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IN THIS GAME, DESIGNERS don't talk about other designers, engineers won't discuss engineers, and senior execs will not comment on any other car or brand at all, *on the record*.

Some barely acknowledge their existence, and worse, you very, very rarely hear any praise of another car, brand or person. However, if they reach over, pause your dictaphone and ask, 'Off the record?' then you know you're going to be hit with something ridiculously juicy, something laden with opinion (and quite possibly lies), something politically motivated, or something downright improper. Stuff you don't, or can't, print, in other words. Stuff like: 'xxx doesn't know their xxx from their xxx, and that they only got their job because they are xxxing xxx in the xxxing xxx. Off the record, of course.'

I'm exaggerating, obviously, but it's fair to say you rarely hear the key movers and shakers in the auto industry comment about rival brands, cars or people. And when you do, it's difficult to believe what you're hearing.

And then there's Gordon Murray.

While chatting on the phone the other day about his new Shell partnership (see evo.co.uk for more), I wondered, you know, whether maybe Gordon would like to comment on Adrian Newey's Aston Martin/Red Bull hypercar? 'No problem,' he said. I nearly fell off my chair.

'Actually, Adrian and I had a lunch together 18 months ago,' began Murray, 'where we talked about supercars – I don't know how much that had to do with it! No, I think he's always wanted to do a supercar – and so did I when I was in racing.'

Murray was on a roll now, and then pondered whether Newey's car would be less about the numbers and more about the driving experience.

'The driving experience and performance can be on different planets. Take the Bugatti Veyron. It's a very quick locomotive, in a straight line. It's

quite startling. But as a driving experience it's one of the worst I've ever had. It just doesn't do anything that pleases me.

'It will be interesting to see whether in the pursuit of speed, [Aston Martin] loses a lot of that stuff. That's what I thought long and hard about with the F1. The driving experience – a lot of that stuff is out in the ether somewhere.'

'You mean how someone responds emotionally to a car?' I asked.

'Yes,' replied Murray. 'For instance, what makes someone feel good about getting in a car, or starting up a car, or seeing the components, the engine. It's all that lovely petrolhead stuff that's very hard to put your finger on and therefore difficult to design into a car.'

'From a performance point of view, we're certainly going to get some of that – it will be interesting to see how he does from the road car point of view.'

'The other thing is that they've got Marek Reichman. I love the stuff he does – it's all very well proportioned and I don't think there's anything he's done in the last few years that

I don't like. I think that will be really interesting, those two mixing the style and the aerodynamics.'

'When I worked with Peter Stevens with the McLaren F1, I knew what proportions I wanted, the size, the classic shape, so it was predetermined a bit and Peter did a great job of making that real.'

So there you have it. Rather than tell me to switch off a dictaphone, spin me a load of crap, insult his peers and generally mock everyone who isn't him, Gordon Murray is open, honest, encouraging, critical (but balanced), complimentary, conversational and, best of all, gets it.

Or, in other words, Gordon Murray is a legend. As if you didn't already know it. ☒

[evoNickTrott](https://twitter.com/evoNickTrott)



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CONTENTS

ISSUE 223 JULY 2016

FEATURES

068
DATA TEST: GIANT KILLERS
Jaguar F-type v 911 Turbo S, Ford Focus RS v Nissan GT-R, GT86 v Mustang GT and more...

088
ASTON MARTIN DB11
Aston's new flagship GT car – and its 5.2-litre twin-turbo V12 – is almost here. We've driven it

096
evo's MINI CHALLENGE
Part two of evo's, er, challenge to develop the new Mini JCW Challenge

102
BENTLEY TO GENEVA
Henry Catchpole, a Mulsanne Speed and the most unlikely of races

112
BOXSTER SPYDER v 4C
Alfa and Porsche go head-to-head in a mid-engined drop-top battle. A foregone conclusion?

120
CATERHAM ACADEMY
Dan Prosser is racing Caterhams in 2016. Has he underestimated the difficulty of this challenge?

124
ICON: VAUXHALL ASTRA GTE
Park the snobbery, because Vauxhall's answer to the 205 GTI is an overlooked gem (seriously)

130
PEUGEOT SPORT
evo celebrates the French marque's road, racing and rallying successes

REGULARS

009
NEWS
A potent new Audi TT RS, Adrian Newey's hypercar, plus the wonderful Mull Rally

059
COLUMNS
Richard Porter, Dario Franchitti and, returning this month, Richard Meaden

065
LETTERS
Surely there's room for something between the standard M4 and the super-expensive M4 GTS?

165
LONG-TERM TESTS
Nissan Juke Nismo RS and BMW E46 M3 hello, plus Ferrari 16M goodbye

183
EVO MARKET
Should you buy a second-hand car with a juicy, turbocharged powerplant?

226
ART OF SPEED
Can the mighty Subaru Impreza be distilled into one part? We think so

DRIVEN

040
Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio

047
Mercedes-AMG S63 4Matic Cabriolet

048
Renaultsport Mégane 275 Cup-S

050
Proteus C-type

053
Skoda Octavia vRS TDI 4x4

054
Audi RS Q3 Performance

056
Superchips VW Golf GTI Mk6



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Audi TT RS

Lighter and faster – could the
TT RS finally be a Porsche-beater?

by STUART GALLAGHER

AS PORSCHE TRIES TO CONVINCe US THAT four cylinders and a turbocharger is the right engine choice for the Boxster and Cayman (see p12-13), Audi has revealed the new TT RS coupe and Roadster, with a new five-cylinder engine that's not only lighter than before but more powerful too; although yes, it's still turbocharged. *evo* has been a tough critic of the TT, the model never really living up to our expectations, especially so when we know the company can deliver cars with the brilliance of the R8. Could this latest TT RS change that?



174
mph

RS's top speed if you pay Audi to raise the limiter

3.7
sec

0-62mph time of the coupe (3.9sec for the Roadster)

50
cm

Length of the new five-cylinder engine

SPECIFICATION

| | |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Engine | In-line 5-cyl, 2480cc, turbo |
| Power | 394bhp @ TBA rpm |
| Torque | 354lb ft @ 1700-5850rpm |
| 0-62mph | 3.7sec (3.9sec Roadster) |
| Top speed | 155mph (174mph optional) |
| Weight | 1440kg (1530kg Roadster) |
| Power-to-weight | 278bhp/ton (262bhp/ton Roadster) |
| Basic price | TBC |



With nearly 400bhp, quattro four-wheel drive (Haldex, not Torsen-diff sadly) and sub-four-second 0-62mph times, both new TT RS models are pitched at the very top end of the premium small sports car segment. The new Audi easily outguns Porsche's new Boxster and Cayman models and Mercedes' SLC43 across every on-paper performance figure, while BMW's Z4 doesn't stand a chance. And as lovely as Alfa's 4C is to look at, to drive it's still a crushing disappointment.

Such performance from the new TT RS theoretically makes it a challenger in the sector above, occupied by the likes of the latest turbocharged 911 Carreras, although Audi's engineers will have had to have worked a small miracle if the TT RS is actually a 911-beater.

Weight saving has been at the top

of the Audi agenda with this latest TT RS, with particular focus paid to the car's new five-cylinder engine: it's more than 20kg lighter than its predecessor, primarily thanks to a new aluminium block. The drivetrain saves a further 1.6kg, the propshaft being 0.9kg lighter and the universal joint going to it losing 0.7kg. There's only one gearbox option, the seven-speed S-tronic, the lower ratios of which have been shortened to help those acceleration times.

New software has been uploaded for the multi-plate clutches of the quattro drivetrain so that it distributes the engine's torque to the rear axle quicker than it did in the outgoing model. Along with the stability control, which will brake an inside rear wheel during hard cornering to mimic a torque-vectoring diff, there is also Audi's

Drive Select system featuring the regular four modes: Comfort, Auto, Dynamic and Individual. Together, the quartet allows you to switch gearshift speed, steering weight, engine map and the exhaust note.

By shedding weight from where it needed it most, Audi has given the new TT RS its strongest chance yet of muscling in on the Boxster, Cayman and AMG SLC party. But while the UK remains the TT's biggest market, Audi UK expects the TT RS to sell only in relatively small numbers (50 per annum, with a third of those expected to be Roadsters). If Audi's engineers have nailed the new engine's performance, given it an engaging and strong power delivery and made the most of the weight savings, there's no reason why the TT RS can't be the mini-R8 we've always wanted it to be.

“The new Audi easily outguns Porsche's new Boxster and Cayman models”

IN DEPTH

1 DESIGN

Distinguishing features on the TT RS include a new front bumper, honeycomb grille, air intakes, lower spoiler and air blades. LED headlights are standard, 'intelligent' Matrix LEDs optional. A fixed rear wing is standard, but you can opt for an electric version that hides in the bootlid.

2 CHASSIS

The TT RS retains the regular TT's MacPherson-strut front and multi-link rear setup, but the springs are stiffer and the car sits 10mm lower. Audi's RS Sport Suspension Plus is an option along with magnetic ride dampers, the characteristics of which are set through Drive Select.

3 BRAKES

The new TT RS wants for nothing in the brake department: 370mm discs are fitted on the front axle, 310mm items on the rear. Black or red eight-piston callipers and iron discs are standard; grey callipers means it has the optional front carbon-ceramic discs fitted, a first for a TT.



INTERIOR



The box of superlatives to describe Audi interiors is all but empty, so we'll focus on the key RS elements here. The sports seats are new and are fitted lower in the car than you'll find in a TTS and feature integrated

head restraints. Optional pneumatic side bolster adjustment is also available. Alcantara trim is standard throughout the cabin, and there's a handful of RS logos dotted about the place, too. Nappa leather is

used to trim the seats and is available in four colour combinations. The RS steering wheel is lifted from the R8 and is home to the gearshifts paddles, start button and the Drive Select controls.



RIVALS

718 Boxster S and Cayman S

Audi has two key rivals in its sights – the Porsche 718 Boxster S and Cayman S. Both have recently received new turbocharged four-cylinder engines; we've yet to drive the Cayman, but we already know the 718 Boxster's Achilles' heel is its motor. If the new TT RS can take full advantage of its weight savings and increased performance, the Boxster may have a proper fight on its hands.



Engine

Power

310lb ft @ 1900-4500rpm

Torque

4.6sec (claimed, manual)

0-62mph

177mph (claimed)

Top speed

1355kg

Weight

259bhp/ton

Power-to-weight

£50,695

Basic price

Flat-four, 2497cc, turbo

345bhp @ 6500rpm

310lb ft @ 1900-4500rpm

4.6sec (claimed, manual)

177mph (claimed)

1355kg

259bhp/ton

£50,695

Flat-four, 2497cc, turbo

345bhp @ 6500rpm

310lb ft @ 1900-4500rpm

4.6sec (claimed, manual)

177mph (claimed)

1355kg

259bhp/ton

£48,834

ENGINE



Audi has gone to town on the TT RS's new five-cylinder turbocharged engine (coming to an RS3 and RS Q3 near you soon), achieving more power and torque and at the same time reducing weight. The

switch to an aluminium block – it was previously iron – has saved 18.8kg; the crankshaft is 1.4kg lighter and even the belt discs lose 0.7kg. The magnesium part of the sump saves another 2kg, and a lightweight

flywheel a further 1.4kg. Overall, the new engine is 26kg lighter, a significant saving considering its location. The five-pot engine delivers a class-leading 394bhp and 354lb ft of torque.

Porsche 718 Cayman

FOLLOWING THE magnificence of the Cayman GT4, there is the very real risk that the last flat-six, naturally aspirated Cayman will also prove to have been the best, never to be repeated. Why? Because the howling flat-six is gone, replaced by the same turbocharged fours that have underwhelmed in the new 718 Boxster (see *evo* 222).

For the first time, the Cayman will not only share the powertrain of the Boxster but will also have identical power and torque figures (for the past decade the mid-engined coupe has always enjoyed a symbolic power

advantage over the roadster), weigh the same, and sprint to 62mph in an identical time before going on to reach the same top speed. The closed car will, however, for the first time cost less than the convertible.

The turbocharged four-cylinder engines, six-speed manual and seven-speed PDK gearboxes are carried over wholesale from the Boxster, so that's a 2-litre for the Cayman and a 2.5 for the S with 296bhp and 345bhp respectively – increases of around 25bhp – although the Chinese market gets a 250bhp 2-litre instead of the more powerful 2-litre available everywhere else. The larger capacity

Cayman follows Boxster down the four-cylinder turbo route, but it's not all bad news! Power's up, and it's now cheaper than the roadster

engine's single turbocharger gets the sophisticated variable-turbine geometry first seen on the 997 Turbo in 2006 and as fitted to the Boxster S.

Beneath the Cayman's new nipped and tucked body, the chassis is fundamentally unchanged, though for this evolution there are stiffer springs and anti-roll bars, and the steering has been retuned to be, Porsche claims, 10 per cent more direct. The front track has also been increased and the rear wheels are half an inch wider, although they wear the same 265/40 tyre of the outgoing car.

In terms of braking, the regular Cayman now has the brakes from the

old Cayman S (which were in turn taken from the 991 Carrera), while the new S follows the previous model by having the same discs and calipers as the latest 991.2 Carrera.

As with the Boxster, both exterior and interior have been updated. Inside, there's the latest PCM infotainment module, while the new steering wheel is home to the optional Sport Chrono selector. Externally, there are new LED daytime running lights, sharper lines for the front and rear bumpers and larger front and side air intakes.

Prices start at £39,878 for the 718 Cayman and £48,834 for the S.



IN DEPTH

1 CHASSIS

A Sport Chrono package and torque-vectoring are available as options on both Cayman models. So, too, is PASM, which lowers the car's ride height by 10mm; the Cayman S can also be had with PASM Sport suspension, which lowers the chassis a further 10mm. Sport Chrono provides four driving modes: Normal, Sport, Sport Plus and Individual.

2 DESIGN

Porsche's design team has never been known for its extravagance, and in the new 718 Cayman there's not a great deal to suggest this was a taxing project. The key focus has been cooling for the new engine, with more prominent air intakes in the front grille and larger intakes positioned ahead of the rear wheels. Sadly, the rear spoiler still features the chintzy Porsche script.

3 ENGINE

The turbocharged fours are lifted straight from the Boxster, but the word from Porsche is that the Cayman has been engineered so that it could still take a six-cylinder engine. And since the packaging will prevent the Carrera's larger turbocharged six from fitting, we may not have seen the last of the naturally aspirated flat-six just yet. Here's hoping.

RIVAL

Audi TT RS

Porsche may have wanted a bit longer for its new four-cylinder sports cars to settle in before the competition started snapping at its heels, but Audi's new TT RS offers a tantalising on-paper specification. We know the five-cylinder engine has bags of character, and it's more powerful, too.



| | |
|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Engine | In-line 5-cyl, 2480cc, turbo |
| Power | 394bhp @ TBA rpm |
| Torque | 354lb ft @ 1700-5850rpm |
| 0-62mph | 3.7sec (claimed) |
| Top speed | 155mph (174mph optional) |
| Weight | 1440kg |
| Power-to-weight | 278bhp/ton |
| Basic price | TBC |

1355
kg

Kerb weight of the S – slightly heavier than the old model

138
bhp/litre

44bhp up on the old S: the beauty of turbocharging

4.2
sec

0-62mph time of the S with PDK and Launch Control

SPECIFICATION (718 CAYMAN S)

| | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Engine | Flat-four, 2497cc, turbo |
| Power | 345bhp @ 6500rpm |
| Torque | 310lb ft @ 1900-4500rpm |
| 0-62mph | 4.6sec (claimed, manual) |
| Top speed | 177mph (claimed) |
| Weight | 1355kg |
| Power-to-weight | 259bhp/ton |
| Basic price | £48,834 |
| On sale | September |

COMMENT

Like a Morphy Richards iron or a Hotpoint tumble-dryer, Porsche's new turbocharged four-cylinder engine is brilliant at what it does but suffers somewhat in the desirability stakes. It suddenly leaves the door ajar for characterful multi-cylinder opposition such as Audi's new five-pot in the TT RS and the supercharged V6s found in Jaguar's F-type and Lotus's Exige. Even though BMW's turbocharged in-line six in the M2 doesn't exactly inspire, there is just something desirable about having those extra two cylinders under the bonnet.

Alfa's 4C hasn't done much for the four-cylinder cause and the 718 Boxster felt like an emotional step backwards after the 981. No doubt the 718 Cayman will still be dynamically brilliant. Perhaps Porsche is ahead of the curve and in a few years fours will be the norm. But for now it feels as though it's asking its customers to make a purchase based on facts and function more than desire.

Henry Catchpole



Aston Martin Red Bull hypercar

Created by the greatest F1
designer of recent years, the
Aston Martin/Red Bull/Adrian
Newey hypercar promises
to be the fastest and most
innovative of its kind

Seriously? Quicker than an F1 car?

That's what Aston Martin boss Andy Palmer has discussed, although we hear that LMP1-pace is the real target. To achieve this, the AM-RB 001 will need to lap Silverstone in 1min 40sec – or 1min 30sec if it wants to be competitive with F1 (1) cars. Newey's wondercar should slay every road car ever made.

What kind of tyres?

Arguably the most important question. Tyres will be crucial, not only for the aforementioned lap time but also to ensure the car is road legal. The chances of the AM-RB 001 driving straight from the public highway onto the track, then achieving THAT lap time are zero. The car will need slicks, no question.

The very best road-optimised tyre, such as a Michelin Cup 2, would be around five seconds a lap slower around Silverstone than slicks, which means a support team will be required to achieve its maximum; think Ferrari's FXX programme.

What will it weigh?

An F1 car must weigh 702kg with ballast and the driver (but not fuel), and a hybrid LMP1 (2) car 875kg

with ballast. The AM-RB 001 won't have to bother with a minimum weight so Newey will ensure the car will be as light as possible – perhaps even as light as an LMP1 hybrid car.

How much power?

This is where it gets really interesting. If it weighs around 875kg, the AM-RB 001 won't need Bugatti Chiron levels of power (1479bhp) to make good on its performance claims. Indeed, to match the Chiron's power-to-weight (741bhp/ton) the AM-RB 001 will 'only' need to produce 648bhp.

However, the car will still need significant horsepower to get on terms with Le Mans prototypes, which means it should produce at least 1000bhp. Expect a number of power maps, too, for adverse weather conditions, powerplant longevity and, er, driver talent levels.

What kind of engine? Or should that be 'power unit'?

We'd all like a screaming naturally-aspirated V12, wouldn't we? But the chances of a V12 achieving the required horsepower, and weight, are low; the new twin-turbo V12 in the DB11 could possibly produce the required power, but once again

weight and the cooling requirements of the large twin-turbocharged engine will create headaches – not least in terms of packaging. One thing has been confirmed; the internal combustion will have a KERS unit strapped to it whatever its configuration.

Daimler has a stake in Aston Martin, but it wouldn't let Newey anywhere near its Mercedes-AMG F1 power unit, so that's out.

Which leaves a bespoke engine (costly unless it's going to be deployed elsewhere in the Aston range in the future) or the current Tag Heuer-branded, but Renault designed, Red Bull engine (3), and Newey has over three years of experience packaging this kind of power unit. But the latest from Gaydon is that the motor will be 'bespoke' – either way the AM-RB 001 team would have to engineer-in the docility required for a road application. Whatever it is, let's hope it sounds suitably 'Aston Martin'.

And the drivetrain?

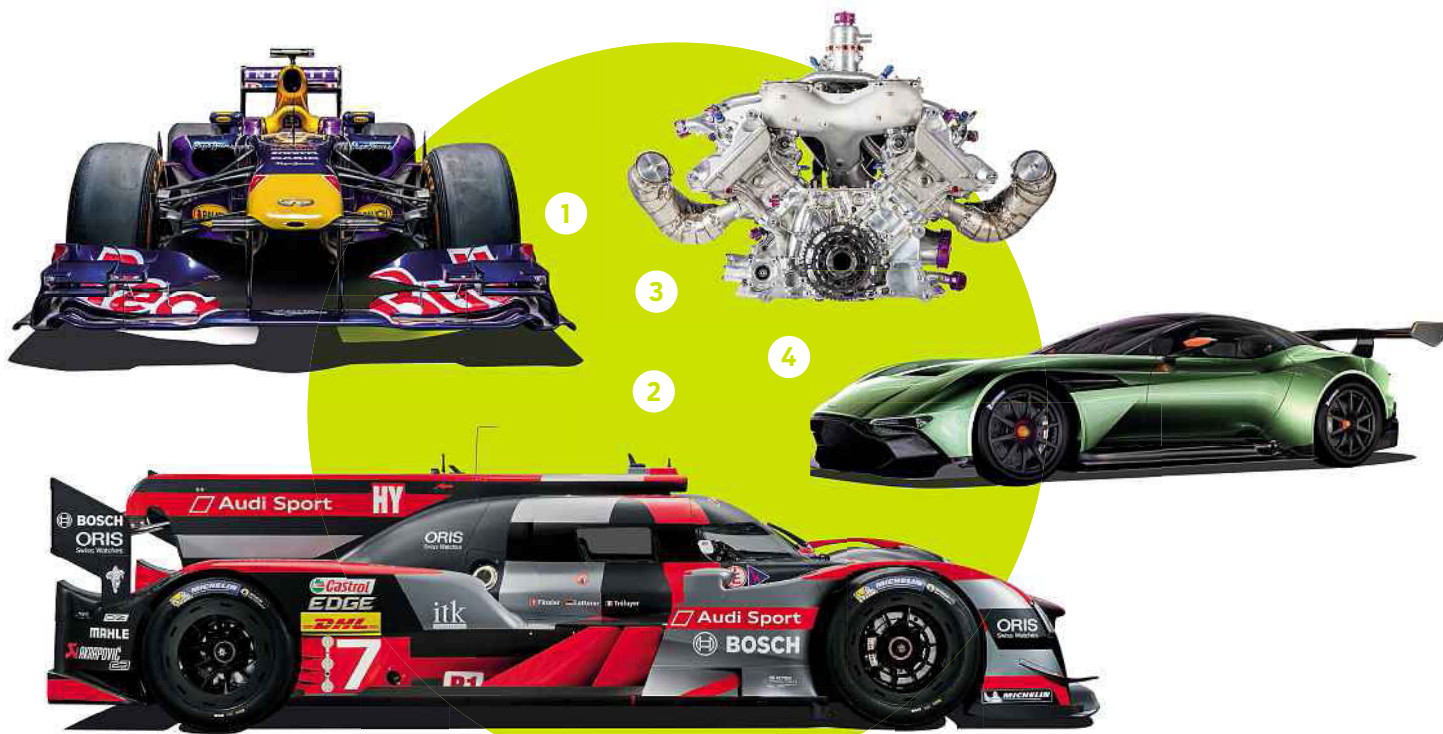
It'll be Aston Martin's first mid-engine layout. The packaging, weight distribution, and aero benefits are well documented, plus Newey has never designed a car with the engine in any other place.

Rear-wheel drive is the simplest, and lightest solution, but if Aston Martin and Red Bull chose to decouple elements of the energy recovery system and create a layout more akin to LMP1 cars, then it would be four-wheel drive which would give it the traction out of the corners to chase those lap times. But while Red Bull has pockets deeper than the Mariana Trench, even it might wince at the cost of engineering a bespoke 4WD solution.

Who will be able to drive it on the road?

Well, in the UK the law says that anyone with a full licence can drive it. So that'll be the 17-year old offspring of an oligarch on the day they pass their driving test... potentially.

Aston Martin will have to consider this carefully, and will no doubt encourage comprehensive driver training before delivery. Experience with the Vulcan (4) track car programme will help here. We have no doubt that simulation training will be part of the AM-RB 001 programme – most likely at Red Bull F1's private simulator if the participants can be trusted to keep the experience secret.





Who will be able to drive it on the track?

This question should be titled ‘who will be fit enough to drive it on track?’ When ground-effect cars were dominating F1 in the ‘80s, drivers complained that someone would blackout if the cornering forces got any higher. The AM-RB 001 will be significantly faster than an F1-car from the early ‘80s, and will ask serious questions of the driver’s physical and mental abilities. Aston Martin and Red Bull will be cautious of this, and will undoubtedly engage with drivers to ensure they can cope with the extreme demands of the car. How extreme? Expect 2-3g under acceleration and 4-5g under braking.

How on earth will it be road legal?

As Radical (5) and Caparo have both proved, race cars can be made road legal. However, this is slightly different – this is an Aston Martin. Andy Palmer told *evo*’s sister mag *Auto Express*: ‘This is a no excuses halo car – the most luxurious car in its class, but also the quickest and the fastest.’ We doubt that the AM-RB 001 will be more luxurious than a Bugatti Chiron (6), but what’s clear is that this car will need power-steering, air-conditioning, a cockpit environment suitable for all shapes and sizes, a decent turning circle, some kind of adjustable ride-height,

mirrors, indicators, etc, etc.

The US poses particular difficulties. It is the only significant car market with crash standards for unbelted occupants. This affects the position of the scuttle, the steering wheel, and even the zone above the knees – anywhere significant injury could be caused in an unbelted crash.

Newey has made a career of finding novel ways to circumnavigate regulations – while keeping his race cars just on the right side of legal – but even he will struggle to find a solution to this. It’s likely the car won’t be road legal in the US, and Aston/Red Bull will offer customers an any time/any place logistics service to run the car on track.

How reliant will it be on aero?

Massively. The only official sketch suggests something quite extraordinary, and the mind boggles at the kind of inventiveness that will be released from Newey’s imagination when unconstrained by race-car regulations.

Fan-assisted aero? Likely. Ground effects? You bet. Not only that, but also this car could deliver the majority of its required downforce from the underfloor area leaving the top surface more open for Marek Reichman and the Aston Martin design team to sculpt something truly wondrous.

Speaking of which...

What will it look like?

A cross between an LMP1 car, an F1 car, the Red Bull ‘X’ Gran Turismo (7) concepts and Aston Martin’s own DP-100 concept (8). Newey’s aerodynamic inventiveness will be worked overtime, too, and it’s likely the AM-RB 001 will produce more downforce than an LMP1 car so expect that to influence its looks.

One thing that hasn’t yet been mentioned is the seating configuration. A single-seat layout would assist aerodynamic performance. But Aston Martin isn’t a ‘single-seat’ car manufacturer – we can’t quite put our finger on it, but there’s something more open, and less selfish, about the Aston Martin driving experience.

EVO COMMENT

There’s no doubt that the AM-RB 001 should be the most exciting performance car of a generation. If you combine Aston Martin’s brand kudos with Red Bull’s wallet, Newey’s brain, Reichman’s design and Gaydon’s ability to ‘get things done’ (CC100, One-77, Vulcan), then you have a quite sensational proposition. Sometimes cars come along that exist outside the realm of mere machine – cars that inspire a generation and rewrite the rules. If Aston Martin and Red Bull get it right, the AM-RB 001 will be one of those cars.

Nick Trott

NEED TO KNOW

99

How many?
One less than 100

£

How much?
No comment from Aston, but well over £2.5million



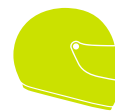
Where will it be built?
Gaydon



When?
2018



Reliability?
Key. Owners are likely to be time-poor. They won’t accept wasted hours stuck on the hard-shoulder or in a pitlane



Will it race?
Possibly. Red Bull could easily turn this into a large-scale event, akin to its popular extreme air-race series

New Sure Special edition. Tested with Williams Racing.



#MakeYourMove



Qualifying at the Ring

evo helps Scuderia Cameron Glickenhaus qualify for the Nürburgring 24 Hours

by JETHRO BOVINGDON

THERE IS NOTHING QUITE like wandering up and down the grid prior to an endurance race at the Nürburgring. At the front it's all gleaming GT3 cars – the new BMW M6 parked in pole position on airjacks with tyre warmers buzzing away, behind it a great wave of AMG GT3s, R8s, 911s and even the wild-looking Lexus RC F. Where the top-level GT3 cars peter out there's an amazing mix of Porsche Cup cars, Audi TTs with vast rear wings, a great gaggle of M235is and assorted front-drive hatchbacks... The big manufacturers might have invaded the racing here but there's

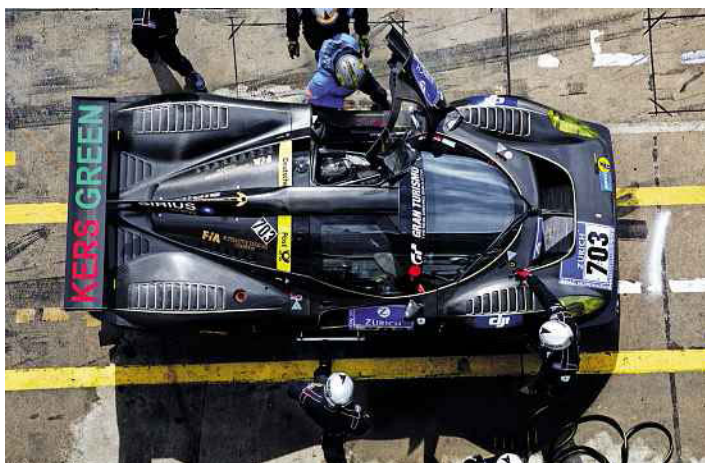
still a sense that it's a giant club event and each participant feels very lucky to be involved.

Today it's the qualification race for the big one, the ADAC Zurich 24 Hours, and I'm one of those pinching myself. In around 90 minutes I'll be a part of the race and, assuming all goes well, I'll be back for the 24-hour race at the end of May (follow the race on evo.co.uk). I'm a guest of Scuderia Cameron Glickenhaus in the simply stunning P4/5 Competizione, driving alongside a vertically challenged *Top Gear* presenter with no hair (Chris Harris not Eddie Jordan) and Ring specialist

and trusted Glickenhaus hotshoe, Manuel Lauck.

The P4/5 Competizione grew out of Jim Glickenhaus' Enzo-based road car project, the P4/5. Built by Pininfarina's Special Projects department headed by Paolo Garella, the P4/5 was inspired by the beautiful Ferrari 330 P3/4 (Jim owns the original) and is still running around the roads of New York pretty regularly. The Competizione version was the next step, once again devised by Paolo Garella – now independent of Pininfarina and head of the newly-formed Scuderia Cameron Glickenhaus – but this time based on a

“On more than one occasion the first time I know there's an M6 or R8 nearby is when it thumps past in a braking zone”



Above left, top and above: Ferrari F430-based P4/5 inspired by 330 P3/4 racer from the 1960s – it looks glorious and is friendly to drive

430 Scuderia road car fused with 430 GT2 race car. It's had considerable success in the past, finishing 12th overall in the N24 in 2012, and above and beyond its GT2 underpinnings, it also runs a KERS hybrid system for a combined output of 563bhp.

In bright, dry conditions I manage two stints of just over an hour each and I have to say it's physically and mentally draining. The seat is set a bit high for me so I feel cramped, and the side mirrors offer a tiny glimpse of the world behind. On more than one occasion the first time I know there's an M6 or R8 nearby is when it thumps past in a braking zone. For the N24,

SCG will fit a rear-view camera. The car is awe-inspiring, though. Despite its potential it's basically very friendly, erring towards gentle understeer, very secure in direction changes and with masses of grip. In fact, I'm still trying to process it all even after over two hours at the wheel. Foxhole flat in sixth? Yeah, that takes a bit of a leap of faith!

In the end the car retires with an overheating KERS unit and a driveshaft issue, but it's the first time it's been used in anger since 2012, so you'd expect the odd niggle. Come the 24 Hour, the P4/5 Competizione will be ready.

BEIJING MOTOR SHOW

Beijing show a meagre feast

TT RS aside, there wasn't much to take away from the recent Chinese show, yet there were a few tasty titbits

CHINESE MOTOR SHOWS REMAIN A HAVEN FOR curiously proportioned facsimiles of well-known vehicles, but the huge market means western brands take the alternating Shanghai and Beijing shows very seriously. While large cars dominate, Smart's latest Brabus models are of greatest interest this year. The Fortwo, Fortwo Cabrio (1) and Forfour get a 108bhp engine, six-speed dual-clutch gearbox and styling and suspension tweaks. VW's T-Prime Concept GTE (2) is yet to be confirmed for production, but could indicate the look of a future Touareg. You'll have to squint hard to see what Lexus has changed with the new IS (3), which gets new headlamps and tail lights, a larger infotainment screen and new colours. Mazda's CX-4 (4) is effectively a sleeker version of the popular and fine-driving CX-5, with strong haunches and a low roof. It could be the best-looking crossover yet, though Mazda is yet to confirm sales outside of China. Infiniti previewed the QX Inspiration concept (5) – a sharp-looking mid-size SUV (think BMW X3 rival) showing the latest interpretation of the firm's design language.



New Ring record for Golf GTI Clubsport S

Just when you thought the Golf GTI couldn't get any hotter, a stripped-out trackday special with more than 300bhp pops up...



IF YOU THOUGHT THE NEW Golf GTI Clubsport was to be the most powerful GTI in the icon's 40-year history, think again, because VW has marked the hot hatch's four-decade anniversary by producing the Clubsport S – the most powerful and fastest Golf GTI to come out of Wolfsburg. It is also the new lap-record holder for front-wheel-drive cars at the Nürburgring.

Limited to 400 units, the Clubsport S has the same 2-litre four-cylinder turbocharged engine fitted to the regular GTI and R. But after an ECU remap and a new exhaust system that reduces backpressure and features a water-cooled exhaust channel, power climbs from the Clubsport's 286bhp to 306bhp, which is also 10bhp more than the R, although torque remains at 280lb ft.

7:49.21

The Clubsport S is the fastest front-wheel-drive car at the Ring

Unlike other hot Golfs, the Clubsport S will only be available with a six-speed manual gearbox.

For the über-Golf's chassis, there are new aluminium subframes, new front hub carriers and an additional setting for the Dynamic Chassis Control specifically for the Nürburgring – essentially the engineers have matched the spring and damper rates to work on the undulating and the less than perfectly smooth surface of the Ring, which

also bodes well for UK roads. The car also gets 19in wheels fitted with Michelin's Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyre. There's an electronically controlled diff, too, which has been recalibrated, as has the stability-control software.

The Clubsport S is marked out by a graphic on the rear sill, with bumpers and spoilers both lifted from the Clubsport model (although you will only be able to order an S with a three-door bodyshell). Look inside, however, and the S is very different from any other Golf GTI. There are

no rear seats and the front seats are buckets; there's also an Alcantara-trimmed steering wheel. Moreover, there is less sound insulation, no rear parcel shelf (obviously) or floor mats, and even the struts for the bonnet have been ditched. Other changes made to chase weight out of the car include a smaller battery, the result being a car weighing 1285kg, 66kg less than a basic Golf GTI.

And so to the numbers: 0-62mph takes 5.8sec, which is 0.2sec quicker than a Clubsport but 0.7sec slower than an R. With a top speed of 164mph, however, it's 9mph faster than the four-wheel drive car. That Ring lap time? 7min 49.21sec – 5.2sec quicker than Renaultsport's Mégane RS 275 Trophy and 1.4sec quicker than the time Honda set with a pre-production Civic Type R.

Prices are expected to start at more than £35,000 when deliveries begin at the end of 2016.

1.42

sec

faster than the next quickest front-driven car around the Ring (the Civic Type R)

200_{kg}

The weight Lotus claims to have removed from its range of cars in 2016

'LaFerrarina'

The rumoured name of the forthcoming LaFerrari Spider...

600_{bhp}

Power output of the new Ford Focus rallycross car

\$283_m

Tesla's financial loss in the first quarter of 2016

1.64_{bn euros}

BMW Group's net profit in the first quarter of 2016

A new era of WRC

Plans for more exciting racing involve greater power and better aero, but will the spectacle actually improve?

