulically assisted brakes operated by a sort of rubber mushroom; and of course, it had all the self-levelling, awesomely supple ride comfort you'd expect of the hydropneumatic suspension. So it's a big GT driven by the wrong wheels, with a screaming little V6, steering faster than a Speciale's, brakes that need almost impossible sensitivity, ride quality to shame an S-class,

comedy body roll and styling best described as sci-fi elegance. Want a go? Me too.

Sadly we're not in St Tropez and the sun is most definitely on strike. Welcome to Yorkshire in early June. Leaden skies barely dent the appeal of the SM, though. I see it every few days but somehow as I get older the shape seems to get better and better. I love the six oblong Cibié lights (the inner pair turn with the steering), the simplicity and confidence of the silhouette, the half-observed rear wheels. The whole car has audacity, invention and a typically French insouciance oozing from every surface. The interior, if anything, is even better. The seats are but a stroke of a designer's pen and offer no lateral support whatsoever, the centre console and dash have a bronze-tinged brushed stainless steel finish, the oval Jaeger dials are exquisite, and the small, single-spoke steering wheel with a chunky, slightly squishy rim feels fantastic. Twist the key and the V6 spins into life



quickly with a trebly, uneven racket that sounds so at odds with the laid-back vibe of the driving environment. Don't try to steer yet: the rack will feel locked solid. Wait for the car to rise slowly, first at the front then a few seconds later at the rear... Now the SM is ready and when you turn the steering wheel, it's fingertip light.

The five-speed 'box might not be directly below the gearlever but it's a sweet, mechanical shift and strangely it emits the classic *clack-clack* sound of an open-gated Italian shift. However, there's so much other stuff going on that it takes a while to notice this sort of finer detail. What strikes you first is the directness of the steering working in combination with a very soft chassis. At low speeds the combination is obviously a mismatch. This is a car that likes to be gently guided into a corner so as not to induce too much body roll (of which there is plenty), but the steering is so darty that you seem to stab at the front wheels and then clumsily adjust

your line as the turn unfolds. Then there's the brakes. That mushroom-shaped button acts on a valve that floods the system with hydraulic pressure and will put the car on its nose if you treat it like a conventional pedal. Again the suspension only heightens the penalty for getting this wrong. It's just so strange to have to action such tiny, precise inputs to control such a big car that's got so little roll stiffness.

So you quickly realise this isn't an intuitive, super-agile sports car, but then wonder if a GT car should require such effort just to trickle along at everyday speeds. Yet there's so much to get absorbed into and the crackling little V6 encourages perseverance. It's not blessed with much torque and it labours against the weight of the SM at low revs, but get it above 4000rpm and the noise hardens into a jagged, angry scowl and the speed builds pretty quickly. And as you go faster, everything else starts to come together, too. The steering weight increases

dramatically (at 100mph there's no assistance at all) and with something to lean against it becomes easy to tease your way into sweeping turns, allowing the suspension to settle and then support the car with more determination.

Of course, the SM has no anti-roll bars, springs or dampers, just spheres filled with hydraulic fluid and a nitrogen 'spring'. The fluid can't be compressed so acts like a damper, while the nitrogen gas is six times more flexible than a steel spring so provides the ride quality for which Citroën was once famed. In practice that means an alien amount of roll, pitch and dive if you've been reared on pretty much anything other than a DS (the SM is much more stiffly suspended). However, the benefits are felt brilliantly on fast, sweeping corners and rough surfaces, of which both are omnipresent over the North York Moors. Once you've gently poured the SM into a corner and felt the suspension settle, the stability is remarkable.

'IT'S A HUGE RELAXING CAR TO TRAVEL LONG DISTANCES IN AND WHEN YOU GET TO THAT KILLER PIECE OF ROAD, IT'S INVOLVING AND CHALLENGING'



Surface bumps, lumps, potholes... they're heard but not felt at all. In fact, short of a bomb going off under one of the tyres I'm not sure you could knock the SM off its chosen line. Maybe even that wouldn't do it: due to the system's self-levelling capabilities you can actually drive the SM on three wheels in complete safety. Not in a heroic dangling-an-inside-rear-wheel hot hatch kind of way. I mean you can remove a rear wheel and then go for a drive. Must try that one day.

Push to the limits of grip – which are pretty high despite the ancient Michelin XWX tyres – and of course you'll find understeer. In slow corners and with aggressive steering inputs the inside-front wheel is unloaded dramatically too, so wheelspin is a possibility. The reality is that you never 'attack' slow corners though, because the jumpy steering and the initial body roll discourage it and because the funky seats mean you're hanging on to the steering wheel for grim death if you do. Instead the SM is a car you pour along fast roads, enjoying the stability, the supreme accuracy of the steering, the deliberate, mechanical gearshift and the snarly V6 as it climbs between peak torque and peak power. Then it feels every inch the super-luxurious GT, albeit with a revvy little sports car engine tucked under its long bonnet. Even better, the things that usually date a car of this

CITROËN SM

Engine V6, 2670cc

Power 178bhp @ 5800rpm

Torque 171lb ft @ 4000rpm

Transmission Five-speed manual, front-wheel drive

Front suspension Double wishbones, hydraulic spheres, nitrogen springs

Rear suspension Trailing arm, hydraulic spheres, nitrogen springs

Brakes Solid discs, 300mm front, 256mm rear

Wheels 6 x 15in front and rear

Tyres 195/70 VR15 front and rear

Weight (kerb) 1520kg

Power-to-weight 119bhp/ton

0-60mph 8.3sec (tested)

Top speed 142mph (claimed)

Price new £5478 (1971)

Value today £10,000-35,000

evo rating: ★★★★★

age – loose steering, crappy brakes, rattly wheel control – are almost completely absent. Because it's unique there's a real timeless quality to the SM. It's staggering to think it's 40 years old.

By the day's end the SM has traversed the M1 in monsoon conditions, been flung across the bleak moors and probably been driven a bit quicker than it has been in the last 17 years or so (sorry, Dad). In fact we've covered 480 miles – a new single-day record in Bovingdon stewardship – and the SM is streaked in grime, but it's behaved impeccably. Once accustomed to its unique steering and brakes it's a hugely relaxing car to travel long distances in, and when you get to that killer piece of road, it's involving and challenging. Not because you have to drive on your wits, pre-empting slides and managing the balance, but because it requires deft inputs to reveal its inner composure and intriguing way of melding scalpel-sharp precision and genuinely cossetting dynamics.

Is it my sort of car? Not quite. I like my thrills a little rawer. Would I like one sitting beside a proper tearaway sports car in my garage? Oh God, yes. The SM represents the very best of Citroën's ingenuity, individuality and charming insanity with a sprinkling of Alfieri's magic. The combination is as weird and wonderful as that sounds. 'The gold one' is alright by me. ☒

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AWAY DAY SPECIAL

evo's editorial team decamps to Blyton Park for a day of long-termer track adventures, sprints against the clock and general hoonery

by HENRY CATCHPOLE | PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH



W

WILL DICKIE MEADEN LET anyone have a go in his R8? That was the big question that I felt Radio 4's *Today* programme was missing as I splashed through Lincolnshire on the morning of *evo*'s grand Fast Fleet away day. With my GT86 having returned to its maker (and the Escort, er, not *quite* ready) I was going to be reliant on nabbing the keys to others' cars during our day at Blyton Park and the closely guarded Audi was top of the list.

The various hot hatches were first out on track and hardly stopped all day, with Stephen Dobie, Will Beaumont, Ian Eveleigh and Matthew Hayward scampering about in impressively committed fashion. Anyone would think they spent the rest of the year shackled to their desks making the road testers look good. Meaden overslept, turned up late and then had to pop out for some fuel. Curious.

Bovingdon's Jag had no rear tyres so he brought his wannabe GT3. We all thought he was smoking the rear rubber on that too, but it turned out to be from the left bank of the engine. Apparently nothing to worry about, just something to do with a seal. Probably accounted for his spin that I said I wouldn't mention. Editor Trott also turned

up in his 911, which seemed to be turning in suspiciously quick laps until Beaumont blew his cover and spotted him skipping the chicane on the back straight.

In the afternoon it was announced that there was to be a competitive element to the day in the form of a sprint using Prosser's Corsa VXR. No one took it seriously, obviously. Actually, that's a lie. Everyone stood on the bank near the start, mocking missed gearchanges, scrutinising lines through the last corner where the finish line was positioned and ribbing me about not knowing where to go without a co-driver. Team building, they call it. The bravery award went to Rob Gould, who was ruthless in his quest for victory by simply not braking for the final turn, instead taking it in the upper reaches of fourth and worrying about the grassy consequences afterwards. In the end, Jethro 'screw you guys' Bovingdon won, which he was delighted about. We were all pleased too, if only because it means the next 12 months will be a lot more bearable.

And so with the sun finally out, a few more laps were had and a few more millimetres were removed from assorted tread patterns. You can see highlights over the page. Oh, and Dickie did relent and let me have a go in the R8. Or at least he left the keys unattended, which is the same thing.



Above and left: Trott's 911 and Dobie's Clio worrying apexes.
Right: Catchpole borrows Meaden's R8 for a few laps on the strict understanding that he'll be gentle



Far left: Beaumont goes straight for the Kia early in the day, *evo*'s ever-dapper designer choosing a pair of bottle green loafers (no socks) to work the pedals on this occasion. **Left:** Ev lights up the Leon

Below: Jethro 'Berlusconi' Bovingdon oversteering round Blyton Park's infamous Bunga-Bunga double-apex left-hander; Richard Porter would not approve



Above left: Beaumont, Hayward and the rest of the *evo* team all out standing in their field. **Above:** Trott attempts to break the last bone in his body

Right: asked for their best motorsport impressions, Catchpole opts for Steve McQueen, while Bovingdon wonders why everyone is laughing at the back of his 996



Right: the second-fastest 911 at Blyton.
Below: art director Gould showed an alarming aversion to using the brakes in anything he drove; we assume this was to simulate the terrifying feeling of driving his own MG ZT on a daily basis



Right: sub editor Eveleigh has a good look at an apex; decides kerning between Corsa and cone needs attention



Above: Prosser tries to stop Trott pushing his luck at start line. **Right:** life of Riley – Sam wonders if he can just use some iPhone footage; headphones model's own



Above: photographer Smith's long-term; oh, the irony of giving him a car called a Focus. **Right:** the trip from evo Towers to Blyton Park was the longest that Hayward had undertaken in the Celica

Below: Jethro graciously accepts his win to rapturous applause; was on Twitter moments later bragging about huge trophy but confused by non-bubbly Champagne



Above: Dickie tries to hide the devastation he's wrought on the cake tray by putting some lap times in the way



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Fast Fleet

From '02 to R8, *evo's Fast Fleet* is the biggest and most comprehensive long-term section in the business. This month...

KIA PROCEED GT

by Nick Trott

Editor

NEW

From McLaren 12C to M6 Gran Coupe to... Kia? Trott explains why he's keen to run the Korean firm's first sporting model.



TOYOTA GT86

by Henry Catchpole

Features editor

OUT

After a full year on our fleet, the '86 has returned to Toyota. Catchpole reveals why he misses it... sometimes.



AUDI R8 V10 PLUS

by Richard Meaden

Contributing editor

Need a supercar you can use every day? You'll struggle to better the one from Ingolstadt, reckons Meaden.



PEUGEOT 208 GTI

by Sam Riley

Film-maker

OUT

The best Peugeot hot hatch in years has left our fleet. Its keeper, Sam Riley, looks back at his time with it.



VAUXHALL CORSA VXR

by Dan Prosser

Road tester

There's never a dull moment in the 202bhp version of Vauxhall's smallest hot hatch. Prosser details why.



SEAT LEON CUPRA

by Ian Eveleigh

Production editor

Leon Cupra or Golf GTI? Eveleigh knows which he prefers, and this month he divulges why.



VW GOLF GTI

by Sam Riley

Film-maker

Our Golf is back – and back to full health. It's got a new keeper too, who's immediately put it to a (very) high-speed test.



FERRARI 458 ITALIA

by Simon George

Contributor

The 458 has passed the 50,000-mile mark this month, causing George to take a closer look at its running costs.



McLAREN 12Cs

by SSO

Contributor

The Secret Supercar Owner has been on a jaunt to Scotland's best roads with friends – and both of his McLarens.



FORD FOCUS ST

by Dean Smith

Staff photographer

Smith has discovered that he can make his 247bhp hot estate more economical, but he's not convinced it's worth the effort.



BMW 2002

by Will Beaumont

Designer

A roll-cage is destined for the interior of Beaumont's BMW – just as soon as he's tackled one or two other little jobs...



JAGUAR F-TYPE V6 S

by Jethro Bovingdon

Contributing editor

While it awaits some new rubber, Bovingdon reflects on the convertible Jag's many strengths.



RENAULT WILLIAMS

by Stephen Dobie

Staff writer

It's been years in the planning, but the '90s Clio has finally gained a thoroughly modern head unit.



Also on the *evo* fleet: Toyota Celica GT-Four, Ferrari F40, Peugeot 106 Rallye, Ferrari F50, Mazda MX-5 Mk2, Nissan GT-R, Porsche 911 3.0 SC, Aston Martin DBS, Ford Escort RS2000, Ferrari 430 Scuderia, Porsche 996 Carrera

Coming soon: BMW M235i

NEW ARRIVAL

Kia Proceed GT

Editor Trott takes delivery of the Fast Fleet's first-ever Kia, in the form of this 201bhp hatchback



H

HOW DO YOU follow a McLaren 12C and a BMW M6 Gran Coupe? I have been the luckiest of lucky buggers when it comes to the cars I've tested in Fast Fleet – going back further I've lived with a Mercedes C63 AMG Coupe, a BMW 1M and an Aston Martin V8 Vantage Roadster. So why the Kia?

It's simple really. This is Kia's first, and currently only, car that acknowledges the thrill of driving. It's built specifically for the European market, it's been styled by someone who I believe will be considered one of the significant car designers of the modern era, and it offers a strong combination of performance and efficiency and a high level of trim.



On paper, it is a fierce rival to the likes of the Vauxhall Astra GTC SRi 1.6 turbo (virtually identical on price and performance) and the VW Scirocco 2.0 TSI (a smidge quicker, but £4290 more expensive). And if your 'warm' hatch absolutely must have a BMW badge on the nose then you'll be looking at a 118i SE 170 three-door to match the Kia's performance (and list), then another £3000 to match its spec.

Ah yes, that B-word... The Kia's badge will deter many, so I wanted to find out what those people would be missing, and I wanted to find out just how seriously we should take Kia's first tentative steps into the world of performance motoring. Oh, and I think it looks absolutely fan-bloody-tastic.

So, this is a Kia Proceed GT Tech. Designed by a team led by Peter Schreyer (he of Mk1 Audi TT fame), it's a three-door Golf-sized hatchback with a 1.6-litre direct-injection, twin-scroll turbocharged engine with continuously variable valve timing (inlet and exhaust). A modest 201bhp is produced at 6000rpm, and 195lb ft of torque between 1750 and 4500rpm. Claimed combined fuel consumption is 38.2mpg.

Kia has been very cautious with its positioning of the GT, reluctant to cast it as a pure hot hatch (note it's a GT and not GTI) and careful not to mention it in the same breath as VW or BMW. However, the styling is as sharp if not sharper than that of any rival, and at 143mph flat out and

taking 7.4 seconds to get from 0 to 62mph it's not exactly slow. It will be interesting to discover over the coming months if our Golf GTI long-termer feels significantly quicker in real-world terms. We'll also get road tester Dan Prosser to crack open his timing gear and run some comparative in-gear data.

In terms of spec, this Tech model is the highest of two trim levels. In standard trim, the GT is extremely well specced, with highlights including air con, reversing sensors, Bluetooth with music streaming, voice recognition, a TFT display, a six-speaker stereo and pretty much every safety feature you can imagine. Tech adds to this a 7-inch touchscreen, Euro mapping, a reversing camera, heated seats and

steering wheel(!), start-stop, smart entry, dual-zone air con, xenon adaptive lights and much more. Spec black metallic paint for £490, as I did, and the car you're looking at costs £22,985, including Kia's seven year, 100,000-mile warranty.

So, my head is sold on the Kia and initial impressions are very positive. This is a very refined, very stylish and very well-equipped hatch. The question over the next six months or so will be whether the Proceed GT can win my heart. **X**

Nick Trott (@evoNickTrott)

Date acquired	May 2014
Total mileage	177
Mileage this month	50
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	35.8

END-OF-TERM

Toyota GT86



Its toughest test yet – a year on the **evo** fleet – is over. So, did Toyota's drivers' coupe impress or disappoint?

SITTING AT A junction the other morning, indicator tick-tocking, windscreen wipers swish-swashing, a red GT86 splashed past in front of me. Our own grey '86 had left **evo** a couple of weeks prior and suddenly I rather missed it. You see, on days when the heavenly bathtubs were left to overflow, the GT86 was an absolute hoot. Sitting low in a precise chassis, behind a naturally aspirated engine and in front of the driven wheels, it was a truly great place to be. With a slippery road beneath the tyres you could play with the car to your heart's content, sliding it at lowish speeds and loving every minute.

Braking power always seemed to reach its limit sooner than I expected, but the pedal feel was excellent so you could manage it easily. On the way into corners you could play the front end, feeling your way in, and although the initial breakaway of rear grip was quite abrupt there was no need to panic,

because once the tyres (of which more in a bit) were slipping, it was easy to play with, extending or shortening slides at will. Not since I ran a Caterham had trips through the sodden roundabouts of Milton Keynes been so much fun.

So why was I not weeping when the GT86 left? Well, for a start, the majority of my driving sadly isn't done on sodden roundabouts or empty B-Roads. On motorways the little Toyota became a quite wearing place to be after an hour or so, simply because of the road and engine noise filtering into the cabin. The radio had to be turned up overly loud to be heard, which only increased the noise further, and while this was fine for a while, the GT86 wasn't a soothing long-journey companion. As Jethro Bovingdon – who ran the car for the first six months – commented, you could forgive the cheap-feeling interior when you were in the wonderful driving position, enjoying the tactile gearshift and

steering, but there was no getting away from the fact that the quality and NVH were less than you'd get in a similarly priced hot hatch.

The 197bhp 2-litre boxer definitely freed up with more miles, but it was never the most zippy or musical of engines, sounding very harsh above about 4000rpm. As a result it felt like hard and slightly antisocial work really revving it, which was what you needed to do to extract the most performance from it. The upside to this was that because there wasn't much incitement to gratuitously wring out each gear, the fuel economy was rather good.

Despite the coupe's diminutive size, it was surprisingly practical. I never subjected anyone to the back seats, but with the back rests folded down flat you could fit a surprising amount in the boot. All four of my Escort's wheels and tyres went in there with a bit of jiggling, as did my mountain bike. Meanwhile, the optional satnav proved a very good

system, with clear mapping and a decent touchscreen. The Bluetooth phone connection, however, was generally only used in extremis for short, shouty conversations.

The 10,000-mile, £169 first service was carried out by Steven Eagell of Milton Keynes, who were extremely efficient and helpful. However, while idly looking at the servicing price list, I noticed that only a V8 Land Cruiser is more expensive to service in the Toyota range, which is a bit startling. The only fault that I had was condensation in the offside-rear light – a common problem according to the GT86 owners' forum.

Jethro changed the original Michelin Primacy tyres early, which was undoubtedly a good decision. The standard rubber definitely lets the car move around, but there is a distinct lack of precision and a nasty feeling that the sidewall will simply fold underneath once you reach a certain level of commitment. Swapped for some equally narrow



Audi R8 V10 Plus

Looking for a practical, everyday-useable car? Meaden's got a recommendation...

C CAN YOU USE a mid-engined, near-550bhp supercar as your everyday car? Perhaps more pertinently, if you had one would you want to? If that car is an Audi R8 then the answer is an unequivocal 'yes', which accounts for the rate at which The Unicorn is piling on the miles. Whether it's a trip to the local supermarket or a big-miles European jaunt, this car takes it all in its stride without complaint or compromise.

Daily driving is by far the most complete test of any car, and more likely to take a supercar out of its comfort zone than half a dozen laps of the Nürburgring. It's the little things that assume huge significance. Crap hands-free is one of my pet hates, but the R8's

is absolutely crystal clear. The ergonomics are ace, visibility virtually unimpeded, noise levels are modest (unless you really wind the V10 up) and the control weights and rate of response are as deft at 20mph as they are 120.

Downsides? Well, if I'm looking for a space at the supermarket it can take me a while to find an end spot to minimise the chance of

'Within the constraints of its two-seat mid-engined layout, it is hugely capable'

some numpty clumping their door into the Audi's precious aluminium flanks. But that's just Man Parking and not specific to the R8.

