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mondeo.ford.co.uk



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Ed Speak



ALFA ROMEO HAS THE world at its feet. Parent group Fiat Chrysler Automobiles has been restructured, Alfa's manufacturing capacity has increased thanks in part to a five-billion-euro investment and (shock) the brand is finally on the verge of having an actual range of cars.

Yes, instead of stumbling from facelift to facelift and quietly euthanising cars, Alfa is promising seven new models in three years and 400,000 sales per annum by 2018. In 2013 it sold just 74,000 cars. By comparison, Porsche sold 162,000.

Of course, Alfa has been predicting sales increases at every key launch in recent times, but having spent a day with the firm in Milan recently, I sense a renewed vigour. Finally, the predictions seem realistic.

I can't tell you how exciting it is to write these words, not only as a car enthusiast but also as someone who grew up with an Alfa-mad dad who rallied-crashed-rebuilt-repeat an original Giulia (see pic). So why, then, do I fear that Alfa cannot deliver a genuine drivers' car? Because 4C.

Alfa Romeo's 4C is by far the most disappointing new car I've driven in the last five years. Achingly beautiful yes, but this only exaggerates the sense of deflation when you climb behind the wheel and wrestle with its woeful dynamics.

Remember that this is a car with all the right ingredients: a clean-sheet design with a stiff carbon tub, a mid-engine/rear-wheel-drive layout and a 237bhp turbocharged engine. The 4C was a spectacular defeat clutched from the jaws of victory and a car that stank of being signed-off by marketers rather than drivers.

The new Giulia (see p18)? It's also a clean-sheet car. It has rear-wheel drive with a four-wheel-drive option and Ferrari has had a hand in developing the V6 twin-turbo version. A manual is available and it looks absolutely *sen-bloody-sational*. Active aero? Yep. Proper torque-vectoring? Yes. Sophisticated suspension layout. Si.

It's all there – the badge, the looks, the engineering and the driver-focused layout. If they cock it up, I sense the whole car community will effectively hand in their Alfa badges, if you know what I mean.

In Milan, CEO Harald Wester explained that the Alfa Romeo brand remains as strong as ever but the challenge ahead was releasing, and realising,



'My dad rallied-crashed-rebuilt-repeat an original Giulia'

its potential. 'Nothing of the brand needed to change, we needed to change,' he said.

It's refreshing to hear a car company boss speak so frankly (he even went on to describe Alfa's premium rivals as 'cold, autocratic and boring'), but I'd question his assessment of the equity in the Alfa brand, particularly among the younger generation. I might get misty-eyed at GTAs and Quadrifoglios, but the *Gran Turismo* generation positively froths over GT-Rs and McLarens.

There is some positive news about the Alfa Romeo mindset. That being that the Giulia project was spearheaded by what Wester calls 'skunks' – a team recruited to challenge incumbent conventions within the company. FCA chairman Sergio Marchionne says the programme was inspired by Lockheed Martin's Skunkworks division formed in 1943 to build America's first jet fighter. 'We needed a revolution of mindset,' said Wester, with Marchionne adding: 'We created a free-thinking environment, with the team working in isolation from the rest of the company.'

I'm sure that put some noses out of joint in Milan, but you've got to applaud the decision. I just hope Marchionne and Wester are similarly brave when they appoint the person to carry out the Giulia's final sign-off. ☒

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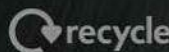
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'The Project 7 allows you to define the limit and hover close to it consistently'

JAGUAR F-TYPE PROJECT 7 p104



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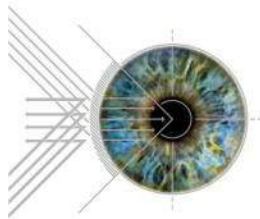
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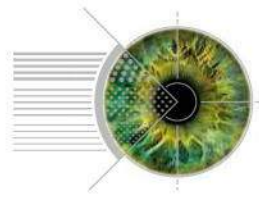
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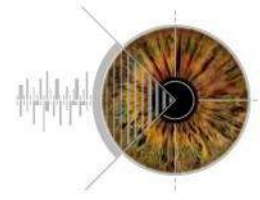
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GIULIA

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Lotus 3-Eleven

by HENRY CATCHPOLE

WATCHING THE SECOND SHIFT IN the paint shop all wander out and stand around in their white boiler suits taking photos of the 3-Eleven is reassuring. If Lotus employees are excited about it then it bodes well. The rest of the company had been shown the car in the morning, but these boys hadn't been around then so it's the first time they've seen what has been something of a secret squirrel project and they're clearly enthused. As they reluctantly drift away and slowly



CONTINUED OVER

reveal the car they've been clustered around, it's easy to see why they've lingered so long, because the green and yellow car sitting in the sunshine is a bit of a stunner. With a 0-60mph time of under three seconds in race trim, it's also the quickest series production car Lotus has ever produced.

The story goes that about 12 months ago a Scottish Lotus club had a trackday at Hethel one Saturday. Hearing the noise of cars going round the circuit, Jean-Marc Gales, then still very new in the job of CEO at Lotus, wandered out to have a look. He met the owners, some of whom were driving 2-Elevens, and one of the first questions he was asked was, 'When do we get a 3-Eleven?' That's what set the ball rolling.

Since the beginning of this year, a small team of about six people, mostly from the

Motorsport department, have had roughly six months to develop what you now see. At first the 3-Eleven was really just going to be a rebodied Exige, but it has ended up being between 80 and 90 per cent new. The chassis is still made from extruded and bonded aluminium, but with a small amount of extra material and no need for the sill cut-outs that the Exige has, it is 50 per cent stiffer.

The bodywork is made from a new, lighter type of glassfibre composite developed by Hexion. Not only is the finish very good but the whole body weighs just 47kg. There are plans to offer a full carbonfibre body too, but whichever option they go for, owners will be getting a very good looking car. The surfaces are far more sculpted than the rather boxy 2-Eleven's, with manipulation of the airflow a clear aim in the new car. The end result is

“The 3-Eleven is three seconds quicker around Hethel than an Evora GT4 race car”



a dry weight for the road car of 925kg, which then falls to under 900kg for the race version.

The 400bhp supercharged V6 found in the back of the new Evora was the starting point for the engine. However, Gales had stated that the car should be 'a car that is among the top ten at the Nürburgring', and for that they needed more power. 'So we put the engine on the benches,' says Gales, '420bhp, 430bhp and at 450bhp they have run now for 100 hours. So it works fairly well at full throttle.' Torque is also impressive for such a light car, with 332lb ft available between 3500rpm and 6500rpm.

The suspension is fully adjustable, with Eibach providing the springs and Öhlins the dampers. Michelin is the tyre supplier and the lightweight forged wheels are 18 inches in diameter at the front and 19 inches at the rear. Aiding the mechanical grip is a healthy amount of downforce. The difference between road and race trim is simply the inclination of the rear wing and the size of the carbon front splitter. In full race mode they will generate 215kg of downforce at 150mph, although this setup also lops 6mph off the straight-line top speed. There are

plans to give owners tables of wing angles, ride heights, etc, along with the effects they have on balance, so that they can then more easily set the car up to their liking.

Impressively, given the fit and finish, the car you see in these pictures is no show-pony but a running prototype. Indeed, it is shortly due to be stripped down and fitted with around 50 sensors so that testing can begin in earnest. By their own calculations the engineers reckon that the car should do a sub-7min 10sec lap round the Nürburgring (without the recently imposed speed limits – although they're keen to set a new benchmark with the restrictions in place, as it would play to their advantage). And if you think that sounds a bit fanciful, consider that it will lap ten seconds quicker than an Exige S round the 2.2-mile Hethel test track and three seconds quicker than an Evora GT4 race car.

As you might expect, none of this performance comes cheap, with the road car starting at £82,000 and rising to £115,200 for the race version. However, with 63 orders already taken just a few days after the unveiling, we expect the 311-unit run to sell out very quickly indeed.



1

1 TYRES

Lotus has switched from Pirelli to Michelin for everything apart from the Elise (which still wears Yokohamas). The 3-Eleven will wear Pilot Super Sports in road trim and Cup 2 rubber in race trim. The sizes are 225/40 ZR18 up front and 275/35 ZR19 on the rear.

2 BRAKES

AP Racing four-pot calipers are fitted to the 3-Eleven, with 332mm grooved and vented discs front and rear. The Race version will come with upgraded pads.

TECH CLOSE-UP



Display

Unsurprisingly the 2-Eleven's analogue dials are out. A new TFT screen from Motec is in and can be switched between Road and Race displays, the former showing a more conventional dial-type rev counter. Shift lights sit just above the screen.



Gearbox

An H-pattern 'box is used for the road car while the Race version gets a six-speed sequential with a pneumatic paddleshift system. The four-cylinder 2-Eleven used a Sadev sequential, but the V6's extra torque means a switch to Xtrac was necessary.

SPECIFICATION (RACE VERSION IN BRACKETS)

Engine	V6, 3456cc, supercharged	Weight	925kg (<900kg)
Power	450bhp @ 7000rpm	Power to weight	494bhp/ton (c508bhp/ton)
Torque	332lb ft @ 3500-6500rpm	Basic price	£82,000 (£115,200)
0-60mph	sub-3.2sec (sub-3.0sec)	On sale	Early 2016
Top speed	180mph (174mph)		



1 STORAGE

Following feedback from 2-Eleven customers, there is a small storage compartment, big enough for a crash helmet, situated behind the engine. Its shape helps channel air out through the back of the car.

2 LIMITED-SLIP DIFFERENTIAL

The road car has a Torsen-type LSD; the Race version gets a plate LSD with a choice of ramp angles and pre-load settings.

3 ROLL-CAGE

The standard safety structure is MSA-compliant, but a full FIA roll-cage for international racing will be an option.

4 BODYWORK

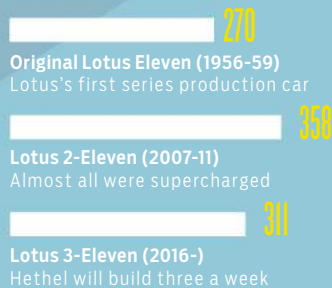
Thanks to a new type of resin-infused composite, the whole body weighs just 47kg, which is 40 per cent lighter than an equivalent GRP body. It looks likely that a full carbonfibre body will be offered too, saving at least another 12kg and quite possibly more.

PRICE

£82,000

Road: £82,000
(including VAT and OTR costs)
Race: £115,200
(including VAT)

PRODUCTION



DRAG COEFFICIENT



Road: 0.421 Cd (equivalent to an Elise)
Race: 0.430 Cd (equivalent to an Exige)



HETHEL LAP TIMES

Elise 220 Cup	1min 38sec
Evora 400 and Exige	1min 32sec
Evora GT4 race car	1min 25sec
3-Eleven	1min 22sec



RIVAL

Radical SR3 SL



Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 2000cc, turbo	0-60mph	3.4sec (claimed)
Power	300bhp @ n/a rpm	Top speed	161mph (claimed)
Torque	340lb ft @ n/a rpm	Dry weight	775kg (393bhp/ton)
		Basic price	£81,300

TORSIONAL STIFFNESS OF CHASSIS



50 per cent greater when compared to the Exige



THE BOSS
Jean-Marc Gales

WE ARE CURRENTLY thinking about Elise and Exige – what can we do with those? Every future Lotus will have more power and less weight for sure, so in the next Exige we will have that. And we are not talking five years, we are talking 24 months, certainly.

'The next Elise I'd like to do two versions of, one that is – I need to be careful what I say, but – maybe a bit more affordable. Probably the same engines, but lighter, which then makes it faster automatically. And then you can go for smaller tyres, smaller brakes, smaller everything, because weight is the enemy. And if you take weight out you normally take cost out also, so that we can have a real good price for the next Elise.'

'The Exige, on the contrary, I want to make even more of a hardcore drivers' car. But at the same time making it easier to live with, because what many customers ask me is whether we can make getting in and out easier. That's what I'm working on now.'

'We're working also on the steering to make it lighter, because when the tyres get wider, like on the Exige, the steering sometimes gets heavier. It's involving, but maybe in city driving or on the way to the track, let's make it a bit lighter. So, we're working on both – the entry level and the hardcore and making both easier to live with.'

DOWNFORCE

at 100mph

Road

47
kg

Race

95
kg

at 150mph

Road

107
kg

Race

215
kg

WEIGHT



Or less than 900kg for the race version without headlights and a passenger seat, and with the lighter race battery and sequential gearbox, amongst other things

STILL AHEAD OF ITS TIME?

'Lotus's bonded extruded aluminium tub might seem like old technology because it's been around for 20 years, but the truth is that it was just a long way ahead of its time when it appeared on the first Elise. According to Gales, the carbonfibre chassis in the Alfa Romeo 4C is just 3kg

lighter but four times as expensive. Carbonfibre is also far less adaptable, because you need a new mould if you want to significantly alter it. The Lotus chassis, meanwhile, is still state-of-the-art and has a huge amount of potential.'

Henry Catchpole

Alfa Romeo Giulia

New saloon to kick-start Alfa's revival, with a 503bhp four-wheel-drive model gunning for the M3. But will it deliver?

1 DRIVETRAIN

The Giulia is based on an all-new platform, with Alfa Romeo developing both rear- and four-wheel-drive drivetrains. Torque-vectoring will also feature.

2 AERO

There's an active front splitter for the Quadrifoglio model, which actively manages downforce via the car's Chassis Domain Control.

3 WHEELBASE

Claimed to be the longest in its class, the Giulia has turned to aluminium and carbonfibre to keep the weight down. The new car also has short overhangs.

ALFA IS BACK! YES, ONCE again the clichéd headline is being wheeled out as one of the best-loved automotive brands (Alfa's words, not ours) has revealed its new Giulia saloon. This is the car the company hopes will take the fight to BMW's 3-series, Mercedes' C-class, Audi's A4 and Jaguar's XE in the executive saloon sector.

Of more interest to evo readers will be the range-topping Quadrifoglio performance model, which will square up to the M3, C63, RS4 and forthcoming XE R in the performance saloon arena.

Crucially the Giulia will aim to steer the company onto a path of growth and success that will yield seven new models over the next three years and see a five-fold sales increase from 2013's 74,000 cars sold to a target of 400,000 in 2018.

The new Giulia has been developed by what Alfa calls a 'skunkworks' of the best engineers, designers and

stylists within parent group FCA. Its efforts have resulted in a new rear-drive platform (four-wheel drive will also be offered) and a to-be-declared range of regular turbocharged petrol and diesel engines. Top-spec Quadrifoglio models will boast a C63 S-rivalling 503bhp from a turbocharged V6. Made entirely from aluminium, as all the Giulia engines will be, this powerplant has been developed by engineers with a 'Ferrari background' and is claimed to accelerate the Giulia to 62mph in 3.9sec – 0.4sec quicker than a manual M3. Drive will go to all four wheels (or solely to the rear axle) via a standard six-speed manual gearbox.

The Giulia's wheelbase will be the longest in its class, which means it will outstretch the 2840mm C-class, but with a design that features short overhangs, a long bonnet and some muscle injected into the arches, Alfa's new C-segment saloon should be the most athletic looking car in



its class. That long wheelbase should also provide the Giulia with a blend of stability and comfort, and there's also an active aero-splitter at the front which is governed by 'Chassis Domain Control' electronics.

Under the Giulia's skin will be double wishbones at the front and an 'Alfalink' multi-link suspension system at the rear, with electronically controlled active dampers at each corner. Alfa has also developed a 'semi-virtual' steering axis designed to maximise steering accuracy and speed, and while Alfa's engineering chief, Philippe Krief, wouldn't talk specifics, we hear it will be on a par with the sharp-steering Ferrari 458.

The Giulia will also be offered with torque-vectoring and will be the first Alfa Romeo to feature the company's new switchable 'DNA' chassis control, which features Advanced Efficiency, Natural, Dynamic and Race settings. Drivers will be able to switch off the car's ESP system completely. With

claims of best-in-class torsional rigidity and the promise of a 'unique, uncompromising driving performance', Alfa is being incredibly bullish with its claims.

It wasn't, however, all that forthcoming with the details during the car's reveal at the company's recently renovated museum in Milan last month. Nonetheless, from the figures we were handed, we've estimated the 3-litre V6 turbo Quadrifoglio will tip the scales at around 1500kg (a manual M3 weighs 1520kg), thanks to the use of aluminium for the suspension components and carbonfibre for some of the external body panels (and even the seat frames), as well as mechanical components such as the prop shaft. The Quadrifoglio will also be fitted with carbon-ceramic brakes.

Inside, the Giulia will feature a driver-focused cockpit with, according to Alfa, the main controls grouped together on the steering

WEIGHT

1500kg

Estimated weight of 503bhp model; 155kg lighter than the 503bhp Mercedes-AMG C63 S

SECONDS



Claimed 0-62mph time for V6-engined Quadrifoglio version



50:50

Weight distribution of all Giulia models

“ The sharp steering is said to be on a par with that of the Ferrari 458 ”



IN DEPTH



1 CHASSIS

Aluminium brake calipers and carbon-ceramic discs will be offered and all models will be fitted with aluminium suspension components. Steering is said to be 'Ferrari-quick'.

2 BODY

The Giulia will feature a carbon roof and bonnet, with aluminium used for the wings and doors, but not at the expense of torsional rigidity, claims Alfa.

3 ENGINES

A range of new aluminium four- and six-cylinder petrol and diesel engines – all turbocharged – will be offered, along with a six-speed manual and an automatic gearbox.

ALFA ROMEO GIULIA QUADRIFOGLIO v GERMANY



BMW M3

Engine 6-cyl, 2979cc, twin-turbo
Power 425bhp @ 5500-7300rpm
Torque 406lb ft @ 1850-5500rpm
0-62mph 4.1sec (claimed)
Top speed 155mph (limited)
Weight 1520kg (284bhp/ton)
Basic price £56,595



MERCEDES-AMG C63 S

Engine V8, 3982cc, twin-turbo
Power 503bhp @ 5500-6250rpm
Torque 516lb ft @ 1750-4500rpm
0-62mph 4.0sec (claimed)
Top speed 155mph (limited)
Weight 1655kg (309bhp/ton)
Basic price £66,810



AUDI RS4 AVANT

Engine V8, 4163cc
Power 444bhp @ 8250rpm
Torque 317lb ft @ 4000-6000rpm
0-62mph 4.7sec (claimed)
Top speed 155mph (limited)
Weight 1795kg (251bhp/ton)
Basic price £56,595



ALFA ROMEO GIULIA QUADRIFOGLIO

Engine V6, 3000cc, twin-turbo
Power 503bhp
Torque 500lb ft (est)
0-62mph 3.9sec (claimed)
Top speed 160mph (est)
Weight c1500kg (341bhp/ton)
Basic price £60,000 (est)

wheel, as you'd see on an F1 car. Expect more of a Ferrari road car-style layout. We would have liked to show you a picture of the interior, but Alfa has yet to release one.

There's no getting away from the importance of the new platform and the Giulia model that will debut it. Harald Wester, Alfa Romeo's CEO, feels cars in the premium market have become interchangeable and replaceable.

'They look alike and are more-or-less the same,' he says. 'With Alfa Romeo, you should feel the difference. Alfa Romeo must be an extension of the driver's soul.'

This is not a statement we would disagree with, but it is one that Alfa

Romeo will need to deliver on.

Sergio Marchionne, Fiat Group's overlord, has secured five billion euros-worth of investment to build the Giulia and the other half-dozen models Alfa is talking about, but to capitalise on this and see the results, every claim needs to be backed up with an uncompromising product.

On paper the Giulia certainly looks like it has the right credentials, but on the road it will come up against an establishment that has spent decades evolving and competing on a level that doesn't suffer fools. The 503bhp Giulia Quadrifoglio appeals to the heart of *evo*; we just hope Alfa will do enough to convince our brains that it's the new class leader.

LIVE FROM MILAN

You're ushered through a red tunnel into the new Alfa Romeo museum, or 'La Macchina del Tempo - Museo Storico Alfa Romeo', to give it its proper name. Andrea Bocelli takes the stage and sings 'Nessun Dorma'. Beautiful doesn't do it justice.

Alfa boss Harald Wester reveals the new Giulia – the hyperbole is extreme. The Italians are wide-eyed with pride; the Brits are wide-eyed with cynicism.

You're not allowed to speak to the bosses (at a press event?) so a tour of the new museum is on the cards.

Sixty-nine models are displayed, from the very first A.L.F.A. car to the Mille Miglia-winning 6C 1750 Gran Sport driven by Nuvolari and a



fabulous 155 DTM car. Then you spot a simply perfect 33 Stradale (above) and lose an hour just staring at it.

Odd event, wonderful cars (old and new). Intriguing times ahead...

Nick Trott



Cockpit: Aston Martin Vulcan

Welcome to the extraordinary flight deck of Aston Martin's 800bhp track special

1 Controls cover the Vulcan's steering wheel, and their functions have been allocated by wheel manufacturer Beru F1 and Aston Martin works driver Darren Turner. For example, the left-hand spoke has buttons for pit-to-car radio and headlight flashing, the right-hand spoke buttons for the pitlane speed limiter and selecting neutral. These are illuminated, but other controls are etched and UV-painted, thus saving weight by not having them illuminated from behind. These include a switch for the wipers (also on the

right-hand spoke) and rotary controls for the ABS and traction control (below the central boss).

2 Lurking behind the oblong carbonfibre and Alcantara-swathed steering wheel are the gearchange paddles, as well as controls for the indicators.

3 Etching and UV paint also make an appearance on the three knobs sitting to the sides of the steering wheel. Closest to the door is the air con control. Opposite (and hidden by the wheel

here) are rotary dials for the Vulcan's different ignition modes and three power maps. Aston hasn't yet revealed exactly what the ignition dial does.

4 The panel on the centre console has UV-labelled toggles for night running lights, heated screen, radiator cooling, rear rain light and hazard warning lights.

5 Sitting just below the driver's eyeline is the car's information screen. There are several displays to choose from, cycled through with the relevant

steering wheel button. Here, the screen shows speed and engine revs alongside a prominent gear indicator, with split times and lap numbers to the right. Along the bottom are indicators for the ABS and traction control settings. Other pages can show a schematic of the car, with lap and fuel deltas, tyre pressures, yaw rates, a G-meter and more.

6 These alluring red buttons operate the engine kill switch and fire extinguisher system. Try to avoid the temptation to give them a prod...

200%+

The cooling apertures on the new, 592bhp Nissan Juke-R cover more than twice the area of the old 542bhp model's.

800PS

Or 789bhp, the rumoured output of the upcoming Ferrari F12 GTO. It may even use a variant of the LaFerrari's hybrid V12.

EV3

The name of Morgan's 60bhp electric 3 Wheeler. It'll be available on a special-order basis from late in 2016.



A 'Drag Pak' now improves the Dodge Challenger's straight-line prowess – \$99,426 gets you a naturally aspirated 4974cc V8, \$109,354 a supercharged 5796cc. Both boast bulging bonnets and 9-inch-wide Hoosier drag radials.

0.23

The coefficient of drag (Cd) of Audi's slippery new A4. The high-tech A2 of 1999 boasted a Cd of 0.25.

DS prefers **TOTAL**

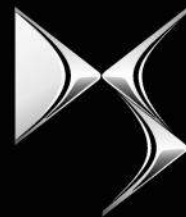
WE KEEP GOING
WHERE OTHERS STOP.

NEW DS 5

FEATURING BLUEHDi 180 EAT6
6-SPEED AUTO, 180hp 64.2mpg 110 g/km CO₂



Official Government Fuel Consumption Figures (litres per 100km/MPG) and CO₂ Emissions (g/km). Highest: DS 5 THP 165 S&S 6-Speed manual: Urban 7.7/36.7, Extra Urban 4.9/57.6, Combined 5.9/47.9, 136 g/km CO₂. Lowest: DS 5 Hybrid 200: Urban 3.2/88.3, Extra Urban 4.3/65.7, Combined 3.9/72.4, 103 g/km CO₂. MPG figures are achieved under official EU test conditions, intended as a guide for comparative purposes only, and may not reflect actual on-the-road driving conditions.



DS AUTOMOBILES

SPIRIT OF
AVANT-GARDE



www.driveDS.co.uk



Matt Becker

Becker is the chassis man charged with making the handling of Aston Martin's new generation of cars as good as their looks

BECKER'S
AMBITIONS



First 'Becker'
Aston Martin by
2016



Bring Lotus
handling expertise
to Aston Martin



Keep the noise
special, even with
turbocharged
engines



Broaden the
dynamic envelope
of Aston's cars



Become a
technical
director

‘ONE OF THE REASONS I CAME to Aston Martin was to broaden my experience. Beyond that, at Aston Martin you’ve got a front-engined sports car all the way up to a luxury GT car. My job is basically being able to tune and develop the car for the market it’s going to go into.

‘I was always known at Lotus for adding polish to a car, and what I want to do at Aston is to make sure that the cars have a polished feel to them as well. The spectrum I’m looking at now is much broader than it’s ever been, but the key thing I want to make sure of is that a lot of the lessons I learned at Lotus are applied here so the cars drive very well.

‘I’m excited about a broader spectrum, but you have to remember that when I was at Lotus I also worked for the engineering consultancy division, so there were many cars I worked on that nobody ever knew about. I can’t tell you what they are, but while it may have looked like all I did was mid-engined cars, I’ve actually done multiple layouts, from front-engined and rear-wheel drive all the way through to four-wheel-drive SUVs.

‘What’s important is that, if you’re working on a brand with many different cars, you bring balance to the attributes to make sure that the car drives appropriately for the marketplace it’s headed for.

‘I’m one person, but there’s a team underneath me, so I have a vision in my head and I know what I want the cars to feel like. What I need to do is communicate that to my team and make sure they’re a strong enough unit to deliver that.

‘The ambition with the cars is that I just want them to drive and feel like how I want them to drive.

‘Some people have this vision that I just drive cars all day long, but that’s definitely not the case. Sure, I’m heavily into driving and testing of some products, so I’ll make sure I go to the Nürburgring or go testing in Rome or the Bridgestone facility we use. I’ll also make sure I go to Sweden at the end of the year.

‘Ultimately I’ll make sure that I get to drive. There’s no point sitting behind a desk; you need to sit there and demonstrate how you want the car to feel.

‘The biggest point of my career so far was doing the Evora, and again this is one of the reasons I’ve come to Aston Martin.

“Journalists got out of the car, said that it was incredible and then asked how I did it”

I grew up doing the Elise, but the Evora was kind of my baby for dynamics. I did the steering, ride and the lot in terms of development. There was obviously an engineering team behind me, but to this point, that was my proudest moment – when the journalists got out of that car and said, “That thing is incredible. How did you do that?”

‘What I’ll do is bring that philosophy – of how I developed that car – to Aston Martin. There are very few places that can offer up an opportunity to start with a clean sheet of paper and develop a completely new car. You’ll see the first “Matt Becker” Aston Martin in 2016, but the new GT12 I’ve had some involvement in as well.

‘As for the arrangement between Aston Martin and Mercedes, it’s to utilise some of their components. There are many different parts we may use on a car, but I’m not going to confirm them now. What we will do is select the appropriate components, which we then won’t need to spend tons of money on.

‘With turbocharging we’re in a good place, we know what we’re doing, we know the sound quality we want and we have a very strong team of engineers that can analyse what we have. We can simulate what the cars are going to sound like, we can analyse that sound and then actually put it together and fit it to the car.

‘I think the noise is there already, but it’s going to be about continuing it with the trend in [forced induction] engines and the way they’re going, but I’m confident that we’re in a good place.

‘With all the tools we’ve got, on future Aston models I want to broaden the spectrum and dynamic envelope. My intention is to make sure we can turn the car up and down, i.e. with the different modes, to give us the difference in character that we’re looking for.

‘In the end, I’m looking to take on more responsibility, maybe be a technical director in the next five to ten

years. Because I’m going into a larger organisation than I’ve been used to, I have to learn some of the processes and systems that the company has. Once I understand all those and perhaps take on more responsibility and a bigger team, then I want to grow my position within the company.

‘Taking on a new job like this and moving brands was a big thing – for the first six months I’ve been continually driving the different cars, understanding them and organising the team the way I want it.

‘Beyond ten years’ time, where do I want to be? I don’t know. I’ve never really thought that far ahead. At the moment there’s so much work ahead of us in the near future. I just want to be part of the team that develops some of the best cars in the world.’

THE MAGIC TOUCH

Aston Martin is about to go through a hugely significant period for the company. Its association with Mercedes will mean plenty of expensive boxes are ticked in terms of technology and engine development, leaving Matt Becker and his team free to create cars with superb handling characteristics.

Don’t underestimate Becker’s involvement with Lotus’s engineering consultancy, either. He will have worked on a wide range of products above and beyond cars such as the mid-engined Elise. This should mean he’s able to execute a much more clearly defined set of driving characteristics for each model in Aston’s future product range.

As for the Evora, it might not have been a huge success for Lotus, but if Becker’s signature steering feel can be transferred to some of the electronic systems likely to be fitted to future Aston Martins, it will make for some very exciting cars indeed.

Hunter Skipworth

Circuit des Remparts d'Angoulême

Mille Miglia seem like too much hassle? Try this comparatively hidden gem in rural France



THE DATES DON'T CLASH so you can do both, but if you fancy giving the Goodwood Revival a miss this year (or if you are planning to anyway) I have an excellent suggestion for an alternative. It's the historic car festival called the Circuits des Remparts.

It's held in Angoulême, a town in France midway between the Cognac and Dordogne regions. It's a classic French walled town, but what puts it on my map is its weekend-long historic festival that this year takes place on September 18-20.

In 1939 a street course was laid out around a town that makes even Monaco look spacious. That first year the main race was won by Raymond Sommer driving an Alfa Romeo. Presumably the organisers knew that it would be unlikely that they would be able to hold the meeting the next year and sure enough the war and occupation got in the way.

It wasn't until 1947 that the meeting was held again. That year engineer/driver Eugène Martin won in a Frazer Nash. The event was held until 1955 and then consigned to the history books until a group of

enthusiasts, backed by 1950 winner Juan Manuel Fangio, held a historic festival in 1978. Five years later the circuit was homologated and historic racing has been held there ever since.

I'm bound to upset a few people here but the Mille Miglia re-run is an event that's turned into some sort of frightful circus. I went to the event in 1987 and chased around in our Datsun 240Z, being waved at by Italian policemen while trying to keep up with the vintage stuff. Cars in the event tended to be owned by people who'd had them for years and loved an opportunity to give them a good thrashing. Today the event is populated by many people who have bought a car especially to get an entry because it's become such an event on the social scene. Angoulême's event is quite different. Not only are there very exotic machines taking part in the races, but also more proletarian machinery such as MGBs.

There are nine races over the weekend this year, each carrying the name of a famous racing driver. For example there's a Henri Pescarolo race that features machinery such as 911s, BMW 2002s and British gems



Above: Bugatti Type 35 driven as intended. **Left:** 911S behaving like a pendulum. **Below:** flat-12 Alfa Romeo F1 car from the '70s negotiates a hairpin.

such as a Mini Marcos and Ginetta G4. Some of the classifications are hard to work out, but I like the sound of the Gérard Larrousse race, with more 911s, a couple of Mustangs and even a De Tomaso Pantera. The Maurice Trintignant race is a Bugatti-only affair for pre-war machines such as the Type 35.

The circuit, as mentioned, is amazingly tight and through some sections the cars are feet from peoples' front doors. But the Circuit des Remparts weekend is about more than just racing. There's a day-long rally for classic cars on the Sunday that wends its way around the local countryside before returning to Angoulême in time for tea. There's a competitive element with timed arrivals and checkpoints.

Even if you don't have a classic car at your disposal, the countryside surrounding Angoulême is wonderful, with brilliant driving roads. About an hour's drive from the town, towards Limoges, you'll find the village of Oradour-sur-Glane. It was the victim of a massacre by the SS in the Second World War and has been left exactly as it was that day. It's extremely moving to see the destroyed buildings and rusting cars that have not moved for over 70 years.



But back to the Circuit des Remparts. There are displays of classic cars held all through the weekend and on the Friday night there's a concours d'elegance in which entrants dress up in fashions that match their cars' eras. As you can tell from my Mille Miglia comments, I'm not a great fan of automobile-related showing off, but this event is a bit different because it's far more low-key and doesn't (unless things have changed recently) have the celebrity chef headcount of the Italian event.

But of course, it's the close racing on a challenging circuit that really makes this event worth the journey to France. There's plenty of footage on YouTube to whet your appetite. ☒

GETTING THERE

Getting to Angoulême from the UK is pretty straightforward. You can take the train to Paris and then a TGV to Angoulême, but I don't know why you'd want to do that. You can also fly to Bergerac in the Dordogne and then rent a car for an under-two-hour drive to Angoulême, but I can't condone the use of Ryanair (Flybe go there too). Really the only way to get to the event is by driving, because any excuse to thrash along France's traffic- and gendarme-free N and D roads is not to be missed. You can take the Dover/Calais route and then have a 500-mile drive or cut the road miles down by going Portsmouth/Le Havre.

However you get there, you're unlikely to be disappointed once you arrive.

Collin Goodwin

NEW REGULAR: OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

by COLIN GOODWIN Photography by HENRI THIBAUT



GPS 45.648613, 0.156237

Length 0.8 miles

Direction Clockwise



FOCUS

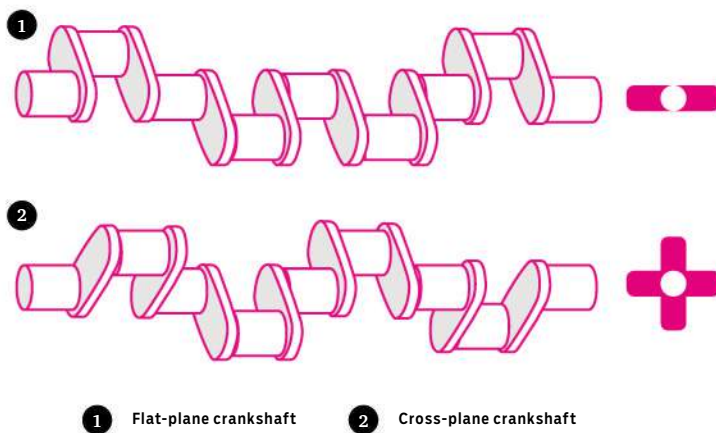
FLAT-PLANE-CRANK V8s

WHILE THE MAJORITY of manufacturers bow under the pressure to downsize and turbocharge engines across their ranges, Ford is sticking with its naturally aspirated V8 philosophy for the forthcoming 526bhp Shelby GT350 Mustang. There's one big difference with this latest engine, however: Ford has ventured down a path that a while now by employing a flat-plane crankshaft.

For generations, American muscle cars have been thrown down quarter-mile stretches by large-capacity, cross-plane-crank V8s. However, the GT350's V8 will use a flat-plane crank similar to that you would find in a Ferrari – or a McLaren or a Porsche 918 Spyder, for that matter. So what is the difference between a flat-plane and a cross-plane crankshaft, and what are the advantages and disadvantages of each type?

Put simply, cross-plane crankshafts are named after their cross-sectional shape: viewed from either end they look like a '4' (see above). With a flat-plan design the cross section is a '2'.

The distinctive gargling noise that is synonymous with the traditional American V8 is due to the cross-plane configuration. The firing order it creates means that exhaust pulses are not equally



“Ford’s new flat-plane V8 has a sharper throttle response and higher red line than if a cross-plane crank had been used”

spaced, because each bank of cylinders has two sequential pulses per cycle.

With a flat-plane V8, the firing order is equally spaced, with alternate pulses from each cylinder bank throughout, creating the familiar noise of a ‘screaming’ V8. This firing order also means that exhaust ‘scavenging’ is more beneficial in the flat-plane configuration. This is where the first exhaust pulse helps pull along the next – as long as they are equally spaced – making the engine more efficient, and more powerful.

Flat-plane designs usually have a

downside in the form of vibration, but modern, lightweight materials and other advances are helping to reduce this. Cross-plane cranks have vibration problems of their own, requiring counterweights to dial them out. However, these counterweights increase the mass and size of the crankshaft, which in turn increases its rotational inertia. This means a slower responding throttle and a lower red-line threshold. Due to its flat-plane design, Ford’s new V8 will have a sharper throttle response and higher red line than if a cross-plane configuration had been used. The red line has been pushed up to an impressive 8250rpm, making it the highest-revving V8 in Ford’s 111-year history.

The 5163cc engine has a specific power density of 102bhp per litre. That’s still some way off what the likes of Ferrari have achieved with naturally aspirated flat-plane-crank V8s – the basic 458 Italia manages 125bhp per litre, the 458 Speciale 132 – but for Ford’s first foray into flat-plane engineering, it’s an encouraging start.



ASK MIKE

Your tech questions answered

Q Should I invest in some trackday tyres for the summer?
– Jim Masdea

A This completely depends on your budget and ability to change your own wheels. A set of semi-slick tyres could improve lateral G a vast amount on warm, dry roads. However, the first sign of rain will reduce the road-to-tyre friction coefficient so much that your car could become scary to drive.

So, if you can afford a second set of wheels for your semi-slicks and can swap wheels depending on the weather, go for it. However, if you would have to get rid of your current boots and run the semi-slicks permanently, then maybe not.

Send your question to experts@evo.co.uk



TECH GAME-CHANGERS ACTIVE AERODYNAMICS

First concept:
Nissan R381
When: 1968



Downforce and drag have to be managed well in automotive design. Under normal circumstances, an increase in downforce means an increase in drag: put a large fixed wing on a car and you would expect the acceleration

and top speed to be reduced. A way around this relationship is to only have a wing when you need one, and only have a splitter when necessary. This is exactly what active aerodynamics can achieve. The Nissan

R381 race car first showed us how a split rear wing could change geometries dependent on vehicle attitude, meaning that generated downforce could be specific to the inside wheels when cornering. More modern

examples, such as the rear wing of the McLaren P1, can remain completely flat for maximum efficiency, then pop-up for downforce, and even flip forwards to increase deceleration. The front splitter on the current

Porsche 911 Turbo has numerous operating states. It lowers at the edges when cruising on the motorway to reduce drag, it can fully retract for improved clearance, and it can be fully extended to increase downforce on track.

ON TRACK. ON ROAD. ON AVONS



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FOCUS

MEET THE MAN WHO SET THAT LAMBO RING RECORD

IT'S NOT SURPRISING TO SEE that Lamborghini's video of the Aventador SV at the Nürburgring has surpassed a million views on YouTube. Riding on board with Pirelli test driver Marco Mapelli as he hustles 1525kg and 740bhp over the bumps and cambers of the Ring is both awe-inspiring and terrifying. But as the 27-year-old Italian explains, the footage and scorching 6min 59.73sec lap time only tell half the story.

'You know, I wanted the car to move a bit underneath me to avoid the understeer that comes from the all-wheel drive,' says Mapelli. 'But by the end of the lap, the road tyres were increasing a bit too much in terms of pressure, so the rear of the car was moving more and more.'

Frightening as a loose car on the Nordschleife sounds (and looks), Mapelli's experience as a tyre tester allowed him to maximise the rubber's performance over the 12.9-mile lap. He played a pivotal role in developing the SV's P Zero Corsa tyres, after all, and worked closely with Lamborghini.

'With other car makers, we have to adapt our tyres to their car, but with Lamborghini there's more matching together to make everything work,' he says. 'During development for the SV, I spent as much time as possible in the car, starting with things like oversteer and understeer. But later you can offer more precise feedback – how you feel the car, the steering behaviour, the torque on the steering and the movement between axles.'

“By the end of the lap, the rear was moving more and more”



When he's not testing, Mapelli is, perhaps unsurprisingly, a professional racing driver. But rather than giving him the edge, he says racing actually proves to be a bit of a disadvantage for tyre testing. 'To be a good tester, you have to increase the window where you might see understeer or oversteer, to increase the problem to understand better where it is coming from,' he explains. 'But racers' natural driving styles might cover any problems with the car and tyres, because racers drive to compensate the problem.'

Marco's racing habits were certainly put to good use on the Nürburgring, however. It took razor sharp responses and supreme bravery to put a relatively old-fashioned and physically imposing machine within a whisker of the Porsche 918 Spyder's lap time.

'There are some really scary parts on that lap, like when I jump and when I'm doing well over 300kph; you close one eye and hope! When I drive the Nordschleife, I am always scared.'



FIRESTONE MULTISEASON

To capitalise on north-west Europe's growing demand for all-season tyres, Firestone has launched the Multiseason. Available for 13 to 16-inch wheels, the new tyre is said to work best between 5 and 20 degrees Celsius, on anything from snow to sun-baked tarmac. This makes the UK a clear target market.

With an indoor ski slope and soaking wet runway at our disposal, *evo* was able to put Firestone's claims to the test. Driving up and down the slope in a conventional hatchback, it was almost impossible to differentiate the Multiseason from a proper winter tyre, with good grip under harsh braking and heavy throttle applications. On the runway, the Multiseason impressed again, braking straight and true with no aquaplaning.

Firestone says the reason for the tyre's talent in slippery conditions relates to its tread pattern, with specialised sipes and blocks exhibiting a clear winter-bias.

Of course, this focus on inclement weather means performance on warm, dry tarmac is a little compromised. This becomes evident as the Multiseasons squeal in protest long before a conventional summer tyre would break a sweat. But its performance is still far better than what any full winter tyre could offer.

In any case, driving fast isn't what the Multiseason is about. Instead, it's about providing European runabouts with dependable grip year-round.

For more info, visit evo.co.uk/tyres

TYRE NEWS ROUND-UP

Goodyear has announced it will be closing its sole UK manufacturing plant, leaving 330 staff redundant. The US-based tyre maker plans to move production to mainland Europe and the Middle East in order to 'strengthen its competitiveness'.

Goodyear is the world's third largest tyre manufacturer but has

recently seen net sales decrease due to unfavourable currency fluctuations. Last year its sales were down by 1.7 per cent on 2013, which amounted to roughly £11.5m. This UK exit is part of a wider plan to reduce costs.

Elsewhere, Pirelli has announced it will supply the new Range Rover Sport with P Zeros, marking the first

time a Land Rover has worn Pirellis as original equipment. The 22-inch tyres will feature Pirelli's new noise-cancelling technology, which employs a polyurethane sponge inside the tyre to absorb vibrations produced as the tyre is squashed against the road, preventing them being transmitted to the wheel hub and into the car.

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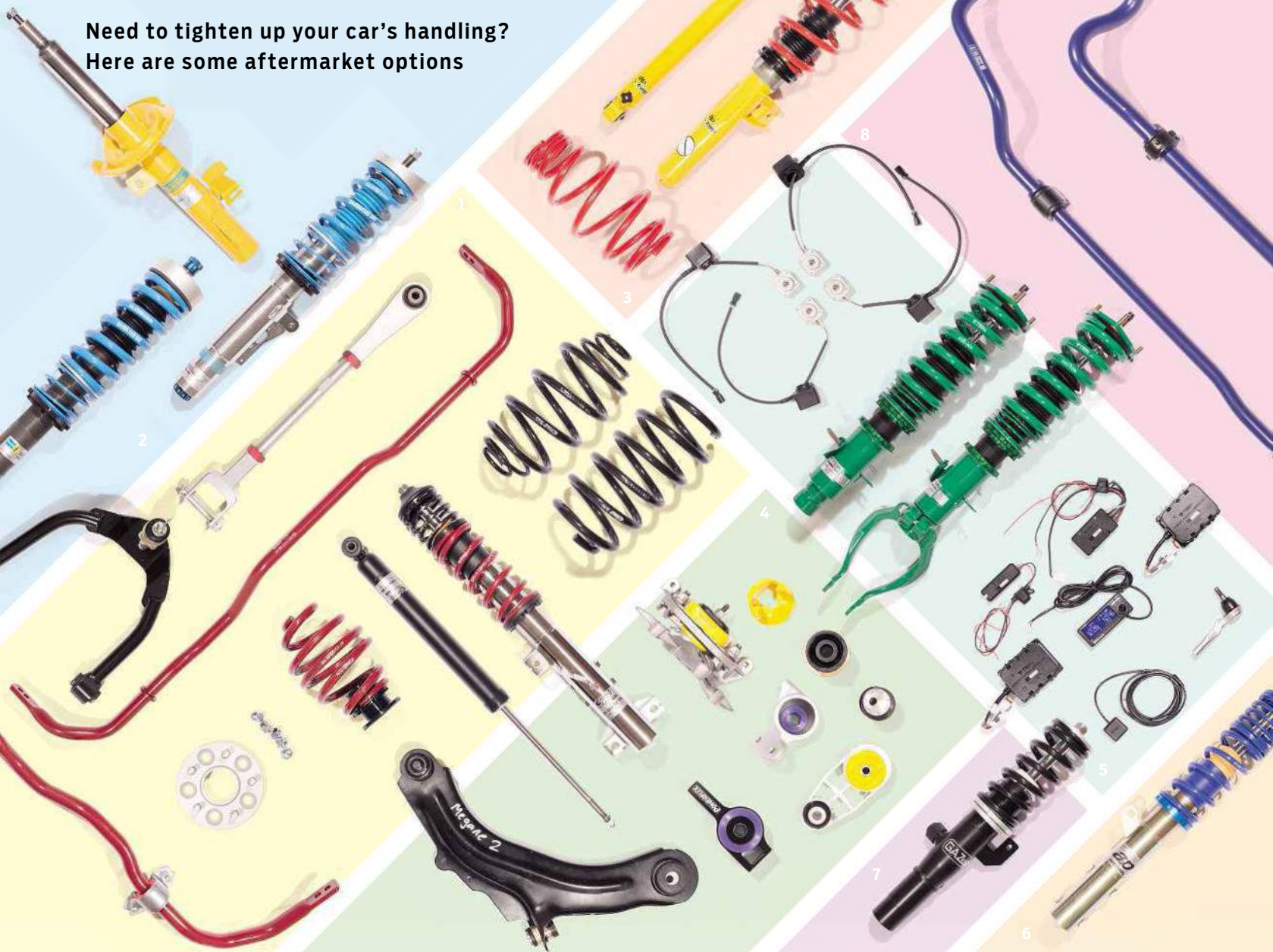
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SUSPENSION COMPONENTS

Need to tighten up your car's handling?
Here are some aftermarket options



EIBACH

Eibach's track record speaks for itself: the firm says its suspension contributed to more than 1000 race wins and 70 championships in 2014. The company's philosophy is not to build extreme products, but suspension systems that are suited to their intended use.

- Pictured, clockwise from above:*
 Golf Mk5/6 4WD hollow, two-way adjustable anti-roll bars – **£396.40**
 Nissan 350Z front arm (camber and caster adjustable) – **£492.24 (pair)**
 BMW E36 and E46 3-series rear camber arm – **£311.20 (pair)**
 Vauxhall Astra VXR (first-gen) Pro Kit springs – **£164.16 (set)**
 E36 M3 coilovers – **£1179.36 (set)**
 Ford Mk2 Focus RS and ST spacers – **£119.04 (pair)**

BILSTEIN

Another firm heavily invested in motorsport, and whose parts are used widely as OE on new vehicles. Damper kits offer more control, while full coilover setups allow ride height and damping force adjustment.

- BMW E90 3-series front damper – **£192 each**
 Porsche 997 GT3 adjustable coilovers – **£2760 (set)**

SPAX

Spax caters for just about every car on the market, and has supplied suspension to the last two land speed record holders. Great value doesn't stop the kits being high quality.