THE WORLD RALLY Championship's new era started in low-key fashion last month, when both VW and Citroën started testing cars built to a set of fresh regulations due in 2017.

Designed to make the sport more spectacular, the new regs are based on the same core values as the existing rules (which means 1.6-litre turbo engines, four-wheel drive and cars of at least four metres in length) but allow for greater exploitation

of aerodynamics as well as wider tracks, a slug of extra power through a wider turbocharger restrictor and a more sophisticated transmission.

The all-conquering VW team, which has been testing a 2017 mule for well over a year now, has issued only a sketch of its proposed challenger – a new generation of Polo that will underpin what's all but certain to be Sébastien Ogier's push for a fourth straight world title.

Citroën Racing, on the other hand, allowed *evo* to witness the very first miles of its vehicle – as yet unnamed, but clearly the new C3 supermini – as Briton Kris Meeke started its development programme in southern France.

evo was afforded a vantage point on the scrubland above the vineyards of Château Lastours, and could clearly hear that the new WRC's engine spins up much more freely than the old unit. Meeke was also revving it higher than we're used to, which would indicate there's more power at the top end.

The C3 looked a handful during early runs over rough gravel roads, as Meeke and the engineers played with a car whose new suspension

and semi-active diff were clearly not as developed as the engine.

'It definitely feels faster,' said Meeke, 'and we can see some areas already where we've made gains – compressions and bumps where I'd have been lifting off in the DS 3, but which are flat in the new car. On faster roads these cars are going to be awesome; they just love to be opened up and go fast. The first thing I said to the engineer after my opening run was, "Can you imagine this thing over Ouninpohja [Finland's super-fast, yump-filled stage] in 2017? It's going to be incredible!"'

Citroën coated its test car in a camouflage wrap but the basic outline of the new C3 was visible. So were the considerably wider wheelarch extensions and a whopper of a wing. There's no doubt that rallying's new era will look quicker when it's standing still; how this extra chassis and aero sophistication tames the 80bhp increase in power will ultimately define whether it has greater appeal on the move.

Our hunch? WRC will be better on gravel, but the cars could corner like they're on rails on asphalt...

John McIlroy





SEAT's hidden museum

Take a peek behind closed doors at SEAT's collection of historic models



1200 Sport Bocanegra

While based on the Fiat 127, the Sport's body was all SEAT's work. Bocanegra means 'black mouth'.



Panda Group 2

The 64bhp, 903cc Group 2 Panda helped build Spaniard Carlos Sainz's career – it was his first ever rally car.



131 touring car

Dusty and neglected, but the ground-scraping splitter of this 131 racer makes it one of the coolest cars in the collection.



Toledo Marathon

A little-known Toledo (next to the more familiar WTCC entries), the Marathon competed between 1992 and 1994.



Ronda legal car

The yellow elements (including the entire interior) were to convince lawyers that SEAT's Strada was different from Fiat's...



Fura Crono rally car

Based on the Fiat 127, SEAT's version was a popular rally car. The museum's car is still used in historic events.



Toledo GT

With 550bhp, this is SEAT's most powerful car to date. It was created to win the Spanish GT Championship in 2003.



SEAT 850 Coupe

The benefits of licensing agreements? Getting to build your own version of beautiful cars like the Fiat 850 Coupe.



SEAT Marbella Playa

Comfortably the daftest car in SEAT's collection, the Marbella Playa is a 1991 beach car concept.

MOST EVO READERS WILL be able to empathise with the joy of walking around a car manufacturer's private collection of historic vehicles. Companies such as Porsche, Mercedes-Benz and the Volkswagen Group make those collections public, and display them in theatrical surroundings. Others, like that of SEAT, remain hidden from the public, waiting for a suitable building to be constructed to make them available for all to see.

That's why SEAT has come up with the SEAT Digital Museum – an online archive of the firm's historic vehicles that anyone can access. You can read more about it on page 34.

However, we were fortunate enough to see SEAT's actual collection. Housed in a warehouse at the company's Zona Franca-based facility near Barcelona and comprising over 300 vehicles, it is rather less strikingly presented than the virtual version or other manufacturers' physical museums. Yet as you'll appreciate, there's something about walking around rows of vehicles that – impressive though the Digital Museum is – just can't be replaced by the wonders of the internet. Here are our highlights.

**BEST MPV.
AGAIN.**



CITROËN GRAND C4 PICASSO

Why is the Citroën Grand C4 Picasso a winner again? Well, it might have something to do with its 107g CO₂/km emissions which means no road tax for the first year. Or the high-tech BlueHDi 150* engine, which delivers up to 68.9MPG.[□] And the fact that it comes with an ultra-flexible 7-seat interior, 360° Vision Parking,[°] Keyless Entry and Start,[△] and Panoramic Windscreen. Yes, that's probably why it's been voted 'Best MPV' by both What Car? and Auto Express for two years running.



CRÉATIVE TECHNOLOGIE

   citroen.co.uk

Official Government Fuel Consumption Figures (litres per 100km/MPG) and CO₂ Emissions (g/km). Highest: Grand C4 Picasso THP 165 S&S EAT6 Auto Exclusive+ with 18" wheels: Urban 7.5/37.7, Extra Urban 4.9/57.6, Combined 5.8/48.7, 134 CO₂. Lowest: Grand C4 Picasso BlueHDi 100 S&S manual VTR+ with 16" wheels: Urban 4.5/62.8, Extra Urban 3.5/80.7, Combined 3.8/74.3, 99 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.

CITROËN prefers TOTAL. Model shown: Grand C4 Picasso BlueHDi 120 S&S 6-speed manual Exclusive+. OTR price £27,130 (incl. Teles Blue metallic paint at extra cost of £520). *Available on Grand C4 Picasso Exclusive and above. [□]Combined Cycle on Grand C4 Picasso BlueHDi 150 S&S 6-speed manual Exclusive+ with 17" wheels. [°]Optional at extra cost on Grand C4 Picasso Exclusive+. [△]Optional at extra cost on Grand C4 Picasso VTR+ and Grand C4 Picasso Exclusive, available as standard on Grand C4 Picasso Exclusive+.



Henrik Fries

The R&D boss of Polestar, Volvo's performance arm, on his newfound freedom to create a fresh generation of rapid – but still safe – Volvos



HENRIK FRIES' AMBITIONS



Continue to strengthen the performance of Volvo cars, with performance parts, packages and complete 'Polestar-engineered' cars



Be part of the electrification of Volvo. I see no contradiction here – you will see a lot more in the future



To be world champions in Touring Car racing again. Volvo is not F1, and I don't think we would go rallying, but we love Touring Car racing



To help keep the manual gearbox alive and relevant to the next generation of high performance cars. Not every car has to have a twin-clutch gearbox!

I JOINED POLESTAR IN 2011, and since then it has been such an exciting time. We have shown two concept cars, developed and raced a V8 Touring Car in Australia, brought to market our own car (the V60 Polestar) and are now offering performance parts for all Volvo cars. Since the summer of 2015 we have been entirely owned by Volvo, with the race team remaining independent (as Polestar Cyan Racing).

'Now we are in Touring Car racing (WTCC) again, and we are very proud that we are the only car on the grid to use our own engine. The racing engine uses many of the components from the road car Drive-E engine, because the road car engine is so advanced, such as bearings and so on. That means the race team can order parts from Volvo like any other Volvo owner.

'We will see how the season goes but hopefully we have an advantage. We have a great history in Touring Car Racing; with the 1985 ETCC title for the "Flying Brick" 240 Turbo, the 850 Super Tourer and the 1998 BTCC title for Rickard Rydell in the S40 Super Tourer. We want to add to that success, and learn from it.

'Polestar is a different company to BMW M, or AMG. A Polestar is a car for 365 days a year. You can push it really hard, and it doesn't matter whether it is snowing or raining, leaves on the road or sunshine, you can still have a lot of fun driving it. That doesn't mean that in future we won't do a car that has the same performance as a BMW M3, but a Polestar has a different, sophisticated kind of performance. It should always do exactly what you tell it to do: there should be no nasty surprises. These are the core values of our company.

'Volvo is known for its approach to safety, but for me I see no contradiction with what we're trying to do. The safest car you can have is one that handles really well and has very precise steering. We have ESP and traction control, and although you can turn them "off", they are still working away at a much lower rate in the background.

'Most of all, I look forward to working with the V90/S90 on the SPA platform (Scalable Product Architecture, first seen with the new XC90). We have double wishbone suspension on the front, and we can do amazing things with that car. Because we are now inside Volvo we have

“That doesn't mean that in future we won't do a car that has the same performance as a BMW M3”

had access to this platform for a while. We could even do a Polestar XC90 – it would certainly be popular in some markets.

'In fact, we have platforms now where we can change things around and do most things. If Volvo makes a coupe, then why should there not be a Polestar performance version of that car? But I don't think there should automatically be a Polestar variant of every Volvo model.

'As long as Polestar can bring performance, I don't see an issue with hybrid technology or even electric cars. This is the way it is going. The XC90 T8 has huge performance. At the moment the drawback is the weight of the batteries, but they are improving all the time. In the long run I don't see why we shouldn't go fully electric – Tesla has proved that electric power is not boring.

'We now have the eight-speed Aisin automatic gearbox in all our cars, but I don't think you will see us with a twin-clutch gearbox. I would personally rather have a manual gearbox as an alternative to that. There has been a revival for this sort of [manual] gearbox recently, and if you do it well it is a very good thing.

'In the future we will use electronically adjustable suspension. Volvo already has such a system on some of its cars, but it is not performance-orientated at the moment so we cannot set it up how we want. However, I like the idea of different driving modes, especially when we get to making electric cars: it is an advantage to have the car set up one way for city driving and then another way when you want to drive for fun.

'Before we were part of Volvo, we'd buy a car and then start to tune it – the S60 for example. Now we are on the inside, we are in on the project from the beginning: at the simulation stage, with the test mules, even before that when we are

discussing what a future platform should be, what Polestar needs it to have. That is a huge step forward for us – I don't have to limit myself.

'We have access to amazing facilities: wind tunnels, test tracks, so much technology. We actually do a lot of testing in the UK. Volvo has a test centre in the north of England – I'm not allowed to say where, I'm afraid – and we are often over with the Volvo engineers and some cars.'

ANALYSIS

Polestar is still 'young' within Volvo but, as with AMG at Mercedes, it is now an integral part of the development process.

It will be the cars spun off the new SPA platform, initially the S90 and V90, that will really show what Polestar can do. Expect S60/V60 derivatives, too, after they're replaced next year.

Given the performance requirements for such a big car and Fries' enthusiasm for electric power, everything points to a tuned T8 powertrain, mating the supercharged/turbocharged Drive-E with a plug-in hybrid drivetrain. This combination already produces 395bhp in the T8 XC90, so a combined output of 500bhp is entirely possible. That should make for a very different kind of BMW M5 rival.



WELCOME TO OUR WORLD



Breitling reinvents the connected watch firmly geared towards performance. Every inch an instrument of the future, the Exospace B55 multifunction electronic chronograph pushes the boundaries of comfort, ergonomics and efficiency. The titanium case of this compendium of innovations houses an exclusive SuperQuartz™ caliber chronometer-certified by the COSC and featuring a range of original functions tailor-made for pilots and men of action. Welcome to the world of precision, feats and high-tech sophistication. Welcome to the vanguard of instruments for professionals.

BREITLING.COM



INSTRUMENTS FOR PROFESSIONALS™

IF YOU PRESSED ME TO NAME my favourite part of the world, I would probably say it was the remoter parts of Scotland. Given the far-flung reaches that I've been lucky enough to gad about in, it might seem odd that I would pick somewhere that doesn't require an aeroplane to reach, but the quietly rugged beauty of Scotland is simply magical. If you continued this rigorous line of inquisition (threatening me with a soft cushion or comfy chair) and asked me about my favourite type of motorsport, I would obviously say rallying. So, combine the two and you have my perfect event – the Mull Rally.

It began in 1969 after a chap called Brian Molyneux went on holiday to Mull and thought it would be a splendid place for a rally. The fact that he lived in Lancashire, hundreds of

miles away, didn't deter him and the Tour of Mull, as it was known back then, was first held as a one-night event with 72 entries. It has been held in some form or other every year since, with the 2016 event (sponsored by Beatson's Building Supplies) therefore being its 47th running.

The rally has grown somewhat since that first event and is now run over three days, starting on a Friday night. It might not be the easiest rally to get to, but spectators and competitors are rewarded with upwards of 150 competitive stage miles – almost three times the distance of a normal BTRDA (British Trials and Rally Drivers Association) event. Mull is known for its incredibly testing tarmac stages, which take in most of the island's road network. Watch the many videos of in-car footage from the stages and

the first thing you will think is how narrow the roads look. The second thing that strikes you is the number of wickedly situated, frequently blind crests. Add in bumps, rocks, cambers and cliffs and you have possibly the most intimidating rally in the world. Some would also say the best rally in the world.

There have been brief flirtations with forest stages over the years and this looked like it might have to become a permanent state of affairs when the regulations for road rallies were changed in the late-1980s. In order for the rally to continue, the organisers had to apply for closed-roads status, which required an Act of Parliament. It was a lengthy and expensive process, but in March 1990 the act was granted and Mull became Britain's first closed-road rally.

Isle of Mull Rally

14-16 October 2016

Head north for Atlantic squalls, knife-edge driving and a wonderfully varied cast of cross-country machinery

Last year the event sold out its 150 places within 36 hours of entries opening, and the entry list includes all shapes and types of cars, with everything from WRC cars to Austin Minis, Group N Evos, various flavours of Mk2 Escort and even a Darrian tackling the roads. Clearly this makes it a wonderfully eclectic event to spectate at.

Although the car obviously makes a difference, the skill of the driver arguably has a bigger bearing on stage times than at any other rally. Various big names have entered over the years and rumour has it that WRC driver Mikko Hirvonen wants to make an appearance this year. However, the undoubted stars of the Mull stages in recent years have been local pairing Calum and Iain

Duffy. Calum first started the rally as a navigator when he was just 16 years old, and when he first entered as a driver he didn't use notes as he knew the roads so well. Duffy has won the rally eight times, mostly in a Mk2 Ford Escort. With a 300bhp Millington engine and a sequential shift, it isn't any old Escort, but the fact remains that he has regularly taken victory in a rear-driven car against plenty of four-wheel-drive opposition. Last year he switched to a Group A Subaru Impreza and this year he is having a Skoda Fabia S2000 rebuilt by Den Motorsport with a 2.5-litre Millington, which should sound rather good...

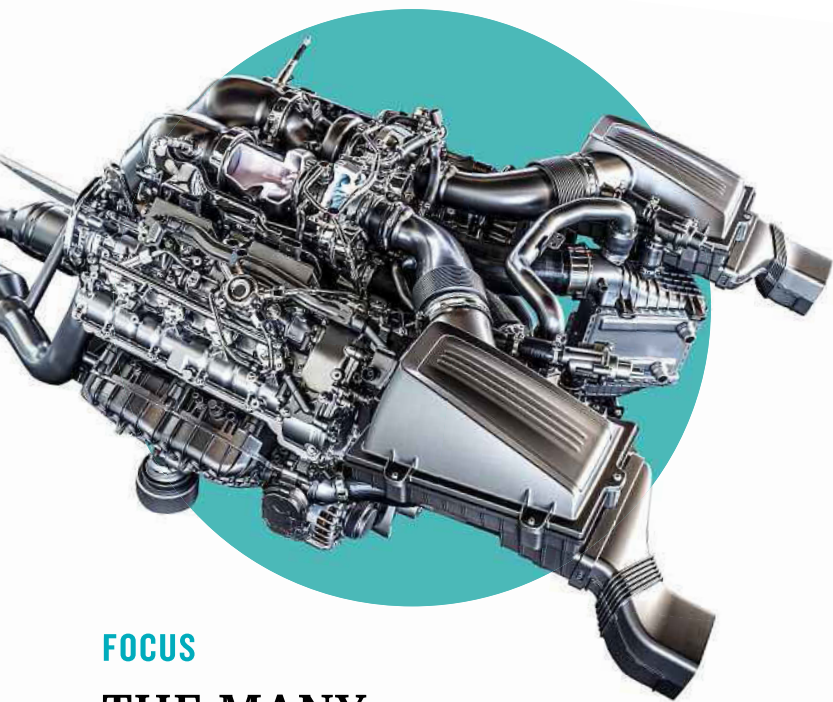
The rally usually ends with a firework display and a Celebration Walk through the island's capital Tobermory. Last year the event

was sadly marred by the death of Andy Mort, co-driver to front-runner John MacCrone, but with the blessing of his family the rally will go ahead again this year.

Accommodation is limited, so it's best to book well in advance. However, access to the island has become cheaper this year thanks to subsidies, and ferry crossings through Caledonian MacBrayne cost between £6 and £13 for a car. That's not the only way to get to the islands. In 1987 Bob Bean missed the last ferry from Lochaline and is said to have rowed across the Sound of Mull to get to the start. Sadly his rally ended early on the first night, but his endeavours were rewarded with the Spirit of the Rally award. Where he acquired the boat is still not known... ❌



“Last year the event sold out its 150 places within 36 hours of entries opening”



FOCUS

THE MANY BENEFITS OF A 'HOT V' V8 TURBO

A HOT V IS WHAT YOU call a turbocharged V8 engine with the exhaust ports pointing inwards, towards the centre of the engine and the turbos located between the two banks of cylinders. There's a common misconception that placing the turbochargers next to the exhaust ports decreases turbo lag and increases throttle response simply by them being closer. Sadly it's not quite as easy as that, but there are three significant benefits to nestling the turbos within the V.

The first is heat. The configuration has the name 'hot V' for a reason: the shorter distance to the turbos means there's less tubing to cool the exhaust gases down. Conventional wisdom suggests you want to keep everything as cool as possible within the engine bay. For the most part that's true, but catalytic converters need to be hot to work. Rather than being positioned under the car (where they are often found), they too are kept near the turbos in the V to stay hot, and therefore as efficient as possible. The high temperature in

“The more compact the engine is, the more cars it can potentially be slotted into”

the engine bay isn't a problem, just as long as there is somewhere for the heat to dissipate.

The second benefit is packaging. Without the turbochargers splayed outwards towards the bottom of the engine, the entire unit can be a much more condensed and neater package. This is hugely beneficial for manufacturers trying to fit the engine into as many different chassis as possible; the smaller and more compact the engine is, the more cars it can potentially be slotted into.

And thirdly – the biggest advantage of them all – is that, with the turbos right next to the exhaust ports, they can be more accurately controlled. The previous reasons for having the turbos on top of the engine would benefit any V configuration engine, but the real advantage is for V8s.

Because of the nature of a cross-plane crank V8 engine, the firing order dictates that two cylinders on each bank will fire in sequence. And on one of those banks, two of the cylinders will be next to one another. It's this firing order that creates the typical charismatic V8 burble, but it also creates a problem for turbocharging. With a turbocharger on each bank of cylinders, the uneven pulses, thanks to this firing order, make the turbo's impeller spin in an irregular manner.

If you can take the exhaust gas pulses from both banks, and pair each opposing cylinder (in terms of firing order, rather than physical position), you can then get two turbos to spin in a more regular and smoother manner. To achieve this with the turbos on the outside would require long, intricate pipes surrounding the engine, which would be hugely complex and expensive.

Having each of the two turbos matched to the most appropriate four cylinders makes the turbos spin more predictably and so they can be controlled more exactly, improving throttle response.

This is how the hot V, turbocharged V8s from Mercedes-AMG and BMW M work. However, Audi has taken it a step further. In its latest diesel, hot-V V8, the two exhaust ports in each cylinder run separate turbochargers. One of the exhaust valves is deactivated at low revs, so the engine runs with just three valves per cylinder. The second exhaust valve is then activated when more power is needed, which in turn starts the second turbo. This staged turbo format can help eradicate turbo lag and give a more linear power delivery while also benefitting from the more even turbo speeds a hot V can offer.



GAME-CHANGER

VARIABLE VALVE TIMING (VVT)

First production application:

Alfa Romeo 2000 Spider

When: 1980

Although a number of engines used some sort of variable valve timing in earlier years, the first production application of the technology didn't take place until 1980 when Alfa used it on fuel injected versions of the 2000 Spider. The camshaft operating the engine's intake valves could be advanced by 25 degrees depending on revs.

A hydraulic piston connected the timing-chain sprocket to the camshaft with helical gears, and when the engine reached a certain speed, oil pushed the piston that rotated the cam in relation to the sprocket, thanks to the angled splines of the helical gears. This changed the timing in relation to the exhaust valves and improved power at high revs while retaining tractability lower down.

The best-known VVT system is Honda's VTEC. Rather than change the timing of an entire cam, when the engine reaches a certain revs VTEC locks together a two-part rocker for each valve that is then operated by a different lobe on the same cam. The new lobe starts to open the valve earlier, closes it later and opens it wider.

BMW's VANOS works in a similar way to Alfa's system but acts on both cams and can work to varying degrees rather than Alfa's two positions. Porsche's Variocam is similar, but also implements a different, more aggressive cam lobe like the VTEC system does.

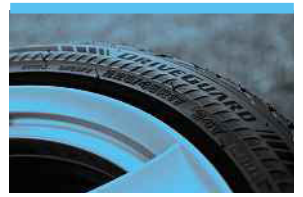


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NEWS

PIRELLI EVOLVES P ZERO RANGE

GIVEN THAT PIRELLI is the OE tyre supplier for more than half of all prestige cars sold worldwide, the launch of its third-gen P Zero range – the Italian company's premium and high-performance product – is big news in the industry. At the launch at Estoril Circuit, Portugal, there are also big claims: the new P Zero offers not only more grip than previous versions, but less rolling resistance, too.

The P Zero line was first introduced for the Lancia Delta S4 rally car in 1986 before making its debut on a road car the following year, on Ferrari's F40. Today, the P Zero range incorporates 11 derivatives, ranging from the all-season Nero to the ultra-high-performance Corsa, mostly in sizes from 17in to 22in.

Throughout the new line-up, tread patterns, construction, compounds and beads have been developed to improve wet and dry grip, as well as lower rolling resistance to improve fuel economy.

Pirelli claims the new P Zero is the best performing tyre on the market, as well as the most reliable when it comes to 'handling the extreme power of modern supercars'. The 11 derivatives can be split into three groups – luxury-saloon applications, sports cars and supercars. The tyre is

therefore the standard-fit on a diverse range of cars – currently spanning 60 individual models – from Maserati saloons to McLaren and Ferrari supercars.

Working in close collaboration with engineers at many high-end car manufacturers, Pirelli, like other premium tyre brands, has established itself as an OE supplier, enabling the company to offer bespoke tyres for

“The P Zero Corsa is now close to being comparable to the track-focused Trofeo R”

particular models. The 305-section P Zero developed for the Audi R8, for instance, is demonstrably different to the 305-section P Zero fitted to the Ferrari 488 GTB and Porsche 911 Turbo.

'If you look at the cross-section, the difference is night and day,' says Alessandro Ascanelli, head of Pirelli's research and development, 'and if you were to put a Ferrari tyre on an Audi, the car behaviour would be totally different.'

Ascanelli says that the new P Zero

in standard form is almost a match for the old Corsa in terms of traction, braking and cornering ability, which has enabled Pirelli's engineers to make the similar advances with the new Corsa. As a result, the ultra-high-performance Corsa is now close to being comparable to the track-focused P Zero Trofeo R, which was an option on the McLaren P1.

Naturally, Pirelli is keen to draw

a link between the new P Zero and its F1 activities. A new technology, 'F1 Bead', utilises 'an especially rigid compound within the bead area that allows a more rapid and precise steering response'.

We're able to sample the new P Zero at Estoril and on surrounding roads. First impressions are very positive indeed, but we'll put the P Zero through a more rigorous test alongside rival tyres to see how it really stacks up.

Dan Prosser

LOVING RUNFLATS

'Runflat' became a derogatory term in the early '00s when BMW adopted such tyres for a vast portion of its range. The M division refused to use them and owners quickly replaced them to avoid the brittle ride quality. Runflat tech, in its early mainstream application, was considered A Very Bad Thing.

I was of that opinion before I visited Bridgestone's test facility near Rome back in 2006. Then they strapped me into a 3-series and asked me to drive at 60mph around a long curve that mimicked a motorway sweeper. Halfway round, a simulated blowout made the BMW spin wildly. The same test with a runflat barely changed the car's trajectory, and I pulled up without fuss. Runflats seemed a pretty good idea.

A decade later I'm back at Bridgestone's proving ground and a man hammers a five-inch nail into the shoulder of a new runflat called 'DriveGuard'. The tyre deflates and I hop in the Golf for a drive. These tyres are still heavier than normal tyres – by 7 to 20 per cent – and they still feature a stiffer sidewall structure to support the weight of the car. However, Bridgestone claims they do not need a dedicated chassis setup. It has also added cooling fins, which increase durability and allow you to drive 50 miles at 50mph on a compromised tyre.

The Golf drives almost as normal, just with the odd squeak from the flat tyre and pulling slightly to the left. It's remarkable. We need to test the DriveGuard system more fully and against conventional rubber, but the runflat concept isn't going away and it appears that the benefits are starting to outweigh the drawbacks.

Jethro Bovingdon

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SEAT moves to make tech more bearable for drivers

Spanish marque is attempting to lessen obstacles in everyday driving

IT'S ALL TOO EASY TO DEVELOP scepticism of new automotive technology, particularly when it's the kind that seems to detract from the process of driving.

One company exploring ways to improve our experience is SEAT. Between 'digital keys', a new look at car-sharing, and 'mobility partnerships' with service providers such as parking facilities and petrol stations, the firm's technology could make our driving lives easier without sacrificing the aspects of driving we love. **evo** spoke to SEAT's head of connectivity, Leyre Olavarria, to see what the company has in store.

On... digital keys

'The digital key replaces the traditional key with something like a smartphone or smartwatch. From that device you'll be able to open, close and start your car, so you don't need to have a regular car key with you any more.'

On... ride-sharing

'Another benefit of the digital key is ride-sharing – you'll essentially

be able to share your "key". If I'm in Germany and my car is in Spain, and a friend wants to drive it, they can send me a request via smartphone. I can accept that request – or deny it – and they can get into my car and drive it with their smartphone. We see this working well for fleets and rental firms, too – if you've rented a car at an airport, you can be sent a virtual key in advance.'

On... mobility partnerships

'The industry is moving from a supplier-based arrangement to an industry based on partners. At the Mobile World Congress we announced partnerships with Samsung and Saba – a Barcelona-based parking firm. In the case of parking, you'd be able to reserve and pay for a parking space while driving. You wouldn't need a ticket, and the barrier would open when you arrived. A similar system could work at fuel stations.'

On... distraction

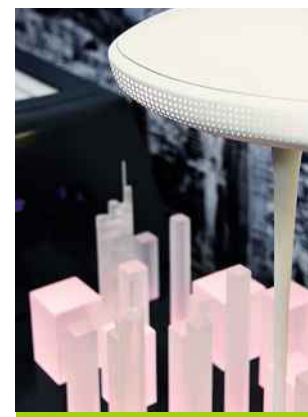
'Safety is one of our priorities. A lot of these functions are handled

“The digital key replaces the traditional key with something like a smartwatch”

by voice control, but we've worked carefully with regulations on our touchscreens – the text is bigger, and the colours and contrast more obvious than on a smartphone.'

On... sporty driving

'One thing we already offer for sportier drivers is the Connect app, available via our Full Link package. It encourages you to drive not necessarily in a sporty way, but in a smooth way. You can track the speeds you've been driving, your revs, your gear selection. The Challenger function lets you score points based on tasks – for example, it might require your next five gearchanges to be at the perfect time.'



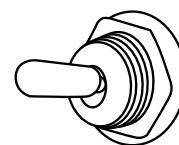
NOW & THEN

SEAT Digital Museum

Few are aware that SEAT has an impressive collection of classic vehicles in its possession, but while **evo** was lucky enough to be granted a look around – see page 22 for our highlights – the collection is not yet accessible by the public.

In the metal, that is. #SEATdigitalmuseum is an initiative that allows anyone around the world to explore the company's history in detail. It's still in its infancy, and SEAT is undergoing the drawn-out process of digitally scanning every car in its 300-strong collection for the online museum.

Cars in the Digital Museum – itself a work of virtual art, the result of a competition involving design students from around the world – are visually identical to the models in SEAT's own collection. Users can view the cars from any angle, read information on each car's history and, where applicable, view photographs and videos from SEAT's archives, which themselves have been painstakingly converted into a digital format.



ON
OR
OFF?

Acoustic warnings

'Anything, and I mean *anything* that buzzes or bings at you needs to be switched off,' says Adrian Tebbutt via Facebook. 'I know when my seatbelt isn't fastened, or when I'm reversing, or the lights are on, or the door is open...'



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JUNGHANS - THE GERMAN WATCH

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MADE IN
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C70 Brooklands 1926 Chronometer



Christopher
Ward



WATCH TECH

BULGARI OCTO FINISSIMO MINUTE REPEATER



Among the lexicon of horological complications, the 'minute repeater' is probably the most outdated. It was originally conceived to indicate the time with audible chimes during the gloomy, candle-lit evenings before electric lighting, but such watches are still sought after by collectors because of their complexity.

Bulgari recently unveiled its 21st-century take on the minute repeater in the form of the Octo Finissimo, which contains the 362 components required for the mechanism in a movement just 3.12mm deep. The case of the watch is made from titanium, the low density of which means the sound of the tiny gongs is less muffled than it would be by steel or platinum. The volume is further enhanced by the dial being cut out at the hour markers and around the small seconds counter.

At a total thickness of just 6.85mm, this is the thinnest minute-repeater wristwatch ever created. Only 50 will be made, and collectors are falling over themselves to get hold of one – despite the far from lightweight price tag of £123,000.



THIS MONTH

TAG Heuer
Monza

Price: £4000
From: tagheuer.com

One of the hits of the Baselworld watch show in March was TAG's latest re-issue of the much-missed Monza drivers' watch. The original was launched in 1976 to celebrate Niki Lauda becoming F1 World Champion the previous year. The new model lacks some of that version's quirks (such as the asymmetrical subdials and the left-hand winding crown) but it retains a suitably vintage look.

Breitling for Bentley
GMT B04S Carbon Body

Price: £17,550
From: breitling.com

Already available in titanium, Breitling for Bentley's dual-time chronograph gets the all-black treatment with a carbonfibre case and dial. Featuring a red secondary hand to indicate 'home' time, the main hands can be easily adjusted to the wearer's current location with a twist of the crown. Just 250 examples of the 45mm diameter, chronometer-certified watch will be available worldwide.

Rolex
Cosmograph Daytona

Price: £8250
From: rolex.com

Famed for its links to the Daytona Speedway and Hollywood star Paul Newman, the Cosmograph Daytona remains the quintessential drivers' watch. This latest update loses the familiar engraved metal bezel in favour of a high-tech 'Cerachrom' (coloured ceramic) component that's more resilient. Available with a black or white dial, the watch has a guaranteed accuracy of two seconds per day.



TAG HEUER MONACO AUTOMATIC

As worn by Matt Windle, operations director, Zenos Cars

'My favourite watch is my TAG Heuer Monaco, which I bought as a present to myself on my 40th birthday four years ago. I've always liked TAGs and went for the Monaco on the basis that, if it worked for Steve McQueen, it should work for me! But mine isn't the blue-dial version that McQueen made famous by wearing

in the movie *Le Mans*, nor is it a chronograph. It's a simple, time-only watch with a small seconds display at six o'clock and a date window at three, but it was that simple, classic appearance that appealed to me.

'When I first bought it, I wore it all the time – until I discovered how much it cost to replace the strap with a genuine

TAG one, to have the movement serviced and to have the case polished. Then I began to limit the occasions when I wear it. I rarely, therefore, wear it at work and, anyway, watches are not welcome in a manufacturing facility such as Zenos. They can cause damage to cars and components, so people leave them off.'

“I like driving and I’m always happy to make a small detour to take my favourite route.

The winding road is so fun to drive.
Negotiating the twists and turns is exciting.
The freedom and control and the sense of safety I feel turn every mile into pure pleasure.

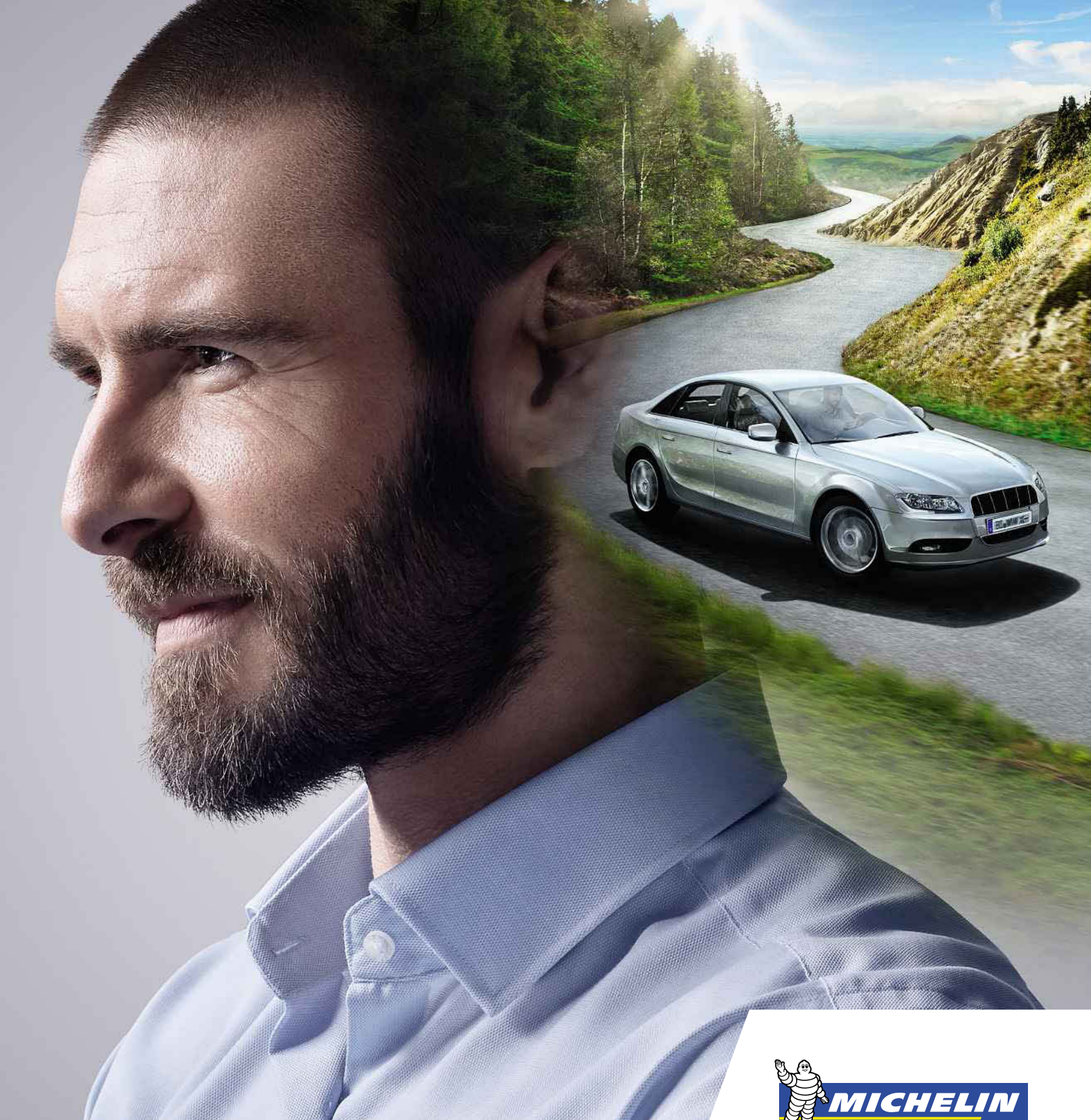
Ever since I fitted new MICHELIN Pilot Sport⁴ tyres on my car, the driving enjoyment is even greater. It’s like rediscovering my car.