Speaking of doors, the R8's are unusually barrel profiled, which means you need a lot of space to swing them fully open. If you can't, it's a bit of a squeeze to slide out of your seat without scuffing

your right foot across the glossy carbonfibre door grab.

The boot is a bit restricted in size – think one of those wheeled carry-on flight bags, plus a bit of room for the motoring journalist's friend, 'the squishy bag' – but there's a useful ledge behind the seats for coats, a suit carrier, etc. Of more concern is the fact that the boot liner is a little flimsy and its flock coating prone to scuffs. It's not a big deal, but it does fall short of the R8's otherwise exemplary design, engineering and build quality.

Of course, it'll never rival an A4 Avant for runs to the tip or swallowing IKEA flat-packs, but within the constraints of its two-seat mid-engined layout, the R8 is a hugely capable all-rounder. Its beauty, and possibly greatest achievement, is that it drives like no other Audi, yet functions like every other Audi. **X**

Richard Meaden
(@DickieMeaden)

Date acquired	March 2014
Total mileage	4251
Mileage this month	1304
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	19.4

215/45 R17 Dunlop Sport Maxx RTs (£393 all-in) the car gained more grip but also more precision. The Dunlops were also much more predictable and consistent once sliding.

I'll fondly remember a few truly great drives in our long-termer, but the biggest sticking point for me was the lacklustre engine, which made the car hard to love more of the time. We've said it before, but after our 12 months with GU13 ERO we'll say it again: what would really make the GT86 the **evo** hero it should be is another 80bhp and 80lb ft, while remaining under £30K. **X**

Henry Catchpole
(@HenryCatchpole)

Date acquired	May 2013
Duration of test	12 months
Total test mileage	14,661
Overall mpg	31.1
Costs	£562
Purchase price	£27,995
Trade-in value	£19,000
Depreciation	£8995





END-OF-TERM

Peugeot 208 GTI

The 197bhp French hot hatch has departed. Its driver, film-maker Sam Riley, says au revoir



Above: small steering wheel obscured the dials for Riley; the satnav wasn't up to scratch either. **Left:** 197bhp turbocharged 1.6-litre engine ensured suitable pace for a hot hatch



S SO, AFTER SEVEN months and just over 12,000 miles, my time with the Peugeot 208 GTI has come to an end. And I have to say that it was with some sadness that I handed the key back to the man from Peugeot so that the car could rejoin the rest of the French firm's UK press fleet.

The 208's vital statistics were a breath of fresh air compared to those of the Skoda Superb estate I'd run previously – 197bhp, 203lb ft and 0-62mph in 6.8sec certainly suggested a car that I'd have bags of fun driving, and for the most part it didn't disappoint.

KV13 UEM first arrived in the **evo** car park last September with just over 6000 miles on the clock, and it came with only two optional extras, bumping the basic price of £18,895 up to a total of £19,945. One was much more of a hit than the other: the panoramic sunroof (£400) really helped make the car feel light and airy inside. On the other hand, the £650 integrated satnav was largely a disaster from start to finish, refusing to accept full postcodes at any point and being left pretty much redundant through the latter months of the car's time here.

Many recent Peugeots have been criticised for lacking sportiness, but the GTI doesn't fall into that trap. Ours certainly delivered plenty of dynamic thrills. It was great fun to hustle along both B-roads and through quiet urban settings (such as my night-time run through Milton Keynes, detailed in **evo** 196), and it proved just as much of a hoot when given a spin on the West Circuit at the Bedford Autodrome.

From an ergonomic point of view, the 208 was a nice place to spend time, the well-bolstered seats offering plenty of comfort. The minuscule steering wheel initially caused me a fair bit of irritation, particularly as it did a sterling job of obscuring the dials from view, but I gradually came to like it: such a small wheel made me feel like I was in control of a tiny pocket-rocket of almost kart-like proportions.

Other bugbears included the firm ride that could become rather tiresome on long motorway journeys, but in mitigation that

kind of use isn't necessarily what the 208 GTI was designed for. The sound system was probably the biggest disappointment, though: its output came across as very mediocre, certainly when compared to the excellent systems found in numerous cars of all classes these days. Strangely, I also found that simultaneously plugging my phone and my iPod into the car's pair of USB ports rendered neither of them useable through the infotainment system, for reasons that remain unknown to myself.

The 208's fuel economy remained remarkably consistent throughout the period of the test, returning 35mpg after practically every type of driving, from B-road blasts to long motorway slogs. The only cost incurred was the £284 needed for a new pair of front tyres, but it has to be said that they only needed replacing towards the end of the loan period and after Dickie Meaden and I had given the old tyres a damn good thrashing around the Bedford Autodrome. There were no other maintenance costs as the GTI doesn't require its first service until 20,000-mile mark, which our car was still some way short of at the time it went back.

The trade-in value of our 208 when it left us was approximately £14,500, representing a fairly normal depreciation of £5445. However, that should still make it something of a bargain second-hand. Rare, too – in my experience sightings of others are few and far between.

The 208 GTI is portrayed as a tribute to its famous 205 GTI predecessor, and on that criteria it simply doesn't have the presence or the general feel of that 1980s icon. But the 208 is an excellent hot hatch in its own right, and after some initial misgivings, it turned out to be a pleasure to run it. ❌

Sam Riley (@samgriley)

Date acquired	September 2013
Duration of test	7 months
Total test mileage	12,206
Overall mpg	35.6
Costs	£284.18 (front tyres)
Purchase price	£19,945
Trade-in value	£14,500
Depreciation	£5445



Vauxhall Corsa VXR Clubsport

I IF I TAKE the long way home from work, which has become standard practice when I'm in the Clubsport, there's this particular entry ramp that drops down from a roundabout to join a dual carriageway. It's effectively a sweeping left-hand bend taken in third gear, with a radius that perfectly matches the torque-steering effects of the Drexler limited-slip differential and 184lb ft of torque. What I'm saying is, if I get the line right, I can drive right around that corner without touching the steering wheel.

It's a neat party trick, but it's also a perfect demonstration of how that diff completely dominates the driving experience. I've never known an LSD to be such a prominent component in the overall dynamic make-up of a performance car. Even in sedate, day-to-day driving, it can be felt tugging the wheel this

way and that as you negotiate a roundabout, for instance. It's an ever-present statement of intent.

On smoother roads, the Clubsport is as entertaining as anything else in the small hot hatch class, and just as rapid, too. There is vast grip and good body control, the 202bhp turbocharged 1.6-litre engine pulls hard and the damping quality in compressions is brilliant. The problem is that, on the lumpy and uneven roads that make up the majority of our back-road network in the UK, the Clubsport can tie itself in knots. The Bilstein dampers, so brilliant when dealing with one major input at a time, seem to run out of ideas when mid-corner bumps and undulations come thick and fast, so the Corsa never feels completely tied into the road surface. Instead, it pogo over the top of it. When combined with the torque-steer from the LSD

A month in, and the hardcore hatch is proving to be both a hoot and a handful

and the slightly remote steering, pedalling the Clubsport at speed down a demanding stretch of road becomes a frantic and mostly reactive discipline.

It's also as exciting as driving experiences come at this price point, but the VXR just isn't as resolved or as intuitive in such conditions as the very best in class. Still, since it delivered a swift backhand to the chops of our recently departed Renaultsport Clio 200 in one of Dickie Meaden's Track Battle videos (visit youtube.com/evotv), it cannot be said that the Clubsport's individual approach is an ineffective one. ❌

Dan Prosser (@TheDanProsser)

Date acquired	April 2014
Total mileage	1928
Mileage this month	1042
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	28.5



SEAT Leon Cupra 280

The 276bhp hatch's clever active limited-slip differential is proving to be a highlight

 ONE OF MY main concerns about running our Cupra long-termer was that it might be a little bit too much like the Mk7 Golf GTI, with which it shares its MQB platform. Don't get me wrong, I admire the Golf greatly, but so capable is its chassis that, even with the upgrade to 227bhp that comes with the optional Performance Pack, it can feel a bit *too* composed.

The Cupra clearly shares a good portion of the GTI's DNA – it has that same super-secure feel that makes rapid progress truly effortless. But dig deep and you're rewarded with a buzz that the Golf all too often can't deliver. Perhaps it's down to some different fine-tuning of MQB by SEAT, or maybe it's simply that the extra 49bhp over the (slightly more expensive) PP GTI gives the Cupra 280's chassis more to deal with, but the Spanish car's extra edge beyond eight-tenths is unmistakable.

Helping you find it is the active mechanical limited-slip differential

that the Cupra shares with the Performance Pack Golf. Called VAQ (short for *Vorderachsquersperre*, which is German for 'front-axle transverse differential lock'), it features an electro-hydraulically operated multi-plate clutch that can vector torque across the front axle to provide maximum traction, based on inputs from various sensors.

Some reports – not in this publication, I hasten to add – have suggested that this diff adds nothing to the SEAT's driving experience and that its presence is virtually undetectable. Please ignore those reports. From tight second-gear turns through to 80mph sweepers, the Cupra's LSD is impressively effective in any corner where you ask it to perform. Get on the power early and the car simply pulls cleanly along your desired line, both front wheels biting hard, no understeer, and no wrestling with the steering either.

And perhaps this is where the confusion comes from. LSDs on

front-drivers often holler 'Here I am!' by delivering an obvious tug of the steering wheel in the direction you're turning, sometimes leading to further steering corrections by the driver. So maybe when one finally eliminates the histrionics and just gets the job done, it seems odd. Or like it's not doing anything at all. But it is – and then some.

Get used to the Cupra's slick, sophisticated diff and suddenly the passive LSDs on the VXR and Ford RSs of this world seem rather gimmicky. And without their steering drama, you can focus on carrying even more pace through the corner, and working the diff even harder still. Understated it may be, but ineffective? No way. ✕

Ian Eveleigh

Date acquired	March 2014
Total mileage	3026
Mileage this month	887
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	27.2

VW Golf GTI

The GTI is back, and has been taken for a V-max run by its new keeper

K KX63 PYA HAS returned to the **evo** car park. It was last seen heading off to Volkswagen's UK headquarters in Milton Keynes displaying a veritable smorgasbord of warning lights. There, VW's technicians tracked all the apparent issues down to a faulty ABS control unit, which was duly replaced under warranty.

With Mike Duff no longer at **evo** and my 208 GTI having gone back to Peugeot (see page 132), I've adopted the Golf. My first impressions are that the VW feels like a much more serious sporty hatchback than the 208. That's not to denigrate the Pug in any way, as it gave me plenty of fun, but the Golf feels more focused and refined in its performance and its extra 30bhp compared to the 208 (227bhp for the Performance Pack-equipped German versus 197bhp for the French car) gives it an extra bit of punch in each of its six gears.



When I took on the VW, I wasn't expecting to undergo a baptism of fire with the car, but that's exactly what I got at a Vmax200 event at Bruntingthorpe. For the uninitiated, the format is simple: give it the beans down the two-mile runway and see what top speed you can achieve. I was only in attendance to film editor Nick Trott attempting to reach 200mph in a Lamborghini Aventador (see youtube.com/

evoTV), and a good thing too: the Golf was dwarfed by the status of the other cars in attendance.

Nevertheless, a chance cropped up for me to have a go with the Golf, and after getting a decent start and a good run through the bend that leads onto the runway, I realised that this would be my only opportunity to wring the GTI out as far as it can be wrung. Despite VW's claim that it's limited to 155mph, the speedo

showed an indicated 159mph before I had to slam on the anchors, feeling rather pleased with myself. It was certainly an opening weekend to remember with the Golf. **X**

Sam Riley (@samgriley)

Date acquired	January 2014
Total mileage	4552
Mileage this month	554
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	26.7

Ferrari 458 Italia



Above: electronic parking brake needs new shoes every few months.

Below: ...but otherwise the 458 is handling the miles well



Ferrari 458 Italia

A mileage milestone has got George thinking about running costs

W WX11 RECENTLY SMASHED the 50,000-mile marker in almost exactly three years from new. It cost the thick end of £220,000 in May 2011, so I shudder to think what the trade would value it at these days, given its mileage. That said, prices of 'junior league' supercars, especially in the five- to ten-year-old bracket, seem to be holding up well, as many were exported in 2009-12 due to a favourable exchange rate and overall demand from other right-hand-drive markets. It's even given me hope that the 250,000-mile orange Murciélago (almost finished, by the

way) might actually be worth more than two bags of carrots.

But back to the 458 Italia. A bit of a weak spot, in my humble opinion, is its appetite for shoes for the electronic parking brake, which it seems to devour with frightening regularity. In fact looking back over the last 18 months it's had four sets at £480 a pop. Of course, when it needs them it's not shy about telling you with a constant bleeping that drives you round the twist. Just give me a traditional handbrake... Overall, though, and considering its sophisticated electronics and hard life, WX11 is on a roll at the moment.

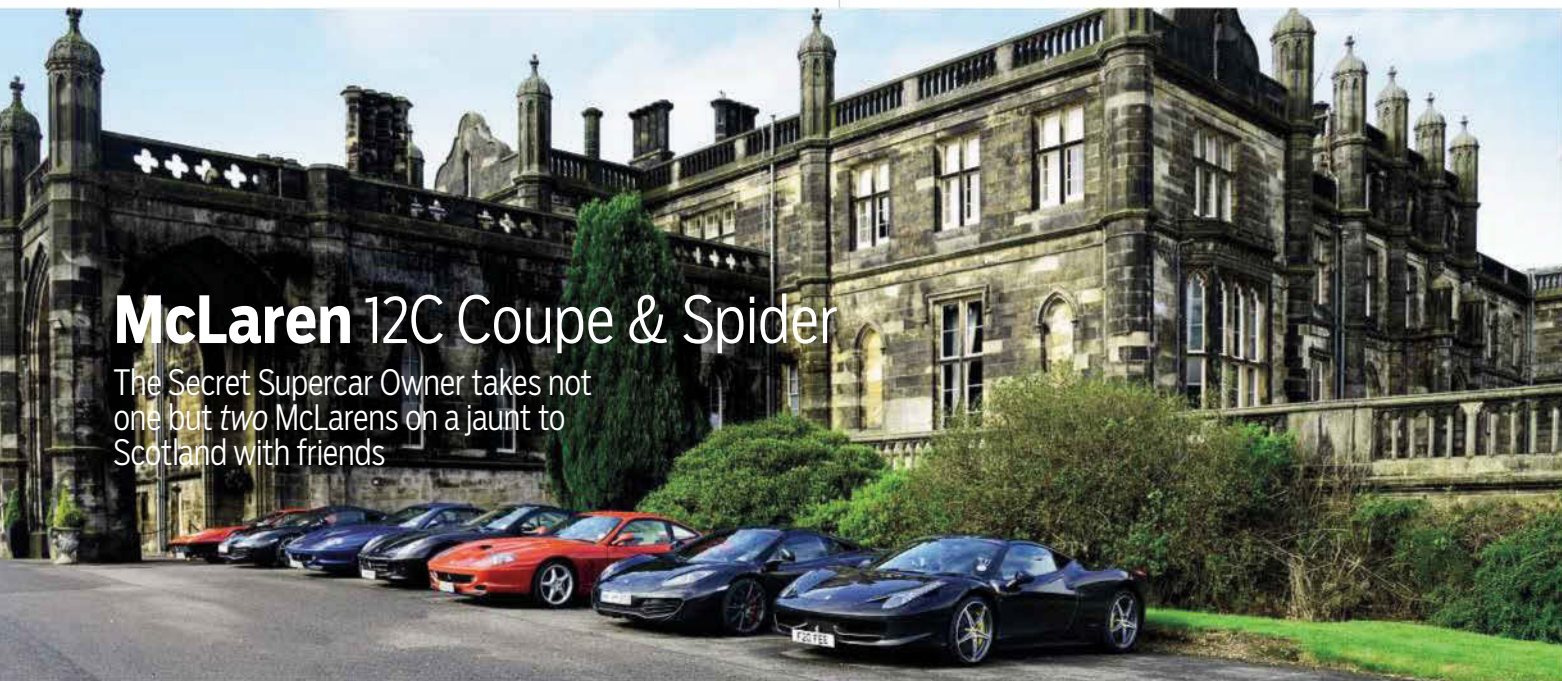
Digressing again slightly, I recently spent a couple of hours examining the maintenance records for the 458, alongside those of the other cars I've run in these pages (the Aston DBS, Lamborghini LP640 and the aforementioned Murciélago) and a few more cars that get some

hammer on 6th Gear's supercar experience days, such as a Ferrari 599 GTB, and two examples each of Audi's R8, Porsche's 997 Turbo and Ferrari's 430. Interestingly, what is common to all of them – with the exception of the Porsches, which seem to cost less to run than my mum's Golf – is that they seem to be at their most troublesome between 25,000 and 35,000 miles, but from there on they 'settle down'. Even at 50,000 miles plus, maintenance bills aren't significantly higher.

Food for thought, maybe, if you're considering a higher-mileage supercar... **X**

Simon George (@6gearexperience)

Date acquired	May 2011
Total mileage	51,925
Mileage this month	2183
Costs this month	£480
mpg this month	14.0



McLaren 12C Coupe & Spider

The Secret Supercar Owner takes not one but two McLarens on a jaunt to Scotland with friends

EVERY YEAR I get together with a group of friends to spend four or five days driving some of the best roads in Europe. This year, the destination was western Scotland. We ventured up to Scotland in 2012 and it was widely regarded as our best trip yet, so a return engagement was in order. The group came from five countries and included a wide range of Ferraris and my two McLaren 12Cs.

After several weeks of debate, the final decision to take both McLarens was only made 24 hours before the planned start of the trip. This made for an interesting situation as the 12C Coupe was sitting in Germany, 600 miles away from our starting point in Oxford, and on the wrong side of the English Channel. The good news was that the car and I were both in the same city, so within an hour the Eurotunnel was booked and the Coupe and I were heading down the ramp onto the Autobahn.

With a train to catch and the May 1 holiday traffic starting to build, it was a hard push down the Autobahn. The 12C Coupe was completely in its element as I did my best to ruin any sort of reasonable mpg reading. Those massive carbon-ceramic brakes and the Autobahn are made for each other.

With the suspension set to Normal and the transmission on

Track, progress was suitably brisk through Germany. Entering the Netherlands, however, life slowed considerably. After a second splash and dash, it was a monotonous roll down the hugely uninteresting E34. Despite a posted speed limit of 130kph (81mph), it was rare that this was achieved due to the proclivity of a large number of trucks for passing each other on the two-lane highway



at 90kph (56mph). If the 12C had been fitted with anti-tank missiles, I would have been extremely tempted to try out a few...

Entering Belgium, velocity improved considerably – until the outskirts of Antwerp, where it dropped to zero. A massive traffic jam took an hour to navigate before the final dash to the Eurotunnel. We made our train with five minutes to spare and the rest of the run to

London, Oxford and then Scotland was uneventful.

Once in the UK I gave the key to the 12C Coupe to my brother, leaving me piloting the 12C Spider. Of all the car models I have driven in both coupe and open-top versions, the 12C is the first where I have noticed zero difference in handling between the two. Carbonfibre tubs are wonderful things! In fact the only

driving along several truly stunning roads, first between Glasgow and Glencoe, and later down to Portpatrick. The A816 stands out as one of the favourite routes as it sweeps down through the hills and alongside several lochs.

Combined, the two 12Cs covered just under 4000 miles through sun and rain, and neither car put a single wheel wrong. Performance-wise, the 12Cs had an edge on the rest of our pack, especially when it came to the tight, twisty stuff. The great sight lines, near-perfect driving position, linear power delivery and accurate steering all inspire confidence and allow you to push on and make brisk progress very comfortably. In terms of comfort and a nice place to live for five days, you would be hard-pressed to beat the cockpit of a 12C.