- VW Golf Mk5 RSX kit – **£539.99**

POWERFLEX

Designed to replace worn OEM items, Powerflex's polyurethane bushes are longer-lasting. The stiffer material also tightens up handling by minimising slack.

- Pictured, row-by-row from top:*
 Vauxhall Astra Mk4 gearbox mount insert – **£27.54**
 Mégane R26 rear beam bush – **£36.90**
 Mini F56 front arm camber-adjustable bush – **£62.34**
 Mégane R26 gearbox mounting bush insert – **£25.14**
 BMW E46 3-series front wishbone caster offset bush – **£71.94**
 Mégane R26 engine mount bush – **£53.94**
 VW Golf Mk5/6 front wishbone anti-lift and caster offset bush – **£66**
 Mégane R26 front arm camber adjustable bushes – **£97.44**

TEIN

Tein offers a huge range of suspension components for Japanese vehicles. Electronic Damping Force Controller (EDFC) kits maintain the functionality of OEM active damper setups.

- Nissan GT-R Mono Sport coilovers and EDFC kit – **£1440 & £691.20**
 Nissan 350Z tie-rod end (pictured middle right) – **£96 (pair)**

AP

AP might serve the budget end of the coilover market, but its parts are manufactured in Germany, and carry full TÜV approval. A wide range of vehicles is catered for.

- Vauxhall Astra GSi Mk4 coilover – **£420 (set)**

GAZ

Gaz supplies suspension for several UK race series, including MX-5s, BMW Compacts, Minis and Elises – indicative of a product range covering most popular new and old vehicles.

- BMW E81 1-series coilover – **£1103.20 (set)**

H&R

German firm H&R has been operating since the late 1970s and supplies products for BMW Motorsport and the Porsche Supercup, among others. Its anti-roll bars use the highest tensile steel available and forged ends, adjustable on some cars.

- BMW M3 (F80) & M4 anti-roll bars (30mm front, 25mm rear) – **£469.18**



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HANDS-ON

APPLE CARPLAY

APPLE'S PROPRIETARY in-car infotainment system, CarPlay, has been sneaking into vehicles left, right and centre of late. It is, for all intents and purposes, the answer to all of your infotainment-system woes.

Until recently, you had no choice but to live with a car manufacturer's own infotainment interface, and that could mean learning a new system – and all of its quirks – each time you changed car. CarPlay changes all that for iPhone 5 and 6 users, however, by essentially enabling the screen in a your car's dashboard to act as a repeater for your iPhone's display.

We sampled CarPlay in a 2015 SEAT Ibiza, which when specified with the 'Full Link' option offers both Apple CarPlay and Google's equivalent, Android Auto.

Plug your iPhone into the car and CarPlay starts up. From here you're confronted with what appears to be a simplified iPad rather than a standard infotainment system interface. The familiar app icons found on iOS are replicated on the screen and for the most part they do exactly the same thing, sometimes tailored for their new home. Tap on 'Messages', for example, and you can have text messages read aloud to you, or you can dictate a reply.

Apple Maps becomes your satnav, while third-party apps that are CarPlay compatible can also draw data from your smartphone. Spotify,



“It's better than most manufacturer systems”

for example, functions perfectly through CarPlay, showing playlists, favourite tracks and artist search on the car's screen. It all basically means you can use your iPhone while driving, but legally.

The key thing here, though, is that Apple's user-interface whizzkids have worked their magic on CarPlay. This is not a frustrating system to use – it's clear, simple and ensures you can carry out actions with the minimum

of fuss and distraction. If the CarPlay-equipped car has a touchscreen, you use that to operate the apps; if it has an iDrive-style control wheel, you use that instead; and, of course, if the car has a voice control button, you just press that to speak to Siri.

It's still early days for CarPlay, so there are admittedly a few bugs and freezes, but for the most part it stands head and shoulders above most manufacturers' own systems, largely just because of its simplicity.

Hats off to SEAT for being one of the first to bring CarPlay to an affordable, everyday car. With more than 30 manufacturers signed up to include it in future models, and aftermarket head units from Alpine and Pioneer also now compatible, we can expect to see CarPlay appearing on many more dashboards soon.

Hunter Skipworth



THEN & NOW Digital dashboards

TFT screens are now the norm for infotainment systems, but they're becoming a regular element of instrument displays too. That's best illustrated by the 'Virtual Cockpit' in the new Audi TT, which can show everything from a speed and rev counter to a full-width satnav map. The Aston Martin Lagonda can lay claim to the first digital dash, however, as early as 1976. In 1983 the Renault 11 Electronic was the first European hatch to feature digital gauges (pictured above). American brands truly embraced the concept: Buick's 1986 Riviera was the first car with a touchscreen display, and in 1988, the Oldsmobile Cutlass Supreme was the first with a head-up display. Mazda took the lead with satellite navigation in 1990, in the rotary-engined Eunos Cosmo coupe. Japan was the first to really show the potential of TFT instruments too – the Lexus LFA featured an adaptable display in 2010 (below). It's then only a short step to the Virtual Cockpit.



WATCH



C63 v M3

Q C63 Deadly Rivals

Last month's twin-test stars, the BMW M3 and Mercedes-AMG C63 S, head-to-head on track



488, 458 & F40

Q evo 488 video

The new Ferrari 488 and the ancestors it must beat: the 458 Speciale and F40



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Q Aventador SV Jethro

Jethro Bovingdon reviews the new, 740bhp Aventador Supersveloce

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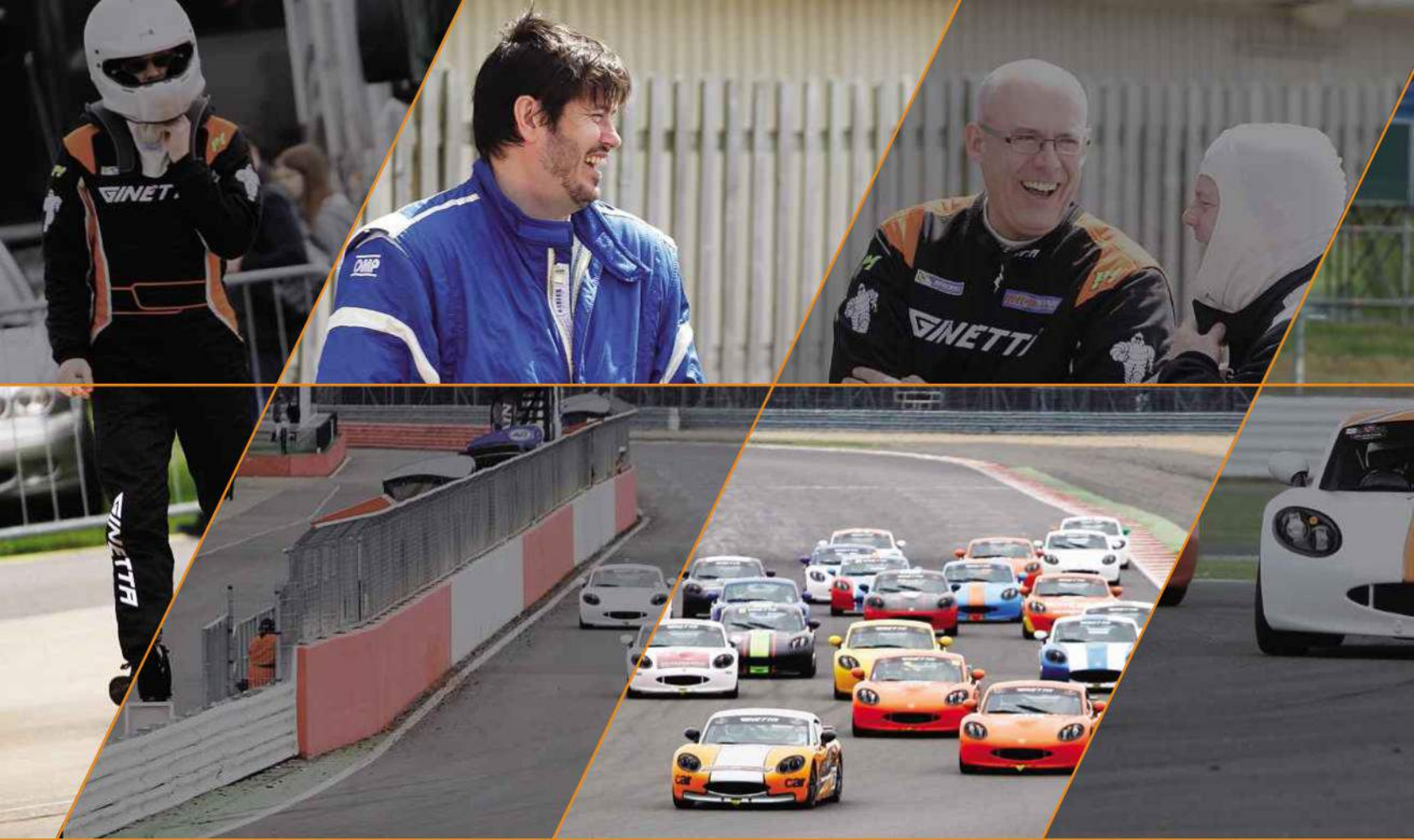
Trucks in mud – more entertaining (and difficult) than it sounds



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WATCH TECH

Laurent Ferrier Galet Classic Tourbillon



A simple, three-handed watch can be as technically impressive as a grand complication – as demonstrated by the creations of Laurent Ferrier, a former racing driver who spent 37-years watchmaking with Patek Philippe before going alone in 2008.

His range-topping Galet Classic Tourbillon features a hand-wound movement with a tourbillon escapement. This places the escapement – the device that transfers power from the mainspring to the timekeeping part of the watch – inside a rotating cage, thus negating the effects of gravity and improving accuracy. However, rather than placing the tourbillon on show, as lesser watchmakers might, it is quietly hidden behind the dial.

Superbly accurate, each watch is supplied with a chronometer certificate from the prestigious Besançon Observatory and is available only with a 41mm case made from precious metal.

Unfortunately, the 'less is more' philosophy doesn't apply to the price. It costs £151,100.



THIS MONTH

Autodromo Prototipo Brian Redman Edition

From: autodromo.com
Price: \$775 steel, \$1200 gold-plated

New York-based designer and unashamed petrolhead Bradley Price pays homage to the legendary endurance racer Brian Redman with this latest, limited-edition watch from the Autodromo brand. Commemorating Redman's brilliant 1969 Nürburgring 1000km victory in the Porsche Salzburg 908, the watch carries the same red, white and green of the car's livery. The edition comprises 100 gold-plated watches and 400 in steel, each with a 42-page booklet signed by Redman. Seiko 'Meca-Quartz' movements provide the motive power.



Christopher Ward C70 Grand Prix Chronometer

From: christopherward.co.uk
Price: £599

Christopher Ward has refreshed its 'Grand Prix' line, first introduced in 2007, with four new models. Each celebrates a historic motor race – respectively the 1906 French GP, 1921 Italian GP, 1925 Belgian GP and 1926 British GP – and is finished in the racing colour of the relevant country. The casebacks are inset with the matching national flag as a ceramic disc, while the left side of the 42mm steel case carries a plate bearing the name of the race winner and their finishing time. Each watch is also chronometer certified for its accuracy.



Tudor Fastrider Ducati Scrambler

From: tudorwatch.com
Price: £2800

This year's big launch from Ducati is the Scrambler, a new 'urban' machine available in four versions, all of which can be customised to suit the rider's 'lifestyle' with a range of bolt-on accessories. To complement the bikes, Tudor – Ducati's official watch partner – has launched three special versions of its FastRider chronograph, with dials based on some of the Scrambler's paint colours: yellow, red or olive green matt. The rugged, 42mm watch has a satinised steel case, a scratch-resistant ceramic bezel and a choice of rubber or quilted leather straps.



PATEK PHILIPPE REFERENCE 5101P

As worn by Simon Kidston, classic car broker and concours judge

'On my 25th birthday 20 years ago, my father gave me a Patek Philippe Reference 1463 steel chronograph, which he bought new in 1954. I wore it all the time until the mainspring broke and I took it to a watchmaker.

'When I checked my answering machine a couple of days later, I found several messages from him saying that a customer had seen my watch and wanted to buy it – for £17,000. Up until that point, I had assumed it was worth

around £2000. So I sold it and spent £13,000 of the money on a Fiat Dino Spider – which used to overheat all the time and which I soon got rid of.

'The person who bought the 1463 still has it, and would

probably sell it back to me – but it's now worth £400,000. To console myself, I bought a pre-owned Reference 5101P 10-Day Tourbillon with a salmon dial. It's a lovely and very special watch. But I do regret selling the 1463.'

CHRONO



Read more from Simon de Burton in *Chrono*, the world's leading annual watch magazine. Available now for iPad and iPhone from the iTunes Store.



LE MANS' WINNING NUMBERS

IT'S ONE OF THE MOST FAMOUS motor races in the world and perhaps the toughest – the Le Mans 24 Hours is a legendary endurance test of man and machine. And, of course, tyres.

Michelin has been competing at the Le Mans 24 Hours since 1923, and in 2015 – as fitted to the no. 19 Porsche 919 Hybrid, driven by Nico Hülkenberg, Nick Tandy and Earl Bamber – notched up its 24th overall win; that's its 18th in a row. All the teams in the front-running LMP1 class choose Michelin tyres, as do about 60 per cent of the entire Le Mans grid.

What makes Michelin's race tyres such a popular choice is their unique mix of longevity and consistent performance throughout their operating life: these are factors appreciated by both drivers and race car development engineers. And it's what Michelin refers to as its Total Performance Package.

For Michelin, though, competing at Le Mans isn't all about the silverware. The race – and that includes testing, practice and qualifying – is a high-pressure development laboratory, crammed with extreme challenges that have to be met with ingenious solutions. And the lessons learned pounding around Le Mans' gruelling curves and straights are then applied to Michelin's outstanding range of high-performance road tyres.

Racing flat-out for 24 hours gives invaluable knowledge about tyre life, about maintaining predictable, dependable, stable responses, and about balancing those objectives with the need for superlative roadholding. And when you stop to think about it, those qualities are just as much to be valued in the Michelin tyres that you fit to your road car.

To find the right tyre for your car, visit the tyre selector on michelin.co.uk. To read more about Michelin in motorsport, head to evo.co.uk/on-the-right-track



3m 17.475s

During qualifying for the 2015 Le Mans 24 Hours, Neel Jani set a new lap record for the course in its current format – 3m 16.887s – in a Porsche 919 Hybrid. A new race lap record of 3m 17.475s was set by André Lotterer in an Audi R18 e-tron quattro.



214.79mph

In the 2015 race the highest speed achieved was 214.79mph, posted by the no. 8 Audi R18 e-tron quattro. The highest speed rating for any current Michelin road tyre is 186mph, but in 2010 Michelin tyres were fitted to the Bugatti Veyron 16.4 Super Sport that set a Guinness World Record speed for a production road car of 267.81mph.



5 tyres

For the LMP1 teams, Michelin supplies several different types of race tyre. There's a low-temperature soft compound and a high-temperature soft compound, a slick intermediate, a wet and a full wet. And there's a wide choice in Michelin's high-performance road tyre range, too, depending on your type of car and how you use it:

- Michelin Pilot Alpin
- Michelin Pilot Sport 3
- Michelin Pilot Super Sport
- Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2



100°C

A Michelin race tyre, as fitted to the winning LMP1 Porsche at Le Mans, typically operates at an 'ideal' temperature of 100°C. Thrashed around a circuit on a trackday, a Michelin high-performance road tyre generates a similar temperature, but runs much cooler in regular hard road driving.



1st & 2nd

In only the second year of its World Endurance Championship comeback, Porsche enjoyed a 1-2 finish at Le Mans 2015. This was Porsche's 17th Le Mans victory and its first for 17 years. Meanwhile, this was Michelin's 24th win at La Sarthe, and its 18th in a row.

The winning Porsche 919 Hybrid completed 3345.07 miles in 24 hours, at an average speed of 139.34mph – over 80 per cent of the race is at full throttle for the LMP1 cars. The need to engineer tyres that can survive for so long in such extreme conditions teaches Michelin's development team invaluable lessons for creating long-lasting high-performance road tyres.

3345.07 miles

in association with



Test location: Brecon Beacons, Wales GPS: 51.846606, -3.224787

BMW X6 M v Range Rover Sport SVR v Porsche Cayenne Turbo

If you must have a performance SUV, Porsche's Cayenne has long been the default choice. But now both BMW and Range Rover are out to change that

Photography: Aston Parrott

IN PURELY dispassionate terms, a performance SUV can be an impressive and broadly capable thing, but it's difficult to escape the thought that these cars are fundamentally at odds with themselves. The tall, heavy body of an off-roader – or at least a vehicle that bills itself as an off-roader – is absolutely the worst starting point for a performance car, and then by fitting stiff

suspension and low-profile tyres you compromise any off-road ability that the car might have had.

No matter how capable sporting SUVs get, they will never make a great deal of rational good sense. In the curious world of fast cars, though, good sense needn't be the main concern, and with that in mind the Porsche Cayenne Turbo and its ilk can hold a sort of subjective, adolescent appeal.

The Porsche has long been the

definitive rapid SUV, but having been launched five years ago, the second-gen model is starting to feel as though its best years are behind it, despite the range having been overhauled only last year. Until an entirely new model arrives in 2017, then, the door is open for another manufacturer to sidle up and knock the Cayenne from its perch.

The latest challengers are the second-gen BMW X6 M (as well as the mechanically identical X5 M) and



Above: three £90,000+ performance SUVs, but only two are genuinely convincing on fast, challenging tarmac

Land Rover's Range Rover Sport SVR. The German car arrives with more firepower than any performance SUV before it – 567bhp to be exact. And as if its power unit needed any more credibility, it's actually the same twin-turbo V8 that drives the M5, which is our preferred super-saloon at the moment (see *evo* 208).

The Range Rover Sport SVR, meanwhile, bucks the current trend for downsized, turbocharged engines and instead uses a 5-litre

supercharged V8. It's lifted from the comically overpowered Jaguar F-type R, but even its 542bhp is not enough to topple the X6 M.

In terms of outright power, the range-topping 562bhp Cayenne Turbo S is best equipped to defend Porsche's honour, but it's also £23k more expensive than the £95,150 Range Rover and £25k more than the £93,080 BMW. The non-S Turbo, which makes do with a quaint 513bhp, is a much closer price match

This month



BMW X6 M v RANGE ROVER SPORT SVR v PORSCHE CAYENNE TURBO

Which of these three 500bhp+, £90k+ SUVs defies its size and weight best?



REVO FORD FIESTA ST

Tuner upgrade endows our favourite small hatchback with 256bhp. Can it handle it?



BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GT SPEED

Fastest Continental gets refreshed. Is there life in the old W12 yet?



ALPINA D4 BI-TURBO CONVERTIBLE

Reworked version of drop-top 4-series with unique powerplant and drivetrain

The team

With the SUVs in our lead Driven weighing a combined 6785kg, we thought the perfect antidote would be to ask our road test team to name their favourite lightweight:



NICK TROTT

Editor

'Aside from the Lotus 340R, the Citroën AX GT. Pure flyweight fun'



STUART GALLAGHER

Managing editor

'Ariel Atom. Best drive to Le Mans I've ever had was in one. And it rained all the way'



HENRY CATCHPOLE

Features editor

'The 381kg Light Car Company Rocket. I've never actually driven one but I've always loved the idea of it'



DAN PROSSER

Road test editor

'A mid-spec Caterham on van tyres. The most fun you can have in an empty car park'



JETHRO BOVINGTON

Contributing editor

'Adore the Atom 3.5R, but my heart still says a Caterham. Flavour? Previous R500 with the sequential 'box'



RICHARD MEADEN

Contributing editor

'My old Fireblade Caterham. Only weighed 369kg with fuel! Minimal inertia, maximum fun'



DAVID VIVIAN

Contributing editor

'Ariel Atom 3.0, before the latest chassis tweaks. The most exciting lap of the *evo* triangle ever'



at £93,574, so it's the one we've brought along today.

The new X6 M and SVR were launched to the press within weeks of one another and on both events the assembled journalists were invited to test the cars away from the public highway. In the case of the BMW the extra-curricular activity was a handful of laps around the Circuit of the Americas, the Texan Formula 1 circuit, while on the SVR launch the route turned hard left off the main road and into a muddy wood. These cars might exist in the same sector of the market, but on the evidence of the launch events they have very different priorities.

Before we explore those two in any depth, let's remind ourselves what the Cayenne Turbo is capable of. It's tricky to find a great deal wrong with its cabin in quality and build terms, but the dashboard

'Over the kind of crests and undulations that cause most SUVs to float, the Cayenne feels completely locked down'

architecture is looking quite dated now, almost utilitarian. On the move, there's also a sense of agedness in the way the car deals with sunken drain covers and potholes. The driver is always acutely aware of the suspension working hard as a wheel crashes into the depression, then of the entire structure shuddering markedly and the steering column fidgeting with the intrusion. There simply isn't the geological solidity that you might expect of such a brutish, modern Porsche.

The engine, similarly, feels less than cutting edge because there's a discernible degree of turbo lag. It needs to be spinning at 3500rpm before the thrust really begins in earnest, after which point the Cayenne Turbo is flung down the road in an alarming fashion. A bigger problem than that degree of lag, though, is the curiously blunt

throttle response. Pin the right-hand pedal out of a corner and the hesitation before the big 4.8-litre twin-turbo V8 answers your call is frustrating.

The final criticism of the Cayenne relates to its steering. The weighting is quite light and there is some vagueness, so threading the Porsche down a narrow road, particularly at speed, requires concentration.

Everything else, though, is more than rosy. This was the first SUV to really transcend its off-roader underpinnings and sheer mass to respond like a much smaller, lighter performance car, and it still impresses to this day. In cornering the front axle finds incredible purchase and the body barely rolls at all, which immediately defies the tall ride height and high centre of gravity.

Over the kind of crests and undulations that litter our rural roads

and cause most SUVs to wallow and float, the Cayenne Turbo simply feels completely locked down. The way in which the Porsche controls its mass has always been this car's signature trick, and it was one that went unmatched, until now.

The X6 M is every bit as capable as the Porsche in dynamic terms – the agility and control of the chassis are genuinely brilliant – but it has much crisper and more direct steering, sharper throttle response and a more vibrant engine in the lower reaches. So the BMW has a chassis of freakish ability, one that matches that of the Porsche, but its control points are better by an order of magnitude. The result is a car that is actually fun to drive, one that will stagger you with its precision and composure in direction changes and over a cresting road surface.

Its structure also feels much tougher and the suspension does a better job of keeping road imperfections out of the cabin, which, it must be said, is of a higher overall quality than the Cayenne's.

The X6 M – or the X5 M if you can't abide that contrived 'coupe' roofline – is the car that usurps the Cayenne Turbo. Judged by the traditional values of this magazine, it's also a better performance SUV than the Range Rover Sport SVR.

Unlike its rivals here, the British car doesn't have the same eye-popping ability to shake off its weight and get down a road like a saloon car. The SVR is an exercise in systems tuning rather than a comprehensive reengineering of the base car, so it feels largely the same as any other Range Rover Sport.

The biggest difference to the donor model is in the tyres. Our test car wears the optional Continental performance tyre, which is altogether grippier and more precise than the standard mud-and-snow offering. Nonetheless, the SVR still floats and wallows where the German cars are settled and it can feel loosely controlled in direction changes and over vertical inputs.

In contrast to the BMW, the SVR's steering shows up its off-roader origins. The rack itself is actually quite sharp with very little slack, but with every steering input there



Top: SVR isn't naturally agile, and often needs to be massaged through corners.
Left: £5924 carbon-ceramics aim to improve handling on the Cayenne by reducing unsprung weight.
Below: X6 M has the best steering feel in this group





is a measurable delay before the front axle redirects the car towards a corner. In the best cars, X6 M included, steering and response is one fluid, cohesive movement, but in the SVR it's a two-stage process.

That looseness in the steering makes the Range Rover an unnatural car to really pedal along quickly, and when the road narrows you'll find yourself hoping that it'll stay between the lines rather than being unwaveringly certain that it *will* do so. It also relies quite heavily on its electronic safety systems in cornering. Throw it hard into a turn and the high centre of gravity drags the body over, which trips the car into scruffy momentum-induced

‘The SVR lacks the on-road manners of both the others, but there is a caveat...’

oversteer – which is hurriedly arrested by the stability control. That said, it is possible to keep the SVR in shape at a decent lick by being very smooth with your steering inputs, but it's ultimately not as dynamically capable as the BMW or Porsche. Like the Cayenne, it also crashes noisily over potholes.

There are strengths, though, such as the quality of the damping into compressions, the smart cabin design and the drivetrain. The supercharged engine offers the best response to throttle inputs here, and with the exhaust not being muted by turbochargers its voice is the most amusing. In fact, the SVR's drivetrain is the most characterful of the lot.

All three cars make use of eight-speed automatic gearboxes rather than twin-clutch units, and all work just as smoothly as you could reasonably expect.

So the X6 M is the new class leader and the SVR lacks the transcendent on-road manners of both the BMW and the Porsche, but there is a caveat. Even on its sportier optional tyre the Range Rover will traverse rough and muddy terrain that the BMW, and to a lesser extent the Porsche, couldn't countenance. If off-road ability matters to you, the SVR is in a class of one, but if mud-plugging isn't a concern, you'll be best served by the BMW. ❌

Dan Prosser (@TheDanProsser)

BMW X6 M

➕ Startling on-road dynamics ❌ Questionable taste of coupe roofline

evo rating

★★★★☆

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
V8, 4395cc, twin-turbo	258g/km	567bhp @ 6000-6500rpm	553lb ft @ 2200-5000rpm	4.2sec (claimed)	155mph (limited)	2265kg (245bhp/ton)	£93,080

Porsche Cayenne Turbo

➕ Incredible poise for an SUV ❌ Vague steering, dated engine

evo rating

★★★★☆

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
V8, 4806cc, twin-turbo	261g/km	513bhp @ 6000rpm	553lb ft @ 2250-4000rpm	4.5sec (claimed)	173mph (claimed)	2185kg (239bhp/ton)	£93,574

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➕ Characterful drivetrain, off-road ability ❌ Not a match for its rivals on the road

evo rating

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Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-60mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
V8, 5000cc, supercharger	298g/km	542bhp @ 6000-6500rpm	501lb ft @ 3500-4000rpm	4.5sec (claimed)	162mph (limited)	2335kg (236bhp/ton)	£95,150



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SLK55 AMG » 389 BHP (+DELIMIT)
SLK 350 » 328 BHP
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250 CDI ALL MODELS » 259+ BHP
320 CDI V6 » 274 BHP
350 CDI V6 » 312 BHP
420 /450 CDI V8 » 358 BHP

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Revo Ford Fiesta ST

Test location: B660, Cambridgeshire
GPS: 52.401834, -0.372667

212bhp Mountune upgrade too tame? Tuner Revo has a 256bhp answer

IT PROBABLY HASN'T escaped your notice that we quite like the Ford Fiesta ST here at **evo**. It isn't perfect (what is?) but it meshes its on-the-road attributes so well; no rival has quite such a generous 'sweet spot', though several have nicer dashboards.

The genius of the Ford-sanctioned and warranty-protected Mountune upgrade is that it's essentially invisible. You could be driving the standard car, the only difference being the relationship between the angle of the accelerator pedal and the numbers on the speedo dictated by the new 212bhp power peak (up from 179bhp). The pitch-perfect virtues that make the ST special aren't squeezed or distorted. It just has a little more where it counts and edges closer to some notional ideal of a junior hot hatch.

Davenport-based Revo has a somewhat different take on the Fiesta ST's role in life. In Stage 3 tune it puts 'junior' out to play and gifts the ST the power, suspension, brakes and rubber to cut it at trackdays and fear little this side of a Golf R on the road. Stages 2 and 1 are incrementally less fierce, but how does 256bhp,

0-60mph in 5.4sec and 0-100mph in 12.4sec sound? Thought so.

Stage 3 is Revo's 'ultimate' Fiesta ST and so entails rather more work than Mountune's ECU remap, airbox, filter and hose. For starters, the standard car's turbocharger is extensively modified by Revo, principally to accommodate a larger exhaust turbine designed to increase the amount of air flowing through the 1.6-litre engine. Basically it spins faster, blows harder and, together with an Airtec intercooler, a Revo-developed airbox, a Scorpion turbo-back race exhaust system and a remap that lifts the rev limit to 7200rpm, delivers significantly more power and torque at all points over a wider rev band.

So, not quite the standard car's (or even the Mountune's) tempo. The Stage 3 package also includes four-pot front brakes with 332mm floating discs, a shaved ride height courtesy of Bilstein B14 coilovers, and 17-inch Team Dynamics Pro Race 1.2 wheels wearing Dunlop SportMaxx tyres. All told, that lot adds up to a pretty hefty £7216 but, as you can see, it's more than an airbox and a remap.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Mountune's trick of retaining



the Fiesta's basic behaviour and personality with a little more tug flies out the window here. The Revo ST is an altogether ruder, louder and more rumbustious steer that's almost hilariously fast in a straight line and has a rather more belt 'n' braces approach to spirited cornering. Some of that is not entirely unrelated to the few things that need sorting on the car as driven, but we'll come to those in a moment.

The engine mods are spot on. The big pull starts at around 1700rpm, seems to kick harder at 4000rpm and doesn't let up until 7000rpm, where it gently runs into the 'soft' limiter. There's the tiniest amount of lag as you grab the next gear but it does little to dent the flow. Roll-on pace really does feel Cayman S quick. Equally impressive is the absence of troublesome torque-steer. Inevitably

there's some, but it's never too intrusive and very well contained considering the 300lb ft the front wheels are handling. The amount of post-apex traction with the ESC switched out is impressive too.

Bumpy roads are more of a problem with the current setup, which feels a smidge too low and soft. Although the chassis is always composed and rides reasonably well, the tyres can be heard scuffing the wheelarches, sometimes alarmingly. Revo is aware of the problem and planning to rethink the suspension mods to allow more adjustability with regard to damping, ride height, camber and castor angles and so on.

Thankfully, the Scorpion exhaust system is also on the delete list. It excites the mother of all boom resonances in the cabin that, at its worst, should warrant noise weapon certification. It's overlaid by a much quieter diffused whistle from the inlet plumbing, the standard car's cultivated, piped-in growl nowhere to be heard.

Even with the foibles fixed, the Stage 3 Revo Fiesta ST won't seem much like the Mountune. But then extreme has its own rewards. ❌

David Vivian (@davidvivian)

Specification

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-60mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
In-line 4-cyl, 1596cc, turbo	n/a	256bhp @ n/a rpm	300lb ft @ n/a rpm	5.4sec (claimed)	150mph (estimated)	1088kg (239bhp/ton)	£7216 for conversion

➕ Porsche pesteringly fast, good steering, traction ➖ Suspension and exhaust noise need work

evo rating ★★★★★

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Bentley Continental GT Speed

Test location: Grendon, Northamptonshire **GPS:** 52.222778, -0.705442

With 2000 miles to conquer between Norway and Blighty, is there a better tool for the job than this revised, W12-engined Bentley?

THE PADDLESHIFT IN a Continental GT has never been something I've much bothered with. For a start, the paddles seem to be positioned slightly out of the way so that they don't initially fall easily to hand. Then there is the fact that the ZF automatic gearbox does a very good job of shuffling its octet of ratios on its own. Finally, when you've got a gargantuan 605lb ft of torque on offer, as in the GT Speed, there is really no such thing as 'the wrong gear'.

As a result, I probably didn't even extend an index finger towards a paddle for the first few hundred miles in this car. When I did decide to do a bit of digit dabbing, however, the result was a revelation. I hardly took my hands off the paddles for the rest of the 2000-mile journey. The reason had nothing to do with

the shift itself, which is fine, if a little lumpy when you're aggressive, and everything to do with the feel of the adze-shaped paddles. The texture of cool, knurled aluminium is extremely tactile, and it's this almost ticklishly rough surface that greets your fingertips in the refreshed Conti GT. In the same way that Alcantara tangibly adds something to the steering of a car, so this machined aluminium transforms an otherwise unremarkable gearchanging experience. Other manufacturers should take note.

Elsewhere in the interior things are much the same as before. There is a slightly different steering wheel, some higher quality leather (although I can't remember the previous hide being too shabby) and the seats are still incredibly comfy for hours on end. You can now have Wi-Fi in your Bentley too, which

was rather good as it enabled me to beam up Radio Le Mans on my phone while in Norway and then Bluetooth the dulcet race commentary through the Bentley's crystal-clear Naim speakers. The areas that do require some attention, however, are the satnav and some of the switchgear, as they feel rather old now.

Externally the Conti GT retains the same elegantly brutish appearance it's always had. There is a new front bumper, an indistinguishably smaller radiator grille and the lines over the wheelarches have become sharper and more flamboyantly art deco, which I rather like. Under the bonnet the W12 has gained an extra 15bhp and 15 lb ft in standard form, although outputs for the Speed and V8 models remain the same as before. Given that the mighty 6-litre, twin-turbo, 12-cylinder motor has never felt under-endowed, perhaps

the more important news is that it is now capable of running on just six cylinders at part throttle. It does so imperceptibly and on the long motorway stretches our GT Speed was returning about 27mpg.

As a drivers' car we would pick the V8 Continental, as it turns in with greater alacrity and generally feels more quick-witted. Nonetheless there is something deeply seductive about the monstrous 626bhp of the GT Speed. Even with a portly 2.2 tons to propel it feels impressively quick in a straight line.

It is smart off the line too, with four-wheel drive ensuring that traction is not a problem. Take one on at the traffic lights at your peril, because although you might think you're lining up against the equivalent of the fat father at the sports day parents' race, experience shows that the GT



Left: with 605lb ft split between all four wheels, the GT Speed can barrel out of corners with alarming speed. **Below:** ceramic brakes (a huge 420mm at the front) are an option; cast iron discs are standard



‘Power now seems to be directed to the rear axle with greater intent’

Speed’s 4.0sec 0-60mph time is easily repeatable. The battering ram sensation of a fully lit Bentley just keeps going as well. When we drove through Germany we saw an indicated 202mph before traffic stopped play, and the acceleration only really slowed during the final ten of those miles-per-hour. At which point I turned on the seat’s massage function.

You may be wondering what I was doing driving 2000 miles through Norway and Germany. The answer is that *evo* film-maker Sam Riley and I were bringing the car back to the UK from the launch and filming the journey as we went (just the interesting bits – keep an eye on

[youtube.com/evo](https://www.youtube.com/evo) for the result). Those sorts of distances are what the Conti GT does better than almost anything else. Armchair-comfortable and library-quiet most of the time, but pleasingly loud and very capable when you want it to be, it simply devours miles while cossetting its occupants. There is a reassuring heft to it on motorways that makes it feel very stable laterally, yet all that torque makes changes in pace feel effortless.

Back home, the GT Speed feels slightly tauter than we remember on British back-roads. The dampers, as before, can be adjusted through four levels of compliance, and in the firmest setting the Conti is

impressively well supported through corners. It still feels nose heavy, but if you get on the throttle smartly as a corner unravels, the power now seems to be directed to the rear axle with greater intent. This throws a bit of agility into the grand tourer mix, but it’s still some way short of a Ferrari FF on that front.

Ultimately, it would be nice to see an all-new Continental GT before too long, as this car has essentially been with us since 2003, but the styling tweaks (not to mention those paddles) have just about kept Bentley’s best seller fresh enough to maintain its undoubted appeal. ❏

Henry Catchpole
(@HenryCatchpole)

Specification

Engine W12, 5998cc, twin-turbo	CO2 338g/km	Power 626bhp @ 6000rpm	Torque 605lb ft @ 1700rpm	0-60mph 4.0sec (claimed)	Top speed 206mph (claimed)	Weight 2245kg (283bhp/ton)	Basic price £168,300
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+ Heady power, surprising agility - Feeling a little dated; we’d still have the V8

evo rating ★★★★★



Alpina D4 Convertible

Test location: A507, Bedfordshire **GPS:** 52.025074, -0.316210

A DIESEL CONVERTIBLE isn't top of the desirability stakes in the **evo** car park.

But when it has an Alpina badge on its tail we tend to stop and take note, then look at the spec sheet to see what Buchloe's meisters have produced for us to taste. In the case of this D4 'Bi-Turbo' it's a four-seat convertible with a breathed upon version of BMW's 3-litre, straight-six twin-turbocharged diesel. This makes the D4 Convertible unique, as BMW doesn't offer this body with a similar level of diesel power.

To save you checking, in BMW's 435d Convertible the 3-litre twin-turbo diesel produces 309bhp at 4400rpm and 465lb ft between 1500 and 2500rpm, and is only available with xDrive four-wheel drive. With an eight-speed Steptronic gearbox – the only option – this equates to a 5.2sec 0-62mph claim and a limited 155mph top speed. When Alpina's men in white coats have finished optimising the engine's air intakes and pressure losses, as well as upping both the boost and

injection pressures, those outputs increase to 345bhp at 4000rpm and 516lb ft from 1500 to 3000rpm. And the D4 is rear-wheel drive. With Alpina also offering an eight-speed self-shifting 'box – it too having been optimised for the engine's increased performance – the D4 knocks 0.2sec from the 435d's sprint time and raises the top speed to 171mph.

As with all BMW six-cylinder diesel engines, there's very little to tell you it drinks from the forecourt's black pump. There's the slightest hint of clatter on start-up when the engine's cold, but aside from the rev counter, with its Alpina-blue facing only marked up to 6000rpm, you'd never know. Until, that is, you squeeze the right-hand pedal for the first time and your brain reminds you this Alpina has as much torque as a Porsche 997 Turbo.

The engine piles on the revs with unchallenged ease and road speed increases with the effortless pace and rich torque these engines are famed for. All eight ratios get the very best from the engine's delivery, the 'box seamlessly shifting up and

Does an Alpina-fettled 4-series make for a genuinely desirable diesel convertible, or is that too much to ask even for a brand with such strong performance cachet?



down as required. Although, such is the effortless nature and speed of the gearbox's shift pattern that it does make Alpina's Switch-Tronic controls – two buttons on the back of the steering wheel – all but redundant. It's not an engine that you go chasing revs with, and therefore it's at its best when you let the electronic brains do the work.

On optional 20-inch Alpina Classic wheels and with the company's sports suspension plugged into BMW's adaptive chassis, the D4 is more than up to the challenge of harnessing the engine's thrust. The ride is a little on the firm side for UK B-roads, but the body remains controlled and only the largest imperfections cause it to dance a little jig. But it's on fast, sweeping

A-roads that the D4 shines brighter than a regular 4-series Convertible. The blend of performance and the more dialled-in chassis makes for an unexpectedly athletic cross-country companion. The standard variable-rate steering offers very little in terms of direct feel, but it reacts well and weights up with consistency as the loads build through the tyres. An opportunity to lap the fast-flowing Goodwood circuit highlights just how well balanced the D4 is at speed. While its natural cornering stance is predictable rather than involving, it all adds up to an ability to cover ground at a surprising pace, with no shocks lurking should you start to take a look over the edge.

Alpina's D4 Bi-Turbo Convertible may be a bit of a mouthful to say, but there's very little to criticise it for. It is a car that does everything that is expected of it and the model/engine/drivetrain configuration also makes it unique. And worth nabbing the keys to next time its tyres crunch the gravel in the **evo** car park. ❌

Stuart Gallagher
(@stuartg917)

Specification

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
In-line 6-cyl, 2993cc, twin-turbo	156g/km	345bhp @ 4000rpm	516lb ft @ 1500-3000rpm	5.0sec (claimed)	171mph (claimed)	1815kg (193bhp/ton)	£54,950

➕ As much torque as a 997 Turbo in a chassis that can handle it ❌ A diesel convertible wouldn't be our choice of Alpina

evo rating ★★★★★



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Outside Line

by RICHARD MEADEN



Cars and television aren't always a successful blend, but *Top Gear* proved that there's a big audience for this kind of thing, says Meaden

S **SO TOP GEAR IS NO MORE, AT LEAST IN** its present guise. It seems astonishing to me that the sorry saga of an angry man deprived of his dinner has gripped an entire nation and sent shockwaves through a worldwide community of car fans. That said, there's something deeply gratifying, not to say reassuring, that a show dedicated to the four-wheeled exploits of three puerile middle-aged blokes is bigger than Kim Kardashian's gargantuan buttocks.

The lefties within the BBC might have hated *Top Gear* and JC's knack of lurching from one controversy to the next, but they sure as hell loved the money it made, so with a bazillion pounds of revenue stream at stake it's no wonder the Beeb wasted no time in announcing that the show will go on. With broadcasting's king of reinvention, Chris Evans, at the helm and several farm's-worth of auditions to wade through, you just know the resulting product will be *Top Gear*, but not as we know it.

Whether you're a diehard fan, an occasional viewer or one of those vociferous haters who say it's not been the same since Chris Goffey hung up his cashmere pullovers (but secretly tune into every show), it'll be fascinating to see what Evans and Co come up with to counter whatever the three amigos do next.

Aside from the possibly rather defeatist belief that whatever the BBC does next it'll never match the extraordinary success – or money-making potential – of the now deceased format, the question that keeps going through my mind is, 'Does the world actually need a *Top Gear*-style car show?' Thanks to YouTube there's never been a greater abundance of good, readily accessible car content, be that an endless supply of evocative old archive footage, documentaries, motorsport or just straightforward car reviews. And by and large, the vast majority of it is free to view. Even though it's not free to produce. But that's another column.

Of course, if you're an *evo* reader then I'd hope our videos are staples of your automotive playlist, so I won't spend the next few paragraphs blowing smoke up our own tailpipes, but like you, I love the variety and diversity of what's out there. Former *evo* contributor (and good mate) Chris Harris was a pioneering presence in front of the camera and has become a brand in his own right thanks to his handy driving, provocative views and an irritating ease in front of the camera. Elsewhere, if you want a fix of plain and simple track testing, *Car & Driver* magazine's *Lightning Lap* videos are strangely addictive. And if you want to add a twist of Japanese genius then there's no finer way to waste a morning (or an entire weekend) than trawling through the huge back-catalogue of *Best Motoring* races and battles.

If you're amused by the individual characters as much as the cars they're driving then you've got plenty of choice. Jay Leno's an obvious leader, and there's certainly no denying his credentials as a bona fide car nut, but for a man who made his fortune hosting one of the world's biggest TV shows he seems really rather awkward in front of the camera. A more left-field choice is Jerry Seinfeld's *Comedians In Cars Getting Coffee*, in which, well, JS takes a fellow comedian for a drive in something cool, stops for coffee and has a chat. It shouldn't work, but it does, most likely because although the car is the hook, the meat of the content is anything and everything but.

If you want to see fellow *evo* columnist and *Top Gear* script editor Richard Porter go puce with rage, suggest *TG* isn't, or rather wasn't, a car show but an entertainment show. Personally I think the truth – and the nub of its success – is that it existed on a

'There has never been a greater abundance of good car content'

knife-edge somewhere between the two. It didn't always hit the spot – nothing ever does – but there's no question that at its best *Top Gear* delivered some of the most memorable car content on television. Okay, so it sometimes plumbed the depths, but it also raised the bar in terms of production values and demonstrated a truly remarkable ambition and scale, best exemplified in the most successful of its epic one-hour specials.

If you're a thirty- or forty-something car enthusiast, *Top Gear* has always been there to scratch your petrol-fuelled itch. Other car shows have come and gone, success eluding them because they can't seem to find the mass appeal that lurks somewhere between overly worthy reviews and forced irreverence. Quite how you follow *Top Gear* is beyond me. Perhaps I'm too close to the subject matter to take the required step back. What I do know is that *Top Gear* championed cars to an audience of unimaginable size, amusing and enraging opposing factions in equal measure. As car lovers, I think we're all looking forward to whatever Team Clarkson and Team Evans come up with, but a bit of me is clinging to the hope that the next big thing will instead come from the blindside, free from baggage or excessive expectation. Whatever happens, we're about to be spoiled for choice. ☒

 @DickieMeaden

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

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by RICHARD PORTER



Porter paints the picture of a scene many of us know oh-so very well, but might at first struggle to recognise

A SHIRTLESS MAN IS WALKING IN FRONT of me. To complement his lack of shirt he has also dispensed with his shoes and, though the surface is uncomfortably gravelly, he walks with a simian strut befitting of a bloke who thinks it's perfectly okay to whip his top off in public places. In between where his shirt was and where his shoes used to be, he is sporting a merciful pair of small shorts, thereby sparing everyone the sight of his arse whilst simultaneously preventing him from noticing his own genitals and immediately rutting a wheelie bin.

The shirtless man spots a trio of other shirtless men slouched on the ground against a wall and acknowledges them with a guttural grunting noise that gives no clue as to his nationality, or indeed if he can form words at all. The other shirtless men respond with a range of sounds usually heard on a farm. Do they even know the first shirtless man or is this some kind of shirtless man code by which shirtless strangers acknowledge each other and salute their shared devotion to letting the world see how sweaty and sunburnt their back has become?

The whole thing is weirdly fascinating. Mind you, this is not the only display of rampant mannishness in the area today. Gangs of lads roam the village wearing matching shirts with nicknames on the back, each one amusing only to another person wearing the same sort of shirt, and followed around by a miasma of lager-fuelled laughter which is the main spluttering by-product of what crashing bores like to call 'banter'. Don't get me wrong, I'm completely down with this sort of boorish male bonding. I was once in a group of mates that climbed up the Black Mountains constantly repeating lines from *Team America*. It was like a wolf pack call-and-response to make sure everyone in the group was still alive, except instead of howling you'd approach a thick bank of fog and hear from within it someone shouting, 'Act, Gary. Act.'

Watching this sort of blokey interaction happening in front of you is interesting, but it's not the only thing to see here because, shock horror, there are women too. Tattooed rock chicks mingle with pint-chugging geezer birds as case-dragging glamour pusses totter past on their way to promote gearbox lubricant. Also much in evidence is the conspicuously bored girlfriend ruing the moment she thought this sounded like a nice weekend away, little knowing she'd be deafened and downbeat by the end of it, having spent much of the time trying to get a drink at a temporary bar while standing next to a noisy berk from Barnsley with 'PUSSY HUNTER' written on his back.

As if trying to placate this particular subset, someone has laid

on a 'women's pavilion' that the official bumf claims will include 'a lounge where women can continue talking while enjoying a cocktail or read the feminine press'. Yet despite eye-watering condescension so dense the list of activities might as well have included 'sewing', there's a queue out of the door, presumably from women hoping for a just a few moment's escape from the humid clouds of testosterone that hang in the air. Also, maybe they're a bit behind on the 'feminine press'.

Elsewhere, the menfolk run free. As night falls I see a group of them capering about wearing eerily realistic animal heads, giving onlookers a reasonable idea of what it would be like to become caught in an acid flashback. In another spot, a cluster of more-than-middle-aged men in matching tour shirts bearing a date more than a decade past attempt to recreate happy times with palpable glee and make merry for as long as their aching

'Gangs of lads roam the village wearing matching shirts with nicknames on'

knees will allow. A tall man staggers past dressed as a saucy 1970s female police officer, complete with a balloon-stuffed bra. Maybe he's part of a stag do and that grand, strange tradition of celebrating a big day in a friend's life by attempting to humiliate them. Perhaps he just likes the outfit.