It’s like my tyres know where I want to go before I do.

I’m not a motor sport fanatic or anything, just a regular driver who loves their new tyres.”

Michael
MICHELIN Pilot Sport⁴ owner.





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SKODA OCTAVIA vRS TDI 4X4 // **AUDI** RS Q3 PERFORMANCE //
SUPERCHIPS VW GOLF GTD Mk6

Test location: Balocco Proving Ground, Italy **GPS:** 45.36038, 8.10556

Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio

Performance figures to make the likes of AMG look twice, and Ferrari involvement in the car's development. Could this – at last – be the kind of Alfa we've been waiting for?





TALKING TO YOURSELF is, apparently, some sort of indication of madness, but when you're making notes into a dictaphone, there isn't much choice. What I'm saying does seem slightly insane, though. After my initial laps, I've just said the words: 'It feels like there is quite a lot of Ferrari in this new Giulia Quadrifoglio.' For the avoidance of any doubt, that's a good thing.

When Alfa first unveiled the new Giulia last year, heart rates were raised and hopes lifted. It looked great and the details seemed

mouth-watering: rear-wheel drive, 503bhp, 443lb ft, a twin-turbo V6, an active front splitter, a carbon bonnet, a carbon roof, a lap time around the Nürburgring of 7:39.0... the list went on. Inevitably, however, most people tempered their anticipation. So many times before, good things had been promised from stunning looks and great mechanical ingredients, only for the end result to be a devastating disappointment once it was driven. For many, the 4C was the last straw. The manufacturer from Milan had become the automotive equivalent of the boy who cried wolf.

Which is why I can't quite believe I'm saying such glowing things into my dictaphone. Throughout my subsequent hours with the Quadrifoglio, I keep expecting to stumble across some great flaw that will derail my enjoyment of it, but it never happens. This really is a wolf. Or rather it's a genuinely enjoyable, fun, drivers' Alfa.

You're probably wondering what those Ferrari similarities are. Well, the paddles are the most obvious tactile link. The big pieces of cool, curved aluminium fixed to the steering column grab your attention as soon



The team

This month, we asked our road testers to name their favourite Alfa...



NICK TROTT
Editor

'SZ. But I've never driven one – I fear it won't be my favourite any longer if I do...'



STUART GALLAGHER
Managing editor

'A '72 Montreal. Not driven one either; it'd probably cost a packet to run but it's '70s cool'



HENRY CATCHPOLE
Features editor

'Alfaholics GTA-R. Gorgeous to look at, beautiful to drive. What you want an Alfa to be like'



DAN PROSSER
Road test editor

'Another vote for the GTA-R. Such fun to drive, but I could just stare at the thing'



JETHRO BOVINGTON
Contributing editor

'The best Alfas tend to be the ones you haven't driven, so I'll say Tipo 33 Stradale'



RICHARD MEADEN
Contributing editor

'As a kid I loved my dad's Alfasuds, but my favourite to drive is the '65 GTA. Perfection'



ADAM TOWLER
Road tester

'A lap of the Targa Florio circuit in a '72 Tipo T33/TT/3 please. I can dream'



WILL BEAUMONT
Staff writer

'1963 Giulia TI Super. Homologation special with lighter body, bigger carbs...'



as you open the driver's door and they have the same lovely action as the ones you'll find in a 488 GTB. It's a longer throw than most paddles but it makes the shifts feel much more engaging. Then there is the red starter button on the wheel, the steering that is noticeably direct and the button that softens the dampers, just like a Ferrari's 'bumpy road' mode. And then there is the easy, playful balance over the limit when you turn everything off...

The launch is at the Balocco test track, about an hour from Milan's Malpensa airport, and sadly we can't take the cars out of the gates and onto the public road on this first

drive. On the plus side, the track does offer the chance to drive the car really hard while we have it.

For the first few miles I concentrate on the less aggressive driver modes, accessed by a rotary knob on the transmission tunnel. First up is A, for Advanced Efficiency, which is not very entertaining but is impressive as it allows three of the six cylinders to be deactivated. I move swiftly to N, for Natural. The steering is direct but feels too light. However, I leave it in N while I look around the cabin. The seats are nice and the fit-and-finish of the switches feels good – on a par with a Jaguar, if not quite up to an

Audi or Mercedes. It looks like the controls for the infotainment system have taken inspiration directly from BMW's iDrive and Audi's MMI (which is no bad thing), and the menus are reasonably intuitive to navigate around. The lovely steering wheel, supportive seats and attractively cowed dials are all Alfa, though.

D, for Dynamic, ramps things up with the throttle and gearshift while also firming the suspension and lifting the sound of the engine. The turbo V6 isn't yowlingly sonorous, but it sounds throatily aggressive and much more characterful than BMW's M3. What's more, it flies through the revs incredibly quickly

and cleanly, never feeling like it's running out of enthusiasm. The throttle response is excellent, too, giving you great control in the corners. In D, the ESP soon feels like it is holding things back a little too much and, just like in a 488 GTB, the hazards flash every time you lean hard on the optional ceramic brakes. The only thing to do is switch to R, for Race, which turns the ESP off.

Any worry that the ESP might have been masking something nasty is banished after the very first slide. The rate of roll is easy and the steering feels natural, but the most impressive thing is the incredibly progressive way the way



‘Any worry the ESP might have been hiding something nasty is banished after the first slide’



the bespoke Pirelli P Zero Corsa tyres spin up and break traction. Rarely has a car transitioned into oversteer so smoothly. The nose can feel a little heavy through tighter corners, but it's easily managed. The quick steering means it's easy to weight the front on the way into more open bends, and then there is ample torque to switch the balance and drive the car through cleanly or initiate a long slide. The key to this, hiding in the rear axle and managed by Alfa's Chassis Domain Control system, is a proper torque-vectoring differential with a pair of electro-mechanical clutches capable of sending power to either wheel.

Top right: 3-litre V6 is laced with Ferrari know-how; it also features cylinder deactivation.
Above: column-mounted paddles possess a long but very satisfying action; wheel-mounted starter button very 'Ferrari'

Through the quickest corners at Balocco, the rear occasionally feels a little soft and not completely settled on its springs (at 1524kg dry, this car is certainly not a lightweight), but even if it begins to slide a fraction, it never feels scary. Through slow or medium-speed corners, the car is just entertainingly encouraging, happy to play the hooligan as much or as little as you want. It's just great fun and I'm smiling an awful lot during my time in the driver's seat. (Incidentally, as an option you can have carbon-backed buckets in the front, which look fantastic.)

The eight-speed ZF auto is a familiar 'box, but rarely has it felt as

good as it does in the Giulia. In Race mode the changes punch through crisply and not once do I find myself wishing for a DCT. One thing I have studiously avoided mentioning so far is the Quadrifoglio's other gearbox, the six-speed manual. There is a reason for this – the manual won't be available in right-hand drive. I can almost hear the tortured cries of exasperation and I had a similar reaction when I was told in the airport on the way out to the launch, startling several other travellers nearby. How could Alfa do this to us?

However, I do have a go in a car equipped with three pedals on the launch and I actually don't think our



'It seems bizarre to be saying such glowing things about an Alfa'

Above: first drive was sadly limited to the track, but so far all the signs suggest that this is one of the best Alfas in decades. **Below:** six-speed manual version won't be coming to the UK



loss is a disastrous one. It's not a bad 'box. The spherical gearknob is a bit big and the shift can feel a touch baulky at times, but it gets better the quicker you go and the pedals are well placed. However, with only six ratios the engine doesn't feel quite as spritely, and when you really push hard, the paddleshift Giulia feels like it manages the torque-vectoring more smoothly, making it easier to balance on the limit. I'm a card-carrying member of the save-the-manual campaign, but in this instance the paddleshift car feels at least as good, if not slightly better.

It would be wrong to give the Giulia Quadrifoglio more than four and a half stars when we haven't driven it on any road, let alone a British one, so I won't. But if the soft-damper button quiets bumps as miraculously as a 488 GTB's 'bumpy road' setting does, and if the quick steering has enough feel, then it may well graduate to the full five. Once again, it seems almost bizarre to be saying such glowing things about an

Alfa and comparing it to Maranello's products. At least it does until you discover who developed it.

During a lull in proceedings, I fall into conversation with a man wearing a blazer and chinos. He is quietly spoken but delighted I like the car because he developed the powertrain. He explains how he wanted the all-new 90-degree V6 to be reminiscent of Alfa's DTM engines of old. His name is Gianluca Pivetti, and his previous job was developing the remarkable engine in the Ferrari California T. He calls over his friend, Philippe Krief, who was in charge of the Giulia's chassis. Krief, he explains, also worked at Ferrari until three years ago, when Sergio Marchionne (CEO of Fiat, Chrysler and also Ferrari) asked them to develop the Giulia. 'It was like a skunkworks at first!' says Pivetti. I ask Krief what his last project was before he left Maranello. 'The Speciale,' he says. Suddenly it all makes sense. ❌

Henry Catchpole
(@HenryCatchpole)

Specification

🇬🇧 If Ferrari built a saloon (really) 🇬🇧 No manual for the UK, where the Quadrifoglio still has to prove itself..

| Engine | CO2 | Power | Torque | 0-62mph | Top speed | Weight (dry) | Basic price |
|------------------------|---------|------------------|-------------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------------|-------------|
| V6, 2891cc, twin-turbo | 198g/km | 503bhp @ 6500rpm | 443lb ft @ 2500-5500rpm | 3.9sec (claimed) | 191mph (claimed) | 1524kg (335bhp/ton) | £59,000 |

evo rating

★★★★★

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Test location: Nice, France
GPS: 43.70709, 7.24256

Mercedes-AMG S63 4Matic Cabriolet

Can the first S-class cab for 40 years combine drop-top opulence with AMG thrills?



THAT MERCEDES-BENZ has built a cabriolet version of its S-class Coupe should come as no big surprise, but why it has taken the company so long to do so just might. The last time you could buy a piece of such opulence from Mercedes was back in 1971, and in the interim the market for luxury drop-tops has grown from a small niche into a core sector.

Aston Martin (DB9), Bentley (Continental GT), Ferrari (California T) and Rolls-Royce (Dawn) all offer two-door, four-seat, six-figure boulevard cruisers, and all have enjoyed sales success and found loyal customers who are prepared to sacrifice some dynamic integrity for a suntan. So Mercedes' reason to return to the game is a no-brainer, and it gives those who would dismiss the SL (still being built, and 'always will be') for its lack of rear seats another option.

Three models and two drivetrains are offered with the new S-class Cabriolet: there are rear-driven S500, S63 and S65 variants and a four-

wheel-drive S63 4Matic. Frustratingly, the S63 4Matic isn't coming to the UK or other right-hand-drive markets because the front driveshafts get in the way of the steering column. However, it's the only model available on this launch.

Powered by the same 5.5-litre twin-turbo V8 found in the S63 Coupe, the 4Matic Cabriolet produces an identical 577bhp and 664lb ft of torque and uses the same AMG seven-speed MCT auto gearbox (the S500 has the nine-speed 9G-tronic auto). Despite a 115kg weight penalty over the 4Matic Coupe (again, not offered in the UK), it records an identical 0-62mph time of 3.9sec, which is three-tenths quicker than the rear-drive S63s.

As well as sharing powertrains, the S63 4Matic Cab also features the Coupe's air suspension with Mercedes' ADS Plus adaptive damping, which has been retuned to handle the increased kerb weight and shift in centre of gravity. Composite brake discs are standard, but carbon-

ceramic discs are optional and reduce unsprung mass by 20 per cent.

In designing the S-class Cabriolet, Mercedes has created the world's largest opening fabric roof, and some may argue that with the roof closed it's a better looking car than the Coupe on which it's based. Roof down, it's not as ill-portioned as you might imagine, the biggest of all the Benzes looking almost elegant, with the less fussy S500 seeming more upmarket than the AMG models with their chrome and chintz.

As with every offering in this corner of the market, the S63 Cab is a fine place to be. It's smooth, refined and has an elegance you only find in cars that sit at the top of a brand's model line. With the roof closed, the S63 is effectively as quiet as its coupe equivalent; the absence of wind noise is remarkable and you'd require a sensitive decibel meter to be able to detect the difference between the Cab and Coupe's interior noise.

Just as the Cab is as refined as the Coupe to be in, it is its equal

when it comes to driving, too. That twin-turbo V8 shrugs off the weight penalty like a West Indian batsman dismisses an English bowler in the last over of a World Cup final. Indeed, the mid-range throttle response still shocks and the top end has enough fizz to warrant chasing the red line.

There's not a great deal of feel to work with through the steering, but it's accurate when you need it to be and you can get the chassis turned in and hooked up in a manner unexpected of a car of this bulk. Get the 19-inch front Michelins where you want them and the chassis loads up on its air springs in such a way that you can catapult yourself out of a corner with real ferocity.

In a market where driver thrills take a back seat, the S63 4Matic Cabriolet at least makes a decent attempt at involving the driver. It feels more direct than a Conti GT and is better resolved than Ferrari's California T, but it still doesn't excite. Then again, few do in this category. **X**

Stuart Gallagher (@stuartg917)

Specification

| | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|----------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Engine V8, 5461cc, twin-turbo | CO2 244g/km | Power 577bhp @ 5500rpm | Torque 664lb ft @ 2250-3750rpm | 0-62mph 3.9sec (claimed) | Top speed 155mph (limited) |
|---|-----------------------|----------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|

+ Twin-turbo V8 never gets boring **■** Can't always say that about the rest of the car

| | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| evo rating ★★★★★ | Weight 2110kg (278bhp/ton) | Basic price £135,675 |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|



Test location: B660, Cambridgeshire **GPS:** 52.31077, -0.40140
Photography: Aston Parrott

Renaultsport Mégane 275 Cup-S

Tastily configured new RS Mégane doles out another lesson in why it's not all about power

W WITH ALL THE FURORE surrounding the Focus RS, it's easy to forget Renault is still building an RS Mégane. A class leader from the year it was launched, the Renaultsport Mégane might now be in its dotage, but on the evidence of the new (kind of) 275 Cup-S, there's plenty of fight left in it.

Apart from its name, there's nothing especially fresh about the Cup-S. Indeed, it's effectively a shortcut spec for those who know they're on the hardcore spectrum of hot hatches. To this end, it gets the track-ready Cup chassis as standard, rather than the more compliant (but still sharp) Sport chassis, as fitted to the plusher, road-focused Nav 275.

You know the RS recipe by now: the still-handsome, wedge-shaped, three-door Mégane, powered by an outgunned-in-2016 but supremely effective 271bhp four-cylinder turbo engine driving the front wheels of a chassis honed to an edge to rival that of a samurai's katana. Inevitably our test car has a generous array of performance-enhancing options, but to be fair I'm pretty sure most people who order a Cup-S will also go for the

titanium Akrapovic exhaust (£2500) and a wheel/tyre upgrade to the 19-inch Speedline alloys and Bridgestone Potenza RE050A tyres (£1000).

If they saw this test car in bright sunshine, they might also be tempted to spend a further £625 on the lava-hot Flame Red paintwork. I'd probably stick with a more sober hue and put the cash towards the £2000 Öhlins suspension option, but that's me.

What's the Cup-S like to drive? Well, it's certainly uncompromising. From the moment you get moving you can feel how sharp, direct and connected it feels. The steering has a steely response and consistent weight that's perfectly attuned to its rate of response and the amount of grip available from the tyres. Comfort isn't a priority, but the Cup-S is an entirely habitable car over long distances. If you're okay with having your wobbly bits agitated over road imperfections, you'll be happy with the trade-off, for the upside is an immersive, addictive, pin-sharp drive that gets to the heart of great hot-hatch dynamics. It doesn't have 'Drift Mode', but it does have a three-stage



ESC, so you have the freedom to back yourself through a hedge a 60mph if you so wish. I like that in a car.

The engine feels up for it at all times, but you need to engage Sport mode to bump it from 247bhp to the full 271bhp. There's a hint of torque-steer – as you'd expect from a front-drive car with a mechanical limited-slip diff – but it's nothing to worry about, and certainly not enough to distract you. There's tons of traction, so you can put down all the power, and the six-speed gearbox is sweet and swift in shift action.

The motor isn't a screamer (the red line is at 6800rpm), but it has a broad spread of torque – the 265lb ft peak is available at 3000-5000rpm – so you're rarely caught in the wrong gear. With foot pinned to the floor, the Cup-S does feel a league below

the Focus RS for outright grunt, but the Mégane has always been more about the punctuation points between the straights. Besides, I'm inclined to think 158mph and a sub-6.0sec dash to 62mph is ample.

As this test car is running on regular Cup suspension and not the optional Öhlins Road & Track kit previously offered as an option on the Trophy, it also does without Michelin's Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres. That's not a disaster, for as we've said before, the Potenza is actually the nicer tyre for road use, being less temperature-sensitive, offering a fraction more compliance and providing a clearer sense of connection to the road at sane speeds. On road or track, the Brembo brakes have excellent feel, performance and stamina.

Yes, the RS Mégane is a bit long in the tooth, and no, it's not a bargain once you've added the options you're absolutely going to want to fit. But if you're serious about your driving and want a hot hatch with pedigree, the Cup-S delivers the goods in every way that really matters. It's a class act. **✘**

Richard Meaden
 (@DickieMeaden)

Specification

| Engine | CO2 | Power | Torque | 0-62mph | Top speed |
|------------------------------|---------|------------------|-------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc, turbo | 174g/km | 271bhp @ 5500rpm | 265lb ft @ 3000-5000rpm | 5.8sec (claimed) | 158mph (claimed) |

🟢 Cup chassis and diff as standard; still the purest hatch around 🟠 Too hardcore for some; pricey

evo rating



| Weight | Basic price |
|---------------------|-------------|
| 1394kg (198bhp/ton) | £23,935 |



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GPS: 52.00179, -3.41400

Proteus C-type

Le Mans-winning bodywork meets a modernised powertrain. Time to cancel that Singer order?



BACK IN ISSUE 013 OF *evo*, then associate editor Peter Tomalin described how, if the world were going to implode at midnight on 31 December 1999, he would use his last tank of fuel driving a Jaguar C-type along the Mulsanne Straight. I was still at school when this was published (he'll thank me for mentioning that) and it was one of the most evocative things I'd ever read. It still is. So, walking up to the beautifully fluid curves of the Proteus, I feel like it has quite a lot to live up to. Modern recreation or not, this is the stuff that dreams are made of.

With the likes of Alfaholics, Singer and Eagle there is currently a wave of interest in classic cars that have been tweaked and tuned to be subtly more modern. The interest is justified too, as the cars are generally fantastically involving to drive as well as being inspiring to look at. Proteus would very much like to be included in this group. The company was founded in 1980 and has built more than 260 cars (five times more C-types than Jaguar

made). Things have since changed under that iconic shape, however, and this is the latest iteration.

The aluminium body and tubular steel chassis come from ADV in Coventry, which is a remarkable hive of skilled traditional panel wheeling. Although the car is finished by hand, Proteus has invested in 15-ton moulds that enable large sections of the bodywork to be superformed. This means that the bonnet, for example, is made of just two large, perfectly repeatable pieces instead of the 20 or 30 needed if it were being made traditionally. The clothed skeleton of a car is then taken down to Hofmann's in Henley-on-Thames where the rest of the assembly is carried out. A late 4.2-litre Jaguar XK straight-six is the basis for what goes under the bonnet, but totally rebuilt with new internals and specially designed induction and exhaust systems. There is a Life Racing ECU and Bosch is responsible for the fuel injection and fly-by-wire throttle. The H-pattern five-speed gearbox is a Tremec T5 and there is a



Top: superformed aluminium bodywork sits over a tubular steel chassis. **Above:** 4.2-litre straight-six is rebuilt using new components

‘The soundtrack takes on a more rasping note as the needles on the Smiths dials push higher’



Specification

| Engine | CO2 | Power | Torque | 0-62mph | Top speed | Weight | Basic price |
|----------------------|-----|------------------|--------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------------|-------------|
| Straight-six, 4196cc | n/a | 260bhp @ 3000rpm | 230lb ft @ 3000rpm | 5.4sec (claimed) | 130mph (claimed) | 1000kg (264bhp/ton) | £130,000 |

+ A joy to behold and engaging to drive - Braking needs care; authentic interior is sparse

evo rating



Torsen limited-slip diff. This is also the first Proteus to get Nitron dampers. After 1000 hours, the end result in numbers is a car that weighs just 1000kg, while putting out 260bhp and 230lb ft, both at 3000rpm.

Reach inside, pull on the wire and the tiny featherweight door swings open. Once you're ensconced you feel surprisingly snug and there's plenty of room even for someone lofty. Hold the thin Moto-Lita wheel, peer through the double protection of the Mille Miglia wraparound screen and the Brooklands aeroscreen and you're instantly transported to a different era of motoring. It's authentic inside, but perhaps a splash of turned aluminium would lift it and show off the craftsmanship you're buying into.

Turn the key, press the small black button and after a couple of turns the engine comes to life through the twin nearside-exit exhausts. The straight-six has a distinctive sound, not aggressive, just smoothly purring, and this relaxed ease is reflected in the sense of torque as you pull away.

You might think that with a relatively large displacement and peak power produced at low revs it wouldn't be a particularly sporty engine, but it feels keen and the soundtrack takes on a more rasping note as the needles on the Smiths dials push higher. The sprint to 62mph is claimed to take 5.4sec, which feels eminently achievable. You certainly don't feel like you're wanting for pace.

The gearbox is a joy. 'Snickety' is the word, with a narrow gate and the sense that there's no rubber or plastic anywhere to fudge the precision of the shift. The pedals are well placed, too, but use of the middle one requires thought. With discs all-round, the power of the system isn't in question, but the Blockley radial tyres can only take so much pressure and with no ABS you need to brake a little earlier than you might be used to.

The handling is classic in nature as well, but there is much more precision on corner-entry than I had expected, with the big steering wheel providing plenty of information about how hard

you're leaning on the tread blocks and sidewalls. Use of the throttle is key to cornering and the C-type is happy to slide. It's not a car that will feel entirely smooth and settled when pushed over the limit, but it's easily manageable and you are very much engaged from entry all the way to exit.

The Proteus doesn't miss a beat all day (as you'd expect for an endurance racer), and given the craftsmanship, the cost of an original and the price of other cars in this 'reimagined' class,

the £130,000 list price almost seems reasonable. And the most crucial thing you're buying into with this sort of car is, of course, the emotion that it evokes. Pressing on across the wilds of south Wales, hunkered down behind the long bonnet and shifting into fifth with a low sun making the paintwork gleam, I can assure you that Proteus has got that bit absolutely spot on.

Henry Catchpole
(@HenryCatchpole)



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**Best Small Family
Car of 2015****



Test location: B645, Northamptonshire
GPS: 52.25828, -0.67188

Skoda Octavia vRS TDI 4x4

Skoda builds a quattro-like version of its Octavia vRS



B BEING A VOLKSWAGEN Group product planner must rival the job of an air traffic controller when it comes to positioning 'products' in the right spaces so as not to overlap and cause confusion or a collision. Although admittedly there are fewer risks if the Passat Convertible doesn't sell.

When the brief came through for a Skoda that offered four-wheel drive, performance and practicality but didn't tread on the toes of Volkswagen's Golf R Estate, there couldn't have been many options left for those responsible for filling this niche within a niche. A Yeti vRS would do, but Skoda has said it will never build one, which is a shame.

What they came up with is an Octavia vRS. The car's official name is Skoda Octavia vRS 2.0 TDI 184 DSG 4x4. It's the only specification you can have if you want a four-wheel-drive vRS, which means there's no meaty, 227bhp petrol engine mated to a six-speed manual gearbox and

four-wheel drive on the product plan, or coming anytime soon.

The four-wheel-drive setup is the fifth-generation Haldex system. This means up to half of the diesel's drive can be directed to the rear axle when traction demands it, and there's a limited slip-differential fitted between the front wheels, too. Being a vRS model means the chassis is lower than standard, by 10mm for the saloon and 12mm for the estate, and both body styles also feature more sophisticated multi-link rear suspension in place of the regular model's simplistic beam axle. The larger vRS-spec brakes remain, too.

Despite Skoda being the biggest seller of compact 4x4s in Europe, this hasn't carried much weight for the vRS 4x4 in terms of power output. Rather than getting the more powerful 187bhp 2-litre four-cylinder diesel engine that's fitted to the new Superb, this Octavia retains the same 181bhp four-cylinder powerplant that **evo** is running in its Fast Fleet Octavia vRS TDI. It uses the same six-speed

dual-clutch gearbox, too.

Having enjoyed playing around on snow and ice earlier in the year during the car's international launch, there isn't a great deal of anticipation when an Octavia vRS 4x4 arrives at **evo**. I mean, what will an extra pair of driven wheels bring to a front-driven Skoda? I've never felt our Fast Fleet vRS would be improved if it had a propshaft running to the rear.

First impressions are that the steering is much more consistently weighted. In Normal mode (selected via the vRS mode controller), it feels as weighted and responsive as our front-drive vRS's does when the steering is set to Sport. Switch the four-wheel-drive vRS to Sport and there's a further level of improvement and a cleaner connection with the 18-inch front wheels. The whole car turns in more effectively, too. Not Golf R quick, because the Octavia is still a substantial car, but it's more alert than the front-drive model and works harder to get more from the chassis, which once loaded up

remains settled and works its stiffer dampers and springs more evenly. It just feels a better balanced chassis, with a more even weight distribution (incidentally, the 4x4 is 85kg heavier than a two-wheel-drive vRS), and less nose-heavy on turn-in. The two-wheel-drive vRS sometimes feels like it's pivoting around its front axle, but the four-wheel-drive system all but eradicates this sensation. It's not a Mitsubishi Evo VI by a long shot, but the 4x4 system does allow you to crack on at an unexpected rate.

The only fly in the ointment is the engine and gearbox combination, which as we're discovering with our Fast Fleet example, isn't the best you can have with a vRS. The diesel motor isn't the most sophisticated compared with other VW Group offerings and the six-speed DSG 'box is feeling its age. So come on, Skoda, offer this 4x4 drivetrain with all vRS engine and gearbox options and give the Golf R Estate something to think about. **✘**

Stuart Gallagher (@stuartg917)

Specification

| Engine | CO2 | Power | Torque | 0-62mph | Top speed | evo rating | Weight | Basic price |
|------------------------------------|---------|-----------------------|-------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------|---------------------|-------------|
| In-line 4-cyl, 1968cc, turbodiesel | 129g/km | 181bhp @ 3500-4000rpm | 206lb ft @ 1750-3250rpm | 7.6sec (claimed) | 142mph (claimed) | ★★★★★ | 1475kg (125bhp/ton) | £27,590 |

+ Tightens the vRS chassis **-** Diesel and DSG only



Audi RS Q3 Performance

Surprisingly involving junior SUV gets RS3-equalling power. Is it worth the premium?

Test location: Aynho, Northamptonshire **GPS:** 51.99491, -1.25154

S SINCE ITS LAUNCH THREE years ago, the Audi RS Q3 has continued to surprise us with just how enjoyable a hot hatch on stilts can be. Conversely, the closely related RS3 Sportback, which has largely the same engine but a more conventional ride-height, has left us underwhelmed.

Where the RS3 has had the edge, however, is in terms of power, with a 27bhp advantage. But now, thanks to a new 'Performance' variant of the RS Q3, the SUV can be ordered with an identical power output to the hatch. The extra grunt required to take the charismatic, warbling five-cylinder turbocharged engine from 335bhp to 362bhp has been liberated thanks to extra cooling from the radiator, a modified fuel pump and a new map. In addition to the extra power, the RS Q3 Performance gets darker exterior trim (less flashy than the glitzy aluminium on the standard car), a set of bespoke 20-inch alloys and a new colour option – metallic Ascari Blue, as pictured here.



So, does a power hike dull the junior SUV's charms and turn it into just a savagely fast but blunt instrument, like the RS3? Simply put, no. The increased performance isn't particularly noticeable, but what remains is a truly entertaining drive, if not the last word in sophistication.

As seems appropriate for a high-riding SUV, there's plenty of pitch and roll. But rather than making the RS Q3 feel cumbersome and heavy, the roll simply acts as a barometer for how hard you're driving. The exaggerated body movements are most noticeable on initial steering inputs, but as the suspension gets further into its travel, it firms up to keep excessive roll at bay. This results

in a robust yet comfortable ride, the body well supported without ever feeling wayward.

On particularly rough roads, any unloaded wheels can develop an unpleasant resonance. This is most noticeable at the front as a vibration sent through to the steering wheel, and while it can only be felt occasionally, it's a shame, as it's at odds with just how controlled the suspension feels most of the time.

The RS Q3 relishes being driven aggressively, making the most of the weight transfer that the suspension allows. Getting hard on the brakes into a corner loads up the front tyres nicely while making the rear feel nimble. Get back on the power aggressively and the weight then shifts dramatically to the rear. Just as it does so, the Haldex four-wheel-drive system sends torque rearwards, and drive to the back wheels engages exactly when you want it there, really helping to propel the car out of a corner. Not only does this all feel cohesive and perfectly judged, it's

also engaging and allows a certain degree of adjustability, too.

It's in slower, second-gear corners where you get the most from the RS Q3. Sadly, the seven-speed S-tronic gearbox is often reluctant to change down into second; some of the time it simply doesn't engage before a bend and you have to settle for third. There's still enough torque available for the car to not feel too sluggish out of the corner when this happens, but the acceleration isn't as savage, you don't feel the rear axle working quite as hard and it just isn't as entertaining. What's more, as the engine sounds best towards the top of its rev range, the soundtrack isn't as enjoyable either.

The RS Q3 Performance is £3365 dearer than the regular car, and as the changes aren't that dramatic it does make the cost hard to justify. It is still really enjoyable, however, and now has some aggressive looks to match its monstrous pace. ❌

Will Beaumont
(@WillBeaumont)

Specification

➕ Extra power always welcome; sweet chassis remains unsoftened ❌ A bit pricey

| Engine | CO2 | Power | Torque | 0-62mph | Top speed | Weight | Basic price |
|------------------------------|---------|-----------------------|-------------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------------|-------------|
| In-line 5-cyl, 2480cc, turbo | 203g/km | 362bhp @ 5550-6800rpm | 343lb ft @ 1625-5550rpm | 4.4sec (claimed) | 167mph (claimed) | 1655kg (222bhp/ton) | £49,185 |

evo rating





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Superchips VW Golf GTD Mk6

Engine-remap specialist branches out into fettling dual-clutch gearboxes to good effect

Test location: Padbury, Buckinghamshire **GPS:** 51.96170,-0.93118

F FIVE-YEAR-OLD DIESEL Golfs are not *evo*'s usual fodder, so you can be sure we've a good reason for featuring such a car. Buckingham-based Superchips has long been a leader in engine remapping, but it has recently turned its attention to transmission software, claiming it can improve VW Group DSG gearboxes in a matter of moments for a modest outlay.

For the time being, Superchips only offers its upgrade for the Group's DQ250 six-speed dual-clutch transmission, which was introduced in 2003 and fitted to various Audi, VW, Skoda and SEAT models. The list includes all Mk5 and Mk6 performance Golfs. Superchips expects to have an upgrade ready for Mk7 models within 12 months and a package for Ford's PowerShift transmission is on the way, too.

The new software yields smoother shifts in Drive mode, Superchips claims, with shift points optimised for economy and comfort. Faster, performance-optimised shifts arrive



in Sport mode, but the quickest shifts come in manual mode, with more immediate response to shift requests. The launch-control point has also been lifted slightly, to 2500rpm. Perhaps the most meaningful improvement, however, is that in manual mode the automatic kickdown has been disabled. Superchips can even disable the automatic upshift in this mode, too, if the customer so chooses.

The transmission software upgrade makes the most of Superchips' engine ECU remap, which in this application, a Mk6 Golf GTD, adds 28bhp and 44lb ft, lifting outputs to 196bhp and 302lb ft. The cost of the gearbox remap is £180,

on top of the £399 engine upgrade, and Superchips offers a seven-day money-back guarantee for buyers who want to revert back to the standard map.

'It's a subtle improvement – that's why it's cheaper than the engine remap – but it is an improvement nonetheless,' says company founder Ian Sandford. 'Disabling the automatic kickdown in manual mode makes a big difference, though. It gives you more control and the customers like that.'

'Subtle' is certainly a reasonable description of the improvements, in the automatic modes at least, but in manual mode the gearbox is transformed. The standard transmission map gives you so little control when the lever is slotted over to the right that you might as well leave the gearbox to swap cogs itself. It'll slavishly change down a ratio when you open the throttle, even in manual mode, which is both frustrating, as it ruins your rhythm pulling away from a corner, and

completely unnecessary, because with so much torque the engine will happily pull the longer ratio.

The Superchips remap makes the manual mode worthwhile. The gearbox no longer hurries to give you a lower cog in a great blare of revs at corner exit. Instead, you can use the swell of torque to drive forward with less fuss, which makes the whole car considerably more enjoyable.

The automatic upshift in manual mode has not been disabled on this particular demonstrator, and that means you can still get a double upshift if you tug the right-hand paddle near to the red line, just as the gearbox is preparing to call for its own shift. The solution is to simply allow the car to manage upshifts, but I'd actually be inclined to disable it, just to give me total control in manual mode.

In combination with the engine upgrade, the transmission remap brings a meaningful improvement at a very reasonable cost. ❌

Dan Prosser (@TheDanProsser)

Specification + Much-improved control over DSG gearbox in manual mode - Improvements in auto are subtle

| Engine | CO2 | Power | Torque | 0-62mph | Top speed | evo rating | Weight | Basic price |
|------------------------------------|---------|--------------|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------|---------------------|-------------|
| In-line 4 cyl, 1968cc, turbodiesel | 134g/km | 196bhp @ n/a | 302lb ft @ n/a | 7.0sec (estimated) | 145mph (estimated) | ★★★★☆ | 1329kg (150bhp/ton) | See text |

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| | |
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| | |
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Outside Line

by RICHARD MEADEN



Afraid of change, overly sentimental or just uninspired by modern machinery? You may well be a Hoarder, says Meaden

WHEN IT COMES TO CAR-OWNERSHIP patterns, I reckon we all fall into one of three categories: the Lifer, the Serial Monogamist and the Hoarder. I'm deliberately excluding prolific collectors with the means to indulge every whim and fantasy – the Hefner, in case you were wondering – because we all know if we could, we would.

So, which category most accurately describes you? Come on, don't be shy. You're amongst friends here. OK, I'll go first. Perhaps I'm a bit odd, but I've exhibited symptoms of all three at one time or another, but I'd say the most accurate description of the last few years is that of a Lifer with very definite Hoarder tendencies.

Of course, being a motoring journalist for the vast majority of my adult life has somewhat skewed my take on car ownership, but I've always tended to feel most comfortable with making a long-term commitment. I think it's inevitable that most of us spend our formative years as Serial Monogamists, budget and necessity being the dominant factors in our buying habits. Two small vans got me to my pre-journo job in a quarry (I know, strange career progression), but my first proper car was a Mini, which I kept for years after the unbroken succession of press cars effectively made it redundant.