With the trip finally over, my brother and I compared notes on the two cars. We decided the Coupe wins on brakes and luggage capacity, but the Spider is the clear favourite when the sun comes out. ✘

Secret Supercar Owner
(@SupercarOwner)

Date acquired	Coupe April 2013, Spider March 2014
Total mileage	Coupe 7630, Spider 5550
Mileage this month	Coupe 2230, Spider 1550
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	17.0



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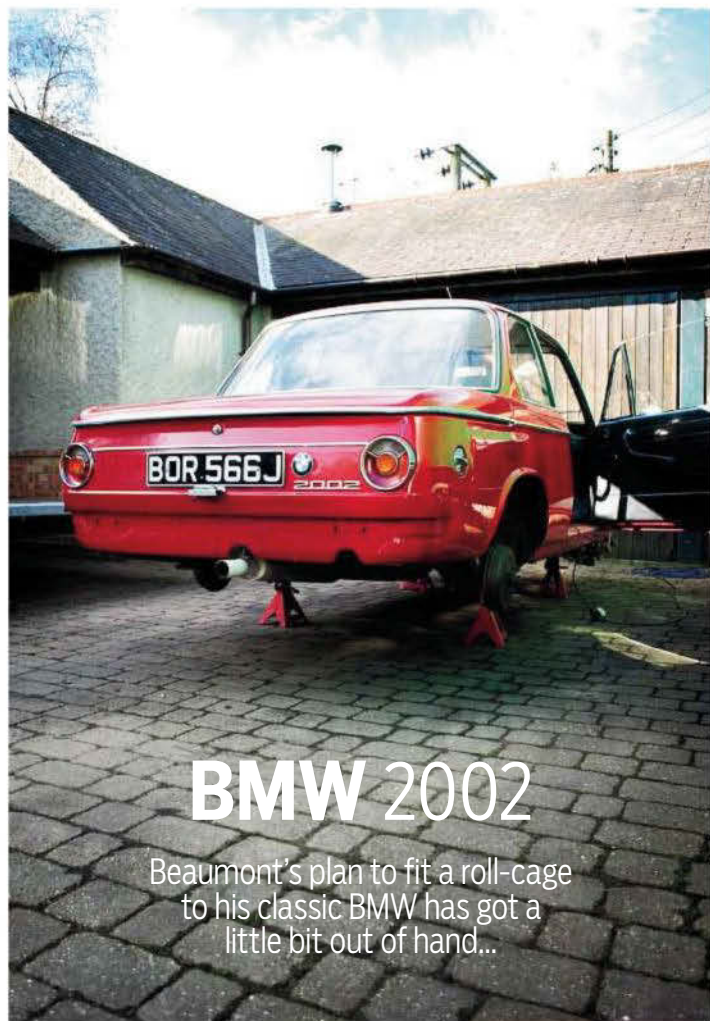
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BMW 2002

Beaumont's plan to fit a roll-cage to his classic BMW has got a little bit out of hand...

I I'VE DONE IT the wrong way round. I tortured my car throughout the salty, wet and icy winter. Then, when the weather got better, I took it off the road to strip it down to work on it.

Initially, I just wanted to fit a roll-cage. Marginally increasing the car's safety so that it could no longer be categorised as a death trap and slightly increasing the rigidity of its aged shell were important factors... OK, I ain't fooling no one. I'm fitting a cage because of the simple fact that a roll-cage is really cool.

To enable me to install it, I stripped out the 2002's interior and removed all the nasty, tar-like sound deadening that was stuck to the floor. This was partly to remove some weight (almost 11kg) and also to see if it was covering any nasty rot. Despite the floors being from the 1970s, when rust-proofing was as rare as brown corduroy was popular, the removal of the sound deadening thankfully revealed no rust. What I ended up with, however, was a floor in three colours: white (primer), red and scratched. Once installed, the cage will leave the shell exposed where the rear seats used to be, so the floor will need painting.

And as I'll be having some of the inside painted, I've decided to

take the opportunity to tidy up the outside, which is looking a little rough and faded in places. I've found a man who makes good-quality fibreglass bonnets and bootlids, so I've ordered one of each. Having lightweight panels that won't rust is a prospect too appealing to ignore, so I'm on the hunt for fibreglass front wings, too. Of the existing panels, the doors are in the worst shape and will actually need replacing.

All this will leave most of the car needing new paint, and what with the imminent arrival of my new engine (and therefore the removal of the current one), at some point soon the car will be a complete bare shell. And as I never wanted a red car and the attention to detail of the person who painted it last left a lot to be desired, I've decided to have it blasted back to bare metal and repainted blue.

So simply fitting a roll-cage has turned into a complete bare-metal restoration. That's normal, right? ✘

Will Beaumont
(@WillBeaumont)

Date acquired	July 2008
Total mileage	146,050-ish
Mileage this month	630-ish
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	15-ish



Ford Focus ST Estate

Smith has been on a (short-lived) economy drive

OVER THE LAST few months, the relatively poor fuel economy of the Focus has really started to grind my gears. Although I'd be foolish to expect some stratospheric mpg figure from a 247bhp 2-litre turbo petrol engine, I would have hoped for better than the mid-20s it has consistently

delivered. Combine this with a fuel tank that seems a lot smaller than the claimed 62 litres, and fuel stops are all too frequent.

To remedy this, I decided I'd try an mpg mission for a couple of weeks to see how far the economy could be stretched. This involved keeping to the main roads between home and

the *evo* office rather than the twisty, entertaining B-roads I usually take, and setting the cruise control to a relatively mundane pace. That this particular period also required me to put in plenty of motorway miles was an extra help.

I'm happy to say that the results of driving like a granddad for two weeks were good, the Focus returning a much more encouraging 31.5mpg. It was nice to have a change of pace in my driving, although I'm not too sure I'd want to drive like that all the time: removing every ounce of excitement from my time behind the wheel for an extra 5-6mpg didn't really seem worthwhile.

Away from the Focus, I'm always keen to test out the luggage-holding capabilities of other cars to get a better idea of how the Ford stacks up in the grand scheme of things. More often than not, this would be a



car that is at least in a similar class to the Focus, but this month that simply wasn't possible. But I was not to be deterred, and as the picture here shows, I was able to transport my mountain bike in the back of a Corvette Stingray – the 455bhp two-seater American hooligan that simply screams practicality... ✘

Dean Smith (@evoDeanSmith)

Date acquired	August 2013
Total mileage	22,306
Mileage this month	1619
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	31.5



Renault Clio Williams

Dobie has had a radio fitted in his classic Clio. And it only took him four years to get round to it...



I I HAVE OWNED the Williams for four years this summer. That's a surprising stat to me – it feels like half that, which, if you're familiar with the old adage, is an indicator that I've been having fun...

Since 2010 I've spent an amount of money I'm not willing to tot up on all manner of improvements and maintenance. In the process of uprating the brakes, refurbishing the wheels, and thoroughly servicing the car each year, I've neglected to fix something I alluded to in the Clio's second-ever Fast Fleet report – the vacant slot in the dashboard where a stereo originally lived. After an impressively long period kidding myself I was replicating the dynamic focus of Renaultsport's stripped-out R26.R, it was time to accept the lack of music (or more pertinently, Five Live football commentary) was limiting how often I used the Willy for the long weekend journeys its accomplished ride and plush seats otherwise encourage.

Back in issue 151 I explained I wanted 'a simplistic, none-too-flash item that sits well with a '90s dashboard'. My dream scenario was one of Becker's lovely tech-heavy but retro-styled set-ups, but a distinct lack of funds led me to seek



something more mainstream.

I eventually settled for the Kenwood KDC DAB 34U (£133 on Amazon) – a pleasingly plain-looking unit, albeit one with adjustable graphics colours to match the car's instruments. As well as FM/AM radio, a CD slot and iPod connectivity, it also has DAB digital radio – and, unusually, the necessary aerial, too.

The fitting by Halfords (£29.99) was neat, the windscreen-mounted aerial being subtle and requiring no drilling, simply sticking on the inside of the glass. And thus far the clarity of signal and breadth of digital stations it receives are both proving impressive. Job done. At last. ✕

Stephen Dobie
(@evoStephenDobie)

Date acquired	August 2010
Total mileage	97,070
Mileage this month	773
Costs this month	£163
mpg this month	35.8

Jaguar F-type V6 S Convertible

Going sideways and looking good aren't its only fortes

T THE F-TYPE IS currently parked up and awaiting its new tyres. I was a bit slow to sort replacements so it's been running on or near the wear markers for a little while. Impressively, the OE Pirellis still have plenty of lateral grip, but the rears do light-up a bit more easily than is ideal and because they're chunky 295-sections, dealing with standing water has become a bigger challenge in recent weeks...

Anyway, while the Jaguar has gathered dust over the past week or so I've been driving the odd test car and my 996. So what have I missed? Apart from the mundane stuff like a decent DAB radio (the Jag's holds the best reception of any I've tried) and bright white xenons at night,

it's really been the F-type's ability to entertain at low speeds. I know it's all a bit synthetic, but I have grown to enjoy the V6's crackling exhaust and I'll simply never tire of the car's highly developed roundabout skills. Hence the tyres, I guess.

The F-type has also really stood up to the quality test. OK, so the passenger-side electric window switch went on the blink for a week or so (now miraculously cured), but other than that it's been all plain sailing. No oil used, no rattles of any kind and the seats and trim in general all look as new. I know it's hardly old, but it gets the sort of use that ages a car – airport runs with bags in the footwell or passenger seat (the boot really is pathetic);



supporting the odd photo shoot in foul weather; small children insisting on pretending to drive it on the driveway – that sort of thing.

So despite some slightly scratchy-looking and brittle-feeling materials – the flap that covers the cup holders on the centre console is pretty nasty, for example – I think the interior has integrity and is lifted by the nice design touches that

abound. I'm really looking forward to a new set of boots to get it dynamically tip-top again, too. ✕

Jethro Bovington
(@JethroBovington)

Date acquired	September 2013
Total mileage	13,694
Mileage this month	235
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	26.2

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Market Watch

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BENTLEY ARNAGE

The last 'proper' Bentley, now available from just £25,000

IT SEEMED ONLY right to make the first car to be featured in this newly named column something that is also physically big – but that's not the only reason for choosing the Bentley Arnage. Admittedly it's a long way from being the sort of sharp-edged driving weapon that usually appears on the pages of *evo* – but many believe it to be the last 'proper' Bentley before the more mass-produced Continental GT democratised the marque and diluted its status as the carriage of choice for (slightly) sporting gentlemen.

Now, we've all seen how affordable old-but-not-really-classic examples of the Winged B's products have become, with cars such as the Brooklands (the old four-door, not the hefty,

limited-production coupe) falling to rock bottom, and Turbo Rs doing likewise. As an example, a perfectly decent-looking 1989 Turbo R with wads of service history changed hands at a Barons auction in April for a premium-inclusive £3300. In anyone's book, that's ridiculously cheap.

So what about the Arnage? Despite production having spanned 11 years, from 1998 to 2009, the Arnage is still an outdated machine regardless of when it was built. The early, BMW-engined cars (later called 'Green Label'), with a 349bhp 4.4-litre twin-turbo V8, are clearly a more practical proposition for regular (if not daily) use than the 'Red Label' versions and others with the Turbo R-derived 6.75-litre V8 – but if you want a post-2000 car, then there is no choice.

Aside from the run-out 'Final Series' of 150, the most desirable are the late, twin-turbo 'R' and 'T', which deliver an exhilarating 450-odd horsepower and endow the mighty behemoth – kerb weight about 2600kg – with a top speed of 170mph and unfeasibly rapid acceleration. Needless to say, the interior is better appointed than the above-average domestic sitting room and, despite its age, the Arnage still reeks of effortless superiority.

All of which makes it a tempting buy – especially at an entry-level price of around £25,000 for a genuine, well-maintained one. We'll discuss the running costs another time...

Simon de Burton

In the classifieds



Arnage Red Label £24,995

Titty Ho Motor Company, Northants

2000, 38,000 miles, Black Emerald, beige leather, full service history.



Arnage T £32,994

Imperials, Essex

2005, 51,000 miles, Storm Silver, Beluga leather, recent service.



Arnage R £25,990

Beck Evans, Kent

2003, 56,000 miles, Peacock Blue, magnolia leather, full service history.

Or consider...

Rolls-Royce Seraph

Rolls's version of the Arnage, powered by a 5.4-litre BMW V12. Rarer, less desirable, less sporting and not nearly so raffish. Now from around £30k.

Bentley Turbo R

As stated above, they are now exceedingly good value. 6.75-litre turbo V8 produces 320bhp in the R, or 400bhp in the rare Turbo RT of 1997-98.

Chrysler 300C

The poor man's Bentley, or just a more practical daily car? Look out for the 5.7 V8, with prices around £7-8k.

Market Watch

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Ask the expert

Your buying questions answered



Q I currently own a Mk2 Skoda Octavia vRS petrol estate with a DSG gearbox, but it is due to be replaced as it is now three years old. I need something with at least the same amount of space and practicality but that will still put a smile on my face when I get the chance to open the throttle. I have around £27,000 to spend and I'm currently thinking that the only suitable car would be another Octavia...

Paul Hardman

A Well, Paul, it sounds as though you have answered your own question – for the type of car you want at the money you have to spend, a new Octavia vRS estate seems to be the obvious choice, not least because you have clearly enjoyed owning the one you've got. The latest, third-generation version (pictured) is a bit more powerful

than yours too, of course, so could be marginally more fun. You could, I suppose, go for the diesel vRS, but I fear it would be a let-down after three years with the petrol engine.

The only comparable alternative we're left with is the Ford Focus ST Estate. It has marginally less load space, but – assuming you don't need to drive everywhere in a car stuffed to the gunnels – you'll probably be happy to trade luggage capacity for bhp, of which you get an extra 30 with the ST. If you do a lot of motorway driving, the Ford's marginally higher torque output might also be welcome.

I suspect, however, that your decision could rest on how much you like using your DSG 'box. If the answer is 'lots' and you find the six-speed stick-shift of the Focus old-fashioned, then you'll have to remain loyal to the vRS. **sdb**

Email your question to experts@evo.co.uk

Just looking

The pick of the classifieds this month



Ferrari 412i

£29,995

Cheshire Classic Cars, Cheshire
cheshireclassiccars.co.uk
01244 529500

Depending on who you speak to, the Ferrari 400 and 412 are either quirky and underrated or 'comically dreadful' (an opinion attributable to *evo* columnist Richard Porter). What you can't deny is that they're one of the cheapest ways to get into a well-kept Ferrari.

For a fiver under 30 grand, this smart-looking example at Cheshire Classic Cars is a 1988 412i automatic with just 46,000 miles to its name. Its Grigio paint and Sabbia upholstery result in a subtle, tasteful look, and while it's a late-1980s car, the styling is clearly from a decade earlier, varying little from the Ferrari 400 launched in 1976. Its three-speed self-shifter might not be to all tastes, but the combination of a 340bhp 4.9-litre V12 engine and a useable 2+2 body surely is.

Stephen Dobie (@evoStephenDobie)



Maserati GranCabrio

£56,990

Bowker Motor Group, Lancs
bowkermotorgroup.co.uk
01254 769079

From one four-seat Italian to another. The roofless GranTurismo has been with us since 2010, the GranCabrio arriving three years after its hard-top sibling. With a 434bhp naturally aspirated V8 up front, losing the roof and removing an obstacle between eight-cylinder orchestra and occupants' ears was a canny move. And back in *evo* 142, John Barker described the GranCabrio as being 'as good to drive as it is to look at' – a grand statement given what a slickly styled car it is.

This early 10-plate example at Bowker Motor Group in Lancashire has covered a relatively scant 13,798 miles. With exotically named Giallo Extra Campionario paint and gloss black Birdcage alloys, it's far less subtle than the Ferrari above, but given how vocal its quad tailpipes will be, probably all the better for it. **SD**

Trader chat

Rod Leach's 'Nostalgia' 01992 500007



Rod Leach has been trading in genuine AC Cobras for a remarkable 40 years, during which time he has come to be recognised as a leading expert on Carroll Shelby's legendary supercars – but the past 12 months have been the quietest Britain's top Cobra specialist has ever known.

'The Cobra market is, however, a very unusual one,' says Leach. 'I don't feel as though I understand it any better now than when I started!'

'Part of the problem is that there are so many replicas available, which are far cheaper to buy than the real AC/Shelby

Cobra Mk1, II, III and IV cars, which are the only ones I deal with. I think enthusiasts are put off buying something that is totally genuine, but which might be misconstrued as being a replica by many who see it.

'But for anyone who wants a real drivers' car, I don't think there are many which are more exciting than an AC Cobra. I'm currently looking for good homes for three of them – including a 289 FIA Cobra Continuation [pictured], one of only two factory-built by AC Cars Ltd – as well as my unique, 200mph Mazda RX-7 ex-Midnight Club supercar...'

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Auction watch



Tempting Ferraris aplenty at July's Silverstone Classic auction

SILVERSTONE AUCTIONS RAISED a few eyebrows recently when it sold a 'barn find' Dino 246GT for £132,250. Dinosaurs of this generation have been something of an anomaly for some time, with prices often seeming out of kilter with the rest of the market. Now the Northamptonshire-based auction house is offering a considerably nicer Dino at its next sale, at the Silverstone Classic event on July 26, with what seems to be a conservative estimate of £185,000-225,000.

Having been the subject of a 3000-hour nut-and-bolt restoration, the Giallo Fly yellow 246GT (pictured above) has been completely rebuilt. The interior features non-standard, but undeniably cool tan and black leather seats from a Daytona, as well as an Alcantara-trimmed dashboard.

At the same sale, Silverstone is also offering a Ferrari 308 GTS (below), which is expected to sell for just £32,000-37,000. Earlier glassfibre 308 GTBs are already well on their way to true collector status, but later steel-bodied cars like this offer a significantly more affordable proposition. This 1979 model features the preferable carburetted 2.9-litre engine, and has been well looked after, having covered just 48,516 miles since it was sold new.

Another tempting Ferrari in the sale is a 1987 Testarossa. Poster car to many teenage boys in the 1980s, this particular example has travelled a mere 23,000 miles, and is expected to sell for £38,000-42,000. After suffering minor damage in the 1990s, the car was rebuilt to a high standard, and has since scored well at some of the notoriously tough Ferrari concours events.

Nobody can accurately predict which Ferraris are set to rise next, but you can't deny just how tempting these slightly cheaper models look.

Matthew Hayward (@evoMatthew)



Auction results



RM Auctions, Monaco

1997 Ferrari F50
€907,200
2003 Ferrari Enzo
€866,000 (above)
1973 Ferrari Daytona
€532,000
2006 Ford GT
€336,000
1992 Porsche 911 RS 3.6
€268,800

Silverstone Auctions, May sale

1971 Dino 246GT
£250,700
1973 Porsche 911 S 2.4
£105,800

1989 Porsche 911 Turbo
£92,000

2005 Aston Martin DB9
£39,330
1993 Lotus Carlton
£16,675
1995 BMW 850 CSI
£14,030

Coys, Monaco

2013 McLaren 12 Spider
€159,800
2012 Ferrari FF
€227,000
1971 Ferrari Dino 246 GT
€294,200
Alfa Romeo 8C Competizione
€120,000

Barons, Sandown Park

1987 Audi Quattro
£9250
1992 Lancia Delta Integrale 16v
£7750
2002 Mercedes SL500
£7550

Anglia Car Auctions, April 5

1993 BMW M5 Touring
£7980
1985 Ford Escort RS Turbo
£4725
2000 BMW Z3M Coupe
£13,860

Auction calendar

14 June
Anglia Car Auctions
King's Lynn, UK
angliacarauctions.co.uk

19 June
DVCA
Dorchester, UK
dvca.co.uk

21 June
H&H
Rockingham, UK
classic-auctions.com

24 June
Barons
Esher, UK
barons-auctions.com

27 June
Bonhams
Goodwood, UK
bonhams.com

5 July
Artcurial
Le Mans, France
artcurial.com

12 July
Coys
Woodstock, UK
coys.co.uk

12 July
Bonhams
Stuttgart, Germany
bonhams.com

16 July
Brightwells
Leominster, UK
brightwells.com

Fantasy garage

Our market guru, Simon de Burton, spends a fictional £25,000 on three cars you would probably regret buying. All can be found amongst the listings at forsale.evo.co.uk



Lomax 223
£5750

This well maintained 1994 three-wheeler combines a Citroën 2CV flat-twin motor with not much weight and straight-through exhausts.



Pontiac Trans-Am
£16,995

It's gold, it's got the T-top, the snowflake wheels and the monster, 400ci (6.6-litre) engine. Perfect for the daily commute.



Triumph Dolomite Sprint
£2500

At around £1750 when new, the Sprint was £1000 cheaper than the rival BMW 2002ti. We soon discovered why.