It all just adds to the rich, varied atmosphere. Young children gambol about, high on stolen sips of sugary drinks and the heady thrill of being allowed to stay up late. Gaggles of partisan fans drift by, stating their allegiances and the depth of that passion with the number of branded items covering their person. Couples and clubs and committed loners cling to fences or walk the dusty miles to find themselves a better viewpoint. An old lady holding a small dog smiles benignly at the passing crowd as you wonder who had the idea to buy a ticket for this, her or the mutt? It doesn't really matter. They're here for some reason, probably the same reason as most; not just a shared passion but a mutual love of a unique atmosphere and a truly special event, one that offers a wealth of things to do, not least the simple pleasure of people watching.

I love Le Mans. And, as an added bonus, it even contains a car race. ✕

✉ @sniffpetrol

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

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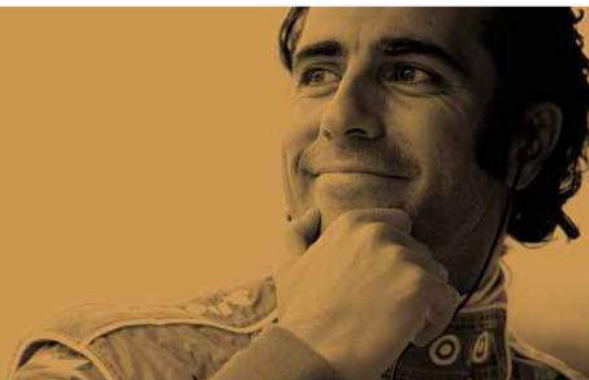
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Champ

by DARIO FRANCHITTI



Now more than ever, classic car owners have to tread a fine line between maintaining originality and enhancing performance, says Dario

SOMEONE RECENTLY ASKED IF I rued the performance shortfall of my classic cars in comparison to more modern machinery. Whether, they very pertinently said, driving road-legal racers such as the latest Porsche GT3 and the 918 Spyder – cars genuinely capable of inducing vertigo – leaves me just a wee bit disillusioned when I climb back into my beloved F40 or similarly elderly 930 Turbo.

The short answer – the only answer, for that matter – is of course ‘no’. Anyone firing up a machine three decades old is chasing a different encounter to the person who habitually buys the very latest metal simply because objectively it’s the best thing yet. Clunky gearboxes, the aroma of fuel and oil, mediocre visibility, horrendous turbo-lag and fragile electronics all need to be managed, but as the classic car crowd knows, that’s all part of the fun. If you really want to iron out all a car’s imperfections, you may as well buy a new one. It would almost certainly be cheaper!

Even so, the question got me thinking about the compromises we make with older cars and the logic behind those decisions. Where, for instance, do you draw the line between gently stoking a car’s dynamic ability while augmenting the qualities you love and desecrating originality and character? I adore what Singer does, but are those cars classic 911s? Not at all. Likewise, is an original 3-litre 911 SC quite as rewarding to drive as it could be? Probably not. And the increasingly popular idea of cars as investments only complicates matters.

My F40 is a case in point. Values have gone through the roof and there’s nothing to suggest that speculators will get an abrupt wake-up call anytime soon, so the sensible thing would be to trickle-charge it in a warm garage in perpetuum. And let’s not forget it’s an era-defining supercar, so many people would argue that it’s of paramount importance to respect history and stay unwaveringly true to what Ferrari achieved late in the ’80s.

Now I’m pretty sympathetic to that notion, but my cars are for *driving*, and so I try to strike a balance between the Singer and the 3-litre SC. So, I’ve made personal improvements, if you like, starting with an Alcantara steering wheel from a Ferrari 360 GT car (which my dear brother Marino actually earned as part-payment for a drive). It feels thicker and just a little *better* than the standard F40 part, but I’ve kept the original just in case the car ever goes to concours (which, frankly, is unlikely ever to happen) or gets sold. It’s the ideal classic car modification – small, hassle-free and easily reversible, yet it still makes a meaningful difference to the driving experience. In a similar vein I’ve thought about fitting a redesigned

rear window with subtly different slats. It would mean I’d finally be able to see through it properly, but even though Nick Mason – a man of impeccable taste – has gone down this route, I’ve decided not to. Why? Because it’s not easily reversible.

Things get more serious when it comes to modifying chassis components, so – surprise, surprise – I feel the best thing to do is keep it simple. In handling terms the thing that got to me on the back-roads of Scotland was the F40’s suspension, which had real trouble keeping up with the performance of the car. In the end I went for Quantum’s two-way adjustable dampers just so the car wasn’t airborne quite so much of the time, which was really all we were trying to achieve! It’s a functional change that improves

‘Dear old Marino earned the F40’s steering wheel as part-payment for driving a Ferrari 360 GT car’

driveability without impinging on the car’s character. And I’ve still got the original kit on a shelf in the garage – I’ve probably enough hardware lurking about to fabricate an entire car.

Most of my cars have a new exhaust, but who’s going to hold it against someone for freeing up the engine note a little (okay, a lot, in the case of my Carrera GT)? Tyres are also something to keep on top of, and I reshoe cars every two years regardless of mileage. That gets bloody expensive, but it’s worth it.

The one thing I don’t muck about with is servicing, even though the intervals are easy to forget since it’s all done on time not mileage. My record between services is 19 miles, purely because I was in the US racing the whole year. That’s 19 miles and a brace of £2000 services, but for me the peace of mind and satisfaction that comes from knowing your car is in its finest fettle – that it has been properly looked after – means it’s money well spent, despite the admittedly eye-watering cost.

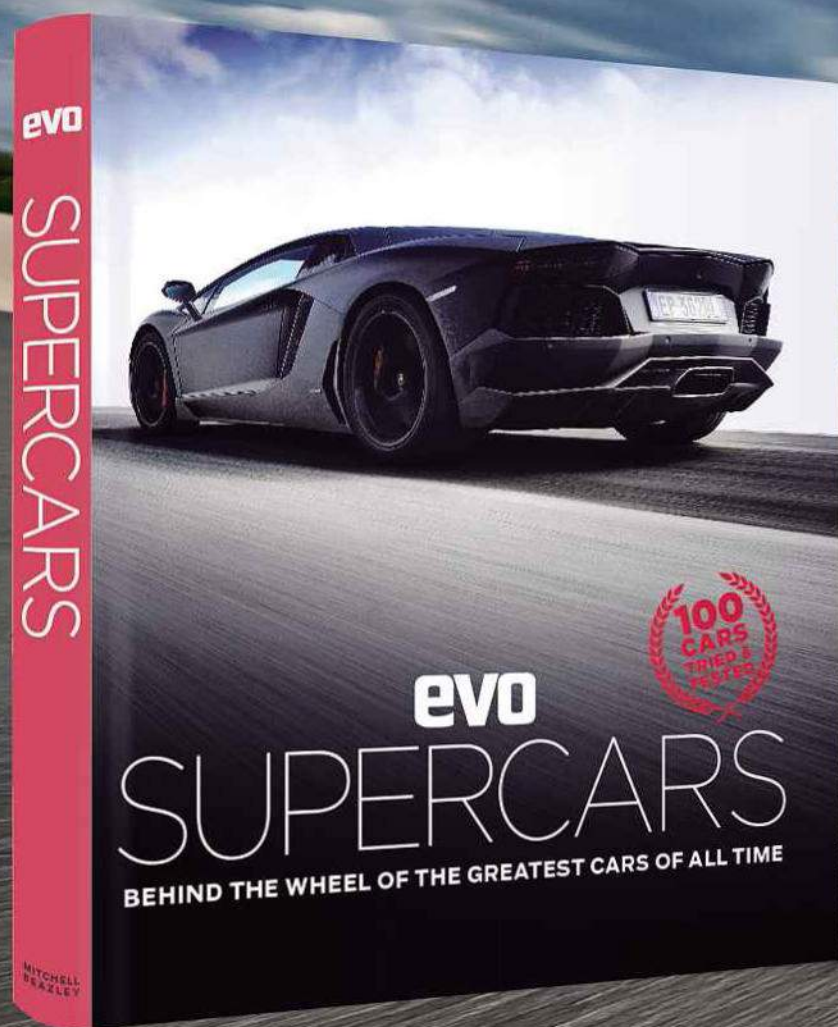
The exception to all this is my ’73 911 hot-rod, which doesn’t boast many original components at all. In fact its creation has probably been in some ways cathartic, helping me stay fastidious with the other cars. I shudder to think where a similar approach would lead with something as potent as a Ferrari F40... ❧

✉ @dariofranchitti

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

evo SUPERCARS

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Inbox

Who's crashed on your hill climb this month?



Letter of the Month

Vantage point

Thank you for recognising just how great a drivers' car the V8 Vantage really is (Mercedes-AMG GT group test, *evo* 210). I'm the fortunate owner of a MY09 Sports Pack-equipped V8 Vantage (mechanically the same as the tested N430 but for 10bhp and 15lb ft) and I've driven most of the newer and even faster competition, yet none has tempted me out of my Aston.

The Vantage is deservedly appreciated as a beautiful and desirable thing, but it seems to be erroneously viewed as a good-but-not-great drivers' car. That perception sells it short, as your review demonstrates. Looking back through *evo's* tests, Sports Pack-equipped V8 Vantages, as represented by the N400, N420 and N430, have all received five stars.

Dan Prosser shows how underrated the Vantage is, saying he 'just thought it would be embarrassed, but in the end it more than holds its own'. We also hear that the Aston 'schools the AMG GT in steering feel', is 'arguably the most rewarding and engaging car here' and that 'The driving experience is simply magical – so involving, so malleable.'

Those are powerful sentiments, and after almost six years with mine, I think they are well deserved.

Todd Warren

Cheque, please

I would like to submit an expenses claim to the *evo* accounts department to the tune of one Caterham 360R. Let me explain. I have been a reader of *evo* since before it was *evo*. I was quite content pottering around with occasional flashes of *evoness* in my cheap, second-hand daily drivers (944/Boxster/MX-5 Mk1), happy that I could get my fix of more expensive machinery from your fine publication.

And then you ran the article 'Decision Time' (*evo* 209), which plucked at the heart strings that have long been attached to a deep desire to build my very own Caterham. No sooner had I read it than I found my buttocks cosseted by the very same seat in the very same green 360R that had previously been caressing Bovingdon's cheeks. All courtesy of Caterham Cars in Crawley. One thing lead to another and... Well, I think you can guess what happened next.

Oh yes, and while you are writing me a cheque for the car, would you be so kind as to also write one for a garage in which to build it?

Graeme Wilding

Unfair competition

It was with anticipation that I turned to your Driven article on the new Mustang 5.0 V8 GT (*evo* 211). My eyes quickly flicked to the three-and-a-half-star rating and my heart sunk.

What would it be? Gutless engine? Poor transmission? Lousy suspension? No, none of those. The reports of a 'fat spread of torque and power', an 'accurate, clean-shifting transmission' and suspension 'flowing through curves and attacking hairpins with poise' alleviated my worst fears. The Mustang's biggest problem, it seems, is that there are excellent (but highly predictable) second-hand

competitors from BMW and VAG available for the same money.

Fair enough, but to be fair to the Mustang, isn't any brand-new car poor value compared with a low-mileage, well-cared-for three-year-old car?

Michael Coates

Very Impreza'd

Fantastic to see your article on the 1993 Impreza RA in issue 211.

Baby number three is on the way so I needed a practical four-door car and fell into a 1994 WRX import three weeks ago. Everything feels so right with the car it makes you wonder if manufacturers should spend an afternoon in what they used to make.

Giggling as you drive to the child minder's in the morning is the best way to start the day!

Andrew Bell

Cheer up!

evo 210 had all the promise of being the perfect issue – GTs and hot hatches all over the place, and the Ariel Nomad – a car I desperately want, no, NEED!

However, all was not well. So far Henry Catchpole would appear to be the only member of your editorial staff who enjoys driving. Every issue brims with sets of very serious chops – grumpy, even – eyes usually hidden behind very serious sunglasses. Mr Catchpole, however, usually grins ear-to-ear and clearly loves driving.

But the Ariel Nomad shoot showed that Catchpole had been afflicted with 'Helmsman's Mien' – a tragic palsy of the face that forever consigns the sufferer to browsing ever more serious sunglasses at duty free.

Whatever caused this affliction, please see to it that Henry gets a holiday, or something.

J Worrall



Above: this or a low-mileage E90 M3? Unfair comparison, says Michael Coates



Above: Catchpole loved the Ariel Nomad. So why the serious face, wonders J Worrall



The Letter of the Month wins an Elliot Brown watch

This month's star letter writer receives an Elliot Brown Bloxworth 929-004 (pictured), worth £600. It features a sandblasted dark gunmetal grey PVD case and matt grey dial, while the solid-link bracelet contains a concealed slide-out wetsuit extension clasp.

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Talking Point

Concepts they should build

Last month we took a look at the role of concept cars, including the likes of the BMW 3.0 CSL Hommage. So we asked which concepts, new or old, you would like to see make production

Jaguar RD-6 [no. 1, below]. Would have loved to have seen this at the time. Only thing it previewed was the use of the 2.7 derv motor, though.

securitycheck

Volvo Concept Coupe [2]. Just look at it! All the reason you need.

DeskJockey

VW Microbus Concept [3].

Gavin

I think it's a great shame Nissan decided against putting the handsome IDX [4] into production. A bit of competition for the GT86 wouldn't have gone amiss, especially if turbocharged engines were offered.

mr_pushrod

Merc C111 [5]. Would still look great if launched now and it dates back to 1969. And the VW Scooter [6] because, well, why not?

Jobbo

It has to be the Audi Quattro Concept [7] for me.

Stu2502

The Jag C-X75. If they'd shown it a couple of years later, we'd be looking at a rival to the P1, LaFerrari and 918 trilogy.

IanF

Only if they kept the gas turbines, though.

Beany

And not accidentally swapped them for the engine out of a Metro? Jaguar would never do that.

Jimmy Choo

Citroën Survolt [8]. Lovely piece of awesomeness.

jay-me

Ferrari Pinin [9]. Lamborghini Bravo [10]. (At least the wheels made it into production.)

JonathanE

Ford Forty-Nine [11].

SRSCW

I'll go for the Gilbern T11 [12]. It just looks bonkers.

Jimmy Choo



Join the discussion

Keep an eye on evo.co.uk or follow us on Facebook ([facebook.com/evomagazine](https://www.facebook.com/evomagazine)) to participate in our regular Talking Point debates.

The best comments will be published here each month

Thread of the Month

Stu2502

New Alfa Romeo Giulia

Looks interesting, but it will be hard work taking on the BMW/Audi/Mercedes volume sellers.

Not sure about the overall design but love the wheels. The 503bhp turbo petrol V6 sounds tasty.

Alex_

Looks like a 3-series/Lexus IS-F mash-up. Quite like it, though. Will be great if Alfa can finally deliver a real rival to the usual Germanic offerings.

JeziH

Might have an unintended consequence of decimating Ghibli sales, of course...

Jobbo

Judging by the video it looks pretty good and sounds even better. Also, the first 'numbers' we've been told about (503bhp and 3.9sec to 62mph) are rather promising. In true Alfa tradition it will probably be great yet flawed (as per 8C and 4C reviews).

Piro

I think I saw an active front splitter in the video, moving around...

Who

Presumably a normal splitter not screwed on properly.

mattcambs

The big question is will they set it up correctly? I have a horrible feeling it'll be the 4C all over again: plenty of promise but let down by not having the final five per cent of development carried out properly. I'd love to be wrong, though.

mr_pushrod

NO! NO! NO! I had just got the Alfa out of my system (with the help of the Mito and Giulietta being cack) and they go and bring this out.

Jimmy Choo

I think it looks pretty decent. I just hope they try and make it lightweight. I'd rather it was lighter than German rivals with less power; we don't need another overweight 'small' exec car with 500bhp.

Captain_Planet

Does it matter if it weighs the same as an M3 as long as it has good dynamics and some steering feel? That's the one thing they mustn't mess up.

mattcambs

It does look pretty with all the stuck-on spoilers etc, but will the 1.9 TD look as cool?

Gavin



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.

ROAD ANGEL

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NEW MAZDA MX-5

SIMPLY BRED

*Lighter than the car it replaces,
and retaining a naturally aspirated
engine, the fourth-gen Mazda MX-5 bucks
the trend of increasingly podgy sports
cars with compensatory power increases.
But does the formula still work?*

by DAN PROSSER

PHOTOGRAPHY *by* GUS GREGORY



IM

MORE THAN MOST CARS THAT WILL BE LAUNCHED IN 2015, the Mazda MX-5 needs to be understood before it is driven. I first sampled the little roadster on a one-day launch event in the south of France, and on such occasions the temptation is to leap in the car, give it death from the very moment you're out of sight of the PR team and cover as much ground as you can in the couple of hours you have with it. But if you approach this MX-5 like that you'll come away feeling a little confused, trying to piece together the unusual dynamic traits and wondering if it isn't just a bit... soft. I know this only because that's exactly what I did.

The arrival of a brand new MX-5 is an event worth paying attention to. This is only the fourth all-new version since the original debuted way back in 1989, and since the MX-5 is the world's best selling sports car (the millionth will roll off the production line late in 2016), this is in some ways the year's most significant new arrival in the performance motoring sector.

Naturally enough, this new model swerves from the fundamental tenets set out by the original version about as much as Max Mosley would swerve for a jaywalking Ron Dennis. It's still a two-seater roadster, still rear-wheel drive with a longitudinal four-pot up front, still suspended by double wishbones at the front and a multi-link layout at the rear and still lightweight. In fact, by employing a 'gram strategy' and trimming out unnecessary flab from every single component – think pencil-thin seat adjuster levers and drilled suspension crossmembers – this is the lightest MX-5 since the 1989 original. It weighs just 1015kg in entry-level 1.5-litre form (down from 1075kg for the outgoing 1.8) and 1047kg with the 2-litre engine (down from 1098kg for the old 2.0).

This new model is shorter, lower and wider than the version it replaces. The styling is more aggressive, too, particularly at the front end. The headlight graphic is very small, which actually helps to minimise the front overhang because the lamp unit itself is compact. In fact, every panel has been shrink-wrapped around the mechanical components to reduce size and weight, and to give an impression of visual tension.

As mentioned, there are two engine options, both four-cylinder petrol units. The 1.5-litre returns 129bhp at 7000rpm and 111lb ft at 4800rpm, while the 2-litre is good for 158bhp at 6000rpm and 148lb ft at 4600rpm (the previous 2.0 had 158bhp and 139lb ft). Those are not big numbers, but neither is £18,495, the cost of the base model. The version tested here is the 2.0i Sport. It costs £22,695 and gets a limited-slip differential, Bilstein dampers and a front strut brace. All models have a six-speed manual gearbox.



NEW MAZDA MX-5



*'THIS IS THE LIGHTEST MX-5
SINCE THE 1989 ORIGINAL'*

*'IT'S YOUR JOB TO DRIVE WELL AND
GET THE MOST OUT OF THE MACHINE'*



Clockwise from right: cockpit is cosy, in the traditional MX-5 fashion; engine – still naturally aspirated – is mounted lower and further back than before; 280mm ventilated discs have a relatively easy job given the 2-litre MX-5's modest 1047kg kerb weight



In an age of ever-corruptive driver aids and soulless powertrain technologies there's a refreshing simplicity to the MX-5's mechanical make-up. The engineering approach is honest and proven, and it places driving fun right at the top of the list. To a performance driving enthusiast that sounds just right, but let's remind ourselves of the MX-5's proud boast of being the world's best selling sports car. The little Mazda has always had a very broad appeal, yet the more mass appeal that music, film, television or literature has, the less likely it is to gratify that small band of knowledgeable enthusiasts, and the same could be true here. Having driven the MX-5 for a couple of hours over the Col de Vence, I wonder if the very keenest of drivers have been overlooked. I wonder if the new MX-5 is the *Fifty Shades of Grey* of the sports car world.

'Jinba ittai' is an ancient Japanese term that means 'person and horse as one'. Mazda has updated the definition to 'person and car as one', and rather than being some meaningless tripe spewed forth by a marketing exec between over-long lunches, it's actually a fundamental engineering principle. In fact, it completely determines the way the new MX-5 drives.

Jinba ittai is the reason the car is so small and light, the reason the driver now sits 20mm lower in the chassis and 15mm closer to the centre of the car, the reason the engine is mounted 15mm further back in the chassis and 13mm lower down.

'We wanted to emulate the characteristics of the first-generation MX-5 in terms of mechanical performance,' says Mazda's chassis dynamics chief, Hitoshi Takamatsu, 'but in a more emotional way. This is what we call jinba ittai.

'In order to achieve this we made the car move more than what you think it is. We modulate this movement so that it is smooth. When the car rolls [in cornering], it rolls very smoothly, not with a

sudden jerk or drop. It's a gradual movement.

'The driver feels G-forces mostly in his neck. When a car drops suddenly in cornering there is so much lateral force on the neck, and a human being cannot respond to that very quickly. This roll gives the driver a cue for what's coming next.'

Takamatsu's team has tried to make the MX-5 move around during cornering in total sympathy with the forces the driver will feel. The result, he explains, is that the driver feels innately in tune with the car. Oneness between driver and machine. Jinba ittai.

Takamatsu also describes his preferred version of the new MX-5, which gives some insight into the values held by the people who designed this car. His favourite model is only available in Japan and it does without a rear anti-roll bar. It uses the 1.5-litre engine and doesn't have an LSD. He likes it because it places the onus firmly on the driver to operate the car skilfully. Apply too much throttle at corner exit, for example, and the inside rear wheel will spin wastefully. There's no locking differential to flatter your clumsy input. It's your job to drive well and to get the most out of the machine. 'That gives me really good driving pleasure,' he says.

It might have been useful to have understood that philosophy before I drove the car myself, but on reflection I'd only have reached the same conclusion. Despite the seat now being mounted that much lower, it still feels just an inch or so too high. The steering wheel doesn't adjust for reach, so it too feels just a little stretch away from your chest. Those impressions soon fade, though, and the conclusion you'll reach on the MX-5's seating position is that it's 'not quite perfect', which hardly seems like a criticism. The cabin is, of course, quite cramped, particularly for tall passengers, who'll wish they could stretch their legs further, but it otherwise accommodates two well enough.



It's clear to see where costs have been cut within the cabin, but that's not at all unreasonable in such an affordable sports car. Things can be improved by upgrading to Sport spec (a £2600 step up from the entry-level 2.0), which brings heated leather seats and a Bose stereo. The latter features additional speakers in the headrests that improve the clarity of the system during top-down motoring. Rather than directing the sound towards you from behind, they instead throw it forward to the centre of the cabin, which gives a rich, surround-sound effect. The technical explanation for this is pretty baffling, but it's only when you press your ear to the headrest that you hear where the sound is coming from. Top-of-the-line models will come fitted with Mazda's new infotainment system, which works very much like BMW's class-leading iDrive.

While on the subject of the cabin, it is worth noting that the right-hand side of the transmission tunnel kicks out a great deal of heat when the car is worked hard. The catalytic converter sits just a layer of carpet, a metal skin and a heat shield away from your leg, which has the potential to become uncomfortable.

On the move the car rides with the low-speed sharpness that you'd expect of a sports car, but at higher speeds it settles and the ride becomes very fluid. In fact, the new MX-5 is pretty soft over bumps, but because it's so light the dampers do regain control of the body in a single stroke after a big vertical input, such as when hitting a compression.

What really stands out is the amount of body roll in cornering. This thing lists like a torpedoed warship, and does so across the front axle more than the rear. This means the car leans extremely hard on its outside front tyre and, as Takamatsu said it would, the body rolls gradually and progressively. So you turn the car in and rather than responding with flat-bodied immediacy and darting for the apex, it leans languidly, loads the outside front and finds its way into the corner with decent grip. Did I feel more in tune with the car as a result? Not really. I kind of just wished it rolled less.

Beyond that, the chassis feels really sweetly balanced, although it doesn't quite give the impression of pivoting about the gearlever. The electrically assisted steering is plenty accurate enough and the weighting is very natural, but as with so many of these systems there isn't a great deal of feel and it doesn't load up in cornering. By design the grip levels are good but not unimpeachable and breakaway is very progressive. There isn't the raw power to stick the rear boots with throttle alone, but if you over-commit to a corner and stand on the throttle early, the back end will step out a little, which allows you to enjoy the rear-wheel-drive chassis balance without worrying that it'll launch you into a hedge.

The 2-litre engine gives up all it has to offer by around 6500rpm, so it's no rev-happy screamer in the mould of a Honda Type R engine of times gone by. It will spin around to its red line willingly enough, though, which is just as well as you'll need to keep it there or thereabouts to achieve any meaningful pace. The gearshift action is, thankfully, very crisp and direct, which makes dropping down to second gear no chore whatsoever.

So there is fun to be had driving this MX-5 and it doesn't exactly fall apart if you really do fling it down a road. But as Takamatsu confirms, it's a car that works best just a couple of notches back from maximum attack. This is a keen chassis, but after a few miles I just wanted more response from the front axle, tauter body control, less roll and more immediacy and intensity from the whole experience. If you really enjoy finding a car's limits and holding it there, I've no doubt you'll be left feeling the same way.

What the likes of you and I think is a little redundant, though, because this latest MX-5 does what the MX-5 has always done – it brings an authentic sports car experience to the masses. For that reason alone it'll continue to be the world's best selling sports car for a long time yet, and in that respect it's more or less beyond criticism. But if you're looking for an intense and exhilarating driving experience, walk on by. ☒

MAZDA MX-5 2.0i Sport

Engine In-line four-cyl, 1998cc

CO2 161g/km

Power 158bhp @ 6000rpm

Torque 147lb ft @ 4600rpm

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

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

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

Brakes Ventilated 280mm discs front, solid 280mm discs rear, ABS

Wheels 7 x 17in front and rear

Tyres 205/45 R17 front and rear

Weight 1047kg

Power-to-weight 153bhp/ton

0-62mph 7.3sec (claimed)

Top speed 133mph (claimed)

Basic price £22,695

On sale Now

evo rating ★★★★★





PRIMAL

by RICHARD MEADEN

'Legend' is a clichéd label, but if ever a machine deserves it then it's the Le Mans-winning no. 55 Mazda 787B. Twenty-four years after witnessing it take the chequered flag at La Sarthe, evo's Richard Meaden slides behind its wheel

SCREAM

GIVEN THE MILD-MANNERED NATURE OF THE MX-5, you might be surprised to learn there's a direct connection between the world's favourite two-seater sports car and Mazda's ear-splitting, fire-breathing 787B outright Le Mans winner. His name is Nobuhiro Yamamoto.

Drawn to Mazda by the promise of working with rotary engines, Yamamoto-san soon got involved with the company's motorsport programmes, and was an integral part of Mazda's history-making Le Mans effort in 1991. Twenty-four years later, he's programme manager for the new MX-5 (page 62). With Mazda taking centre stage as the featured marque at this year's Goodwood Festival of Speed, the legendary Group C 787B would be making the long trip from Mazda's museum in Hiroshima to serve as a vivid reminder of one of the most spectacular cars ever built. Somewhat unbelievably, I'd be driving it.



The no. 55 Mazda 787B and I go back a long way. All the way to 1991, in fact, when I watched it score its historic win at Le Mans. During the dead of night, when I retreated to my tent located near the Dunlop bridge for a precious hour or two of shut-eye, it would wake me with monotonous regularity. The three-and-a-half minutes or so it took to complete each lap was just enough for me to teeter on the edge of sleep, only to be slapped awake by the otherworldly wail of its quad-rotor engine.

If I'm honest, I headed to La Sarthe to support the Jaguars, as did half of the UK population, or at least that's how it seemed. Yet whenever the dazzling dayglo green and orange Mazda was within view or earshot (most of the lap, then), it commanded your attention by waging war on your senses. It simply refused to be ignored, so I took the fact that Johnny Herbert was one of its three drivers as tacit permission to root for it. Then when it became clear Mazda's strategy was to absolutely drive the wheels off the thing from flag-to-flag, it somehow added an even more manic edge to its furious soundtrack.

'I TAKE MY HAND OFF THE WHEEL TO GO FOR AN UPSHIFT AND THE NOSE VIOLENTLY DIVES FOR THE GRASS'

The rest, as they say, is history. The flying Peugeot 905s (built to the new 3.5-litre 'F1' rules) both faded early in the race, and when one-by-one the dominant trio of Sauber-Mercedes cars faltered under pressure from the relentlessly pursuing Mazda, victory for the initially unfancied 787B was assured. Johnny Herbert had driven his heart out

in a marathon final stint that left him a dessicated husk so in need of first aid and emergency rehydration that he never made it to the podium. It was, by all accounts, an epic and hugely popular win.

Fast-forward to Goodwood in 2015 and it's clear the no. 55 787B has lost none of its seductive powers. Parked at the foot of Gerry Judah's sensational sculpture – together with all the other rotary-powered racers assembled by Mazda for the event – it's the absolute star of the show. That famous colour-scheme, now faded by 24 summers of sunshine, is somehow even more evocative, while the rear-set wing screams 'low-drag' in a way only cars conceived to race at Le Mans do.

This being Goodwood there's a surreal informality about things. Thanks to the vagaries of accidents and breakdowns on the hill, there's also a rather, er, fluid timetable. All of which means instead of an endless briefing from the team, as befits a precious car of this significance and potency, I'm stuffed into the seat and told to fire-up the engine, inflicting what is almost certainly permanent hearing damage on the crowd that has gathered to witness one of Mazda's daily 'Rotary Moments'. As an ice-breaking introduction to this most iconic of Japanese race cars, it takes some beating.

Ah yes, the 787B's engine. Rotaries are largely regarded as internal combustion voodoo, and with good reason, for in this, surely the ultimate state of tune, they function, sound and respond like no other engine you've ever experienced. This was the culmination of all Mazda's hard-won knowledge – the 787B featured a new 'R26B' version of the four-rotor power unit. The main additions were a constantly variable intake system and three spark plugs per rotor, compared to the two in the previous iteration of the engine. Mazda claims the engine was good for

900bhp at 10,500rpm, though it ran at closer to 700bhp with a 9000rpm limit for Le Mans. Given capacity equivalency rates the R26B motor at 2616cc, either figure is pretty remarkable!

Like all Group C racers of the era, the cockpit is very straightforward, with a simple LCD dash pod supplemented by a bank of fuses. The view out is about as special as it gets, the big goldfish-bowl windscreen offering glimpses of the orange and green bodywork and a panoramic view of the road ahead. The seating position is spot-on and although the steering wheel is surprisingly large in diameter, it feels just right. The starting procedure couldn't be easier: twist the big red ignition cut-off switch and press the black starter button.

From the moment it sparks into life the R26B engine is all-consuming. It spits and crackles and pulses impatiently at idle, then yelps and whoops with every twitch of your right foot, emitting a gunshot-like report from port and starboard side-exit exhausts the instant the throttle snaps shut. Prior to the crazy days of 20,000rpm F1 engines, there was surely nothing quite like this.

Nerves of an entirely crippling magnitude threaten to grip you as you sit on the Goodwood Festival of Speed start line. It's the most public arena in which to demonstrate a car. In a car loud enough to trip Bedford Autodrome's noise meters from the outskirts of Chichester, that means any hesitancy, missed gears or other ham-fistedness will be plain for all to hear.

Fortunately the 787B is easy to get off the line, so despite my initial deference to its drivetrain from a standing start, once rolling that instantaneous rotary power effortlessly lights up the rears with an exuberant *whoop-whoop-whoop* before I tentatively push the gearstick forwards and across to the right in search of second. Relief at finding it is soon overtaken by the need for third as we zip by Goodwood House and the main grandstands. I'd been warned the 787B is lively over the bumps and cambers, but when I take my right hand off the wheel to go for the next upshift the nose makes a violent dive for the grass. I'm sure it all looked pretty tame from the outside, but from where I was sitting things felt a bit frantic, which is my excuse for finding fifth instead of third. Then fourth. And then, finally, the sanctuary of second for more crowd-pleasing noise. Just a few cars back, the demise of the similarly liveried 767B confirms I'm happy to settle for a few missed gears.

Once safely in the holding area at the top of the hill, I'm feeling a bit crestfallen at what ranks as some of the scruffiest mile-and-a-bit's driving I've ever done. Then, as the adrenalin kicks-in and my heart thumps its approval, I concede it really doesn't matter, for I've just driven a racer that's been right at the pointy end of my own personal bucket list for many years. Judging by the looks on everyone's face as I *whoop-whoop-whoop* my way back to the paddock, just seeing and hearing this car has made everyone else's day, too. When Valentino Rossi drives 'my' no. 55 Mazda on Sunday, the whole experience becomes even more surreal.

To this day the 787B remains the only Japanese car to win Le Mans outright. This despite numerous money-no-object efforts by Nissan and Toyota before and since. It's also the only car to win using a non-piston-engined motor, which is remarkable given the challenges that had to be overcome. To Mazda's rivals, persisting with such apparently oddball technology must have seemed like madness, right up until they had their asses kicked.

Mazda's victory spoils were bitter-sweet. A ban on rotary engines the following season halted a remarkable engineering adventure (at least in Europe), but the heroic win bestowed immortality on the brand and in particular the number 55 787B. Seeing it win at Le Mans was special. Driving it at Goodwood was a dream come true. ❏



Clockwise from above: a nervous Meaden settles into his noisy home for the 90-second run up the hill; deep-dish alloys in silver and gold, naturally; functional cabin features an unusually large steering wheel; five-speed manual 'box sourced from Porsche takes some familiarisation; Japan's only Le Mans winner is a cult hero

among racing fans; quad-rotor Wankel capable of 900bhp and ear-splitting sounds; the trio that brought no. 55 home in first place during the 1991 Le Mans 24 Hours; in-board Bilstein dampers are mated to double wishbones – the Mazda is notoriously frisky over bumps; vents behind the front wheels cool the side-exit exhausts



SEPTEMBER 1989. THE DODGE VIPER RT/10 makes its debut at the Chicago motor show. Its immense eight-litre V10 develops 400bhp and it's wrapped in a glassfibre body so muscular as to make TVRs look malnourished.

Why then were all eyes on the delicate Japanese roadster across the hall? The one with a power output little more than a quarter of the Viper's and rolling on wheels that, to this day, are referred to as 'daisies'? The Goodwood Motor Circuit on a windy Monday morning seems a world away from the glitz of an international motor show, but the quaint surroundings are somehow an appropriate environment to explore the MX-5's appeal.

Its links with the 1960s sports cars that inspired it have been endlessly repeated. The Lotus Elan-like body. The exhaust note, tuned by Mazda to mimic that of old Triumphs and MGs. And the gleeful pop-up headlights and curved lower intake? They're not unlike the slightly gormless face of an Austin-Healey 'Frogeye' Sprite.

If early MX-5s don't quite match an original Elan Sprint on paper, they share its spirit: 1597cc, four cylinders, 115bhp and 100lb ft (for the original 1.6), five speeds, rear-wheel drive, double wishbones at all four corners, 185-section tyres and 971kg at the kerb. The numbers are modest, but Mazda's 'jinba ittai' concept – 'horse and rider as one' – invite you to delve beyond simple performance statistics. Well, that's the theory. Stretching along Goodwood's pitlane is a line of MX-5s, from early cars to the latest Mk4. We'll be sampling generations one, two and three here, starting with the first.

Climbing into this later 1.8-litre-engined example reveals the first pleasant surprise: you're actually sitting in a manner approximating that of a sports car. Early MX-5s aren't known for their low-slung seating position, but the soft fabric allows me to sink lower than the firm leather of my own Fast Fleet Eunos. The extra friction should reduce the bracing required in faster corners, too.

Less pleasant is the three-spoke steering wheel – there's little wrong with the shape or the thinness of the rim, but the textured, injection-moulded affair is a reminder of the bad





by ANTONY INGRAM

MILLION SELLING BABY

If you feel we've judged the new, fourth-generation Mazda MX-5 harshly, that's only because of the benchmark laid down by its charismatic – and incredibly popular – forebears. We take a spin back in time with the first three generations



‘Their malleability on the limit of grip is what makes the first two generations of MX-5 such a joy to drive’



Far left and top left: the MX-5 grew steadily in size and weight between Mk1 and Mk2, and again for the Mk3 (pictured on the previous page). The new Mk4 (see page 62) reverses that trend by being shorter and lighter than the Mk3

old days before even the most basic supermini featured a cow-skinned wheel. Earlier Mk1s used a neat Momo number whose padded horn press could be removed to expose the racy metal spokes beneath.

Sadly, the tyres are flat. Or they seem to be. A twist of the wheel to extract the Mk1 from its place in the string unearths another facet of this particular car – there’s no power steering. This kept the price low back in the mid 1990s – an unadorned 1.8 could leave the forecourt for £14,495, against the £17,595 of a better-specified (and power-assisted) 1.8iS.

The lack of hydraulic assistance isn’t an issue once you’re moving, but the initial weight feels at odds with the delicate responses you expect from a small, lightweight sports car. Non-assisted MX-5s use a lower-geared rack – 3.2 turns lock-to-lock instead of 2.8 – to compensate. That’s actually quite a useful attribute on greasy, post-rain-shower Goodwood tarmac. The large steering wheel and slower responses encourage fluid, measured inputs through the fast, sweeping turns. Not here the unsettling dartiness of a modern, electrically assisted setup with a chubby, small-diameter wheel.

There’s not notably more chatter than my own ‘assisted’ car relays, but the precision is still there and there’s enough feedback to detect the front wheels pushing. The rear also slides – more easily at high speeds on a damp track than on a dry road – but the car’s balance is

such that you can quickly account for slip at either axle, adjusting the car’s line with the throttle as much as the steering.

There isn’t the precision of newer cars – the Mk1 takes time to settle on its springs and there’s flex in the body too. In this respect it’s more like a classic car, and further incentive to drive smoothly rather than attempting to hustle it like you would a modern hot hatch.

Throttle response is a different story. The engine reacts instantly, eliciting a sporty *parp* from the exhaust and a hint of induction bark from the engine bay. It’s eager too. The four-pot is almost masochistic in its desire for revs, while the tactile gearshift rewards every change. The 132bhp 1.8 isn’t notably quicker than the earlier, less powerful 1.6 – extra weight and taller gearing sees to that – but you don’t feel too short-changed by the lack of pace.

Surprisingly, the same applies even to the 1.6-engined Mk2 car waiting in the pitlane. These cars – of which this particular one is an ‘Arizona’ special edition – produced more power than the detuned final run of Mk1s, but with just 108bhp they still played second-fiddle to the 138bhp Mk2 1.8. Not only less potent, 1.6s also lacked the limited-slip differential of the 1.8s, and performance was offset further by the extra weight of the Mk2 body.

Proponents of the MX-5 will tell you that Mazda had begun to cut



MAZDA
MX-5 Mk1 1.8

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1840cc
Power 132bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 114lb ft @ 5500rpm
0-62mph 10.6sec (claimed)
Top speed 116mph (claimed)
Weight 983kg
Power-to-weight 136bhp/ton
Price now £500-4500

evo rating: ★★★★★

MAZDA
MX-5 Mk2 1.6

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1598cc
Power 108bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 99lb ft @ 5000rpm
0-62mph 9.7sec (claimed)
Top speed 119mph (claimed)
Weight 1035kg
Power-to-weight 106bhp/ton
Price now £750-5500

evo rating: ★★★★★

MAZDA
MX-5 Mk3 2.0

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1999cc
Power 158bhp @ 6700rpm
Torque 139lb ft @ 5000rpm
0-60mph 7.9sec (claimed)
Top speed 136mph (claimed)
Weight 1098kg
Power-to-weight 146bhp/ton
Price now £3500-17,000

evo rating: ★★★★★

costs by the time the Mk2 arrived, in 1998, and while the cabin is more cossetting than its forebear's, the curvy 1990s plastic does feel a little downmarket. After the Mk1, the leather-bound driver's seat also seems to be mounted about half a foot too high.

The Mk2 is still a pleasant steer as I crest Madgwick. The three-spoke, leather-wrapped and airbagged Nardi wheel sits snugly in the hands. After the extended, deliberate movements needed to steer the earlier car, the Mk2's power-assisted response initially feels disconcerting, but you quickly adapt.

Either Goodwood's marshalls have forgotten I'm on the circuit or they're happy for me to continue circulating as droplets of fresh rain grow larger on the windscreen. The car's balance remains predictable and ABS adds welcome reassurance on the damp asphalt without spoiling pedal feel. The third-gear Woodcote corner is the trickiest, with understeer on turn-in and oversteer as you squeeze the throttle, but this malleability is what makes the first two generations of MX-5 such a joy – and such appropriate tools in which to learn rear-wheel-drive behaviour.

The same couldn't be said of the Mk3 MX-5 upon its 2005 debut. **evo's** first drive of the car revealed stark shortcomings in its balance and ability to telegraph useful information to the driver, and when

a 2-litre car found itself against such luminaries as the Renaultsport Clio Trophy, BMW M3 CS and Caterham Seven CSR in **evo** Car of the Year 2005, it was first to exit the test, lacking the feel, delicacy and vitality that made its predecessors so endearing.

To its credit, Mazda worked tirelessly to improve the car, and by the time the facelifted 'Mk3.5' model arrived in 2009 many of our criticisms were rendered moot. It's more liveable with on the road than the earlier cars, if not quite as tactile. At Goodwood, the extra grip, improved body control and improved torsional rigidity prove confidence-inspiring, particularly on a drying track.

Along with the extra power – 158bhp at 6700rpm from the 2.0 – it's the best track car by a margin. Not as talkative as earlier MX-5s perhaps, but reduced slack in the car's responses and the extra grip at both ends give you impetus to push harder. You need correspondingly higher speeds to really work the chassis, which can be a drawback on the road, depending on your propensity for playing with the rear axle, but as a tool for learning to drive on track, it's the best car here.

As the dappled grey blanket over West Sussex finally makes way for patches of blue, the roofs comes down. Each generation of MX-5 has its faults, but until a rival matches this simple formula, none will feel quite as jovial on a summer's day. ☒

NEW AUDI R8 AT LE MANS

BONNE

This is the story of how a benign introduction to Audi's latest supercar evolved into a flat-out lap of Le Mans in front of a gallery of 250,000 motorsport fans. No pressure, then. None at all...



CHANCE

by DAN PROSSER

PHOTOGRAPHY by
ASTON PARROTT



Left: optional 20-inch wheels come with fade-resistant ceramic brake discs. **Right:** a smart cabin has always been an R8 strong point. **Below:** Prosser, tailed by an Audi pace car, threatens to get lost on a racetrack...





'MOST ONLOOKERS
ARE HOPING TO
SEE SOME JAMMY
GIT STUFF A NEW
SUPERCAR INTO A
TYRE WALL'

AFTER FIVE-AND-A-HALF MINUTES, the lap is over. I slowly meander through the weaving pitlane entry and bring the bright red Audi R8 to a halt as the crowd begins to surround us. I turn to staff snapper Aston Parrott and say, in a high-pitched voice I've never heard before, 'I don't remember a bloody thing!'

The call came a couple of weeks before the Le Mans 24 Hours. 'Come and drive the new R8 a month ahead of the international launch,' Audi said. 'You'll be one of only a handful of titles who'll get to do so.'

That's an important new car, we thought. We should go. As the details were drip fed through, it became ever more apparent that we were not going to get the first drive exclusive we were hoping for. Time with the car was limited. We'd drive it around the Circuit de la Sarthe on the Thursday evening before the 24-hour race. For one lap.

We could carry a photographer in the car to document the occasion and we'd be driving in a convoy led by Tom Kristensen. The latter point was comforting because I had not a single clue which way the circuit went, but I reckoned old TK, nine times a Le Mans winner, probably did.

When the day arrived, the anticipation built gradually to a point where, come early evening, I was really rather excited. When we got word that the lap had been cancelled, though, I felt a bit gutted. In earlier runs the R8 demo cars had suffered stone-chipped windscreens and the Le Mans organiser, the ACO, refused to let them out again in that condition. It all seemed a bit daft to me and the Audi media team apologised profusely, fed me significant quantities of fillet steak and beer to ease the disappointment and promised they'd try to get me out some time on the Saturday. I reckoned that was about as likely as a Nissan LMP1 win, so I necked a couple more beers, forgot all about it and went to bed.

There are bad text messages and there are good text messages. The one that lit up my phone on the Friday evening was definitely a good one. New screens had been fitted and the run was back on. Meet at the Audi hospitality unit in the paddock at midday. You'll be out just before the race starts.

As I waited in the assembly area at the end of the pitlane, slowly wilting in the bright sunshine, I realised there would be no Mr Le Mans to shadow, but instead some Audi suits in RS3s. I had less confidence in their La Sarthe knowledge than my own, and to add further pressure there would be somewhere in the region of 250,000 people looking on, most of them hoping to see some jammy git stuff a brand new supercar into a tyre wall.

Most of the recollections that follow come not from my detailed memory of the occasion, but instead from the footage recorded by a GoPro that was hanging from the windscreen, and my largely incoherent, unusually squeaky commentary. The lap was just a blur and those five-and-a-half minutes were so frantic that I didn't commit anything of value to long-term memory. Anyway, 8.5 miles in the brand new, £134,500 Audi R8 V10 Plus with a quarter of a million people watching. This is what went down.

I'M FIDDLING WITH MY SEATING POSITION, TRYING TO GET it just so. Forward a bit, then back a bit. It won't go low enough. Just like in the original version, I want the seat to drop another inch or two closer to the road. I get the engine running and glance over the dashboard, note the attractive heater controls but wonder if the gearlever is just a bit... Oh heck, they've gone! I was so wrapped up in the sodding seating position that I hadn't noticed the train of RS3s disappearing up the road. What's more, I'd been expecting them to parade around at half pace, drivers waving to the crowd and all that nonsense, but they're fully lit and diving underneath the Dunlop



‘THE CHASSIS SEEMS TO GRIP LIKE AN LMP1 CAR ON SLICKS AND THE BODY REMAINS ENTIRELY FLAT’

Above: Prosser does his very best Jim Clark impression at 180mph on the Mulsanne Straight; new R8 is paddleshift only – a manual gearshift will not be available. **Below:** Audi’s trick new display is entirely digital

Bridge before I’ve even put my car in gear. I pull back on the lever for first, boot the throttle and set off in pursuit.

All of a sudden, my priority shifts from getting an early impression of what this important new car is like to drive to not being the idiot in a 602bhp supercar who got dropped by some bloke in a hatchback in front of enough people to overthrow a monarchy.

Thankfully, the Dunlop Chicane and the Esses that follow are well sighted so I close a little ground, but as we round a right-hander – which I now know to be Tertre Rouge – I realise I’ve no idea which way the track goes next. It takes a worrying amount of time for me to work out that this long, straight piece of track is actually the Mulsanne Straight. I know there are a couple of chicanes along here somewhere, but I’m not sure quite where and am desperate to reel in that bloody RS3. The speedo rolls around at a heck of a rate. This thing pulls mightily hard and the V10 spins with real ferocity well beyond 8000rpm. The gearshifts are blink-and-you’ll-miss-them quick, much more instant than the old car’s. We steam along to an indicated 285kph, which I hurriedly calculate to be close to 180mph.