Fighting my emerging Lifer urges, I reluctantly sold it to a mate, and the next few years' finances were diverted into buying mine and the future Mrs M's first house. Then *evo* happened and a few of us made a bit of cash. That's when I started my Caterham Fireblade project, and John Barker embarked upon building the mythical V8 Capri. A confirmed Lifer, naturally JB owns it to this day. But only because it's still not quite finished...

Unlike John, I parted with the Caterham and bought an S2 Exige, which I kept for a thoroughly enjoyable 18 months before selling that and buying my 964 RS. It was at this point I transitioned from conflicted Serial Monogamist to confirmed Lifer, in part because the Porsche has since proved far better at making money than I am, but mainly because after ten years ownership, parting with it would cause me too much anguish to contemplate.

From here it's been a rapid but reasonably controlled descent into my present state of unashamed Hoarder, with a Peugeot 106 Rallye and, most recently, a manual Ferrari F430 Berlinetta joining the Porsche. None get driven anywhere near enough, but having them around is comfort in itself. By the way, I know that statement will make no sense if you're not a Hoarder, but that's what makes the subject so intriguing.

Take my brother-in-law, James. He's worthy of special mention for being one of the most prolific Serial Monogamists I or any of

his friends and acquaintances have ever met. The man is a living legend, at least amongst the local car-dealing community, and has more notches on his garage door frame than Russell Brand's bedpost. German marques are his weakness – they suit his somewhat exacting standards – and they're all new or ex-demo and mostly bought from dealer stock, as he's not cut out for six-month lead times.

In the last ten years – a period in which I've bought three cars and sold, er, none – he must have been through a good four dozen. From relatively modest Sciroccos, Golf GTIs and Golf Rs, to countless Audis (currently a new RS3, but I sense it's soon to be ditched for something else...) to assorted M BMWs and a flurry of Porsches, from Cayman to 991 Turbo S.

'After years of ownership, parting with my 964 RS would cause me too much anguish to contemplate'

Being family, I see him quite a lot, but there are times when I fail to keep pace with his churn rate. Some cars have come and gone without me even seeing them. Sometimes the first I know of a coming and going in the garage is a guilty confession, or a tip-off from my nephew. One week the 911 can be a C4S, the next it's a red Turbo. Then, almost in the blink of an eye, that burning romance has gone cold and there's an Audi in the garage.

Jimbo's the first to admit he has a problem – one that provides the rest of us with endless amusement – but I do wonder if his affliction is at least partly down to modern cars lacking the substance and depth of character to hold his attention. We're also conditioned to want the next big thing, whatever that might be. It's the same reason we upgrade our phones, even though there's nothing wrong with the old one. I honestly don't know how he finds the energy to repeatedly go through the buying and selling process, but I do know he's not really cut out for classic car ownership, so he's always going to have to find bigger, faster, shinier ways to scratch his automotive itch. Not that any of us are in a position to judge. Cars might be the shared addiction, but we each feed our habits in very different ways. Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm off to the classifieds, and I'm definitely not selling. ☒

📧 @DickieMeaden

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



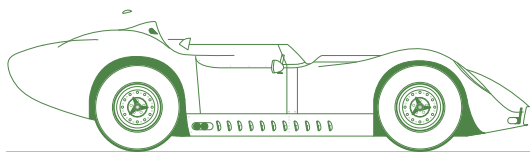
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BHL 152 is the first of ten continuation Lister Jaguar Knobblys built to celebrate Lister's 60th Anniversary. Completed in 2014, BHL 152 was retained by the Lister Motor Company for press use and as a factory demonstrator. It has featured prominently in various shows and publications worldwide and was the very first Lister Jaguar to emerge from George Lister Engineering since 1961. It is also particularly special as it was the first and only continuation Lister to be taken to Brian Lister's Cambridge home for his seal of approval following its completion. Brian was filmed inspecting the car and gave a 30 minute interview talking about BHL 152, and his time making some of the most successful racing cars of the 1950's. Unfortunately, Brian died just 10 days after inspecting the car, making this the very last Lister that Brian saw in person. A full-length, never seen before video of Brian's interview will be included for the new owner.

BHL 152 is finished in Masons Black with Oxblood Hide, has covered just 130 miles from new and is in immaculate condition throughout. It features the iconic Jaguar 3.8 D Type Engine with Wide Angle Cylinder head, complete with Jaguar D Type gearbox. The bodywork has been hand crafted from aluminium using the same body bucks as the original Listers from the 1950's and even some of the original mechanics assisted in its build. Complete with Historic Technical Passport, BHL 152 is ready to be prepped for race or would be equally at home in the most revered car collection. All ten of the 60th anniversary cars were sold within a matter of months of their release, so this is a rare opportunity to purchase a genuine and original Lister continuation car built to the exact 1958 specification.



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Petrolhead

by RICHARD PORTER



Following Henry Catchpole's views on the subject last month, Porter ponders the surprising importance of miniature model cars

NOT FAR FROM MY HOUSE THERE'S A chap who really likes American things. I've deduced this from two things about him. Firstly, he wears a cowboy hat and clothes that would be unnoticeable in South Dakota but seem a little conspicuous in north London. And secondly, because he has a small collection of American cars. To kick off, there are a couple of Jeeps that seem to act as his daily drives. Although you can't say 'drives' if you wear a cowboy hat, can you? You'd have to say 'rides'. Finish your grits, spark a Lucky Strike and saddle-up your ride for a mosey down to Marks & Spencer in Muswell Hill to buy some socks and a ready meal.

This chap also has a Pontiac Firebird, one of the 1990s models when the styling went to cock and the creaking, '60s-spec underparts were kept going only with liberal dollops of turd oil. It's a pony car, but only in the Cockney sense of the word. Slumped on a street in west Texas it would cut a pretty sorry figure, enveloped in the stench of Four Loko, failed marriages, and a fifty-yard exclusion zone around six different high schools. In Britain it's even more wretched, serving as a sad plastic totem of an Americana enthusiasm that teeters between obsession and mental illness.

Yet my pretend American near-neighbour has another car that completely makes up for the awful, ageing, whoop-yah nonsense he whips on weekdays. It's another Pontiac, but this one is different. It's a late-'70s Firebird Trans Am and it's simply brilliant. I mean, obviously it's not. I've never driven it, but I'd bet you a dollar it's vague and clonky and does nothing especially well beyond making a delicious V8 noise, yet none of this really matters, because it looks fantastic and I covet it greatly. There's a simple reason for this: when I was a kid, I had a remote-control toy Trans Am in a very similar spec. Long before I'd seen *Smokey and The Bandit*, that badly steering, battery-powered replica with a scale 0-60mph time of one second cemented a Firebird fetish that I haven't lost in 30-odd years.

This stuff gets under your skin at a formative age and then just stays there, largely based on the things you played with as a nipper. It's why I prefer the Ferrari 250 LM to the 250 GTO. It's why I can't resist a Ford Capri 3.0S. It's why I have a slightly weird obsession with the Austin Metro. These were the die-cast models with which I took chunks out of my parents' skirting boards. Or, in the case of the radio-controlled Trans Am, it was the car that, with a long run-up and a steely control of the steering, could be made to do little jumps from a rudimentary ramp on the patio. Now I lust after the full-size versions, all because of those toys.

And this set me thinking about my son, who is currently two. He's obsessed with cars and he's not very keen on eating vegetables. The gene pool runs deep. Currently, his favourite toys are a microscopic facsimile of a Dodge Charger with a stripe up the side and a much larger model of a Land Rover Defender, which makes an unrealistically revvy noise on demand and vaguely annoys me, not because of the sounds, but because some of the detailing is wrong. These are fair things for a toddler to smack into the dog's face as she lies on the living-room rug, but are they giving him a good grounding in cars he will become powerlessly drawn to in adult life?

The other day I took to him to a nursery where, I was delighted to notice, they had a titchy model of a Ferrari 512M and a Matchbox

'The nursery staff might have these models as battered distractions to keep my son amused for a few minutes, but I saw them as a vital part of his overall education'

version of the Ford RS200. The staff might have regarded them as battered distractions to keep him amused for a few minutes, but I saw them as a vital part of his overall education.

Yet even this is not enough. Next time I'm in the local toy megastore, I'm going to have a good look around for other bits of interesting metal that can gently seep into his little brain at this ever-so-impressionable age. Maybe a 1:43 Golf GTI. Perhaps a weeny E30 M3. Is it possible that Hot Wheels makes a Pagani Zonda or an original Aston Vanquish? Suddenly these things seem important because, if he's anything like his dad, this is going to have a profound effect on his later life and the kind of random metal he'll drool over in the street and lose hours browsing in the classifieds.

I might even let him play with a little model of some old muscle car. But not too much. After all, I don't want to fast-forward 50 years to find him wandering around Finchley in a cowboy hat. ✕

✉ @sniffpetrol

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

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- F10 520D » 240 BHP
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- 316D/216D/116D » 160 BHP
- 318D/218D/118D » 225 BHP
- 330D E90 » 296+ BHP
- 320D E90 » 215 BHP
- 420i/320i/220i/120i » 275+ BHP
- 435i/ F30 335i » 390 BHP
- 428i/328i » 295 BHP
- 535D / 335D / X5 SD » 355+ BHP
- 640D/335D/535D/435D » 390 BHP
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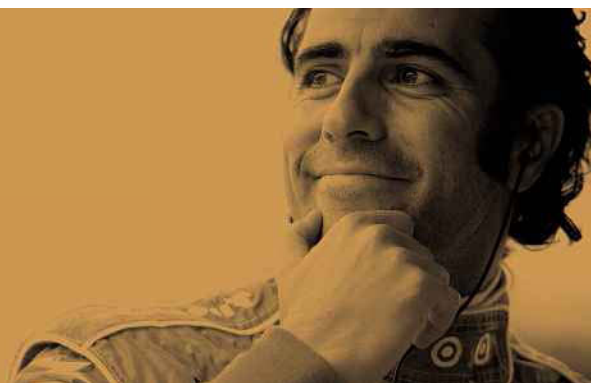


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Champ

by DARIO FRANCHITTI



Driving cars might be brilliant fun, and racing them a real thrill, but actually developing one is a truly unique experience, says Dario

BACK IN THE EARLY '80s, WHEN HONDA began its 'mid-ship research project', nobody at the company believed (though some might have dreamt) the end result would be a supercar of generation-defining characteristics. In fact the mission was to simply develop a mid-engined, rear-driven sports car based on the humble CRX. But then ambition set in, a certain *cavallino rampante* cantered into Honda's crosshairs, and things got serious. Serious enough to involve Ayrton Senna...

For the past three years I've been lucky enough to follow in the Brazilian's footsteps – albeit without any of the hype and certainly without the same pizzazz in the footwear department (just google 'Senna' and 'NSX'). Travelling in a convoy made up of perhaps three or four scything pre-production models, several support cars, and top (and I mean the *absolute top*) engineers from Honda's divisions in Japan, Europe and the US, we've progressively fine-tuned the damping, throttle maps, gearbox calibration and steering of the new NSX. This last trip, and I'm writing to you from Nice, is all about ironing out any lingering imperfections that might have been missed and making sure the car really is what we think it is.

It sounds like fun, and despite the very serious nature of the job (imagine the pressure of developing a car that you know is going to go straight up against a 911 Turbo S), it is fun. You're probably wondering how I've found myself in this position. Well, apart from my first season, I've always driven Hondas in IndyCar. In fact, all my wins came with Honda. The invitation to help develop the NSX stemmed from an open day at one of the firm's R&D centres. I'm also a serial owner of fast road cars, so I think Honda was interested in my perspective – an *evo* perspective, shall we say.

Ultimately I've tried to help make the NSX a car I would like to own myself, and even though the technical purity of the original car's naturally aspirated V6 and manual gearbox is long gone, replaced by three electric motors, a twin-turbo V6 and a nine-speed dual-clutch 'box, I do want to own this car.

What can I tell you about the new NSX? Versatility aside, what's most impressive is how it drives like an analogue machine despite being just as complicated as a 918 Spyder. This is an attribute I've been extremely keen to capture, and combined with frankly indecent cross-country pace – yesterday we headed from Maranello into the Alps at an unbelievable lick, visiting the village my mum's family is from on the way – I think it'll stand the car in good stead. Indeed, the sheer speed of the thing on the Autobahn during a prior test was quite shocking. A 191mph limiter has been

imposed since that day and in truth it's actually fairly restrictive. The car just keeps pulling, and then there's the stability. At high speeds it's noticeably more stable than a Ferrari 488 GTB or Audi R8 – it should make a cracking race car.

What's less race-car-like is the 1725kg kerb weight, and yet the NSX doesn't ever feel it. It drives like a light, small car. Moreover, the A-pillars are refreshingly slender, so you can see through a corner, and it's little details like this that are so important to people like us. Steering feel, too: there's a lot of communication despite the fact that two electric motors up front add a decent slab of weight. During repeated downhill runs in Austria, coming into a hairpin bend I was able to get the unloaded inside front tyre just

'What can I tell you about the new NSX? It drives like an analogue machine, despite the complexity'

on the edge of locking up and hold it there, which I thought was pretty remarkable in a car with ABS and a complicated drivetrain with regenerative electric motors.

One thing I've learnt is that developing a road car is similar to racing, in that there's often very little between the acceptable and brilliant. But unlike racing, where there's only one focus – speed – balancing numerous conflicting factors such as safety and design, or speed and reliability, or handling and useability, is an art. So often if you fix one problem, you cause another, and on it goes.

And the sound? With four catalytic converters it's not been easy to extract a proper howl from the V6, and I've always liked my cars *loud*. This isn't to say that the engine doesn't purr nicely – it does – but it isn't bombastic. Maybe I'm a bit old-fashioned...

This will probably be the last time I drive the car before it gets handed over to the likes of *evo*'s road testers. As for being directly involved in the birth of a new supercar alongside engineers of quite freakish mechanical and electronic nous (it's frankly hilarious to think that everyone was nervous when it was announced the car would be developed in Ohio), it's been as good as you'd imagine it to be. A privilege? Certainly. And without doubt something on every petrolhead's wish list. ✕

✉ @dariofranchitti

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



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Inbox

What's ruined your ride comfort this month?



Letter of the Month

M4 GTS lite

The price of BMW's M4 GTS is laughable, as much as Jethro Bovingdon thinks it's 'worth every penny' (evo 222). This got me thinking. If you listed all the changes made over the standard M4 and ranked them by price and for what each added to the 'phwoar-factor', surely it's possible to spec a car that's perhaps 95 per cent of the GTS at a relatively modest price increase over the base model.

For example, I'd immediately untick the water-injection system and leave the boost (and power) as standard. I'd still want the trick KW dampers, the brakes and the bespoke wheels and tyres. And possibly those gorgeous seats too. The aero mods and roll-cage I'd probably do without. Would that, Mr Bovingdon, still give me a car that 'zings with feedback', but one that also saves me enough money to buy a family hatchback? If so, perhaps you could persuade BMW to offer this package as an aftermarket kit, or maybe as a 'GT' model in the same vein as the E46 M3 CS. I'd be interested.

Chris Davies

The Letter of the Month wins an Aviator watch

The writer of this month's star letter receives an Aviator MIG-35, worth £465. Its sturdy and sophisticated design is inspired by elements of the MIG-35 fighter jet, while its 45mm case contains a Swiss-made quartz movement with advanced chronograph functions.



www.aviatorwatch.ch



www.peterjackson.co.uk

Lagadaisical

I enjoyed the excellent issue celebrating the evoness of turbos (issue 222). If I can be picky, though, I think people use the word 'lag' to refer to two different characteristics in turbo engines. Most of the time people mean the delay in getting to the meaty part of the torque curve when applying throttle at low revs when an engine is off boost. You could, however, argue that this is the fault of the driver for being in the wrong gear.

My daily driver for the last 18 months has been a Golf R. The difference between this and the last petrol turbo car I ran – an Impreza Turbo back in 2001 – in terms of the lag resulting from low torque at low revs is night and day. The Golf has virtually no off-boost period in the rev range.

Where the Golf does have a problem, though, is with the other aspect of lag. That's the very short delay in getting torque when you go back on the throttle after lifting off. You notice it changing gear, and when adjusting the throttle in corners. It's this aspect of lag that I find the real killer for driving enjoyment with turbo engines. Sure, it doesn't make any difference to performance or lap times, but it damages the connection between driver, car and road – and it's why I'll keep searching for atmo-engined cars while they still exist.

David Williams

The hard truth

I had been looking forward to the new Focus RS and Civic Type R for months. In both cases I was especially excited to hear that they would be fitted with adaptive suspension with two modes. There's nothing more irritating than a car that is so crashy and uncomfortable on the road that it doesn't cut it as a daily driver. Well



Above: the new Focus RS needs a softer suspension setting, thinks Niall McMahon

done to Ford and Honda, I thought – they have remembered that most of us will use the car to travel to work, take our mothers shopping or ferry the kids to school.

But no. Instead, both manufacturers chose to deliver products aimed at the self-deluded racing-driver wannabe: the sportier mode in both cars is so hard and uncomfortable that you would only ever use it on a track, while the normal mode in both cases is very firm and only borderline acceptable for a daily driver.

These are hot hatches for heaven's sake, not racing cars, and at £30k+ they won't be bought or driven by 18-year-olds with elastic spines and no families. Why ruin a perfect opportunity to deliver a product actually suited to purpose; to be fun when you are in the mood but also daily useable?

Niall McMahon

McLaren mystery

Loved the article on the McLaren 675LT Spider (evo 222). What a car! The pictures, however, told an odd story... It seems some of your shots were of LT05 MCL, while others were of a totally different car, LT06 MCL. The question is, was this a two-car shoot or merely dodgy number plates to avoid a speeding fine in the Highlands?

Paul Higgins

You weren't the only eagle-eyed reader to spot this, Paul. There were indeed two cars in the Highlands – one left-hand drive, one right-hand drive – as a couple of other magazines were at the launch. McLaren supplied a set of shots of the '06' car for all the time to use, but we grabbed some extra time with the photographer and the '05' car to capture some bespoke images. Hope that unravels the mystery. – Ed



Above: Paul Higgins noticed something unusual in our pictures of the 675LT Spider

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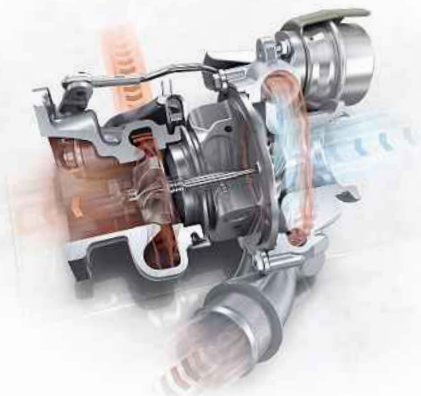


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Talking Point

The rise of the turbo

Last month, we took a close look at several turbocharged performance cars, including the new Porsche 718 Boxster and the Ferrari 488 GTB, so we asked for your thoughts on the proliferation of turbos. Here's what you said...

For me they do nothing for a performance car but rob it of its soul. Turbos have a place and I am glad they exist, but while I can choose a fun car without them, I will. Life is not just about big numbers to shout about in the pub. You need the visceral memories that only all your senses combined can generate.

Markcoopers

My second car was a Metro Turbo – properly old-school in its power delivery. Modern electronics have taken the fun out of turbos. If you look at the torque curve of many 'downsized' turbo lumps it's often a torque plateau, presumably a) to tame the power delivery and b) so that it doesn't tread on the toes of other models higher up the range.

Who

Old-school boost is a riot, but it's neither safe in terms of what most modern end users require, nor efficient. That said, I've never had so much fun in a car as in a Renault 5 GT Turbo with a large T28 turbo on it: wait, wait, wait, oh here it comes, booooooooooooooooooooooooooooooost!

andybond

Performance car or not, I suspect natural aspiration will vanish just as carburettors did. Nostalgia cannot save an outdated technology, no matter how lovely it could be. And performance cars have to be up-to-date. Obsolete features can be enjoyed on classic cars.

pilouil

It's a last gasp from an obsolete form of propulsion.

Si_

It'll all be EVs soon enough and we'll miss anything internal combustion, so enjoy it while you can, folks!

Barry

I have no problems at all with turbos. Current technology means engineers can fill gaps in the rev range and adjust the delivery. The negative is that they force capacity and cylinder count down. The former isn't necessarily an issue. The latter is.

mik

I like them and given the efficiency benefits they're not going anywhere, I think. Development, like for the Chiron, will make them better, faster and more efficient to the point where you'll get all the benefits without the downsides. They'll figure out how to make something that sounds good, revs like an NA engine and provides the kind of thrill we want.

DeskJockey

Add electric in-fill and they make a huge amount of sense: loads of power from a small unit, useful low-down shove and low consumption when just plodding. But for people who love driving there is nothing like a great NA engine screaming to the red line.

FaceFirst

Turbos suck. And also blow.

r1aw22

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

Sheriff

Should I buy a GT-R?

I've been looking around for something proper quick that will handle the odd trackday too. I keep coming back to the big ugly Nissan, as in terms of bang for the buck it seems there is little that can touch it. I know a few forum members have or have had them and I'm interested to hear genuine thoughts on ownership.

I had a ride in David Yu's before he sold it. It was running about 700bhp and had the upgraded Litchfield fast-road suspension IIRC. The ride was great, the speed shocking and the way it went round corners at speeds faster than my 330i could manage was alarming.

Jimmy Choo

On track they have a spectacular appetite for tyres and brakes.

Foz

Why not something more track-biased? Obviously there are heavily compromised cars like the Atom, but something like an S3 Exige S (with a 430bhp Komotec upgrade if you like) would give a very different experience, and at 1100kg it would have no issues with lotsalaps.

Mik

The GT-R is just awesome. For the money nothing comes even remotely close. Not even in the same postcode. It's a heavy car, though, so of course it will use up tyres and stuff if driven

on the limit. But you'll still pass most things taking it relatively easy... I'd agree that it is at heart a GT, though, not a hardcore sports car. I also don't think it's a car that impresses enough on an initial drive (I cancelled my initial order). For me it needed time to get to know it. Its personality grows and you appreciate the subtle things.

Mark BT52

Just. Do. It. There have probably been more words written about the GT-R than any other car in the last ten years and it deserves all the praise it has received and more. Seeing as the R36 will be a hybrid with electric front-wheel drive, I cannot see how the tuners will be able to get a balanced modification out of it as the motors will only be rated to a specific output, regardless of the tune of the petrol engine powering the rear wheels. As we all spend our twilight years being carted around in Google iCars, we will look fondly back on the R35 as the last of the 'affordable' era-defining performance cars.

David Yu



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



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

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GIANT

by DAN PROSSER, RICHARD MEADEN,
JETHRO BOVINGDON & NICK TROTT
PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT





KILLERS

The performance car landscape has changed. Power figures are up, acceleration times are down and sticky tyres are no longer reserved for exotica. But just how close do today's real-world heroes get to the true performance car stars?



GIANT KILLERS





Data. Cold hard data.

IT'S NOT EASY TO DECOUPLE YOURSELF FROM THE SUBJECTIVE

when your mantra is 'the Thrill of Driving', but that's the exercise here. This is our biggest objective data test in quite some time, the results of which we hope you will find revealing.

The point of the test? In a nutshell it's 'bang-for-buck', but rather than look for the obvious giant killers (Ariel v Lamborghini, etc) we picked a group that we hope will inspire curiosity – and create debate. For instance, we thought about BMW M2 v AMG GT – both front-engined, both rear-wheel drive, both turbocharged, both twin-clutch (optional on the M2). But we had what we thought was a more revealing option...

We've no doubt the M2 would give the AMG GT a bloody nose, if not 'win' outright. But the comparison with the M235i appealed because BMW has narrowed the gap between its pukka M-cars and the 'prefix' Ms. And with the M235i being one of the most popular cars among our readership, well, it simply had to be done.

At the other end of the scale, it may sound contradictory to label a £100,000 Jaguar F-type R AWD as a giant killer but it is a whole BMW M2 cheaper than the car we've put it up against – the new Porsche 911 Turbo S. Both are 4WD, both are extreme coupes, both offer all-weather performance and traction, both have around 550bhp and both pulse with desirability. Both delivered impressive results – and I'm pretty sure the Turbo S momentarily stopped the Earth from spinning during one particularly impressive acceleration run...

And the Toyota GT86 v Mustang V8? Front-engined coupes, both rear-wheel drive, both manual – but what's really intriguing here is the price. The Mustang is only a moderate monthly payment increment more than the Japanese car, which makes you think, doesn't it? Thunderous V8 coupe, or delicate four-cyl *dorifto*?

The Ford Focus RS and the Nissan GT-R elicit a fever like few other cars. Cults and communities revere them, and pretty much at the core of their respective USPs (and DNA) is the ability to slay giants. Throwing them in the ring together here, with only the total transparency of data to guide us, was an irresistible match. Is the new RS a mini-GT-R?

Lastly, we've gone extreme. Our long-term Caterham 420R is a phenomenally fast and affordable machine.

Sure, it doesn't have the 991 GT3 RS's PDK 'box, modern aero or torque-vectoring but the Seven is, and always has been, about major-league performance for minor-league cash.

We carried out the test over four days in spring, with consistent temperatures and dry conditions. A day at the excellent Rockingham circuit established lap times, with sensible lines adhered to (i.e. no extreme kerb-hopping) and tyre performance monitored. Then we moved to Alconbury in Cambridgeshire – a flat, dead-straight runway with no gradient – for the acceleration, in-gear and braking tests.

We took the cars directly from the press fleets and allowed no manufacturer presence at the test – although to be honest, all participants simply threw us the keys. There has been a colossal amount of bullshit spouted regarding 'special' press cars, but the majority is internet hokum (the GT3 RS had covered 17,000 miles!). We spot-check press cars on rolling roads – see last month's report from Jethro on his long-term GT-R for just one example – and I hope you will trust us when we say that if we notice anything, we will let you know. We also weighed the cars with our calibrated scales and adjusted the figures for fuel.

Throughout this feature you'll see all the key data we recorded, and there's a more detailed breakdown at the end. For each pairing we also distilled the lap times, acceleration, braking and in-gear data into a single figure that expresses the overall performance of the more affordable car as a percentage of the performance of the giant it is up against.

And that's it. We hope you enjoy the results as much as our road test team did 'working' for four days extracting maximum performance from each car... As ever, any questions or comments – please email letters@evo.co.uk or contact us via Facebook or Twitter. **NT**

Toyota GT86 v Ford Mustang 5.0 V8 GT



On track

To be honest, I'm not expecting too much from these cars. The Rockingham circuit seems too fast for the tiny Toyota and I have a feeling the Mustang will quickly unravel, but I'll be proved wrong on both counts. These two conceptually similar coupes with wildly different executions are great fun and kindred spirits.

The GT86 has plenty of attributes but a sweet engine isn't one of them. The flat-four sounds strained as the car begins the lap. It reaches just 98mph on the main straight. Momentum is a precious commodity. The chassis carries decent speed into the unsettlingly fast chicane, though – a good start. The GT86 might have narrow, economy-minded tyres, but the low centre of gravity provides good high-speed balance and the car rides the kerbs very nicely.

The engine is puffing again on the exit and the GT86 hits just 106mph before the tight left into Deene. But now we're into the technical part of the lap and the GT86's comfort zone. It has fantastic brake and steering feel, which is important because you can't overload the front

tyres. If you do get the GT86 understeering, it quickly gets scrappy, so try to stay back from that point, get hard on the power early and feel the transition to oversteer build progressively. As there's not tons of torque, the Toyota seems to naturally find a small, neat angle that keeps the revs and acceleration building. Having said that, those tyres are a real limiting factor and artificially undermine the chassis' agility.

The Mustang is much faster in a straight line. It hits 107mph before the first chicane and 120mph before the hairpin. Yet while the Toyota is transparent in everything it does, the Ford puts obstacles in your way. The brakes are supremely responsive but the brake pedal is mute. At any speed and whether or not the ABS is activated, it moves about two centimetres and no more. So while your foot says all is well, your eyes see the nose sailing past the turn-in point.

In terms of balance, though, the big Ford is a hoot. As with the GT86, it pays to be patient on turn-in to avoid understeer. However, its wider tyres tolerate a more aggressive turn-in speed, and in combination with the engine's



HOW THEY COMPARE

Toyota GT86



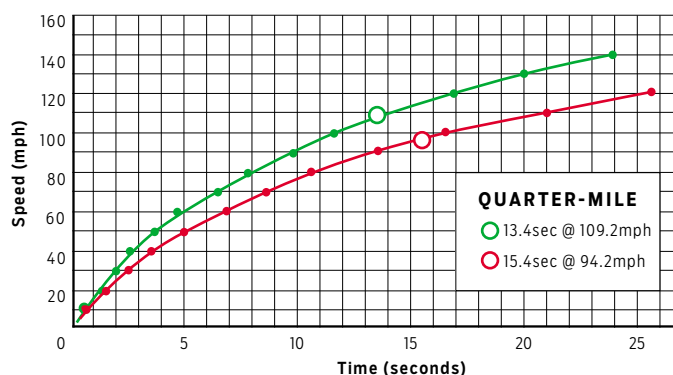
Flat-four, 1998cc
197bhp @ 7000rpm
151lb ft @ 6400-6600rpm
6.9sec (7.6sec 0-62mph claimed)
140mph (claimed)
1234kg (1240kg claimed)
161bhp/ton (claimed)
£22,495

Ford Mustang 5.0V8 GT



Engine V8, 4951cc
Power 410bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 391lb ft @ 4250rpm
0-60mph 4.8sec (4.8sec 0-62mph claimed)
Top speed 155mph (limited)
Weight 1749kg (1711kg claimed)
Power-to-weight 243bhp/ton (claimed)
Basic price £34,995

ACCELERATION



30-70MPH IN THIRD

7.8 | **5.0**
seconds | seconds

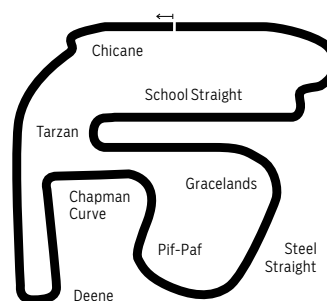
BRAKING 100-0MPH

105 | **95**
metres | metres
1.06 | **1.26**

LAP

FASTEST TIME

1:43.8



FASTEST TIME

1:37.9

PERFORMANCE VALUE

PERFORMANCE

84%

The GT86 isn't a giant killer – how could it be when the Mustang packs a V8 with twice the power? – but it still offers 84% of the Ford's performance for just 64% of the price. A bit of a bargain, then? Yep.

PRICE

64%

wide powerband, this provides all the options you could wish for to thread the car neatly from entry to exit. It's a big old bus and its body control isn't that of the GT86, but it dances with grace. It does a 1:37.9 to the Toyota's 1:43.8. **JB**

Straight-line

Dial up 3500rpm, release the clutch smartly but without dumping it abruptly, modulate the throttle through first gear, then slot in each new gear as quickly and cleanly as you can. It's the same for both cars, despite the power disparity.

The numbers show how traction-limited the Mustang is. It may run 275-section rear tyres but it still requires a full 2 seconds to hit 30mph, compared with 2.4 for the Toyota. By 60mph and out of the traction phase, the Mustang's 213bhp advantage over the GT86 has started to tell and the margin is more than 2 seconds. At 100mph, it's close to 5 seconds.

Impressively, the 1749kg Mustang also loses speed more effectively than the 1234kg GT86. It requires 95.1m to stop from 100mph, some 9.8m less than the Toyota. **DP**



Caterham Seven 420R v Porsche 911 GT3 RS

On track

As a rule of thumb, unless the 420R is sliding, it's not working hard enough. It *will* understeer – sometimes usefully, if you simply want to find the limit of mechanical grip and nudge beyond it; sometimes unhelpfully, if you ask too much of the front tyres on turn-in. But the beauty of the Seven is you recognise the situation immediately. You can adjust its line from turn-in to exit, effecting big shifts in attitude or small tweaks to squeeze the last few tenths out of it.

Short gearing means you're always busy, and the manual shift can be tricky if you rush it. The pedals are cramped, which makes limit-braking and heel-and-toe work awkward, but the brakes themselves are powerful and feelsome enough to work to the point of lock-up. It feels great everywhere, but the faster, longer corners really show how finely you can get the car balanced on the way in and dance it through. No car better combines pace, purity and zero-inertia fun.

A fast lap in the GT3 RS is like playing with a flick knife. You really have to be diligent in warming the tyres beforehand. With the

gearbox and suspension set to Sport Plus but PSM still engaged, the car feels just the exploitable side of edgy. Yes, you can feel the systems nibbling away as the 991 settles onto its haunches, but the electronics are quick to release, so it feels like you've won more through confidence and stability than you lose in the split second it takes to get back on the power.

Disabling PSM in the GT3 RS and going for a lap time focuses the mind like little else. The chassis dances along a knife-edge from the moment you turn into the medium and fast corners. There's a narrow window in which you can correct and finesse things, but you need to be super-precise and ultra-confident to work in this zone. Do so and you'll find small gains, but fumble for a moment and those hard-won tenths and hundredths turn to dust. My best analogue lap actually sees me a few tenths up by three-quarter distance, but I'm a tenth or two down by the end of the lap. The GT3 RS is a mighty challenge, but one with extraordinary rewards. It sets a searing time of 1:29.4 – 3.8 seconds faster than the Caterham. **RM**



Straight-line

This was always going to be a daunting comparison for the Caterham 420R, not least because the Porsche 911 GT3 RS makes a very strong case for itself as the fastest accelerating normally aspirated, two-wheel-drive car on the market. Indeed, 0-60mph in 3 seconds flat with no turbochargers or front driveshafts is staggering.

The 420R records a time of 4 seconds, which is limited by the manual gearbox's tricky throw

HOW THEY COMPARE

Caterham Seven 420R



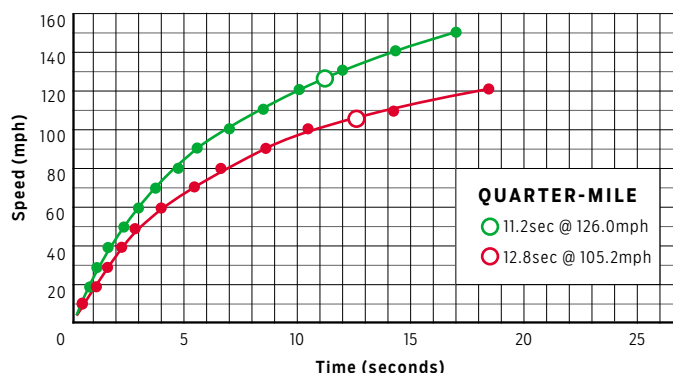
In-line 4-cyl, 1999cc
210bhp @ 7600rpm
150lb ft @ 6300rpm
4.0sec (3.8sec claimed)
136mph (claimed)
591kg (560kg claimed)
381bhp/ton (claimed)
£33,990

Porsche 911 GT3 RS



Engine Flat-six, 3996cc
Power 493bhp @ 8250rpm
Torque 339lb ft @ 6250rpm
0-60mph 3.0sec (3.3sec 0-62mph claimed)
Top speed 193mph (claimed)
Weight 1490kg (1420kg claimed)
Power-to-weight 353bhp/ton (claimed)
Basic price £131,296

ACCELERATION



30-70MPH IN THIRD

4.2 seconds
4.0 seconds

BRAKING 100-0MPH

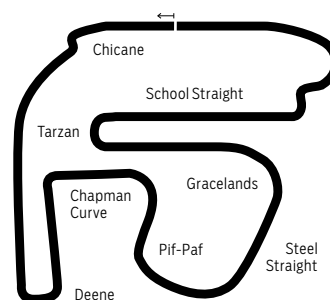
101 metres
88 metres

1.1G **1.2G**

LAP

FASTEST TIME

1:33.2



FASTEST TIME

1:29.4

PERFORMANCE VALUE

PERFORMANCE

81%

In terms of pure performance per pound sterling, the Seven really is in a league of its own, offering 81% of the GT3 RS's shove for a only a quarter of its £131,296 price.