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2013/63, 2014 Model, 800 miles, Anthracite Grey, Black £159,999 VAT Q

Bentley Continental GT Speed



2014 Model, 500 Miles, Onyx Black, Linen, Black wood £132,000

Bentley Continental GTC



Choice of seven motor cars in stock, From £46,999

Bentley Brooklands Coupe



2008/08, 47,000 Miles, Silver, Black Quilted leather, Silver stitching, Flying B £99,999

Range Rover 4.4 SDV8 Autobiography



2013/62, 14,000 Miles, Santorini Black, Black Leather, Glass Roof, Big Spec £89,999

Rolls-Royce Phantom



2008/08, 26,800 miles, 1 Owner, Blue Velvet Ivory, Blue piping, S/Roof, Cameras £129,999

Maybach 62 V12



2008/57, 1 Owner, 55,000 miles, Bose sound Glass Roof, Rear DVD, Fridge £89,999

Bentley Arnage



Bentley Arnage, Choice of four stunning low millage cars in stock

Bentley GTC Mulliner



2010/60, 7,200 miles, Black, Black, Linen stitching/piping, Massive spec £86,999

Bentley Azure



Choice of two motor cars in stock, from £56,999

Bentley Continental Flying Spur



Choice of three motor cars in stock, from £32,999

Rolls-Royce Silver Shadow MK1, 1968, 64,000miles, Sage Green with Beige Leather £19,999
 Rolls-Royce Corniche Convertible, 1981, 83,000 miles, Seychelles Blue, Cream leather £45,000
 Rolls-Royce 20hp Tourer Park Ward Body, 1926, 50,000miles, convertible, Grey with Red Leather £79,999
 Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud MK2, LHD, 1962, 59,000miles, Charcoal Metallic, Mulliner body £395,000
 Bentley Continental GT 2013/13, 1owner, 6,300miles, Dark Sapphire Blue with Magnolia £102,9999

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Lamborghini Diablo
VT Wheels, SE30 limited edition 24,000 miles 1996 **£129,990**



Lamborghini Gallardo LP560
Lifting Gear Reverse Camera Black Calisto Alloys 3,000 miles 2011 **£119,990**



Lamborghini Gallardo
Cordelia Alloys Qcuitura Stitching Lifting Gear 6,000 miles 2011 **£114,990**



Lamborghini Gallardo
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Lamborghini Gallardo
LHD Reverse Camera Calisto Alloys 8,000 miles 2008 **£72,990**



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Lamborghini Murcielago LP560
Hemera Alloys Full Carbon Interior Egear 12,000 miles 2007 **£139,990**



Lamborghini Gallardo
Lifting Gear Reverse Camera Egear 21,000 miles 2008 **£79,990**



Porsche Carrera GT
Carbon Racing Seats Ceramic Brakes Full Carbon Fibre option 16,000 miles 2004 **£279,990**



Rolls-Royce Phantom
Starlight Option Front and rear cameras 21 Inch alloys 7,000 miles 2009 **£149,990**



Ferrari 599
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Buying Guide

Knowledge

Your indispensable resource when buying used

Aston Martin V8/V12 Vantage 2005-present

Overview



V8 or V12, the Vantage is one of our favourite Astons. And with used prices as low as £30k, now's the time to buy **Words:** Peter Tomalin

BACK IN 2009, when we first ran a buying guide on the V8 Vantage (evo 133), we were excited about the fact you could pick up an early example (original list price £80k) for a touch over 40 grand. That seemed to us a conspicuous bargain as the Vantage approached its fourth birthday. Well, a lot has happened in the intervening five years. There's been the launch of the fabulous V12 Vantage, Roadster versions of both models, a series of motorsport-themed special editions, and the pumped-up S versions. Best of all, perhaps, you can pick up an early V8 for an almost obscenely tempting £30k. Time, then, to revisit this most **evo**-centric of modern Astons.

A quick recap. The V8 Vantage arrived in the autumn of 2005: an entry-level Aston targeted with laser precision at the 911 buyer. It has since become the biggest-selling Aston ever, with well over 15,000 sold to date. Shorter and lower than the DB9, and a strict two-seater with a golfbag-sized boot beneath the rear hatch, construction was a mixture of aluminium, steel and composites. Power came from a Jag-derived but thoroughly re-engineered quad-cam V8, originally 4.3 litres, in which form it made a wholesome 380bhp. Early cars all had a conventional six-speed Graziano manual gearbox, but from late 2006 an automated manual, called Sportshift, was available as a cost option.

In mid-2008 (09MY) the capacity went to 4.7 litres, lifting power to 420bhp. This was accompanied by new Bilstein dampers for tighter body control, an improved gearchange linkage, a revamped console and satnav, and 19in wheels as standard.

Then, in mid-2009, Aston squeezed the 510bhp 5.9-litre V12 from the DBS into the Vantage's engine bay, uprating the suspension and brakes to match, and in the process created one of our all-time favourite Astons. Today you can pick up one of those early V12 Vantages for £75-80k. But it's the V8 that fires the imagination – not least because only an Aston spotter would tell an early one from a new car. Stick a private plate on a £30k Vantage and watch your neighbours turn green with envy.

Checkpoints

Engine

The really good news is that all the Vantage engines are generally robust, so providing the service history is watertight there should be few issues. On the V8s the most common fault is failure of the gasket on the timing cover – expensive to replace because of the several hours of labour involved – so look for signs of leaks at the front of the engine. With the V12, again service history is all: properly maintained, there are no major recurring mechanical woes. They do occasionally use oil, so the level should be checked fastidiously.

Transmission

A new clutch is pricey – Aston Works quotes over £2500 fitted for the V8; an independent like McGurk charges c£2k, and more for the V12. On the manual, a particularly heavy pedal is a clue that it's on the way out; another clue is a rattle that disappears when the pedal is depressed, or any judder or slip when pulling away. Some early manual 'boxes are obstructive, particularly into first and second, but they should get better as they warm up. If you're considering a Sportshift, have an extended drive in various traffic situations: the automated manual isn't for everyone.

Suspension, steering, brakes

A Sports Pack was available for the V8, making body control tighter but the ride unremittingly firm; again, it's not for everyone. On the V12, check the condition of the CCM ceramic discs; if they feel like sandpaper it's likely the silicone lining has carbonised or just worn badly (a full set of discs and pads will set you back a five-figure sum!). The Pirelli P Zero Corsas fitted to early cars can make them a handful in cold, wet conditions; the less extreme P Zeros of later versions are generally preferred.

Body, interior, electrics

Serious corrosion shouldn't be an issue, but some cars show light bubbling around the base of the A-pillars and the door handles. Unless VentureShield or similar is fitted, the nose is prone to chips. Check any respray for quality and colour-matching. On the V12, inspect the vulnerable front splitter – it's £6k for a new one. Confirm that an early car has the optional full leather: most did, but it wasn't standard until 07MY. Battery age and condition is important, as a poor battery can lead to electrical gremlins.



1: engines are generally robust. **2:** early cars were manual-only. **3:** V8's brakes (pictured) are much cheaper than the V12's CCMs. **4:** early cars look much like later ones, which is a bonus





What we said

V8 Vantage, October '05

'The road is empty and the Aston's revvy V8 is ripping the air to shreds. The steering is heavy but not artificially so, and you get a great sense of the road texture through the rim.

'The extruded aluminium chassis feels incredibly stiff and gives the suspension a great platform to work from. The wheel-control in particular is superb; grip and traction are phenomenal. You turn and the Vantage dives for your target. Understeer isn't really an issue...

'The real key to its appeal is that it feels like a cohesive and meticulously engineered package' (evo 084)

V12 Vantage, July '09

'The V12 is brutal. Whatever the gear, whatever the revs, the shrink-wrapped engine leaps forward as soon as your right foot flexes. There's no lag, no wind-up, no time for contemplation; it's as though you've instantly hit the supercar sweet-spot every time you accelerate.

'Grip in the corners is phenomenal, the whole car much more connected to the surface of the road than either a V8 or DBS... There is no doubt that the V12 Vantage is the best car that Aston makes.' (evo 132)



Above: Vantage is undoubtedly one of the prettiest production coupes ever to hit the road



Above: official consumption figures are around 20mpg for the 4.7, and 17mpg for the V12

Specification

V8 4.3 / V8 4.7 / V12

Engine V8 4281cc/V8 4735cc/V12 5935cc
Max power 380/420/510bhp
Max torque 302/346/420lb ft
Transmission Six-speed manual (Sportshift option), rear-wheel drive
Weight 1570/1630/1680kg
Power-to-weight 246/272/308bhp/ton
0-60mph 4.8/4.7/4.4sec (claimed)
Top speed 175/180/190mph (claimed)
Price new £79,995/£85,000/£135,000

Parts prices

(Prices from mcgurk.com. Tyre price from blackcircles.com. All prices include VAT but exclude fitting)

Tyres (each) £201.55 (V8 front), £237.42 (V8 rear), £183.12 (V12 front), £256.15 (V12 rear)
Front pads (set) V8 £363.55, V12 £761.44
Front discs (pair) V8 £299.88, V12 £5553.60
Damper V8 £444.36, V12 £858.87
Clutch kit V8 £1194.36, V12 £1459.57

Servicing

(Prices from mcgurk.com, including VAT)

Services for both V8s and the V12 are every 10,000 miles or 12 months, whichever is sooner

10,000 miles/1 year V8 £533.92, V12 £570.35

20,000/2 years V8 £690.57, V12 £727.00

30,000/3 years V8 £657.70, V12 £694.13

'I bought one' John Gladman

'I bought my 59-plate V12 Vantage in December 2011. It was Quantum Silver, with lightweight seats and the 700W hi-fi upgrade. At the time it had covered 6400 miles. When I sold it at the end of 2013 it had covered 15,800 miles.

'Early on, the clutch was making a squealing noise – apparently an issue that afflicted some early cars – but Aston replaced it without any fuss. Otherwise there were no issues at all.

'One thing that new owners need to be aware of is that the Pirelli P Zero Corsas are awesome when it's warm and dry, but in the cold and wet they will bite you if you're not careful. It's not a criticism of the car particularly, just that this much torque through the rear wheels and their wide, track-biased tyres can be a recipe for disaster.

'The V12V is monumentally quick and handles very well for a 1600kg car, and

the CCM brakes are epic. It also sounds glorious and looks beautiful. People wind down their windows to hear you go by. The effect it has on others is hard to describe. It spans all ages and all demographics and they either smile at you, wave at you or just give a nod that says all you need to know about how they feel about Astons.

'I absolutely loved it. In fact I plan to buy another one later this year.'

In the classifieds



2005 (55) V8 Vantage 4.3
 ⚡ 67,000 miles
 ⚡ Tungsten Grey metallic
 ⚡ Full Aston history
 ⚡ Satnav ⚡ Heated seats
 ⚡ north-sands.co.uk

£31,990



2009 (09) V8 Vantage 4.7
 ⚡ 46,234 miles
 ⚡ Chiltern Green metallic
 ⚡ Full Aston history
 ⚡ Satnav ⚡ Bluetooth
 ⚡ silverlinkspecialistcars.co.uk

£39,000



2010 (10) V12 Vantage
 ⚡ 20,000 miles
 ⚡ Titanium Silver
 ⚡ Satnav ⚡ Tracker
 ⚡ Full Aston history
 ⚡ hrowen.co.uk

£76,950

The rivals

Porsche 911

For £30k you've got a huge choice of 997-generation 2005-07 Carrera Ss. For £40k you can get an '06-'07 997 Turbo...

Audi R8

Nothing as cheap as £30k, but early V8 R8s are now sub-£40k, with a strong reputation. V10s start at c£60k.

Maserati GranTurismo

Maser's gorgeous 400bhp V8-engined coupe starts at £35k for a good one; the superior 433bhp 'S' begins at £40k.

What to pay

The earliest V8Vs have been hovering around £30k for more than a year now; £35k is top money for an early car. Late, low-mileage 4.3s are around £40-43k, which is where the earliest, higher-mileage 4.7s start. Don't overpay for a low-spec car. Cruise control, Bluetooth, satnav, heated seats, Premium audio, parking sensors – all are desirable in a V8V. For track regulars, the Sports Pack, with its lightweight wheels and tightened suspension, is worth looking out for. Same goes for the various Prodrive upgrades. The 430bhp V8 S starts at around £70k, while the earliest V12 Vantages ('09) have now edged down to around £77k.

Useful contacts

⚡ astonmartinreview.co.uk
 (detailed model evolution)

⚡ amoc.org
 (owners' club, forum, events, etc)

⚡ astonmartinworks.com
 (sales and service)

⚡ mcgurk.com
 (sales and service)

⚡ pistonheads.com
 (cars for sale, forums)

⚡ forsale.evo.co.uk
 (cars for sale)

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1



MODEL

Ferrari LaFerrari

£129 diecastlegends.com

1 evo got to drive the LaFerrari last month and 'spectacular' barely begins to describe just how good it is. This 1:18-scale diecast Mattel model features opening doors and unhindered access to the V12 motor. The details, such as the delicate door mirrors, look great.

WHEELS

Gemballa GForged-one

£POA gemballa.com/en

2 German tuning house Gemballa has created this special range of alloys for the McLaren 12C and P1, as well as all 991-spec Porsche 911s. They are designed to be as lightweight as possible to suit the cars to which they are fitted, and can also be ordered complete with high-performance Michelin tyres – but don't expect them to be cheap.

COMMUNICATIONS

Road Angel Gem+ Deluxe

£179.99 roadangelgroup.com

3 This upgraded 'plus' version of Road Angel's Gem camera locator device is one of the most comprehensive of its kind on the market, notifying you of everything from Gatsos and red light cameras, to school zones and level crossings. The Deluxe package adds a hardwiring kit, windscreen and dashboard mounts and a mains charger adaptor. Subscriptions to Road Angel's updates service start at £39.99 for six months.

T-SHIRT

130R

£25 t-lab.eu

4 The latest in T-lab's 'Famous Corners' range of tees looks at Suzuka's fast 130R left-hander: excellent if you get it right (look up Fernando Alonso's pass on Michael Schumacher in 2005), scary if you get it wrong (check out Allan McNish's crash in 2002). Available in white and an off-white 'natural' colour.

CAR CARE

Gtechniq Crystal Serum

£145 gtechniq.com/shop

5 This nano-coating has undergone such intensive development that it comes with a five-year guarantee. It's claimed to keep your car clean and shiny, protect the paintwork and significantly outlast carnauba wax. Be advised, however, that it's recommended the serum is only applied by a trained technician, so expect extra costs.

3



2



4



5



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Kärcher K2 Premium Home and Car From £129.99 homebase.co.uk

Every car enthusiast should own a pressure washer, right? I didn't, and it had been playing on my mind. Then – eureka! I realised that the pathway and patio area at our house was in dire need of a clean and managed to convince the missus that we should invest in a Kärcher. Oh, and on occasion, I could clean my 911 with it. 'You can clean my car as well, then,' she replied. Bugger.

So I bought a Kärcher K2 Premium from Homebase. You get the surprisingly compact pressure washer unit, a fine-mesh water filter, a 6m pressure hose, a detergent tank, a 'Vario-Power' spray lance, a 'Dirtblaster' lance, a patio cleaner attachment and two bags of detergent.

The pressure with the Vario-Power lance is more than adequate for general domestic and auto cleaning, while switching to the Dirtblaster creates a very high-pressure circular spray – but having removed a strip of varnish from our wooden front door, I can confirm that you shouldn't point the lance too close to the object...

The soap dispenser is easy to fill and works well, but as I'd rather apply the detergent with a sponge, I can't see this getting much use. Other points? The hose detangles easily, the unit is not particularly noisy, and the Vario-Power lance is more effective than the patio tool.

In hindsight, I wouldn't have bought such a comprehensive package as this, but I'm happy to recommend it nonetheless. It offers good value and high quality. The downside is that I now have to clean the wife's car every time I go out to clean the Porsche.

Nick Trott (@evoNickTrott)

The Unfair Advantage

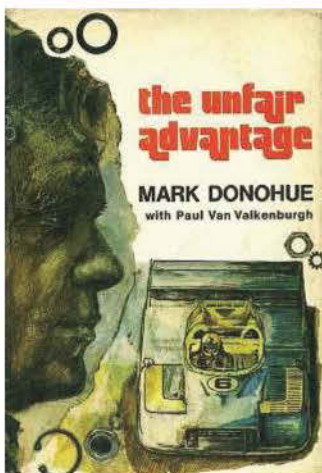
£24.95 amazon.co.uk

The motorsport history books will show that Mark Donohue won the Can-Am series, the Indy 500, the International Race of Champions and a handful of domestic championships. Captain Nice, as he was affectionately known, celebrated his fair share of success in North America during the 1960s and early '70s, but those successes tell only half the tale of a remarkable racing career. As well as being competitive

behind the wheel, Donohue was a brilliant motorsport engineer and his book – first published in 1974 – is a detailed account of his racing career from a technical perspective.

Having studied mechanical engineering, Donohue began racing as a clubman competitor and quickly worked his way up the ranks to form a now legendary partnership with team owner Roger Penske. During that time he pioneered the use of a steering pad for chassis development, making countless discoveries relating to vehicle dynamics in the process, and raced machines as varied as Trans-Am saloons and Formula 1 cars. The title of this book relates not to cheating or underhand tactics, but instead to Donohue's relentless pursuit of small advantages that his rivals just wouldn't have thought of, or simply couldn't have imagined.

This particular well-thumbed copy has been passed around several motoring journalists, all of whom quietly accept they learnt an awful lot about driving techniques and vehicle dynamics from it. *The Unfair Advantage* is well worth a read before 2015 marks 40 years since Donohue's untimely passing during practice for the 1975 Austrian Grand Prix.
Dan Prosser (@TheDanProsser)



Autoglym Bodywork Shampoo Conditioner £6.99 (500ml) autoglym.com

I don't enjoy cleaning cars. I never have. However, having seen how a professional detail can transform a car after Richard Tipper (@perfectionvalet) did his thing a couple of months ago, it would be remiss of me if I didn't keep on top of my 911 SC's appearance. That's why I bought a Kärcher (see above) and why I'm starting to stock my shed with cleaning gear.

So, for the first time in my life I went to the car cleaning aisle in Halfords. Tipper told me to find a pH-neutral shampoo so that it wouldn't strip off the wax he applied, so I searched and searched until I found Autoglym's Bodywork Shampoo Conditioner.

After pouring two capfuls of nuclear yellow liquid into 10 litres of water, I began cleaning the 911 with a microfibre mitt. The shampoo didn't create a huge amount of suds, but the cleaning power was very effective on the bodywork and glass. Flies and even small tar deposits came off easily, but I suspect Tipper's treatment had something to do with this as well. It wasn't so effective on the Fuchs wheels, though, where various oily deposits simply wouldn't shift.

Oh, and £6.99 for a 500ml bottle seems pretty good value, especially as I only used four capfuls on the bodywork.
Nick Trott (@evoNickTrott)



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Trips & Travel

Knowledge

The best destinations to visit in your car

Great drives: Val d'Orcia, Italy



Start point: 43.30644, 11.33898 (SR2, Siena)

The roads: SR2, SS323, SP135, SP61, SS478, SP146, SP40, SP53, SP146

Great for: Zonda Roadster, Panda 100HP with the windows down



E

EVO HASN'T BEEN to Tuscany for a test for a while, but there was a time (which may or may not have coincided with Harry Metcalfe owning a house out there...) when it seemed like the magazine's go-to supercar playground. 'The Test' from issue 022 and eCoty 2001 were both memorably held out there, while slightly more recently, John Barker visited the Val d'Orcia in issue 127 to try to recreate a perfect drive in a Zonda.

The area south of the beautiful city of Siena is littered with wonderful roads that meander through the sort of scenery that seems untouched by time. It's easy to see, particularly at dawn and dusk, why Renaissance painters were so inspired by the light out here. The route that I've picked is essentially a loop that begins and ends in Siena using the SR2 as its main artery. Start by heading south on the SR2 for 30 miles, then take the SS323 (then the SP135 and SP61), to loop around Mount Amiata, the most visible point in the Val d'Orcia landscape. Next cross the SR2 towards Radicofani. You can then stay on the SS478 towards Sarteano or shorten the loop by turning left onto the equally wonderful SP53 towards Pienza.

Some roads are quite narrow, but most are two-lane and you'll find fast open stretches as well as glorious hairpins piled on top of one another, so you can explore the area in pretty much any car. You certainly don't have to stick to the route above, as all the roads look wonderful. Just follow your nose, get lost, eat some pasta and marvel at the views. In some parts the callipygian hills are sprinkled with lone farmhouses, cypress trees standing like sentinels along their driveways. Elsewhere you'll plunge through dense woodland, while the seasons bring wildly different colours to the fields and trees. Mix in a good 12-cylinder soundtrack and you could be in heaven. We really must go back soon...

Henry Catchpole
Features editor



The route



Distance: 140 miles

Time: 4 hours 40 minutes

Where to stay

Located just south of Siena in Doglia, the Aia Mattonata Relais comes out top on TripAdvisor. Parking is available in the grounds of the hotel, which is something that you might not find closer to the city. If you fancy staying in the Val d'Orcia itself (and if you want something a bit cheaper) then the Albergo le Macinaie is actually on the route, on the west of Monte Amiata.

Watch out for

The Mille Miglia goes through this area, so depending on whether you want to see it or avoid it, bear the middle of May in mind when booking. When you're plotting routes on a map, you should be aware that a few of the good-looking squiggles are in fact *sterrati* or *strade bianchi*, which are white gravel roads. Fun in the right sort of car, but possibly not a bare-carbon Zonda.

Reader road trip

Scottish coast trek

Having bought tickets for a gig in Edinburgh, it occurred to me that I could make a road trip out of it. I discussed the idea with my wife, and a two-week journey all the way around the coast of Scotland in my BMW M3 took shape.