Blessedly, the RS3 has grown from a small dot in the distance to a big blob in my windscreen. It brakes for the first chicane and I do the same. The very moment I turn the car into the right-hander I realise just what a big step over the old model it is. The directness of the steering and the immediacy of response from the front end are staggering. The chassis seems to grip like an LMP1 car on slicks and the body remains entirely flat. Through the remainder of the chicane the car feels just as impressive and it lunges





up the next straight with an accelerative urgency that the outgoing model couldn't match.

Another chicane follows, then the tight right-hander at Mulsanne. This chassis is scalpel sharp. Whereas the first-generation R8 feels fluid in the way it responds to steering inputs, in the way it hesitates and rolls just a little on turn-in, this car is without slack. It's also completely locked down, so even with a bit of a bung it doesn't seem to take attitude on the way into a corner. Neither with a big stab of throttle at corner exit will it slip a little and power away on a quarter-turn of corrective lock.

The Audi slices through Indianapolis and Arnage, then through the flowing Porsche Curves. Each bend clarifies my first impression. The convoy slows as we approach the Ford Chicane at the end of the lap. I bring the R8 almost to a stop to leave a gap, then accelerate towards the chicane and chuck the car at the first apex. There's not a hint of give. I trundle into the pitlane, body flooded with adrenaline, and try to recall what's just happened. I draw a blank.

Based on the recorded evidence of those 8.5 chaotic miles, it would seem the new R8 is a deeply impressive machine. It remains to be seen, though, if that locked-down chassis is bereft of the expression and adjustability that makes the old car so much fun. Next month we'll drive the new R8 for more than five-and-a-half minutes and without 250,000 people watching, so we will be in a position to deliver a proper verdict. All I can be certain of for now is that a brand new supercar and the world's most famous racetrack make for a truly forgettable experience. ✘

AUDI R8 V10 PLUS

Engine V10, 5204cc

CO2 287g/km

Power 602bhp @ 8250rpm

Torque 413lb ft @ 6500rpm

Transmission Seven-speed S-tronic dual-clutch gearbox, four-wheel drive, torque vectoring

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

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

Brakes Carbon-ceramic discs, 398mm front, 380mm rear, ABS, EBD (option)

Wheels 8.5 x 20in front and rear (option)

Tyres 245/30 R20 front, 305/30 R20 rear (option)

Weight 1555kg

Power-to-weight 393bhp/ton

0-62mph 3.2sec (claimed)

Top speed 205mph (claimed)

Basic price £134,500

NEW

by DAN PROSSER & RICHARD MEADEN

PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH

WORLD

The new, turbocharged Honda Civic Type R has arrived in the UK, so we've arranged the toughest and most thorough test for it that you'll find. Can it outperform the very best rivals from

*SEAT, BMW, VW and Renaultsport, both on road and on track? Only **evo** has the answer*

ORDER?





On road

by DAN PROSSER

THERE'S A BUMP JUST BEFORE THE APEX. Hit it quickly enough and it'll flick the inside wheels an inch or two into the air, leaving the outer tyres to dig in and negotiate the car around the bend. It makes for a dramatic cornering photograph, but it's a spectacle that's even more impressive to witness in person. I'm standing on the outside of the corner, and as Jethro Bovingdon approaches the third-gear left-hander he hardly seems to slow down. He turns in, hits the bump and, just as planned, the car rides up on two wheels. The weight settles on the right-hand Cup 2 tyres, which smear themselves into the abrasive surface leaving a thick, black stain running for six feet or so at mid-corner. I've never before watched a hot hatch corner with such force that it leaves its tag on the road.

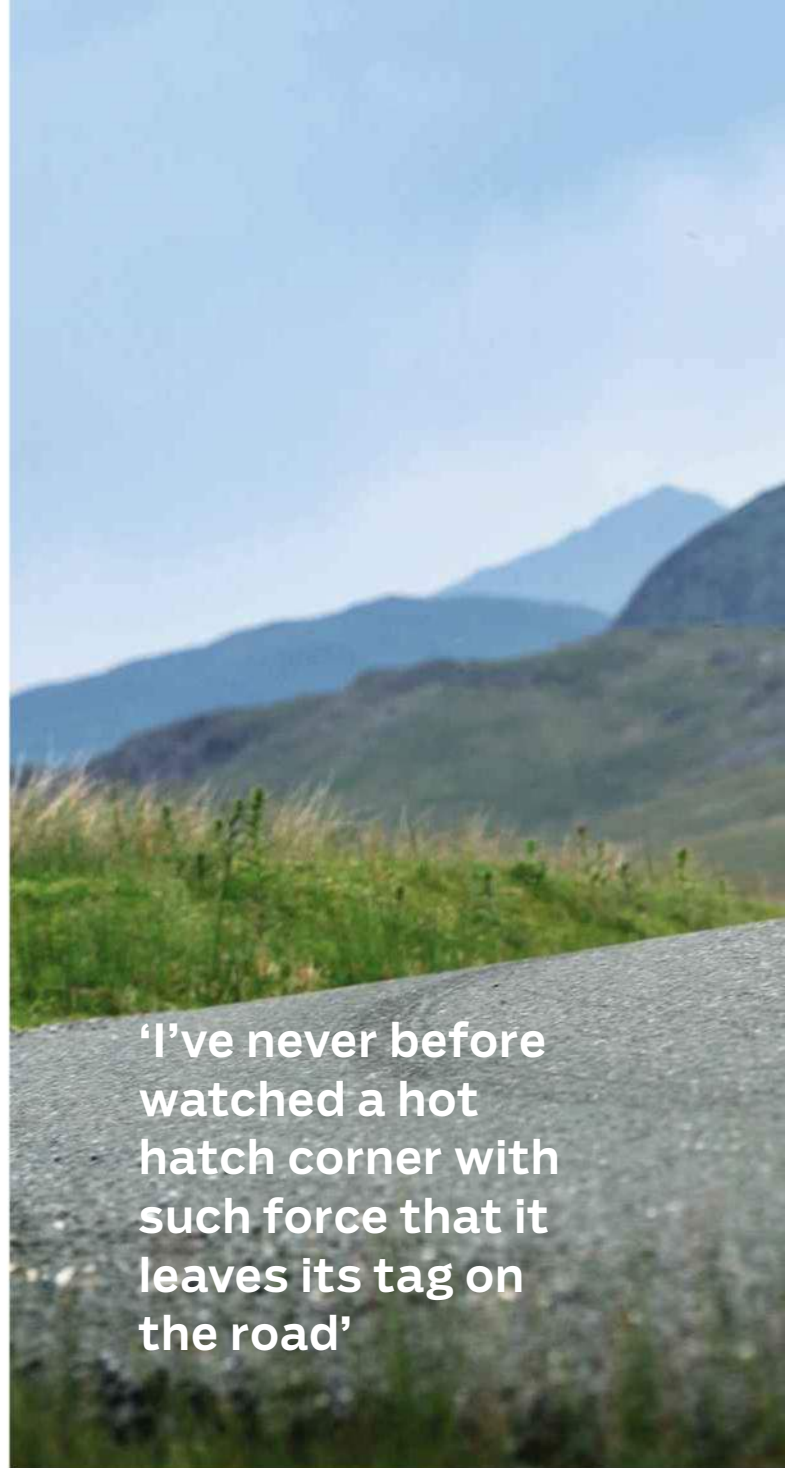
Up until this point the most noteworthy thing about the SEAT's 19-inch wheels was their sunbed orange hue, but it now seems rather more significant that they're wrapped in what is essentially the same tyre that Porsche deemed worthy of its 918 Spyder hypercar. That's a pretty emphatic comment on the sheer intent and purpose of the modern high-performance hot hatch, and it isn't only true of the Leon Cupra 280 Sub8 – the Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy we have here is wearing Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2s as well.

Unlike other sectors of the market, the hot hatch genre has diverted its arms race away from sheer power output and instead towards the kind of sophisticated chassis engineering that was the preserve of bespoke sports cars just a few years ago; think trick suspension components and super-sticky tyres. A consensus seems to have been reached on 300bhp (give or take) being the correct output for a hot hatch in 2015 and if you need much more than that just to keep up, you're not doing it right.

It all means the hot hatch marketplace is a pretty difficult arena to enter after a long leave of absence, but the new Honda Civic Type R arrives with some promising hardware and a fistful of bold claims. The high-revving, normally aspirated engines of previous models have been junked in favour of a turbocharged four-cylinder. You'd need six cylinders and 3 litres to deliver competitive hot hatch power from an atmospheric engine these days, say the engineers, and a unit that size would sit far too much weight over the front axle. The Type R's headline numbers are on point: 306bhp at 6500rpm and 295lb ft of torque from 2500rpm. The claimed figures are 0-62mph in 5.7 seconds, 167mph flat out and 7min 50.6sec around a patch of the Eifel mountains that you may have heard of. That's a front-wheel-drive production car record.

The Honda's vast rear spoiler, assorted aero spats and odd little vents will draw derisory comments throughout the test, but alongside the Mégane's flashy decals and the Leon's (optional) orange highlights, the Civic's go-faster bits don't look quite so jarring as in isolation. Honda actually claims this is the first hot hatch to produce real downforce, which is another indicator of the progress made in this sector in recent years.

The Renault and the SEAT between them set the dynamic benchmark for the more unhinged of hot hatch challengers, but Honda will also want to draw buyers from the Volkswagen Golf R and BMW M135i. These cars do approach the issue of propelling a hatchback down a road at great speed in a much more discerning



'I've never before watched a hot hatch corner with such force that it leaves its tag on the road'



Above: Sub8 pack on the Leon Cupra 280 costs £2050 and brings 30mm-larger front brake discs with Brembo calipers, plus a different design of wheel to fit around them; Cup 2 tyres (left) an extra £460



The cars



BMW M135i

Engine In-line 6-cyl, 2979cc, turbo
Power 321bhp @ 5800-6000rpm
Torque 332lb ft @ 1300-4500rpm
Weight 1445kg
Power-to-weight 226bhp/ton
0-62mph 4.9sec (claimed)
Top speed 155mph (limited)
Basic price £31,325



HONDA Civic Type R

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1996cc, turbo
Power 306bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 295lb ft @ 2500-4500rpm
Weight 1378kg
Power-to-weight 226bhp/ton
0-62mph 5.7sec (claimed)
Top speed 167mph (claimed)
Basic price £29,995



RENAULTSPORT MÉGANE 275 TROPHY

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc, turbo
Power 271bhp @ 5500rpm **Torque**
 265lb ft @ 3000-5000rpm **Weight**
 1376kg **Power-to-weight** 200bhp/
 ton **0-62mph** 5.8sec (claimed)
Top speed 159mph (claimed)
Basic price £28,930



SEAT LEON CUPRA 280 SUB8

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1984cc, turbo
Power 276bhp @ 5600rpm
Torque 258lb ft @ 1750-5300rpm
Weight 1346kg **Power-to-weight**
 208bhp/ton **0-62mph** 5.7sec
 (claimed) **Top speed** 155mph
 (limited) **Basic price** £30,535



VOLKSWAGEN GOLF R

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1984cc, turbo
Power 296bhp @ 5500-6200rpm
Torque 280lb ft @ 1800-5500rpm
Weight 1476kg
Power-to-weight 204bhp/ton
0-62mph 5.1sec (claimed)
Top speed 155mph (limited)
Basic price £30,820



way, but costing from £30,820 and £31,325 respectively to the Civic's £29,995, they occupy much the same space.

The Honda is on its way to meet us from a sunrise rendezvous in Slough, so we've got an hour or so and the best roads in north Wales with which to make a start on the action photography. The Leon does its two-wheeler thing, the Golf gets impressively crossed up in my rear-view mirror and the M135i skims a layer off its rear boots. When the Civic eventually steams over a crest in the middle distance it looks mean and low, a no-nonsense road racer tearing up the sort of terrain it was built for. It's only when it pulls up in the lay-by that the clumsiness of some of the details hits home. It's such a busy aesthetic and I'm not sure it navigates the precipitous divide between motorsport-honed purpose and *Fast and Furious* set prop without stumbling. My colleagues, it's fair to say, are less charitable; Jethro reckons it looks like a cupcake that's been dunked in a box of Lego, while Adam Towler will claim he has to fight the urge to put a brown paper bag over his head every time he gets into it.

Its cabin is no more orderly but the seat is supportive and the

driving position is very good. The first impressions the Civic makes over the B4391 are also mostly positive, for it feels supple over bumps but tautly controlled and it responds with agility and immediacy to steering inputs. The engine returns plenty of performance, too, but it seems to do so a heartbeat or two after you first call for it. At least the gearshift action is slick and tight in the best Type R tradition.

Before exploring the Civic any further I pass its keys to Richard Meaden and settle into the most powerful car of the group, the 321bhp M135i. With two more cylinders than its rivals and another 1000cc of displacement, the BMW's turbocharged engine does things the four-pots can't. Low-down response is very sharp indeed and the mid range is broad, but it's the willing top end and baleful howl that really distinguish this engine. It's a pleasure to work it hard and although the standard six-speed manual (much improved since the car's facelift earlier this year) would add a layer of involvement, the ZF eight-speed automatic we have here is at least very slick and clean in the way it shifts cogs.



Judged in isolation the M135i is a very easy car to fall for, not only for its engine but also for the balance of its chassis. But in the context of the world's best hot hatches, it falls short. Approach the BMW with the same maximum-attack mindset that you would the Mégane or Leon and you wonder if some rogue has stuck an M135i badge and silver mirror caps onto a cooking 118i. Where its front-wheel-drive rivals just get sharper and better controlled the more you ask of them, the BMW begins to roll heavily, the brakes run out of stamina and the suspension starts to lose control of the masses. More fundamentally, you don't get the traditional benefits of rear-wheel drive – notably crisp steering feel and precise throttle adjustability – with the M135i, so it ultimately isn't as much fun to thrash along a moorland road.

Perhaps it's a little unfair to heap too much criticism at BMW's door for the M135i not being at its best on a charge, but the second of the seemingly more grown-up cars in this test manages that trick quite brilliantly. In fact, the Golf R actually gets better the harder you push it, rising up onto its toes and coming alive just at the point where

'The Civic Type R looks mean and low, a no-nonsense road racer tearing up the sort of terrain it was built for'

Above left: Civic Type R and Golf R approach the 300bhp hatch thing from very different angles.

Top: like the Golf, the M135i is very road-biased

‘The Golf R is playful – it’ll take on some attitude if you back it into a corner on the brakes’





previous generations would fall to pieces. There's a crispness and a purity to the steering, a sense of lightness and agility to the way it darts in towards an apex and, by virtue of its four-wheel-drive system, none of the tugging at the wheel under full load that you get in the front-wheel-drive cars here.

Whereas earlier R and R32 Golfs felt dumpy and lethargic, this latest version is altogether more alive. Rather than labouring its way through corners, it responds with precision and immediacy. The body is tautly controlled in direction changes and over crests, but there's a fair amount of dive and roll, which gives you a clear impression of how hard the chassis is being worked. The Bridgestone Potenza tyres don't return the same faultless grip as the Michelin Cup 2s of the Leon and Mégane, but they bite plenty hard enough and you can feel them scrubbing just a little as you lean on the chassis, which is deeply satisfying.

The Golf R is playful, too, for it'll take on some attitude if you back it into a corner on the brakes. Do so hard enough and it'll even begin to rotate about itself rather than simply plough on, which is probably the biggest point of dynamic difference between this Golf R and those that have come before it. In simple terms it's an enormous amount of fun.

The 296bhp engine is second only to the BMW's unit for response and top end, but the gearshift action is something of a let-down. The throw can be a touch notchy and the weird delay in the clutch pedal returning to its raised position makes a smooth upchange a very tricky thing to do. (DSG is available as a £1415 option.) Like the M135i, the Golf R looks like a more sober sort of hot hatch, particularly in five-door form, but it's transcendent in the way it responds to a deliberate driving style. Without Cup tyres and an uncompromising chassis setup it lacks the outright pace of the bewinged, stickered-up cars here, but it's no less enjoyable.

There's something about the Leon's slim glasshouse and three-door body that make it seem as though it belongs to a class below the VW. Yet a basic Sub8 costs just £285 less than an unoptioned three-door Golf R. It shares the Golf's platform and base engine,



Top: Civic's interior styling is a match for the exterior; driving position is good. **Above left:** auto 'box in the BMW is slick, but we'd have the manual. **Above:** the Golf's manual shift can be notchy. **Left:** Alcantara wheel suits the Renault

albeit with front-wheel drive only and 20bhp less. The Sub8 gets vast 380mm front brakes and is available with those Michelin tyres (for an extra £460). It isn't quite the Ultimate model that set a 7min 58.4sec lap at the Ring and is distinguished by a handful of modest weight-saving measures, but equipped with the £1355 DSG gearbox, this test car is very nearly the Leon Cupra 280 at its most potent.

Out on the road, it feels as rapid as any hot hatch ever needs to be. The grip those Cup 2 tyres find is simply staggering. You don't brake for a corner because you need to shed speed, but because you run out of nerve. You can just keep throwing entry speed at the car and every time it finds its way through, completely unimpressed by your caution. With a strong engine and quick-firing gearbox, the Sub8 gets along a road at a barely believable pace.



‘Drive the Mégane just a few hundred metres and you’ll sense the quality of the engineering and the singularity of focus’

The Leon doesn’t traverse a road with complete class, however, because over ridges and potholes it crashes and rattles the structure where the Mégane, for instance, smothers the intrusion. It really is worth diving into the slightly clunky menu system to set the Individual driving mode parameters – choose the heavier steering because it adds some much needed directness to the loose, slack default setting and wind the dampers down from Cupra to Sport.

Even so, the Leon always majors on outright performance rather than delicacy of touch. It settles into its comfort zone just as you are beginning to stray out of yours, which some among our test team find fun and charming, while I think it speaks of a narrow and sometimes inaccessible operating window.

To back up my position I present to you the Mégane 275 Trophy, a car that all but matches the Leon for cross-country pace, that is more than happy to be spanked along but also feels special and enjoyable well back from the limit. Drive it just a few hundred metres and you’ll sense the quality of the engineering and the singularity of focus.

To deal with the few disappointments first, the 271bhp engine is much more clearly turbocharged than the VW Group unit – it needs

another 500rpm or so before the boost arrives and, similarly, it feels like it needs another 500rpm at the top end to give the engine more reach – and the blast furnace exhaust note gets wearisome, but otherwise all else is exemplary. The adjustable Öhlins dampers are a standout feature. The car is always very tautly controlled, but it rides bumps fluidly and it lands into compressions with such composure. Whereas the SEAT seems to deal with big compressions with just the last few millimetres of its damper travel, the Renault dissipates the energy throughout the entire stroke. The Öhlins are a £2000 option, although at £28,930, the Renault is the cheapest car here basic.

The Mégane’s steering is precise and very natural in the way it loads up. The limited-slip differential gives good traction, and grip on those optional Michelins is enormous, but there’s still an element of off-throttle adjustability built into the chassis. At speed there is a touch of nervousness in the chassis – dab the brakes in long corners and the car will wobble slightly – but that’s just a corollary of its underlying agility. In overall terms the Trophy is a masterclass of front-wheel-drive performance car engineering.

It’s one heck of a benchmark for the Civic to aspire to. I drop into its



Left: this is our first group test for the 275 Trophy, and its case here is strengthened by optional Öhlins dampers and Michelin Cup 2 tyres lifted from the even-more-hardcore Trophy-R

firmly stuffed seat and point it at exactly the same stretch of road. The Honda's engine is no better than the Renault's, for it needs to be spinning at more than 3000rpm before it offers any meaningful thrust – the BMW, VW and SEAT get going below 2000rpm – and throttle response is dull. In fact, floor the throttle and even in the mid range there's an appreciable delay before the power is delivered to the front wheels. With the red line set at 7500rpm there is more reach to this engine than most of the others, but it feels and sounds coarse up there, not willing and joyful.

Once the power does arrive the LSD distributes it cleanly and without too much corruption at the steering wheel. The brake pedal is firm and stopping power is good, which helps to build your confidence in the car. The grip levels are very strong, too, and although the Continental SportContact 6s lack the sheer bite of the Cup 2s, you do always feel as though the Civic will stick.

There's a lovely cohesiveness to the way the chassis responds without hesitation to steering inputs, rolling a little but changing direction keenly and precisely. But whereas the Mégane gets into a corner fluidly and calmly, the Civic does so in a slightly neurotic

way. At higher speeds there's so much agility in the chassis that you seem to be able to flick the steering wheel in the direction of a corner and return to centre, rather than holding the lock on through the bend. At low and medium speeds that super-agility feels like edginess, almost instability.

Although the brake pedal itself is very good, the spacing between it and the throttle pedal is so wide that blipping on downshifts requires a really deliberate and quite unnatural rotation of the ankle. Given that a slightly reshaped throttle pedal would solve the issue, that's quite a disappointing oversight.

The 'R' mode, meanwhile, ramps the dampers up so aggressively that it's basically unusable on British back-roads, but since the throttle response remains dull in that setting it's no great issue. Like the Mégane, the Civic deals with compressions very effectively, but it lacks the Renault's pliancy over bumps and ridges. Combined with its degree of edginess, that can make the Type R feel unsettled and short on composure on uneven surfaces.

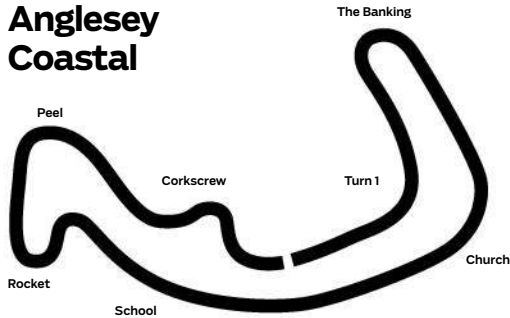
On smoother roads, though, the Civic is at its best, and in the manner of all great hot hatches it draws you into chasing it ever harder and harder down a road. You can adjust its balance by trail-braking into corners or by lifting sharply mid-turn, which makes it involving and playful. It is a great deal of fun, then, but its chassis isn't touched by genius in the way the Mégane's is.

Over the course of the test it becomes clear that the Type R is a peaks and troughs sort of car. In many ways it's very good indeed and at times you completely fall for the way it hauls itself down a road, but at other times it comes up short against the very accomplished opposition. Given that Honda invested so much time and effort into the way it performed around the Nürburgring, perhaps the Type R will win us all over at Anglesey Circuit.

On track

by RICHARD MEADEN

Anglesey Coastal



Direction: Clockwise

Distance: 1.55 miles

Location: Aberffraw, Anglesey, UK

GPS: 53.18833, -4.49639

T **THIS IS THE FIRST TIME WE'VE HAD THE** opportunity to pit the most potent hot hatches of the moment against the clock. It's an intriguing proposition, for not only are we desperate to discover how they compare against one another, but we'll also learn how they compare with some of the more exotic and expensive metal we've lapped. Ladies and gentlemen, place your bets...

We start with the more mainstream VW and BMW. For a car that feels so poised, balanced and within itself on the road, it's a surprise just how quickly you push through the Golf R's polish on a circuit. The tyres are the major issue – they just can't support the corner speed, direction changes and traction demands you make on track, so understeer is the order of the day. You never sense the four-wheel drive shifting the torque split. And because you're working beyond the engine's meaty mid-range it never feels that strong.

The BMW makes a slightly better fist of things, with an inherently more neutral balance and greater on-throttle adjustability thanks to its rear-wheel drive, but it's aloof and hard to read. The lack of a limited-slip diff means wheelspin flares and fades unpredictably. Like the Golf, its brake pedal goes soft and the tyres give up all too readily. Despite this, both post respectably rapid times for a pair of road-focused cars, but they're like fish out of water on track.

Next up is the Mégane. As you begin to attack, it immediately



'The Civic feels the most race car-like. It's terrific fun to go in search of those final few tenths'

feels an infinitely sharper, more urgent, more agile and more demanding car. This car is a true package: Pilot Cup 2 tyres, Öhlins dampers, mechanical limited-slip diff, Brembo brakes and a punchy engine combining to deliver a precise, exploitable, feelsome and enjoyable string of laps. Traction is strong, but needs managing out of the tightest corners, but the balance is neutral to understeery, so you can commit to the quickest turns without fear of a sting in the tail. The brakes are strong, but they do begin to wilt under extreme use, which suggests Renaultsport's big brake kit would be worthwhile for serious trackday goers. A far more convincing car on track, the Trophy simply doesn't give up until you've pushed hard enough to find its limits. A best of 1:19.6 is pretty special, just a few tenths shy of a BMW M4 here.

And so to the SEAT. I struggled to warm to the 280 on the road, but it's a far more likeable car on track. It's got terrific traction. You can really feel it trying to tighten its line and not push wide out of the tighter corners, and the spread of power and torque is more impressive than the Golf's. There's massive grip to lean on, with poise and balance, too, so not only do you have the luxury of confidently carrying big speed through the quickest corners, but you can also place it precisely. There's fractionally greater agility than the Mégane, so you can make fine adjustments to your line. It just feels like it has greater reserves of grip to draw from. The brakes are the best of the bunch so far – a consistently firm pedal delivering impressive stopping power into the scary-quick uphill braking zone at Rocket and the awkward downhill approach to the Corkscrew. The only weakness is the DSG transmission. Not because its shifts aren't super-quick, but because the shifters themselves don't have a positive enough feel. A large gear indicator would also be helpful. Still, there's no arguing with a best time of 1:19.1, which beats the Mégane by a full half-second, and matches our best time in an Aston Martin Vantage N430!

That's a tough benchmark for the Honda, but if any hot hatch stands a chance of doing so it's the Type R. Initial impressions are closer to those in the Renault than the SEAT, for this car has an urgency and sharpness that's always simmering in the background. Go for a time and it feels up for the fight, with plenty of front-end bite and brilliant brakes (with by far the best judged ABS of the quintet) supported by a superbly quick gearshift and an engine that loves to rev. Like the Mégane and Leon, you need to be disciplined to get the best time from the CTR. Push too aggressively on turn-in and you'll sail beyond the optimum grip zone, but there's more than enough feedback to dial yourself into the limits of the rubber and walk the line. Of the three track-honed cars in the test, the Civic feels the most race car-like. It's terrific fun to go in search of those final few tenths, to try and tease a fraction more speed as you steel yourself at the turn-in point for Church and to absolutely nail your braking into Rocket and Corkscrew.

So the Civic Type R is the most addictive and enjoyable at Anglesey Circuit, but it's not the fastest – the VBOX data revealing the Honda pips the Renault by a scant 0.1sec, but remains 0.4sec shy of the super-quick SEAT. So now we know.

Results

Leon Cupra 280 Sub8	1:19.1
Civic Type R	1:19.5
Mégane Trophy 275	1:19.6
M135i	1:20.4
Golf R	1:21.6

Left: Civic is a natural on track, as are the Mégane (right) and Leon (top right); the more road-biased M135i (above right) and Golf (left, background) feel far less at home



Conclusion

by DAN PROSSER



THE FINAL ORDER WAS DECIDED ON A judges' vote, and all four of us placed the BMW last. While it's fair to say the M135i is a more grown-up sort of hot hatch and not directly pitched at the likes of the Renaultsport Mégane, the Golf R's performance

shows that a more mature approach needn't extinguish a car's sense of fun. 'Funnily enough, I enjoyed the BMW a lot on the way home,' says Jethro. 'It's maybe the most enticing when you're at six or seven tenths because of that engine and the rear-wheel-drive balance. It's just a shame it starts to unravel when really pushed.'

In fourth position is, perhaps surprisingly, the Civic Type R. It isn't the result Honda will have hoped for, but the car's performance in this test was better than the outcome might suggest. It lacked the Mégane's dynamic polish, the engine was disappointing and we all took issue with the questionable taste of that extrovert styling, but we all had fun in it, too. 'I find the Honda completely fascinating,' comments Adam. 'Parts of it are great, others much less so. I have to say that during the afternoon I had one of the best drives I've had in a while, but across the moor earlier in the day it felt scrappy, reluctant, lacking in guts and wooden.'

The Leon Cupra 280 Sub8 comes home in third position. 'The Leon and the Golf were so close for me,' says Jethro, 'but in the context of this test the Leon gets my nod. On those mega roads and on track it just has more edge, more aggression. The quicker you go, the better it gets. The grip is just phenomenal and it uses all four tyres so evenly. The way SEAT has set the car up is just lovely.'

The runner-up spot goes to the Golf R, which we all agree is the car that combines B-road fun and everyday usability the most deftly. 'I really fell for the Golf,' says Dickie. 'Yes, it was a squealing pig on track, but I kind of like that if it means the R can be such a blindingly great road car.'

All four judges commented on how tightly stacked the Civic, Leon and Golf were in their final reckonings. But today, on these roads and this track, the outcome between those three cars is clear, and all of us are agreed on the winner. 'The Mégane 275 Trophy is just a class act,' says Jethro. 'It is getting on and in performance terms it's the slowest car here, but in every other way it's timeless. The damping is of such quality, the steering is really nice and at higher speeds it's just so exciting.'

Dickie, who runs this car as his daily driver on our Fast Fleet, was full of praise: 'It's no secret I love the Mégane. Having played about with the Öhlins dampers I've come to appreciate the range of its ability, and while it's not as simple as pressing a button on the dash, the way you can tailor the suspension to your precise needs is brilliantly effective – and geeky!'

'The Mégane is sublime,' adds Adam. 'There's more than a little predictability about saying that, and putting it in first place, too, but it's the one car here that oozes the kind of well-rounded but aching desirability that Porsche Motorsport cars always seem to possess. It's a polished product, clearly developed over a number of years, and by a team that "get" exactly what this magazine, and its readers, value.'

In the end, the Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy scores a unanimous victory. It truly is one of the great performance motoring icons, at this price point or any other. It leads the way for the modern hot hatch, which in recent years has become one of the most impressive and beguiling sectors in our little corner of the motoring world. This really is a golden age for the hot hatch.

'The Mégane is one of the great performance motoring icons, at this price point or any other'

The scores

	DP	RM	JB	AT	pts	pos.
Renault	1st	1st	1st	1st	20	1st
Volkswagen	2nd	2nd	3rd	2nd	15	2nd
SEAT	4th	4th	2nd	3rd	11	3rd
Honda	3rd	3rd	4th	4th	10	4th
BMW	5th	5th	5th	5th	4	5th

evo ratings

Renaultsport Mégane Trophy 275	★★★★★
Volkswagen Golf R	★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra 280 Sub8	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R	★★★★★
BMW M135i	★★★★★



TROPHY

by HENRY CATCHPOLE

PHOTOGRAPHY by
DREW GIBSON

MEET FERRARI'S MR XX

Enrico Galliera is the man tasked with presenting a picture-perfect image of Ferrari to the public and orchestrating the human element of Maranello's Corse Clienti programme. evo finds out how he decides who gets to buy an FXX K



Even at the bastion of access that is the Goodwood Festival of Speed, Ferrari is keeping people slightly at arm's length. Lord March's Sussex house party is a place where you can frequently find yourself mingling with your heroes. Whether it's rubbing shoulders with Hannu Mikkola or skinning your shins on any number of iconic splitters, you feel incredibly close to – if not actually a part of – the action.

The velvet rope count has inevitably increased a little over the 22 years the event has been going, but they are still a pretty rare sight. If you want to get close enough to feel the heat emanating from a recently worked brake, you can. If you want to do your hearing some euphoric damage nuzzling between the exhausts of a revving race V8 you can generally find a way to do that too, such is the proximity of the machinery.

Wander into the newly relocated Supercar Paddock and you'll find people flocking to press a nose against the side window of a Koenigsegg or even sit in a Cayman GT4. There is a constant crowd around a new Ferrari 488 GTB, too. But next to that are a handful of Ferraris from which the public is kept back at a respectful distance. With the XX cars it's very much a case of 'look but don't touch'.

I'm currently standing in the shade on the expensive and exclusive side of the rope. I look rather out of place as I seem to be the only one not wearing some sort of red official Ferrari kit. Then there is a parting of the masses and another man, also unadorned by any prancing horse uniform, joins me inside the ropes. He is immaculately turned out in a lightweight navy blue suit, the quality of which is matched in the tie, shirt and particularly the shoes. The only giveaway that he is with Ferrari is the Hublot watch.

This is Enrico Galliera, senior vice president, commercial and marketing director for the world's most famous car brand. He is also the man in charge of Corse Clienti (or 'client racing') and therefore the XX programme – he is Mr XX.

Approaching 50 but looking rather younger, he is all smiles and enthusiasm as he enters the red-floored sanctum and introductions are made. His English is extremely good and has that fantastic Italian musicality to the way he pronounces words and constructs sentences. Like Valentino Rossi but more fluent. Although he looks as though he could have been with Ferrari all his life, rising up through the ranks having learnt at Luca's knee, he has in fact only been with the company since 2010. Instead, after leaving university in Parma in 1989, just





RIDING IN THE FERRARI FXX K

by HUNTER SKIPWORTH

A few key moments at **evo** have completely redefined my concept of strong acceleration: launch control in a 911 Turbo S springs to mind, so too the savagery of a Ferrari 458 Speciale.

But nothing could prepare me for how the FXX K's 1036bhp feels off the line at Goodwood. All that power is generated almost instantly thanks to the car's complex hybrid powertrain, giving a near limitless feeling of acceleration, as if the Ferrari could just keep pulling at the same rate, running out of gears before it ever lets up accelerating.

Then there's the noise, which is utterly barbaric, screaming through the bare carbonfibre cabin with only your helmet to protect your ears. And what a cabin. The beautiful race seats wrap around you, leaving you with little choice but to stare forwards out of the car's LMPI-like windscreen.

In your peripheral vision you can make out the blinking green light for the KERS system, letting you know all is safe and sound

'If you look at our performances in the road business and in racing, there is not a strict correlation'

Left: Galliera at the carbonfibre-clad wheel of the XX programme's latest creation – the LaFerrari-based FXX K

after Enzo's death a year earlier, he joined an institution arguably even more Italian than Ferrari: the Barilla pasta company, where he stayed for 20 years. When I ask him if he has always liked cars there is no doubting the answer: 'Yes, yes! I'm Italian,' he says, as though it is an obvious prerequisite of his nationality. 'I am 50 years old, so I was young at the age of Niki Lauda driving Ferrari.'

Ferrari has famously always shunned advertising and instead used racing for its marketing. I ask if the recent slump in the F1 team's fortunes has affected sales at all.

'Frankly speaking, if you look at our performances in the road business and the performances in the racing there is not a strict correlation,' says Galliera. 'This is probably because the image the company was able to build in the last 20 years is so strong that it's not connected in the short term to the results in racing.'

Something that no doubt also helps Ferrari is its strict assertion that supply should never outstrip demand. Galliera has suggested in the past that annual sales would never exceed 7000 cars a year, and although that barrier has been breached, there is nonetheless certainly no sense that the floodgates have opened; there are still far more potential customers than there are cars. This leaves Ferrari, and Galliera as head of sales, in a very interesting position. And the XX programme is like a fascinating microcosm of the larger business.

There will be 40 LaFerrari-based FXX K track cars once



and that full power is at your disposal.

We're yet to get behind the wheel of the FXX K, but this brief blast up past Lord March's impressive residence evidences nothing to suggest that it isn't the fastest, most technologically advanced Ferrari car ever to be offered to the (admittedly meticulously vetted) public. You'll not be too surprised to hear that it feels almost insanely fast – on a level above and beyond what I had expected. Owners can consider themselves incredibly lucky indeed.



they are all produced, up from 30 each of the Enzo-based FXX and the later 599XX. It seems incredible really. When the FXX was announced in 2005, plenty scoffed at the idea of paying £1million for a car that the owners couldn't race and couldn't drive on the road. Surely it was a folly? If not for Ferrari, then certainly for the owners. But it seems that a mixture of exclusivity and what are in fact incredibly cool cars is a very heady commercial cocktail. Entry to the FXX K club costs 2.5million euros (c£1.8million).

'We have now delivered 11 FXX K to final customers,' says Galliera, 'and the first five, they came to Mugello three weeks ago for the first day of driving. I joined them on Friday after their first session in the morning and it was like meeting young kids! Smiley...'

I ask what sort of background these customers have.

'They have to be long-lasting clients,' explains Galliera. 'So money is not enough, and they have to be in a way already a part of the programme – XX programme or Corse Clienti programme – so that we know that they will not buy the car just to collect it.'

'We want this car to be on the track. Within the price we offer them participation in the programme for two years, so if they want, everything is paid in order to participate. They can come to seven events all around the world. Then if they want we can organise something for them; renting a track, bring in the car. All the cars, all the FXX that we sell are kept in our factory, so we store for the customer.'

This is a slight surprise because I thought Ferrari had denied this, so I ask if the owners can take them home.

'I would say that we prefer them to remain in our factory, then after a while if they want to keep it outside they can do it. But most of the customers leave the car over there [at Maranello] because just after we test drive we bring it back, we check everything, we keep it perfect and we ship it with our mechanics to the event.'

It still seems rather restrictive, but equally it's not hard to see why some would want to join.

'When we deliver this car, clients come to Fiorano so we can make the delivery ceremony like for any other Ferrari, but then we have our test driver teach them how to drive and we have the shakedown on Fiorano. It's something

that they really love. In the middle of Fiorano is the old house of Enzo Ferrari, where they can sleep. It has been refurbished as a guest house so it's really an experience. If you love cars it's the maximum you can dream.

'This limited number of people become like members of an elite club. They become friends, they enjoy driving together without racing. They meet in Hockenheim or in Brands Hatch or wherever and they spend three days driving together and enjoying also the rest of the day and the evening. So, now we are experiencing that there are a lot of people that want to become part of this group of people because they have fun.'

'The FXX K is sold out, so the way to enter now is to try to buy one of the 599XX, because many of the guys that are buying FXX K, they also own a 599XX. So if one customer is interested, we try to put them in contact to see if another customer is willing to sell. Normally they're not so keen, but sometimes it happens because they cannot drive two cars. So that's the way to enter the programme. It's like when you want to buy a new Ferrari and normally you enter via a pre-owned one. It's more or less the same. You enter, you become part of the family, you can test and then if you like you try to enter in the limited numbers for the new one. That's the way it works, basically.'

It strikes me that that the XX programme should perhaps adopt the motto of Brooklands: the right crowd and no crowding. I ask if many of the XX customers race.

'Errr, not many, I think,' says Galliera. 'Quite a few run in GT3 with our 458. I would say four or five of them are also having some races [elsewhere].'

It seems fair to say that most don't race and purely do it as a sort of ultimate trackday experience without the pressure of competition (and potentially looking rather slow). However, Ferrari is keen to point out that the cars are like a proving ground for future technology.

'The 599XX was the starting point for the 599 GTO,' says Galliera. 'Many of the solutions went on that car. So it's really a laboratory.'

I'm intrigued as to how critical the owners are, imagining that one cross word could see them blackballed from the club.

'Most of them are very critical. So we have some of them that like to drive, like to enjoy and they have fun. Then we have others that are almost like official drivers. They are really as fast as our official drivers and so their comments are very, very to the point, which is interesting. So we always listen.'

'And of course, if they want to go one step further they could always buy an old F1 car. We don't have many available now, so what we do again, we are in contact with the customer that owns an F1 car and if we receive a specific request, say, for a 2007 car, we know where it is. We get in contact with the client, we check if he wants to sell it and if he does we put him in contact with the customer. So we try to keep control of the cars because we know they have to be managed properly.'

As I watch him having his photo taken it strikes me that Galliera is a consummate professional, a marketing man par excellence. Many of the answers he has given have steered a shrewd and politically canny course that sometimes doesn't quite answer my original question but

‘Some of our XX drivers are as fast as our official drivers and their comments are very, very to the point. So we always listen’



Above: the 2009 599XX laid the foundations for the road-legal 599 GTO.
Below: the FXX arrived four years earlier and was an ultra-lightweight Enzo with 788bhp



always paints Ferrari in a positive light. I get the feeling that he is always preciously, even slightly anxiously, guarding Ferrari's image in the same way that the ropes are there to discreetly keep grubby public fingerprints from appearing on the paintwork of the XX cars. Nothing must besmirch the ideal.

As he says, there is a special atmosphere about Ferrari. It goes beyond the cars; something intangible that you can feel not only when you visit Maranello but also when you see the crowds at events such as this. Whether those people are devoted, reverential or just slightly jealous, there is a magnetism about Ferrari that draws them in like moths round a lamp.

But I wonder what it must be like to work for a company that has that effect, to live with it. The impression I get is that it's as though Il Commendatore, Enzo himself, is still watching over them all and no one wants to upset him for fear of the wrath that would ensue.

'Does it feel like a lot of pressure working for Ferrari?' I ask Galliera, almost quietly, just before he leaves. He pauses for a few moments and then gives the straightest answer possible.

'Yes.'

He pauses again and there's a real sincerity in his voice. 'Particularly because I am Italian. For Italians you have your mama... and you have Ferrari.'

We shake hands and he is ushered away to the far side of the velvet ropes. ☒

OTHER X-RATED PROGRAMMES

by ANTONY INGRAM



McLaren P1 GTR

For some McLaren customers, as for their Ferrari counterparts, the firm's fastest-ever hypercar isn't quite enough. The GTR answers that demand with 986bhp (up from 903bhp). You can take your GTR home, though despite tractability that should match the P1 road car, it's a vehicle neither intended nor legal for the road.



Aston Martin Vulcan

Just 24 Vulcans will be made, each a tribute to the firm's long history at the Le Mans 24 Hours. At 200mph it produces 1300kg of downforce, while the dramatically styled swoops of carbonfibre envelop an 800bhp, 7-litre V12 and six-speed Xtrac sequential transmission. Racing slicks expose the Vulcan's track-only intentions.



Pagani Zonda R

With 739bhp the 2009 Zonda R now seems undernourished alongside the latest track-only specials. Its styling, however, is anything but feeble. Long-tailed and exquisitely detailed inside and out, it's also light, the all-carbonfibre construction tipping the scales at 1104kg. The subsequent Zonda 760RS made the R's lunacy road-legal – with even more power.



Lotus Type 125

'All the thrills of an F1 car, minus the pain' is how Lotus pitched the Type 125. Revealed in 2010, it packs a Cosworth 3.8-litre V8 under its rear cowl. Its 11,000rpm limit is less frenetic than a contemporary F1 car's, but 640bhp and a 590kg dry weight mean over 1000bhp/ton.

Forget the questionable historical references, there's only one thing we want to know about Jaguar's Project 7: just how involving is the most potent F-type money can buy, and is it good enough for the class of 2015?

P R O J E

by JETHRO BOVINGDON



C T I L E





I'M ASSUMING YOU'VE ALL HEARD OF Jaguar Land Rover's relatively new Special Vehicle Operations – or 'SVO' – division? Not least because one of *evo*'s founders, a certain Harry Metcalfe, now acts as a consultant for SVO. But I bet you don't know the scale of this 'skunkworks' outfit. You see, it's not some after-hours club made up of half a dozen engineers cramming V8s into everything they can find. In fact it's part of another, larger group, confusingly called Special Operations, which consists of a 500-strong team headed up by former chief technical officer of Williams Advanced Engineering, Paul Newsome.

Special Ops has a number of subdivisions, of which Heritage and SVO are the most exciting. The former supplies parts, servicing and restoration for older models, while SVO is set to be a kind of AMG-meets-Mulliner, offering high performance and ultra luxury. So far SVO's work has delivered the Range Rover Sport SVR (this isn't confusing at all, is it?) and the Range Rover SV Autobiography (still there?), and there are rumours of an extreme off-road sub-brand called 'SVX' in the near future.

If all this sounds rather complicated for us simple folk used to a clear proposition like BMW's M division, then just think of SVO as the people who take JLR products and make them faster, sexier and more extreme, or simply drown them in luxurious fittings. Oh, one more thing. They'll also do limited-run models that will be the ultimate expression of SVO's vision. Or should that be 'visions'? Anyway, this is finally where the F-type Project 7 comes in. *Phew*. Just 250 will be produced, costing £135,000 apiece, and it's the first halo product to demonstrate the skills and resources of SVO in one bespoke package. And here it is, in the cool, crisp morning air of Pamplona in northern Spain.

Now, in theory the idea of chucking a few D-type styling references at an F-type, giving it a name to celebrate Jaguar's distant seven Le Mans victories, slapping some 'evocative' stripes on it and massaging a few extra horsepower from its existing powertrain sounds, well, a bit cringey. Surely Jaguar is past all the 'Hey look, we used to build the E-type and D-type, y'know? And don't forget Stirling Moss drove for us. Disc brakes! Yep, we did that.' Right? Seems not... But somehow today it's not so bad. Jaguar is building proper cars that are genuinely competitive, exciting and desirable, so the celebration of the past isn't a crutch for an ailing range any more. Rather it feels like a deserved pride in past glories, and who can blame them for sprinkling a bit of racing fairy dust on the F-type? Of course, a GT3 race programme might do an even more credible job of that...

Okay, so I still have a few reservations, but despite myself I can't help thinking that the Project 7 looks pretty special. The faux D-type stuff might not be to everyone's taste but there's certainly a drama and aggression to this car over and above a standard F-type. Crucially, the Project 7 is much more than just a cosmetic makeover, too. With a unique drivetrain calibration, new suspension components and revised spring and damper settings, plus a lighter kerb weight, it promises a considerably sharper, more aggressive, locked-down driving experience. Of course, the F-type R Convertible is a hoot, but there are times when you do crave more precision, less wheelspin and greater feedback. The Project 7 should address all of those issues.

The first few miles roll quietly under the Project 7's wheels and it all feels very, very familiar. The lightweight seats pinch a bit tighter, there's more swirling air whipping around thanks to the cut-down windscreen, and the V8 crackles, booms and roars more vehemently than ever, but the fluid ride isn't edgier at all, the steering is super-direct but still lacks gritty feedback, and I

Above: driver's roll-over hoop is elegantly integrated into the D-type-inspired 'aero haunch'. **Opposite page:** lightweight Sabelt bucket is mounted 3cm lower than the driver's seat in the regular F-type





**'THE PROJECT 7
IS AN EXUBERANT
THING TO DRIVE
QUICKLY, ALWAYS
TEETERING ON
THE EDGE OF
OVERSTEER'**



**'THE FRONT END IS SO SHARP THAT IT'S
ACTUALLY QUITE HARD TO CARVE CLEANLY
AROUND SWEEPERS'**



Top and left: lack of roof (there's a basic one for emergency use), contributes to an 80kg weight saving compared with the F-type R Convertible. Glacier White is one of five colour options; the others are Ultra Blue, Ultimate Black, Caldera Red and, of course, British Racing Green. **Above:** carbon-ceramic brakes are standard

have to admit I'm a bit taken aback that it doesn't feel completely different. The front spring rate is up 80 per cent, there are unique suspension knuckles to create 1.5 degrees of negative camber instead of regular F-type's 0.5 degrees, and there are also new and much more uncompromising Continental ContiForceContact tyres... So where's the added focus and aggression?