PRICE

26%



from second to third. By 100mph it has fallen 3.2 seconds behind the Porsche.

In spite of its power-to-weight ratio being lower than the Caterham's, the Porsche is faster in every single measure, even in the 30-70mph dash in third gear, where it trims two-tenths off the flyweight's time.

Across the quarter-mile, the GT3 RS pulls out a 1.6-second advantage over the 420R, which, to the Caterham's credit, is comfortably the tightest margin of all five pairings. **DP**



BMW M235i v BMW M2

On track

The M235i may wear an 'M' badge, but that could just as easily stand for Mainstream as Motorsport. On the out-lap the straight-six motor feels keen and torquey, the (manual) gearshift sweet and quick and the chassis nicely balanced, but when you go for a lap time that promise fades. There simply isn't the bite to attack corners on turn-in, so you have to settle for a neutral-to-understeer stance and try to keep things tidy. If there is oversteer – most likely at Chapman Curve or the first part of Pif-Paf – it's more through momentum than torque, so it's hard to sustain.

The upside to this, at least in terms of the lap, is that the M235i is benign enough to take big liberties through the turn-one chicane. You really can lob it down the banking without fear of it snapping sideways, but the truth is there's not a great deal of fun to be had during the rest of the lap, even with 321bhp. Perhaps the M actually stands for Marketing.

The M2 is a curious machine. Much more serious in look and feel than the M235i, there



are far greater reserves of performance to draw from. The 365bhp engine feels much gutsier and sharper, as you'd expect, and the brakes, though noisy, resist that old M trick of wilting at the first sniff of hard use. Chassis-wise the M2 has a generous, fun-loving setup that's easy to read and enjoyable to push to and beyond its limits, but when you're trying to stay just on the quick side of lairy, it's less satisfying.

There's decent front-end grip to lean on, but

as you chase the throttle, you feel the rear end hook up and then kick into oversteer. It's not scary, but it's very hard to find a sweet spot where the tail is *just* sliding, but not enough to need significant steering correction. Through the endless sequence of left-handers at Pif-Paf and Gracelands it's tricky to get the M2 settled, but it's the tight hairpins that are the most frustrating, as it's all too easy to waste your work in getting the nose neatly to the apex by getting a ton of oversteer from apex to exit. Fun, certainly, and a much more impressive experience than the M235i, but the M2 doesn't have the finesse to truly maximise its on-track advantage. **RM**

Straight-line

With an extra 44bhp and the optional DCT gearbox – and therefore launch control – the M2 does, naturally, find an advantage over the M235i away from the line. But at 30mph that advantage is just one tenth of a second – there is only so much work two contact patches can do.

Once out of the traction phase, though, the

HOW THEY COMPARE

BMW M235i



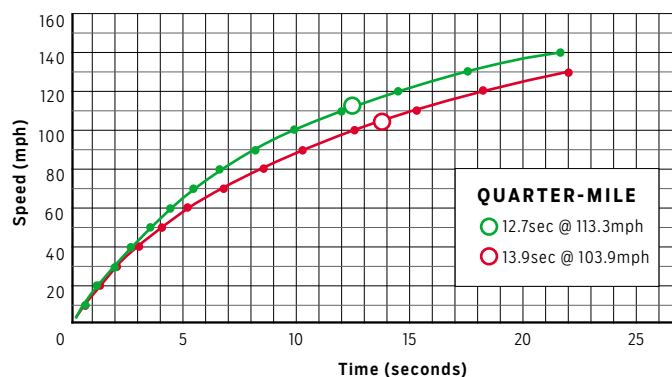
In-line 6-cyl, 2979cc, turbo
 321bhp @ 5800-6000rpm
 322lb ft @ 1300-4500rpm
 5.2sec (4.8sec 0-62mph claimed)
 155mph (limited)
 1541kg (1470kg claimed)
 222bhp/ton (claimed)
 £35,225

BMW M2



Engine In-line 6-cyl, 2979cc, turbo
Power 365bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 369lb ft @ 1450-4750rpm
0-60mph 4.3sec (4.3sec 0-62mph claimed, DCT)
Top speed 155mph (limited)
Weight 1566kg (1520kg claimed, with DCT)
Power-to-weight 244bhp/ton (claimed)
Basic price £46,575 (with DCT)

ACCELERATION



30-70MPH IN THIRD

5.3 seconds
4.1 seconds

BRAKING 100-0MPH

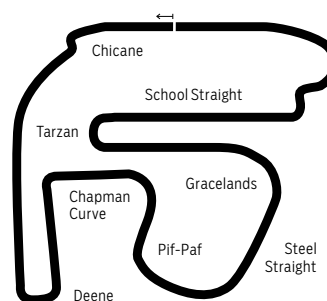
94 metres
91 metres

1.1G **1.2G**

LAP

FASTEST TIME

1:38.9



FASTEST TIME

1:35.6

PERFORMANCE VALUE

PERFORMANCE

90%

The M235i makes a strong case for itself, offering 90% of the M2's performance for 76% of the price. However, there are significant dynamic differences between the two cars.

PRICE

76%



M2 begins to gap the M235i at a fairly startling rate. It reaches 60mph almost a full second sooner, and by 100 the margin is close to 3 seconds. The M2 needs 4.1 seconds to power from 30 to 70mph in third gear, meanwhile, compared with 5.3 seconds for the M235i.

There's less to choose between the two in the braking test, though, the M235i hauling up from 100mph in 94.2m, compared with 91.4m for the M2. **DP**







Jaguar F-type R Coupe AWD v Porsche 911 Turbo S

On track

Logic suggests that the Jaguar F-type R AWD and Porsche 911 Turbo S will be a bit out of their depth around Rockingham. However, despite their GT-car philosophies and rather hefty four-wheel-drive systems, both display excellent balance and an appetite for being hustled. But can the bruising Jag get anywhere near the 911?

Erm, no. Not really. The Porsche turns in a 1:31.3 lap time to the F-type's 1:34.6, yet from the driver's seat you wouldn't credit quite that difference. And against expectations it's the Jaguar that often carries a shade more speed into the corners. It changes direction beautifully and understeer is only an issue in the tightest of turns. For the most part, the Jaguar adopts a neutral balance and then makes a gradual transition into exit oversteer. The key to getting the best time is to let the car gently slide from the apex but not so much that you need a steering correction. Get the F-type walking that tightrope and it's massively satisfying.

The Turbo S likes to work in that zone, too, but it's harder to keep it there. In slow corners it

wants to oversteer on turn-in; in medium-speed turns there's more understeer than in the Jag, and so you're always busy managing the slip. God it's fun, though, the balance ever shifting and the drivetrain allowing you to take silly liberties. The ceramic brakes are outstanding, too, whereas the Jag – even with optional ceramics – displays marked fade early on.

The 911's power and traction advantage creates a big disparity in acceleration zones. It reaches 124mph to the Jag's 119mph on the

banked start/finish 'straight' and howls out of the first chicane to reach 134mph at the fastest part of the track, before the left hairpin, when the pattern is repeated.

However, the Jag fights back by carrying more speed into the turns, usually by around 4mph. If only it could retain that advantage. The 911 requires a lower entry speed to avoid time-sapping under- or oversteer, but then allows you to pin the throttle. In the Jag you're fighting to keep that precious momentum





HOW THEY COMPARE

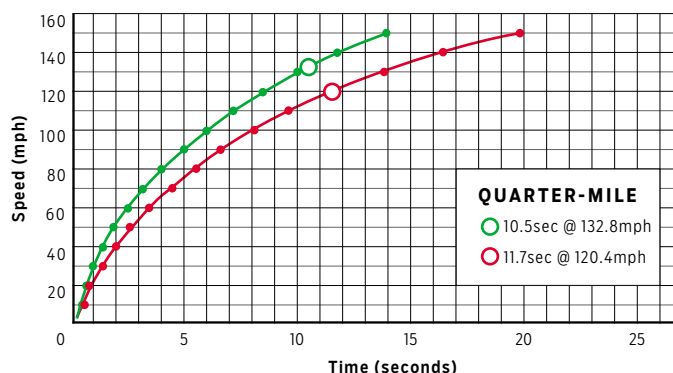
Jaguar F-type R
Coupe AWD

V8, 5000cc, supercharged
542bhp @ 6500rpm
501lb ft @ 3500rpm
3.5sec (3.9sec claimed)
186mph (claimed)
1825kg (1730kg claimed)
318bhp/ton (claimed)
£91,660

Porsche 911
Turbo S

Engine Flat-six, 3800cc, twin-turbo
Power 572bhp @ 6750rpm
Torque 553lb ft @ 2250-4000rpm
0-60mph 2.6sec (2.9sec 0-62mph claimed)
Top speed 205mph (claimed)
Weight 1619kg (1600kg claimed)
Power-to-weight 363bhp/ton (claimed)
Basic price £145,773

ACCELERATION



30-70MPH IN THIRD

4.1 seconds
3.4 seconds

BRAKING 100-0MPH

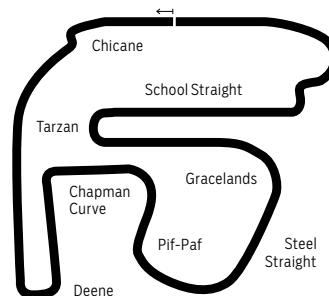
95 metres
88 metres

1.16 **1.26**

LAP

FASTEST TIME

1:34.6



FASTEST TIME

1:31.3

advantage and inevitably failing. As you're carefully metering out that supercharged V8 to avoid a big oversteer angle, you can almost see the ghost of the Turbo S already fully hooked up and rocketing away. Lighter, more agile and consistent, capable of soaking up lap after lap of punishment and just scarily fast in a straight line, the Turbo S really is the total package. **JB**

Straight-line

The F-type is so overpowered for its price point that it only gives away 30bhp to the Turbo S, despite being £50k cheaper. Somehow, though, the Porsche's slim advantage manifests itself as a whole new level of pace. It is more than 200kg lighter than the Jag for one thing, but its launch-control system is also crushingly effective.

The 911 records an absurd 2.6sec 0-60mph time, giving it a 0.9sec lead over the Jag. By 100mph, it's ahead by more than 2 seconds.

Both cars are equipped with carbon-ceramic brakes – an optional extra on the Jaguar – but with much less weight to contain, the Turbo S stops in 87.8m to the F-type's 94.8m. **DP**

PERFORMANCE VALUE

PERFORMANCE

87%

The F-type R AWD offers an impressive proportion of the Turbo S's breathtaking performance (in fact it is the faster car on corner entry) for less than two-thirds of its asking price.

PRICE

63%



Ford Focus RS v Nissan GT-R Track Edition

On track

From the moment you engage Track mode, you sense the Focus is going to be a hoot. The engine has a sharp response and plenty of torque. The handling balance (this car is on the standard Michelin Pilot Super Sports rather than the optional Cup 2s) is really exploitable and very entertaining. Plenty of turn-in bite is backed up by strong mid-corner grip. Then, as you see the corner begin to open out and get on the power, the balance neutralises, then shifts rearwards. It's all so natural – you never feel like you're

waiting for the front end or reining in the rear.

The brakes are strong, but the pedal goes a bit soft three or four laps in. That said, the stopping power remains consistent, so you just need to adapt when it comes to heel-and-toe downshifts. The manual gearshift is quick and light, though the gate could be a bit more defined when you're really trying to make the quickest possible shifts. A best lap of 1:37.5 is respectable, and it's the most fun I've had on track in a hot hatch in a long time.

Lapping the GT-R is all about managing

its mass. At first you think you can drive through the understeer, but the harder you try, the scruffier it gets. Running in its most aggressive suspension, transmission and stability control modes, the Nissan is more constrained than the Ford, and struggles to find a sweet spot. The front end just wants to push wide through the long corners, while tight corners are sometimes punctuated by an unhelpful spike of oversteer as you exceed the limits of the trackday-spec Dunlop SP Sport Maxx GT tyres. If you do get the car to slide

under power, the systems catch it too soon, leaving you becalmed in a weird oversteer stasis. Switching ESP off reveals how hard it was working to keep the GT-R reined in. Now the understeer is more exaggerated, as is the snap to oversteer when you trail-brake or try to provoke the chassis to avoid understeer.

It's a surprisingly frustrating and joyless machine to drive on track. Too heavy and too cumbersome to feel at home, it delivers its lap time – 5.3sec quicker than the Focus's – through raw grunt and traction. For evidence, just look at the steepness of the acceleration trace! It's effective, but for finesse, fun and exploitability, the Focus is the better car. **RM**

Straight-line

The Nissan GT-R has long been the consummate giant killer, and on the face of it, the Ford Focus RS – also turbocharged, also four-wheel-drive, also uncompromising – could be equipped to pull off the same trick at its own price point. But in spite of the GT-R struggling to match its claimed performance figures on the day, there is still a fair margin between them.

There is beyond 30mph, anyway, because it's actually the RS that gets away from the line more rapidly. After running neck-and-neck with the Focus to 30mph, the Nissan registers a 3.4sec 0-60mph dash – we've seen them go faster – while the Ford clocks a still impressive 4.7sec time. The Nissan goes a second quicker in the 30-70mph sprint, too.

The GT-R also overcomes its 211kg weight penalty over the RS to stop from 100mph in 93.3m, a slim 2.4m sooner than the Ford. **DP**



HOW THEY COMPARE

Ford Focus RS



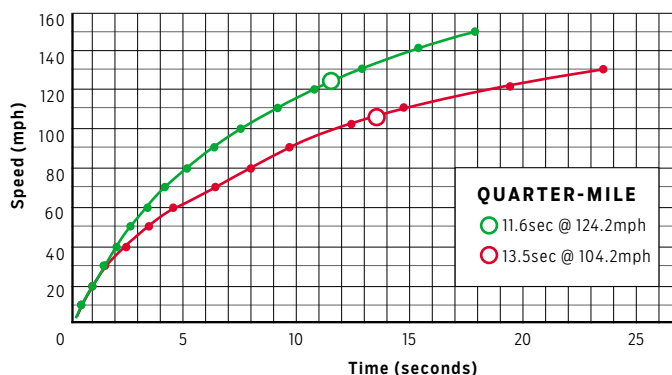
In-line 4-cyl, 2261cc, turbo
345bhp @ 6000rpm
347lb ft @ 2000-4500rpm
4.7sec (4.7sec 0-62mph claimed)
165mph (claimed)
1567kg (1524kg claimed)
230bhp/ton (claimed)
£31,000

Nissan GT-R Track Edition



Engine V6, 3799cc, twin-turbo
Power 542bhp @ 6400rpm
Torque 466lb ft @ 3200-5800rpm
0-60mph 3.4sec (2.7sec 0-62mph claimed)
Top speed 196mph (claimed)
Weight 1778kg (1740kg claimed)
Power-to-weight 316bhp/ton (claimed)
Basic price £88,560

ACCELERATION



30-70MPH IN THIRD

5.0 seconds
4.0 seconds

BRAKING 100-0MPH

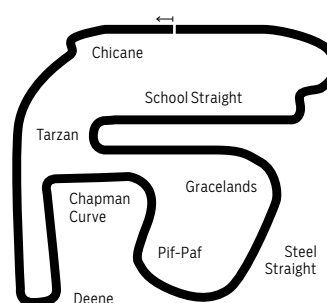
96 metres
93 metres

1.1G **1.1G**

LAP

FASTEST TIME

1:37.5



FASTEST TIME

1:32.2

PERFORMANCE VALUE

PERFORMANCE

84%

The 'bargain' supercar has finally met its match in the value-for-money stakes, because the Focus RS offers 84% of the Nissan's ability for around a third of the outlay.

PRICE

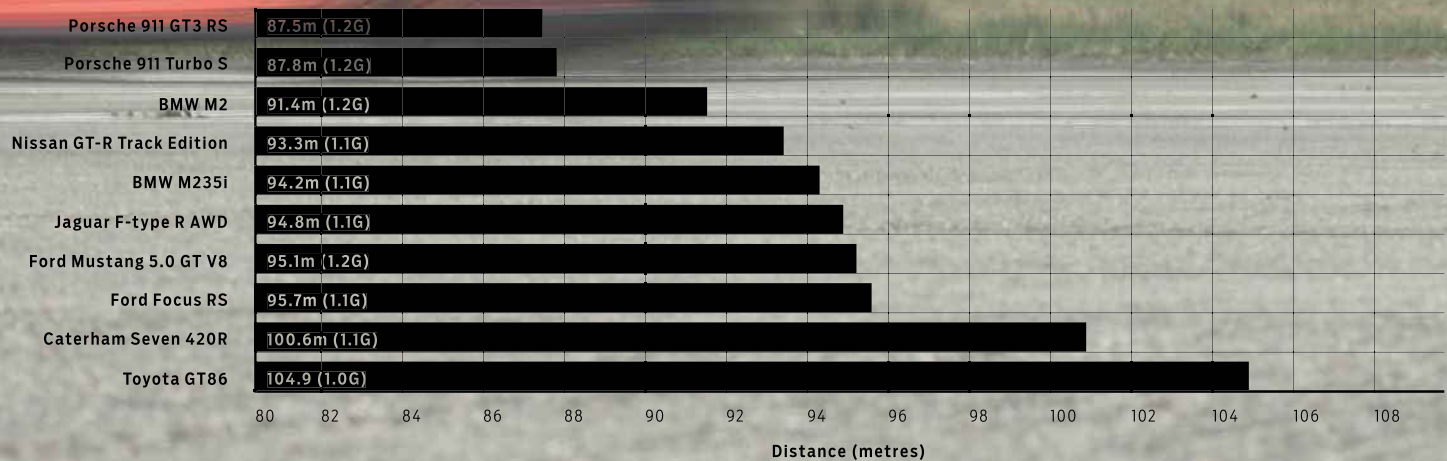
35%

Hard data

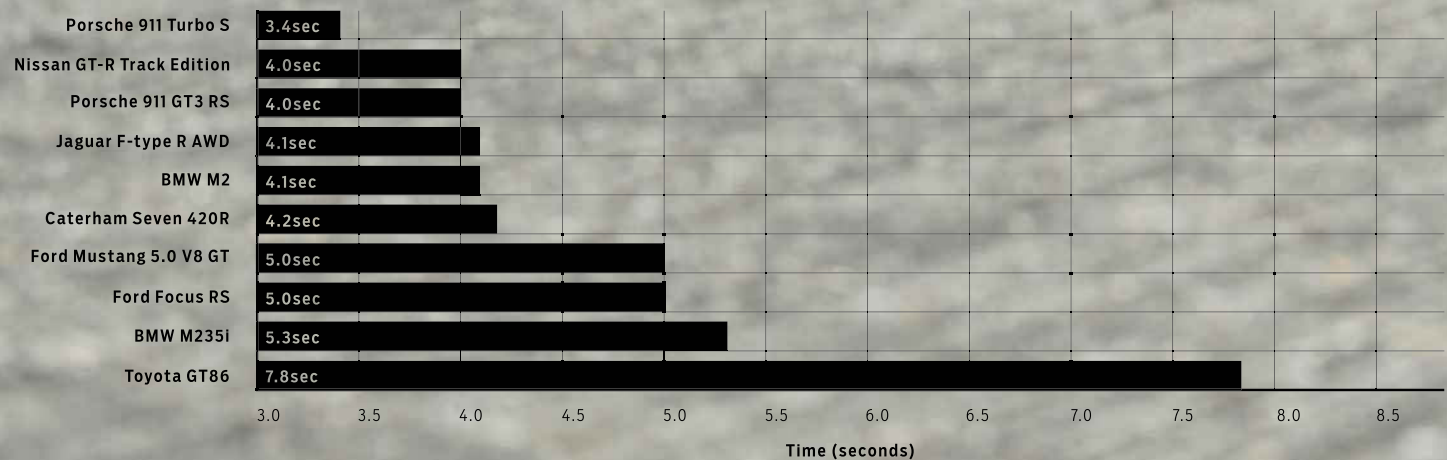
ACCELERATION (from standstill, in seconds)

| | Speed (mph) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------------|-----|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 | 100 | 110 | 120 | 130 | 140 | 150 |
| Porsche 911 Turbo S | 0.3 | 0.7 | 1.0 | 1.4 | 1.9 | 2.6 | 3.2 | 4.0 | 5.0 | 6.0 | 7.2 | 8.5 | 10.0 | 11.8 | 13.9 |
| Porsche 911 GT3 RS | 0.3 | 0.8 | 1.2 | 1.7 | 2.3 | 3.0 | 3.8 | 4.8 | 5.8 | 7.1 | 8.5 | 10.1 | 12.0 | 14.3 | 17.0 |
| Nissan GT-R Track Edition | 0.5 | 1.0 | 1.5 | 2.1 | 2.7 | 3.4 | 4.2 | 5.2 | 6.4 | 7.7 | 9.2 | 10.8 | 12.9 | 15.3 | 17.9 |
| Jaguar F-type R AWD | 0.4 | 0.9 | 1.4 | 2.0 | 2.7 | 3.5 | 4.5 | 5.5 | 6.7 | 8.1 | 9.6 | 11.6 | 13.9 | 16.4 | 19.8 |
| Caterham Seven 420R | 0.5 | 1.1 | 1.7 | 2.2 | 2.8 | 4.0 | 5.7 | 6.7 | 8.6 | 10.3 | 14.2 | 18.4 | - | - | - |
| BMW M2 | 0.6 | 1.2 | 2.0 | 2.7 | 3.4 | 4.3 | 5.4 | 6.7 | 8.2 | 9.9 | 12.0 | 14.5 | 17.7 | 21.7 | - |
| Ford Focus RS | 0.4 | 1.0 | 1.6 | 2.6 | 3.5 | 4.7 | 6.5 | 8.0 | 9.7 | 12.4 | 14.8 | 19.3 | 23.6 | - | - |
| Ford Mustang 5.0 V8 GT | 0.6 | 1.3 | 2.0 | 2.7 | 3.8 | 4.8 | 6.4 | 7.8 | 9.7 | 11.6 | 13.6 | 16.9 | 20.0 | 23.9 | - |
| BMW M235i | 0.6 | 1.3 | 2.1 | 3.1 | 4.1 | 5.2 | 6.9 | 8.5 | 10.2 | 12.7 | 15.3 | 18.2 | 22.0 | - | - |
| Toyota GT86 | 0.8 | 1.6 | 2.4 | 3.7 | 5.0 | 6.9 | 8.7 | 10.7 | 13.6 | 16.5 | 21.0 | 25.8 | - | - | - |

BRAKING DISTANCE AND G-FORCE (100mph to standstill)



IN-GEAR TIMES (30-70mph in third)



AS THE GT3 RS CROSSES THE LINE, WHERE IS EVERYTHING ELSE?

- ① Porsche 911 GT3 RS **1:29.4**

- ② Porsche 911 Turbo S **1:31.3**

- ③ Nissan GT-R Track Ed. **1:32.2**

- ④ Caterham 420R **1:33.2**

- ⑤ Jaguar F-type R AWD **1:34.6**

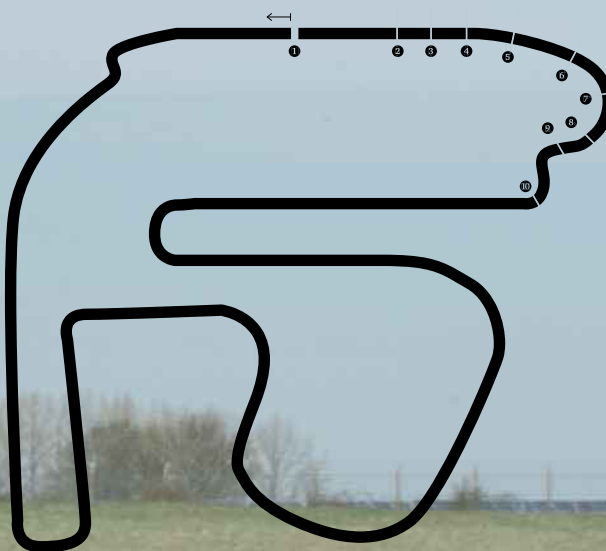
- ⑥ BMW M2 **1:35.6**

- ⑦ Ford Focus RS **1:37.5**

- ⑧ Ford Mustang GT V8 **1:37.9**

- ⑨ BMW M235i **1:38.9**

- ⑩ Toyota GT86 **1:43.8**



FASTEST TIME

1:29.4

SLOWEST TIME

1:43.8

DIFFERENCE

14.4sec

PERFORMANCE AND VALUE MATRICES

HOW IT WORKS

Using these tables you can compare the performance and price of any two cars in this test. Each cell shows the performance (or price) of the car named across from it on the vertical axis as a percentage of the car named below it on the horizontal axis. So, for example, you can discover that the Focus RS has 86 per cent of the performance of the 911 GT3 RS at just 34 per cent of the cost. (Or, viewed the other way around, that the Jaguar has 121 per cent of the performance of the Ford for 296 per cent of the price.)

Performance (%)

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|
| GT86 | — | 85 | 82 | 84 | 87 | 79 | 72 | 74 | 68 | 66 |
| Focus RS | 120 | — | 96 | 99 | 103 | 92 | 84 | 86 | 78 | 76 |
| Caterham | 127 | 105 | — | 103 | 105 | 96 | 87 | 89 | 81 | 79 |
| Mustang | 122 | 101 | 97 | — | 103 | 93 | 84 | 86 | 79 | 85 |
| M235i | 117 | 98 | 94 | 98 | — | 90 | 82 | 84 | 77 | 75 |
| M2 | 132 | 109 | 105 | 108 | 112 | — | 90 | 92 | 85 | 81 |
| GT-R | 152 | 124 | 118 | 122 | 127 | 112 | — | 102 | 93 | 89 |
| F-type R | 149 | 121 | 115 | 120 | 125 | 110 | 98 | — | 91 | 87 |
| 911 GT3 RS | 165 | 134 | 127 | 132 | 138 | 121 | 107 | 110 | — | 95 |
| 911 Turbo S | 180 | 145 | 137 | 142 | 149 | 130 | 112 | 117 | 106 | — |

GT86 Focus RS Caterham Mustang M235i M2 GT-R F-type R 911 GT3 RS 911 Turbo S

Price (%)

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|
| GT86 | — | 73 | 66 | 64 | 64 | 48 | 25 | 25 | 17 | 15 |
| Focus RS | 138 | — | 91 | 89 | 88 | 67 | 35 | 34 | 24 | 21 |
| Caterham | 151 | 110 | — | 97 | 97 | 73 | 38 | 37 | 26 | 23 |
| Mustang | 156 | 113 | 103 | — | 99 | 75 | 40 | 38 | 27 | 24 |
| M235i | 157 | 114 | 104 | 101 | — | 76 | 40 | 38 | 27 | 24 |
| M2 | 207 | 150 | 137 | 133 | 132 | — | 53 | 51 | 36 | 32 |
| GT-R | 393 | 286 | 260 | 253 | 251 | 190 | — | 97 | 67 | 61 |
| F-type R | 408 | 296 | 270 | 262 | 260 | 197 | 103 | — | 70 | 63 |
| 911 GT3 RS | 584 | 424 | 386 | 375 | 373 | 282 | 148 | 143 | — | 90 |
| 911 Turbo S | 648 | 470 | 429 | 417 | 414 | 313 | 164 | 159 | 111 | — |

GT86 Focus RS Caterham Mustang M235i M2 GT-R F-type R 911 GT3 RS 911 Turbo S

Conclusion

THERE IS A GREAT DEAL MORE TO the thrill of driving than numbers alone, but the joy of poring over performance data is a timeless one. And although we can be fairly confident that a more powerful, more expensive car will be quicker in a straight line and around a lap than a less powerful, cheaper car, there is still a great deal to be learned from attaching the timing gear and applying some good old-fashioned objectivity to those gut feelings. Having done just that, we can be certain that the performance car arena is governed by the law of diminishing returns.

You'll have seen in our choice of pairings that there was a definite giant-killing theme to this test, and although none of our Davids managed to slay their respective Goliaths with faster lap times or stronger acceleration

figures, we do see a clear trend when we introduce the bang-for-buck factor. Simply, for every extra pound you spend, the performance return gets smaller and smaller.

Perhaps the most revealing pairing is Focus RS versus GT-R. The mighty Nissan has touted itself as the definitive giant killer in the years since its 2008 launch, but the moment we saw the specs for the Focus RS, we knew it would be equipped to do much the same thing at a more inclusive price point.

We also wondered if the highly anticipated Ford could administer a dose of that bitter medicine unto the GT-R. Yes, the Nissan is faster in every respect, but the Ford returns an extraordinary 84 per cent of its performance at just 35 per cent of the price. On top of that, Richard Meaden actually found the Focus RS

to be more enjoyable on track than the GT-R.

Then there is the Caterham Seven 420R versus Porsche 911 GT3 RS. Sevens have long been the authority on Premier League performance at League One prices, but isn't 81 per cent of a GT3 RS's performance at just 26 per cent of its substantial cost a truly staggering return?

The performance and value matrices on the previous page bring all of the data together and allow you to compare one car to any other. We also encourage you to scan through the results of each test for the simple pleasure of it. Did you ever imagine the Mustang would get quite so close to the Focus RS's lap time, or that the F-type would all but match the GT-R to 60mph? There really is nothing more revealing than cold, hard data. **DP** ✕

'There is a great deal to be learned from attaching the timing gear and applying some good old-fashioned objectivity to those gut feelings'



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ASTON MARTIN DB11 PROTOTYPE

This is a prototype of Aston Martin's new flagship GT car – and we've driven it. So, what exactly does that 5.2-litre twin-turbo V12 feel like? And can the DB11 move Gaydon's game on sufficiently for it to once again take on the best?

NEW POWER GENERATION

by JETHRO BOVINGDON



5 KHJ

F

OR TOO LONG THERE'S BEEN A crushing sense of the inevitable about every new Aston Martin model. Because 'new' in Aston Martin terminology has really meant 'revised'. I still remember the buzz of anticipation when the DB9 and Vantage were unveiled, but since then it's been a nip here and a tuck there. And on the rare occasion that it hasn't – the Rapide or Vanquish, for example – the ingredients have remained the same: an elegant, beautiful but oh-so familiar form stretched and teased but never truly reinvented. Same aesthetic, same engines, same chassis... same old same old.

That's history now, though. In fact Aston Martin has become remarkably unpredictable. In the space of 18 months, Gaydon has churned

out a new Lagonda and a track-only hypercar that looks like it's been beamed in from outer space, a new tie-up with Mercedes-Benz has been announced that will provide engines and electrical architecture, and we've seen a new EV crossover model that will be built at a new factory in Wales. Oh, and it's building a new supercar – one that will lap Silverstone as quickly as an LMP1 car – with some bloke called Adrian Newey. Some people don't seem to have noticed, but Aston Martin is possibly the most exciting manufacturer in the world right now.

So Aston is on the brink of a brave new world of turbocharged V8 engines from AMG, electric and hybrid drivetrains, crossovers, and a supercar that might well be the greatest since



Above: Bovingdon (left) and Aston's chief chassis engineer Matt Becker, with 'dynamics bitch' VP 5079 in the foreground. **Right:** Bridgestone's flowing test track is an ideal place to hone a GT car's dynamics



the game-changing McLaren F1. But first it needs to nail the core range, starting with the DB9 replacement. You've seen it by now, of course, and the DB11 is surprising only in the sense that on paper it's pretty familiar: bonded-aluminium chassis, V12 engine, 2+2 configuration and long, lithe elegance as befits an imperious GT car. However, that chassis is all new, the engine is Aston Martin's own, but downsized from 5.9 litres to 5.2 and now with two twin-scroll turbochargers, and while the look might retain a familiar sense of proportion, it is unquestionably *not a DB9*.

For the record, I love the looks and the clever (and mostly hidden) aerodynamic devices, but I'm ready to stop looking at it and start *feeling*

what the next generation of Aston has to offer. Which is lucky, because I'm at a Bridgestone test track just outside Rome to do just that.

Matt Becker, formerly of Lotus and now Aston Martin's 'vehicle attributes chief engineer', is my guide for the next 90 minutes on wet and dry handling tracks in 'VP 5079'. Fully camouflaged and endearingly ragged around the edges, I overhear this hard-working DB11 verification prototype lovingly referred to as the 'dynamics bitch'. It's about 80 per cent of the way there in terms of setup, but should give a pretty clear indication of how the DB11 will feel and sound in its finished form.

'What we're trying to do with all future Astons is to push them apart a bit,' explains

**'IN TERMS OF
SETUP, THIS
PROTOTYPE IS
ABOUT 80 PER
CENT OF THE
WAY THERE'**



ASTON MARTIN DB11 PROTOTYPE

Becker as we creep out onto the dry handling circuit. 'This is a GT car – which doesn't mean it's going to be lazy. It's going to be extremely comfortable but also very agile and connected. This car is a clean sheet of paper; a whole new architecture.'

That architecture remains bonded-aluminium but it's now around 15 per cent stiffer, slightly lighter, allows wider door apertures and creates a more spacious interior. The DB11 remains a big, imposing GT car, and

is wider than the DB9 but has a lower roofline. The wheelbase is also 65mm longer than that of its predecessor.

The suspension is also new, with double wishbones at the front and a multi-link rear axle replacing the former double wishbones. Damping is continuously variable with Bilstein's latest skyhook technology. There's an electric power assisted steering system and torque-vectoring via the brakes, as well as a mechanical locking differential.

Right: in an effort to improve agility, Aston has quickened the steering ratio compared with the DB9's, but has it worked?

Below: DB11 will run a bespoke Bridgestone tyre developed with Aston Martin



**'THE DB11 REMAINS
A BIG GT CAR, AND
IS WIDER THAN
THE DB9 BUT HAS A
LOWER ROOFLINE'**



'The trick to making the car feel how we want it to feel is the integration of all those systems,' explains Becker. 'The beauty of the steering ratio, which is quite fast at 13:1 and 2.4 turns lock-to-lock [the DB9 was 17:1 and a Ferrari is typically around 12:1], is that instead of having to restrict the roll in the car to increase agility, the speed of the rack creates the response without incredibly aggressive roll support. That allows us to let the car breathe. We've also worked on the yaw centre to get it close to the centre of the car, to make it feel short and agile.'

Of course, he would say that, and much as the car feels fluid, small and nimble in Becker's hands, I know how skilled he is as a driver and I'm itching to determine whether it feels as polished and responsive in slightly clumsier company...

It's a mark of the new twin-turbocharged engine that for the first few minutes I barely think about it. I'm tickling the throttle, barely using the massive performance, but the V12 offers taut response, a superbly progressive power delivery and – best of all – it sounds like an Aston 12-cylinder engine should: clean, strident and hungry. It produces 600bhp at 6500rpm and 516lb ft at 1500-5000rpm – big numbers, but I'm more impressed with the purity of response at this stage.

Perhaps the engine's characteristics fade a little because my brain is concentrating on what feels really new: the way this DB11 rides, steers and changes direction. I'm so relieved to report that it does feel like a brand-new car. The ride is much more supple, there's less tyre noise, and refinement feels improved in every way. As a GT, there's little doubt that the DB11 will be a big step on from the DB9. This is good news. But Becker's assertion that this is 'the softest Aston Martin for some time' in terms of spring rate and roll stiffness is ringing in my ears. Can the DB11 still cut it when you've peeled off the autoroute and climbed onto the Route Napoléon? I select Sport

Plus for the dampers and drivetrain (there are also GT and Sport settings) and determine to find out.