We set off from the Midlands to our Northumberland starting point, and after a good night's sleep in Seahouses, we were ready. We headed to Edinburgh and after the gig and a visit to the Falkirk Wheel, we hit the road: up through Perth and onto the A93, through Blairgowrie and onto the stunning Old Military Road. Braemar and Balmoral followed and then it was the A939 to our hotel in Nairn.

The next day we made our way up the A9 to Wick and John O'Groats: some great sea views but a surprisingly busy road. Photos taken, we



continued to our next stop outside Thurso. It was then across the roof of the country, along the A836 to Tongue and then the A838 to Durness, for amazing roads, fantastic scenery and great driving. Turning south and heading for Lochinver, we passed through beautiful landscapes and crossed the Kylesku Bridge. We arrived at the Inver Lodge Hotel as the weather finally started to close in.

From here we headed to Skye for two nights at the Kinloch Lodge Hotel. By now the rain had set in and it lasted the whole time we were on the island. But Skye is spectacular and worth visiting whatever the weather. Then it was Invergarry, Loch Lochy and Glencoe en route to Glasgow for our last night in Scotland and a catch up with some old friends.

We had a great time, did 1750 miles and the M3 behaved faultlessly. Those roads around the top of our island are just breathtaking and I'd recommend them to anyone.

Andy O'Malley

Email your story to henryc@evo.co.uk

Events calendar

JUNE

June 19-22

24 Hours Nürburgring
nuerburgring.de

June 20-21

Ypres Rally, Belgium
ypresrally.com

June 26-29

Goodwood Festival of Speed
goodwood.co.uk

JULY

July 4-6

British Grand Prix, Silverstone
silverstone.co.uk

Ratings Thrill-free zone ★ Tepid ★★ Interesting ★★★ Seriously good ★★★★ A truly great car ★★★★★



Our Choice

Volkswagen Golf R. A flagship Golf to get really excited about, the new R offers immense pace and a truly engaging driving experience in a compromise-free package with class and quality aplenty. Cake both possessed and consumed.



Best of the Rest

BMW's M135i is an enticing rear-drive alternative to the Golf R, although the Mégane 265 Cup pips both for absolute tautility and involvement. The Fiesta ST (left), meanwhile, is the default affordable hot hatch choice. We'd have ours Mounted.

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 Sunny GTi-R		'92-'93	4/1998	220/6400	197/4800	1269kg	176	6.1	-	134	-	25.1	+ Nissan's Escort Cossie - Make sure it's a good one
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 2)		'97-'98	4/1587	103/6200	97/3500	865kg	121	8.8	-	121	-	34.0	+ Bargain no-frills thrills - Not as much fizz as original 1.3
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 1)	095 R	'94-'96	4/1294	100/7200	80/5400	826kg	123	9.3	-	118	-	35.6	+ Frantic, thrashy fun - Needs caning to extract full potential
Peugeot 106 GTi 16v	034 R	'97-'04	4/1587	120/6600	107/5200	950kg	128	7.4	22.2	127	-	34.9	+ Fine handling supermini - Looks its age
Peugeot 208 GTi	184 R	£18,895	4/1598	197/5800	203/1700	1160kg	173	6.8	17.9	143	139	47.9	+ Agile chassis works well on tough roads - Could be more involving
Peugeot 205 GTi 1.9	195 R	'88-'91	4/1905	130/6000	119/4750	910kg	145	7.9	-	124	-	36.7	+ Still scintillating after all these years - Brittle build quality
Peugeot 306 GTi-6	020 R	'93-'01	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1215kg	139	7.2	20.1	140	-	30.1	+ One of the great GTIs - They don't make them like this any more
Peugeot 306 Rallye	095 R	'98-'99	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1199kg	142	6.9	19.2	137	-	30.1	+ Essentially a GTi-6 for less dosh - Limited choice of colours
Renaultsport Twingo 133	175 R	'08-'13	4/1598	131/6750	118/4400	1050kg	127	8.6	-	125	150	43.5	+ Renaultsport experience for pocket money - Optional Cup chassis gives bouncy ride
Renaultsport Clio 200 Turbo	184 R	£18,995	4/1618	197/6000	177/1750	1204kg	166	6.9	17.9	143	144	44.8	+ Faster, more refined, easier to drive - We miss the revvy nat-asp engine and manual 'box
Renaultsport Clio 200 Cup	195 R	'09-'13	4/1998	197/7100	159/5400	1204kg	166	6.6	16.6	141	190	34.5	+ The hot Clio at its best - They don't make it anymore
Renaultsport Clio 197 Cup	115 R	'07-'09	4/1998	194/7250	158/5550	1240kg	161	6.9	-	134	-	33.6	+ Quick, polished and capable - Not as much sheer fun as 182 Cup
Renaultsport Clio 182	066 R	'04-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1110kg	165	6.6	17.5	139	-	34.9	+ Took hot hatches to a new level - Flawed driving position
Renaultsport Clio 182 Cup	187 R	'04-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	168	6.5	-	139	-	34.9	+ Full of beans, fantastic value - Sunday-market upholstery
Renaultsport Clio Trophy	195 R	'05-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	168	6.6	17.3	140	-	34.9	+ The most fun you can have on three (sometimes two) wheels - Just 500 were built
Renaultsport Clio 172 Cup	048 R	'02-'04	4/1998	170/6250	147/5400	1011kg	171	6.5	17.7	138	-	-	+ Bargain old-school hot hatch - Nervous in the wet, no ABS
Renaultsport Clio V6 255	057 R	'03-'05	6/2946	255/7150	221/4650	1400kg	182	5.8	-	153	-	23.0	+ Supercar drama without the original's edgy handling - Uninspired interior
Renaultsport Clio V6	029 R	'99-'02	6/2946	230/6000	221/3750	1335kg	175	5.8	17.0	145	-	23.0	+ Pocket supercar - Mid-engined handling can be tricky
Renault Clio Williams	195 R	'93-'96	4/1988	148/6100	126/4500	981kg	153	7.6	20.8	121	-	26.0	+ One of the best hot hatches ever - Can be fragile
Renault 5 GT Turbo	195 R	'87-'91	4/1397	118/5750	122/3000	855kg	140	7.3	-	120	-	28.4	+ Clio Williams' grand-daddy - Few unmodified ones left
Renaultsport Mégane 265 Cup	195 R	£25,990	4/1998	261/5500	265/3000	1387kg	191	6.4	14.8	158	190	34.4	+ A hot hatch benchmark - Not a lot
Renaultsport Mégane 250 Cup	139 R	'09-'12	4/1998	247/5500	251/3000	1387kg	181	6.1	14.6	156	190	34.4	+ Fantastic chassis... - partially obscured by new-found maturity
Renaultsport Mégane dCi 175 Cup	119 R	'07-'09	4/1995	173/3750	265/2000	1470kg	119	8.3	23.5	137	-	43.5	+ A diesel with a genuinely sporty chassis - Could take more power
Renaultsport Mégane Trophy	087 R	'05	4/1998	222/5500	221/3000	1355kg	166	6.7	17.3	147	-	32.1	+ Mega grip and traction - Steering needs a touch more feel
Renaultsport Mégane Z30 FI Team R26	195 R	'07-'09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1345kg	171	6.2	16.0	147	-	-	+ The car the R26.R is based on - FI Team stickers in dubious taste
Renaultsport Mégane R26.R	195 R	'08-'09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1220kg	189	5.8	15.1	147	-	-	+ One of the true hot hatch heroes - Two seats, plastic rear windows
SEAT Ibiza FR 2.0 TDI	144 R	£17,445	4/1968	141/4200	236/1750	1245kg	115	8.2	-	131	123	60.1	+ More fun than the petrol FR, manual gearbox option - The Cupra's not much more
SEAT Ibiza Cupra	183 D	£18,765	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	£22,255	4/1968	181/4000	280/1750	1350kg	136	7.5	-	142	112	64.2	+ Performance, sweet chassis, economy, comfort - Boorish engine
SEAT Leon Cupra 280	195 R	£26,940	4/1984	276/6000	258/1750	1320kg	212	5.8	-	155	149	44.1	+ Serious pace and ability for Golf GTi money - The Mk7 Golf R
SEAT Leon FR+	163 D	'11-'12	4/1984	208/5300	206/1700	1334kg	158	7.2	-	145	170	38.7	+ As quick as a Golf GTi five-door but lots cheaper - Misses the VW's completeness
SEAT Leon Cupra R	139 R	'10-'12	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1375kg	193	6.1	14.0	155	190	34.9	+ Bold car, blinding engine - Lacks the character of its rival mega-hatches
SEAT Leon Cupra	105 R	'07-'11	4/1984	237/5700	221/2200	1375kg	175	6.3	-	155	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	£17,150	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	£23,260	4/1984	210/4500	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	£15,375	3/999	97/5500	104/3500	780kg	126	9.9	-	96	119	54.3	+ Telling people you drive a Brabus - Then realising it's not a T200bhp S-class
Subaru Impreza STiCS400	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, lifeless steering
Subaru Impreza WRX	125 D	'08-'10	4/2457	251/5400	288/3000	1395kg	180	5.5	-	130	270	-	+ An improvement over the basic WRX - Still not the WRX we wanted
Subaru Impreza STi 330S	124 R	'08-'10	4/2457	325/5400	347/3400	1505kg	219	4.4	-	155	-	-	+ A bit quicker than the STi... - but not better
Suzuki Swift Sport (Mk2)	175 R	£13,749	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	£18,995	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	'11-'13	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 VXR (Mk2)	195 R	£27,260	4/1998	276/5500	295/2500	1475kg	190	5.9	-	155	189	-	+ Better than the car it replaces; loony turbo pace - Lacks RS Mégane's precision
Vauxhall Astra VXR (Mk1)	102 R	'06-'11	4/1998	237/5600	236/2400	1393kg	173	6.7	16.7	152	221	30.7	+ Fast and furious - Lacks a little composure and precision
VW Up/SEAT Mi/Skoda Citigo	171 R	£7990+	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	£19,730	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	£25,565	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)	195 R	£26,125	4/1984	211/4500	258/1500	1351kg	163	6.5	-	152	138	47.1	+ Brilliantly resolved - Mégane 265 beats it as a pure drivers' car
VW Golf R (Mk7)	195 R	£29,900	4/1984	297/5500	280/1800	1476kg	204	5.1	-	155	165	40.9	+ Time to take the R brand seriously - Mégane 265 just edges it as a pure drivers' car
VW Golf GTI (Mk6)	172 R	'09-'13	4/1984	207/5300	207/1700	1318kg	160	6.4	16.5	148	170	38.7	+ Still a very accomplished hot hatch - 207bhp isn't a lot any more
VW Golf GTI Edition 35	168 R	'12-'13	4/1984	232/5500	221/2200	1318kg	179	6.5	-	154	189	34.9	+ Mk6 GTI gets the power it craves - Expensive compared to the standard car
VW Golf R (Mk6)	140 D	'10-'13	4/1984	266/6000	258/2500	1522kg	178	5.5	-	155	199	33.2	+ Great engine, tremendous pace and poise - High price, ACC only optional
VW Golf GTI (Mk5)	195 R	'04-'09	4/1984	197/5100	207/1800	1336kg	150	6.7	17.9	145	-	-	+ Character and ability: the GTI's return to form - Lacking firepower?
VW Golf R32 (Mk5)	087 R	'06-'09	6/3189	246/6300	236/2500	1510kg	165	5.8	15.2	155	-	26.4	+ Tractor's great and you'll love the soundtrack - We'd still have a GTI
VW Golf R32 (Mk4)	053 R	'02-'04	6/3189	237/6250	236/2800	1477kg	163	6.4	16.3	154	-	24.6	+ Charismatic - Boomy engine can be tiresome
VW Golf GTI 16v (Mk2)	195 R	'88-'92	4/1781	139/6100	124/4600	960kg	147	7.9	-	129	-	26.6	+ Still feels everyday useable - Very hard to find a standard one
VW Golf GTI (Mk1. 1.8)	095 R	'82-'94	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	6.6	16.9	149	203	32.5	+ Good-looking, desirable Volvo - Lacks edge of best hatches. Avoid auto

PERSONAL CONTRACT PURCHASE REPRESENTATIVE EXAMPLE: V40 D2 R-DESIGN

36 monthly payments	£249
Customer deposit	£1,999
On the road price*	£21,080
Total amount of credit	£18,581
Interest charges	£2,752
Total amount payable	£23,832
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SEARCH VOLVO V40

Official fuel consumption for the Volvo V40 D2 R-Design (manual) in MPG (l/100km): Urban 74.3 (3.8), Extra Urban 91.1 (3.1), Combined 83.1 (3.4). CO₂ Emissions 88g/km. MPG figures are obtained from laboratory testing intended for comparisons between vehicles and may not reflect real driving results.

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Ratings

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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 - Rarer 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	£146,035	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	£56,525	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1935kg	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! And there's an estate version too - Busy under braking	★★★★★
Audi RS4 (B5)	192 R	'00-'02	6/2671	375/6100	325/2500	1620kg	236	4.8	12.1	170	-	17.0	+ Effortless pace - Not the last word in agility, Bends wheel rims	★★★★★
Audi RS2	101 R	'94-'95	5/2226	315/6500	302/3000	1595kg	201	4.8	13.1	162	-	18.0	+ Storming performance (thanks to Porsche) - Try finding one	★★★★★
Audi S6	091 D	'06-'11	10/5204	429/6800	398/3000	1910kg	228	5.2	-	155	299	22.4	+ Even faster, and discreet with it - Very muted V10	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant (C7)	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 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	413/1900	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	£79,900	8/3993	513/5800	479/1700	1975kg	264	4.1	-	155	237	27.7	+ Quicker and much more economical than before - But still underwhelming to drive	★★★★★
Audi RS Q3	194 R	£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 Q7 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	£150,900	12/5998	616/6000	590/1600	2425kg	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	'08-'12	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 Mullanne	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	£28,775	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	£29,765	4/1997	242/5000	258/1250	1430kg	172	5.8	-	155	149	44.8	+ Well-specced, impressively refined - Lags far behind the Mercedes S-class	★★★★★
BMW 330d M Sport (F30)	180 D	£36,975	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	£36,565	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	£44,555	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	£73,940	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1870kg	300	4.3	-	155	232	28.5	+ Twin-turbocharging suits all-new M5 well - Can feel heavy at times	★★★★★
BMW M5 Touring (E60)	105 R	'07-'10	10/4999	500/7750	383/6100	1780kg	285	4.8	-	155	-	19.3	+ Brilliant at ten tenths - Feels slightly clumsy when pottering	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E60)	129 R	'04-'10	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1755kg	289	4.7	10.4	155	-	19.6	+ Close to being the ultimate supersaloon - SMG gearbox feels old-tech	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E39)	110 R	'99-'03	8/4941	394/6600	369/3800	1795kg	223	4.9	11.5	155	-	-	+ Magnificent V8-engined supersaloon - We'd be nit-picking	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E34)	110 R	'92-'96	6/3795	340/6900	295/4750	1653kg	209	5.9	13.6	155	-	-	+ The Godfather of supersaloons - The family can come too	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E28)	182 R	'86-'88	6/3453	282/6500	251/4500	1431kg	200	6.2	-	151	-	-	+ The original storming saloon - Understated looks	★★★★★
BMW M6 Gran Coupe	190 D	£98,125	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	£58,880	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	£86,680	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	£71,505	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	£6330,000	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 ST220	043 D	'02-'07	6/2967	223/6150	204/4900	1550kg	146	6.8	-	151	-	27.7	+ Muscular engine, fine chassis - Hotted-up reprom 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 racer - 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 Q50S Hybrid	195 D	£40,000	6/3498	359/6800	402/5000	1750kg	208	5.1	-	155	144	45.6	+ Good powertrain, promising chassis - Lacklustre steering, strong rivals	★★★★★
Jaguar XF 3.0 V6 Diesel S	145 D	£46,610	6/2993	271/4000	443/2000	1695kg	162	5.9	-	155	159	47.1	+ Sweet handling plus diesel economy - But we'd still have the R	★★★★★
Jaguar XF Sportbrake 3.0 V6 Diesel S	177 D	£49,110	6/2993	271/4000	443/2000	1695kg	153	6.1	-	155	163	46.3	+ Looks and drives better than the saloon - There's now a Sportbrake R...	★★★★★
Jaguar XF 3.0 V6 Supercharged	178 D	£48,495	6/2995	335/6500	332/3500	1695kg	201	5.7	-	155	224	29.4	+ Fast, comfortable, refined - Bland engine, poor economy compared to diesel V6	★★★★★
Jaguar XFR	181 D	£65,415	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1800kg	284	4.8	10.2	155	270	24.4	+ Brilliant blend of pace and refinement - Doesn't sound as special as it is	★★★★★