One thing that isn't in doubt is that the Project 7 is a seriously rapid car. The drivetrain is similar to the F-type R's, but with more boost pressure the supercharged 5-litre V8 is good for 567bhp at 6500rpm (up 25bhp) and 501lb ft from 2500 to 5500rpm (the same peak figure, but spread over a wider range). That makes the Project 7 the most powerful road-going Jaguar ever and it's claimed to be good for 186mph and 0-62mph in 3.9 seconds. It's also riotously noisy, reporting sharp explosions on the overrun and emitting a loud crack every time the eight-speed 'Quickshift' ZF automatic gearbox delivers a punchy upshift. The 'box has been reprogrammed to be faster and more aggressive, and although it still has impeccable manners, for the most part there's a definite edge of physicality to the shift quality.

To find a match in the chassis for that new edge to the drivetrain you need to select Dynamic mode, where the Project 7 takes a new strategy. Throttle mapping, damping, steering weight and ESC settings are all still affected, but now the distinction between the surprisingly laid-back Normal mode and Dynamic is wider. Newsome says the Project 7 actually rides with more compliance than the F-type in its default setting but then ramps-up body control and accuracy in Dynamic mode much more aggressively. On smooth Spanish roads the difference isn't night and day, but you do sense a new tension in Dynamic.

We're heading to the Navarra circuit and the roads en route are typically empty. They sweep in broad strokes for miles before bunching up and winding along a valley and then up into the hills. On the faster stretches the Project 7 starts to assert its new character. The front end is so sharp that it's actually quite hard to carve cleanly around gentle sweepers in one perfect arc, but once you acclimatise to its responsiveness there's clearly more mid-corner grip to lean against and a greater sense of the tyres really biting the road. The turn-in agility also goes some way to hiding the Project 7's mass, but at a claimed 1585kg it's still a chunky sports car.

As the road bunches up, that added agility and grip crystallises into something tangibly different. The Project 7 gets into corners a little more accurately, but more noticeable is that the tyres hang on for longer instead of falling into oversteer as soon as you touch the throttle. Part of this is because the throttle is more progressive, but there's undoubtedly more stability and traction, too. That doesn't mean that the car has sacrificed adjustability in the name of grip, though. In fact, you can steer the car more accurately with throttle inputs now, not just bonfiring the tyres but gently tweaking its line. With the F-type R you tend to jump way over the limit almost by accident, but the Project 7 allows you to define that limit and hover close to it more consistently. Unless you're a professional drifter it's a more satisfying and more realistic way to enjoy a road car.

Even so, the DNA of the F-type is clear and the Project 7 is still an exuberant thing to drive quickly, always teetering on the edge

of oversteer and the tyres only ever another millimetre of throttle away from melting into wheelspin. There's just not the mechanical grip of, say, a Mercedes-AMG GT S, nor quite the control and sense that the car really wants to carry speed and pick apart the road ahead. It's a big, all-enveloping experience that bombards you with noise and keeps you busy behind the wheel, but I arrive at Navarra still to be convinced that the Project 7 goes far enough to really set it apart from the F-type R and match the breathless speed and accuracy of the AMG or creamy poise of an Aston V12 Vantage S.

The circuit layout we're using today starts with a fearsomely fast gentle right then flows into a much tighter right-hand complex that forces you to trail-brake. The Project 7 tackles it with assurance, blending into the fast turn with real stability in fifth and then allowing you to really get on the brakes and turn ever harder right as the next, third-gear turn approaches. The rear tyres do eventually

slip wide as the car is slowing and turning, but they don't snap into terminal oversteer. With a calm correction it's possible to still hit the apex and then rocket out onto the following straight.

SVO are keen to talk about the Project 7's aero efficiency and it's easy to imagine the new front splitter, rear venturi tunnel and fixed rear spoiler are helping here. Drag is slightly lower than on a regular F-type Convertible with the roof stowed, but now there's some real downforce, too. This isn't a GT3 RS so I'm not going to pretend I can feel it squeezing into the tarmac through fast turns, but the Project 7 does deliver good high-speed stability and breeds confidence. The rest of the track is slower and tighter, and although the carbon-ceramics offer superb feel and no discernible fade in our five-lap stints, the car's weight does start to tell.

Into the tightest corners the front tyres start to push wide and keeping exit oversteer to the neat-and-fast variety is very difficult indeed. Sticky as those tyres might be, the sheer enormity of the torque available always seems to defeat traction. SVO has made the rear of the car softer in relation to the front to keep the inside rear wheel on the ground and driving

hard, but the electronically controlled limited-slip differential still struggles to turn torque into forward motion. And once the tyres are hot, some of the tension dissipates from the chassis and you're left with a car that's happy oversteering like mad but can't replicate the sheer excitement of the best cars at this price.

In the end, the Project 7 presents something of a conundrum. I won't pretend I didn't enjoy the sheer exuberance of the experience, the noise, performance and supreme adjustability. And I wasn't unrealistically expecting a searingly accurate GT3-humbling road and track car. But somehow it just didn't quite give the bite and clarity of feedback I'd hoped to feel. It takes the F-type experience to a new level and I suspect the edge I'd hoped for might be more evident on ragged UK roads, but here it just doesn't quite deliver the substance to fully back up the style. Of course, the Project 7 is sold out and so it doesn't need to 'compete' with, say, the 911 Turbo Cabriolet, but that limited build was an opportunity to unleash a new sort of F-type rather than polish its already fine attributes – to channel the D-type properly with a raw, exciting car that makes compromises without apology in order to deliver something unique. The Project 7 is a whole lot of fun, but it isn't quite that car. ❏

JAGUAR F-TYPE PROJECT 7

Engine V8, 5000cc, supercharged
CO2 n/a

Power 567bhp @ 6500rpm

Torque 501lb ft @ 2500-5500rpm

Transmission Eight-speed automatic gearbox, rear-wheel drive, e-diff

Front suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, adaptive dampers, ARB

Rear suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, adaptive dampers, ARB

Brakes Carbon-ceramic discs, 398mm front, 380mm rear, ABS, EBD

Wheels 20in front and rear

Tyres 255/35 ZR20 front, 295/30 ZR20 rear

Weight 1585kg

Power-to-weight 363bhp/ton

0-62mph 3.9sec (claimed)

Top speed 186mph (limited)

Basic price £135,000

EVO rating ★★★★★



THE

Looking for an alternative to Jaguar's Project 7? The Aston Martin V12 Vantage S Roadster and Ferrari California T both fit the same drop-top GT bill. But with their approaches a generation apart, which offers more substance to match the style?



GENERATION

by STUART GALLAGHER

PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH



GAME

IF YOU WEREN'T ONE OF THE LUCKY 250

asked to hand over £135,000 to Jaguar in return for a Project 7, worry not. Both Aston Martin and Ferrari will help fulfil your desire for something exotic and open-roofed with a minimum of 550bhp and rear-wheel drive. And if you get *really* carried away with the options list, you could arrive at a car that's as unique as Jaguar's SVO-developed F-type.

Ferrari's original California struggled to find favour at *evo* when it arrived in 2008. The naturally aspirated V8 was characterful and punchy, but it was wrapped up in a shell that was all a bit soft and uninvolved for our liking. The bodywork wasn't the most striking to have exited through the famous Maranello gates, either, and no matter the number of Ferrari badges and *Cavallini Rampante* thrown at the interior, it was a little too far removed from the rest of the Ferrari range for our liking.

In 2014 Ferrari delivered the Mk2 California with an all-new turbocharged V8, an optimised seven-speed gearbox with a torque-limiting function, a new steering box (resulting in a rack that's 10 per cent quicker), stiffer springs and new magnetorheological damping. The new car also reduced drag while focusing on improved airflow and increased engine and brake cooling. Finally, the interior underwent a makeover. The California 'T' is still not the prettiest Ferrari, and it's certainly not a classic design, but this latest incarnation of the company's four-seat open-top has a stronger visual appeal and a closer link to the rest of the range than its predecessor did.

Then again, with Aston Martin's V12 Vantage S Roadster, the Cali T has a fight on its hands in the aesthetics stakes. It may boast a familiar design (read 'old'), but the Aston is still a neck-snapper when it rumbles by. Perhaps its familiarity is the cause for the generally enthusiastic response it generates when people hear its V12, or maybe it's the association with an expensively attired civil servant who has a licence to kill. Perhaps both. Either way, the Roadster is delightful to look at, even if its fabric roof isn't as slick as the Ferrari's folding metal one.

While age has been kind to the Aston's exterior, its interior is looking past its best. The airbagged steering wheel is unnecessarily large by today's standards, the tiny buttons on the centre-stack are frustratingly small and the satnav is laugh-out-loud awful. 'Old-school charm' is the politest way of describing the Aston's cabin. The California's cockpit is more up-to-date in terms of design and functionality, but the plastics and overall quality are beneath those of the Brit and not what you'd expect of a £154,490 car. Or in the case of our specced-up test car, £200,000.

Is there a better sound than the churn of a starter motor as it cranks 12 cylinders and the best part of six litres into life? Perhaps only when they all fire and



settle into the smoothest of tickovers. Cubic inches and cylinder count: nothing comes close. There's very little to criticise the Aston's V12 for, and while it may have been around for some time it's still one of the finest motors in production. And it's brutally strong. At 1000rpm it is already delivering 376lb ft of torque, the remaining 81lb ft arriving by 5500rpm. Before then the revs will have picked up cleanly and swiftly, and the inherent muscle of the V12 will have hauled you to the vanishing point at serious speed. Yet, as the revs reach their limit and all 565bhp has been delivered, you do wish the tacho needle had another thousand rpm to run, because just as the engine hits its sweet-spot you need a higher gear, which means interacting with the seven-speed automated manual gearbox...

In today's company the Aston's 'box feels from a past generation. The upshifts are painfully slow in auto mode and if you use the paddles the only way to execute a smooth shift is to lift out of the throttle, pull the paddle to select the required gear and wait to get back on the power once the gear's decided that it's time to slot home. It's all a bit slow and cumbersome and highlights just how far the latest units, such as ZF's eight-speed piece, have come in a relatively short space of time. And, of course, there's none

of the control and tactile involvement a manual offers. It's a crying shame that the ZF eight-speeder doesn't fit and the six-speed manual isn't offered, because the transmission is the biggest blot in the Aston's copybook.

The Brit's chassis is nicely balanced and offers reassuring levels of control that allow you to push to the car's limits. It's all very fluid through bends, the dampers working as one as the weight transfers to the outer corner in one flowing movement. The rear always feels settled and the steering stays locked on line once you've committed. It may be the old stager here, but the V12 Vantage S Roadster still puts in an encouraging performance.

The Aston is a very natural car to drive quickly, despite responding best to an old-school approach of slow in, fast out. The steering is both nicely weighted and full of detail, and when you do take the car by the scruff it engages with you wholeheartedly. There's very little body roll and only when you go to peak over the chassis' edge do you begin to reach its limit. On poorly surfaced roads the rear tyres can fight for traction if you're too greedy with the throttle, and the chassis is not immune to being knocked from your chosen line, but on the right road the Vantage S Roadster is a delight.

'The Ferrari's V8 is up there with the very best of its kind, with razor-sharp throttle response and seemingly never-ending torque'

Left: Ferrari differentiated the California T from its predecessor with turbochargers and a noticeably tighter design. **Below:** Vantage S Roadster's 565bhp V12 is a dinosaur but still holds almost limitless appeal to evo-minded drivers



ASTON MARTIN V12 VANTAGE S

Engine V12, 5935cc
CO2 343g/km
Power 565bhp @ 6750rpm
Torque 457lb ft @ 5500rpm
Transmission Seven-speed automated manual gearbox, rear-wheel drive, LSD
Front suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, adaptive dampers
Brakes Carbon-ceramic discs, 398mm front, 360mm rear, ABS, EBD
Wheels 9 x 19in front, 11 x 19in rear
Tyres 255/35 ZR19 front, 295/30 ZR19 rear
Weight 1745kg
Power-to-weight 329bhp/ton
0-62mph 4.1sec (claimed)
Top speed 201mph (claimed)
Basic price £147,000

evo rating: ★★★★★

FERRARI CALIFORNIA T

Engine V8, 3855cc, twin-turbo
CO2 273g/km
Power 552bhp @ 7500rpm
Torque 557lb ft @ 4750rpm
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, 390mm front, 360mm rear, ABS, EBD
Wheels 20in front and rear (option)
Tyres 245/35 ZR20 front, 285/35 ZR20 rear (option)
Weight 1729kg
Power-to-weight 324bhp/ton
0-62mph 3.6sec (claimed)
Top speed 196mph (claimed)
Basic price £154,490

evo rating: ★★★★★

This means the newer, fresher, lighter (by 16kg) Ferrari has a tough challenge laid out for it. Yet it's a challenge you consider the California T to be up to the moment you experience its twin-turbocharged V8. This engine is up there with the very best of its kind, with razor-sharp throttle response and seemingly never-ending thrust. The lower torque limit in the first six gears allows you to use full throttle whenever suitable, which only adds to the sensation of sustained acceleration. However, for a V8 it lacks the low-down shove you might expect, and considering it has the potential to deliver 557lb ft of torque, this comes as a bit of a surprise. Explained in some part by the engine's torque-limiting technology, it feels as if Ferrari has chased top-end power at the cost of low-down driveability.

Still, the eight-speed dual-clutch gearbox is a revelation after the Aston. Its shifts are quicker (although considering an iceberg drifts faster than the Aston shifts gear, this is no great surprise), they engage more cleanly and you never find yourself in the wrong gear for the situation. All told, it's a masterful powertrain.

The Ferrari's chassis is sharp, too, masking

its bulk. At no point do you feel you're trying to wrestle with the mass of a metal folding roof and associated electrical motors hung high out back. The steering is also much quicker than the Aston's, but this isn't necessarily a good thing. The Cali turns in crisply and cleanly and oozes precision, but the speed of the rack doesn't suit the nature of the car. You find yourself applying too much lock as you turn in, then having to correct at the point when you really want to be nailed on line.

Where the Ferrari starts to lose ground over the Aston is when the road throws up more of a challenge. At a steady pace the Cali T can hold its own, but when the ante increases it begins to run out of ideas. If you need to adjust your line, or you hit a compression or ridge mid-corner, the composure evaporates and the California becomes a bit ragged, the control gone and the tyres too easily overworked. And no, not in a good way. It can all get a bit unruly above seven-tenths.

On a short back-to-back drive the Ferrari would win the majority of people over – in most cases because of its far superior gearbox. But the Aston is more convincing in more areas, more of the time. It's our choice between the two. ☑

Porsche and Ferrari: two names inextricably linked with the most famous motor race on earth. For 2015, evo plotted a historical course to the Le Mans 24 Hours in the road-going siblings of the cars that do battle at the Circuit de la Sarthe

ROAD TRIP

to

LE MANS

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

in association with







Right: our wheels for the run to the Circuit de la Sarthe: 597bhp 458 Speciale and 468bhp 911 GT3. **Below:** interesting metal on the way down. **Above:** the Le Mans diet



PART 1: THE CARS

by DAN PROSSER

As the wide, low and insectile LMP1 cars fight for outright victory at Le Mans, it can sometimes be easy to forget the connection between these machines and the performance cars that we drive on the road. But the likes of the Audi R18 e-tron quattro, Porsche 919 Hybrid and their predecessors act as rolling test-beds for all kinds of technology that we can benefit from. ABS, traction control systems, fuel management, twin-clutch gearboxes, tyre compounds – all are, or were, developed and tested to some degree on the Circuit de la Sarthe.

The cars we're guiding across northern France to the 2015 race – the Porsche 911 GT3 and Ferrari 458 Speciale – rank amongst the ultimate road-going models to benefit from such race-bred tech. The PDK gearbox in the GT3, for example, can trace its bloodline back to the PDK transmission that appeared on a Porsche 962 at Le Mans way back in 1988. Both



the road cars, meanwhile, wear Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres. Direct descendents from the company's racing activities at Le Mans, they feature a twin-compound construction – the outer section made from a 'high molecular chain' elastomer to maximise grip in corners, the inner section using a more rigid elastomer that promises more precise steering.

Of course, you don't need a supercar to use Cup 2 tyres, or to experience a dual-clutch gearbox, but there's another reason why we chose this particular pairing: the 911 GT3 and 458 Speciale are donor cars for the 911 RSR and 458 Italia GTE that compete in the 'Grand Touring Endurance' (GTE) category at the Le Mans 24 Hours, continuing a generations-old rivalry between the two marques.

The appeal of the GTE class is simple, if a little fanciful: drive the 260 miles across France to Le Mans in your stripped-out sports car, cheer on its racing cousins for 24 hours, then drive home again. But for the profoundly disappointing fact that these cars are very much borrowed, that's just what we're doing this weekend.

With the Speciale's almost unbearably serrated exhaust bark pinging off the GT3's upright windscreen an hour or so from Le Mans, it occurs to me just how much these two road racers have in common. Their naturally aspirated engines both rev to 9000rpm, crashing over the final 1000 revs with such force and intensity that you fight the urge to shift up early. Those shifts bang in as quickly as you can flex the fingers on your right hand in both cars. Furthermore, both have face-bending carbon-ceramic brakes and chuck out unnecessary luxuries to save weight. Even more significantly for this magazine, however, is that both have been crowned *evo* Car of the Year winners. They'll rank alongside the all-time performance car greats for generations.

Trading the 911's upright bucket seat for the 458's firmly stuffed sports seat, it's clear that there are also significant differences between these cars. Whereas the Porsche's steering returns a very calm, almost languid rate of response at the front axle, the Ferrari's helm is electrifying in the way it adjusts the car's

trajectory. It's tricky to arrive at a preference between the two, but after a few miles in each car you soon reach the slightly paradoxical conclusion that both systems are near-perfect.

While the GT3 retains some semblance of day-to-day usability, the Speciale clearly sets out its stall as a high days and holidays machine. Not for the screaming Ferrari the needless distraction of a stereo or satellite navigation – on the final dash towards Le Mans, this 'Giallo Modena' 458 feels all the more dramatic for it.

But both cars are nothing less than spectacular to drive. As we eventually pull up to the circuit entrance, drawing open mouths and longing stares from onlookers, it dawns on me that I'll probably never travel to Le Mans in a more enthralling brace of cars.

In forthcoming weeks both cars will be superseded – the GT3 by an even more focused GT3 RS and the Speciale by the blown 488 GTB. This round is probably best judged as a dead heat, but Porsche and Ferrari will continue their most romantic of rivalries for years to come, both on the road and at Le Mans.



PART 2: THE JOURNEY

by HUNTER SKIPWORTH

There aren't many cars I can think of that would cause more of a disturbance than a Ferrari 458 Speciale during its cold-start warm-up procedure. Luckily, I don't like my neighbours, so the pain of a 4.30am start for our journey to Le Mans is offset with the delightful bark of that 4.5-litre V8 beating the dawn chorus at its own game. And annoying those killjoys in Flat 2a.

Photographer Aston Parrott and I fill every spare area of space in the Ferrari with the usual accoutrements for a weekend away in a field: squishy overnight bags, wallets, sunglasses, driving licences. Unfortunately Aston didn't get the 'pack light' memo and will be cuddling his camera bag for the next 360 miles.

The sun is barely up when we arrive at Folkestone to meet road test editor Dan Prosser in the GT3. And we're not the only ones making an early start – the Le Mans road-trippers are gathering. The M20 en route was neatly peppered with a fine selection of automotive iconology mixing it with liveried caravans. Cameraphone-wielding passengers didn't know which way to focus. This already feels a special journey and we haven't left the UK yet.

An hour later, more than £350,000-worth of supercars safely unloaded from the Chunnel, fuel tanks brimmed with 98-octane and cockpits topped-up with Haribo, we turn south-west out of Calais and head towards Rouen. If there wasn't a grid of some of the fastest race cars in the world waiting for us we'd have hugged the coast of northern France and enjoyed the sweeping route nationales and sleepy villages. But we've a plan, kind of, and it means getting to Rouen tout suite.

Endless miles on an autoroute provide very little opportunity for any meaningful testing. This time does, however, allow for numerous games of 'which car sounds the best on a fly-by'. Having swapped from the GT3, Prosser rockets past in the Speciale. The noise and ferocity are insane. The GT3 isn't exactly quiet, but the Ferrari is *nuts*.

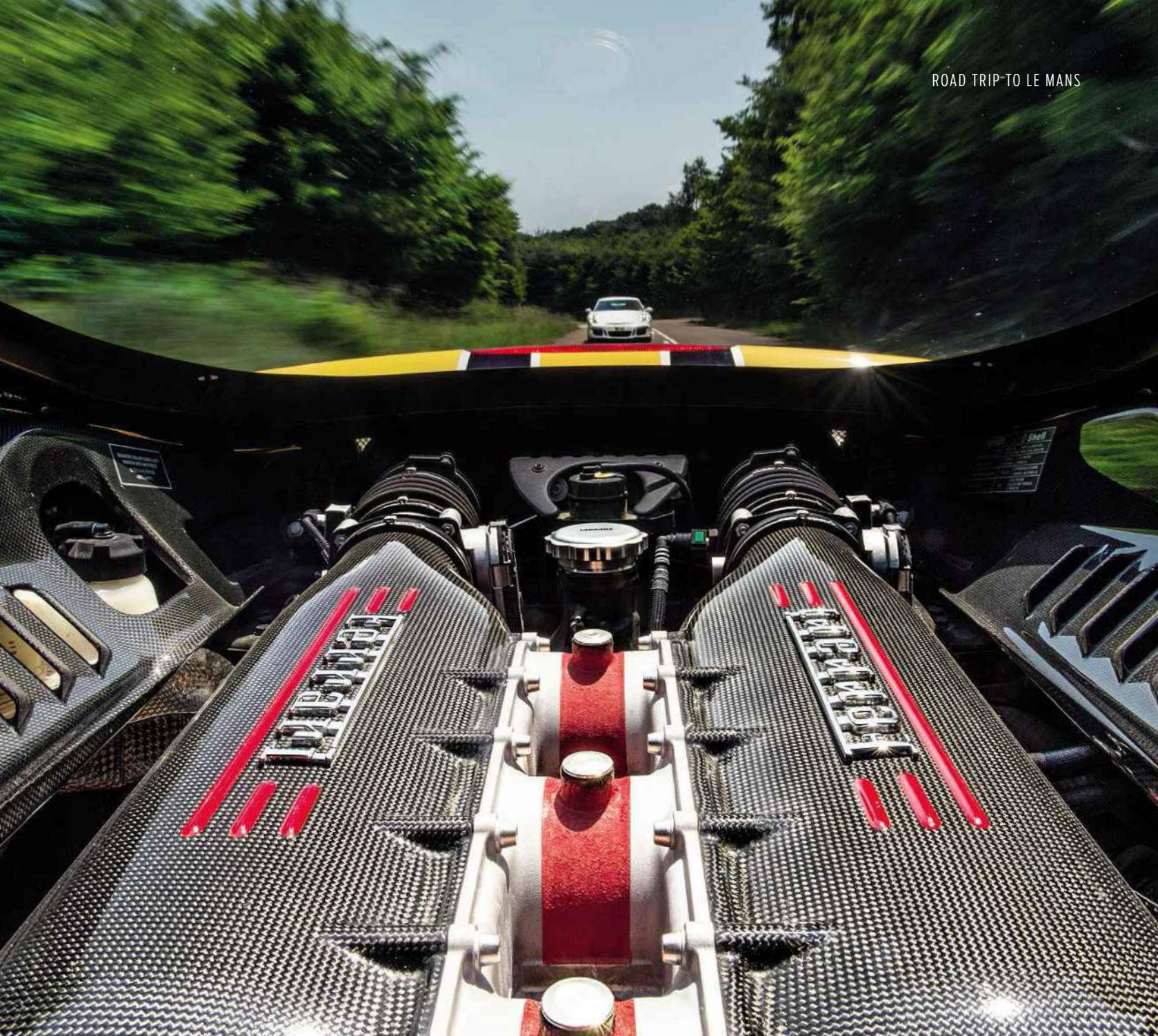
Rouen, the bottleneck of any journey to Le Mans, has more to offer than horrendous traffic, and once away from the bridges, underpasses and traffic lights, we head to the old Grand Prix circuit – the Circuit de Rouen-les-Essarts. Situated south-west of the city, it opened as a street track in 1950, measuring 3.2 miles. Evolving over the years in both configuration and length, it finally closed in 1994, but during the '50s and '60s it hosted five French Grands Prix, with the 1962 event being the scene of Porsche's only Formula 1 victory.

Today the track's route is purely public



Above: blessed with glorious weather and dry tarmac, the super-sticky Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2s are in their element. **Left:** a V8 Ferrari in Giallo Modena never goes unnoticed for long. **Below left:** *evo* web editor Hunter Skipworth sporting a forgivably cheesy grin. **Bottom:** any trip to Le Mans is worth a detour to the former GP circuit at Rouen





*‘As the 458
Speciale rockets
past, the noise
and ferocity
are insane’*

road. The old cobbled hairpin is still evident, as is the blood-curdlingly fast downhill start-finish straight, with high banking on one side that once had a grandstand perched atop it, and an opening opposite leading to the pits and paddock. There's little else to remind you of this once great venue, one many called France's greatest.

Retracing the old lap is straightforward, and after a couple of tours we stop for cake and for Dan and accompanying *evo* contributor Adam Towler to consider just how fast this circuit was and what it would have been like for Jackie Oliver, Dan Gurney, Jochen Rindt and Denny Hulme to race flat-out here – often in the rain. It's tricky for us mere mortals to comprehend.

When you're planning your trip to Le Mans next year, factor in a detour to this sacred venue and try to get your own head around it.

The days of red-line runs from Rouen to Alençon and on to Le Mans are long gone, but the journey to the most famous motor race in the world needn't be a soulless jog along the new autoroute. A Speciale and GT3 certainly help make any drive unique, but following the old road to Le Mans feels like a rite of passage no matter what car you are in. The D438 and D338 crest and dip their way through the French countryside, and it's when you're absorbed in the scenery and the intoxicating sights and sounds of thoroughbred supercars that you realise the 4.30am alarm call is well worth it.

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Clockwise from top left: Ferrari 250 GTOs clocked up several top ten finishes in the early '60s; 166 MM won outright in 1949; 356 SL took a class win for Porsche – the company's first – in 1951; Ferrari 330 P4 and Porsche 908 would both come second to Ford's GT40, in '67 and '69 respectively; Porsche 911 RSRs faced Ferrari F430 GT2s in 2009



∞ PART 3: THE HISTORY

by ADAM TOWLER

When the Ferrari 166 MM of Luigi Chinetti and Peter Mitchell-Thomson won the first post-war Le Mans 24 Hours in 1949, it was also the emergent Maranello firm's first major motorsport success. Le Mans helped put Ferrari on the map, and 'Il Commendatore' was well aware of its significance.

A second victory followed in 1954, a third in 1958. Then, in 1960, 'the Ferrari years' began, with six wins on the trot. Such was Enzo Ferrari's preoccupation with the race, his over-stretched engineers prioritised the development of sportscars over F1 machines, much to the chagrin of the team's drivers, which included John Surtees.

It was Ford money and cross-Atlantic co-operation that finally broke Ferrari's vice-like grip, but not without a struggle. Ferrari, humiliated in 1966, counter-attacked strongly in 1967, seizing the Daytona 24 Hours and



pushing Ford all the way at Le Mans.

Back in 1951, not long after Ferrari's first victory, Ferry Porsche had accepted an invitation to enter a car in the Le Mans 24 Hours for the first time. In a pivotal moment for the tiny company, the meek 356 captured a class win and served notice that the Porsche marque could punch substantially above its weight.

This efficient use of limited horsepower characterised Porsche's early efforts at Le Mans. While Ford and Ferrari were slogging it out, it was the lithe 2-litre Porsches that snapped at their rear wheels on the Mulsanne Straight. By 1969, a 3-litre 908 was fighting John Wyer's Gulf GT40s to the flag in a tantalising near miss.

It all came to a head in 1970. That year's race, captured in spirit by the Steve McQueen movie *Le Mans*, saw 11 Ferrari 512s square up to seven Porsche 917s. The fastest and most glamorous racing cars in the world converged on Le Mans in a battle not just for victory and championship points, but also a struggle for prestige between the old guard and the heir apparent.

In the end it was carnage. Not long after the

start the deluge began, and the leading cars crashed or expired in succession. One incident claimed four factory 512s alone. An unfancied 917 entry eventually won, and after 19 years Porsche had finally conquered Le Mans. Ferrari elected to gain experience with its new 3-litre 312 PB prototype in the 1971 championship, given it was the final year the 5-litre cars would be eligible, but knew it wouldn't have the endurance to be a contender over 24 hours. It was left to privateers to uphold Ferrari's honour with an updated 512 'M', but Porsche scored another emphatic victory in any case.

That would be the last time the two marques clashed for outright honours. Ferrari skipped Le Mans in 1972, but did contend long-tail 312 PBs in 1973, though they had to give the best to Matra. That was the end of the factory team in sportscar racing, and ever since the marque has only fielded an in-house squad for F1.

After the financial madness of the 5-litre years, Porsche regrouped in the early 1970s via separation from Porsche and Piëch family influence. The works team had their first serious

crack at Le Mans again in 1974, a year after Ferrari's exit, with the 911 Turbo RSR; they'd win with the 936 in 1976. Over the course of the next 22 years Porsche collected an astounding 14 outright victories, demolishing Ferrari's once-thought unsurpassable record. The final victory (until 2015) arrived in 1998 with the GT1-98, and then, too, Porsche was gone from the top level at Le Mans: a V10 contender was canned and turned into the Carrera GT supercar, with money directed instead towards a certain SUV.

Porsche debuted the 996 GT3 R in 1999, and 911-based racers and Ferrari 'baby' V8-based cars have spent the past 15 years battling in the GT class at Le Mans with factory and privateer representatives. Each has had its period of dominance, the pendulum swinging back and forth through successive generations of machinery. Now, in 2015, Porsche once again claims the biggest prize. With the revival of sportscar racing and Le Mans in particular, how long can Maranello afford to ignore its old adversary? ❏

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Fast Fleet

NEW ARRIVAL

Mini John Cooper Works

The most powerful production Mini ever takes its place on the *evo* fleet

From JCW to GT2, *evo's* Fast Fleet is the biggest and most comprehensive long-term section in the business. This month...

MINI JCW by Ian Eveleigh

Production editor **NEW**
It's another Mini for Eveleigh. It's got nearly 100bhp more than he wanted, but we're sure he'll quickly get over it



BMW M4 by Dan Prosser

Road test editor **OUT**
Prosser looks back on the mixed emotions that came with spending seven months with an M4



CATERHAM 420R by Hunter Skipworth

Website editor
It's the moment of truth. Can the *evo* team succeed in their mission to build a Seven in just five days?



PORSCHE 996 GT2 by Nick Trott

Editor **NEW**
Not content with owning just one 911, Trott now has a noughties rarity to sit alongside his '80s SC



TOYOTA CELICA by Matthew Hayward

Contributor
Should it stay or should it go? An extended hibernation for the GT-Four has got Hayward questioning if he should keep it



RANGE ROVER SPORT by Nick Trott

Editor
It's service time for our fleet's hardest-working car. And it seems that it's wearing its miles particularly well



SEAT LEON ST CUPRA by Aston Parrott

Staff photographer **NEW**
Could the new 276bhp Leon estate be the perfect photographer's car? Parrott is about to find out



VW AMAROK by Sam Riley

Film-maker
The big pickup is already proving its worth out on video shoots – it has even acted as a mobile office



FERRARI F40 by SSO

Contributor
The F40 proves the Secret Supercar Owner's theory that supercars are more reliable when used regularly



RENAULT MÉGANE 275 by Richard Meaden

Contributing editor
Meaden's taken the Mégane on another big trip, this time with mountainous Switzerland as the destination



AUDI S1 by Jethro Bovingdon

Contributing editor
Ignore what Prosser wrote. The S1 was the real winner of last month's hot hatch group test, says Bovingdon



MAZDA MX-5 Mk1 by Antony Ingram

Staff writer
A trip to see the ever-helpful folks at Tyres Northampton gets Ingram's Eunox a step closer to perfection



FORD FIESTA ST by Henry Catchpole

Features editor
Catchpole is starting to get a taste for the finer things in motoring life. Such as heated seats, DAB and cruise control



KIA PROCEED GT by Richard Lane

Subeditor
Lane has finally tried our Kia. But while others on the *evo* team rate it, he's not convinced it's his kind of hot hatch



FERRARI 458 ITALIA by Simon George

Contributor
The 458 behaves itself in queuing traffic, and it appears that people behave themselves in its presence, too



Also on the *evo* fleet:

Skoda Octavia vRS, Subaru WRX STI, McLaren 12C Spider, Ferrari Scuderia Spider 16M, Lamborghini Murciélago, Peugeot 106 Rallye, BMW 2002, Nissan GT-R, Lancia Delta Integrale, Renaultsport Clio 182

F FOR SOME TIME NOW I've had a hankering to run a basic Mini Cooper as a long-term. I've always found the entry-level sporting Mini to be surprisingly good fun – good enough to want to spend six months or more behind the wheel of one, in fact.

You may recall the last time I mentioned this (**evo** 188), I had just taken delivery of a second-gen GP – a Mini about as far away from a simple Cooper as you can get, bar perhaps a Countryman WRC. The GP was enormous fun, of course, and ranks as a favourite amongst all the long-termers I've run, but I still wanted to scratch that Cooper itch. So now the R56 Mini has given way to the F56, I find myself running... a 228bhp John Cooper Works. Oh well. Third time lucky, maybe.

Not that I'm complaining about

the opportunity to spend some serious time with the most powerful production Mini ever, nor the most highly specced Mini **evo** has ever run: the JCW may cost £23,050 basic, but the car you see here came in at an eye-widening £31,670. Options responsible for this significant leap in price include variable damper control (£240), the sport automatic transmission (£1380), a head-up display (£450), LED headlights (£150), 'Media Pack XL' (£1400 for a fancier satnav and advanced phone connectivity), a Harman/Kardon hi-fi upgrade (£590) and the almost-obligatory Chili Pack (£2470 and including 18-inch alloys, automatic air con, auto lights and wipers, and some leather and Alcantara).

In **evo**'s defence, we didn't spec this particular car (you probably guessed that from the auto 'box),

but I'm sure it'll be fun to try out all those gadgets and gizmos and see which are worth splashing out on. You won't find me arguing with the chosen colour combo, either: White Silver metallic (£475) with a red roof and mirrors, and no fussy stripes or graphics. Backed up by those fabulous two-tone wheels, which look a lot like a five-spoke version of the last GP's four-spokes, it makes for the best-looking new JCW we've seen yet. It's a definite improvement on the Rebel Green with red example we had for last month's group test, which just reminded me of the Rover 200 BRM. (Sorry, Mini.)

But enough about the visuals. What about those all-important early driving impressions? Instantly getting the thumbs up are the pace (0-62mph in 6.1sec is claimed with this transmission), the supportive

sports seats and the taut damping. I'm less sure about the Pirelli P7 Cinturato tyres and the automatic gearbox. The former, as we found last month, just don't seem sticky enough for this car, but I'm going to give them a fair shot and see if their less-than-ultimate grip grows on me. That auto 'box, meanwhile, just seems odd in a Mini. But I'm not someone who is totally blinkered when it comes to paddleshifts. I've been won round by them in two previous long-termers: a 370Z and a Leon Cupra 280. Will it happen a third time? We'll see... **x**

Ian Eveleigh

Date acquired	May 2015
Total mileage	1995
Mileage this month	1020
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	29.6



'Instantly getting the thumbs up are the pace, the seats and the damping'

END OF TERM

BMW M4

Now it has returned to BMW, Prosser has come to a conclusion about his M4 – although it may not apply to *all* M4s...

A AT THE GENEVA MOTOR show in March this year, I interviewed Carsten Pries, the boss of product for BMW's M division. Expecting he would nod along in begrudging agreement, I suggested that the reception for the new M3 and M4 had been somewhat mixed. Instead, he flashed an enormous smile and said that he could not have been happier with the way the models had been received. Given that we at *evo*, and several others, had given it a shoeing on more than one occasion, that was a little hard to swallow. But divided opinions were a theme of my seven months in the M4.

Long before a new car arrives on the Fast Fleet, one of our team of road testers will drive it on the international launch, another will try it on a regional event, then the whole team will have a go when we borrow a car for a full week in the UK. So when we take delivery of a new long-termer, we've usually long since reached solid, shared conclusions about that particular car's dynamic credentials. The objective of a long-term test is to further scrutinise the car's reliability, its suitability for everyday use, its build quality and so on. This one was different.

The M4 has been one of very few cars to have really divided us during my time at *evo*. Various members of the team had such different experiences in those early days that there was no real consensus between us. Some thought it the consummate modern performance coupe, others reckoned it was the most disappointing M-car they'd ever driven.

It all came to a head at *evo* Car of the Year 2014. I don't think any of the judges got out of that M3 (the four-door version is more or less interchangeable with the two-door M4), without feeling as though we'd aged by a year or two, particularly on the wetter days. We voted it into ninth place out of ten cars.

Our long-termer arrived in

October last year. We didn't get to spec it ourselves. Instead, it was plucked out of BMW's press fleet, having covered a little over 3000 miles doing the rounds between various motoring titles. Aside from the telltale odometer there was no real clue that it hadn't just rolled off the production line, and I doubt I could have bettered the spec – the Mineral Grey paint perfectly picked out the sharp styling creases that streak across the bonnet and flanks, and the Sakhir Orange leather offset the paintwork and stopped the car from looking in any way dull. I was glad it had the optional M Carbon Ceramic Brakes (£6250) because I intended to drive it on track at every opportunity, but I reckon I'd have saved £2645 and left the standard six-speed manual transmission in place rather than going for the seven-speed DCT option. All in, the car cost £67,515 when new.

And so, over the following seven months, the team and I set about trying to reach a satisfactory verdict on the way the thing drove. It must be said we didn't reach a unanimous conclusion in all that time – the M4 remains a divisive car – but after the better part of 15,000 miles behind the wheel I am satisfied with my own verdict. I reckon it just had a narrow operating window in outright performance terms. On

Date acquired	October 2014
Duration of test	7 months
Total test mileage	14,684
Overall mpg	24.8
Costs	£107,796 (see text)
Purchase price	£67,515
Trade-in value	£57,890
Depreciation	£9625

a dry and relatively flat road, the chassis was superb. When that road was anything less than Saharan in its dryness, though, the chassis couldn't contain that lump of torque (406lb ft from 1850 to 5500rpm) and it became a handful. There also wasn't enough body control over vertical inputs, such as crests and undulations, to give you confidence that it would stick. Ultimately, it was a difficult car to really hustle along a road unless the conditions were on its side.

Others had criticisms that I could understand, but could equally let go of. Yes, the 425bhp twin-turbo straight-six didn't have the character of the old V8, but the straight-line performance was on another level. And yes, it didn't feel like a £60,000, Porsche 911-baiting performance car within the cabin, but the quality was generally very good. Short of the absolute dynamic limit, I found the M4 to be a fast, comfortable and seriously good-looking car, which is a pretty compelling package.

It went on track at every



Caterham Seven 420R

So, can a bunch of journalists turn a pile of bits into a working car in just five days? Time to find out.

T THINKING BACK ON OUR Caterham build, I should've known it was going to be troublesome when I turned up on day one and there weren't any instructions.

A rather disgruntled-looking Dan Prosser was pacing about in front of a vast pile of boxes, each daubed with a Caterham logo and each containing parts more alien to me than the last.

The Mission Motorsport guys (who were kindly hosting our build in their garage) had neatly arranged everything we needed to put our 420R together before we arrived. It probably took less than a minute for Prosser and me to make a mess of this as we gradually got more and more overexcited at the sight of all

opportunity, it never missed a beat and it didn't need a service despite the miles we covered. The only costs were £977.96 for a fresh set of tyres after 6000 miles (that'll be the track work) and a repair to a relatively minor car park ding (£100).

A week after the M4 went back to BMW, an M3 arrived for last month's C63 S twin-test. It arrived with 1000 miles beneath its wheels and it was, by a long shot, the best M3 or M4 I've ever driven. BMW is coy about any chassis changes it might have made since those first cars arrived, but it does confess to employing a strategy of continuous improvement during a model's life-cycle, so I'm in no doubt the chassis settings have been revised in recent months. My time with the M4 is now over, but the saga looks likely to roll on. ☒

Dan Prosser (@TheDanProsser)



'The M4 remains a divisive car, but I reckon it just had a narrow operating window in outright performance terms'

the bits that would soon bring our Caterham to life. Or so we thought.

The first issue arose when we realised we didn't actually know how to build a car. This meant that our first day was largely spent doing things wrong and waiting for the Mission boys to fix them for us. Still, a day in and we had the basis of the car's front end completed.

Day two was a lot more productive. We'd now got some instructions from Caterham, so subeditor Richard Lane joined me to tackle the suspension. By the end of the day we had the Bilstein dampers fitted and the brakes done, too. But a word of warning: don't ever try to build headlights. Ever.

More members of the **evo** team arrived on day three, but they found

things difficult from the offset. I had warned them about the instructions, which were unclear at the best of times, but I don't think they were truly prepared for just how vague they were ('woeful' is how editor Trott described them). As we tried to make sense of what they were saying, the process of putting the car together slowed to a crawl. Still, fitting the gearbox and engine was enjoyable, even if space was a bit tight – clearances in the front end of a 420R are basically non-existent.

Access also proved an issue for the rest of the build. This just wasn't an easy car to work on, with nuts and bolts that needed tightening becoming largely inaccessible once other parts had been fitted.

Ultimately, though, it was missing

'By the end of the second day we had the Bilstein dampers fitted and the brakes done, too'

Date acquired	August 2015, maybe
Total mileage	n/a
Mileage this month	n/a
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	n/a

parts that brought our build to an untimely end. The lack of a gearbox mount meant our car was left with its 'box supported by a jack. As such, due to time constraints, we had to reluctantly hand the remnants of the build over to Caterham.

Enjoyable though it was, building a 420R is not something you can do in a week. Not with our level of spanner skills and car-building experience, anyway. Factor in time for missing bits and unclear instructions and you're looking at a month.

Still, none of this changes the fact that we can't wait to drive the 420R, and now, with Caterham having put right what we did wrong, the car is finally finished. ☒

Hunter Skipworth
(@HunterSkipworth)

Caterham Seven 420R



Left and below: very original and very tidy, this first-gen 996 GT2 on sale at RPM Technik proved irresistible to Trott when Porsche hunting

NEW ARRIVAL

Porsche 996 GT2

What do you do if you can't find the Porsche GT3 of your dreams? Buy a GT2, of course

A AT THE BEGINNING OF THE year I started the search for a Porsche 996.1 GT3. It's a car I've always loved, and a little financial reshaping (i.e. man maths) meant that I could finally afford something a bit tasty.

By February it was clear that most were selling before they were advertised; by March it seemed that the remaining UK cars had pulled a Lord Lucan and disappeared. I got a sniff of two GT3s (one up north and one in London) and offered good money for both, but the owner of one decided to keep it at the last minute and I was beaten to the other by just a few hours.

The search then went overseas, with help from a few Twitter buddies, including @dr_nadav, plus Jeten Chetty from the Porsche Centre Johannesburg and the excellent people at ShipMyCar. A plot was hatched to import a GT3 from South Africa, so I waited for the right car to pop up, and waited, and waited...

During the wait, I started to consider other options. I looked at a Ferrari F430 manual and a Ferrari F355, but the servicing costs terrified me. No, I told myself, stick with plan A and continue the hunt for a GT3. Stay on target...

Then at the end of May, feeling rather exasperated, RPM Technik (the people who sold me, and look after, my 911 SC) called and asked if I might be interested in a 996 GT2. The price was over my budget, and it wasn't a GT3, but I asked to see some pictures.

God it looked good. Polar Silver. Yellow calipers. That incredible wing with the subtle intakes in the uprights. And, of course, the specs. Even today, 456bhp and 1440kg is impressive, as is 0-100mph in 8.5sec and 196mph (you can read *evo's* first impressions from 2001 on page 157). Add to this the fact that the GT2's engine is effectively the same as the one used in Porsche's Le Mans-winning GT1, that this was the last of the turbocharged Porsches without driver aids, and that we're unlikely to see another GT2 for a long, long time, and I was on my way down the path of inevitability...

RPM Technik delivered a full technical inspection of the car, and everything checked out. One of the benefits of the race-derived Mezger engine is that you can interrogate the ECU for over-revving – and nothing significant was showing on the RPM computer. A full suspension check was also carried out, with all parts stamped the date they left the factory, indicating no significant damage. The roll-cage and carbon-backed seats were fitted after the



'The GT2's Mezger engine is effectively the same one used in Porsche's Le Mans-winning GT1'

car left the factory (but both are OE), and the wheels, ceramic brakes (the first to be fitted to a road car) and clutch all checked out. It was a two-owner car, with services carried out at 5k, 9k, 12k, 16k and 25k miles. It had new radiators, new brake pads and a brake fluid change, and RPM Technik offered a further major service before delivery.

At £89,950, even the little things (like two keys and the Porsche leather bookbags) were big things to me, but all were present and correct. So, with a deep breath... I bought it over the phone (while

trying to forget that the last time I did this resulted in an Impreza Turbo that blew up within 24 hours).

It never occurred to me that one day I could buy a GT2 – after all, they retailed for £114,900 back in 2002 – but chasing numbers around on a piece of paper showed that I'd only spend a little more on this GT2 than I was prepared to pay for a GT3, and the GT2 is rarer, faster and more intriguing. Crikey.

As I write this, I've only driven the car once – a memorable experience (more next time) – and I've had a bit of a shock with the insurance. It's early days, and I still can't quite believe I've bought a GT2, but boy am I happy! Just please don't inform my wife of the GT2's nickname. She has no idea, OK? ✘

Nick Trott (@evoNickTrott)

Date acquired	June 2015
Total mileage	26,015
Mileage this month	5
Costs this month	£89,950
mpg this month	n/a



Range Rover Sport SDV8

Our hard-working Range Rover gets its first service – and a clean bill of health



I I'M NOT ENTIRELY SURE 'service' is the appropriate term any more. To me, a service should be a grubby affair involving mechanics thoroughly checking big mechanical objects with a hammer and an inspection torch, then replacing the majority of the car before finally handing it back with a big bill and a smile.

Today, as I'm sure the majority of you are aware, a service – especially one early in a car's life – is mostly a visual inspection and computer interrogation.

The Range Rover Sport has had its first 'service' this month. Looking at the schedule, this amounted to mostly checking (tyre condition, drive belts, wipers, lamps) and resetting (oil level and service indicator). Of the grubby stuff, the, erm, pollen filter was replaced, as were the engine oil and filter. A road test was also carried out, which included a low-to-high-range gearbox test – the first time the car has ever been in low range...

The car is nudging 20,000 miles (all covered in just six months) and I have to admit that I was expecting

the discs and pads would need replacing. Not so. There's another year in them, according to Guy Salmon in Northampton, and the same goes for the 275/40 R20 tyres. Impressive, given that this car is driven pretty hard.

An annual inspection related to the six-year anti-perforation warranty was also carried out, which hunted for damage to the underbody sealer, sills, wheelarches, lower body and doors, flanged hinges, suspension mounts and fuel tank fixings. It's a thoroughly 'Land Rover' inspection – and rather comforting despite the fact that the closest my car has got to going off-road was a jaunt across a local farmer's field. I really must address that.