Our N85 today is the brilliant dry handling track at Bridgestone's European Proving Ground and the DB11 seems very happy howling around it until its bespoke Potenza S007 tyres are squealing on turn-in and finally succumbing to all that torque on corner exit. The speed of the steering is key. It's an EPAS system and there's no denying it has lost the constant textural feedback that flows through the wheel of a DB9 or Vantage, but in its place you get smooth accuracy and instant agility. The DB11 just snaps into corners and despite the steering's aggressive-sounding ratio, the whole car responds as one and there's no nervousness off-centre as you can find with a Ferrari rack. The DB11 is completely intuitive; you seem to pour it around the track.

'IT'S COMPLETELY INTUITIVE, THE DB11; YOU SEEM TO POUR IT AROUND THE TRACK'

Start to push the limits and the EPAS begins to shine. Unlike some systems, which do a great impression of feel at lower speeds but then seem to disappear to nothingness as the tyres breach their limits, the DB11's really does communicate well. As the front tyres start to struggle, so the steering lightens and you know you're close to pushing into understeer. Lift now and you feel the balance shift, the whole car seeming to pivot around the small of your back. Once you've avoided overloading the front tyres, it's simple to push the rears wide with the ever-present torque, dial in the smallest steering correction and exit the turn in spectacular style.

A few more laps and a clearer head does reveal more body roll than you might expect. We also start to overwhelm the massive, six-piston, 400mm front brakes (this prototype

runs iron discs, ceramics will come later), but mostly this DB11 feels polished and controlled. Traction is impressive given the power and torque on tap, and the stability systems in Track mode provide a wide operating window yet prevent you from bursting beyond the limit. The rear differential is more predictable, too, and the DB11 never flares up into wheelspin on the unloaded tyre as the DB9 often does. For a car that's still got plenty of optimisation to be carried out, and considering the torque-vectoring function will be punched right up for the finished cars, VP 5079 puts in a very impressive showing. It's properly quick, suitably imperious and yet has an appetite for being hurled around this fast, technical track. And although the 5.2-litre V12 doesn't have quite the zing of a normally aspirated engine at the top end, it sounds the part and delivers

massive, seamless performance in combination with the eight-speed automatic gearbox.

Our final few minutes in the DB11 are spent splashing around the wet handling track. It is, of course, a complete laugh and reveals that the DB11 has strong mechanical grip, slides with the grace you'd expect of such a long-wheelbased, front-engined, rear-driven car, and that the engine's response is subtle and detailed even when you need ultimate precision. It's a pretty joyous end to an illuminating session.

We now know for sure that Aston's new GT combines agility and serenity with fine judgment, and that the turbocharged V12 retains a huge amount of character whilst delivering effortless performance. In the wilds of Wales, Scotland or the Alps, and on the long journeys to reach those destinations, the DB11 is shaping up to be very good indeed. ✕





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AKRAPOVIČ

FIVE GUYS STAND IN A PIT GARAGE

at Oulton Park circuit. They discuss the relative merits of 25 damper clicks on the rear axle versus 20, agreeing that the firmer setting is an improvement. 'It helps the front end into the apex,' offers one, and the others nod along.

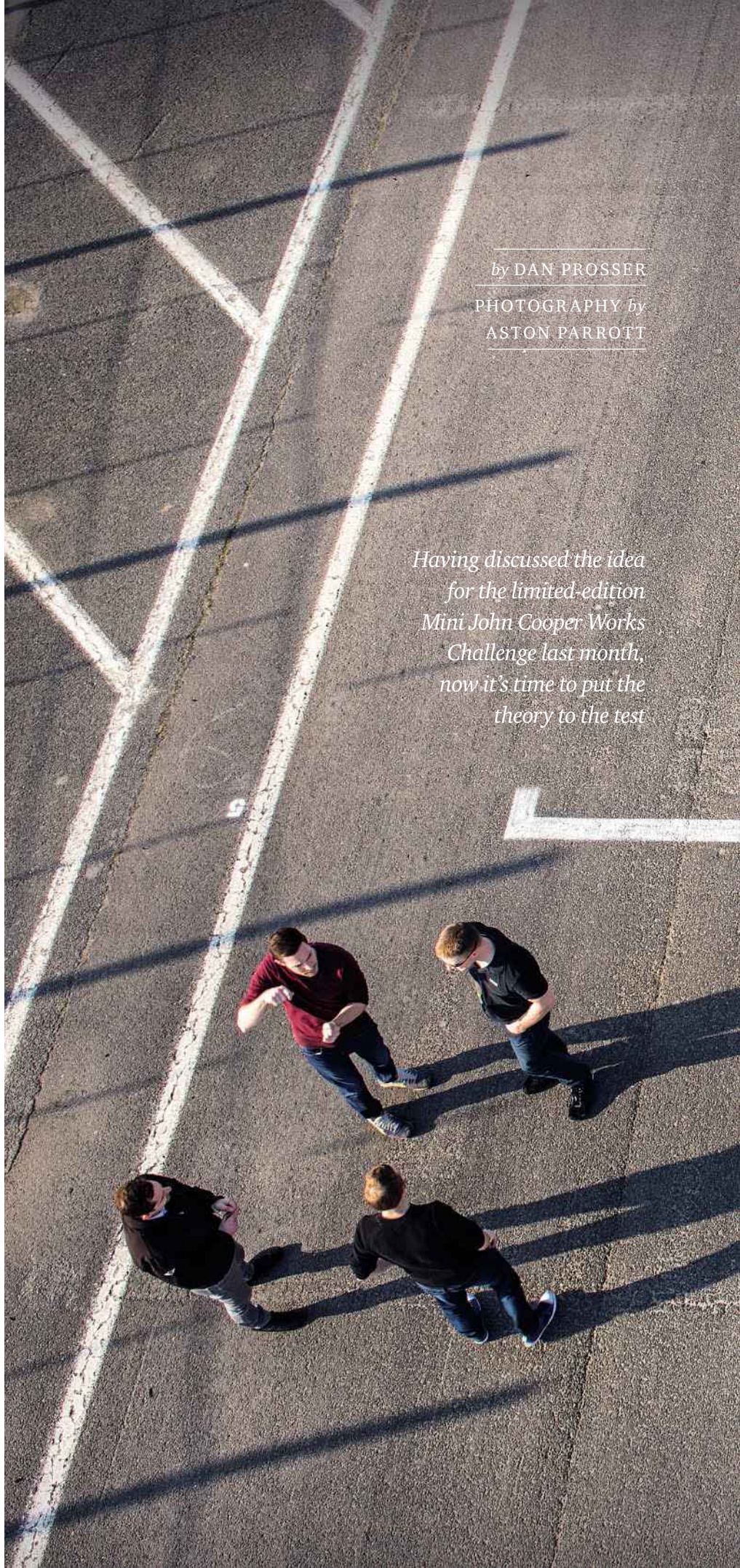
The garage will have witnessed this exact exchange a thousand times before, but probably only in relation to purpose-built competition cars. In the context of a small, factory-built, road-going hot hatch? I'll bet this is a first.

Let me fill you in on the Mini John Cooper Works Challenge project. There's a nucleus of die-hard driving enthusiasts at the Mini Plant Oxford – guys who spend their weekends racing cars – for whom the limited-edition Challenge is an extra-curricular activity. Between them they wanted to find the trackday car within Mini's cutesy little hatchback and set it free.

With the standard Mini John Cooper Works as their starting point they took inspiration (and the name) from the Mini Challenge single-make race series and approached the same companies that supply components for the racing cars; Quaife for the limited-slip differential, Nitron for the dampers, Mintex for the brake pads and Team Dynamics for the wheels.

Then they approached **evo**. They would be drawing on our familiarity with every significant hot hatch and trackday car of the last two decades and we'd get a rare opportunity to peer over the fence and get an insight into the development work that a big manufacturer undertakes before releasing a new model. In this age of precisely stage-managed product launches, being party to a new model long before it's announced to the wider motoring press was a novelty in itself.

We all met at Mini Plant Oxford in February to discuss the car (Radar, **evo** 222) – which will be built in very limited numbers and launched at the Goodwood Festival of Speed in June – in minute detail. The engineers listened to what we had to say and told us everything we wanted to know about the chassis upgrades, the styling tweaks and the pricing (somewhere around the £32,000 mark), but, strangely, on the subject of tyres they were



by DAN PROSSER
PHOTOGRAPHY by
ASTON PARROTT

*Having discussed the idea
for the limited-edition
Mini John Cooper Works
Challenge last month,
now it's time to put the
theory to the test*



RISING

TO



THE

CHALLENGE

very coy indeed. Before going our separate ways we set a date for the all-important development driving session.

A month later, five guys stand in a pit garage at Oulton Park circuit. Representing Mini are Nicolas Griebner, head of product, Mini UK; James Loukes, Mini John Cooper Works Challenge project leader and Chris Fryer, Driving Dynamics Test Engineer – between them they form the aforementioned nucleus. Contributing editor Jethro Bovingdon and I fly the **evo** flag.

Naturally, the development of any new model, be it a trackday car or motorway hack, is a lengthy, iterative process. James and Chris first ran the John Cooper Works Challenge on its expensive Nitron suspension at an under-the-radar test session during a public trackday at the Bedford Autodrome one Saturday in February, then conducted two further track test sessions ahead of our day at Oulton Park. They've also been using a pair of development cars as their daily rides for the past few months, giving them ample opportunity to thoroughly test various settings and components.

The Challenge will be the first Mini to run fully adjustable suspension, meaning bump and rebound, ride height and camber settings will all be adjustable. In order that the buyer isn't left stranded in a disorienting world of damper clicks and C-spanners, the factory will specify recommended road and track settings as a starting point, leaving owners plenty of freedom to adjust the various parameters to suit their own tastes. The job for today is to work towards defining those road and track settings. We're also testing two tyre options, each of them selected from a longer list of candidates during the earlier tests, with a view to reaching a conclusive decision as to which will be the original equipment.

It isn't until Jethro and I arrive at Oulton Park and see the development cars tucked away in the pit garages that we learn which tyres are being assessed for the Challenge. Neither James nor Chris had wanted to give too much away during our initial discussions. I'm sure they had good reason. I just hoped it would be something quite sporty, such as Pirelli's P Zero or a Michelin's Pilot Super Sport. The sort of

rubber you'd find on a bigger, more powerful hot hatch or a mid-range sports car.

I definitely didn't expect to see the stacks of 17-inch Team Dynamics wheels wrapped in Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2s and Dunlop Direzzas. Even the more road-biased Cup 2 would probably be the most aggressive tyre ever fitted to a small hot hatch. For all the encouraging noises made during that meeting at the Mini Plant Oxford, learning of those two tyre options for the first time is the clearest indication yet that Nicholas, James and Chris are determined for the Challenge to be a serious, fully equipped trackday machine, and not merely an approximation of one. Time to get down to work.

Before donning our crash helmets and tackling the undulating Oulton Park, though, we venture out onto a road route. The Challenge has to work both on track and as a day-to-day road car – indeed that's the very reason why the development team arrived at an adjustable suspension configuration – so we start by peeling out of the paddock and onto Cheshire's craggy back roads.

'The team is determined for the Challenge to be a serious, fully equipped trackday machine'



Left and above right: two cars have completed test work on road and track. **Far right:** tyres are crucial to the Challenge's setup



The yellow car wears the Cup 2s, the green car the Direzzas, Jethro and I swapping each time we complete the 20-mile loop. We start with five damper clicks on the front axle and ten on the rear – one being the softest setting, 25 the firmest – on both cars. Whatever the tyres, the Challenge instantly feels a world apart from the standard John Cooper Works, with a tauter ride, much tighter body control and immediate, precise steering responses. Both tyre options serve up enormous grip levels, but the Dunlops claw so much purchase out of the road surface that I wonder if the Challenge needs a middle pedal at all.

They also howl like a wounded animal, though. It's an odd wailing noise, one that rises in volume and pitch as your speed increases. On top of that, the super-stiff sidewalls give a slightly more unsettled ride than the Cup 2s, but not to the point of ruin.

'The Dunlops give the car amazing turn-in and they're really stable when you lean on them hard,' says Jethro when we return to the track. 'They also back up the natural agility in

the chassis with genuine grip, which the Pirelli Cinturato tyres on the standard JCW don't do. But they're so noisy! The Michelins give most of the performance of the Dunlops, with much better refinement.'

With five clicks on the front and ten on the rear, both cars feel pointy and agile in that trademark Mini way – the rear dampers being stiffer than the fronts edges the chassis balance towards oversteer – but with grip, steering response and body control elevated well beyond any other third-generation Mini. Chris reckons the Dunlops' stiffer sidewalls are worth around five damper clicks over the Michelins, so Jethro and I agree that the Cup 2s with ten clicks on the front and 15 on the rear strikes a neat balance between handling, ride quality and refinement on the road. Owners will still be able to soften things from there if they choose to, we reason.

We start on circuit in the original road settings to give us a baseline from which to work. Both cars feel vastly better controlled and much more composed on track than a standard John Cooper Works would do, even

in the road setup, but over Oulton Park's quick crests and at its high-speed turn-in points there is a degree of floatiness just when you want to feel that the car is locked into the track surface. It's less prominent on the Direzzas and the more aggressive rubber allows you to carry more speed, too. In fact, while chasing Jethro – him in the Dunlop car and me on the Michelins – I run out of track on consecutive laps at the final right-hander, Lodge Corner, demonstrating in mildly alarming fashion just how much grippier the Direzzas are than the Cup 2s, which themselves are really quite impressive to drive on.

We pull into the pitlane, switch to the proposed track settings – 15 clicks on the front and 20 on the rear – and return to the circuit. It actually takes a few laps and a handful of really committed corners to identify the improvements, but they are there. Whereas the road setup made the car feel slightly aloof and vague right when you needed to know exactly where it was, the track setting keeps it resolutely tied down. No longer does the body trip slightly out of phase with the wheels at the



‘We feed back to James and Chris in the pits, who write detailed notes on their assessment forms’



Top: Oulton Park is a suitably demanding test venue for the Challenge setup.
Above: downloading *evo*'s findings to the Mini Challenge project squad

top of the fourth-gear crest, and no longer do you have to wait a fraction on turn-in for the tyres to dig into the track surface as the weight transfers. The real benefit, though, is that my faith in the car goes through the roof. We feed back to James and Chris in the pit garage, who write detailed notes on their diligently prepared assessment forms.

‘It’s much better in the track setting,’ reckons Jethro. ‘I think you could make the Cup 2s feel more like the Direzzas by turning up the suspension settings. I’d also like a little more oversteer dialled in so you can turn-in early, lift off and allow the car to steer itself in towards the apex.’

So that’s how Jethro and I arrive at our preferred track setup: 15 clicks on the front with 25 clicks on the rear to give agility and a slight oversteer balance at corner entry. We’ve both discounted the Dunlops now, agreeing that they’re simply too noisy on the road for a car that must be useable day-to-day.

I feel a bit conflicted about that. I suppose I approached this exercise believing I should

push for the most aggressive chassis settings and the grippiest tyres on test out of some sort of duty to this magazine and all that it stands for. In fact, that is more-or-less what Jethro and I have done in terms of chassis settings, but on the subject of the Direzzas we had to make a sensible call.

Our recommendations are made and dutifully noted. Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres; 10 clicks on the front and 15 on the rear for the road; 15 on the front and 25 on the rear for the track. At the end of the day, somebody points to the Michelins on the rear of one of the cars, which have worn in a pleasingly consistent way, suggesting we’ve arrived at a pretty smart chassis balance for the Challenge.

Nicholas, James and Chris will do with our input what they will. The Mini John Cooper Works Challenge is a tremendously promising car, though. Next month a third member of the *evo* team will test the finished product, complete with Challenge-specific paintjob and body styling, to see how well that promise has been fulfilled. 📌



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BENTLEY MULSANNE SPEED





by HENRY CATCHPOLE

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

POWER TRIP

*Nearly ninety years ago, Bentley Boy Woolf Barnato raced across Europe and achieved a remarkable feat. In a celebration of the man, the company, and in particular its 6.75-litre twin-turbo V8, **evo** embarks on its own race, aided by the 530bhp Mulsanne Speed*



HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO BUILD?'

is the sort of easy question asked on a factory tour by someone with a thirst for knowledge but without a really deep understanding of what he is looking at. Someone like me. I'm standing in awe next to the Bentley Mulsanne's magnificent six-and-three-quarter-litre (please, never 'six-point-seven-five') twin-turbocharged V8, which has been around in one form or another since 1959. This formidable longevity makes it the oldest engine still in production. The answer to the question is ten-and-a-half hours (by hand), which sets my brain cells pondering another question: how far could you drive in that time?

After a bit of keyboard work back in the office the following day, I discover that one of the answers, conveniently, is 'from London to Geneva'. Even more conveniently, as I'm sure you're aware, there is a motor show in Geneva every year, and at the 2016 extravaganza, Bentley would unveil a new Mulsanne. Perfect, except that sitting on the motorway/autoroute for ten hours wouldn't really make much of an adventure. However, if you start the clock at Calais, avoid the toll roads and throw in a few appropriate diversions, you get a much more compelling way of passing ten-and-a-half hours behind the wheel.

So, the scene is set. A Mulsanne Speed arrives at the office in late February, and unreasonably early on a Saturday morning I collect photographer Aston Parrott and we head for the Eurotunnel. But we don't head straight there.

I've always wanted to do some sort of race in a Bentley



and the entire reason for this is my long-standing fascination with Woolf Barnato, who raced and famously beat the night-express train 'Le Train Bleu' that ran between the Côte d'Azur and Calais. All the Bentley Boys were intriguing characters, but Barnato perhaps stands a little taller amongst them. His perfect record of three wins from three entries at Le Mans (1927-29) remains unmatched and WO Bentley said he was 'the best driver we ever had and, I consider, the best British driver of his day. One who never made a mistake and always obeyed orders.' I also love the idea of the glorious polymath and Barnato was undoubtedly one of those. We see it so rarely in this age of increasing specialisation, and perhaps back in the time of CB Fry it was easier, but nonetheless Barnato's *palmarès* is impressive: amateur boxer, wicket-keeper for Surrey, keen shot, motorboat racer, horse breeder, captain in the Royal Artillery and wing commander in the RAF.


He died on 27 July 1948 at the age of just 52, succumbing to a blood clot after an operation for cancer, and he is buried at St Jude's United Church in Englefield Green, Surrey. Standing on the corner of plot 25, there are three gravestones: Woolf, his daughter Diana (herself an extraordinary aviator) and her husband Wing Commander Derek Walker, who died flying a Mustang in bad weather in 1945. I've never been here before and it might seem like a sombre way to start a journey, but the few minutes of quiet reflection feel like the right way to begin.

A couple of hours later we are entering the belly of a Eurotunnel train, having opted for the wider option with the coaches. At over seven feet wide including wing mirrors, this is not a car to trifle with width restrictions. Once our tyres hit French tarmac, I start the stopwatch and (hypothetically) at the same time in Crewe someone attacks the first job on the engine-build list, which is to begin assembling internal parts such as the pistons and rocker shafts.

Studiously avoiding signs for the A26, the Mulsanne settles into an unstressed cruise like a retired general lowering himself and a broadsheet into the most softly sprung armchair in the club. 'Settle down chaps, we're in this for the long haul,' it seems to be saying. The bottomless torque, all 811lb ft of it at 1750rpm, is palpable but also defining – I'm not sure I've ever driven a more languorous car. As we lope along, the rev counter is reading barely 1500rpm and even a breezy overtake doesn't require more than 3000rpm as we sweep past a line of lorries. At the moment, the idea of reaching the histrionics of the red line all the way up at a stratospheric 4500rpm seems almost wrong. It would be like seeing the Queen running.

Above left: 6.75-litre V8 was originally shared between Bentley and Rolls-Royce models. Now that the latter use BMW-sourced V12s, the Mulsanne is its only home. **Right:** featureless landscape of northern France is dispatched with ease





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BENTLEY MULSANNE SPEED

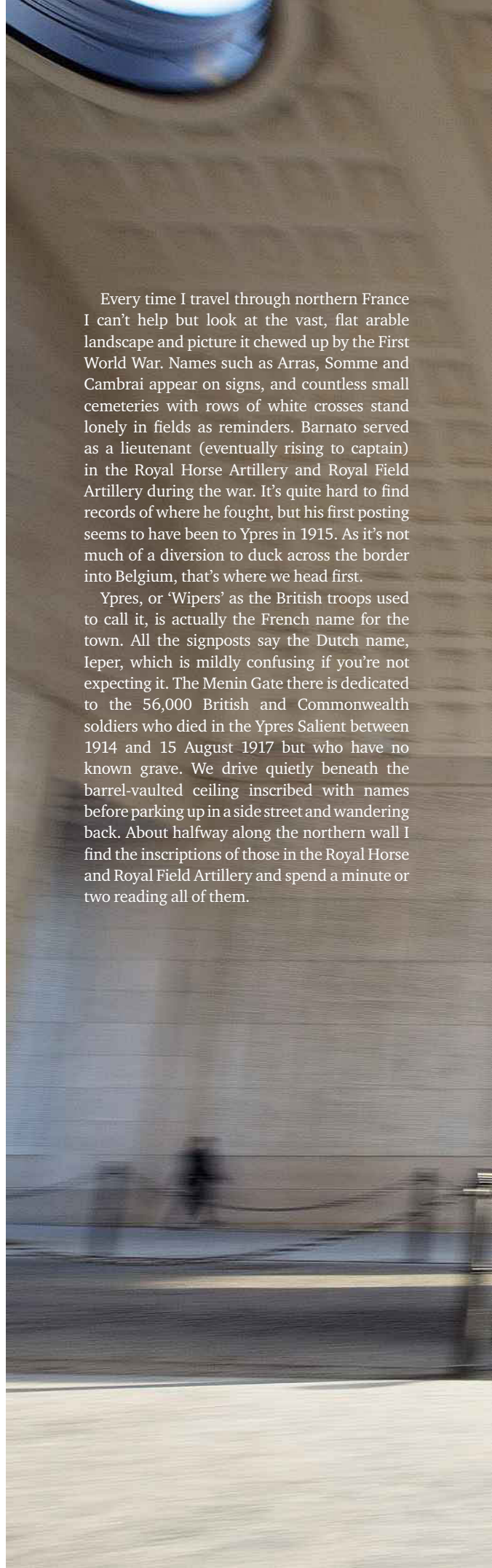


Top left: massive displacement and eight cylinders rather than 12 makes for a sizeable bore. **Left:** first stop is Woolf Barnato's grave in Surrey. **Right:** within the Menin Gate, Ypres



Every time I travel through northern France I can't help but look at the vast, flat arable landscape and picture it chewed up by the First World War. Names such as Arras, Somme and Cambrai appear on signs, and countless small cemeteries with rows of white crosses stand lonely in fields as reminders. Barnato served as a lieutenant (eventually rising to captain) in the Royal Horse Artillery and Royal Field Artillery during the war. It's quite hard to find records of where he fought, but his first posting seems to have been to Ypres in 1915. As it's not much of a diversion to duck across the border into Belgium, that's where we head first.

Ypres, or 'Wipers' as the British troops used to call it, is actually the French name for the town. All the signposts say the Dutch name, Ieper, which is mildly confusing if you're not expecting it. The Menin Gate there is dedicated to the 56,000 British and Commonwealth soldiers who died in the Ypres Salient between 1914 and 15 August 1917 but who have no known grave. We drive quietly beneath the barrel-vaulted ceiling inscribed with names before parking up in a side street and wandering back. About halfway along the northern wall I find the inscriptions of those in the Royal Horse and Royal Field Artillery and spend a minute or two reading all of them.



‘WHAT YOU GET AS DYNAMIC COMPENSATION FOR THE WEIGHT IS THE ENGINE – THE UNDENIABLY DOMINANT HEART OF THIS CAR’

In the ten minutes it takes to wriggle our way out of the streets of Ypres, the crankshaft will have gone in back at Crewe and it feels like we need to cover some serious ground to keep pace with the engine build. The next stop is Reims, some three hours away, by which point the sump will be on and the engine will be emerging from the balancer ready for its cylinder heads. We bisect Roubaix and Lille remarkably easily and emerge onto much more rural roads. The Mulsanne surges wonderfully under every acceleration, nose rising slightly every time we exit a town or village. As we get closer to Reims there are some magnificently long, straight stretches of road. Sometimes these straights are bordered by a corridor of tall trees, which inevitably increases the sensation of speed. Other times you feel as though you're hardly moving as the asphalt spears through vast open fields all the way to a distant horizon, like some sort of exercise in perspective. Frequently you'll reach the horizon to discover that there

is only a slight kink into another arrow-straight bisection of the world. It doesn't take the wildest imagination to draw a link between these straights and the one that this magnificent beast of a Bentley is named after.

I've always been astounded at the thought of manhandling one of the mighty 4½ Litre or Speed Six Bentleys around Brooklands circuit. And the 2610kg Mulsanne feels like the true descendent of those huge cars. Of course, even threading the Mulsanne Speed through a tight roundabout at pace requires none of the physicality the vintage cars would have needed. It is a paragon of precision by comparison. But something about the way you need to manage the mass, letting it settle as the body rolls, makes the Mulsanne feel very different to any of the Continentals, even the Flying Spur. Switching to Sport mode, the steering quickens noticeably and the damping firms up (introducing a little shudder through the body and wheels over bumps), but the underlying weightiness

remains. 'Jink', 'dart' and 'flit' are not words you will find in any road-tests of a Mulsanne.

What you get as dynamic compensation for the weight is the engine – the undeniably dominant heart of this car. Back in 1954, Bentley's 4.9-litre straight-six was at full stretch and Bentley's engine engineer, Jack Phillips, was told to design something new with 50 per cent more power and torque. Five years later a new 6.23-litre naturally aspirated V8 with an aluminium alloy block and heads, hydraulic tappets, a compression ratio of 8:1, twin carburettors and an automatic choke was brought to production. It was shown in the new S2 and shared with the Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud II. There was also a higher-performance version of the S2, called the Continental S2, which I suppose is really the great-grandfather of today's Mulsanne Speed.

By 1970 the displacement had already reached today's considerable capacity, but it wasn't until the Mulsanne Turbo was unveiled at



BENTLEY MULSANNE SPEED

the 1982 Geneva motor show that the V8 received its first forced induction. This saw a jump in power of at least 50 per cent to 300bhp, and then, as it homed in on its 30th birthday, this grew to 328bhp as fuel injection was added. By the time it reached over 400bhp, under the bonnet of the Turbo R and Continental T in the late 1990s, it was due to be phased out.

But that wasn't the end, because in 2002 the single turbocharger was replaced with two smaller turbochargers and the engine found a home under the bonnet of the Arnage T. Today, well into its sixth decade in production, the V8 has cylinder deactivation, meaning that although it produces around three times the power and torque of the original, its tailpipe emissions are down by 99 per cent. What's more, it's been said that this incredible engine isn't even close to its limits in terms of bearing and block strength.

Perched on a hill, Laon's impressive Gothic cathedral is visible for miles, lit up like a crowning jewel on a pile of sparkling lights. Then





Above: Mulsanne interior is awash with leather (24 colours are available) and wood. **Top left:** back in Crewe, the 6.75-litre V8 takes shape; once operational, it will make 530bhp at 4200rpm

‘THERE’S A CLOCKING-OFF TIME IN CREWE AND WHILE THEY’RE NOT BUILDING, WE’RE NOT DRIVING’

it’s on down more endlessly straight roads to Reims, where we’re stopping for the night. Yes, stopping. There’s a clocking-off time in Crewe and while they’re not building, we’re not driving. Sorry.

EARLY THE FOLLOWING MORNING WE ponder going to the circuit, but on this occasion it seems more appropriate to take a couple of photos in front of the wonderful walls of the champagne houses. Lanson, Taittinger, Pommery, Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin: all are based in Reims and it’s reported that Barnato was fond of a drop. It was said that he could drink two bottles of the bubbly stuff with no visible effect. Given that we’ve been carting a small built-in fridge and some Bentley champagne flutes around with us between the rear seats, perhaps I should have tried the two-bottle trick last night myself, in homage to Woolf. But Barnato was built like a heavyweight boxer (his nickname was therefore ‘Babe’) and

I am not, so the expenses department and my liver are both spared.

The clock restarts with the engine builders back in Cheshire thinking about fitting the alternator. We set a course for Chaumont (engine undergoing hot test), Langres (steering rack being fitted to the front subframe) and eventually Besançon. As you would expect, the Mulsanne is a very lovely place to spend time. Listening to my favoured *Desert Island Discs* podcast through the Naim stereo, it’s almost as though Kirsty Young and her guest, the adventurer Ben Saunders, are in the car with us, chatting away on the back seats. As Saunders describes following in Shackleton and Scott’s footsteps to the South Pole, I instinctively turn up my heated seat. Outside, the white peaks of the Alps are almost coming into view but there isn’t as much snow as I was expecting for this time of year. Nonetheless, the Speed is wearing Pirelli Sottozero winter tyres just in case.

Scrolling through the various numbers in the



‘YOU CAN NEVER QUITE
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MOVING AROUND’



Left: Mulsanne not the most athletic saloon, but its rear will swing sideways if provoked. **Bottom left:** champagne flutes remain unused on this trip

trip computer, I notice that we are averaging 45mph, the exact figure that Barnato averaged when he raced Le Train Bleu across France 86 years ago. The train went from Cannes to Calais, and although a Rover Light Six had already beaten the train over this route, Barnato decided to raise the stakes, claiming that he could reach London before the train reached Calais. Starting from the bar of the Carlton Hotel in Cannes just before 6pm on 13 March 1930, Barnato and his relief driver Dale Bourn battled rain, fog and a puncture on their way northwards. In the middle of the night they also lost time searching for a pre-arranged fuelling rendezvous near Auxerre, but at 3.20pm the following day, the Bentley 6½ Litre Speed Six reached Bourn's club in St James. Four minutes later, the train arrived at Calais. Barnato had won his £100 bet.

With Lausanne practically in sight, it's obvious that we are going to fall just short of our ten-and-a-half-hour goal. Back in Crewe, the wiring loom will be being hooked up to the gearbox and the engine will be being mounted onto the subframes – the final jobs. Perhaps I should lie for the sake of the story and say that we made it with seconds to spare... Charging headlong down the shores of the sparkling Lake Geneva, we hit 175mph. The Mulsanne Speed is pulling, ironically, like a big blue train and we show flagrant disregard for all draconian Swiss speed enforcement.

'Send the bill to Brooklands!' I yell as the flash of a camera illuminates the tarmac we have just thundered across. 'Mark it for the attention of Sir Henry – Birkin or Segrave, it matters not!'

The outskirts of Geneva are ahead of us and with every second the tension is rising, so I crank up the massage seats. Any traffic is potentially disastrous to the cause and my navigator, Aston 'Polly' Parrott, is working hard too, slaving over a knurled aluminium dial. At the last moment he taps the touchscreen and re-routes us around the district of Versoix. The town might have a lovely chocolate festival, but its sticky centre is not what we need right now. Threading our way round the congestion we charge onwards, riding a tsunami of torque towards not only our destination, but also tea and crumpets and victory... In reality, as the last nut is torqued in Crewe, we will be within touching distance of Geneva, yet undeniably just short. Perhaps we shouldn't have taken that detour via Ypres? But I think Barnato would have approved.

With the race effectively lost, I decide to deviate from the route slightly and head down a more interesting piece of road. There is a lonely fromagerie, and outside is a huge wheel of cheese with a Pacman-esque triangle missing. We turn right just alongside it. The road is rough but the Mulsanne seems not to notice. As we snake between pine trees, Parrott suggests that a cornering shot might look quite fun. I like a challenge.

Having selected a medium-speed right-hander that's comfortingly slightly uphill and Aston having wisely situated himself in a position to capture the scene from the rear, I turn off the ESP and take a run up. Using the small paddles to hold the gears, it's almost a surprise to find that the huge engine rips so merrily up to its red line when asked. It seems Her Majesty does own a pair of running spikes.

When you're relying on an ECU to do the changes, you barely notice them. So rarely does the flow seem to be interrupted that you might assume it was an old three-speed auto rather than a modern ZF eight-speeder. However, when you're summoning the ratio swaps yourself, you do need to allow a little time for the transmission to gird its loins on downchanges. So, up to fourth, brake, request third, let the car settle, turn-in with enthusiasm, and reapply the throttle. Such is the length of the wheelbase (10ft 8in) that you feel the rear wheels begin to swing round on the same sort of timescale as tectonic plates work to, with their own continental style of drift. It's almost lazy and you feel like you have plenty of time to apply any corrective lock, but you can never quite shake the sense of trepidation that comes with over two-and-a-half tons moving around.

Two days later I watch the new Mulsanne being unveiled on a glitzy motor-show stand in the Palexpo convention centre in Geneva. I'm not sure about the new grille if I'm honest, but I am very glad that behind it is the same venerable six-and-three-quarter-litre V8. It is motoring royalty (it has certainly propelled royalty) and I can't think of another engine that so completely defines and dominates the character of a car. Its disdain for revs but bountiful torque is, in its own way, as glorious and emblematic as an Italian V8 yowling to 9000rpm with a flat-plane crank. It produces sensations that have to be experienced to be believed and, as it closes in on its diamond jubilee, I hope it is around for many years to come. ❧

Bentley Mulsanne Speed

Engine V8, 6752cc, twin-turbo
Power 530bhp @ 4000rpm
Torque 811lb ft @ 1750rpm
Weight 2610kg
Power-to-weight 206bhp/ton
0-60mph 4.8sec (claimed)
Top speed 190mph (claimed)
Basic price £252,000



by WILL BEAUMONT

PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH

SPIDER



DECIDER

The 981 Boxster Spyder is one of our favourite sports cars and the pinnacle of the outgoing Boxster range, but Alfa Romeo's achingly pretty 4C Spider is a tough car to resist. Or is it?

My introduction to the Boxster Spyder could have gone better.

It had been left with barely a dribble of fuel when I collected it late one evening from the office, so I had to feather it to the local filling station. Then, walking back across the forecourt after paying for the petrol and a hearty dinner of crisps and a Coke, I was collared by three youths with quite significant facial scarring. As they refuelled 'their' EP3 Civic Type R while it was still running(!), they insisted I revved the Boxster so they could find out 'what that Porsche sounds like'.

When I suggested it was perhaps a bit late at night to be making that much noise, the look on their faces wasn't one of disappointment, but sheer menace. I gave in and gave a quick blip of the throttle with the exhaust switched to its louder setting. They looked distinctly unimpressed. When I flatly refused to 'do some drifting' for them, their by-now-threatening demeanour told me it was time to leave. Immediately.

In pictures, the Spyder doesn't look dramatically different from a regular 981 Boxster. The GT3-lite bumpers, lower ride height, higher rear deck and bigger rear spoiler make it look only slightly more aggressive. In the metal, however, they combine to give the Spyder a real junior-supercar vibe. It certainly commands a lot more attention than a regular Boxster, even if not all of it's welcome.

The exhaust noise that failed to impress the Civic thieves has a bit more edge to it, too. Listening to it reverberate off the scenery as I



Right: Boxster and 4C shed their rather rudimentary roofs and enjoy some surprising Welsh sunshine. **Below:** Porsche went to town with stripping the Spyder's interior





approach our photography location, it's almost enough by itself to cement this as an enjoyable driving experience. As I meet road test editor Dan Prosser and photographer Dean Smith, I can't help but wear a big, cheesy grin.