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Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft./rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	ET mpg	evo rating
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	411/6600	372/5200	1714kg	247	4.7	10.9	173	270	24.4	+ Shockingly good Lexus - The M3's available as a (second hand) four-door too ★★★★★
Lotus Carlton	170 R	'91-'93	6/3615	377/5200	449/2200	1658kg	231	4.8	10.6	176	-	17.0	+ The Millennium Falcon of saloon cars - Every drive a work-out ★★★★★
Maserati Ghibli	186 D	£52,275	6/2979	326/5000	406/1750	1810kg	183	5.6	-	163	223	29.4	+ Bursting with character, good value compared to Quattroporte - It's still a big car ★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte S	184 D	£80,095	6/2979	404/5500	406/1750	1860kg	221	5.1	-	177	244	26.9	+ Tempting alternative to V8 - Feel-free steering, secondary ride lacks decorum ★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte GTS	179 D	£108,160	8/3798	523/6800	479/2250	1900kg	280	4.7	-	191	274	23.9	+ Performance, sense of occasion - Lacks the charisma and edge of its predecessor ★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte S	137 R	'08-'12	8/4691	425/7000	361/4750	1990kg	216	5.1	12.1	174	365	18.0	+ A QP with the bhp it deserves - Grille is a bit Hannibal Lecter ★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte Sport GTS	141 R	'08-'12	8/4691	433/7000	361/4750	1990kg	221	5.1	-	177	365	18.0	+ The most stylish supersaloon - Slightly wooden brakes, unforgiving ride ★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte	085 R	'04-'08	8/4244	394/7000	333/4500	1930kg	207	5.1	-	171	-	17.9	+ Redefines big-car dynamics - Don't use auto mode ★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte Sport GTS	113 D	'07-'08	8/4244	396/7000	339/4250	1930kg	208	5.5	-	167	-	-	+ Best Quattroporte chassis so far - More power wouldn't go amiss ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz 190E 2.5-16	185 F	'89-'92	4/2498	201/6750	177/5500	1360kg	147	7.2	-	142	-	24.4	+ M-B's M3 alternative - Not as nimble as the Beemer ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLA45 AMG	186 D	£42,265	4/1991	355/6000	332/2250	1510kg	239	4.6	-	155	161	31.0	+ Strong performance, classy cabin - Priced compared to A45 AMG hatchback ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG	151 R	£57,275	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1655kg	277	4.4	9.7	160	280	23.5	+ Monstrous pace and extremely engaging - M3's just a little better... ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C55 AMG	088 R	'04-'08	8/5439	367/5250	376/4000	1635kg	228	5.2	-	155	-	23.7	+ Furiously fast, commendably discreet - Overshadowed by M3 and RS4 ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG	187 D	£74,095	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 E55 AMG	052 R	'03-'06	8/5439	476/6100	516/2650	1760kg	271	4.8	10.2	155	-	21.9	+ M5-humbling grunt, cosseting ride - Speed limits ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG	'98-'02	8/5439	354/5500	390/3000	360/3000	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	£81,950	8/5461	518/5250	516/1700	1795kg	293	4.2	-	155	231	28.5	+ Monster performance, S49bhp an option - Not as desirable as a Bentley or Aston ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG	099 R	'06-'11	8/6208	507/6100	464/2650	1905kg	270	4.5	-	155	345	19.5	+ Beauty, comfort, awesome performance - M5 has the edge on B-roads ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz ML63 AMG	176 R	£84,125	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	2270kg	232	4.7	-	155	276	23.9	+ Great engine, surprisingly good dynamics - £85k buys a Boxster and an ML350... ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz G63 AMG	172 D	£123,975	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 D	£31,349	4/1998	290/6500	300/3500	1590kg	185	5.2	13.9	155	256	26.2	+ Evo gets twin-clutch transmission - Not as exciting as it used to be ★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-360	122 D	£38,559	4/1998	354/6500	363/3500	1560kg	231	4.1	-	155	328	19.9	+ Ridiculously rapid new Evo - A five-speed gearbox! ★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-330 SST	134 R	'08-'12	4/1998	324/6500	322/3500	1590kg	207	4.4	-	155	256	-	+ Great engine and gearbox combo - It still lives in the shadow of the Evo IX ★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-400	181 R	'09-'10	4/1998	403/6500	387/3500	1560kg	262	3.8	-	155	328	-	+ Most powerful factory Evo ever... - about X grand too much when new ★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo IX FQ-340	088 R	'05-'07	4/1997	345/6800	321/4600	1400kg	250	4.3	10.9	157	-	-	+ Gives Porsche drivers nightmares - Points, Lotus of ★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo IX MR FQ-360	181 R	'05-'07	4/1997	366/6887	363/3200	1400kg	266	3.9	-	157	-	-	+ Well-executed engine upgrades - Prison food ★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VIII	055 R	'03-'04	4/1997	276/6500	289/3500	1410kg	199	5.1	-	157	-	-	+ The Evo grows up - Brakes need beefing up ★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VIII MR FQ-300	057 R	'03-'05	4/1997	305/6800	289/3500	1400kg	221	4.8	-	157	-	20.5	+ Extra pace, extra attitude - Extra money ★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VII	031 R	'02-'03	4/1997	276/6500	282/3500	1360kg	206	5.0	13.0	140	-	20.4	+ Terrific all-rounder - You tell us ★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VII RS Sprint	041 D	'02-'03	4/1997	320/6500	327/6200	1260kg	258	4.4	-	150	-	-	+ Ruthlessly focused road weapon - For the truly committed ★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VI RS Sprint	011 R	'99	4/1997	330/6500	323/3000	1255kg	267	4.5	11.8	145	-	-	+ Lighter, keener, quicker than regular Evo - A little uncompromising ★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VI Makinen Edition	181 R	'00-'01	4/1997	276/6500	275/2750	1265kg	205	4.6	-	150	-	-	+ Our favourite Evo - Subtle it is not ★★★★★
Porsche Panamera 4S	186 D	£85,721	6/2997	414/6000	383/1750	1870kg	225	4.8	-	177	208	31.7	+ Strong performance and typically fine Porsche chassis - Misses cheerful V8 of old 'S' ★★★★★
Porsche Panamera GTS	168 D	£93,175	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	£107,903	8/4806	493/6000	516/2250	1970kg	254	3.6	8.9	188	270	24.6	+ Fast, refined and dynamically sound - It still leaves us cold ★★★★★
Porsche Panamera Turbo S	159 D	'11-'13	8/4806	542/6000	590/2250	1995kg	276	3.7	-	190	270	24.6	+ Pace, excellent ergonomics - Steering feel, ride ★★★★★
Porsche Macan Turbo	194 R	£59,300	6/3604	394/6000	406/1350	1925kg	208	4.8	-	165	208	30.7	+ Doesn't feel like an SUV - Still looks like one ★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne GTS (Mk2)	173 D	£68,117	8/4806	444/6500	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 ★★★★★
Range Rover Evoque Coupe S4	160 D	£46,650	4/1999	231/6000	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 ★★★★★
Rolls-Royce Ghost	186 D	£170,250	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	197 D	£28,995	4/2457	296/6000	300/4000	1534kg	196	5.2	-	159	242	27.2	+ Fast Subaru saloon returns (again) - Without a power increase ★★★★★
Subaru WRX STI	151 D	'10-'13	4/2457	296/6000	300/4000	1505kg	200	5.1	-	158	243	26.9	+ Fast Subaru saloon returns - Without the blue paint and gold wheels ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WRX GB270	109 D	'07	4/2457	266/5700	310/3000	1410kg	192	5.2	-	143	-	-	+ Fitting final fling for 'classic' Impreza - End of an era ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza STI	090 R	'05-'07	4/2457	276/6000	289/4000	1495kg	188	5.3	-	158	-	25.9	+ Stunning to drive - Not so stunning to look at ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza STI Spec C *	084 D	'05-'07	4/1994	320/6730	311/3500	1350kg	240	4.3	-	157	-	-	+ Lighter, faster, fiercer - The need for self-restraint ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza RB320	105 R	'07	4/2457	316/6000	332/3750	1495kg	215	4.8	-	155	-	-	+ Fitting tribute to a rallying legend - Too hardcore for some? ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WRX STI PPP	073 R	'03-'05	4/1994	300/6000	299/4000	1470kg	207	5.2	12.9	148	-	-	+ A Subaru with real edge - Bit too edgy in the wet ★★★★★
Subaru STI Type RA Spec C *	067 R	'03-'05	4/1994	335/7000	280/3750	1380kg	247	4.3	11.1	160	-	-	+ Best Impreza since the P1 - Lost its throbby flat-four voice ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WR1	067 R	'04-'05	4/1994	316/5800	310/4000	1470kg	218	5.3	13.1	155	-	-	+ Most powerful official UK Impreza until RB320 - Spec C is better ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza Turbo	011 R	'98-'00	4/1994	215/5600	214/4000	1235kg	177	5.4	14.6	144	-	27.2	+ Destined for classic status - Thirsty ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza P1	067 R	'00-'01	4/1994	276/6500	260/4000	1283kg	219	4.9	13.3	150	-	25.0	+ Ultimate old-shape Impreza - Prices reflect this ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza RB5 (PPP)	187 R	'99	4/1994	237/6000	258/3500	1235kg	195	5.0	14.1	143	-	-	+ Perfect blend of poise and power - Limited numbers ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza 22B	188 R	'98-'99	4/1994	276/6000	265/3200	1270kg	220	5.0	13.1	150	-	-	+ The ultimate Impreza - Doesn't come cheap ★★★★★
Tesla Model S Performance	196 R	£69,080	310kW	416	442/0	2100kg	201	4.2	-	130	0	n/a	+ Intoxicating performance, soothing refinement - Generic styling, charging limitations ★★★★★
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 stealer ★★★★★
Vauxhall Vectra VXR	102 D	'06-'09	6/2792	276/5500	262/1800	1580kg	177	6.1	-	161	-	27.4	+ Great engine, effortless pace, good value - Numb steering, lumpy ride ★★★★★
Vauxhall VX88 GTS	187 D	£54,499											

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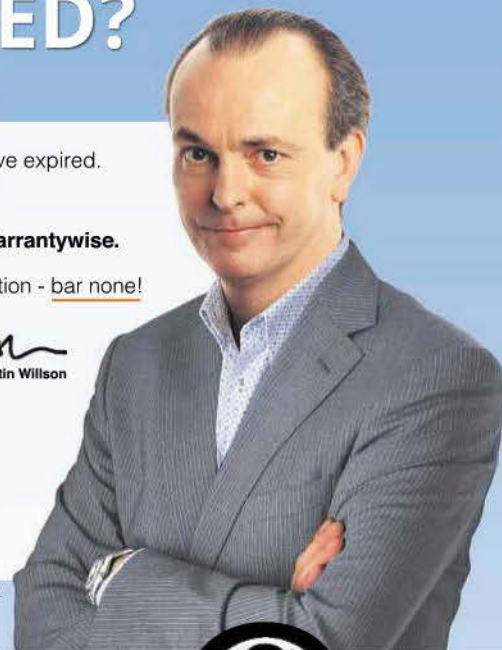
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Our Choice

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	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating
Alfa Romeo 8C Spider	161 R	'09-'11	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1675kg	273	4.5	-	181	-	-	+ Beauty meets beast. They hit it off - Boot is useless for touring
Ariel Atom 3.5 Supercharged	180 D	£38,000	4/1998	310/8400	169/7200	550kg	573	2.7	-	155	-	-	+ As mad as ever - Rain
Ariel Atom Mugen	165 R	£55,000	4/1998	270/8300	188/6000	550kg	499	2.9	-	150	-	-	+ Perfect engine for the Atom's chassis - Only ten being made
Ariel Atom V8 500	165 R	£146,699	8/3000	475/10,500	284/7750	550kg	877	3.0	5.8	170	-	-	+ An experience unlike anything else on Planet Car - £150k for an Atom
Ariel Atom 3.245	113 D	'08-'12	4/1998	245/8200	155/5200	500kg	498	3.2	-	150	-	33.0	+ The Atom just got a little bit better - Can still be a bit draughty...
Ariel Atom 3 Supercharged	138 R	'09-'12	4/1998	300/8200	162/7200	550kg	554	3.3	-	155	-	-	+ It's brilliant - It's mental
Ariel Atom 2.300 Supercharged	123 R	'03-'09	4/1998	300/8200	162/7200	550kg	554	3.3	-	155	-	28.0	+ Makes your face ripple - ...like Clarkson's
Ariel Atom 1	015 R	'99-'03	4/1796	125/5500	122/3000	496kg	256	5.6	18.0	115	-	-	+ Amazing styling, huge fun - As practical as a chocolate teapot
Aston Martin V8 Vantage Roadster	130 R	£95,080	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1710kg	250	4.7	-	180	328	20.4	+ Sportiest, coolest drop-top Aston in years - Starting to feel its age
Aston Martin V8 Vantage S Roadster	161 R	£150,080	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1690kg	258	4.6	-	189	299	21.9	+ Sounds amazing, looks even better - Still not the best drop-top in its class
Aston Martin V12 Vantage Roadster	175 R	£151,080	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1760kg	294	4.4	-	190	-	-	+ As good as the coupe, with amplified V12 rumble - Just a smidgen shakier
Aston Martin DB9 Volante	150 D	£143,080	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1815kg	263	4.6	-	190	368	18.2	+ Consummate cruiser and capable when pushed - Roof-up wind noise
Aston Martin DBS Volante	133 D	'09-'12	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1810kg	286	4.3	-	191	388	17.3	+ A feelgood car par excellence - It's a bit of a heavyweight
Audi TTS Roadster	122 D	£38,025	4/1984	268/6000	258/2500	1455kg	187	5.6	-	155	189	34.9	+ Effortlessly quick - Long-term appeal open to question; not cheap either
Audi TT RS Roadster	133 D	£48,140	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1510kg	225	4.7	-	155	212	31.0	+ Terrific engine... - ...is the best thing about it
Audi TT Roadster (Mk1 225bhp)	016 R	'00-'06	4/1781	225/5900	206/2200	1395kg	164	6.9	20.0	150	-	30.4	+ Winner on the King's Road - Trails Boxster on the open road
Audi S5 Cabriolet	130 D	£46,500	6/2995	328/5500	325/2900	1875kg	178	5.6	-	155	199	33.2	+ Gets the S4's trick supercharged engine - Bordering on dull
Audi RS5 Cabriolet	179 D	£68,985	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1920kg	235	4.9	-	155	249	26.4	+ Pace, looks, interior, naturally aspirated V8 - Not the last word in fun or involvement
Audi RS4 Cabriolet	094 D	'06-'08	8/4163	414/7800	317/5500	1845kg	228	4.9	-	155	-	-	+ That engine - Wibble wobble, wibble wobble, jelly on a plate
Audi R8 V8 Spyder	186 D	£101,360	8/4163	424/7900	317/6000	1660kg	259	4.8	-	187	337	19.6	+ More delicate and subtle than the V10 - The V10 sounds even better
Audi R8 V10 Spyder	185 R	£122,460	10/5204	518/8000	391/6500	1720kg	306	4.1	-	194	349	19.0	+ Sensational for the money - Not quite a rival for the 458 and 12C Spiders
BAC Mono	189 R	£101,940	4/2261	280/7700	206/6000	540kg	527	2.8	-	170	-	-	+ The most single-minded track car available - That means no passengers...
Bentley Continental GT V8 Convertible	168 R	£136,250	8/3993	500/6000	487/1700	2470kg	207	4.9	-	187	254	25.9	+ One of the world's best topless GTs - Still no sports car
Bentley Continental GT V8 S Convertible	194 D	£152,900	8/3993	521/6000	502/1700	2470kg	214	4.5	-	191	254	25.9	+ A true driver's Bentley - Excessively heavy, feels like it could give more
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 braces a necessity
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 435i Convertible	194 D	£45,970	6/2979	302/5800	295/1200	1740kg	176	5.6	-	155	190	34.8	+ Impressive chassis, smart looks, neat roof - Extra weight, not as composed as coupe
BMW M3 Convertible (E93)	119 D	'08-'13	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	4.8	11.1	155	-	14.4	+ M5-powered super-sportster - M5's more fun to drive
Caterham Seven 160	190 R	£17,995	4/660	80/7000	79/3400	490kg	166	6.5	-	100	-	-	+ The fabulous Seven formula at its most basic - Gets pricey with options
Caterham Seven Roadsport 125	105 R	£22,995	4/1595	125/6100	120/5350	539kg	235	5.9	-	112	-	-	+ New Ford-engined model is just great - Bigger drivers need SV model
Caterham Seven Roadsport SV 175	140 D	£30,995	4/1999	175/7000	139/6000	555kg	321	4.8	-	138	-	-	+ The Caterham for everyday use, R300 engine - 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	171/7200	506kg	528	2.9	-	150	-	-	+ Better power-to-weight ratio than a Veyron - Until you add the driver
Caterham Seven CSR 260 Superlight	094 R	£44,995	4/2261	256/7500	200/6200	565kg	460	3.8	-	155	-	-	+ Brilliant for high days, holidays and trackdays - Wet Wednesdays
Caterham Seven 620R	187 R	£49,995	4/1999	311/7700	219/7350	545kg	580	2.8	-	155	-	-	+ 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	4.8	8.2	150	-	-	+ Twice the power-to-weight ratio of a Veyron! - Not easy to drive slowly
Caterham Seven Superlight R300	150 R	'09-'12	4/1999	175/7000	139/6000	515kg	345	4.5	-	140	-	-	+ Possibly all the Caterham you need - They're not cheap
Caterham Seven R300	068 R	'02-'06	4/1796	160/7000	130/5000	500kg	325	4.7	-	130	-	-	+ Our 2002 Trackday Car of the Year - Not for wimps
Caterham Seven R400	068 R	'03-'06	4/1796	200/7500	150/5750	490kg	415	3.9	-	140	-	-	+ Race-car with a number plate - Your missus will leave you
Caterham Seven R500	068 R	'99-'06	4/1796	230/8600	155/7200	460kg	510	3.6	8.8	146	-	-	+ Fine for the Nürburgring - Hard work around the Bullring
Caterham Seven R500 Evolution	069 R	'04	4/1998	250/8000	190/4000	460kg	552	3.9	8.1	150	-	-	+ Madder than Mad Jack McMad - Er, it's a bit mad
Chevrolet Corvette (C6)	083 D	'04-'13	8/6162	430/5900	424/4600	1460kg	300	4.3	-	186	316	21.2	+ Corvette performance - Convertible dynamics, electronics
Donkervoort D8 GTO Performance	185 R	£130,000	5/2480	375/5500	350/1750	695kg	548	2.8	-	168	-	-	+ There's nothing else like it - Pricey for a car with a five-cylinder engine
Ferrari California	171 D	£152,154	8/4297	483/7750	372/5000	1705kg	290	3.8	-	193	299	-	+ Revised with sharper performance and dynamics - We'd still take a 458 Spider
Honda S2000	118 D	'99-'09	4/1997	237/8300	153/7500	1260kg	191	6.2	-	150	-	28.2	+ An alternative and rev-happy roadster - The Boxster's better
Jaguar F-type Convertible	186 R	£58,520	6/2995	335/6500	332/3500	1597kg	213	5.3	-	161	205	32.1	+ 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	209	32.1	+ Better-damped and more rounded than the V8 S - A Boxster S is £20k cheaper
Jaguar F-type V8 S Convertible	183 R	£79,985	8/5000	488/6500	461/2500	1665kg	298	4.3	-	186	259	25.5	+ Wilder than the V6 S - Could be too exuberant for some
Jaguar XK 5.0 Convertible		£71,465	8/5000	380/6500	380/3500	1621kg	238	5.3	-	155	264	25.2	+ Basic XK gets extra power... - ...but loses some of its GT refinement
Jaguar XKR Convertible	130 R	£84,965	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1725kg	296	4.6	-	155	292	23.0	+ Gains Jag's fantastic new V8 - Loses sporting ground to its main foes
Jaguar XKR-S Convertible	167 R	£103,465	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1725kg	319	4.2	-	186	292	23.0	+ Loud and mad; most exciting Jag in years - It's also the most expensive in years
Jaguar XK	089 R	'06-'09	8/4196	294/6000	303/4100	1635kg	183	6.6	-	155	-	25.0	+ Every bit as good as the XK coupe - 294bhp still only just enough
Jaguar XKR		'06-'09	8/4196	414/6250	413/4000	1705kg	247	5.0	-	155	-	-	+ First Jag sports car for years - Overwritten detailing
Jaguar XKR	004 R	'97-'06	8/3996	370/6150	387/3600	1750kg	215	5.4	12.8	155	-	15.6	+ Hurricane-in-the-hair motoring - A danger to toupees everywhere
KTM X-Bow GT	183 D	£674,000	4/1984	281/6400	310/3200	875kg	326	4.1	-	144	189	34.0	+ Extraordinary ability, now in a more road-friendly package - Price
KTM X-Bow R	165 R	£64,850	4/1984	296/5500	295/3300	818kg	368	3.6	-	144	-	-	+ Sharper handling, more power - Pity it's not even lighter, and cheaper
KTM X-Bow	138 R	'08-'12	4/1984	237/5500	229/2000	818kg	294	3.8	-	137	-	-	+ Mad looks; real quality feel - Heavier and pricier than you'd hope

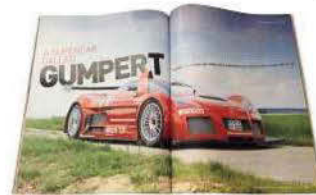
PAST master

Pretty it ain't, but the 640bhp Gumpert Apollo packs a mighty punch, as John Barker discovered

Gumpert Apollo Issue 081, July 2008

'The substantially uprated Audi RS6 twin-turbo V8 labours against the brakes and loads up with a hissing, gusting, torrent of boost. I brace myself. As the brake is released, the slam in the back is major-league scary, a massive force that the rear tyres squirm to contain.
'We turn right and the assault begins again. One, two,

three, four, five - the gears seem to go home about as fast as it takes to count the numbers out loud, while the acceleration doesn't abate.
'In the world of supercars there are few that concentrate ruthlessly on performance, but the Apollo cuts straight to the chase. This car puts function ahead of form.'