The next service is due in a year or at 35,773 miles. I have a feeling that the Fast Fleet's hardest working car will reach the latter first. ☒

Nick Trott (@evoNickTrott)

Date acquired	December 2014
Total mileage	18,773
Mileage this month	2228
Costs this month	£467.54 (service)
mpg this month	30.1

Toyota Celica GT-Four WRC

Hayward's rally refugee might be on the receiving end of a reluctant garage cull after languishing unused

I IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE my last Fast Fleet report, and I'm not proud to say the Celica hasn't moved from its cosy workshop space in over six months. Sound familiar? This is exactly what happened last year, albeit for slightly different reasons.

One of the main causes for this year's lack of action comes from the car's awkward MOT expiry date. December is not usually the best time to be laying out cash on a car that's likely not going to be used on the salt-ridden winter roads, so I hatched a plan to simply leave it until spring. Then spring came and went, and the Celica is still sitting around with no tax or MOT...

The other issue is that I'm easily

distracted, and with the Celica out of sight I've been focusing a little bit too much time and effort on my other cars. Between keeping on top of a money-hungry Citroën Xantia Activa and a 1980s BX 16-valve that's quickly turning into a full restoration job, the reliable and trouble-free Toyota has hardly been given the attention it deserves.

I know it might not make sense, but for the first time I'm actually considering selling the trusty GT-Four. In real terms it owes me very little money, but with it getting such little use, what's the point in having it?

We'll see how the next few months go. I plan to sort out a few of the nagging jobs I've been putting



Date acquired	August 2013
Total mileage	47,459
Mileage this month	0
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	n/a

off, such as refurbishing (or maybe even replacing) the wheels, getting it fully detailed and just maybe fitting a slightly more sociable exhaust.

A new set of dampers wouldn't go amiss either. Who knows, I might just fall in love with it again... ☒

Matthew Hayward
(@evoMatthew)

NEW ARRIVAL

SEAT Leon ST Cupra 280

No sooner does one Cupra leave than another arrives.

This time it's an estate, though, and it faces some completely new challenges

MY NEW LONG-TERMER has arrived and I could not be more excited. The Leon ST Cupra 280 is SEAT's first ever high-performance estate, and with the same turbo 2-litre petrol engine as the hatchback Cupra 280, it has 276bhp and 258lb ft of torque.

Unlike our recently departed five-door Cupra long-termer, however, this time we've got a six-speed manual gearbox, not the DSG. That's good news as far as I'm concerned, as I struggled to fall in love with the paddleshift on our hatchback when I sampled it. The claimed 0-62mph time for the manual estate is 6.1sec, which is 0.1sec slower than the DSG estate, and 0.2sec behind the manual five-door hatch. That latter difference can be explained by the estate's extra 45kg of weight (1365kg versus 1320), but it's a small price to pay for the extra practicality that bigger rear-end brings – it's just what I need for lugging photography equipment around.

Also useful should be the Cupra's Dynamic Chassis Control system.

Its Comfort setting softens things off nicely for those long motorway journeys that are an inevitable part of a car photographer's job; hopefully it will provide the smooth ride needed for taking sharp tracking (car-to-car) shots, too. Then at the push of a button I can select Cupra mode to tie everything down and give the SEAT a better chance of staying with whatever supercar we happen to be shooting that day. So far I've found the midway Sport mode pointless, though Individual is handy if I fancy mixing the weightier steering of Cupra with the mpg-friendly Comfort engine map.

Basic, the ST Cupra 280 costs £29,205. Options on our car include the Black Line package (£505), which introduces black sections to the 19-inch wheels, switches the 'CUPRA' tailgate lettering to black and adds spoilers either side of the rear window. It contrasts perfectly with the Alor Blue metallic paint (£575). We've also got the upgraded nav and sound systems, bringing a high-resolution 6.5-inch touchscreen,

DAB radio, voice control and a 10GB jukebox with picture/video viewer (£940). Finally, there's full leather and an electrically adjustable driver's seat (£1055). Altogether that brings the total to £32,020, which is still £1565 cheaper than an unoptioned Golf R Estate.

The Cupra looks absolutely mega with its aggressive lines and sporty stance. The interior is not as exciting as the exterior, but it has a practical, simple design and the quality is high. The chunky leather wheel and sport seats make you feel instantly happy to be in the space.

In fact, my only concern so far is whether the Comfort ride setting will be soft enough to offset the effects of those 19-inch wheels for tracking photography. I'm sure I'll find out soon enough. ✉

Aston Parrott (@AstonParrott)

Date acquired	May 2015
Total mileage	2460
Mileage this month	811
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	31.1

'The extra practicality of that bigger rear-end is just what I need for lugging photography kit'



Volkswagen Amarok

The big pickup reveals its strengths as it settles into working life with film-maker Riley



MONTH TWO WITH THE monster truck, and I haven't yet had a chance to get a locking cover for the load bay. This hasn't been that much of an issue outside of work, when the most I've used the bay for is lugging old crap to the recycling centre. But at work I'm still carrying my video equipment on the back seats most of the time, so I'm not really using the Rok to its full potential.

Even so, it has still already proved very helpful. The load compartment *does* get used out on shoots, as it means we have access to all our gear at once and don't need to constantly load-up and unload as we move short distances between locations. The coating on the bay floor keeps everything where it should be, too, so we don't wreck it with scratches. We've also found that the rear door, when in its lowered position, makes a handy table for laying kit out on, meaning we really can work remotely from the truck.

As of yet I haven't done a trip fully loaded, so I can't judge how the Amarok drives at maximum

capacity, but with just a few bits of kit from the office and the odd passenger on board, it hustles along at a surprising speed considering it only has a 2-litre turbodiesel engine. It's not going to blow you away with its performance, but there's enough mid-range punch for a B-road overtake – if the road is wide enough to get the Amarok past, that is.

The more I drive this VW, the more I realise its ride isn't quite as comfy as I first thought. A recent trip to Exmoor for our Ariel Nomad feature and video particularly highlighted this: the Amarok was bouncing all over the place on the undulating moorland roads. But these are the kind of roads we love at *evo*, so it has to be expected. And I guess I can put up with being thrown around in a two-ton Tonka Toy when in pursuit of a *Mad Max*-style road buggy! ❌

Sam Riley (@samriley)

Date acquired	March 2015
Total mileage	4745
Mileage this month	1872
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	31.2

Ferrari F40

Ferrari F40

Woken from hibernation for a video shoot, the F40 demonstrates how supercars don't like long rests

A FEW WEEKS AGO A PAIR of emails dropped into my inbox, one from Jethro Bovingdon, the other from Nick Trott. The basic message in both was: can we borrow your F40 for a video shoot with the new Ferrari 488? Other than a brief outing for a service, the F40 has spent the last nine months in hibernation. This looked like a great opportunity for it to get a bit of exercise with a driver I trusted, so I agreed.

With all the arrangements in place, Jethro collected the car from its place of slumber as planned. That's when the problems started. The first sign of something amiss was a text message asking how to get the suspension to drop. Not good, as this is supposed to happen

automatically at speed. I replied with instruction on how to do it manually and hoped for the best.

The next day things got worse when I picked up a voicemail saying the F40 had decided not to proceed while out on a test run. (Hence the photo you can see here.) A quick check indicated a very dead battery. Given it was only a year old and always kept on a conditioner, this was distinctly not good. A couple more tests indicated the battery was not charging. RIP alternator.

Despite the challenges, Jethro managed to get the shoot done (visit youtube.com/evo to see the result). Once finished, the F40 headed into the belly of a transporter for a trip to Carrs Ferrari. One new alternator and a suspension reset later, it was back



Date acquired	November 2006
Total mileage	44,500km
Mileage this month	c200km
Costs this month	£800
mpg this month	Don't ask

in perfect health, but unfortunately also headed back to storage.

Would either issue have happened if the F40 had been getting regular use? I doubt it. Lesson learned. From now on I will make sure it sees the open road at least once every six to eight weeks. ❌

Secret Supercar Owner (@SupercarOwner)

Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy

A long run to Switzerland reveals how the Trophy copes as a grand tourer

THE TROPHY BREACHED 10,000 miles this month, thanks to a ten-day, 1500-mile European jaunt. Our first destination was the brilliant Dijon-Prenois circuit for the Grand Prix de l'Age d'Or historic race meeting. Five hours on French autoroutes is hardly the most scintillating drive, but it provided an excuse to use the Mégane's cruise control for the first time. I don't bother at home as the roads are too busy, but it was just the job in France, where the motorways are almost deserted and sneaky gendarmes lie in wait for speeding rosbifs.

Long journeys have a habit of revealing a different side to a car's skill set, and so it was here. In terms of humdrum functionality the Trophy falls a little short. The high load sill made hefting our admittedly ginormous suitcase in and out tricky, but the boot can swallow tons of

kit. Interior oddments space is less satisfactory. The solitary cupholder is virtually useless thanks to its proximity to the overhanging centre console, and there's nowhere to stow your phone when it's charging/connected to the stereo. Comfort-wise I was happy in the driver's seat for hours on end, but whether driving or passengering, Mrs M found the Recaro to be a bit lacking in lumbar support. A rolled-up coat provided an improvised solution.

After racing at Dijon we headed to Switzerland and the canton of Valais

for a week of fresh mountain air and the daily culinary battle known as Man v Fondue. The Mégane spent much of the time parked outside our chalet, but when it was pressed into service, the sinuous – and sometimes unmetalled – mountain roads were great fun to explore and the views stunning. Unlike my burning Fenland lungs, the Trophy's turbocharged 2-litre engine seemed unfazed by the thin air, pulling enthusiastically out of hairpins and romping along straights.

There are more refined and

luxurious ways to tackle a big European mission, but as our 11-hour door-to-door homeward journey underlined, when put to a more grown-up test, Renault's hardcore hot hatch makes a decent fist of being a mile-eating GT. ✘

Richard Meaden
(@DickieMeaden)

Date acquired	November 2014
Total mileage	10,214
Mileage this month	2142
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	29.1



Audi S1

Bovingdon has issues with last month's group test result

I WAS GENUINELY EXCITED to hand the S1 over for the hot hatch group test last month. Over the last six months I've come to really, really enjoy it. I think it's because despite the promise of four-wheel-drive stability and the 'grown up' feel you might expect from an Audi, it's actually a properly feisty little car: it's got mighty mid-range performance that sends the front wheels weaving into just a bit of torque-steer, the balance tends towards a little understeer at first but then there's a real adjustability, and the ride is only just supple enough, so in combination with its short wheelbase the S1 always feels busy and you can have it teetering on the edge on nearly any drive.

Then I heard it had come third.

Beaten by a Fiesta and a Peugeot. How did this happen? Bribery? Stupidity? Recreational drugs? Stupidity? I think possibly all of these things. Don't worry, we've fired Dan (have you told him yet, Nick?), Viv is serving his penance by buying his own cigarettes and Henry has been told he can't shave his legs for two whole days to make up for it. And the S1 wins. Please tell your friends.

Of course, only some of this is true. (Sorry, Dan. Was great working with you.) The Fiesta ST – in spite of its hateful infotainment system and heinous driving position – is a brilliant little car, smooth and fluid yet zinging with energy. I'm a big fan of the 208 GTi 30th, too. It's so aggressive and focused and I can see how it might have edged the S1

on that very long day from sunrise to sunset with nothing but each other's company and those recreational drugs to keep the test team awake.

But would I rather have either on my driveway every single day? No way. The S1 does all the great Audi quality stuff beautifully, normal human beings can change the DAB station and it's genuinely exciting to drive. Now if you'll excuse me I have to buy Dan a leaving present. Something by Silvikrin, I think. ✘

Jethro Bovingdon
(@JethroBovingdon)

Date acquired	December 2014
Total mileage	7933
Mileage this month	1390
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	29.6







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Mazda MX-5 Mk1

Two fixes in one month make big improvements to Ingram's imported MX-5

YOU'RE PROBABLY NOT sitting on your washer-dryer with a desk fan pointing at your face as you read this, but if you were, you'd have some idea of the vibrations and wind roar that until recently accompanied ownership of my Eunos.

The former was the result of the mismatched tyres and sub-optimal wheel balancing present on the car when I bought it. The offside rear in particular was looking quite unhealthy, with a series of worrying splits in the sidewall and even a few chunks missing. The nearside rear

had its own problems, namely that it was the lone Yokohama among Firestones, and was beginning to resemble a racing slick.

A trip to Tyres Northampton to fit the set of Dunlop Sport BluResponse rubber mentioned last month has fixed all that. Not only do I now have a quartet of tyres consistent in both tread pattern and circumference, but careful balancing has also eliminated many of the buzzes and rattles I previously endured.

I'm yet to thoroughly test the new set, but initial impressions are positive. Turn-in is sharper, grip is

more consistent and the firm ride has marginally improved.

Some of that is also down to the full alignment Tyres Northampton carried out, though a seized track-rod-end ball joint meant the front offside toe couldn't be adjusted, despite the technician's heat- and mallet-assisted efforts. It appears to be alone in causing concern, though – offered a peek under the car, I found the Eunos to be remarkably rust-free. I'll be back to have the alignment finished once I get hold of the requisite parts.

And the cause of the desk-fan

wind roar? An ill-fitting seal at the leading edge of the hard-top roof. Or it was ill-fitting, until it fixed itself. The best explanation I can offer is that the seal has expanded in the warmer weather. The subtext is that the car is still wearing its hard-top. I promise I'll remove it soon. ☒

Antony Ingram (@evoAntony)

Date acquired	February 2015
Total mileage	91,100
Mileage this month	348
Costs this month	£100 alignment £60 tyre fitting
mpg this month	38.0



Ford Fiesta ST

It's not only the driving experience that makes the ST an **evo** favourite

THE ST CONTINUES TO be a daily delight. With summer now here, its 17-inch wheels have had another tyre change, leaving the winter Pirellis behind and donning Bridgestone RE050s (which were the original fitment). These have improved the ride quality, and while they're not as grippy as the ContiSportContact 5s I opted for in the autumn, they are predictable and good fun.

Although I originally questioned the need for the fully loaded 'ST-3'

trim level, I've certainly got used to having all the toys. As Viscount Tonypandy once said when asked how he found living in relative luxury after growing up a miner's son in darkest Wales, it's very easy to adjust upwards! Even the little extras make you feel good, such as opening the door at night and seeing the illuminated door sills (part of the £275 Style Pack) glow welcomingly like an electric fire in a cold cottage. I've also been amazed at the number of times I've found myself driving vastly dearer cars and gone looking for something that I'm used to having in the Fiesta only to search in vain. A heated seat missing here, a heated windscreen absent there, a spot of cruise control lacking hither, a dab of DAB omitted thither.

Perhaps that's one of the reasons why there seem to be so many STs on the UK's roads. Like Minions, they



seem to get everywhere. And despite the number of them out there and the deals to be done on new ones, the second-hand prices also seem to be holding strong, with £13k about the lowest they've gone. I really do think that the ST is the small hatch of the moment, in the same way that the equally good-value VW Golf R is

the large hatch of the hour. ☒

Henry Catchpole (@HenryCatchpole)

Date acquired	July 2014
Total mileage	17,818
Mileage this month	901
Costs this month	£348.56 (tyres)
mpg this month	38.3

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Lifting Gear Reverse Camera Full Electric Heated Seats 8,000 miles 2009 **£104,990**



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Colour SatNav, Yellow Brake Callipers, Scuderia Shields, 18,000 miles, 2009 **£85,990**



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Kia Proceed GT

evo subeditor
and hot hatch fan
Richard Lane finally
tries our Kia



UNTIL RECENTLY MY relationship with our Fast Fleet Kia had been long-distance, in that I only ever observed it while passing through the clogged-up evo car park. Not once had I slid behind the perforated leather of its rock-hard steering wheel, but curiosity, the general approval of my colleagues and its looming final collection prompted me to act. After all, with a Mk1 Focus RS and an Integrale on my own fleet, I clearly rather like hot hatches.

Kia pulled the proverbial rabbit out of the hat when it styled this car (actually it hired Audi TT designer

Peter Schreyer, which when you're Kia amounts to the same thing), because the tapered front graphic and sprawling proportions just look *right*. To my eyes the three-door Proceed GT is handsome in extremis and seems more comfortable in its taut hide than the defensively snarly Golf GTI or any other over-styled rival one cares to mention.

Inside, things get better, too. The Alcantara-encased Recaro seats are set low (although I'd prefer them a bit lower still) and grip my elongated torso reassuringly firmly at the base of the ribcage. The no-nonsense gearlever also has a short, notchy

throw and falls easily to hand.

But, for me, the veneer of distinction wears through quickly on the road, because while the 2-litre turbo four might have 201bhp, with a substantial 1448kg to haul it feels like it's fighting a losing battle. There's certainly never any suggestion of that most addictive of hot hatch qualities: urgency.

Bedfordshire's bumpy back roads also expose brittle damping and a front axle that simply will not settle as the tyres struggle for grip and traction. That turn-in is always impressively keen and the mobile rear axle eager to assume an

attitude under a trailing brake only make this all the more... frustrating.

Truth is, as an everyday performance car you could do a lot worse than the Kia. It looks nice and kept at a simmer it covers ground quickly in a laid back kind of way. But it lacks tenacity – it will never get under your skin, and isn't that the point of these things? ☒

Richard Lane (@_rlane_)

Date acquired	May 2014
Total mileage	25,912
Mileage this month	1349
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	30.1

Ferrari 458 Italia

Simon George hates traffic more than his 458 does

THE LAST FEW MONTHS have seen me spending more time ensconced in the 458's cosy cabin than ever before, partly because my commute includes a scandalous 30-mile section of 50mph limit on the M1. Sitting stationary there, watching the water temp rise, I can't shake off a slightly nervous feeling that the 458 will overheat. It never has, of course – the huge fans always kick in bang on 98 degrees – so I can only put it down to the first Ferrari I owned: a 308 GTS QV that would often tick and hum in heavy traffic before the inevitable happened.

I'm often asked how long we'll keep the 458 on the 6th Gear Experience fleet. A year or so ago I'd have said not much longer. However, I see the same pattern developing with this Italian supercar as with others I've run in the past: once 50k-60k miles have been cracked, they 'settle down', giving little extra trouble than those with half the mileage. Of course, most owners will bail out long before, understandably nervous of resale values.

Finally this month, one more thing I've noticed about the 458. As most supercar owners will admit, the occasional negative hand gesture



or malicious comment goes with the territory, but surprisingly the Italia gets little of this. In fact, if it's positive attention in spades you require, I'd say it rates a close second to a V12 Aston Martin. Go figure. ☒

Simon George
(@6gearexperience)

Date acquired	May 2011
Total mileage	72,512
Mileage this month	1393
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	14.0

Ferrari 458 Italia



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ALFA ROMEO 156 & 147 GTA

Fast, attractive and inimitably expressive, these flawed gems look set to rise in value

WHAT IS IT WITH ALFAS? WHILE usually flawed packages, on the right road they can be utterly brilliant.

'Musical' is the best way to describe their V6 engines, and the beautiful looks stand out in a market full of conservative German boxes. At least this was the case in 2002, when the 3.2-litre 156 GTA saloon first made an appearance.

Perhaps it's the charismatic styling and attractive Italian interiors, but what Alfas offer is often greater than the sum of their parts, and that's why they have such loyal and eager followers. It's also why values of the 1990s GTV 3-litre V6 currently sit far above those of its

comparable rivals, and it's why the 156 and its hatchback sibling, the 147 GTA, very much have Next Big Thing potential.

In *evo* 042, we raved about the 156 GTA, claiming that it has 'one of the liveliest throttle-adjustable chassis since the Peugeot 306 Rallye'. It also has one of the all-time great engines in the form of the 247bhp 3.2-litre Busso V6.

So, 156 or 147? Under the skin they're all but identical, and the consensus when new was that the smaller hatch was the marginally better car to drive. The 156 offers four doors for those who need it, but is tiny by modern saloon standards.

Looking at the values, for a time there was

a good supply of slightly rough, high-mileage examples around if you wanted to spend £3500-4500. You can still pick up these cars, although genuinely cheap ones are quickly snapped up by specialist breakers. It's the well-presented, enthusiast-owned cars that are best value, at £6000-7000, while those with the lowest mileages are still pushing £10,000-12,000.

Rarity is a factor, with just 390 147 GTAs and 376 156 GTAs making it to UK shores. Few cars offer the drama or emotion of a GTA and, flawed or not, a good one is certainly worth holding on to.

Matthew Hayward

Found on classicandperformancecar.com



2002 Alfa Romeo 156 GTA

£4495 finsburygarage.co.uk

112,000 miles, Silver, full service history, superb condition, iconic 'telephone dial' alloy wheels



2002 Alfa Romeo 156 GTA

£10,950 tcsgroup.co

62,212 miles, Miro Red, fitted with almost every option, previously in a private collection for nine years



2004 Alfa Romeo 147 GTA

£6250 autostilo.co.uk

86,000 miles, two owners from new, full service history, Brembo brakes, transformative Quaife differential

Or consider...

Alfa Romeo GT 3.2 V6

The same fantastic V6 as the GTAs (albeit with 10bhp less) in a slightly more subtle package. Nice examples are also great value, at around £4k, but difficult to find.

MG ZT V8

Like the 156, it's an inappropriately engined saloon car with a lot of shortcomings. However, you can't help but love this 256bhp rear-driver. It's impressively spacious, too. Add a supercharger for more power. Aim for £5500.

BMW M3 (E46)

Only available as a coupe, but in some ways still a rival to the 156 GTA when new. Its 338bhp straight-six is almost as entertaining as the rear-drive chassis. From £5500.

Market Watch

Knowledge

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Ask the expert

Your buying questions answered



Q I run a Mk5 Golf GTI but would now like something more exotic, with greater speed and purity. It has to be a Porsche.

However, I'm stuck on which one... My budget is £25k, but I'm willing to save for longer for the right car. I'm keen on a gen-two Cayman (981) or a 911 (997.1), so would appreciate your expert view on both (engines, gearboxes, spec and so on).

Gary Paddock

A The great thing about buying a 911, especially in your price range, is that there are so many examples to choose from. You can afford to be picky, but while you might be tempted to go for the best-specified car you can find, don't rule out the basic models such as the 3.6-litre Carrera (321bhp in 997.1 form). The 29bhp-healthier 3.8-litre Carrera S sold in larger numbers in the UK, but we reckon the smaller engine

is that little bit sweeter and keener to rev. Options like PASM suspension can be useful if you want to go on track, but for road driving the standard suspension offers a good compromise.

The auto versus manual argument will be a personal one. We think the six-speed manual is one of the best shifts around. You'd need to stump up an additional £10,000 for a 997.2 with PDK, and we didn't rate early versions of that transmission, although it's a vast improvement over the five-speed Tiptronic on the 997.1.

Then there's the Cayman. Many of the arguments remain the same, and there are more available, better specced and lower mileage, for less money. The mid-engined car is every bit as good to drive as the 911, although for different reasons. Our advice would be to test drive a few. You'll soon find out where your heart lies. **MH**

Email your question to experts@evo.co.uk

Just looking

The pick of the classifieds this month



Lotus 340R

£29,995

Bell and Colvill, Surrey

bellandcolvill.co.uk

01483 281000

The Lotus 340R arrived at the turn of the millennium. A roofless – and doorless – version of the Elise, with a 190bhp Rover K-series engine, reduced mass and short gearing, 0-60mph took just 4.5sec while top speed was 126mph.

Suspension was by double wishbones all round, which made good use of semi-slick Yokohama A038R trackday tyres. As such, most 340Rs have been round a circuit or two at some point, but there are a few that have escaped such treatment, of which this is reportedly one.

Dating from 2000, it's covered just 4400 miles since, gaining aftermarket aluminium engine mounts and a Blueflame exhaust on the way. With a full service history and Armourfend protection, car 135 of 340 appears to be a truly cherished example.

Sam Sheehan (@evoSamSheehan)



Alpina B10 (E34)

£19,950

DD Classics, Surrey

ddclassics.com

0208 878 3355

Buying an old, burgundy E34 with a thirsty straight-six engine might not make much sense in 2015, but then you catch a glimpse of the classic Alpina wheels, slim wheelarch gaps, Deko Set (see page 170) and... wait a minute, is that cream velour?

This 1989 Alpina's first owner was the Earl of Seafield. Though he opted for the less potent, non-turbo 3.4-litre engine (ignore the '3.5' badging, it's a 250bhp 3430cc unit under the bonnet), almost every other option box was ticked – the period in-car phone and Blaupunkt cassette player are still present.

The car has travelled a total of 59,000 miles and appears to be spotless inside and out. It comes with a full BMW service history and the original purchase invoice (it cost a heady £42,300 in 1989 – considerably more than the M5 of the time). There's even an unused Uniroyal spare tyre in the boot. **SS**

Trader chat

James Agger James Agger Autosport

With the news of TVR's return (see Radar, [evo 211](#)), we thought it a good time to take a look at what's going on with the second-hand market. We spoke to James Agger of Leicestershire-based TVR specialist James Agger Autosport.

'We currently sell around 80 cars a year, mainly focusing on TVRs from the early 1990s onwards,' said Agger. 'People are more than happy to pay a little bit more money for cars that are in great condition,

and really nice cars don't hang around for very long. It's less seasonal than you might think, too, although the cars and owners do generally get out and about to events and on road-trips during the summer.

'We have all sorts of customers interested in different cars, but all TVRs are simply about having huge fun. We're all enthusiasts here, and the TVR community really is just as special as the cars. Demand for used TVRs is as great as ever and

there has been a lot of talk and general excitement from our customers about the idea of a new car, too.

'With any small UK sports car operation, you have to think realistically about any announcements and future cars, but this time with TVR it *feels* good. With so much goodwill towards the company, and the news that TVR is already taking deposits for the new sports car, the future is certainly looking brighter.'



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Buying Guide

Knowledge

Your indispensable resource when buying used

TVR Tuscan 1999-2006



Overview

With TVR back in the headlines, values of classics like the Tuscan are on the rise. If you're tempted, read this first **Words:** Peter Tomalin

W E DON'T HAVE ANYTHING QUITE LIKE THE TUSCAN today, though we might in the future if New TVR comes to fruition: a reasonably priced, properly powerful rear-drive coupe/convertible with a serious power-to-weight ratio, and nothing to get you out of trouble if you louse it up. 'Hairy arsed' would be the term for cars like this, and over the years plenty of Tuscan drivers have discovered just how hairy, *evo*'s David Vivian among them. On eCoty 2000 he found himself a passenger in a Tuscan (even though he was still holding the wheel and pressing the pedals) as it careered through a dry-stone wall in north Wales. Not backwards, as you might expect from a car with no traction or stability control, but front-first, a victim of Peter Wheeler's aversion to anti-lock brakes as much as Viv's over-optimistic entry speed.

Of course, that very lack of driver aids, along with the swooping bodywork, mad interiors and bellowing naturally aspirated engines, is part of what makes Wheeler-era TVRs so appealing. But it's as well to know what you're getting into.

The Tuscan, initially with a 360bhp 4-litre version of TVR's own straight-six, went on sale in 1999. The early cars were a curious mixture of ultra-pointy steering and disconcertingly soft suspension (Wheeler's idea to make it more of a GT), though by the end of the year the damping had been improved. That was typical TVR: constant evolution. Which, of course, means the later the car, generally the better it is.

In the early days there was a 'Red Rose' upgrade with an extra 20-30bhp, better brakes and tauter damping. That then formed the basis for the Tuscan S, which added front and rear spoilers to aid high-speed stability. Following Nikolai Smolensky's buyout, the Tuscan Mk2 arrived in 2005 with a new front grille and fared lights. Underneath, the changes included revised suspension, a close-ratio gearbox, bigger brakes and – crucially – better-quality engine components. Best of the lot is the Convertible (and its Mk3 targa-roof equivalent), which arrived in 2006 and saw the quality ramped up again, taking the dash and wiring loom from the Sagaris as well as its Bilstein suspension.

Checkpoints

Engine and transmission

Our experts are Dom Trickett of Powers Performance (formerly TVR Power) and Jason Clegg of Str8six. Early Speed Six engines suffered valvegear wear, oil starvation and other woes, some caused by design flaws, more by poor quality components. Many went back to TVR for rebuilds. Problem was, the replacement parts were still poor, so more engines went bang. By 2003 TVR was getting a grip on quality control, and, after Smolensky bought the company in 2004, real improvements were made.

By 2005/06 the engine was pretty well sorted, and it's since been further developed by specialists. So the later the car or – or the more recent the engine rebuild – the better the outlook. But the engine still needs meticulous servicing – every 6000 miles, with tappet clearances set every 12,000. A full inspection by a specialist is advisable.

Check for oil leaks and signs of overheating, that it's not excessively noisy on start-up, and is smooth at idle. Check the fans kick in: the first at about 92deg, the second a few degrees higher.

The Borg Warner T5 'box is generally sound, but needs regular oil changes, as does the diff. And beware clutch slip or judder – replacement takes five hours.

Suspension

There's considerable disparity in handling between cars, so try to experience a few. From 2003 the handling was improved by a change in king pin inclination that made it less 'twitchy'. Damping on early cars wasn't great: Nitrons and Bilsteins are popular upgrades. If it tramlines badly, ask if it's had the geometry checked. Expect to replace suspension bushes every six or seven years (budget a grand). Early wheels were prone to spokes bending; vibration could mean a bent spoke.

Body, interior, electrics

The steel chassis resists rot better than many, but it's still worth checking the usual areas like the outriggers and looking for accident damage. For the GRP body, check panel fit, including the roof, and that the doors and boot open and close cleanly. Check the rear screen is the later, bigger item – early ones were prone to popping out at speed! Also check the roof catch above the rear-view mirror for similar reasons. Obviously, check all the electrics. Wires and connectors in the battery compartment are vulnerable to corrosion and chafing. In bad cases this can result in shorting-out, which could lead to a fire.



1: Mk2 Tuscan gained faired-in headlights... **2:** ...and tail lights gathered together in clusters (rather than individual lights in various positions on the rear). **3:** interior remained bonkers



What we said



Group test, May 2001

'When you start the engine you could be in the paddock at Donington. The noise is pure race car: low-inertia, high-decibel music that throbs and roars from those extravagant tailpipes. The pedals are weighty, but the clutch action and gearshift are clean and precise.

'The Speed Six engine pulls heartily from tickover, and the l-o-n-g travel, ankle-stretching throttle acts as a cunning form of traction control. Combined with the Hydratrak limited-slip differential and expansive Bridgestones, it gives the Tuscan excellent bite, even in the wet.

'Naturally, 380bhp [up from 360bhp by 2001] in a lightweight, rear-drive car still deserves huge respect. You soon learn that to get the best from the Tuscan you have to adjust your approach to fast driving. If your style is aggressive, with heavy inputs of power and late, hard braking, the Tuscan is an intimidating, unnerving experience. Stay smooth, brake early and pick a clean line through the corner and it flows...

'It's an old-style sports car brimming with character that's more rewarding at six tenths than many cars are at ten tenths.' – **evo** 031



Above: curvy boot spoiler was another Mk2 addition; the chassis felt more poised, too



Above: wheels on later cars got reinforced spokes, putting a stop to unwanted bending

Specification

Tuscan 4.0 Mk1 (S in brackets)

Engine In-line 6-cyl, 3996cc

Max power 360bhp @ 7000rpm (390 @ 7000)

Max torque 310lb ft @ 5250rpm (330 @ 5250)

Transmission Five-speed manual, rear-drive, limited-slip differential

Weight 1100kg

Power-to-weight 333bhp/ton (360)

0-60mph 4.4sec tested (4.0 claimed)

Max speed 180mph (195) (both claimed)

Price new £48,390 in 2000 (£50,780 in 2001)

Parts prices

(Prices from **str8six.co.uk**. Tyre price from **blackcircles.com**. All prices include VAT but exclude fitting)

Tyres (each) £106.43 front, £108.54 rear (Bridgestone)

Front pads (set) £126

Front discs (pair) £384

Damper £138 (Bilstein, inc. bushes)

Clutch kit £948 (AP Racing)

Exhaust £708 (cat-back, exc. tail-cans)

Catalytic converter £540

Spark plugs (set) £42

Servicing

(Prices from **str8six.co.uk**, including VAT)

6000 miles £390

12,000 mile (inc. valve clearances, gearbox and diff oil, etc) £750

'I bought one' Matthew Buck

'I bought my car in September last year, a 2000 Tuscan Mk1 Red Rose in Crystal Topaz with dark blue leather. I looked at seven or eight before I found this one. I chose it because it was very solid underneath and it had clearly had a lot of work done, whereas some of the later cars weren't so tidy. I paid £16,000, as it needed a service and a couple of small bits doing.

'Most importantly, in 2007 it had had

an engine rebuild by TVR Power. That was about 25,000 miles ago. Because it's a later rebuild I'm not anticipating any problems, but I'm always very strict with warming the engine from cold.

'I've done 3000 miles in the car so far. There have been a few gremlins – the brake-light switch stopped working, and with the headlights there was a dry solder joint in one of the connections, but generally it's been good so far.

'I wouldn't recommend a Tuscan to anyone who views a car as an appliance. You really have to love them and be prepared to forgive their imperfections. I've met various people who've tried to use them as they would, say, a 911, but it's a very different car. They're not perfect, they are a handful and they do have to be respected. But if you're the right kind of person, then for the money there's nothing to touch them.'

In the classifieds



2000 (02) Tuscan 4.0

- ⊕ 20,700 miles
- ⊕ Crystal Verde
- ⊕ Fern Green half leather
- ⊕ Top-end rebuild at 11k
- ⊕ bespokeperformance.co.uk

£19,495



2002 (02) Tuscan S

- ⊕ 19,000 miles
- ⊕ Amaranth Purple pearl
- ⊕ Portland Grey leather
- ⊕ Detailed history
- ⊕ tonygilbertcars.co.uk

£27,750



2005 (54) Tuscan Mk2 S

- ⊕ 59,000 miles
- ⊕ Formula Red pearl
- ⊕ Black extended hide
- ⊕ Full history
- ⊕ hhcsportscars.co.uk

£29,995

The rivals

Noble M12 GTO

310bhp (or 352bhp in 'R' form) from a turbocharged mid-mounted V6, 0-60mph in 4sec or less, and agile handling. Prices today from £25-35k.

BMW M Coupe/M Roadster

325bhp straight-six, with 0-60 in 4.3sec in the case of the better-handling Coupe. Roadsters from £13k, coupes from £30k.

Porsche 911 (997)

Coupe, cabrio and targa, RWD and 4WD – take your pick. We'd go for a 997.1 Carrera S (350bhp, 0-60 in 4.6sec) – from just £20k.

What to pay

You can find tidy-looking early cars for around £15k-16k, but don't buy without getting a specialist inspection. £17k-20k throws up plenty more, both private and trade, but again tread carefully. For a properly sorted car with a good history and (probably) a rebuilt engine, you're currently looking mid to high-20s (and rising too). Generally add at least a couple of grand for an S in equivalent condition. Late Ss and Tuscan 2s are now c£30k+. Exceptional Mk2s are high-30s, while Mk3s and Convertibles are £40k+.

Useful contacts

- ⊕ tvr-car-club.co.uk (owners' club)
- ⊕ mytuscan.co.uk (in-depth model guide)
- ⊕ str8six.co.uk (sales, servicing)
- ⊕ tvr-parts.com (original-spec parts)
- ⊕ powersperformance.co.uk (servicing, parts)
- ⊕ fernurst-tvr.co.uk (sales, servicing)
- ⊕ racingreentvr.com (servicing, sales)
- ⊕ tonygilbertcars.co.uk (cars for sale)
- ⊕ classicandperformancecar.com (ads)

Market Watch

Knowledge

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Auction watch

RM Sotheby's extends August's Monterey auction for some very special lots



RM SOTHEBY'S RECENTLY ANNOUNCED IT WILL BE ADDING another day to its annual Monterey auction during the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance week. It will now run from August 13 to 15. This is due to the consignment of the 'Pinnacle Portfolio', which is described as a 'private automobile collection of unprecedented value'. That's a bold claim, but when you look through the full list of cars, it becomes very clear that this is an extremely serious collection of incredible machinery.

It's difficult to know where to start, but we like the look of the McLaren F1 'LM-spec road car' (top). Built to special order by the division now known as McLaren Special Operations, chassis 073 was the penultimate F1 to leave the Woking production line, and it had a few special upgrades. First of all, this is a road-legal car with a fully trimmed interior. However, it was specified with the extra-high downforce pack as well as an LM-spec engine. It's perhaps one of the most unusual configurations for an F1, even getting a factory fitted satnav. RM hasn't released an estimate for the car, but with Rowan Atkinson's car recently selling for around £8m, the sky is the limit.

An ordinary Enzo would be deserving of a place in this collection, but this isn't just any old Enzo. This (above left) was the final Enzo built, which was given to the late Pope John Paul II by Ferrari boss Luca di Montezemolo. It was laden with options, including a carbonfibre rear spoiler, Daytona seats and a personal inscription to the pope. The Enzo was then sold, with profits going to charity, and is now offered with a mere 188km on the clock. Other 'modern' Ferraris in the sale include a 288 GTO, an F50 and a F40 LM.

A relation to the Enzo is also included in the sale – a 768km Maserati MC12 (above right). Built on the same chassis as the Ferrari, the MC12 was created to go racing, but 50 road cars were offered to customers. With a removable targa-style roof, it's the closest you can get to an Enzo 'spider'.

Matthew Hayward (@evoMatthew)

Auction results



Classic Car Auctions, June Sale

2003 Mercedes-Benz SL55 AMG
£10,388
1998 BMW Z3 M Roadster
£13,250
1990 TVR 280 S2
£9752
2010 BMW E60 M5 25th Anniversary
£26,500
1990 Lancia Delta Integrale
£22,790
1992 Mercedes-Benz 500E
£12,720

Anglia Car Auctions, June 13

2002 Alfa 156 GTA
£5460
1973 Alpine A110 1300 (pictured) £38,850
1990 Citroën AX GT
£3780
1988 Dimma Peugeot 205 GTI Turbo Technics
£7980
2002 Ferrari 456M GTA
£45,150
1987 Ford Sierra RS Cosworth
£47,250
1988 Lancia Delta Integrale 8v
£14,175

2006 Maserati Quattroporte
£18,637
1979 Porsche 930 Turbo
£49,350

Bonhams, Summer Classic Sale

1974 BMW 2002 rally car
£116,100
1974 Jensen Interceptor
£43,700
1964 Morris Mini Cooper S 1071
£39,100
1968 Fiat-Abarth SS Scorpione 1000 GT
£14,950

Auction calendar

July 19
Charterhouse
Shepton Mallet, UK
charterhouse-auction.com

July 20
Artcurial
Monte Carlo, Monaco
artcurial.com

July 20
H&H Auctions
Burghey House, UK
classic-auctions.com

July 25-26
Silverstone Auctions
Silverstone, UK
silverstoneauctions.com

July 28
Barons
Esher, UK
barons-auctions.com

July 29
H&H
Buxton, UK
classic-auctions.com

July 31
Richard Edmonds
Toddington, UK
richardedmondsauctions.com

August 8
Coys
Nürburg, Germany
coys.co.uk

August 11
H&H Auctions
Chateau Impney, UK
classic-auctions.com

Fantasy garage

Three great roadsters for around £40,000 in total. All can be found in the classifieds at classicandperformancecar.com



TVR Griffith
£21,990

Some say this is the best-looking TVR of all time. We won't disagree, and the tuned Rover V8 sounds intoxicating.



Vauxhall VX220 Turbo
£14,995

Not just an Elise in a different frock – the turbo engine makes this a very different beast.



Honda S2000
£5490

Although the S2000 never quite did it for us when it was new, the lure of that VTEC engine is still strong. Great value.

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STYLING & BODYKITS
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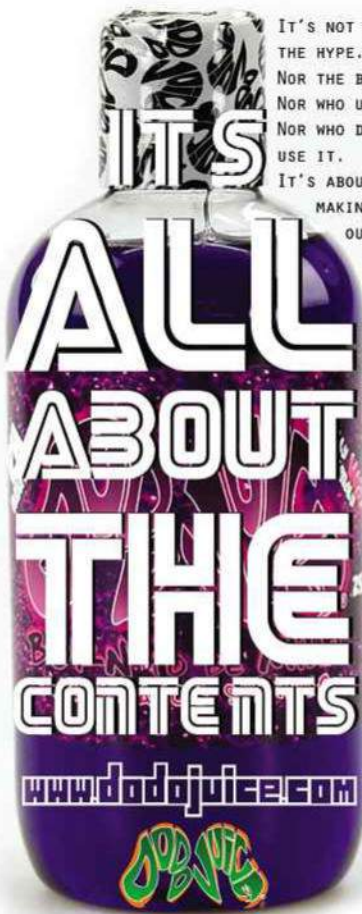
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Knowledge

The best motoring products, put through their paces by the *evo* team

VIBRA-TECHNICS BMW E36 ENGINE MOUNTS

£117.60 vibra-technics.co.uk

I was warned that these Vibra-Technics mounts would be a bit harsh on my relatively small-engined 3-series, as they are designed for the 3.2-litre M3. At tickover, when the car is cold, there is an unpleasant vibration, but at anything other than those exact revs, NVH is imperceptibly different to what you get with the standard mounts.

On the move, the new mounts make a huge difference, allowing the engine to react immediately with the car. Indeed, it's no longer a mass that feels semi-independent from the car. Through quick direction changes the car is more agile, and exiting a corner is much smoother

now, without having to wait for or anticipate any extra engine movement. The front end now feels composed at all times, even over small, sharp crests that would previously have unsettled it.

Fitting was easy too. The mounts are a similar shape and size to the standard ones. The length of the studs is also similar (rather than being significantly longer, like on other aftermarket engine mounts I've fitted), meaning the engine didn't have to be moved further to fit the Vibra-Technics ones after the standard ones were out.

Will Beaumont
(@WillBeaumont)



GARMIN NÜVICAM SATNAV

£299 halfords.com



As the name suggests, this Garmin combines a satnav with a dash camera. It features a six-inch touchscreen that displays the usual Garmin menus and maps, including useful search functions for local restaurants, fuel stations and even toilets, all provided via search app FourSquare.

The inclusion of a built-in camera enables journeys and incidents to be recorded in both video and audio and also offers lane departure warnings (although in practice the alarm is often a little too late and also sounds off every time you change lanes on the motorway...).

The camera's ability to provide a forward collision warning is a welcome safety feature, however. We also loved the nüviCam's speed camera alerts and found the car park finder helpful. Overall, a highly useful road companion.

Sam Sheehan
(@evoSamSheehan)

MUC-OFF ÜBER WAX

£40 muc-off.com

Muc-Off's Über Wax, a vivid pink substance, not only protects bodywork, it also adds a high-gloss shine usually only seen with the most premium products. Fans of beading will love the way it repels water, too.

It's quick to apply and easy to buff off (it comes with a foam applicator pad and a microfibre cloth). Originally developed for mountain bikes, the tough protection it provides works wonders on cars, too. **SS**



SEASUCKER MINI BOMBER BIKE RACK

£349.99 fisheroutdoor.co.uk

Henry Catchpole, *evo*'s intrepid features editor, recently approached me wearing a grin so wide it threatened to tear the fabric of the universe. As it turned out, he'd managed to squeeze his carbonfibre racing bike into a Porsche 911 GT3. Bravo, Henry.

Yet from the barely contained pride with which he related the feat, I knew it had been a struggle – probably a long and brutal one. It also reminded me that the unusual bike rack I've relied on week-in, week-out for the last five months is a thing of pure brilliance.

Using the same vacuum mounts our photographers employ to suspend expensive hardware from the flanks of fast-moving machinery during shoots in unforgiving locations, SeaSucker's rack brings two novel attributes to the

bicycle transportation scene: subtlety and versatility. The latter is a godsend.

Bereft of its front wheel, your bike affixes to a quick-release skewer mount with the rear wheel secured by a strap. The result is a quiet and startlingly secure way to haul about two bikes, and deciding to take a different car at the last moment needn't thwart your feverishly anticipated sufferfest.

One caveat is that the cranks need securing to the chainstay to prevent them from potentially brushing against the car's roof. This can be achieved with a spare sliver of Velcro. Otherwise this is an inspired bit of kit – I've used it on everything from a Fiat Panda to a Ferrari California. And I'm certain it will go on a GT3 with no trouble at all.

Richard Lane (@_rlane_)

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Trips & Travel

Knowledge

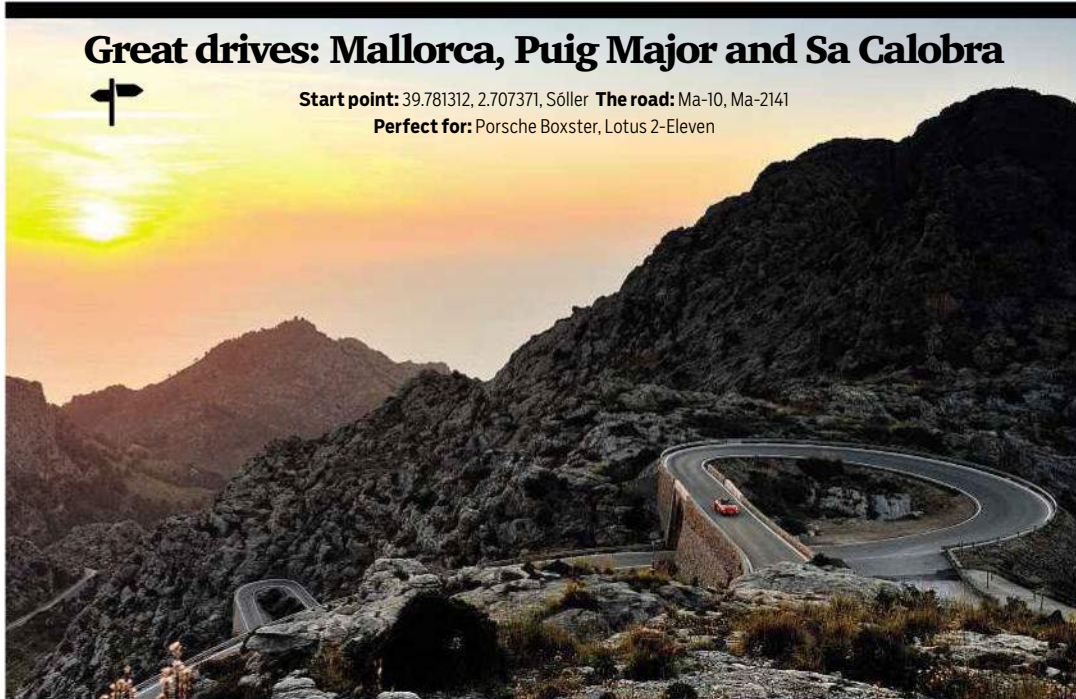
The best destinations to visit in your car

Great drives: Mallorca, Puig Major and Sa Calobra



Start point: 39.781312, 2.707371, Sóller **The road:** Ma-10, Ma-2141

Perfect for: Porsche Boxster, Lotus 2-Eleven



THE TRAMUNTANA MOUNTAIN RANGE IS ONE OF THE most spectacularly beautiful places I have ever been. UNESCO clearly agrees, as the area was awarded World Heritage status in 2011. Situated on the northern side of the Balearic island of Mallorca, it possesses a combination of coastal and almost Pyrenean drama, and at times the roads seem perfectly formed.