Dean's expression couldn't be more different. I think he'd been anticipating weather more typical of Wales in March than the warm, sunny stuff we've got today. Watching Dan and me grumble as he insisted the roofs must be down despite bitter winds and heavy rain would have entertained him greatly. Instead, he'll just have to make do with watching us battle with the recalcitrant manual roofs of these back-to-basics spiders.

The Boxster may have had presence in a grey Northamptonshire, but in this epic scenery and in the company of a bright yellow Alfa Romeo 4C Spider, some of its dazzle has been diluted. The

Alfa might look like it has been made one or two scales too small, but it's low and wide and has all the proportions of a proper supercar. It's been designed to grab attention, and I reckon it would give some full-sized exotica a run for their money on the Côte d'Azur. It's like a pygmy-Ferrari.

As soon as you start the 4C Spider, you begin to notice shortcomings. It erupts with a loud and tuneless bark that settles into a drone that's just a few decibels on the wrong side of sociable. On the centre console, forward of an awkwardly affixed DNA switch (for Alfa's switchable drive modes) borrowed from a Mito, are four nondescript buttons. One of these is for Drive. Press it and the 'N' in the games-console-style display changes to '1' with an accompanying jolt from the drivetrain.

Pull away and you're immediately reminded that the 4C does without power-assisted steering:

'IN THE COMPANY OF A BRIGHT YELLOW ALFA 4C SPIDER, SOME OF THE BOXSTER'S DAZZLE HAS BEEN DILUTED'



***‘THE ALFA’S
STEERING
DOMINATES
THE DRIVING
EXPERIENCE,
THOUGH SADLY
NOT FOR ITS
PURITY AND
DELICACY’***

it’s plain heavy at very low speeds. Of course, choosing to fit unassisted steering to a car in this day and age is a statement. It suggests an intent that it will be a hardcore car for enthusiasts who can appreciate the finer nuances of feedback that an uncorrupted unassisted steering rack can offer.

And the 4C’s steering certainly dominates the driving experience, though sadly not for its purity and delicacy. No, the Alfa’s steering wheel is constantly being pulled in your hands. It seeks out cambers in the road, follows ruts determinedly, and bump-steers at a mere change of wheel travel. On a motorway or dual-carriageway, even at 50mph, it needs constant adjustment as the car drags one way or the other. There are certain times where it pulls for such a long time you think you’ve got a flat tyre, until you pull yourself free of the imperfection in the road and you realise nothing’s actually broken.

At least when you start to explore the 4C it does feel quick. Once you’ve got the engine above 3200rpm there’s a huge boost and it really pulls. It might not be very sophisticated – it feels like old-school turbocharging – but it is fun. The

soundtrack is dominated by the tuneless, droning exhaust, but there’s the occasional whoosh and chirp from the turbos and wastegates, which adds a touch of character. The six-speed dual-clutch gearbox helps keep the engine on boost – the ratios are nicely judged and the shifts are fast enough – But every upshift is accompanied by a flatulent grumble from the exhaust.

Despite the 4C’s wide, flat stance and the fact it feels so harsh over bumps, there’s a surprising amount of pitch and roll. As you accelerate and the weight shifts to the back, the front goes light and the steering becomes vague, not that the tugging and pulling at the steering wheel stops, though. So you can never really relax, as at any moment a bump or change in the road could pull the Alfa one way or the other. The only time the steering feels truly consistent is as the front dives on the brakes. With the front tyres loaded up, it doesn’t suddenly transform into feelsome steering, but it does stop being so unpredictable. The brakes themselves are effective and satisfying to use; there’s a very natural, linear progression to them.

The roll is well managed, too; the 4C never



Dan says: 'The steering should be the highlight of that car and I could live with everything else – the really boosty engine, the slightly brittle ride, the ropey cabin – if it didn't tramline so much. That's what kills it for me.'

THE BOXSTER SPYDER IS THE YARDSTICK against which all roadsters can be measured. And – as you may have guessed by now – the 4C Spider doesn't even come close. The philosophy behind both cars is very similar: uncompromised, driver-focused, £60,000-ish mid-engine sports cars with elementary folding roofs. It's just that the Porsche fulfils its brief so much better than the Alfa.

There's cohesiveness to everything about the Boxster. Where the rather uncomfortable ride in the 4C feels at odds with the amount of roll and pitch, the Boxster's chassis strikes just the right

completely falls away, the body finding support as it's pushed and the roll contributing to the ample amounts of grip the 4C has to offer. In the dry, it will carry huge speeds into corners and has plenty of traction out of them, too. But finding the conviction to really commit is difficult. For a moment, just as you come off the brakes, you feel disconnected from the steering and you aren't quite sure what the 4C is going to do: grip and turn in, or understeer. It's only for a split second, but it's enough to sap your confidence.

But it's the way the steering is constantly distracted that really undermines the Alfa. As

Right: look and feel of some of the 4C's switchgear leaves much to be desired in a £60k car.
Below: Alfa finds good grip levels and keeps initial body-roll nicely in check when you're pressing on





Porsche Boxster Spyder (981)

Engine Flat-six, 3800cc **CO2** 230g/km **Power** 370bhp @ 6700rpm
Torque 310lb ft @ 4750rpm **Weight** 1315kg **Power-to-weight**
 286bhp/ton **0-62mph** 4.5sec (claimed) **Top speed** 180mph
 (claimed) **Price new** £60,459 **Value today** £85,000-95,000

evo rating: ★★★★★

Alfa Romeo 4C Spider

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1742cc, turbo **CO2** 161g/km **Power** 237bhp @
 6000rpm **Torque** 258lb ft @ 2100-3750rpm **Weight (dry)** 940kg
Power-to-weight (dry) 256bhp/ton **0-62mph** 4.5sec (claimed)
Top speed 160mph (claimed) **Basic price** £60,255

evo rating: ★★★★★

balance. The ride doesn't settle until you get to 50mph, then it gains real fluidity. It remains relatively firm, but there's enough pliancy for it not to be thrown around by bumps. There's also very little roll, though not unnaturally so.

To feel you're working the chassis you need to be pushing it hard. In a standard Boxster, the engine can feel heavy and – strangely, being a flat-six – rather high as the body rolls. The Spyder, however, keeps everything much more contained and under control. There's never any unruly weight transfer. The impression is that all the weight is confined within the axles, the car pivoting around the driver.

The Spyder has the quicker steering rack from the 911 Turbo, but it's not easy to gauge how much grip the front axle has. That's mostly down to the front tyres being well within their limits on the road. The Spyder also lacks the energetic, physical and immediate front-end

of the Cayman GT4, and won't be goaded into oversteer quite as easily. But it always feels nimble and direct. You can turn in with absolute confidence, the steering's response and the chassis' poise in wonderful harmony.

As soon as you're on the throttle the limited-slip diff engages, the rear adopting attitude. It's not oversteer that needs any sort of correction, but enough for you to know you can adjust your line and balance the car on the throttle. The process is wonderfully intuitive, the chassis' transparency combining with the glorious howl of the engine to egg you on.

The Boxster Spyder isn't perfect. The increase in capacity over the standard Boxster's engine does make the annoyingly high gearing that plagues all 981 Boxsters and Caymans less of a problem. You no longer feel a need to change into first in tighter corners. However, lower gear ratios, or a lower final drive, would make

it more enjoyable still. You'd be able to use the rear axle more, enjoy the Boxster's balance better and exploit the diff more often. As it is, you need real commitment to reach the limit of the Boxster's grip, more commitment than you can really employ on the road most of the time.

The Boxster Spyder's ultimate grip, involvement and the intuitive nature of the whole driving experience puts it poles apart from the 4C Spider. Also, the Porsche's sonorous flat-six doesn't just sound better than the Alfa's turbocharged four, but it's more powerful, torquier, and its linear delivery makes it so much more gratifying to use. If it's pure attention you crave, then the 4C Spider does trump the Boxster. However, the Alfa's brittle ride, shoddy interior and dreary sound make it unpleasant even at low speed. And it's not as if the Boxster doesn't attract enough attention; it's just not always the kind of attention you want. ❌

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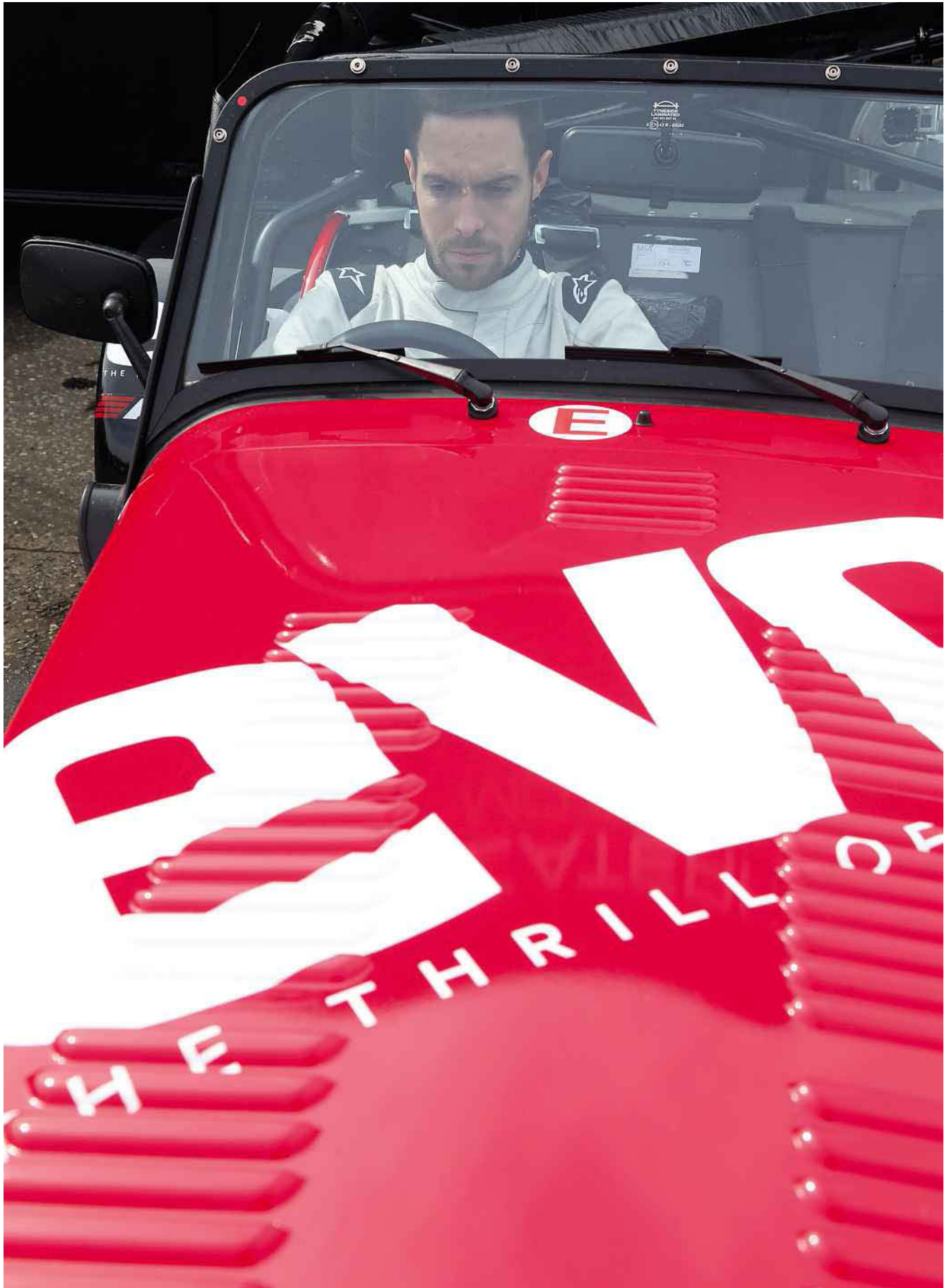
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CLIMBING THE RACING LADDER

by DAN PROSSER



Don't be fooled by the dainty physique and modest grunt of the Caterham Seven. Get an entire pack of them on a track and the result is usually brutally competitive racing, as evo is about to find out...



IF YOU'RE LEADING A CATERHAM RACE with one lap to go, you'll finish sixth. Or maybe eighth. It's basically an accepted law of Caterham racing. You don't need a doctorate in aerodynamics to work out that a Seven is not a streamlined vehicle – its exposed front wheels and upright windscreen give it the aerodynamic properties of a terraced house, which means the tow effect is huge. As the brick-like front end punches a fat-handed hole in the air, the train of cars behind you will slingshot past on the dash to the chequered flag.

That's what I'm told, anyway. I hope that little crumb of wisdom settles somewhere within the gloopy folds of my mind, because I'm going to be racing a Caterham throughout the year. Lucky sod. I don't suppose I'll have to worry too much about finding myself at the front of the field with one lap to go, but if I can attach myself to that train of cars...

The idea of this exercise is to explore Caterham's motorsport ladder of progression, which is entirely unique. The ladder spans five distinct series, starting with the Academy. This category is for rookies: drivers who have never sat on the grid

before. A factory-built Academy car costs £26,995. Its 1600cc Ford Duratec engine is good for 125bhp and it drives through a five-speed gearbox and an open differential. The tyres are intentionally low-grip – they're universally referred to as van tyres – and the car remains road-legal.

From the Academy, drivers graduate to the Roadsport series the following year, then Tracksport, Supersport and finally – if they really want to get serious about their racing – the R300-S category, where the cars are as quick as full-spec GT4 racers. By graduating at the end of each season, a driver will scale the ladder in five years. I'm attempting to do it in five weekends.

The ladder came about by happy accident rather than brilliant design. Back in 2002, Caterham upgraded the Seven with a de Dion rear axle in place of the live axle that had served for so long. 'That opened up the possibility to upgrade a given car,' says Simon Lambert, chief motorsport and technical officer, 'so a driver can use the same car in each category with only minor modifications.'

'The Academy started in 1995 and it's been a huge success – we've just sold our 1000th Academy car, in fact. There was demand for a follow-on series,



Above: a grid of Roadsports jostle for position. **Below:** our man Prosser behind the wheel of evo's Caterham racer in its initial Roadsport trim – its spec will change as Prosser quickly climbs through the ranks





'A DRIVER WILL SCALE THE LADDER IN FIVE YEARS. I'M ATTEMPTING TO DO IT IN FIVE WEEKENDS'

so we introduced Roadsport in 2002. That series uses the same specification Seven as the Academy, but with better tyres.

'A couple of years later there was so much demand for another follow-on series that we introduced Tracksport. Again, it's the same car, but we upgrade the suspension and remove the windscreen and headlights, so it looks and feels more like a racing car.'

By 2012, the Tracksport series was so oversubscribed that Caterham introduced the Supersport category. This is where things start to get serious: the cars are fitted with a limited-slip differential and uprated camshafts to liberate a touch more power from the Duratec engine, which by this point is up to 140bhp. 'With each upgrade we're aiming to improve the handling of the car, not the performance,' says Lambert. 'That means the driver can improve with their car.'

A remarkable 60-70 per cent of competitors graduate from one series to the next each year, which demonstrates how well the ladder is working. At the very heart of the ladder of progression is the fundamental design of the Seven. Being so light and simple, it's supremely cost-effective to run, and very easy to upgrade, too. 'If you've been sensible and kept all the parts, you can convert your race car back to road-spec when you're finished,' adds Lambert, 'and it'll still be worth around £18,000.'

The R300-S series is a whole new ball game. To compete in this category, drivers will have to wave a teary goodbye to the car that has served them for four years and buy an R300 in its place, which has a 175bhp 2-litre engine and a sequential gearbox.

CATERHAM'S MOTORSPORT LADDER

Caterham's motorsport ladder exploits the Seven's simplicity and adaptability, and the first four series – all the way up from Academy to Supersport – use the same basic car. Tyres get wider and stickier and certain mechanicals improve, but it's not until the top-tier R300-S series that a new chassis is needed at a cost of £34,495 (fully built).

Academy

Novices only, 125bhp, Avon CR322 tyres, five-speed manual, open diff.

Roadsport

125bhp, Avon ZZS tyres, five-speed manual, open diff.

Tracksport

125bhp, Avon ZZS tyres, five-speed manual, open diff, lights /windscreen removed, uprated suspension.

Supersport

140bhp, Avon ZZS tyres, five-speed manual, limited-slip diff.

R300-S

175bhp, Avon ZZR tyres, six-speed sequential gearbox, limited-slip diff.


'I don't think there's a faster non-aero car than an R300 out there,' says Lambert. 'The racing is fantastic, too. Sevens aren't particularly streamlined, which means the slipstream effect is very strong. That keeps the cars close to one another on circuit.'

As well as the cars being quick enough to trouble GT4 machines, the standard of driving is very high indeed, says motorsport manager Jennifer Mouratsing. 'We've had lots of guest drivers come in and have a go in R300-S. Matt Parry, for instance, is tipped to be a future F1 star and he won the prestigious McLaren Autosport BRDC Award in 2013 as proof of that. Thanks to a connection with the Caterham F1 team at the time, Matt joined the R300-S grid at Donington in 2014. He tested on the Friday to get to grips with the car, but he was very disappointed with sixth in qualifying.

'He finished third in the race, which we thought was a good result – but when you are a potential world champion, you aren't so pleased. Matt is a good driver, but he found out the hard way that the top level of Caterham racing is extremely competitive.

'Guy Martin also had a go in 2011. He didn't have time to test before the weekend and qualified 25th – last. He crashed out of race two on the first lap. During the first race he had shown that he was getting to grips with it, but he told us afterwards he had no idea it would be so competitive.'

Caterham's ladder of progression is so compelling we just had to put it to the test. How big are the steps from one series to the next? How does the standard of driving improve – or otherwise – in each category? Is the R300-S class as terrifying as it sounds?

The Academy is strictly for competitors who have never raced; I have done a small amount of racing before so I'll slot into the Roadsport series before working my way up to the R300-S series over five weekends. At the time of writing, I have just made my Caterham debut at Brands Hatch. I think the correct term to describe that weekend is 'mixed'. You'll be able to read all about it in the Fast Fleet section next month, and if you want to witness my ineptitude in glorious high-definition, look out for my video reports on the [evo YouTube channel](#). 



VAUXHALL ASTRA GTE

All white in the 1980s

by RICHARD MEADEN

PHOTOGRAPHY *by* DEAN SMITH



When you think of the all-time great hot hatches, the cars that spring to mind are the usual suspects: Mk1 Golf GTI, 205 GTI, Clio Williams, Mégane R26.R... But is it time to add the Mk1 Astra GTE to that list? Dubious? So were we, until we drove one

T

THIRTY-TWO YEARS. THAT'S A LONG TIME TO WAIT FOR anything, let alone a Vauxhall Astra with 115bhp. And yet, look at the images accompanying this feature and tell me you wouldn't love to have a go. More '80s than a Maggie Thatcher and *Miami Vice* mashup, this was Opel's (and Vauxhall's) first attempt at a proper hot hatch. One to challenge VW's genre-defining Golf GTI, no less. By all accounts it did a very fine job. At least according to contemporary road tests, most notably that from respected British weekly *Motor*, which pronounced a dead heat between the GTE and a Mk1 GTI, convincingly beating the Alfasud Ti Green Cloverleaf and Ford's XR3i in the process.

It's impossible to discuss the way the GTE looks without commenting on its dazzling monochrome colour scheme – reputedly the first example of colour-coding in a production car. There were red, black and silver GTEs, but only those painted white went the whole hog, matching bumpers *and* wheels to the body colour. I can certainly remember being extremely impressed with





Above: angular architecture of the fascia echoes the exterior. Thin door-pillars offer a great view out (if not a great deal in the way of crash protection).
Right: not as scary as it looks, GTE's handling is actually pretty benign – and a whole heap of fun



the advertising campaign (featuring a white GTE, natch) as a 13-year-old back in 1984. The slogan 'Nought to Naughty Naughty in 8.5sec' seems almost laughable now, but in the year Prince ruled the US Billboard chart with 'When Doves Cry' and Frankie Goes To Hollywood scored a hat-trick of UK No1s, Vauxhall's first proper stab at a hot hatch was a serious machine and a sure-fire poster car for pubescent boys like me.

Like the majority of cars from the '80s, the Astra's interior is simplicity itself, but all the important elements are there. Up front, a pair of super-comfy and nicely supportive Recaro recliners look the part, especially in their grey pinstripe velour upholstery. The dashboard is shallow, the instrument binnacle boxy like the exterior. Bold analogue instruments are simple and clear, the large round tacho and 140mph speedo separated by a quartet of oblong

secondary gauges for fuel, water temp, amps and oil pressure. Wind-up windows are a bit of a blast from the past, as is the glass sunroof (we used to call them moonroofs, for some reason) and the push-button radio/cassette deck, complete with electric aerial that extends out of the right-hand front wing. The overall ambience is that of a basic car with a bit of embellishment. The plush-yet-purposeful results are endearing and strangely effective.

The driving position is sound with minimal offset to pedals or steering wheel, which is plastic. It feels good in your hands, though, and is the perfect diameter to apply some useful leverage to the unassisted steering while still feeling sporty. Its boss is emblazoned with the 'GTE' logo to offer you a reminder that you're in something special. The pedals do have one quirk, though – the throttle is set further into the footwell than the clutch and brake. I can't

'JUDGING BY THE WIDE-EYED GRIN ON DEANO'S FACE, IT MUST LOOK HYSTERICAL AS I TRICYCLE THROUGH HIS VIEWFINDER'



think of any good reason why, and it does make heel-and-toe blips a bit awkward to execute.

The 1.8-litre four-cylinder engine has Jetronic fuel injection but still takes a good few churns of the starter before it comes to life. It sounds modest, but the orange tacho needle jumps enthusiastically enough when you prod the throttle. The long gearlever woggles around and feels a bit vague, but it slots through the H-pattern gate cleanly enough. Of all the Astra's primary controls, it's the unassisted steering that's the most alien. Hefty at parking speeds and with a smidge over four turns lock-to-lock, it's not promising, at least to arms and internal G-sensors calibrated to modern cars with their low-effort, highly-responsive steering.

Unsurprisingly, your first few miles in a GTE are spent reacquainting yourself with all kinds of sensations long since consigned to

hazy memories. First of all there's the strange exterior size/interior space conundrum, which is akin to Dr Who's Tardis. Then you glance at the wafer-thin door-cards and breadstick-like A- and B-pillars and you understand where the space has been gained. Best not to think about the consequences of being side-swiped by a Range Rover.

The upside to being in a small '80s hatchback is the sense of lightness. The controls might have weight but, at smack on a ton, the GTE itself is nearly 50 per cent lighter than today's Astra VXR. That's why 115bhp and 111lb ft of torque punts you along so well, and why the modest disc brakes do a decent job, at least once you've pushed through the initial bit of soggy travel. Despite these mixed messages, the GTE is one of those cars you know will be a hoot to thread along a decent A- or B-road.

The engine isn't exactly a screamer, but

standard Vauxhall engines never really have been. What they do well is deliver solid, gutsy, workmanlike shove across a decent rev-range. Consequently, the GTE has a natural, freely given and readily accessed pace. Work that orange tacho needle towards 5000rpm and you're soon going well. Wind it round to 6000 and you're really zipping along, though it's clear there's not much to be gained from pushing through the final 500rpm or so to the red line.

The refreshing thing about this car is that, although it takes a lot longer than we've become used to getting up to a healthy double-figure speed, once there the real fun is in preserving that pace. A Golf R has a similar propensity for maintaining momentum, but unfortunately it'll tackle most roads in most weathers at a speed that's well into three figures. Hugely impressive, but a bit silly. By



Below: Mk1 GTE's trend-setting colour-coding even extended to the wheels if you specced it in white.
Left: to create the GTE, Opel/Vauxhall engineers transplanted the 1.8-litre fuel-injected eight-valve four from the Cavalier SRI. By today's standards, 115bhp sounds pretty weedy, but the Astra weighed less than a tonne. It was easily a match for the Mk1 Golf GTI



contrast, you can drive the socks off the Astra and only feel mildly naughty.

And trust me, you will want to be mildly naughty because, once up and running, the GTE really comes to life. The unassisted steering lightens considerably at speed, but it has some on-centre vagueness that makes you question the Astra's appetite to turn in. Keep the faith and, once you've made your initial input (much smaller than the four turns lock-to-lock gearing would have you expect), you get the most brilliant sense of loading and subtly increasing resistance as the chassis begins to soak up the cornering forces.

The suspension is supple and the tyres a small and compliant 185/60 on 14in rims, which means there's considerable 'give' before you really build a detailed picture of what the car is doing. But it's this phase of increasing lateral load that gives you so much information

through the steering – and ultimately what makes the GTE such a transparent car to read as you approach its limits.

Once committed, the GTE is supremely stable, but never flat-footed or inert. It always seems to have a little bit of grip in reserve, so although you can and will make the front end begin to push, it does it with such progression that you can wind a little bit more lock in and it finds a little bit more grip. Traction is never an issue – hardly surprising with such modest power and torque – so you can be confident with the throttle early in the corner. But just as impressive is the GTE's behaviour if you do find you need to back-off mid-corner, for rather than punishing you with a widowmaking wag of lift-off oversteer, the Astra simply and neatly tightens its line.

Once you've experienced this, you know you can trust the GTE implicitly, and, far

from inhibiting your fun, it actually takes the fear out of fast driving, as I learn when we start shooting the inevitable **evo** trademark cornering shots. I'm the first to admit this is not real-life driving, but cornering shots do (literally) offer a snapshot of a car's behaviour under provocation. They are especially revealing in the GTE, as were it not for the need to really push it for the benefit of Dean Smith's 400mm lens, I'd never have peeled back the final layer of its abilities.

Carry a slightly uncomfortable degree of speed, tip it in regardless and the GTE remains supremely progressive but extends itself beyond that brilliantly benign envelope, soaking up the lateral load on the outside front corner, cocking an inside rear wheel high in the air, then ever-so-gently transitioning into a helpful degree or two of slip from the rear. It feels like the most natural, controllable

Vauxhall Astra GTE

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1796cc

Power 115bhp @ 6000rpm

Torque 111lb ft @ 4800rpm

Transmission Five-speed manual,
front-wheel drive

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

Rear suspension Torsion beam, trailing
arms, coil springs, dampers

Brakes Solid discs front, drums rear

Wheels 14in front and rear

Tyres 185/60 R14 front and rear

Weight (kerb) 998kg

Power-to-weight 117bhp/ton

0-60mph 8.5sec (tested)

Top speed 115mph (tested)

Price new £6612 (in 1984,

£20,150 in today's money)

Value today £8000-10,000

evo rating: ★★★★★



**'OVER THE YEARS,
VAUXHALL FORGOT
HOW TO ACHIEVE
THIS BLEND OF
UP-TO-THE-LIMIT
STABILITY AND OVER-
THE-LIMIT POISE'**

thing in the world, even though, judging by the wide-eyed grin on Deano's face, it must look hysterical as I tricycle through his viewfinder.

I can tell you now that if I'd been foolish enough to take this level of liberty in a 205 GTI, he'd have been running and I'd have been pulling twigs and grass from the wheels and rear bumper. Over the years, Vauxhall forgot how to achieve this blend of up-to-the-limit stability and over-the-limit poise, preferring handling that majored on the former. That's why the French marques in particular gained such strong reputations for entertaining dynamics (and numerous lift-off-induced shunts), but this Astra is a lesson in how front-drive can be friendly *and* fun.

I'm not sure what I was expecting from the GTE. I knew it would look cool and I hoped it would be fun of sorts, but could it really deliver a genuinely strong driving experience?

Honestly, I had my doubts. Shame on me, for after a brilliant day's driving I can say with equal candour that I haven't had this much fun in years. The more I drove it, the better I got to know it, and the better I got to know it, the more I learned – and liked.

We get very hung-up on what VW and Peugeot were up to in those nascent years of the hot hatch – and understandably so – but, on the evidence of my time with it, the Mk1 Astra GTE is unfairly overlooked. What's more, it gets there on its own terms and in its own unique way. Rare is the car with a repertoire of such breadth and quality. In terms of exploitable, sustainable point-to-point pace, it would surely have taken something seriously potent – like an E28 M5, say – to go meaningfully quicker on a challenging road. As we all know, that's the mark of a great hot hatch, and this terrific Astra is right up there with the best of them. ✕

Go-faster STRIPES

A PEUGEOT SPORT CELEBRATION

Peugeot has been involved in motorsport and the creation of rapid road cars since the 205 T16. Here, we celebrate that dedication to going faster



IMAGINE A PETROL STATION forecourt. A fortysomething bloke is filling his 911 with Optimax when

a twentysomething bloke pulls up to the pump next to him in a 205 GTI... Both have a mutual admiration for the other's car: fortysomething because he used to own a 205 GTI, twentysomething because he wants to own a 911. It was our belief that this shared outlook on cars and driving united these two blokes, and an appreciation of great cars at any price point was crucial to the success of **evo** as a magazine.'

The words of Dickie Meaden in issue 075 of **evo** were, as ever, carefully chosen. And so were the cars. The 911 for obvious reasons, but the 205 GTI? Some may scoff, but for many of us the 205 GTI shared the same essence of the thrill of driving as the Porsche, and even today the 205 GTI offers a sparkling driving experience. Peugeot has, on occasion, lost its way since production of its most famous hatchback ended in 1992. And getting beaten up, somewhat unfairly, by a certain TV show must have sent a spear through the heart of a company that now seems to be regaining its sporting prowess.

These really are exciting times for Peugeot and its fans, so what better excuse to take a shamelessly nostalgic look back at the great cars and people in the company's past, and investigate what's next for Peugeot Sport...





by RICHARD INGRAM

Bruno Famin

The Peugeot Sport director explains the importance of his division and how it will shape the dynamics of Peugeot's future sporting models



PEUGEOT SPORT'S

headquarters in the Parisian suburb of Vélizy are unremarkable. Only if you

know what goes on behind its gates, as Bruno Famin does, would you be quite so happy to sit in a stuffy office, being quizzed on the brand's future.

As director of Peugeot Sport, Famin is intimately familiar with cars such as the 208 and 308 GTi, as well as more extreme projects such as the 500bhp 308 R HYbrid concept and the Dakar-winning 2008 DKR. It's these cars, as well as the ethos behind Peugeot Sport, that we're here to discuss.

What is the philosophy of Peugeot Sport? What are your priorities?

The priority for us is to add value to the brand. Since 1981, Peugeot Sport has been integral to Peugeot's overall strategy and we're now back doing the things that the division was created for in the first place: we can create the 'halo' cars that have a positive effect throughout an entire model range.

How does Peugeot Sport operate?

All our cars are built with know-how from Peugeot Sport's competition activities. Yet they undergo the same testing as the standard cars and there is no waiver in quality. The tests on our engines are exactly the same as for Peugeot's more mainstream road cars: there is no derogation of the process.

What is the process behind the development of a race car, and more latterly a road car?

First you have to check the competition regulations, to assess the feasibility of the project. And you have to check what rivals are up to, to see what you might do before being given the green light. Then you start the pure design phase.

We have no facilities here to make parts. Generally, around 90 per cent of our parts we

buy in. When the design is done, we check it, we test it, we put it on the dyno.

What proportion of parts from, say, the 208 GTi by Peugeot Sport, make it in to models like the 208 rally car?

A tiny proportion. We start with the same basic shell, that's the rules. We start with the standard engine – but with quite a lot of progression, of course. All the pistons, connecting rods, camshafts and inlets are modified; there's a new turbo. The exhaust is specific to a motorsport application.

Then we modify the bodyshell to include the roll-cage and make it stiffer. After that, the transmission is specific, the suspension is specific, the electronics are specific.

So Peugeot Sport isn't just a brand-building exercise?

All our customer activities are financially balanced. We spend money developing new products, we spend money in promoting our races, as well as on subsidiaries around the world to develop their own motorsport programmes. We do this in many countries.

We need to promote the products and the image of our brand. We are also generating added value for the brand. In the middle of the pure competition cars, we have this new range of products 'by Peugeot Sport'. These are standard cars sold through our dealers but developed and produced by Peugeot Sport.

How far do you think the Peugeot Sport brand can go?

For the time being, there is no limit. For now it is quite new. We have to develop 'by Peugeot Sport' versions systematically and economically. We have to make sure we have a good figure, to justify the cars.

Is the legacy of the 205 GTi ever a frustration?

At the time of the 205, you had three cars in that segment. The volumes were very different

and the competition was very different. Now there are 45 or 50 competitors in the European market. It is much more difficult. But for sure, the 208 takes something from the 205: it's a modern version.

What do the next five years hold for Peugeot Sport?

We'll continue to add sportiness, especially with the handling of the cars, and will further develop that. We won't follow the standard cars, we'll be ahead of them.

With the 208 FE of 2013, we wanted to show we can develop a very low emission car. Using Le Mans technology, we brought together all our know-how in hybrid and combustion engines, as well as aerodynamics and lightweight technologies, to make a 208 with very low emissions, but with the performance of a GTi. We can be very responsible, very sustainable, but need also to retain the fun associated with Peugeot cars.

We are thinking about what we will do over the next five or six years. The new 208 or 308? We already know what we will do with these cars; we have a plan. The RCZ R was not planned at all: we made that with whoever happened to be available. Now, over the course of three or four years, things have changed completely. We are fully integrated into the long term strategy of PSA.

Is electrification the perfect solution for future drivetrains?

We made a very good demonstration of that with the 308 R HYbrid. Electrification is a very good way of adding significant power while also making the most of recovered energy. Such systems allow for four-wheel drive, too.

What about a performance diesel?

We have no plan for that for the time being. I think electrification is more suited to Peugeot Sport than diesel. We are much more on the electrification strategy than diesel. ❌

'We'll continue to add sportiness, especially with the handling of the cars, and will further develop that. We won't follow the standard cars, we'll be ahead of them'



GT HIGH

In the last three decades Peugeot has made some of the best hot hatches of all time. We take the 208 GTi and 308 GTi on a road trip to Le Mans to enjoy its latest offerings

by ANTONY INGRAM
PHOTOGRAPHY by OTIS CLAY



They say a racing driver's heart-rate is at its highest moments before the lights change from red to green.

My own cardiovascular system, sullied by years of takeaway pizzas and an appetite for the finest brewed products, would concur. I select first, slowly bringing the revs to that finite area between excessive wheelspin and an embarrassing splutter as you drop the clutch.

Green. I've judged it perfectly, with just a chirp from the Michelin Super Sports before full throttle can be applied and the limited-slip diff prevents one wheel or the other from stealing all the power. I get the jump on the other drivers, snatching second for another brief flurry of revs and a tug from the steering. Then it's hard on the brakes for the next red light.

But that's Paris for you. I'm beginning to suspect that Richard Ingram (no relation), leading in his 308 GTi 250, has followed the satnav's shortest route through the bustling capital rather than its quickest. When the Arc de Triomphe heaves into view my heart thumps once more at the prospect of navigating its chaotic cobbled intersections.

We're in France to pay homage to Peugeot's legacy of supplying superlative hot hatches, and our destination is Le Mans – the scene of many a Peugeot victory. The 280 or so miles that preceded our Parisian detour had passed in much more relaxed fashion, both the 308 and 'my' 208 GTi by Peugeot Sport chomping up the miles with the ease you'd expect of a modern hot hatch. The 308 in particular pairs its performance with useful refinement while the 208's sports seats seem perfectly shaped for my five-nine frame.

While each uses a development of Peugeot's 1.6-litre, turbocharged petrol engine, it's the 308 that leads from toll booths and service stations with an extra 41 horses (246bhp to 205bhp). In



turn, the 208's lighter weight, shorter wheelbase and sticky rubber allow it to claw back distance on each slip road. Where the firm ride and small-diameter steering wheel sometimes feel busy on bumpy British roads (and the diff tugs even harder at the wheel), the response and feedback feel perfectly judged on ultra-smooth tarmac.