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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 better (pricey) options...	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S Club Racer	189 D	£35,600	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	905kg	244	4.2	-	145	175	37.5	+ Purist approach intensifies ability - Lightest, option-free spec requires commitment	★★★★★
Lotus Exige S Roadster	186 R	£52,900	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1166kg	301	4.0	-	145	236	28.0	+ Like the hard-top Exige S, but more road-friendly - Boxster S is a better all-rounder	★★★★★
Lotus Elise R	068 R	'04-'11	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	860kg	223	5.6	13.9	150	196	34.4	+ Most thrilling Elise yet - Blaring engine note	★★★★★
Lotus Elise SC	131 R	'08-'11	4/1794	218/8000	156/5000	870kg	254	4.5	11.4	148	199	33.2	+ All the usual Elise magic - Supercharged engine lacks sparkle	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S 1.8	104 R	'06-'10	4/1794	134/6200	127/4200	860kg	158	6.3	18.7	127	-	37.2	+ Brilliant entry-level Elise - Precious little	★★★★★
Lotus Elise 111S	049 R	'02-'04	4/1796	156/7000	129/4650	860kg	197	5.1	-	131	-	40.9	+ A genuinely useable Elise - Air-con? In an Elise?	★★★★★
Lotus Elise 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 Sport 190	044 R	'03	4/1796	190/7800	128/5000	710kg	272	4.7	12.1	135	-	-	+ Fabulous trackday tool - Pricey	★★★★★
Lotus Elise (S1)	126 R	'96-'00	4/1796	118/5500	122/3000	731kg	164	6.1	18.5	126	-	39.4	+ A modern classic - A tad impractical?	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven Supercharged	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	4.5	12.5	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 Spirit	126 R	'71-'73	4/1558	126/6500	113/5500	720kg	178	6.6	-	122	-	-	+ Sensational chassis, properly quick - Affording a mint one	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio	142 D	£98,315	8/4691	434/7000	332/4750	1980kg	223	5.3	-	176	358	18.3	+ As good to drive as it is to look at - Lacks the grunt of some rivals	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio Sport	161 D	£103,910	8/4691	444/7000	376/4750	1980kg	228	5.1	-	177	377	19.5	+ Looks, performance, cruising ability - Brakes could be sharper	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio MC	185 D	£111,710	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1973kg	234	4.9	-	179	337	19.5	+ Most powerful GranCabrio yet - The GranCabrio is starting to show its age	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.8i SE (Mk3.5)	170 R	£23,095	4/1798	124/6500	123/4500	1075kg	117	9.9	-	121	167	39.8	+ Basic MX-5 offers plenty of fun - But you'll probably want the 2.0's power	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 R'Ster Coupe 2.0i (Mk3.5)	170 R	£23,095	4/1798	158/7000	139/5000	1173kg	137	7.9	-	136	181	36.2	+ Handles brilliantly again - Less than macho image; no soft-top option with 2-litre engine	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk3)	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; dubious handling	★★★★★
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 classic	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.6 (Mk1)	131 R	'89-'97	4/1597	115/6500	100/5500	971kg	120	9.0	-	114	-	-	+ The original and still (pretty much) the best - Less than rigid	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK350 Sport	161 R	£44,600	6/3498	302/6500	273/3500	1465kg	209	5.5	-	155	167	39.8	+ Best non-AMG SLK yet - Still no Boxster-beater	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG	186 R	£55,335	8/5461	416/6800	398/4500	1615kg	262	4.6	-	155	195	33.6	+ Quicker and more economical than ever - Needs to be sharper, too	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG	087 R	'05-'10	8/5439	355/5750	376/4000	1575kg	229	4.9	-	155	-	23.5	+ Superb engine, responsive chassis - No manual option, ESP spoils fun	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG Black	110 R	'07-'08	8/5439	394/5750	383/3750	1495kg	268	4.9	11.2	174	-	-	+ AMG gets serious - Dull-witted 7G-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	1805kg	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	394/5750	383/3750	1495kg	268	4.6	10.2	174	-	-	+ As fast as a Murciélago - Not as much fun	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG	071 D	'04-'10	12/5980	604/4800	737/2000	2035kg	302	4.1	-	155	-	-	+ Gob-smacking performance - Gob-smackingly pricey	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG Roadster	167 R	£176,985	8/6208	563/6800	479/4750	1660kg	345	3.7	-	197	308	21.4	+ Loss of one of the coupe's talents - But (understandably) loses the gullwing doors	★★★★★
Mini JCW Convertible (R57)	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	196 D	£31,000	2/1976	82/5250	103/3250	525kg	159	6.0	-	115	215	30.3	+ Quirky, characterful, brilliant - Can become a two-wheeler if you push too hard	★★★★★
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	284/4800	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	185kW	248/4500	273/0	1283kg	196	5.0	14.3	120	0	n/a	+ If this is the future, it's going to be fun - Limited range, high price	★★★★★
Toyota MR2	187 R	'00-'06	4/1794	138/6400	125/4400	975kg	141	7.2	21.2	130	-	38.2	+ Tight lines, taut dynamics - Minimal luggage space	★★★★★
TVR Tamora	070 R	'01-'07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1050kg	338	4.5	-	160	-	-	+ Well-sorted soft-top TVR - Awkward styling	★★★★★
TVR Tuscan Convertible	091 R	'05-'07	6/3996	365/6800	315/6000	1100kg	337	3.8	8.1	195+	-	-	+ Spirit of the Griff reborn - Over 195mph? Really?	★★★★★
TVR 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	4.8	11.2	148	-	-	+ The car that made TVR, Cult status - Mere details	★★★★★
TVR Griffith 500	009 R	'93-'01	8/4988	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	4.8	11.2	167	-	22.1	+ Griff 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 gear 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 M4 and Jaguar's F-type S Coupe would both make great everyday propositions.

Coupes / GTs

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating
Alfa Romeo Brera 3.2 V6	120 R	'08-'11	6/3195	256/6300	237/4500	1532kg	170	6.9	-	155	260	-	+ Brera made better for UK roads - Steering lacking some feel ★★★★★
Alfa Romeo 4C	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	1855kg	288	4.1	-	181	-	-	+ Looks, exclusivity, noise, balance - They're all sold ★★★★★
Alpina B3 Biturbo (E92)	108 R	'07-'13	6/2979	355/5500	369/3800	1570kg	230	4.8	-	177	-	29.1	+ Alpina's M3 alternative - Too refined for some ★★★★★
Alpina B3 GT3 (E92)	176 D	'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	430/7300	361/5000	1610kg	271	4.5	-	189	299	21.9	+ Keener engine, V12 Vantage looks - Slightly sluggish auto only ★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage 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	£46,385	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	1765kg	199	4.9	-	155	190	34.9	+ Supercharged V6 makes S5 cleaner and faster - Poor body control ★★★★★
Audi RS5	168 R	£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	181 D	£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	194 R	'90-'91	5/2226	220/5900	228/1900	1329kg	168	6.2	18.2	143	-	19.1	+ Modern classic - The game has moved on ★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT V8	178 R	£123,850	8/3993	500/6000	487/1700	2295kg	221	4.6	-	188	246	27.0	+ A proper drivers' Bentley with decent economy - W12 suddenly seems pointless ★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT	152 D	£135,760	12/5998	567/6000	516/1700	2320kg	248	4.6	-	198	384	17.1	+ 200mph in utter comfort - Weight, heavy ★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT Speed	177 D	£151,100	12/5998	616/6000	590/2000	2320kg	258	4.0	-	205	338	19.5	+ 205mph in utter comfort - Feels nose-heavy in slow corners ★★★★★
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 Coupe	196 R	£34,250	6/2979	321/5800	332/1300	1455kg	224	5.0	-	155	189	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 435d xDrive M Sport Coupe	195 D	£45,000	6/2993	309/4400	465/1500	1625kg	193	4.7	-	155	146	50.4	+ Pace, grip, economy - Not the sharpest steer; slow-responding gearbox ★★★★★
BMW M4	197 R	£56,650	6/2979	425/5500	406/1850	1497kg	288	4.3	-	155	204	32.1	+ Ferociously fast - Only really sparkles when you're on or over the limit ★★★★★
BMW M3 (E92)	196 R	'07-'13	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1580kg	266	4.3	10.3	155	290	22.8	+ Fends off all of its rivals - ...except the cheaper 1-series M ★★★★★
BMW M3 GTS (E92)	171 R	'10-'11	8/4361	444/8300	324/3750	1530kg	295	4.3	-	193	295	-	+ Highly exclusive, one of the most focused M-cars ever - Good luck trying to find one ★★★★★
BMW M3 (E46)	066 R	'00-'07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1495kg	230	5.1	12.3	155	-	23.7	+ One of the best BMWs ever - Slightly artificial steering feel ★★★★★
BMW M3 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-racer 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	£45,600	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1850kg	303	4.2	-	155	232	28.5	+ Mighty ability, pace, technology - You'll want the Competition Package upgrade too... ★★★★★
BMW M6 (Mk1)	106 R	'05-'10	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1635kg	311	4.8	10.0	155	342	19.8	+ Awesome GT, awesome sports car - SMG gearbox now off the pace ★★★★★
BMW i8	197 D	£99,895	3/1500	357/5800	420/3700	1485kg	244	4.4	-	155	49	134.5	+ Brilliantly executed concept; sci-fi looks - Safe dynamic set-up ★★★★★
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 Stingray Z51 (C7)	197 R	£61,520	8/6162	460/6000	465/4600	1539kg	304	4.2	-	180	279	23.5	+ Performance, chassis balance, supple ride - Body control could be better ★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette (C6)	116 D	'05-'13	8/6162	430/5900	424/4600	1461kg	300	4.3	-	186	316	21.2	+ A Corvette with no apologies needed - Still left-hand drive only ★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette Z06	099 R	'05-'13	8/7011	505/6300	469/4800	1418kg	363	3.9	8.5	198	350	19.2	+ 8.5 to 100, brakes, price - Not quite the road-racer we expected ★★★★★
Ford Shelby GT500 *	178 R	£60,000	8/5812	662/6500	631/4000	1747kg	385	3.5	-	202	-	-	+ Huge performance for the money - Putting it to use takes nerve ★★★★★
Ginetta 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	-	-	+ <i>evo</i> 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 F-type S Coupe	197 R	£60,250	6/2995	375/6500	339/3500	1594kg	239	4.9	-	171	209	32.1	+ Exquisite style, more rewarding (and affordable) than roadster - Scrapy on the limit ★★★★★
Jaguar XK	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 Jag - The kids will have to stay at home ★★★★★
Jaguar XKR-S	198 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 ★★★★★
Jaguar XKR-S GT	163 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 ★★★★★
Lotus Evija S (V6)	171 R	£53,850	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1166kg	298	3.8	-	170	236	-	+ Breathtaking road-racer; our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Doubts over Lotus's future ★★★★★

POCKET buying guide

SEAT Leon Cupra (Mk2)

Years 2007-2012 Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1984cc, turbo Power 237bhp @ 5700-6300rpm Torque 221lb ft @ 2200-5500rpm 0-62mph 6.4sec Top speed 153mph



WHY WOULD YOU?

Because it's quicker and edgier than a Golf GTI, a beefier turbo, larger injectors and a new cylinder head giving the VW Group's 2-litre TFSI engine 237bhp; 0-62mph takes 6.4sec. The even hotter 'R

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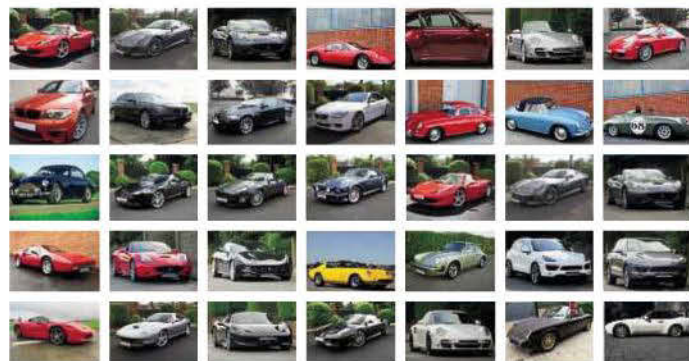
Coupes / GTs

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/vcc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max.mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating	
Lotus Exige 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 Exige S is better for road work	★★★★★
Lotus Exige S (S2)	105 R	'06-'11	4/1796	218/7800	158/5500	930kg	238 4.5	-	148	199	33.2	-	+ Lightweight with a hefty punch - Uninspiring soundtrack	★★★★★
Lotus Exige Cup 260 (S2)	139 D	'10-'11	4/1796	256/8000	174/6000	890kg	293 4.0	-	152	199	31.1	-	+ Feels like a race car, yet works on the road - Pricey for a four-pot Exige	★★★★★
Lotus Exige (S2)	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 Exige (S1)	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 5.6	13.6	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 4.3	9.9	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 5.5	12.7	177	330	19.8	-	+ Striking, accomplished GT - Doesn't spike the pulse like an Aston or 911	★★★★★
Maserati GranTurismo Sport	188 R	£90,785	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 - Lacks ultimate steering	★★★★★
Maserati GranSport	073 R	'04-'10	8/4244	400/7000	333/4500	1680kg	239 4.8	-	180	-	-	-	+ Maser Coupe realises its full potential - Very little	★★★★★
Mazda RX-8	122 R	'03-'11	2R/1308	228/8200	156/5500	1429kg	162 6.5	16.4	146	299	24.6	-	+ Never mind the 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 4.4	10.3	186	280	23.5	-	+ Mercedes makes a proper two-door M3 rival - C63 saloon looks better	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Black	171 R	'12-'13	8/6208	510/6800	457/5200	1635kg	317 4.2	-	186	286	-	-	+ The C63 turned up to 11 - Too heavy, not as fiery as Black Series cars of old	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG	092 D	'06-'09	8/6208	481/6800	464/5000	1755kg	278 4.6	-	155	-	19.9	-	+ Power, control, build quality - Lacks ultimate involvement	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG Black	106 R	'07-'09	8/6208	500/6800	464/5250	1760kg	289 4.2	-	186	-	-	-	+ AMG goes Porsche-hunting - Dull-witted gearshift spoils the party	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CL63 AMG	150 D	£118,865	8/5461	536/6500	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 5.5	13.0	155	-	24.1	-	+ Huge fun, and great value too - Honestly, we're struggling	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R (2012MY/2013MY/2014MY)	196 R	£78,020	6/3799	542/6400	466/3200	1740kg	316 3.2	7.5	196	275	24.0	-	+ GT-R is quicker and better than ever - But over £20K more than its launch price	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R (2010MY)	152 R	'08-'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)	196R	'99-'02	6/2568	276/7000	289/4400	1560kg	180 4.7	12.5	165	-	20.1	-	+ Big, brutal, and great fun - Needs more than the standard 276bhp	★★★★★
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R33)	196 R	'97-'99	6/2568	276/6800	271/4400	1540kg	182 5.4	14.3	155	-	22.0	-	+ Proof that Japanese hi-tech can work (superbly) - Limited supply	★★★★★
Noble M400	089 R	'04-'06	6/2968	425/6500	390/5000	1060kg	407 3.5	-	185	-	-	-	+ Deviously fast - Demon Tweaks interior	★★★★★
Peugeot RCZ 1.6 THP 200	155 R	£26,895	4/1598	197/5500	202/1700	1421kg	141 7.3	18.1	147	155	42.1	-	+ Distinctive looks, highly capable handling - Could be a bit more exciting	★★★★★
Peugeot RCZ R	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 GTS (981)	197 D	£55,397	6/3436	335/7400	280/4750	1345kg	253 4.9	-	177	211	31.4	-	+ Tweaks improve an already sublime package - Slightly 'aftermarket' looks	★★★★★
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)	197 R	£83,545	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1395kg	287 4.5	-	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 mki 997 - Lost a little of the 911 magic	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.2)	121 R	'08-'11	6/3800	380/6500	310/4400	1425kg	271 4.7	-	188	242	27.4	-	+ Poise, precision, blinding pace - Feels a bit clinical	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.1)	070 R	'04-'08	6/3824	350/6600	295/4600	1420kg	246 4.6	10.9	182	-	24.5	-	+evo Car of the Year 2004; like a junior GT3 - Tech overload?	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera (996.3 & 4)	008 R	'98-'01	6/3387	300/6800	258/4600	1320kg	230 4.6	-	173	-	28.0	-	+evo Car of the Year 1998; beautifully polished - Some like a bit of rough	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera (993)		'94-'97	6/3600	285/6100	251/5250	1372kg	211 5.2	-	168	-	25.0	-	+ More character than 996 - Harder work at speed	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (991)	190 R	£100,540	6/3799	468/8250	324/6250	1430kg	332 3.5	-	196	289	23.0	-	+evo Car of the Year 2013 - At its best at licence-troubling speeds	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.2)	182 R	'09-'11	6/3797	429/7600	317/6250	1395kg	312 4.2	9.2	194	303	22.1	-	+ Even better than the car it replaced - Give us a minute...	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.2)	152 R	'10-'11	6/3797	444/7900	317/6750	1370kg	329 4.0	-	193	314	-	-	+evo Car of the Year 2010 - Looks and noise are slightly OTT	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS 4.0 (997.2)	187 R	'11-'12	6/3996	493/8250	339/5750	1360kg	368 3.8	-	193	326	-	-	+evo Car of the Year 2011 - Unforgiving on-road ride	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.1)	182 R	'07-'09	6/3600	409/7600	298/5500	1395kg	298 4.3	9.4	192	-	-	-	+ Runner-up evo Car of the Year 2006 - Ferrari 599 GTBs	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.1)	105 R	'07-'09	6/3600	409/7600	298/5500	1375kg	302 4.2	-	193	-	-	-	+evo Car of the Year 2007 - A chunk more money than the brilliant GT3	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.2)	082 R	'03-'05	6/3600	375/7400	284/5000	1380kg	272 4.3	9.2	190	-	-	-	+evo Car of the Year 2003 - Chassis is a bit too track-focused for some roads	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (996.2)	068 R	'03-'05	6/3600	375/7400	284/5000	1330kg	286 4.2	9.2	190	-	-	-	+ Track-biased version of above - Limited supply	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.1)	182 R	'99	6/3600	360/7200	273/5000	1350kg	271 4.5	10.3	187	-	21.9	-	+evo Car of the Year 1999 - Porsche didn't build enough	★★★★★
Porsche 968 Club Sport	019 R	'93-'95	4/2990	240/6200	225/4100	1335kg	183 6.1	15.7	149	-	-	-	+ One of the all-time greats - Lots have been driven very hard	★★★★★
Renault Alpine A610	187 D	'91-'95	6/2975	247/5750	258/2900	1420kg	177 5.4	13.8	166	-	21.0	-	+ Overlooked, bargain-price French 911. Try one - R5 interior	★★★★★
Rolls-Royce Wraith	189 D	£237,111	12/6592	624/5600	590/1500	2360kg	269 4.4	-	155	327	20.2	-	+ 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	-	-	-	+ Critically overlooked homologation special - Finding one	★★★★★
TVR Sagaris	097 R	'05-'07	6/3996	406/7500	349/5000	1078kg	383 3.7	-	185	-	-	-	+ Looks outrageous - 406bhp feels a touch optimistic	★★★★★
TVR Tuscan S (Mk2)	076 R	'05-'07	6/3996	400/7000	315/5250	1100kg	369 4.0	-	185	-	-	-	+ Possibly TVR's best ever car - Aerodynamic 'enhancements'	★★★★★
TVR Cerbera Speed Six	004 R	'98-'04	6/3996	350/6800	330/5000	1130kg	315 5.0	11.4	160+	-	-	-	+ Accomplished and desirable - Check chassis for corrosion	★★★★★
VW Scirocco GT 2.0 TSI	155 R	£26,760	4/1984	207/5300	207/1700	1373kg	153 6.1	15.8	149	172	38.2	-	+ Golf GTI price and performance - Interior lacks flair	★★★★★
VW Scirocco R	181 R	£31,985	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 it is based on even more, well, special. *The supercar to buy.*



Best of the Rest

Pagani's Huayra (left) was our joint Car of the Year in 2012, while Lamborghini's Aventador offers true supercar drama. And if you're wondering which is best out of the LaFerrari/McLaren P1/Porsche 918 hybrid hypercar triumvirate, well, we really need to get them together to make a call there...