Beginning in the town of Sóller, head up the Ma-10, which climbs northeast towards the island's highest mountain, Puig Major. This is a relatively flowing, fast road with a white line down the middle. The pines either side frequently shroud the view, but you are always aware of how high you're climbing. It's worth pausing at the top just before you plunge into the first short tunnel. The second tunnel arrives four miles later at the end of a dazzlingly coloured reservoir fed by the Gorg Blau. Head through the rock again and soon after you emerge you'll see the arches of an old aqueduct. Turn left here for the legendary Sa Calobra.

Initially you climb and the views are all looking back inland, which is a bit of a surprise if you've seen photos and are expecting it to be all downhill to the sea. Fear not, though, because at the summit you go through a cutting and then emerge onto something that looks as though it has been inspired by the ultimate bedroom Scalextric track. There is even a corner that loops 270 degrees round and underneath itself. My advice would be to get up there very early in the day, or late, to avoid the coaches and cyclists and get the place to yourself.

The road is narrow, but not uncomfortably so, and the sightlines are very good. Note that the surface can be slippery even when it's warm. At the bottom you'll find yourself at a dead end, leaving you with perhaps the ultimate hill climb for the return journey.

Henry Catchpole
Features editor



The route



Start **Finish**
Distance: 21.5 miles Time: 55 minutes

Where to stay

Airbnb seems to be gaining ever more traction and would be worth checking out. James Villas also do some good last-minute deals (occasionally including free car hire). If you're feeling flush then there are some beautiful hotels in the small settlements of Valldemossa and Deià, both of which are down the coast from Sóller.

Watch out for

Make sure you take time to stop at the bottom of Sa Calobra and wander through the tunnels to the stunning bay that looks like something out of Jurassic Park. There are plenty of other roads on the island that are worth exploring too (some of which I'll cover in a future T&T). If you like a bit of motorsport, then a classic stage rally takes place in March.

For more driving destinations, visit:
evo.co.uk/track-and-travel

Reader road trip

Rhapsody in blue

Finishing my coffee and putting evo 209 to one side, Henry Catchpole's Great Drive on the D2 in Languedoc, France, is just the catalyst I need to give my new VW Golf R a chance to stretch its legs in the same region. It's a fine morning and, sharing the driving with my son, we explore another great route, which starts in the pretty market town of Pézenas and runs for 42 miles north-east, mainly along the D32, to Saint Mathieu de Trévières.

We join the D32 just outside Montagnac. For the next 12 miles the road is more or less straight and uninterrupted as we barrel down an avenue of plane trees. With the Golf's



panoramic sunroof open, the gruff induction roar is exhilarating. The morning sunshine flashes through the foliage like a strobe. You could only be in France.

After Gignac the D32 becomes more interesting as it rises into the hills. The countryside becomes wilder. There's a heady perfume of wild flowers in the air.

At this point the tarmac is billiard-table smooth. The Golf flows round wide, sweeping sections at full chat. The village of Aniane, with its pretty cafés, soon comes and goes, and then the road starts to twist and turn. Some sections rise and fall like a rollercoaster. The Golf, which only yesterday had cruised sedately down the autoroute, suddenly becomes sharply focused.

At Saint Martin de Londres, the road becomes more challenging as we take the D122. With a dramatic backcloth of the Pic Saint Loup mountain, we pause to take some photos before fighting for the driver's seat. The Golf then swiftly settles into a rhythm as it demolishes the remaining sweeping bends.

Finally we descend into Saint Mathieu de Trévières, where we sit in silence for a few minutes, in awe of the car and the drive, just the ping of the engine and the glorious smell of hot oil.

Stuart Calder

Email your story to henryc@evo.co.uk



Database

Key

■ = new entry this month. * = grey import. Entries in italics are for cars no longer on sale. **Issue no.** is for our most recent major test of the car (D = Driven, R = Road test or group test, F = Feature). Call 0844 844 0039 to order a back issue. **Price** is on-the-road including VAT and delivery charges. **Engine** is the car's main motor only – additional hybrid tech isn't shown. **Weight** is the car's kerb weight as quoted by the manufacturer. **bhp/ton** is the power-to-weight ratio based on manufacturer's kerb weight. **0-60mph** and **0-100mph** figures in bold are independently recorded, all other performance figures are manufacturers' claims. **CO2 g/km** is the official EC figure and **EC mpg** is the official 'Combined' figure or equivalent.

Knowledge

Superminis / Hot Hatches

	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating	
Abarth 595 Competizione	196 D	£18,960	4/1368	158/5500	170/3000	1035kg	155	7.4	-	130	155	43.5	+ Spirited engine, still looks great - Favours fun over finesse	★★★★☆
Abarth 695 Biposto	205 R	£32,990	4/1369	187/5500	184/3000	997kg	191	5.9	-	143	-	-	+ Engineered like a true Abarth product - Desirable extras make this a £50k city car	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo Mito Cloverleaf	149 R	£18,870	4/1368	168/5500	184/2500	1145kg	149	7.5	-	136	139	47.1	+ Great MultiAir engine, impressive ride - Not as feisty as we hoped	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo Giulietta QV	199 D	£28,120	4/1742	237/5750	251/2000	1320kg	182	6.0	-	151	162	40.3	+ Still looks good, and now it's got the 4C's engine - Pricey, and it has more rewarding rivals	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo Giulietta Cloverleaf	144 D	10-14	4/1742	232/5500	251/1900	1320kg	179	6.8	-	150	177	37.2	+ Shows signs of deep talent... - but should be more exciting	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo 147 GTA	187 R	03-06	6/3179	247/6200	221/4800	1360kg	185	6.0	15.5	153	-	23.3	+ Mk1 Focus RS pace without the histrionics - Slightly nose-heavy	★★★★☆
Audi S1	211 R	£24,900	4/1984	228/6000	273/1600	1315kg	176	5.8	-	155	162	40.4	+ Compliant and engaging chassis; quick, too - Looks dull without options	★★★★☆
Audi A1 quattro	181 R	13	4/1984	253/6000	258/2500	1420kg	181	5.7	-	152	199	32.8	+ Polished 253bhp all-wheel-drive A1 - Just 19 for UK, Porsche Cayman price	★★★★☆
Audi S3	188 R	£30,640	4/1984	296/5500	280/1800	1395kg	216	5.4	12.5	155	162	40.4	+ Lots of grip and one of the best-sounding four-pot turbos - Still a little too clinical	★★★★☆
Audi RS3	210 D	£39,950	5/2480	362/5500	343/1625	1520kg	242	4.3	-	155	189	34.9	+ Addictive noise, lighter on its feet than its predecessor - Still a shade sensible	★★★★☆
Audi S3	106 R	06-12	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1455kg	183	5.6	13.6	155	198	33.2	+ Very fast, very effective, very... err, quality - A little too clinical	★★★★☆
Audi RS3 Sportback	156 R	11-12	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1575kg	216	4.5	-	155	212	31.0	+ Above, with added five-pot character - Again, see above...	★★★★☆
BMW 125i M Sport	176 D	£26,020	4/1997	218/5000	228/1300	1420kg	156	6.4	-	155	154	42.8	+ Performance, price, running costs - Dull four-pot soundtrack	★★★★☆
BMW M135i	195 R	£30,835	6/2979	316/5800	332/1300	1425kg	225	4.8	12.9	155	188	35.3	+ Powertrain, noise, chassis, price - M235i looks nicer, and has an LSD on its options list	★★★★☆
BMW 130i M Sport	106 R	05-10	6/2996	261/6500	229/2750	1450kg	183	6.1	15.3	155	-	34.0	+ Fantastic engine - Suspension can still get a little boingy	★★★★☆
Citroën C1/Peugeot 107/Toyota Aygo	126 R	£8095+	3/998	68/6000	68/3600	790kg	87	14.2	-	98	103	61.4	+ Full of character and insurance-friendly - Insurance friendly power	★★★★☆
Citroën Saxo VTS	020 R	97-03	4/1587	120/6600	107/5200	935kg	130	7.6	22.6	127	-	34.9	+ Chunky, chuckable charger - Can catch out the unwary	★★★★☆
Citroën AX GT	195 R	87-92	4/1360	85/6400	86/4000	722kg	120	9.2	-	110	-	-	+ Makes terrific use of 85bhp - Feels like it's made from paper	★★★★☆
Citroën DS3 1.6 THP	142 R	£17,475	4/1598	154/6000	177/1400	1240kg	126	7.2	-	133	155	42.2	+ A proper French hot hatch - Petrolheads might find it too 'designed'	★★★★☆
Citroën DS3 Racing	153 D	11-12	4/1598	204/6000	203/2000	1240kg	167	6.5	-	146	149	-	+ Faster, feistier version of above - Not as hardcore as its 'Racing' tag suggests	★★★★☆
Fiat Panda 100HP	132 R	06-11	4/1368	99/6000	97/4250	975kg	103	9.5	-	115	154	43.5	+ Most fun per pound on the market - Optional ESP can't be turned off	★★★★☆
Fiat Punto Evo Sporting	141 D	£13,355	4/1368	133/5000	152/1750	1155kg	117	8.5	-	127	129	50.4	+ Great engine, smart styling - Dynamics don't live up to the Evo name	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST	207 R	£17,545	4/1596	179/5700	214/1600	1088kg	167	7.4	18.4	137	138	47.9	+ Chassis, price, punchy performance - Not as powerful as key rivals	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST Mountune	211 R	£18,144	4/1596	212/6000	238/1750	1088kg	198	6.4	-	140	138	-	+ One of the best mid-sized hatches made even better - Badge snobbery	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta Zetec S	123 D	08-13	4/1596	118/6000	112/4050	1045kg	115	9.9	-	120	134	48.7	+ Genuinely entertaining supermini - Growth up compared to Twingo/Swift	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta Zetec S Mountune	132 R	08-13	4/1596	138/6750	129/4500	1080kg	130	7.9	-	120	134	48.7	+ As above, with a fantastically loud exhaust... - if you're 12 years old	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST	075 D	05-08	4/1999	148/6000	140/4500	1137kg	132	7.9	-	129	-	38.2	+ Great looks, decent brakes - Disappointing chassis, gutless engine	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST185 Mountune	115 R	08	4/1999	185/6700	147/3500	1137kg	165	6.9	-	129	-	-	+ Fiesta ST gets the power it always needed - OTT exhaust note	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST TDCi Estate	206 D	£23,295	4/1997	182/3500	295/2000	1488kg	124	8.3	-	135	110	67.3	+ Performance not sacrificed at the altar of economy - Interior design still jars slightly	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST	207 R	£22,195	4/1999	247/5500	265/2000	1362kg	184	6.5	-	154	159	41.5	+ Excellent engine - Scrapy when pushed	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST Mountune	187 D	£23,220	4/1999	271/5500	295/2750	1362kg	202	5.7	-	154+	169	-	+ Great value upgrade - Steering still not as feelsome as that of some rivals	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST	119 R	05-10	5/2522	222/6000	236/1600	1392kg	162	6.7	16.8	150	224	30.4	+ Value, performance, integrity - Big engine compromises handling	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST Mountune	137 R	08-11	5/2522	256/5500	295/2500	1392kg	187	5.8	14.3	155	224	-	+ ST takes extra power in its stride - You probably still want an RS	★★★★☆
Ford Focus RS (Mk2)	195 R	09-11	5/2522	300/6500	324/2300	1467kg	208	5.9	14.2	163	225	30.5	+ Huge performance, highly capable FWD chassis - Body control is occasionally clumsy	★★★★☆
Ford Focus RS500	181 R	10-11	5/2522	345/6000	339/2500	1467kg	239	5.6	12.7	165	225	-	+ More power and presence than regular RS - Pricey	★★★★☆
Ford Focus RS (Mk1)	207 R	02-03	4/1998	212/5500	229/3500	1278kg	169	5.9	14.9	143	-	-	+ Some are great - Some are awful (so make sure you drive plenty)	★★★★☆
Ford Escort RS Cosworth	157 R	92-96	4/1993	224/6250	224/3500	1275kg	179	6.2	-	137	-	-	+ The ultimate Essex hot hatch - Unmodified ones are rare... and getting pricey...	★★★★☆
Ford Puma 1.7	095 R	97-02	4/1679	123/6300	116/4500	1041kg	120	8.6	27.6	122	-	38.2	+ Everything - Nothing. The 1.4 is worth a look too	★★★★☆
Ford Racing Puma	128 R	00-01	4/1679	153/7000	119/4500	1174kg	132	7.8	23.2	137	-	34.7	+ Exclusivity - The standard Puma does it so well	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type R	211 R	£29,995	4/1996	306/6500	295/2500	1378kg	226	5.7	-	167	170	38.7	+ Chassis is a gem - Turbo engine not as special as old NA units; styling a bit 'busy'	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type R (FN2)	102 R	07-11	4/1998	198/7800	126/7kg	158	6.8	17.5	146	215	31.0	-	+ Looks great. VTEC more accessible - Steering lacks feel, inert balance	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type R Champ'ship White	126 D	09-10	4/1998	198/7800	142/5600	1267kg	158	6.6	-	146	-	31.0	+ Limited-slip diff a welcome addition - It's not available on the standard car	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type R Mugen	195 R	09-11	4/1998	237/8300	157/6250	1233kg	195	5.9	-	155	-	-	+ Fantastic on road and track - There's only 20, and they're a tad pricey...	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type R (EP3)	075 R	01-05	4/1998	197/7400	145/5900	1204kg	166	6.8	16.9	146	-	31.7	+ Potent and great value - 'Breadvan' looks divide opinion, duff steering	★★★★☆
Kia Proceed GT	207 R	£20,200	4/1591	201/6000	195/1750	1448kg	143	7.4	-	143	171	38.2	+ Fun and appealing package - Lacks sharpness and control at its outer edges	★★★★☆
Lancia Delta Integrale	194 R	88-93	4/1995	207/5750	220/3500	1300kg	162	5.7	-	137	-	23.9	+ One of the finest cars ever built - Demands love, LHD only	★★★★☆
Mazda 2.1.5 Sport	132 R	£13,495	4/1498	102/6000	101/4000	1030kg	107	10.4	-	117	135	48.7	+ Fun and funky - Feels tinny after a Mini	★★★★☆
Mazda 3 MPS	137 R	06-13	4/2261	256/5500	280/3000	1385kg	188	6.3	14.5	155	224	29.4	+ Quick, eager and very good value - The steering's iffy	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz A45 AMG	194 R	£37,845	4/1991	355/6000	332/2250	1480kg	244	4.3	10.6	155	161	40.9	+ Blisteringly quick everywhere - Not as rewarding as some slower rivals	★★★★☆
MG3 Style	190 D	£9999	4/1498	104/6000	101/4750	1155kg	91	10.4	-	108	136	48.7	+ Decent chassis, performance and price - Thrashy engine, cheap cabin	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper (F56)	194 D	£15,300	3/1499	134/4500	162/1250	1085kg	125	7.9	-	130	105	62.8	+ Punchy three-cylinder engine, good chassis - Tubby styling	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S (F56)	196 D	£18,665	4/1998	189/4700	206/1250	1160kg	166	6.8	-	146	133	49.6	+ Still has that Mini DNA - Expensive with options; naff dash displays	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works (F56)	211 R	£23,050	4/1998	228/5200	236/1250	1200kg	193	6.3	-	153	155	42.2	+ Fast, agile, super-nimble - OE tyres lack outright grip	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works Coupe (R58)	164 R	£23,805	4/1598	208/6000	206/2000	1175kg	180	6.3	-	149	165	39.8	+ The usual raucous Mini JCW experience - But with a questionable 'helmet' roof...	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper (R56)	185 F	09-14	4/1598	120/6000	118/4250	1075kg	113	9.1	-	126	127	52.3	+ Brilliant ride and composure; could be all the Mini you need - You'll still buy the 'S'	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S (R56)	149 R	06-14	4/1598	181/5500	177/1600	1140kg	161	7.0	-	142	136	48.7	+ New engine, Mini quality - Front end not quite as direct as the old car's	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper SD (R56)	158 D	11-14	4/1995	141/4000	225/1750	1150kg	125	8.0	-	134	114	65.7	+ A quick diesel Mini with impressive mpg - But no Cooper S alternative	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works (R56)	184 R	08-14	4/1598	208/6000	206/2000	1160kg	182	7.2	16.7	148	165	39.8	+ A seriously rapid Mini - Occasionally just a little unruly	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works GP (R56)	195 R	13-14	4/1598	215/6000	206/2000	1160kg	188	6.3	-	150	165	39.8	+ Brazenly hyperactive - Too much for some roads and some tastes	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S (R50)	077 R	02-06	4/1598	168/6000	155/4000	1140kg	143	7.8	19.9	135	-	33.6	+ Strong performance, quality feel - Over-long gearing	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S Works GP (R50)	144 R	06	4/1598	215/7100	184/4600	1090kg	200	6.5	-	149	-	32.8	+ Storming engine, agility - Tacky styling 'enhancements'	★★★★☆
Nissan Juke Nismo RS	208 D	£21,650	4/1618	215/6000	206/3600	1315kg	166	7.0	-	137	165	39.2	+ Quirky character and bold styling - Not a match for a pukka hot hatch	★★★★☆
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	★★★★☆





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. It's now available as an estate, too.



Best of the Rest

The SEAT Leon Cupra 280 is a real buzz to thread along a tough road, but the Mégane 275 edges it for facility and involvement. The Fiesta ST Mountune (left) is our pick of the smaller hatches, with Peugeot's fabulously focused 208 GTi 30th close behind.

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
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 1)	095 R	'94-'96	4/1294	100/7200	80/5400	826kg	123	10.6	-	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	125	47.9	+ Agile chassis works well on tough roads - Could be more involving
Peugeot 208 GTi 30th Anniversary	211 R	£21,995	4/1598	205/5800	221/1750	1185kg	176	6.5	-	143	125	47.9	+ The most focused small hatch on sale - Nearly £4k more than a Fiesta ST Mountune
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 Cupv chassis gives bouncy ride
Renaultsport Clio 200 Turbo	184 R	£18,995	4/1618	197/6000	171/1750	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	16.7	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	200 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	251/7150	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	227/6000	221/3750	1335kg	173	5.8	17.0	145	-	23.0	+ Pocket supercar - Mid-engined handling can be tricky
Renault Clio Williams	195 R	'93-'96	4/1998	148/6100	126/4500	981kg	153	7.6	20.8	134	-	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 275 Trophy	201 D	£28,930	4/1998	271/5500	265/3000	1376kg	200	6.0	-	158	174	37.7	+ Another cracking Trophy model - Stripped-out Trophy-R is even more thrilling
Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy-R	203 R	£36,430	4/1998	271/5500	265/3000	1297kg	212	5.8	-	158	174	37.7	+ As absorbing as a 911 GT3 RS on the right road - Too uncompromising for some; pricey
Renaultsport Mégane 265 Cup	195 R	'12-'15	4/1998	261/5500	265/3000	1387kg	191	6.4	14.8	158	174	37.7	+ A hot hatch benchmark - Cupholder could be better positioned
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 230 F1 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 - F1 Team stickers in dubious taste
Renaultsport Mégane R26.R	200 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	£27,210	4/1984	276/5600	258/1750	1320kg	212	5.8	-	155	149	44.1	+ Serious pace and agility 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	-	153	190	34.0	+ Great engine, composure - Doesn't have adjustability of old Cupra R
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	217/4500	258/1500	1350kg	163	6.8	-	154	142	45.6	+ Quick, agile, roomier than a Golf - Ride is harsh for what could be a family car
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk2)	163 R	'06-'13	4/1998	197/5100	206/1700	1395kg	143	7.3	-	149	175	37.7	+ Drives like a GTi but costs much less - Green brake calipers?
Smart Fortwo Brabus	110 D	£15,375	3/999	97/5500	104/3500	780kg	126	9.9	-	96	119	54.3	+ Telling people you drive a Brabus - Them realising it's not a 720bhp S-class
Subaru Impreza 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	211 R	£17,995	4/1598	202/5800	206/1900	1278kg	161	6.5	-	143	174	37.7	+ Begs to be wrung out - You'll need the £2400 Performance Pack
Vauxhall Corsa VXR	154 R	'07-'14	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 Nring/Clubsport	164 R	'11-'13/14	4/1598	202/5750	206/2250	1166kg	176	6.5	-	143	178	-	+ VXR gets more power and a limited-slip diff - But they come at a price
Vauxhall Astra VXR (Mk2)	207 R	£27,315	4/1998	276/5500	295/2500	1475kg	190	5.9	-	155	184	34.9	+ Better than the car it replaces; loony turbo pace - Lacks RS Mégane's precision
Vauxhall Astra VXR (Mk1)	102 R	'05-'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/Scoda 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	211 R	£18,850	4/1798	189/4200	236/1450	1280kg	150	6.7	-	146	139	47.1	+ Smooth and brawny - Fiesta ST is more engaging
VW Polo GTI	154 R	'10-'14	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)	200 D	£25,765	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)	207 R	£26,580	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1351kg	163	6.5	-	153	139	47.1	+ Brilliantly resolved - Mégane 265 beats it as a pure drivers' car
VW Golf GTI (Mk7)	202 D	£28,000	4/1395	201	258	1524kg	134	7.6	-	138	35	188.0	+ The most enjoyable plug-in hybrid at this price - Golf GTI still quicker and more fun
VW Golf R (Mk7)	203 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 R (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 R (Mk6)	140 D	'10-'13	4/1984	266/6000	258/2500	1521kg	178	5.5	-	155	199	33.2	+ Great engine, tremendous pace and poise - High price, ACC only optional
VW Golf GTI (Mk5)	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-'84	4/1781	112/5800	109/3500	840kg	135	8.1	-	112	-	36.0	+ The car that started it all - Tricky to find an unmolested one
Volvo C30 T5 R-Design	122 R	'08-'12	5/2521	227/5000	236/1500	1347kg	165	6.6	16.9	149	203	32.5	+ Good-looking, desirable Volvo - Lacks edge of best hatches. Avoid auto

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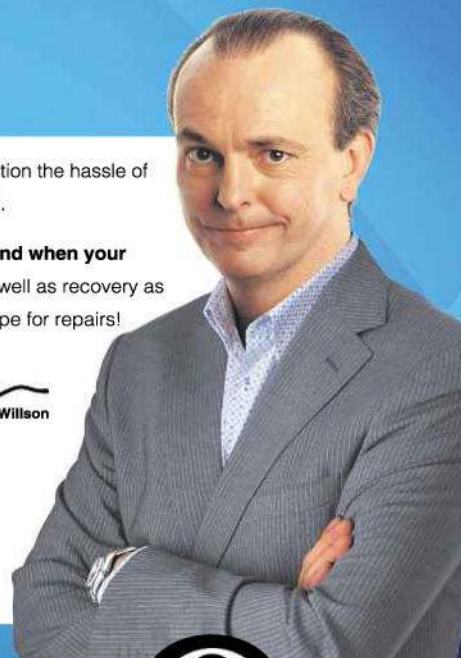


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BMW M5. The turbocharging of BMW's M-cars met with scepticism, but the current M5's 4.4-litre twin-turbo V8 feels a perfect fit. It's a brutally fast car, and there are clever (and useable) adjustable driving modes. The '30 Jahre' special edition, which has an extra 40bhp, is especially worth a look.



Best of the Rest

Mercedes' E63 AMG offers intoxicating performance, especially with the S upgrade (pictured). BMW's M3 is an appealing all-round package, but its C63 AMG rival has more approachable limits. Meanwhile, 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 cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating	
Alpina D3 Biturbo (F30)	192 D	£46,950	6/2993	345/4000	516/1500	1585kg	221	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	1610kg	255	4.2	-	190	177	37.2	+ Understated appearance, monster performance - E90 M3 is better on the limit	★★★★★
Alpina D3 (E90)	120 R	'08-'12	4/1995	211/4000	332/2000	1495kg	143	6.9	-	152	-	52.3	+ Excellent chassis, turbodiesel oomph - Rather narrow powerband	★★★★★
Alpina B5 Biturbo	149 D	£75,150	8/4395	533/5200	538/2800	1920kg	282	4.5	-	198	244	26.9	+ Big performance and top-line luxury - Driver not really involved	★★★★★
Alpina B7 Biturbo	134 D	£98,800	8/4395	533/5200	538/2800	2040kg	265	4.6	-	194	230	28.5	+ Massive performance and top-line luxury - Feels its weight when hustled	★★★★★
Aston Martin Rapide S	201 D	£147,950	12/5935	552/6650	465/5500	1990kg	282	4.2	-	203	300	21.9	+ Oozes star quality; gearbox on 2015MY cars a big improvement - It's cosy in the back	★★★★★
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	£33,540	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	£39,610	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	£56,545	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1795kg	251	4.5	10.5	174	249	26.4	+ Looks and sounds the part, thunderously fast - Harsh ride, unnatural steering	★★★★★
Audi RS4 (B7)	088 R	'06-'08	8/4163	414/7800	317/5500	1650kg	255	4.5	10.9	155	-	-	+ 414bhp at 7800rpm! And there's an estate version too - Busy under braking	★★★★★
Audi RS4 (B5)	192 R	'00-'02	6/2671	375/6100	325/2500	1865kg	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)	203 R	£77,995	8/3993	552/5700	516/1750	1935kg	290	3.6	8.2	155	229	28.8	+ Performance, foolproof powertrain, looks - Feels a bit one-dimensional	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant (C6)	116 R	'08-'10	10/4991	572/6250	479/1500	2025kg	287	4.3	9.7	155	333	20.2	+ The world's most powerful estate - Power isn't everything	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant (C5)	052 R	'02-'04	8/4172	444/5700	413/1950	1865kg	242	4.8	11.6	155	-	19.3	+ The ultimate estate car? - Numb steering	★★★★★
Audi RS7	208 R	£84,480	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	£63,375	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	£80,690	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	206 D	£45,495	5/2480	335/5300	332/1600	1655kg	206	4.8	-	155	203	32.1	+ Surprisingly characterful; better than many RSs - High centre of gravity	★★★★★
Bentley Flying Spur V8	200 D	£142,800	8/3997	500/6000	487/1700	2342kg	217	4.9	-	183	254	25.9	+ Effortless performance with real top-end kick - Determinedly unsporting	★★★★★
Bentley Flying Spur	185 D	£153,300	12/5998	616/6000	590/1600	2400kg	261	4.3	-	200	343	19.0	+ More power than old Flying Spur Speed - Feels its weight; engine sounds dull	★★★★★
Bentley Mulsanne	178 F	£229,360	8/6752	505/4200	752/1750	2610kg	197	5.1	-	184	342	19.3	+ Drives like a modern Bentley should - Shame it doesn't look like one too	★★★★★
Bentley Mulsanne Speed	210 D	£252,000	8/6752	530/4200	811/1750	2610kg	206	4.8	-	190	342	19.3	+ Characterful; superb build quality - A bit pricey...	★★★★★
BMW 320d (F30)	168 R	£29,475	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	£30,470	4/1997	242/5000	258/1250	1430kg	172	5.8	-	155	149	44.8	+ New-age four-pot 328i is great all-rounder - We miss the six-cylinder soundtrack	★★★★★
BMW 330d M Sport (F30)	180 D	£36,975	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 435i Gran Coupe	203 D	£41,865	6/2979	302/5800	295/1200	1585kg	194	5.5	-	155	174	34.9	+ Superb straight-six, fine ride/handling balance - 335i saloon weighs and costs less	★★★★★
BMW M3 (F80)	211 R	£56,590	6/2979	425/5500	406/1850	1520kg	284	4.1	8.6	155	204	32.1	+ Looks, performance, practicality - Body control on rough roads; engine lacks character	★★★★★
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	334/3750	1580kg	285	4.4	-	180	295	-	+ Saloon chassis + weight savings + GTS engine = best E90 M3 - Just 67 were made	★★★★★
BMW 528i (F10)	164 D	£36,570	4/1997	242/5000	258/1250	1710kg	144	6.2	-	155	152	41.5	+ Four-pot 528i is downsizing near its best - You'll miss the straight-six sound effects	★★★★★
BMW 535i (F10)	141 D	£44,560	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)	208 R	£73,960	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 (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	£98,145	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	£64,020	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	£63,065	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	£93,070	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	£71,575	8/4395	449/5500	480/2000	2020kg	226	4.7	-	155	199	-	+ Well specced, impressively refined - Lags far behind the Mercedes S-class	★★★★★
Brabus Bullit	119 R	£330,000	12/6233	720/5100	811/2100	1850kg	395	3.8	-	217	-	-	+ Seven hundred and twenty bhp - Three hundred thousand pounds	★★★★★
Cadillac CTS-V	148 R	£67,030	6/2995	335/6500	332/4500	1590kg	214	4.9	-	155	194	34.9	+ It'll stand out among M-cars and AMGs - But the novelty might wear off	★★★★★
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	-	-	-	+ Road-going Group A racecar - Don't shout about the power output!	★★★★★
Honda Accord Type R	012 R	'98-'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	£39,995	6/3498	359/6800	402/5000	1750kg	208	5.1	-	155	144	45.6	+ Good powertrain, promising chassis - Lacklustre steering, strong rivals	★★★★★
Jaguar XE S	210 D	£44,865	6/2995	335/6500	332/4500	1590kg	214	4.9	-	155	194	34.9	+ Great chassis, strong powertrain - Tight in the back	★★★★★
Jaguar XF 3.0 V6 Diesel S	145 D	£46,615	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 3.0 V6 Supercharged	178 D	£48,510	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	£65,440	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1800kg	284	4.8	10.2	155	270	24.4	+ Brilliant blend of pace and refinement - Doesn't sound as special as it is	★★★★★
Jaguar XFR-S	208 R	£79,995	8/5000	542/6500	501/2500	1800kg	306	4.4	-	186	270	24.4	+ XFR gets turned up to 12 - Starting to feel its age	★★★★★
Jaguar XFR-S Sportbrake	203 R	£82,495	8/5000	542/6500	501/2500	1892kg	291	4.6	-	186	297	22.2	+ Looks fantastic, huge performance, nice balance - Not as sharp as the saloon	★★★★★
Jaguar XJ 3.0 V6 Diesel	148 D	£56,870	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	£92,395	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1805kg	302	4.4	-	174	270	24.4	+ Hot-rod vibe, fine cabin - Opinion-dividing looks	★★★★★

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Saloons / Estates / 4x4s

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft./rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating	
Jaguar 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	★★★★★
Land Rover Discovery Sport	205 D	£32,395	4/2179	187/3500	310/1750	1863kg	100	9.8	-	117	159	46.3	+ Style, packaging, refinement - Will need to prove Sport tag in UK	★★★★★
Lexus IS F	151 R	'07-'12	8/4969	417/6600	372/5200	1744kg	247	4.7	10.9	173	270	24.4	+ Shockingly good Lexus - The M3's available as a (second hand) four-door too	★★★★★
Lotus Carlton	170 R	'91-'93	6/3615	377/5200	419/4200	1658kg	231	4.8	10.6	176	-	17.0	+ The Millennium Falcon of saloon cars - Every drive a work-out	★★★★★
Maserati Ghibli	186 D	£52,615	6/2979	325/5000	406/1750	1810kg	182	5.6	-	163	223	29.4	+ Bursting with character, good value compared to Quattroporte - It's still a big car	★★★★★
Maserati Ghibli S	198 D	£63,760	6/2979	404/5500	406/4500	1810kg	227	5.0	-	177	242	27.2	+ Stands out from the crowd; sounds good too - Chassis lacks finesse, engine lacks reach	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte S	184 D	£80,115	6/2979	404/5500	406/1750	1860kg	221	5.1	-	177	242	27.2	+ Tempting alternative to V8 - Feel-free steering, secondary ride lacks decorum	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte GTS	179 D	£108,185	8/3798	523/6800	479/2250	1900kg	280	4.7	-	190	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	425/7000	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	206 D	£42,270	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 CLA45 AMG	185 R	£44,595	4/1991	355/6000	332/2250	1510kg	239	4.8	-	155	175	37.7	+ An aggressive and focused sports crossover - Low on driver interaction	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG C63	209 D	£59,800	8/3982	469/5500	479/1750	1640kg	291	4.1	-	155	192	34.5	+ Fast and feelsome - Lacks the ultimate finesse and response of the C63 S	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG C63 S	211 R	£66,545	8/3982	503/5500	516/1750	1655kg	309	4.0	-	155	192	34.5	+ Tremendous twin-turbo V8 power - Not quite as focused as an M division car	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG	151 R	'07-'14	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1655kg	277	4.4	9.7	160	280	23.5	+ Monstrous pace and extremely engaging - Same-era M3 is 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-AMG E63	187 D	£74,115	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-AMG E63 S	208 R	£84,710	8/5461	571/5500	590/1750	1795kg	327	4.1	-	155	229	28.8	+ Effortless power; intuitive and approachable - Dim-witted auto 'box	★★★★★
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	134 D	'07-'14	8/6208	451/6800	465/5200	1765kg	298	4.5	-	155	295	22.4	+ As below, but with an extra 10bhp and squarer headlights - Steering still vague	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG	096 D	'06-'09	8/6208	507/6800	465/5200	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	1700kg	271	4.8	10.2	155	-	21.9	+ M5-humbling grunt, cossetting ride - Speed limits	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz S63 AMG L	191 D	£119,835	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 SL63 AMG S	199 D	£86,500	8/5461	571/5500	590/1750	1995kg	327	4.1	-	155	231	28.5	+ Remains quick and characterful - Dated gearbox, no four-wheel drive option in the UK	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG	178 R	'11-'14	8/5461	518/5250	516/1700	1795kg	293	4.2	-	155	231	28.5	+ Monster performance, 549bhp an option - Not as desirable as a Bentley or Aston	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG	099 R	'06-'11	8/6208	507/6100	464/2650	1905kg	270	4.5	-	155	345	19.5	+ Beauty, comfort, awesome performance - M5 has the edge on B-roads	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz ML63 AMG	176 D	£86,920	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	2270kg	232	4.2	-	155	276	23.9	+ Great engine, surprisingly good dynamics - £85K buys a Boxster and an ML350...	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz G63 AMG	172 R	£124,000	8/5461	537/5500	560/2000	2475kg	220	5.4	-	130	322	-	+ It exists: epic soundtrack - Ancient chassis, silly price	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-300 SST	118 R	'08-'13	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	'08-'13	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 MR FQ-340	088 R	'05-'07	4/1997	345/6800	321/4600	1400kg	250	4.3	10.9	157	-	-	+ Gives Porsche drivers nightmares - Points. Lots of	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo IX MR FQ-360	181 R	'05-'07	4/1997	366/6887	363/3200	1400kg	266	3.9	-	157	-	-	+ Well-executed engine upgrades - Prison food	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VIII	055 R	'03-'04	4/1997	276/6500	289/3500	1410kg	199	5.1	-	157	-	-	+ The Evo grows up - Brakes need beefing up	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VIII MR FQ-300	057 R	'03-'05	4/1997	305/6800	289/3500	1400kg	221	4.8	-	157	-	20.5	+ Extra pace, extra attitude - Extra money	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VII	031 R	'02-'03	4/1997	276/6500	282/3500	1360kg	206	5.0	13.0	140	-	20.4	+ Terrific all-rounder - You tell us	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VII RS Sprint	041 D	'02-'03	4/1997	320/6500	327/6200	1260kg	258	4.4	-	150	-	-	+ Ruthlessly focused road weapon - For the truly committed	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VI Mäkinen Edition	200 R	'00-'01	4/1997	276/6500	275/2750	1365kg	205	4.6	-	150	-	-	+ Our favourite Evo - Subtle it is not	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera 4S	186 D	£86,080	6/2997	414/6000	383/1750	1870kg	225	4.8	-	177	208	31.7	+ Strong performance and typically fine Porsche chassis - Misses characterful V8 of old 'S'	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera GTS	208 R	£93,391	8/4806	434/6700	383/3500	1925kg	229	4.4	-	178	249	26.4	+ Vivacious V8, entertaining balance - Can feel light on performance next to turbo'd rivals	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera Turbo	137 R	£108,006	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 S	205 R	£43,648	6/2997	335/5500	339/1450	1865kg	183	5.4	-	157	204	31.4	+ No less compelling than the Turbo - Although lacks its ultimate speed and agility	★★★★★
Porsche Macan Turbo	207 D	£59,648	6/3604	394/6000	406/1350	1925kg	208	4.5	11.1	165	208	30.7	+ Doesn't feel like an SUV - Still not a match for a proper sports saloon	★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne GTS (Mk2, V6)	211 D	£72,523	6/3604	434/6000	442/1600	2110kg	209	5.2	-	163	228	28.3	+ The driver's Cayenne... - but why would a driver want an SUV?	★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne GTS (Mk2, V8)	173 D	'12-'15	8/4806	414/6500	380/3500	2085kg	202	5.6	-	162	251	26.4	+ Dynamically the best SUV of its era - At two tons, it's still no sports car	★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (Mk2)	202 D	£93,574	8/4806	513/6000	533/2250	2185kg	239	4.5	-	173	261	25.2	+ Remarkable performance, handling, completeness - Bigger, heavier, pricier than Macan	★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne Turbo S (Mk2)	184 D	£118,455	8/4806	562/6000	590/2500	2235kg	255	4.1	-	176	267	24.6	+ More power and torque than a Zonda S 7.3 - In an SUV	★★★★★
Range Rover Evoque Coupe S14	160 D	£46,660	4/1999	237/6000	251/1900	1670kg	144	7.0	-	135	199	-	+ Striking looks, sporting dynamics - Hefty price, and petrol version is auto-only	★★★★★
Range Rover Sport V8 Supercharged	186 D	£84,350	8/5000	503/6000	460/2500	2335kg	219	5.0	-	155	298	21.7	+ Deceptively quick and capable sports SUV - It's still got a weight problem	★★★★★
Range Rover Sport SVR	209 D	£95,150	8/5000	542/6000	501/3500	2335kg	236	4.5	-	162	298	21.7	+ Strong on-road dynamics combined with genuine off-road ability - Sharper rivals	★★★★★
Range Rover SDV8	180 D	£80,850	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	£216,864	12/6592	563/5250	575/1500	2360kg	242	4.7	-	155	317	20.8	+ It's quicker than you think - It's more enjoyable drive solely	★★★★★
Rolls-Royce Phantom	054 R	£310,200	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	201 R	£28,995	4/2457	296/6000	300/4000	1534kg	196	5.2	-	158	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 RB200	105 R	'07	4/2457	316/6000	347/4000	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 PI - Lost its throbby flat-four voice	★★★★★
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 PI	200 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													

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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 fabulous all-rounder, while the Lotus Evija S Roadster counters with a more focused driving experience. Jaguar's F-type also impresses in both V6 (left) and V8 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 4C Spider	211 D	£59,500	4/1742	237/6000	258/2200	940kg	256	4.5	-	160	161	40.9	+ Stunningly beautiful; better steering than coupe - Still has the coupe's other foibles
Alfa Romeo 8C Spider	161 R	£84,691	4/1998	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	-	158	-	-	+ As mad as ever - Rain
Ariel Atom 3.5R	198 R	£64,800	4/1998	350/8400	243/6100	550kg	647	2.6	-	155	-	-	+ Remarkable balance, poise and pace - Pricey
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 Mugen	165 R	£12-13	4/1998	270/8300	188/6000	550kg	499	2.9	-	150	-	-	+ Perfect engine for the Atom's chassis - Only ten were made
Ariel Atom V8 500	165 R	£10-12	8/3000	475/10500	284/7750	550kg	877	3.0	5.8	170	-	-	+ An experience unlike anything else on Planet Car - £150K for an Atom
Ariel Nomad	210 R	£33,000	4/2354	235/7200	221/4300	670kg	365	3.4	-	134	-	-	+ Off-road capabilities make for a super plaything - No Bluetooth
Aston Martin V8 Vantage Roadster	130 R	£89,994	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	£108,995	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 S Roadster	202 D	£147,000	12/5935	565/6750	451/5750	1745kg	329	4.1	-	201	343	19.2	+ A brilliant two-seat roadster... - let down by a frustrating gearbox
Aston Martin V12 Vantage Roadster	175 R	£12-14	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	£141,995	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	207 D	£41,085	4/1984	306/5800	280/1800	1450kg	214	5.2	-	155	169	38.7	+ A serious proposition, ranking close behind a Boxster S - Coupe still looks better
Audi TT Roadster	122 D	£08-14	4/1984	268/6000	258/2500	1455kg	187	5.6	-	155	189	34.9	+ Effortlessly quick - Long-term appeal open to question
Audi TT RS Roadster	133 D	£09-14	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1510kg	225	4.7	-	155	212	31.0	+ Terrific engine... - is the best thing about it
Audi S5 Cabriolet	130 D	£46,770	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 RS3 Cabriolet	179 D	£69,505	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	£102,385	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	£123,485	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	£124,255	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	£150,200	8/3993	500/6000	487/1700	2395kg	212	4.7	-	187	254	25.9	+ One of the world's best topless GTs - Still no sports car
Bentley Continental GT V8 S Convertible	194 D	£160,500	8/3993	521/6000	502/1700	2395kg	221	4.5	-	191	258	25.4	+ A true driver's Bentley - Excessively heavy; feels like it could give more
Bentley Conti GT Speed Convertible	187 D	£181,000	12/5998	626/6000	605/1700	2420kg	263	4.1	-	203	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
BMW M235i Convertible	207 D	£37,710	6/2979	321/5800	332/1300	1600kg	204	5.2	-	155	199	33.2	+ Neat styling; great drivetrain - Loss of dynamic ability compared with coupe
BMW Z4 sDrive 35i M Sport (Mk2)	186 D	£43,005	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 M3 Convertible	194 D	£45,680	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 435i Convertible (F83)	202 D	£61,145	6/2979	425/5500	406/1850	1750kg	247	4.6	-	155	213	31.0	+ As good as fast four-seat drop-tops get... - but still not as good as a coupe or saloon
BMW M3 Convertible (E93)	119 D	£08-13	8/3999	444/8300	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 Z8	026 R	£00-03	8/4941	400/6600	369/3800	1585kg	256	4.8	11.1	155	-	14.4	+ M5-powered super-sportster - M5's more fun to drive
Caterham Seven 160	198 R	£19,330	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 270	209 R	£22,995	4/1595	135/6800	122/4100	540kg	254	5.0	-	122	-	-	+ Feisty engine, sweetly balanced, manic and exciting - The temptation of more power
Caterham Seven 360	209 R	£26,995	4/1999	180/7300	143/6100	560kg	327	4.8	-	130	-	-	+ Extra power is welcome - You'll need the six-speed gearbox to make the most of it
Caterham Seven 420	209 R	£29,995	4/1999	210/7600	150/6300	560kg	381	3.8	-	136	-	-	+ It's the one we built for ourselves - Trickier on the limit than lesser-powered Sevens
Caterham Seven 620R	187 R	£49,995	4/1999	311/7700	219/7350	545kg	580	2.8	-	155	-	-	+ Banzai on track, yet still relevant on the road - £50k for a Seven?
Caterham Seven CSR	094 R	£46,495	4/2261	256/7500	200/6200	565kg	460	3.8	-	155	-	-	+ Brilliant for high days, holidays and trackdays - Wet Wednesdays
Caterham Seven Roadsport 125	105 R	£07-14	4/1595	125/6100	120/5350	539kg	235	5.9	-	112	-	-	+ Great debut for new Ford-engined model - Bigger drivers need SV model
Caterham Seven Supersport	165 R	£11-14	4/1595	140/6900	120/5790	520kg	273	4.9	-	120	-	-	+ One of the best Caterhams is also one of the cheapest of its era - It's quite minimalist
Caterham Seven Supersport R	180 D	£7-14	4/1999	180/7300	143/6100	535kg	342	4.8	-	130	-	-	+ One of the best road-and-track Sevens - Impractical, noisy, uncomfortable
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 Superlight R500	123 R	£08-14	4/1999	263/8500	177/7200	506kg	528	2.9	-	150	-	-	+ Better power-to-weight ratio than a Veyron! - Until you add the driver
Caterham 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 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 R500	200 R	£99-06	4/1796	230/8600	155/7200	460kg	510	3.6	8.8	146	-	-	+ The K-series Seven at its very best - No cup holders
Donkervoort D8 GTO Performance	185 R	£120,000	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 T	198 D	£154,490	8/3855	552/7500	557/4750	1729kg	324	3.6	-	196	250	26.9	+ Turbocharged engine is a triumph - Still places daily useability above outright thrills
Ferrari California	171 D	£08-14	8/4297	483/7750	372/5000	1735kg	283	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	£56,745	6/2995	335/6500	332/3500	1587kg	214	5.5	-	161	234	28.8	+ Beautiful, enjoyable, responsive - Noticeably junior to the V6 S
Jaguar F-type S Convertible	183 R	£65,745	6/2995	375/6500	339/3500	1604kg	238	5.3	-	171	234	28.8	+ Better-damped and more rounded than the V8 S - A Boxster S is £20k cheaper
Jaguar F-type R Convertible	£92,295	6/5000	542/6500	501/3500	1665kg	331	4.0	-	186	255	26.4	-	+ Pace, characterful V8 - Costs £25k more than the S
Jaguar F-type V8 S Convertible	183 R	£13-14	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 XKR Convertible	130 R	£09-14	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1725kg	296	4.6	-	155	292	23.0	+ Fantastic 5-litre V8 - Loses sporting ground to its main foes
Jaguar XKR-S Convertible	167 R	£11-14	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1725kg	319	4.2	-	186	292	23.0	+ Loud and mad; most exciting Jag in years - It was also the most expensive in years
Jaguar XKR	£06-09	8/4196	4/1796	414/6250	413/4000	1705kg	247	5.0	-	155	-	-	+ First Jag sports car for years - Overweight detailing
KTM X-Bow GT	183 D	£95,880	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	£87,480	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
Lotus Elise 1.6	144 D	£30,900	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

PAST master

In 2001, the 456bhp GT2 was the most powerful production Porsche ever. Richard Meaden drove it

Porsche 911 GT2 (996.1) Issue 030, April 2001

'A hundred kilos lighter than the Turbo, power up to a mind-numbing 456bhp, rear-wheel-drive only, and a top speed of just under 200mph. And the only aid to traction control is a good old-fashioned limited-slip differential.

'The engine hits its stride early, every one of its 457lb ft hitting the road hard. The tail slithers to the left as the diff

struggles to bring things under control. Punch into third and the whole thing happens again. It's devastatingly fast.

'With so much low-end torque you have to be mindful of the tail stepping out, and when it does slide you need to be ready to catch it, but assuming you get the corrective lock dialled-in quickly enough, the GT2 is surprisingly friendly.'



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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 Club Racer	183 R	£30,900	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	£37,200	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	924kg	239	4.2	-	145	175	37.5	+ New supercharged Elise boasts epic grip and pace - £37k before (pricey) options...
Lotus Elise S Club Racer	189 D	£37,200	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 Elise S Cup	207 D	£43,500	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	932kg	237	4.2	-	140	175	37.5	+ Rewards precision like no other Elise - You can't remove the roof
Lotus Exige S Roadster	186 R	£55,500	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1166kg	301	3.8	-	145	235	28.0	+ Like the hard-top Exige S, but more road-friendly - Boxster S is a better all-rounder
Lotus Elise R	068 R	'04-'11	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	860kg	223	5.6	13.9	150	196	34.4	+ Most thrillsome Elise yet - Blaring engine note
Lotus Elise SC	131 R	'08-'11	4/1794	218/8000	156/5000	870kg	254	4.5	11.4	148	199	33.2	+ All the usual Elise magic - Supercharged engine lacks sparkle
Lotus Elise S 1.8	104 R	'06-'10	4/1794	134/6200	127/4200	860kg	158	6.3	18.7	127	-	37.2	+ Brilliant entry-level Elise - Precious little
Lotus Elise 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-'01	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	199/7000	670kg	382	3.8	-	150	-	-	+ As good to drive as it is to look at - Not hardcore enough for some
Lotus 2-Eleven GT4	138 R	'09-'11	4/1796	266/8200	199/7200	670kg	403	3.7	-	155	-	-	+evo Track Car of the Year 2009 - It's a 76-grand Lotus with no roof
Lotus 2-Eleven	126 R	'07-'11	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	720kg	267	4.3	-	140	-	-	+ Not far off supercharged car's pace - Pricey once it's made road-legal
Lotus 340R	126 R	'00	4/1796	190/7800	146/5000	658kg	293	4.5	12.5	126	-	-	+ Hardcore road-racer... that looks like a dune buggy from Mars
Lotus Elan SE	095 R	'89-'95	4/1588	165/6600	148/4200	1022kg	164	6.7	-	137	-	21.0	+ Awesome front-drive chassis - Rather uninvolved
Maserati GranCabrio	142 D	£98,940	8/4691	434/7000	332/4750	1980kg	223	5.2	-	177	337	19.5	+ As good to drive as it is to look at - Lacks the grunt of some rivals
Maserati GranCabrio Sport	161 D	£104,535	8/4691	444/7000	376/4750	1980kg	228	5.0	-	177	377	19.5	+ Looks, performance, cruising ability - Brakes could be sharper
Maserati GranCabrio MC	185 D	£112,370	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)		£18,495	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	4/1999	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	1070kg	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 ragtops don't get much better - Cheap cabin
Mazda MX-5 1.6 (Mk1)	131 R	'89-'97	4/1597	115/6500	100/5500	971kg	120	9.0	-	114	-	-	+ The original and still (pretty) much the best - Less than rigid
Mercedes-Benz SLK350 Sport	161 R	£44,605	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	£55,345	8/5439	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 Series	110 R	'07-'08	8/5439	394/5750	383/3750	1495kg	268	4.9	11.2	174	-	-	+ AMG gets serious - Dull-witted TG-Tronic auto box, uneven dynamics
Mercedes-Benz SL500	169 D	£81,915	8/4663	429/5250	516/1800	1710kg	255	4.6	-	155	212	31.0	+ Wafly performance, beautifully engineered - Lacks ultimate sports car feel
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	171 D	£110,510	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	£170,815	12/5980	621/4800	737/2300	1875kg	336	4.0	-	155	270	24.4	+ Chassis just about deals with the power - Speed limits
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	117 D	'08-'13	8/6208	518/6800	464/5200	1970kg	278	4.6	-	155	328	20.0	+ More focused than old SL55 AMG - Lost some of its all-round appeal
Mercedes-Benz SL55 AMG	070 R	'02-'07	8/5439	493/6100	516/2650	1955kg	256	4.6	10.2	155	-	-	+ As fast as a Murciélago - Not as much fun
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG	077 D	'04-'10	12/5980	604/4800	737/2000	2035kg	302	4.1	-	155	-	-	+ Gob-smacking performance - Gob-smacking pricey
Mercedes-Benz SL55 AMG Roadster	167 R	'12-'14	8/6208	563/6800	479/4750	1660kg	345	3.7	-	197	308	21.4	+ Loses none of the coupe's talents - But (understandably) loses the gullwing doors
Mini JCW Convertible (R57)	130 R	£25,295	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	198 R	£25,950	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 Speedster	202 R	£71,140	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1000kg	368	4.2	-	148	282	23.3	+ Fantastic old-school roadster experience - Gets unsettled by big bumps
Morgan Plus 8	171 R	£86,345	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1100kg	334	4.4	-	155	256	25.7	+ Hilarious mix of old looks and new mechanicals - Refinement is definitely old-school
Morgan Aero SuperSports	145 R	£128,045	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1180kg	312	4.2	-	170	-	-	+ As above, with a V8 and targa top - It's proper supercar money
Morgan Aero 8	105 R	'02-'08	8/4799	362/6300	361/3400	1100kg	334	4.5	-	170	-	25.2	+ Glorious sound, view over bonnet, dynamics - Awkward-looking rear
Nissan 370Z Roadster	143 R	'10-'14	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
Porsche Boxster (981)	172 R	£38,810	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	£47,035	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 electric steering
Porsche Boxster GTS (981)	203 D	£52,879	6/3436	325/6700	273/4500	1345kg	246	5.0	-	174	211	31.4	+ Superb dynamics, fantastic engine, great looks - Sport suspension is very firm
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 2.7)	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	£82,169	6/3436	345/7400	288/5600	1470kg	238	5.0	-	177	216	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	£92,204	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1485kg	270	4.7	-	187	228	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	£81,300	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 RXC Turbo 500	209 D	£143,400	6/3496	530/6100	481/5000	1100kg	490	2.6	-	185	-	-	+ Huge performance, intuitive adjustability, track ability - Compromised for road use
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
Toyota MR2	187 R	'00-'06	4/1794	138/6400	125/4400	975kg	141	7.2	21.2	130	-	38.2	+ Tight lines, taut dynamics - Minimal luggage space
TVR Tamora	070 R	'01-'07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1050kg	338	4.5	-	160	-	-	+ Well-sorted soft-top TVR - Awkward styling
TVR Tuscan Convertible	091 R	'05-'07	6/3996	365/6800	315/6000	1100kg	337	3.8	8.1	195+	-	-	+ Spirit of the Griff reborn - Over 195mph? Really?
TVR Chimaera S.0	007 R	'93-'03	8/4988	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	4.6	-	167	-	26.4	+ Gorgeous noise, tarmac-rippling grunt - Details
TVR Griffith 4.3	068 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	+ Gruff diamond - A few rough edges
Vauxhall VX220	023 R	'00-'04	4/2198	145/5800	150/4000	875kg	168	5.6	-	136	-	34.4	+ Absurdly good Vauxhall - The badge?
Vauxhall VX220 Turbo	066 R	'03-'05	4/1998	197/5500	184/1950	930kg	215	4.7	-	151	-	-	+ Nothing comes close for the money - Marginal everyday usability
Zenos E10 S	208 R	£29,995	4/1999	250/7000	295/2500	725kg	350	4.0	-	145	-	-	+ Neutral and exploitable - We need to try one on track



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Our Choice

Porsche 911 GT3. You might think the GT3's win at *evo* Car of the Year 2013 was a foregone conclusion, but neither of the last two GT3s (the 997.2 and 997.1) claimed an *eCoty* title. Yet the 991 managed it, and in a vintage year too (Ferrari F12, Merc SLS Black). Yes, it really is that good.



Best of the Rest

Mercedes' AMG GT S is deeply satisfying on every level – we prefer it to the Porsche 911 Turbo and Nissan GT-R. Aston's V8 Vantage N430 and V12 Vantage S are incredibly well-sorted drivers' cars, the Cayman GT4 is as good as the hype suggests, while Jaguar's F-type R Coupe is the best F-type yet.

Coupes / GTs

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine c/y/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	eVO rating
Alfa Romeo 4C	209 R	£51,500	4/1742	237/6000	258/2200	895kg	269	4.5	-	160	157	41.5	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Carbonfibre tub, mini-supercar looks - Hot hatch engine, clunky gearbox
Alfa Romeo 8C Competizione	120 R	£72,000	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1585kg	288	4.1	-	181	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Looks, exclusivity, noise, balance - They're all sold
Alpina B4 Biturbo	206 R	£50,950	6/2993	345/4000	516/1500	1585kg	221	4.6	-	173	139	53.3	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Fifth-gear oversteer - Sounds like a diesel; fuel economy not as good as you might hope
Alpina B4 Biturbo	206 R	£58,950	6/2979	404/5500	442/3000	1615kg	254	4.2	-	188	177	37.2	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + More fluid than the M4; better traction, too - Not as precise as the M-car over the limit
Alpina B3 Biturbo (E92)	108 R	£72,000	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	£72,000	6/2979	402/6000	398/4500	1535kg	266	4.4	-	186	224	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Alpina's M3 alternative - Auto gearbox frustrates when pressing on
Aston Martin V8 Vantage	169 D	£84,995	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1630kg	262	4.7	-	180	328	20.4	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + 2012 upgrades keep the V8 Vantage on song - Starting to feel a little dated, though
Aston Martin V8 Vantage N430	210 R	£89,995	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1610kg	271	4.5	-	189	321	20.5	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Malleable, involving, can still hold its own - Never feels rampantly quick
Aston Martin V8 Vantage S	168 R	£94,995	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	343	19.2	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + The best car Aston Martin currently makes - Old-school automated 'box
Aston Martin V12 Vantage	146 R	£99,000	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	£138,000	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1680kg	308	4.2	-	190	388	17.3	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + The looks, the noise, the way it drives - It's several times the price of a V12 Vantage
Aston Martin DB9	178 R	£133,495	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 DBS	142 R	£72,000	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1695kg	306	4.2	-	191	388	17.3	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Stupendous engine, gearbox, brakes - Pricey. Can bite the unwary
Audi TT 2.0 TFSI (Mk3)	204 R	£29,915	4/1984	227/4500	213/1650	1230kg	188	6.0	-	155	137	47.9	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Desirable, grippy and effortlessly quick - Still not the last word in interaction
Audi TT 2.0 TFSI quattro (Mk3)	203 D	£32,860	4/1984	227/4500	213/1650	1335kg	173	5.3	-	155	149	44.1	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Looks, interior, decent performance and handling - Lacks ultimate involvement
Audi TT S (Mk3)	209 R	£38,790	4/1984	306/5800	280/1800	1265kg	228	4.9	-	155	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + The most dynamically interesting TT yet - Still not as interactive as a Cayman
Audi TT 2.0 TFSI (Mk2)	155 R	£26,440	4/1984	208/4300	258/1600	1295kg	163	6.3	15.7	152	154	42.8	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Front-driver loses nothing to quattro TTs - Steers like a computer game
Audi TT S (Mk2)	193 R	£38,790	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 (Mk2)	158 R	£99,740	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 (Mk2)	185 D	£72,000	5/2480	335/5500	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	£55,000	4/1781	237/5700	236/2300	1390kg	173	5.9	-	155	-	30.3	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Deliciously purposeful interior, crisp chassis - Numb steering
Audi S5	189 D	£43,665	6/2995	328/5500	325/2900	1675kg	199	4.9	-	155	190	34.9	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Supercharged V6 makes S5 cleaner and faster - Poor body control
Audi RS5	206 R	£59,870	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1715kg	263	4.5	-	155	246	26.9	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Brilliant engine and improved chassis - Lack of suspension travel; inconsistent steering
Audi R8 V8	201 R	£93,785	8/4163	424/7900	317/4500	1560kg	276	4.1	9.9	188	332	19.9	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + A true 911 alternative - Exclusivity comes at a price
Audi R8 V10	181 D	£114,885	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	£126,885	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 LMX	208 R	£160,000	10/5204	562/8000	398/6500	1595kg	358	3.4	-	198	299	21.9	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + More of everything that makes the R8 great - S-tronic transmission not perfect
Audi R8 GT	169 F	£102,000	10/5204	552/8000	398/6500	1520kg	369	3.6	-	199	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Everything we love about the R8 - Not as hardcore as we wanted
Bentley Continental GT V8	178 R	£140,300	8/3993	500/6000	487/1700	2220kg	229	4.6	-	188	246	27.0	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + A proper drivers' Bentley with decent economy - V12 suddenly seems pointless
Bentley Continental GT V8 S	204 F	£149,800	8/3993	521/6000	502/1700	2220kg	238	4.3	-	192	250	26.4	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + An even better drivers' Bentley - Vast weight makes its presence felt in harder driving
Bentley Continental GT	152 D	£150,500	12/5998	567/6000	516/1700	2245kg	257	4.3	-	197	338	19.5	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + 200mph in utter comfort - Weight, thirst
Bentley Continental GT Speed	205 D	£154,400	12/5998	626/6000	605/1700	2245kg	283	4.0	-	206	338	19.5	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Desirability meets exclusivity and performance - Ageing styling
Bentley Continental GT3-R	203 D	£237,500	8/3993	572/6000	518/1700	2120kg	274	3.6	-	170	295	22.2	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + The best-handling Continental ever - Expensive; it still weighs 2120kg
BMW 1-series M Coupe	188 R	£72,000	6/2979	335/5900	369/1500	1495kg	228	4.8	-	155	224	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Character, turbo pace and great looks - Came and went too quick
BMW M235i Coupe	209 R	£34,535	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	£42,365	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 M4	206 R	£57,050	6/2979	425/5500	406/1850	1497kg	288	4.3	-	155	204	32.1	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Ferociously fast - A handful on less-than-perfect or less-than-bone-dry roads
BMW M3 (E92)	196 R	£72,000	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1580kg	266	4.3	10.3	155	290	22.8	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Fends off all of its rivals - ...except the cheaper 1-series M
BMW M3 GT3 (E92)	171 R	£72,000	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	£60,000	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	£60,000	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)	200 R	£72,000	6/3246	355/7900	273/4900	1385kg	260	5.3	12.0	155	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Still superb - Changes from the automated single-clutch 'box are... a... bit... sluggish
BMW M3 (E36)	148 R	£93,998	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	£86,900	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	£60,000	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	£98,000	6/3246	325/7400	258/3250	1375kg	240	5.1	-	155	-	25.0	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Quick and characterful - Lacks finesse
BMW 640d	165 D	£62,295	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)	211 D	£92,350	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	£72,000	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	210 R	£99,590	3/1499	357/5800	420/3700	1485kg	244	4.4	-	155	49	134.5	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Brilliantly executed concept; sci-fi looks - Safe dynamic set-up
Chevrolet Corvette Stingray Z51 (C7)	197 R	£69,810	8/6162	460/6000	465/4600	1539kg	304	4.4	9.4	180	279	23.5	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Performance, chassis balance, supple ride - Body control could be better
Chevrolet Corvette Z06 (C7) *	206 R	£88,000	8/6156	650/6400	650/3600	1598kg	413	3.2	-	186	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Mind-boggling raw speed; surprisingly sophisticated - Edgy when really pushed
Ford Mustang 5.0 V8 GT	211 R	£33,995	8/4951	415/6500	391/4250	1720kg	245	4.8	-	155	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Looks, noise, performance, value, right-hand drive - Image not for everyone
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	£35,940	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
Honda Integra Type R (DC2)	200 R	£96,000	4/1797	187/8000	131/3700	1101kg	173	6.2	17.9	145	-	28.9	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Arguably the greatest front-drive car ever - Too raw for some
Honda NSX	188 R	£90,000	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	£72,000	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	£72,000	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
Jaguar F-type Coupe	204 D	£51,260	6/2995	335/6500	332/3500	1567kg	217	5.5	-	161	234	28.8	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Drop-dead looks, brilliant chassis, desirability - Engine lacks top-end fight
Jaguar F-type S Coupe	211 D	£60,260	6/2995	375/6500	339/3500	1584kg	241	5.3	-	171	234	28.8	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Exquisite style, more rewarding (and affordable) than roadster - Scrapy on the limit
Jaguar F-type R Coupe	203 R	£85,010	8/5000	542/6500	501/3500	1650kg	334	4.0	-	186	255	26.4	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Looks, presence, performance, soundtrack - Bumpy and boisterous
Jaguar XKR	168 R	£99,000	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1678kg	305	4.6	-	155	292	23.0	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Fast and incredibly rewarding Jag - The kids will have to stay at home
Jaguar XKR-S	168 R	£72,000	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-SGT	193 R	£72,000	8/5000	542/6000	502/2500	1638kg	336	3.9	-	186	292	23.0	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + The most exciting XKR ever - Very limited runs
Lexus RC F	206 R	£59,995											

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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 Evija S (V6)	209 R	£54,500	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1176kg	298	3.8	-	170	235	-	+ Breathtaking road-racer; our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Gearshift not the sweetest ★★★★★
Lotus Evija 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 Evija (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 Evija (S1)	200 R	'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	£63,950	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... ★★★★★
Maserati GranTurismo	114 R	£82,890	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	£91,420	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1880kg	245	4.8	-	185	331	19.7	+ The best everyday GranTurismo yet - Starting to get long in the tooth ★★★★★
Maserati GranTurismo MC Stradale	193 R	£110,740	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1800kg	256	4.5	-	188	360	18.2	+ Brilliant blend of road racer and GT - Gearbox takes a little getting used to ★★★★★
Maserati Coupe	064 R	'03-'07	8/4244	390/7000	333/4500	1680kg	237	4.8	-	177	-	17.6	+ Glorious engine, improved chassis - Overly sharp steering ★★★★★
Maserati GranSport	073 R	'04-'07	8/4244	400/7000	333/4500	1680kg	239	4.8	-	180	-	-	+ Maser Coupe realises its full potential - Very little ★★★★★
Mazda RX-8	122 R	'03-'11	2R/1300	228/8200	156/5500	1429kg	162	6.5	16.4	146	299	24.6	+ AMG goes Porsche-hunting - Dull-witted gearshift spoils the party ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupe	162 R	'11-'14	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1655kg	277	4.4	10.3	186	280	23.5	+ Thunderously fast S-class built for drivers - Lacks badge appeal of a Continental GT ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Black Series	171 R	'12-'13	8/6208	510/6800	457/5200	1635kg	317	4.2	-	186	286	-	+ A proper two-door M3 rival - C63 saloon looks better ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG	092 D	'06-'09	8/6208	481/6800	464/5000	1755kg	278	4.6	-	155	-	19.9	+ The C63 turned up to 11 - Too heavy, not as fiery as Black Series cars of old ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG Black Series	106 R	'07-'09	8/6208	500/6800	464/5250	1760kg	289	4.2	-	186	-	-	+ Power, control, build quality - Lacks ultimate involvement ★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG S63 Coupe	205 D	£125,595	8/5461	571/7500	664/2250	1995kg	294	4.2	-	155	237	28.0	+ AMG goes Porsche-hunting - Dull-witted gearshift spoils the party ★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG S65 Coupe	209 D	£183,075	12/5980	621/4800	737/2300	2110kg	299	4.1	-	186	279	23.7	+ Thunderously fast S-class built for drivers - Lacks badge appeal of a Continental GT ★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG GT S	210 R	£110,495	8/3982	503/6250	479/1750	1570kg	326	3.8	-	193	219	30.1	+ Almighty power, fabulous luxury - Nearly £60k more than the S63! ★★★★★
Morgan AeroMax	120 R	'08-'09	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1180kg	312	4.1	-	170	-	-	+ Gorgeous to look at, fantastic chassis, huge grip - Downshifts could be quicker ★★★★★
Nissan 370Z	204 R	£27,445	6/3696	323/7000	268/5200	1496kg	219	5.3	-	155	248	26.7	+ Weird and utterly wonderful - Only 100 were made ★★★★★
Nissan 370Z Nismo	209 R	£37,585	6/3696	339/7400	274/5200	1496kg	230	5.2	-	155	248	26.6	+ Quicker, leaner, keener than 350Z - Not quite a Cayman-killer ★★★★★
Nissan 350Z	107 R	'03-'09	6/3498	309/6800	264/4800	1532kg	205	5.5	13.0	155	-	24.1	+ Sharper looks, improved ride, extra thrills - Engine lacks sparkle ★★★★★
Nissan GT-R (2012MY/2013MY/2014MY)	210 R	£78,020	6/3799	542/6400	466/3200	1740kg	316	3.2	7.5	196	275	24.0	+ Huge fun, and great value too - Honestly, we're struggling ★★★★★
Nissan GT-R Nismo	199 R	£125,000	6/3799	592/6800	481/3200	1720kg	350	2.6	-	196	275	24.0	+ Proves that Japanese hi-tech can work (superbly) - Limited supply ★★★★★
Nissan GT-R (2010MY)	152 R	'10-'12	6/3799	523/6400	451/3200	1740kg	305	3.0	-	194	279	23.5	+ Manages to make regular GT-R feel imprecise - Compromised by super-firm suspension ★★★★★
Nissan GT-R (2008MY)	125 R	'08-'10	6/3799	473/6400	434/3200	1740kg	276	3.8	-	193	-	-	+ More powerful version of the original - But they're not worlds apart to drive ★★★★★
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R34)	196 R	'99-'02	6/2568	276/7000	289/4400	1560kg	180	4.7	12.5	165	-	20.1	+ Our 2008 Car of the Year, now from just £35K - You won't see 20mpg often ★★★★★
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R33)	196 R	'97-'99	6/2568	276/6800	271/4400	1540kg	182	5.4	14.3	155	-	22.0	+ Big, brutal, and great fun - Needs more than the standard 276bhp ★★★★★
Noble M12 GT0-3R	200 R	'03-'06	6/2968	352/6200	350/3500	1080kg	332	3.8	-	170	-	-	+ Proof that Japanese hi-tech can work (superbly) - Limited supply ★★★★★
Peugeot RCZ 1.6 THP 200	155 R	£27,150	4/1598	197/5500	202/1700	1421kg	141	7.3	18.1	147	155	42.1	+ The ability to humble exotica - Notchy gearchange can spoil the flow ★★★★★
Peugeot RCZ R	209 R	£32,250	4/1598	266/6000	243/1900	1280kg	211	5.9	-	155	145	44.8	+ Distinctive looks, highly capable handling - Could be a bit more exciting ★★★★★
Porsche Cayman (981)	209 R	£39,694	6/2706	271/7400	214/4500	1330kg	207	5.7	-	165	195	33.6	+ Rewarding and highly effective when fully lit - Dated cabin, steering lacks feel ★★★★★
Porsche Cayman S (981)	202 R	£48,783	6/2706	321/7400	273/4500	1320kg	247	4.5	10.5	175	206	32.1	+ Very enticing for the money in basic spec - You might still want the power of the 'S' ★★★★★
Porsche Cayman GTS (981)	203 R	£55,397	6/3436	335/7400	280/4750	1345kg	253	4.9	-	177	211	31.4	+ The Cayman comes of age - Erm... ★★★★★
Porsche Cayman GT4 (981)	208 R	£64,451	6/3800	380/7400	310/4750	1340kg	288	4.4	-	183	238	27.4	+ 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	+ The Cayman we've been waiting for - Waiting lists ★★★★★
Porsche Cayman S (987)	132 R	'06-'13	6/3436	316/7200	273/4750	1350kg	237	5.2	-	172	223	29.7	+ Extra power, just as involving - Still lacks the desirability of other Porsches ★★★★★
Porsche Cayman R (987)	158 R	'11-'13	6/3436	325/7400	273/4750	1295kg	255	4.7	-	175	228	29.1	+ Still want that 911? - Yeah, us too ★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera (991)	199 R	£73,509	6/3436	345/7400	288/5600	1400kg	250	4.8	-	179	211	31.4	+ Total handling excellence - Styling additions not to all tastes ★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera S (991)	201 R	£83,545	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1415kg	283	4.3	9.5	188	223	29.7	+ 911 becomes cleaner and cleverer - But some of its character's gone AWOL ★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera 4S (991)	179 R	£88,400	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1465kg	273	4.5	-	185	233	28.5	+ As above, but with supercar pace - Electric steering robs it of some tactility ★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera GT (991)	204 R	£91,098	6/3800	424/7500	324/5750	1425kg	302	4.4	-	190	223	29.7	+ More satisfying than RWD 991 Carreras - Choose your spec carefully ★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera 4 GT (991)	208 R	£95,862	6/3800	424/7500	324/5750	1470kg	293	4.4	-	189	233	28.5	+ The best RWD 991 Carrera - Optional active anti-roll bars feel feedback ★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.2)	121 R	'08-'11	6/3800	380/6500	310/4400	1425kg	271	4.7	-	188	242	27.4	+ The highlight of the 991 Carrera line-up - Pricey for a Carrera ★★★★★
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	+ Poise, precision, blinding pace - Feels a bit clinical ★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera (996 3.4)	008 R	'98-'01	6/3387	296/6800	258/4600	1320kg	228	5.2	-	174	-	28.0	+evo Car of the Year 2004; like a junior GT3 - Tech overload? ★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera (993)	'94-'97	6/3600	285/6100	251/5250	1372kg	211	5.2	-	168	-	25.0	-	+evo Car of the Year 1998; beautifully polished - Some like a bit of rough ★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (991)	206 R	£100,540	6/3799	468/8250	324/6250	1430kg	333	3.5	-	196	289	23.0	+ More character than 996 - Harder work at speed ★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (991)	211 R	£131,296	6/3996	493/8250	339/6250	1420kg	353	3.3	-	193	296	22.2	+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	+ Sensationally good to drive - They won't all be painted Ultra Violet ★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (3.8, 997.2)	200 R	'10-'11	6/3797	444/7900	317/6750	1370kg	329	4.0	-	193	314	-	+ Even better than the car it replaced - Give us a minute... ★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS 4.0 (997.2)	187 R	'11-'12	6/3996	493/8250	339/5750	1360kg	368	3.8	-	193	326	-	+ Our favourite car from the first 200 issues of evo - For people like us, nothing ★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.1)	182 R	'07-'09	6/3600	409/7600	298/5500	1395kg	298	4.3	9.4	192	-	-	+evo Car of the Year 2011 - Unforgiving on-road ride; crazy used prices ★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.1)	105 R	'07-'09	6/3600	409/7600	298/5500	1375kg	302	4.2	-	193	-	-	+ Runner-up evo Car of the Year 2006 - Ferrari 599 GTBs ★★★★★
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 2007 - A chunk more money than the brilliant GT3 ★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (996.2)	068 R	'03-'05	6/3600	375/7400	284/5000	1330kg	286	4.2	9.2	190	-	-	+evo Car of the Year 2003 - Chassis is a bit too track-focused for some roads ★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.1)	182 R	'99	6/3600	360/7200	273/5000	1350kg	271	4.5	10.3	187	-	21.9	+ Track-biased version of above - Limited supply ★★★★★
Rolls-Royce Wraith	205 D	£229,128	12/6592	624/5600	590/1500	2360kg	260	4.6	-	155	327	20.2	+evo Car of the Year 1999 - Porsche didn't build enough ★★★★★
Subaru BRZ	204 R	£22,495	4/1998	197/7000	151/6400	1230kg	163	7.6	-	140	181	36.2	+ Refinement, chassis, drivetrain - Shared componentry lets cabin down ★★★★★
Toyota GT86	174 R	£22,995	4/1998	197/7000	151/6400	1275kg	157	7.6	-	140	181	36.2	+ Fine chassis, great steering - Weak engine, not the slide-happy car they promised ★★★★★
TVR Sagaris	097 R	'05-'07	6/3996	406/7500	349/5000	1078kg	383	3.7	-	185	-	-	+ More fun than its cousin (above) - Same lack of torque, poor interior quality ★★★★★
TVR Tuscan S (Mk2)	076 R	'05-'07	6/3996	400/7000	315/5250	1100kg	369	4.0	-	185	-	-	+ Looks outrageous - 406bhp feels a touch optimistic ★★★★★
TVR Cerbera Speed Six	004 R	'98-'04	6/3996	350/6800	330/5000	1130kg	315	5.0	11.4	160+	-	-	+ Possibly TVR's best ever car - Aerodynamic 'enhancements' ★★★★★
VW Scirocco GT 2.0 TSI	155 R	£26,125	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1369kg	158	6.5	-	153	139	47.1	+ Accomplished and desirable - Check chassis for corrosion ★★★★★
VW Scirocco R	200 D	£32,580	4/1984	276/6000	258/2500	1426kg	187	5.7	-	155	187	35.3	+ Golf GTI price and performance - Interior lacks flair ★★★★★
													+ Great engine, grown-up dynamics - Perhaps a little too grown-up for some ★★★★★

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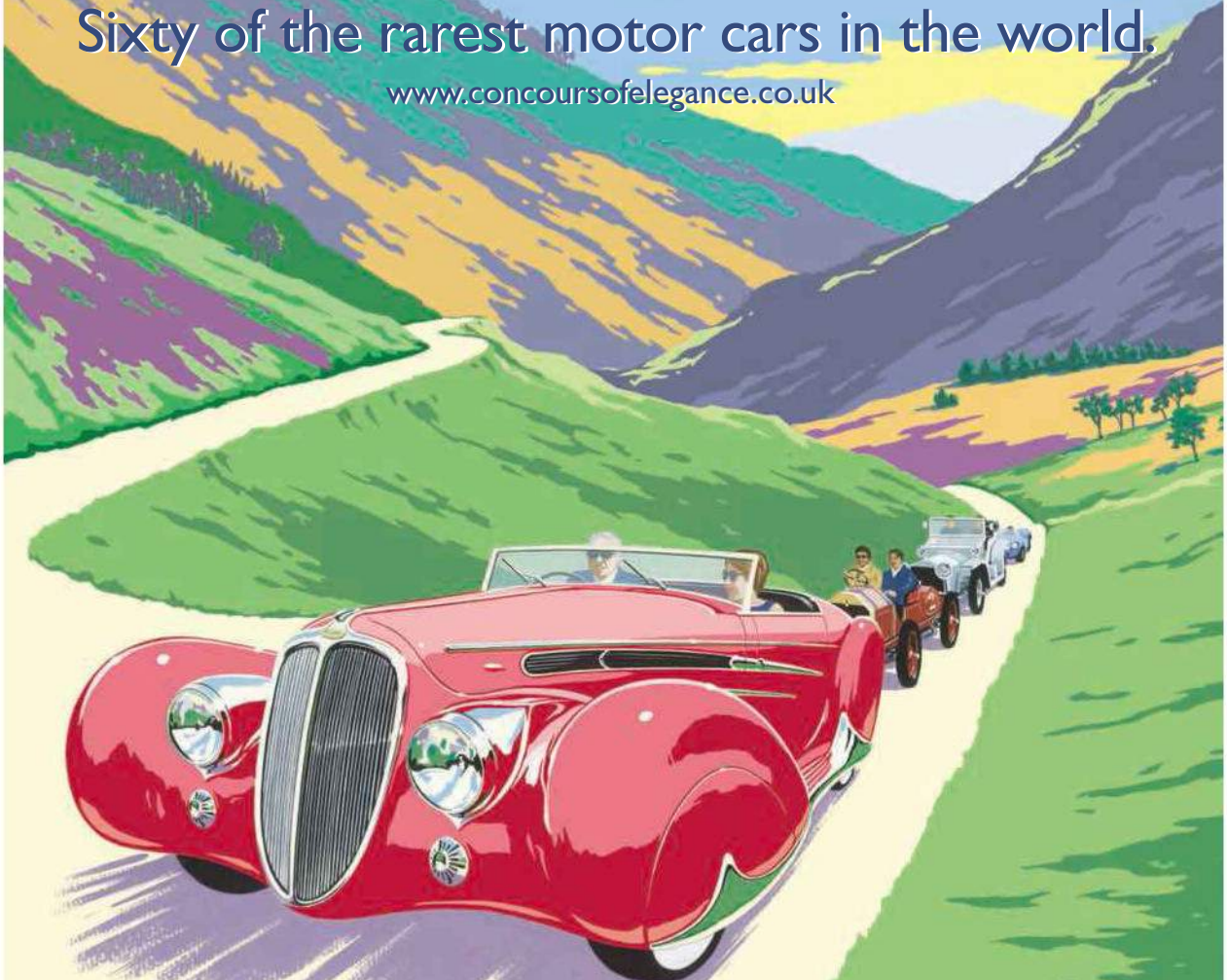
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Sothebys



Our Choice

Ferrari 458 Speciale. The regular 458 Italia was amazing enough, 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. Our 2014 Car of the Year. It's equally brilliant in open-top 'Speciale A' form, too.



Best of the Rest

Porsche's 918 Spyder (left) pips the McLaren P1 on the road, and vice versa on track. The LaFerrari is an incredible drive, too. Maybe get all three.... Meanwhile, Pagan's Huayra was our joint 2012 Car of the Year and Lamborghini's Aventador offers true supercar drama, especially in SV form.

Supercars

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft./rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating	
9ff GT9R	127 D	£450,000	6/4000	1120/7850	774/5970	1346kg	845	2.9	-	260	-	-	+ Above 100mph eats Veyrons for breakfast - Eats M3 dust at traffic lights	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vanquish (Mk2)	203 R	£192,995	12/5935	568/6650	465/5500	1739kg	332	3.6	-	201	298	22.1	+ Much better than the DBS it succeeds, especially in 2015MY form - It's no Ferrari F12	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vanquish S (Mk1)	110 R	£192,995	12/5935	520/7000	425/5800	1875kg	282	4.9	10.1	200	-	-	+ Vanquish joins supercar greats - A tad intimidating at the limit	★★★★★
Aston Martin 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	★★★★★
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 Veyron Super Sport	151 R	£10-14	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	£13-14	16/7993	1183/6400	1106/3000	1990kg	604	2.6	-	254	539	12.2	+ The world's fastest convertible - Limited to 258mph for us mere mortals	★★★★★
Bugatti EB110	078 R	£91-95	12/3500	552/8000	451/3750	1566kg	358	3.4	-	212	-	-	+ Superbly engineered 4WD quad-turbo rocket - It just fizzled out	★★★★★
Caparo T1	138 R	£301,975	8/3499	575/10,500	310/9000	689kg	848	3.8	6.2	205	-	-	+ Absolutely staggering performance - Absolutely staggering price tag	★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette ZR1	133 R	£09-13	8/6162	638/6500	603/4700	1528kg	388	3.8	7.6	205	355	18.8	+ Huge pace and character - Take plenty of brave pills if there's rain	★★★★★
Ferrari 488 GTB	211 R	£181,849	8/3902	661/8000	560/3000	1475kg	455	3.0	-	205+	260	24.8	+ Staggeringly capable - Lacks a little of the 458's heart and excitement	★★★★★
Ferrari 458 Italia	183 R	£09-15	8/4497	562/9000	398/6000	1485kg	384	3.2	6.8	202	307	20.6	+ An astounding achievement - Paddleshift only	★★★★★
Ferrari 458 Spider	185 R	£198,996	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	203 R	£208,090	8/4497	597/9000	398/6000	1395kg	435	3.0	-	202+	275	23.9	+ evo Car of the Year 2014 - If you don't own a regular 458, nothing	★★★★★
Ferrari 458 Speciale A	204 D	£228,682	8/4497	597/9000	398/6000	1445kg	420	3.0	-	199	275	21.2	+ Some dynamics as the coupe but less shouty - Some chassis flex on bumpy surfaces	★★★★★
Ferrari F430	163 R	£04-10	8/4308	483/8500	343/5250	1449kg	339	4.0	-	196	-	18.6	+ Just brilliant - Didn't you read the plus point?	★★★★★
Ferrari 430 Scuderia	121 R	£07-10	8/4308	503/8500	347/5250	1350kg	378	3.5	7.7	198	-	15.7	+ Successful F1 technology transplant - Likes to shout about it	★★★★★
Ferrari 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	£240,083	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 isn't very good	★★★★★
Ferrari 575M Fiorano Handling Pack	200 R	£02-06	12/5748	508/7250	434/5250	1730kg	298	4.2	9.6	202	-	12.3	+ Fiorano pack makes 575 truly great - It should have been standard	★★★★★
Ferrari 550 Maranello	169 R	£97-02	12/5474	485/7000	415/5000	1716kg	287	4.3	10.0	199	-	12.3	+ Everything - Nothing	★★★★★
Ferrari FF	194 R	£227,168	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	203 R	£1m	12/6262	950/9000	664/6750	1255kg	769	3.0	-	217+	330	-	+ Perhaps the greatest Ferrari ever - Brakes lack a touch of precision on track	★★★★★
Ferrari Enzo	203 R	£02-04	12/5999	651/7800	485/5500	1365kg	485	3.5	6.7	217+	545	-	+ Intoxicating, exploitable - Cabin detailing falls short of a Zonda or F1's	★★★★★
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	199 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	200 R	£04-06	8/5409	550/6500	500/3750	1583kg	353	3.7	-	205	-	-	+ Our 2005 Car of the Year - Don't scalp yourself getting in	★★★★★
Hennessey Venom GT	180 R	£900,000	8/7000	1244/6500	1155/4000	1244kg	1016	2.5	-	270	-	-	+ 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	£c£1.09m	8/5032	1124/7100	885/2700	1435kg	796	2.8	-	273	-	-	+ As fast and exciting as your body can handle - It's Veyron money	★★★★★
Koenigsegg One:1	202 R	£c£2.0m	8/5065	1341/7500	1011/6000	1360kg	1002	2.9	-	273	-	-	+ The most powerful car we've ever tested - It's sold out; we couldn't afford one anyway...	★★★★★
Koenigsegg CCX	094 R	£06-10	8/4700	806/6900	678/5700	1180kg	694	3.9	7.7	245+	-	-	+ Sweden's greatest supercar - Sweden's only supercar	★★★★★
Koenigsegg CCR Edition	118 R	£08-10	8/4800	1004/7000	796/5600	1280kg	797	2.8	-	250+	-	-	+ One of the world's fastest cars - Spikey power delivery	★★★★★
Lamborghini Huracán LP610-4	209 D	£186,760	10/5204	602/8250	413/6500	1532kg	399	3.2	-	202+	290	22.6	+ Defies the numbers; incredible point-to-point pace - 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	£06-13	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. Cool - Slightly clunky e-gear	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo Superleggera	104 R	£07-08	10/4961	522/8000	376/4250	1420kg	373	3.8	-	196	-	-	+ Lighter, more agile - Grabby carbon brakes, clunky e-gear	★★★★★
Lamborghini Aventador LP700-4	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 LP750-4 SV	211 D	£321,723	12/6498	740/8400	509/5500	1525kg	493	2.8	-	217+	370	17.7	+ More exciting than the standard Aventador - Inconsistent gearbox	★★★★★
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	213	-	+ Compelling old-school supercar - You'd better be on your toes	★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago LP670-4 SV	200 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	★★★★★
Lexus LFA/LFA Nürburgring	200 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	641/7250	500/6000	1428kg	456	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	205 R	£866,000	8/3799	903/7500	664/4000	1395kg	658	2.8	-	217	194	34.0	+ Freakish breadth of ability - At its mind-bending best on track	★★★★★
McLaren F1	205 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 Series	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	£165,030	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 Series	204 R	£229,985	8/6208	622/7400	468/5500	1550kg	408	3.6	-	196	321	20.6	+ Stunning engine, superb body control - Be careful on less-than-smooth roads...	★★★★★
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	£c£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	£c£1m	12/5980	720/5800	737/2250	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 S T.3	096 R	£02-05	12/7291	555/5900	553/4050	1250kg	451	3.6	-	197	-	-	+ evo Car of the Year 2001 (in earlier 7.0 form) - Values have gone up a fair bit since then	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda F	186 R	£05-06	12/7291	602/6150	575/4000	1230kg	497	3.6	-	214	-	-	+ Everything an Italian supercar ought to be - Looks a bit blingy next to a Carrera GT	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda Cinque Roadster	147 D	£09-10	12/7291	669/6200	575/4000	1400kg	485	3.4	-	217+	-	-	+ The best Zonda ever - Doesn't come up in the classifieds often	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo (991)	210													

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
Porsche Cayman S (981)	1:24.5	109.2	202	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
Jaguar F-type S Coupe	1:26.2	106.3	202	Dry
Audi TTRS	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
Mercedes-Benz GLA45 AMG	1:26.9	-	205	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
Renaultsport Mégane 265 Cup	1:27.3	-	YouTube	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
SEAT Leon Cupra 280	1:28.0	-	YouTube	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
Porsche Macan S	1:28.3	-	205	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

TRACK MAP



- Location Bedford Autodrome
- Length 1.85 miles (2.98 kilometres)
- Direction Anti-clockwise

Note: West Circuit reconfigured in May 2015. The above times are from before this date. Newer times are not comparable.

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Art of speed



Alpina Deko Set

by RICHARD LANE

INNATELY RIGHT ON MOST AMERICANA, THE racing stripe is a rare thing indeed in the world of European road cars. In fact only very special models from the likes of Renault and Ferrari are brazen enough to flaunt something so jazzy. Bucking the trend is Alpina, which has offered racing stripes on every one of its BMW conversions since 1974. Known simply as the 'Deko Set', these unusually sophisticated decals underline Alpina's modern-day role as understated antidote to the BMW M-car and are an elegant strand of the brand's DNA.

Their genesis was in the mid-'70s, when Alpina began asking customers whether they'd like to give their car a 'new identity' and a 'sporty appearance'. If so, rhombic designs were applied to the flanks of the car – then perhaps a modified Neue Klasse BMW, or a 2002 or CS – in colour schemes often derived from successful BMW Alpina race cars, on which the graphics first sprouted. Green, for instance, emerged on the demonic Gösser Beer 3.5 CSL. Previously only the script 'BMW ALPINA' had been available – on the front wings and usually in silver or black. Either way, it could all be easily removed if the novelty somehow wore off.

A no-cost option originally promoted in the UK through the *Sport*

Parts brochure, the Deko Set originated from a time when Porsche drunk Martini, McLaren smoked Marlboro Reds and liveries everywhere were starting to become uncomfortably, brilliantly bombastic. Racing stripes were the rage, and Alpina, being a successful motorsports outfit moving into road cars, understandably had to have them. What's so remarkable is that the fundamental design hasn't changed in four decades.

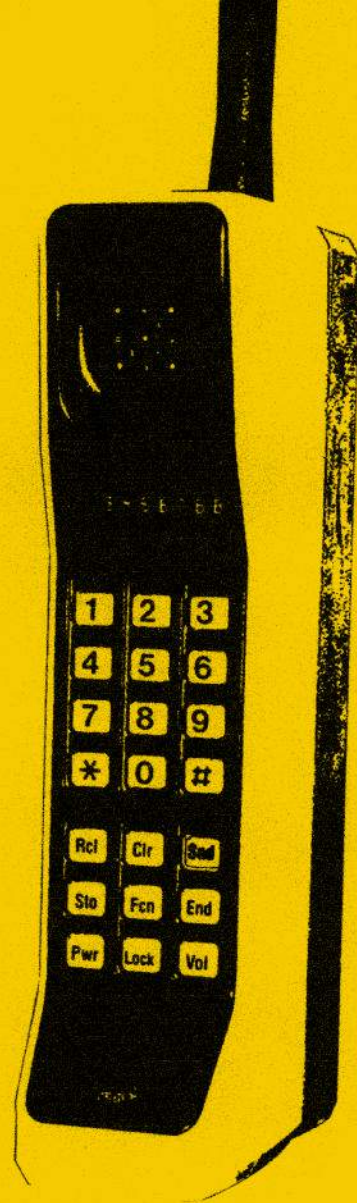
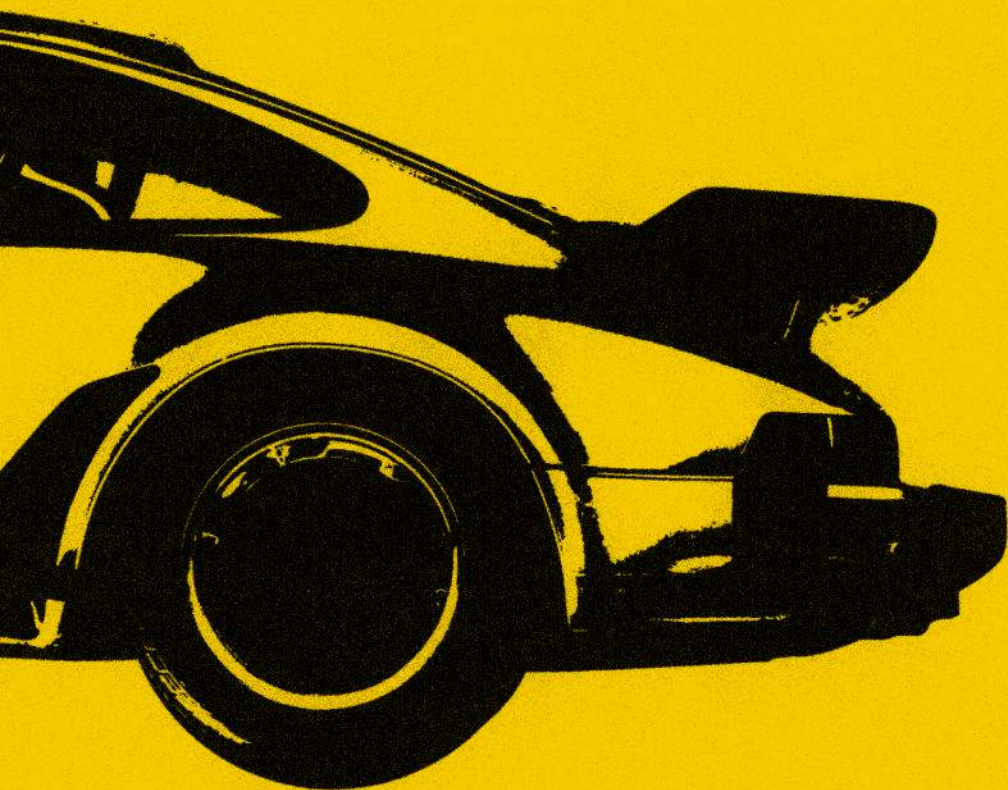
There have been subtle tweaks to the original recipe, however. In the '80s the solid colours could be hollowed out to leave a wonderfully discreet gold or silver filigree. The decals became even less conspicuous when a new 5-series arrived in 2003, with Chris Bangle's contentious 'flame surfacing' demanding thinner lines. Today's delicate tendrils are a unique crossbreed of a full-fat racing stripe and the hand-painted pinstripe that's a £1080 option on a Rolls-Royce Phantom.

Inspiration for the first Deko Set came from downhill skiing. Burkard Bovensiepen, who in 1962 founded Alpina as we know it by installing twin Weber carburettors on an asthmatic BMW 1500, stole the design from a pair of Fischer C4 skis. But the look isn't to all tastes, and the Deko Set is far from a shoo-in on the options list. In fact only half of buyers want it, except in Japan, where almost every car is ordered with it – in gold. ❌

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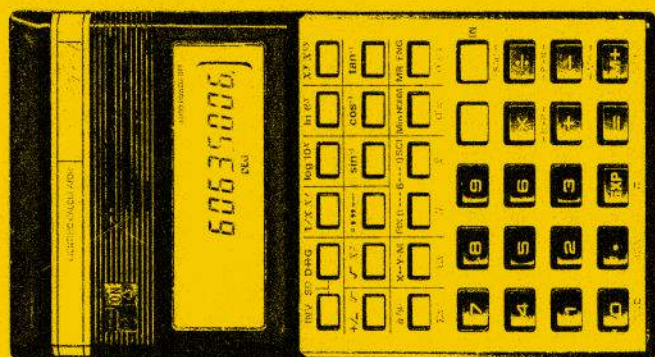


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Official fuel consumption for the SEAT Leon ST CUPRA in mpg (litres per 100km); urban 32.1 (8.8) - 33.6 (8.4); extra-urban 50.4 (5.6) - 49.6 (6.6); combined 42.2 (6.7) - 42.8 (6.6). CO₂ emissions 157 - 154 g/km.