Supercars

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine c/y/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft./rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating	
9ff GT9R	127 D	£450,000	6/4000	1120/7850	774/5970	1346kg	845	2.9	-	260	-	-	+ Above 100mph eats Veyrons for breakfast - Eats M3 dust at traffic lights	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vanquish (Mk2)	182 R	£189,995	12/5935	565/6750	457/5500	1739kg	330	4.1	-	183	335	19.6	+ A much better car than the DBS it succeeds - Shame it looks little different, then	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vanquish S (Mk1)	110 R	'05-'07	12/5935	520/7000	425/5800	1875kg	282	4.9	10.1	200	-	-	+ Vanquish joins supercar greats - A tad intimidating at the limit	★★★★★
Aston Martin One-77	179 R	'10-'12	12/7312	750/6000	553/7600	1740kg	438	3.7	-	220+	-	-	+ The engine, the looks, the drama - Gearbox hates manoeuvring; only 77 were made	★★★★★
BMW M1	110 R	'78-'81	6/3500	277/6500	239/5000	1303kg	216	5.8	-	161	-	-	+ Early supercar icon - A bit under-endowed these days	★★★★★
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	2.8	5.8	253	596	11.4	+ Superbly engineered 4WD quad-turbo rocket - Er, lacks luggage space?	★★★★★
Bugatti EB110	078 R	'91-'95	12/3500	552/8000	451/3750	1566kg	358	3.4	-	212	-	-	+ Superbly engineered 4WD quad-turbo rocket - It just fizzled out	★★★★★
Caparo T1	138 R	£301,975	8/3499	575/10,500	310/9000	689kg	848	3.8	6.2	205	-	-	+ Absolutely staggering performance - Absolutely staggering price tag	★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette ZR1	133 R	'09-'13	8/6162	638/6500	603/3800	1528kg	424	3.8	7.6	205	355	18.8	+ Huge pace and character - Take plenty of brave pills if there's rain	★★★★☆
Ferrari 458 Italia	183 R	£178,526	8/4497	562/9000	398/6000	1485kg	384	3.2	6.8	202	307	20.6	+ An astounding achievement, looks fantastic - There'll never be a manual	★★★★★
Ferrari 458 Spider	185 R	£198,971	8/4497	562/9000	398/6000	1530kg	373	3.3	-	198	275	23.9	+ A 458 that sounds and feels more organic - Er, 4mph slower than the Italia?	★★★★★
Ferrari 458 Speciale	191 R	£208,000	8/4497	597/9000	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	-	-	+ Just brilliant - Didn't you read the plus point?	★★★★★
Ferrari 430 Scuderia	121 R	'07-'10	8/4308	503/8500	347/5250	1350kg	378	3.5	7.7	198	-	15.7	+ Successful F1 technology transplant - Likes to shout about it	★★★★★
Ferrari 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	3.5	7.4	205	415	15.8	+ evo Car of the Year 2006 - Banks are getting harder to rob	★★★★★
Ferrari 599 GTO	161 R	'11-'12	12/5999	661/8250	457/6500	1605kg	418	3.4	-	208	-	-	+ One of the truly great Ferraris - Erm, the air con isn't very good	★★★★★
Ferrari 575M Fiorano Handling Pack	169 R	'02-'06	12/5748	508/7250	434/5250	1730kg	298	4.2	9.6	202	-	12.3	+ Fiorano pack makes 575 truly great - It should have been standard	★★★★★
Ferrari 550 Maranello	169 R	'99-'02	12/5474	485/7000	415/5000	1716kg	287	4.3	10.0	199	-	12.3	+ Everything - Nothing	★★★★★
Ferrari FF	194 R	£227,142	12/6262	651/8000	504/6000	1880kg	347	3.7	-	208	360	15.4	+ Four seats and 4WD, but a proper Ferrari - Looks divide opinion	★★★★★
Ferrari 612 Scaglietti F1	090 R	'04-'11	12/5748	533/7250	434/5250	1840kg	294	4.3	9.8	199	470	13.8	+ Awesomely capable grand tourer - See above	★★★★★
Ferrari LaFerrari	197 R	£1m	12/6262	950/9000	664/6750	1255kg	769	3.0	-	217+	330	-	+ Perhaps the greatest Ferrari ever - Brakes lack the ultimate precision of the P1's	★★★★★
Ferrari Enzo	156 R	'02-'04	12/5998	651/7800	485/5500	1365kg	485	3.5	6.7	217+	-	-	+ Intoxicating, exploitable - Cabin detailing falls short of Zonda or F1	★★★★★
Ferrari F50	186 R	'96-'97	12/4699	513/8500	347/6500	1230kg	424	3.9	-	202	-	-	+ A better drivers' Ferrari than the 288, F40 or Enzo - Not better looking, though	★★★★★
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 288 GTO	064 R	'84-'85	8/2855	394/7000	366/3800	1160kg	345	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's 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	£1,099m	8/5032	1124/7100	885/2750	1435kg	796	2.8	-	273	-	-	+ As fast and exciting as your body can handle - It's the Veyron money	★★★★★
Koenigsegg CXC	094 R	'06-'10	8/4700	806/6900	678/5700	1180kg	694	3.9	7.7	241	-	-	+ Sweden's greatest supercar - Sweden's only supercar	★★★★★
Koenigsegg CXXR Edition	118 R	'08-'10	8/4800	1004/7000	796/5600	1280kg	797	2.8	-	254+	-	-	+ One of the world's fastest cars - Spike your power delivery	★★★★★
Lamborghini Huracán LP610-4	197 R	£186,760	10/5204	602/8250	413/6500	1532kg	399	3.2	-	202+	290	22.6	+ Rare depth of character and ability - Takes work to find its sweet-spot	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4	180 D	'08-'13	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	'10-'13	10/5204	562/8000	398/6500	1340kg	426	3.5	-	202	325	20.6	+ Less weight and more power than original Superleggera - LP560-4 runs it very close	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo	094 R	'06-'08	10/4961	513/8000	376/4250	1520kg	343	4.3	9.4	196	-	-	+ On a full-bore start it spins all four wheels. Clunky - 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	194 R	£260,040	12/6498	690/8250	509/5500	1575kg	445	2.9	-	217	370	17.7	+ Most important new Lambo since the Countach - Erm... expensive?	★★★★★
Lamborghini Aventador Roadster	184 R	£294,665	12/6498	690/8250	509/5500	1625kg	431	3.0	-	217	370	17.7	+ Sensational engine and styling - A wee bit on the thirsty side	★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago	089 D	'01-'06	12/6192	570/7500	479/5400	1650kg	351	4.0	-	205	-	-	+ Gorgeous, capable and incredibly friendly - V12 feels stressed	★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago LP640	093 R	'06-'11	12/6496	631/8000	487/6000	1665kg	385	3.3	-	211	-	21.3	+ Compelling old-school supercar - You'd better be on your toes	★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago LP670-4 SV	186 R	'09-'11	12/6496	661/8000	487/6500	1565kg	429	3.2	7.3	212	-	-	+ A supercar in its truest, wildest sense - Be prepared for stares	★★★★★
Lamborghini Diablo 6.0	019 R	'00-'02	12/5992	550/7100	457/5500	1625kg	343	3.8	-	200+	-	-	+ Best-built, best-looking Diablo of all - People's perceptions	★★★★★
Lamborghini Countach 5000 QV	184 R	'88-'91	12/5167	455/7000	369/5200	1488kg	311	4.2	10.0	182	-	13.7	+ Still the definitive supercar - Visibility, pract-oh hell, who cares?	★★★★★
Lexus LFA/LFA Nürburgring	161 R	'10-'12	10/4805	552/8700	354/6800	1480kg	379	3.7	-	202	-	-	+ Absurd and compelling supercar - Badge and price don't quite match	★★★★★
Maserati MC12	079 R	'04-'05	12/5998	621/7500	481/5500	1445kg	437	3.8	-	205	-	-	+ Rarer than an Enzo - The Ferrari's better	★★★★★
McLaren 650S	196 R	£195,250	8/3799	641/7500	500/3000	1330kg	490	3.0	-	207	275	24.2	+ Better brakes, balance and looks than 12C; more power too - Costs an extra £19k	★★★★★
McLaren 12C	187 R	'11-'14	8/3799	616/7500	442/3000	1434kg	435	3.1	-	207	279	24.2	+ Staggering performance, refinement - Engine noise can be grating	★★★★★
McLaren P1	194 R	£866,000	8/3799	903/7500	664/4000	1395kg	658	2.8	-	217	194	34.0	+ Freakish breadth of ability - We don't know its exact Nürburgring lap time	★★★★★
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	4.0	8.1	199	-	-	+ Bonkers looks, bonkers speed - Bonkers £250K price	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG	159 R	£168,395	8/6208	563/6800	479/4750	1620kg	335	4.1	8.4	197	308	21.4	+ Great engine and chassis (gulling doors too!) - Slightly tardy gearbox	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG Black	190 R	£229,985	8/6208	622/7400	468/5500	1550kg	408	3.6	-	196	321	20.6	+ Stunning engine, superb body control - Appetite for expensive tyres	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLR McLaren	073 R	'04-'07	8/5439	617/6500	575/3250	1693kg	370	3.7	-	208	-	-	+ Zonda-pace, 575-style drivability - Dreadful brake feel	★★★★★
Noble M600	186 R	£200,000	8/4439	650/6800	604/3800	1198kg	551	3.8	7.7	225	-	-	+ Spiritual successor to the Ferrari F40 - It's a bit pricey	★★★★★
Pagani Huayra	185 R	£1m	12/5980	720/5800	731/2250	1350kg	542	3.3	-	224	-	-	+ Our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Engine isn't as nape-pricking as the Zonda's	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda 760RS	170 R	£1.5m	12/7291	750/6300	575/4500	1210kg	630	3.3	-	217+	-	-	+ One of the most extreme Zondas ever - One of the last Zondas ever (probably)	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda C12S	096 R	'01-'05	12/7291	555/5900	553/4050	1250kg	451	3.6	-	197	-	-	+ evo 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	

Track Times

Key

+ = new addition this month. **Red** denotes the car is the fastest in its class.

Car	Lap time	Peak mph	issue no.	Conditions
Radical SR8LM (fastest car)	1:13.6	127.8	138	Dry
Caparo T1 (fastest supercar)	1:14.8	130.9	131	Dry
Ferrari 458 Italia	1:19.3	120.0	159	Dry
Gumpert Apollo S	1:19.4	120.4	119	Dry
McLaren MP4-12C (Corsa tyres)	1:19.6	121.2	159	Dry
Caterham Levante V8	1:19.6	118.6	131	Dry
Porsche 997 GT2 RS	1:19.9	122.3	158	Dry
Lotus 2-Eleven GT4	1:20.1	113.2	138	Dry
Caterham Superlight R500	1:20.2	115.7	119	Dry
McLaren MP4-12C	1:20.6	120.9	159	Dry
Noble M600	1:20.8	121.8	159	Dry
Porsche 997 GT3 RS 4.0 (fastest coupe)	1:21.0	118.2	160	Dry
Lamborghini Murciélago LP670-4 SV	1:21.3	121.1	134	Dry
Ariel Atom 3 Supercharged	1:21.5	113.6	119	Dry
KTM X-Bow (300bhp)	1:21.5	112.7	138	Dry
Ferrari 430 Scuderia	1:21.7	117.2	121	Dry
Porsche 997.2 GT3 RS (3.8)	1:21.9	116.8	150	Dry
Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4	1:22.5	119.1	122	Dry
Brooke Double R	1:22.5	113.2	119	Dry
Lamborghini Murciélago LP640	1:22.9	116.7	143	Dry
Porsche Carrera GT	1:23.3	115.2	119	Dry
Porsche 997.2 GT3	1:23.3	114.5	138	Dry
Porsche 997 Turbo S	1:23.5	117.5	146	Dry
Porsche 997 GT2	1:23.5	115.1	119	Dry
Nissan GT-R (2008MY)	1:23.6	113.1	119	Dry
Porsche 991 Carrera	1:23.6	112.5	182	Dry
Porsche 991 Carrera Cabriolet	1:23.9	112.3	183	Dry
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	1:23.9	-	YouTube	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
Caterham 7 Supersport	1:24.8	101.6	YouTube	Dry
Ferrari California	1:25.0	111.8	134	Dry
KTM X-Bow	1:25.0	105.0	123	Dry
BMW E92 M3 Coupe	1:25.1	109.1	162	Dry
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG Black	1:25.2	108.6	131	Dry
Jaguar F-type V8 S	1:25.2	111.2	183	Dry
Audi RS5	1:25.4	108.8	162	Dry
Audi R8 Spyder V8	1:25.5	107.0	167	Dry
Porsche Cayman R	1:25.5	106.8	158	Dry
Aston Martin V8 Vantage Roadster	1:25.6	109.1	183	Dry
BMW M5 (F10) (fastest saloon)	1:25.7	112.0	165	Dry
Jaguar XKR-S	1:25.7	-	YouTube	Dry
Aston Martin V12 Vantage	1:25.8	110.9	146	Dry
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-400	1:25.9	107.5	138	Dry
BMW 1-series M Coupe	1:25.9	106.4	158	Dry
Mitsubishi Evo X RS 360	1:26.1	106.6	153	Dry
Renaultsport Mégane 265 Trophy (fastest hot hatch)	1:26.1	105.3	166	Dry
Audi TT RS	1:26.3	107.2	149	Dry
Aston Martin DBS	1:26.4	109.5	143	Dry
Porsche Panamera Turbo	1:26.5	109.2	137	Dry
Audi RS6 Avant (C7) (fastest estate)	1:26.5	-	YouTube	Dry
BMW M135i	1:26.6	-	YouTube	Dry
Jaguar XJ220	1:26.7	111.7	131	Dry
Porsche Cayenne Turbo S (fastest 4x4)	1:26.8	106.1	YouTube	Dry
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG	1:26.8	104.9	165	Dry
Porsche Cayenne Turbo	1:26.9	107.4	158	Dry
Lotus Evora	1:27.1	104.2	145	Dry
Nissan 370Z	1:27.1	104.0	158	Dry
Jaguar F-type V6 S	1:27.2	105.0	YouTube	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
Audi S3	1:27.7	-	YouTube	Dry
Vauxhall VX88 Bathurst S	1:27.8	106.1	131	Dry
BMW E46 M3 CSL	1:27.8	105.4	153	Dry
Renaultsport Mégane R26.R	1:27.8	103.3	-	-
Audi RS6 Avant (C6) (fastest estate)	1:27.9	111.0	121	Dry
Jaguar XFR	1:27.9	108.1	137	Dry
Lexus IS-F	1:28.1	106.4	151	Dry
Porsche Boxster S (987)	1:28.1	105.4	120	Dry
Subaru WRX STI	1:28.3	101.6	157	Dry
SEAT Leon Cupra R	1:28.7	102.4	162	Dry
Bentley Continental Supersports	1:29.2	105.8	149	Dry
Lotus Elise Club Racer	1:29.2	95.5	162	Dry
Renaultsport Mégane 250 Cup	1:29.9	101.4	156	Dry
Vauxhall VX88 Clubsport Tourer	1:29.9	-	YouTube	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 Fiesta ST	1:30.4	97.1	YouTube	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

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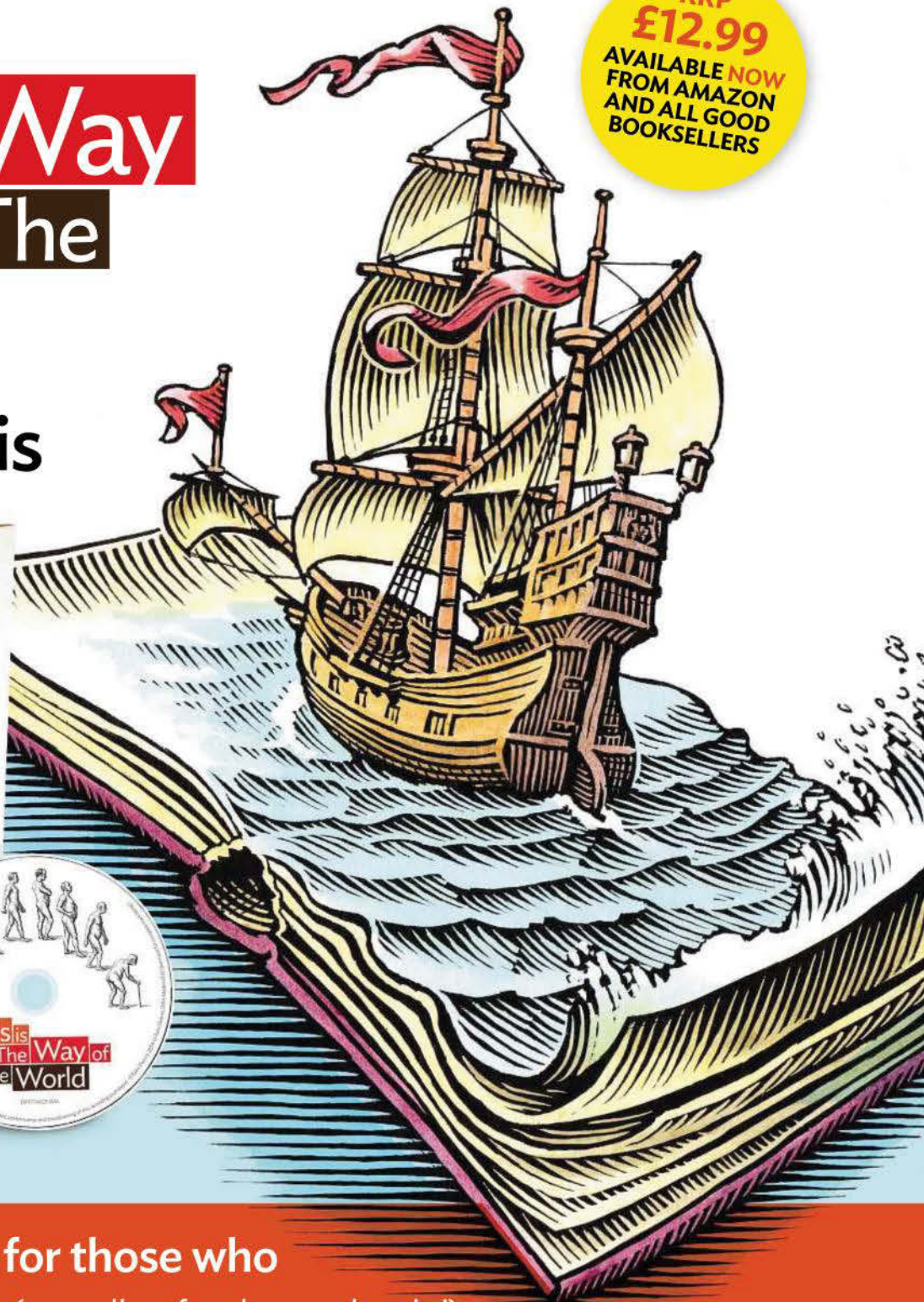
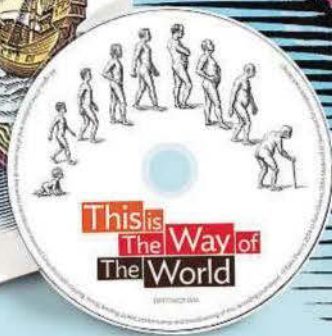
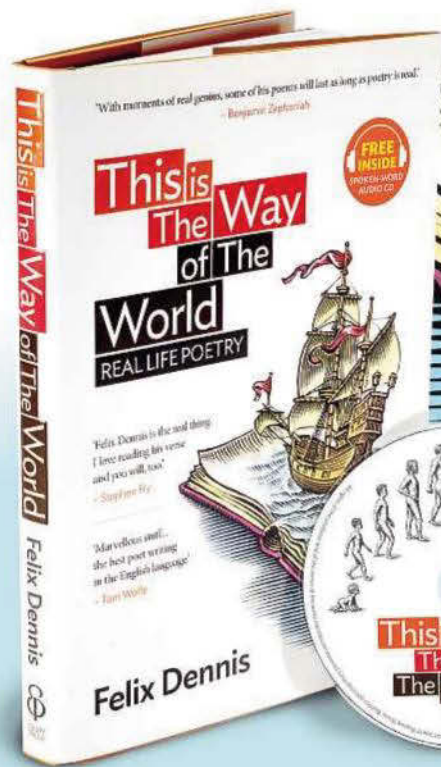
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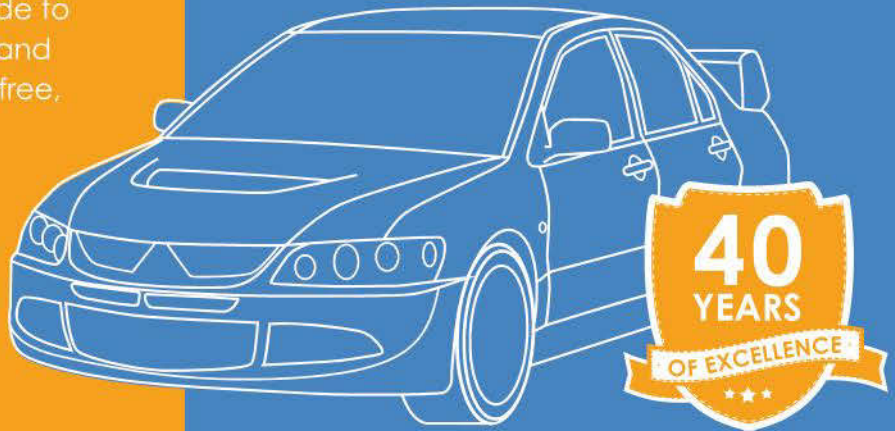
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Art of speed



Alfa Romeo SZ headlights

by DAVID VIVIAN

ONE, NOT UNREASONABLE, THEORY ON WHY SOME of us bond with cars from a tender age is that, like us, they have frontal features recognisable as a face: a nose, a mouth and two eyes. The urge to personify headlights in particular is understandable: they allow us to see where we're going at night. Some Fiat 500 owners helpfully apply stick-on eyelashes to their cars' headlights to emphasise the point.

In the (often dim) and distant past, all cars had round headlights, the very first 'fuelled' by acetylene or oil which gave off a lovely waxy yellow glow, similar to the gas street lamps of the time. Electricity changed everything, of course, giving rein to evolving illumination methods – tungsten, halogen, xenon, LED – that not only brightened our lives but, along with advances in plastics and glass, afforded car designers the freedom to fashion ever more aesthetically arresting headlights.

Where once cars were lumbered with a look of wide-eyed surprise – or frog eyes in the case of one small British sportscar from the '50s – headlights became such a potent feature of a car's 'expression' that nothing less than the automotive equivalent of a Clint Eastwood scowl was required for anything with a performance remit. In recent years, it's almost as if designers have begun

to believe headlights are the window on a car's soul and that conspicuously dazzling, high-tech complexity denotes a sense of sophistication and advanced engineering throughout the rest of the car. Key to this has been the move towards increasing numbers of small, high-intensity elements, a trend that (maybe) has come to a shuddering hiatus with the Alfa Romeo 4C's bi-LED 'bug eyes', each light unit comprising two small bulbs and an additional five much smaller ones – now, following an unprecedented backlash, replaced by simpler units less upsetting to arachnophobes.

But then Alfa was also responsible for the car that arguably prefigured the move towards smaller multiple light sources as a form of design jewellery. The unforgettably twisted SZ, or 'Il Mostro', used clusters of three small headlights, the size and shape of square cream crackers, set into a shallow full-width grille flanking the Alfa shield. Launched at the 1989 Geneva show, the now iconic composite-bodied coupe was branded ugly by most critics and hideous by some. Those initial knee-jerk verdicts seem harsh with the benefit of hindsight, though, especially when the fashion for pretty-pretty cars has faded. The SZ may still be something of a curiosity, but it was ahead of its time in many ways and, today, those old-tech headlights somehow look just right. ✕

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