That each is capable in terms of performance and grip is not surprising; that both are remarkably economical definitely is. High-speed cruising yields an mpg figure in the mid-30s in both cars, but rein-in the pace and 40-plus is within reach. A smaller tank means it's the 208 dictating the fuel-stops every 300 miles or so, but just four top-ups are needed over three days and 1200 miles of driving.

We leave the bustle of Paris to great relief – and the relaxing of heart muscles – and aim for Le Mans. Tens of thousands of Brits make the journey each year (fewer go via Paris, with Rouen the lesser of two evils where traffic is concerned) and it feels odd to be driving down months ahead of the race.

It does mean that where the Peugeots might be outshone by screaming Ferraris and Porsches in June, each car's *coupe franche* colour scheme is attracting rather more attention in April. We're most familiar with *coupe franche* on the 208 GTI, with a cherry-red rump and a matt, textured black finish over the preceding two thirds of car. On the 308 the car is mostly red – a deep, metallic shade – with black paintwork astern. It's altogether classier, though each arrangement has merit: after spending hundreds of miles behind the 308, there's restrained menace to the dark rear end and twin tailpipes, like a tattooed cage-fighter in a Savile Row suit. The 208 is racier, more aggressive still, and almost

stealthy with its black wheels and matt finish.

Both are enough to draw the attention of a young French racer in the pitlane of the Le Mans circuit, and he wanders over, smartphone in hand, and snaps away. Interestingly it's the 308 that draws most admiration – just as it had at an autoroute service station from a dreadlocked Dutchman in a ground-scraping Mk4 Golf.

While it's possible to drive large portions of the full Le Mans circuit – all the way from Tertre Rouge to the start of the Porsche Curves – it's a rare pleasure to take to the start-finish straight, which serves as the heart of the smaller Bugatti Circuit most of the year round. The grandstands and pit buildings take on a new scale from the other side of the fence; approaching their lit forms at night, having spent the past few minutes in isolating darkness, must be comforting for drivers during the 24-hour race.

The Bugatti Circuit feels more like a traditional race-track than does the road section, but it's still a rare privilege. Not least due to the appropriately *laissez-faire* manner in which the circuit's officials let us use it during the testing lunch break. Lunchtime noise restrictions mean we only get a few quick laps among the photographic trundling, but it's enough to experience the immediacy of each car's steering, their turn-in bite and the way the 208's rear axle in particular feels eager to assist in direction changes. The very reasons it had an entry to last year's eCoty.

But then the red lights come on, just as they had in Paris. Our time on the track is over, with another 400 miles to home. Those miles pass by unmemorably, but this is far from being a sleight on the two cars. Their ability to soak up the miles, dice with Parisian traffic and entertain on the track perfectly illustrates why we love hot hatchbacks. ☒

Top: the 208 and 308 grab a few laps of the Sarthe's Bugatti Circuit to retrace the tyre tracks of Peugeot's Le Mans-winning sports prototypes: the 905 (above, leading), which finished first in 1992 and '93, and the 908 (far left), which won in 2009

Peugeot 208 GTi
by Peugeot Sport

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1598cc, turbo
Power 205bhp @ 5800rpm
Torque 221lb ft @ 2750rpm
Weight 1185kg
Power-to-weight 176bhp/ton
0-62mph 6.5sec (claimed)
Top speed 143mph (claimed)
Basic price £21,995
evo rating: ★★★★★

Peugeot 308 GTi 250
by Peugeot Sport

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1598cc, turbo
Power 246bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque 243lb ft @ 1900rpm
Weight 1205kg
Power-to-weight 207bhp/ton
0-62mph 6.2sec (claimed)
Top speed 155mph (limited)
Basic price £26,855
evo rating: ★★★★★



‘A few quick laps of the Bugatti Circuit is enough to experience the immediacy of each car’s steering’

by STUART GALLAGHER

308 GTi

Peugeot's hot hatches are returning to their old winning ways, and we have Peugeot Sport to thank. The 308 GTi shows just how much work the team there has put in



OVER MORE THAN THREE DECADES, Peugeot has created, developed and honed some of the most enthralling hot hatches to ever cock an inside rear wheel. And instrumental to the greatness of these cars was the team at Peugeot Sport.

It may come as a surprise, then, that it was only with the 2015 introduction of the 208 GTi 30th Anniversary by Peugeot Sport that the hallowed name was officially applied to a road car. Now the 308 GTi has earned that honour, too. And rightly so, because the work that has gone into creating the latest 308 GTi models (in 247bhp and 266bhp guises) is far more than just applying a couple of badges and a fruity exhaust: engine, chassis and brakes have been extensively re-engineered for maximum performance.

‘Engine, chassis and brakes have been extensively re-engineered’



1 CHASSIS

Both 308 GTi models get an 11mm ride height reduction, but it's the 266bhp model that receives the full attention of Peugeot Sport's engineers. The front suspension and rear torsion-beam are as you would find in all 308s, but the range-topping GTi goes further by increasing the front spring rate by 60 per cent and the rear by 100 per cent with the damper rates adjusted accordingly.

The front anti-roll bar has been softened to increase traction, but the rear beam is stiffer to improve agility and responsiveness with the toe and camber settings set for a more negative angle. The suspension's bushes are also stiffer and the front track has been widened by 10mm. The 19-inch wheels fitted to the 266bhp GTi are 2.3kg lighter than the smaller 18-inch items, and wear Michelin's Pilot Super Sport tyre. The final piece in the 308 GTi's chassis armour is its Torsen helical limited-slip diff, which required Peugeot Sport's engineers to retune the car's steering to suit.

2 BRAKES

Behind the spokes of those Carbone wheels are some serious brakes. Supplied by British company Alcon, the four-piston calipers fitted to the front axle clamp ventilated and drilled 380mm front discs. The rear discs are 268mm in diameter.

3 ENGINE

The 1.6-litre turbocharged engine in the 308 GTi is, claims Peugeot, the most fuel-efficient in its class. Not that this appears to have had a detrimental effect on its performance. Its 266bhp arrives

at 6000rpm, while 243lb ft of torque is available at 1900-5000rpm. Internally there are oil-cooled aluminium pistons, stronger con-rods, reinforced bolts and bearings, and there's a supercharged air-cooling system that fits behind the front bumper. There's also a steel manifold and sports exhaust system.

Weighing just 1205kg, the six-speed manual GTi (there's no auto option) reaches 62mph in a claimed 6.0sec and tops 155mph. Both GTi models feature the Driver Sport Pack as standard, which adjusts the exhaust's volume and, crucially, introduces a more aggressive throttle map.

4 EXTERIOR

Along with those 19in wheels, the 308 GTi has its own unique front and rear bumper designs, with the former featuring lower front spoilers for improved aero. Deeper side sills are unique to the GTi, so too is the optional 'coupe franche' two-tone paintwork.

5 INTERIOR

Peugeot GTi interiors have always delivered an element of flair to proceedings, and the 308 GTi takes this to another level. The heavily bolstered seats are trimmed in Alcantara, the pedals and gearknob are made from aluminium and the steering wheel is trimmed in leather; it's your staple hot hatch interior. But in the 308 GTi you also benefit from Peugeot's iCockpit technology, which consists of a centrally-mounted touch-screen that forms part of the instrument panel and allows instant access to the car's interactive technology.

10

Our top ten Peugeot performance road cars – and on page 144 the ten greatest competition cars



You realise what a great heritage Peugeot has when the legendary 205 GTI finishes only second in our top ten Peugeot road cars. And then there's the roll-call of iconic competition cars starting on page 144, and the list of great Peugeot Sport drivers on page 147...

by STUART GALLAGHER

THE ROAD CARS

1 205 T16

The original hyper-hatch and one of the most iconic Group B homologation rally specials, the mid-engined, turbocharged, four-wheel-drive 205 T16 is the most extreme road car Peugeot Sport has ever built.

The T16's 1.8-litre, four-cylinder engine used the block from a 205 diesel and was mated to a unique

16-valve cylinder head with a Garrett turbo. The result was 197bhp and 188lb ft of torque for the 200 road cars built (the competition cars had a lot more).

Performance figures were modest; the 0-60mph time was 6.0sec, and the 131mph top speed was only 5mph faster than a 205 GTI 1.9, but it drove like no other Peugeot – or other hot

hatch – has ever done.

Its handling was wonderfully fluid, grip plentiful, and once the turbo had spooled up at 3000rpm there was more than enough grunt to unsettle the chassis and bring the T16 to life.

The build process required standard 205 GTI bodies to be shipped to a company called Heuliez, who cut the back off the car from behind the B-pillar and fitted a new firewall and tubular subframe for the engine to sit in and the suspension to be mounted from, with a similar setup at the front. The 200 road cars were all assembled by Simca and painted dark grey, except for chassis no. 1, which was white.



205 T16

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1775cc, turbo

Power 197bhp @ 6750rpm

Torque 188lb ft @ 4000rpm

Weight 1350kg

Transmission Five-speed manual, 4WD

0-60mph 6.0sec

Top speed 131mph

Built 1984

2 205 GTI

To some, the 205 GTI is the greatest hot hatch of all time and a car that has seldom been bettered. With either the original 113bhp 1.6-litre or the later 128bhp 1.9-litre engine, it was an instant hit and the de facto choice among those who craved lightweight cars with armfuls of feedback and a sense of being an integral part of the dynamic make-up.

What made the 205 GTI stand out from its rivals was its scintillating driving characteristics, with its direct steering, punchy performance and a chassis that was closer in spirit to a sports car than that of a family hatchback. There were rivals that were quicker in a straight line and were more powerful, but none appealed to the enthusiast as the 205 did.

It was the GTI's willingness to engage you in every process that was at the core of its desirability. To experience the sensations and

rewards the diminutive 205 provided you would need to spend twice the amount on a car less practical, no quicker and in many cases less capable, too.

In the 30 years since, the 205 GTI has remained the benchmark for hot hatches. Peugeot even returned to it for inspiration when developing the new 208 GTi 30th Anniversary.

205 GTI 1.6 (1.9)

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1580cc (1905cc)

Power 113bhp @ 6250rpm

(128bhp @ 6000rpm)

Torque 99lb ft @ 4000rpm

(118lb ft @ 4000rpm)

Weight 900kg

Transmission Five-speed manual, front-wheel drive

0-60mph 8.9sec (7.9sec)

Top speed 121mph (124mph)

Built 1984-88 (1986-91)



3 106 Rallye



The appeal of a great hot hatch has often been that it doesn't rely on huge horsepower to deliver its magic, and Peugeot proved to be a master of this kind of machine with its series of Rallye edition road cars.

Our top pick is the brilliant 106 Rallye with its 100bhp 1.3-litre engine (later cars had a 1.6-litre four-cylinder motor with an additional 3bhp...) and 826kg kerb weight. The result was a hot hatch that's remembered for its brilliant chassis control, great damping and very manageable lift-off oversteer. Its unassisted steering was a delight and it never failed to deliver big smiles no matter the company it was keeping. It could make hot hatches with twice the power and performance feel aloof and unexciting and cause some sports cars to take a serious look at their credentials.

By their very nature, both

generations of 106 Rallye needed to be taken by the scruff of the neck to get the best from them, and, while some found this tiresome, the rewards for such an approach were more than worth it. On a back road they were pretty much untouchable and to this day are still a great entry point to performance driving, and they feel equally at home on track, too.

106 Rallye 1.3 (1.6)

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1294cc (1587cc)

Power 100bhp @ 7200rpm

(103bhp @ 6200rpm)

Torque 80lb ft @ 5400rpm (97lb ft @ 3500rpm)

Weight 826kg (865kg)

Transmission Five-speed manual, front-wheel drive

0-60mph 10.6sec (8.8sec)

Top speed 118mph (121mph)

Built 1994-96 (1997-98)

4 306 Rallye

Everything Peugeot had learned with the 205 and 106 Rallye it drew on to create the 306 Rallye. Taking the brilliant 306 GTI 6 as its base, this Rallye variant ditched the unnecessary day-to-day detritus and focused on its 167bhp 2-litre engine getting the most from the 306's engaging chassis.

At the limit it had an edginess that could catch out the unwary, but by using the engine's strong mix of mid-range torque and rev-happy top end, it never felt anything but poised and alert when it needed to be and adjustable and pliable when a little more movement to the proceedings was required.

306 Rallye

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc

Power 167bhp @ 6500rpm

Torque 142lb ft @ 5500rpm

Weight 1199kg

Transmission Six-speed manual,

front-wheel drive

0-60mph 6.9sec

Top speed 137mph

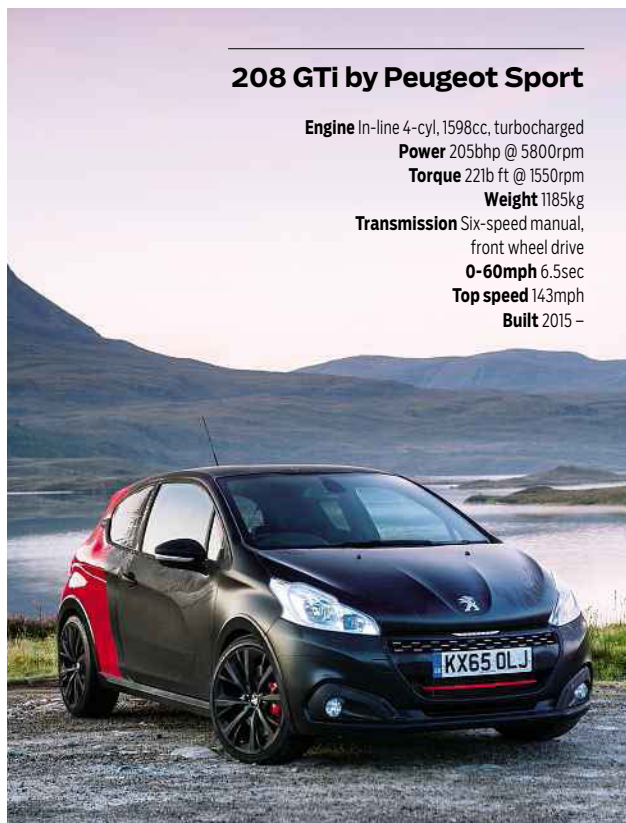
Built 1998-99



5 208 GTi by Peugeot Sport

It was fitting that the 205 GTI's 30th anniversary was celebrated with a superb limited-edition hot hatch – the 30th Anniversary by Peugeot Sport. And when those 100 limited-edition examples were all sold, today's 208 GTi by Peugeot Sport was born.

Unlocking the talent within the regular 208 GTi, the GTi by Peugeot Sport takes the concept to another level. More power and torque, shorter gear ratios, a stiffer and lower chassis, stickier Michelin Super Sport tyres, larger Brembo brakes – it's little wonder that the GTi by Peugeot Sport is an altogether sharper and more aggressive hot hatch than the car on which it's based.



208 GTi by Peugeot Sport

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1598cc, turbocharged

Power 205bhp @ 5800rpm

Torque 221lb ft @ 1550rpm

Weight 1185kg

Transmission Six-speed manual,

front wheel drive

0-60mph 6.5sec

Top speed 143mph

Built 2015 –

6 RCZ R

The first Peugeot road car to be developed by Peugeot Sport since the 205 T16, the RCZ R was the ultimate incarnation of the two-door, two-seater coupe. Its 1.6-litre turbocharged engine had an identical capacity to the standard car, but it was thoroughly reworked with a stronger block, unique turbocharger and exhaust manifolds and forged pistons. The engine work resulted in 266bhp and 243lb ft, allowing you to get the most from the lower and stiffer chassis, which also featured a Torsen limited-slip diff, resulting in an involving coupe that rocked the established cars in the class with its sharp chassis and genuine sense of involvement.

RCZ R

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1598cc, turbocharged

Power 266bhp @ 6000rpm

Torque 243lb ft @ 1900rpm

Weight 1280kg

Transmission Six-speed manual,

front-wheel drive

0-60mph 5.9sec

Top speed 155mph

Built 2014-2015



7 308 GTi 270 THP

You don't have to drive far to appreciate the sharp chassis and responsive steering of the latest hot hatch to wear Peugeot's famous GTi badge.

With a 1.6-litre turbocharged engine delivering a remarkable 266bhp, you might expect the 308 GTi to feel a little strained, but far from it. In fact, its motor is impressive across the rev-range. Coupled with a sophisticated chassis that features a Torsen limited-slip diff and Michelin Super Sport tyres, the 270 never feels out of its depth, proving every bit the pure Peugeot hot hatch.

308 GTi 270 THP

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1598cc, turbocharged
Power 266bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque 243lb ft @ 1900rpm
Weight 1209kg
Transmission Six-speed manual, front-wheel drive
0-60mph 6.0sec
Top speed 155mph
Built 2015-

8 309 GTI

So rich in talent is Peugeot's hot-hatch back-catalogue that the brilliant 309 GTI finds itself in 8th spot. Considered by some to be an even more accomplished hatch than the 205 GTI with which it shared many of its components, the larger 309 didn't enjoy as much time in the limelight as its smaller sibling. Still, its 128bhp 1.9-litre engine was plenty powerful enough to propel the sub-1000kg hatch with its lower and stiffer chassis to top of the class, leaving its rivals for dead on both road and track.

309 GTI

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1905cc
Power 128bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque 122lb ft @ 4750rpm
Weight 930kg
Transmission Five-speed manual, front-wheel drive
0-60mph 8.0sec
Top speed 128mph
Built 1986-1993



9 205 Rallye

The original Rallye was initially only available in left-hand drive and powered by a 1294cc 102bhp four-cylinder. But it wasn't the engine that grabbed the headlines, it was Peugeot's approach to increasing the car's performance without adding more power. This was, of course, achieved by removing every piece of trim that was deemed surplus to requirements, and meant an interior stripped of everything down to the radio, while sound-deadening was removed completely. Result: a 794kg kerb weight and an inertia-free hatch. A little coarse for many, the 205 Rallye was the ultimate in lightweight Peugeots.



205 Rallye

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1294cc
Power 102bhp @ 6800rpm
Torque 89lb ft @ 5000rpm
Weight 794kg
Transmission Five-speed manual, front-wheel drive
0-60mph 9.6sec
Top speed 118mph
Built 1987-1992



10 405 Mi16

Neither a hot hatch nor a GTi, the 405 Mi16 is still worthy of its place on this list and not only because of the great TV ad that took our collective breaths away. Powered by a 1.9-litre, 160bhp 16-valve engine, the 405 was a bit of a Q-car. Its discreet bodykit told those who knew that this was no ordinary 405 and when the driver found a worthy road, those hot Peugeot handling traits shone through: an involving chassis, direct steering and a balance unheard of in its class.

405 Mi16

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1905cc
Power 160bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 133lb ft @ 5000rpm
Weight 1085kg
Transmission Five-speed manual, front-wheel drive
0-60mph 8.6sec
Top speed 137mph
Built 1987-1992



THE COMPETITION CARS

PEUGEOT HAS PARTICIPATED IN most major forms of motorsport, including Formula 1 and Touring Cars. But the brand is most synonymous with the performance of its cars on rally stages in the likes of Monte Carlo, Finland and Wales, along with famous wins on the desert tracks of the Dakar Rally and a couple of successes at the Le Mans 24 Hours.

Charting the vehicles that have brought Peugeot its greatest successes shows the generational jump that occurs when a manufacturer goes back to reclaim the spoils 10 or 15 years after it first did so. And yet the 206 WRC has a number of characteristics in common with the 205 Turbo 16 that rallied 15 years earlier, while Sébastien Loeb's 208 T16 Pikes Peak of 2014 had no less focus than the

405 T16 that Ari Vatanen won with in the epic mountain-climb back in 1988.

At the heart of all of these cars, though, are some pretty basic principles: clever engineering, rugged durability and a process of constant learning and evolution. That's why Peugeot Sport has been one of the most recognised and respected brands in global motorsport over the past 30 years.



2008 DKR

The Dakar Rally is no longer held across African deserts, but the competition's spirit of discovery and adventure makes it popular among French media – so Peugeot needed little persuasion to take on the challenge again in 2015. The vehicle created for the event (now held in Argentina) is called the 2008 DKR, although it has relatively little in common with the small SUV that shares its name. Still, the rear-wheel-drive, V6 diesel twin-turbo machine has already claimed one Dakar success, event legend Stéphane Peterhansel scoring yet another victory in a 2008 earlier this year.

205 Turbo 16

Peugeot wasn't first to the four-wheel-drive Group B class of extreme rally cars but its offering, the mid-engined 205 T16, was arguably the most successful of its generation. The 205's diminutive size and inherent agility allowed it to run rings round Audi's hulking Ur-Quattro.

The 205 burst onto the scene in 1984, winning three of the final four rounds of the season and teeing up a full campaign for the following year. Sure enough, by the time the Group B party had been brought to a controversial end in 1986, the T16 had won two driver's titles with Timo Salonen and Juha Kankkunen, along with back-to-back manufacturer's titles.

The car gradually evolved into a 550bhp monster that would go on scoring wins in other areas of motorsport, including rally raids and rallycross.



205 Turbo 16 Dakar

Frustrated by a shift in world rallying's rules, Peugeot turned to the sport of desert rally raids, which are particularly popular in France. The rally-specification 205 needed a few tweaks to be suitable - most notably a longer wheelbase to accommodate a larger fuel tank - but in the hands of Ari Vatanen in particular it was an instant hit, winning the 1987 Dakar Rally straight out of the box.



206 WRC

Peugeot's long-awaited return to the World Rally Championship came in 1999, the 206 WRC bringing many of the same qualities that had made the 205 so successful. It was smaller than many of its rivals, but no less powerful, and the combination was quick enough to turn underdog Finn Marcus Grönholm into a double world champion in 2000 and 2002.

207 S2000

Peugeot spent many years out of top-line rallying, but the four-wheel-drive, naturally aspirated 207 S2000 was designed for regional series below the main World Championship, and the car enjoyed plenty of success at that level. Most notably, it bagged the 2009 Intercontinental Rally Challenge with Brit Kris Meeke, who won in the Azores, Ypres, Brazil and Italy to secure his first international rally title with a round to spare.



208 T16 Pikes Peak

After the dazzling success of the 405 Turbo 16 (below) at Pikes Peak, Peugeot knew it had to cause a sensation if it ever returned to the epic hill climb – and it did precisely that in 2014 by building a bespoke vehicle for nine-times World Rally Champion Sébastien Loeb.

The Frenchman duly obliterated the course record in the 850bhp racer, scalping over a minute and a half from the previous best to post a new benchmark of 8m 13s. It's unlikely to be matched for some time.



405 Turbo 16 Pikes Peak

Peugeot boiled down everything it had learned with the 205 T16 and applied it to that car's successor, the 405 Turbo 16. The most extreme version of the car had more than 600bhp and four-wheel steering, and was designed to triumph at the daunting Pikes Peak hill climb in Colorado, USA, as well as continuing Peugeot's dominance of the Dakar desert rallies. It worked. The car won Pikes Peak in 1988 and 1989, and the first of those successes, with Ari Vatanen at the wheel, was captured in the groundbreaking motorsport movie *Climb Dance*, which has racked up over 3million views on YouTube alone.



306 Maxi

A star mainly in its native France, the front-wheel-drive 306 Maxi was nevertheless fast enough to give four-wheel-drive World Rally Cars a bloody nose when it ventured onto asphalt rounds of the World Rally Championship. With its 2-litre naturally aspirated engine screaming beyond 10,000rpm, it scored podium finishes in Spain and Corsica in the hands of Gilles Panizzi.



905

Peugeot left rallying altogether at the end of the 1980s, deciding to focus instead on endurance sportscar racing, including the Le Mans 24 Hours. The V10-engined 905 made its debut in 1990 and won the classic French

all-day-and-nighter in 1992 and 1993, along with the World Sportscar Championship. The dramatically styled creation had a remarkable hit rate, winning over half the races it ever started.



908

Le Mans 24 had been dominated by Audi for several years before Peugeot decided to re-enter the sportscar scene in 2007 with the diesel-powered 908 HDi FAP. The firm remained unashamedly focused on

winning its home race, managing the cars' appearances as it ramped up development. It paid off in 2009, Peugeot scoring a one-two at the 24Hrs, the winning 908 driven by Alex Wurz, Marc Gene and David Brabham.

THE GREAT PEUGEOT SPORT DRIVERS

Marcus Grönholm

Marcus Grönholm grew up on the wrong side of the Finnish rally mafia, but Peugeot gave him a golden chance at the heart of its return to the World Rally Championship and he didn't disappoint, winning the title in the team's first full season with the 206 WRC in 2000. An even more dominant second crown followed in 2002, when the gangly Finn bagged the spoils with two rallies to spare.



Juha Kankkunen

Peugeot signed up-and-coming Finnish star Kankkunen to the team for 1986, and while he spent just a single season with the French brand, it was enough to earn him the first of his four world titles. These days, Kankkunen splits his time between ice driving school and enjoying his car collection on his farm in Finland – and yes, there is a 205 Turbo 16 in his garage.



Ari Vatanen

Finnish legend Ari Vatanen is synonymous with Peugeot but, while he won countless rallies and events with the marque, he never quite managed to lift a title (his World Championship crown came in 1981, long before he sat in a 205 Turbo 16). Vatanen would have been a strong contender for the 1985 title, but a serious accident in Argentina left him fighting for his life.



Amazingly, he made a full recovery from physical injuries and depression and got back into a T16 to win the gruelling Dakar Rally in 1987. He'd go on to win the event twice more for Peugeot, as well as scoring a famous victory on the Pikes Peak hill climb in Colorado.

Timo Salonen

Peugeot's first World Rally Champion (in 1985), Timo Salonen had the look of a slightly podgy accountant instead of a motorsport athlete; indeed, he often ignored the inherent dangers of the extreme Group B cars so he could enjoy a cigarette between special stages.



And yet Salonen's consistent pace in 1985 was enough to catapult him to the fore of the 205 T16's first full season in the WRC, and, when team-mate Ari Vatanen was badly hurt in a crash in Argentina, Timo found himself carrying the entire team's hopes. He didn't disappoint, and five wins made him a dominant champion.

Gilles Panizzi

This mercurial Frenchman overcame his diminutive stature to muscle rally cars on asphalt like nobody else. A French champion in the screaming Peugeot 306 Maxi, Panizzi was a natural choice when Peugeot introduced the 206 WRC in 2000.



Navigated by his brother Hervé, Gilles brought seven victories, in Corsica, Sanremo and Catalunya. The second of his three wins in Spain was his most spectacular; he was so in control that he decided to do a donut in front of the crowd on the final stage.

308 Racing Cup

by ANTONY INGRAM

Although every inch a pukka race machine, the new 308 Racing Cup shares some key parts, including engine components, with the road-going 308 GTi



1 ENGINE

A 1.6-litre, four-cylinder turbocharged THP unit derived from that of the road-going GTi. Where that car makes 266bhp in its strongest form, the race car develops 304bhp. Internals are the same as the standard engine, including the Mahle-developed pistons. A new turbocharger and new inlet and exhaust manifolds contribute to the power increase. A 70mm exhaust system is used to expel combustion gases, although a catalytic converter is retained.

2 TRANSMISSION

One of the major departures from the road car. Out goes the six-speed manual, in comes a six-speed sequential transmission with steering wheel-mounted paddles.

3 STRUCTURE

Largely similar to that of the road car, albeit reinforced with a multi-point welded, FIA-standard roll-cage. A 1000/1050kg minimum/maximum weight is enforced – the road-going GTi is 1205kg. Impressively, the race car is

lighter than the 1070kg RCZ Racing Cup car it replaces too, illustrating the benefits of the new platform.

4 BODY

Bumpers are new front and rear, as are the wider front and rear wings – the Racing Cup is 106mm wider than before, and 35mm longer. The windscreen is the same as that of the standard car; side and rear screens are polycarbonate. The enormous WTCC-spec rear wing is adjustable.

5 SUSPENSION

Fully adjustable to suit the characteristics of each circuit. Teams can adjust geometry with toe and camber settings, change compression and rebound rates on the dampers, and adjust the ride height. The chassis setup is a development of that used in the RCZ Racing Cup.

6 WHEELS AND TYRES

The dark-hued alloys are 10 inches wide, 18 inches in diameter, with slick and wet-weather Michelin tyre options in a racing 27/65 format.

DEVELOPMENT

'It was much easier to develop the 308 Racing Cup than it was the RCZ,' says Pierre Budar, Peugeot Sport project manager. 'We started from scratch with the RCZ but already had the 308 GTi road car to work with for this racer – it's a much better way to do development. Most of the drivetrain is similar to the street version – it helps with reliability, which is important when you have a mix of professional drivers and gentlemen drivers. But the car definitely isn't just a GTi with a roll-cage.'



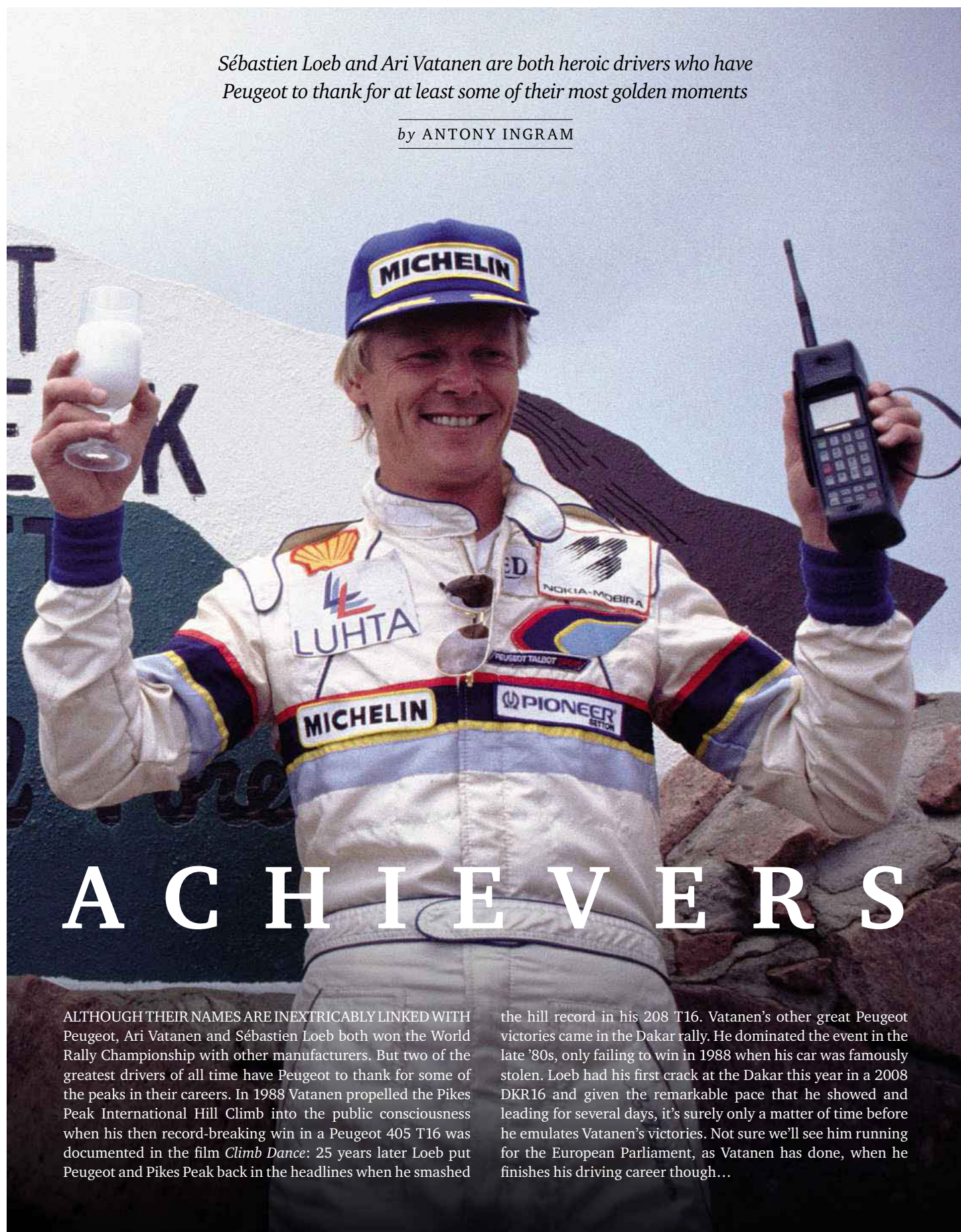
'Most of the drivetrain is similar to the street version – it helps with reliability'

HIGH



Sébastien Loeb and Ari Vatanen are both heroic drivers who have Peugeot to thank for at least some of their most golden moments

by ANTONY INGRAM



ACHIEVERS

ALTHOUGH THEIR NAMES ARE INEXTRICABLY LINKED WITH Peugeot, Ari Vatanen and Sébastien Loeb both won the World Rally Championship with other manufacturers. But two of the greatest drivers of all time have Peugeot to thank for some of the peaks in their careers. In 1988 Vatanen propelled the Pikes Peak International Hill Climb into the public consciousness when his then record-breaking win in a Peugeot 405 T16 was documented in the film *Climb Dance*: 25 years later Loeb put Peugeot and Pikes Peak back in the headlines when he smashed

the hill record in his 208 T16. Vatanen's other great Peugeot victories came in the Dakar rally. He dominated the event in the late '80s, only failing to win in 1988 when his car was famously stolen. Loeb had his first crack at the Dakar this year in a 2008 DKR16 and given the remarkable pace that he showed and leading for several days, it's surely only a matter of time before he emulates Vatanen's victories. Not sure we'll see him running for the European Parliament, as Vatanen has done, when he finishes his driving career though...



F



Ari Vatanen
Age: 64
Nationality: Finnish

EW ARE BETTER QUALIFIED ON THE MERITS OF PEUGEOT'S RALLYING HERITAGE THAN ARI Vatanen. While he failed to take a WRC title with the French marque, he did contribute five wins to the 205 T16's legacy, cleaned up in the Dakar with three wins in Peugeots, and helped commit one of the greatest ever on-board clips to celluloid in *Climb Dance* – winning Pikes Peak in 1986.

Erudite, affable and quick-witted – and with a diplomatic nous that saw him elected to the European Parliament in 1999 – Ari is also ideally placed to comment on the current state of the WRC. Here's what happened when we caught up with the flying Finn...

Ari on... the 205 T16

'A top rally car has to be like a good wine... a great all-rounder. It can't have any significant weaknesses. A lot of power cannot make up for poor handling. Everything must be in balance, and that's what that 205 T16 really was. It was confidence-inspiring, and that's something you can't measure.

'One example... if you have, say, 5km of snow and 30km of tarmac on a stage at Monaco, you'd normally take tarmac tyres. But in the Peugeot I'd select wide winter tyres. Not as fast as slicks tyres, but you could touch snow or ice on the road and stay flat-out. On dry tyres, you're afraid of damp patches or hidden ice. The Peugeot was confidence-inspiring – you could make a conservative tyre choice and then drive like a mad man, absolutely committed to the stage.'

Ari on... the move to Group B

'When I first saw the Audi Quattro at Portugal in 1981, I told everyone we might as well go home. It was obvious that four-wheel drive was the way to make a really fast rally car.

'But the greatest difference was going from four-wheel drive to two. After my accident in 1987, I drove the Thousand Lakes in a rear-drive Sierra Cosworth – the Texaco car. At first I thought there was something wrong with the transmission – the wheels were spinning, there was lots of noise – we weren't moving forward! Two-wheel drive was so inefficient compared with the Group B cars.

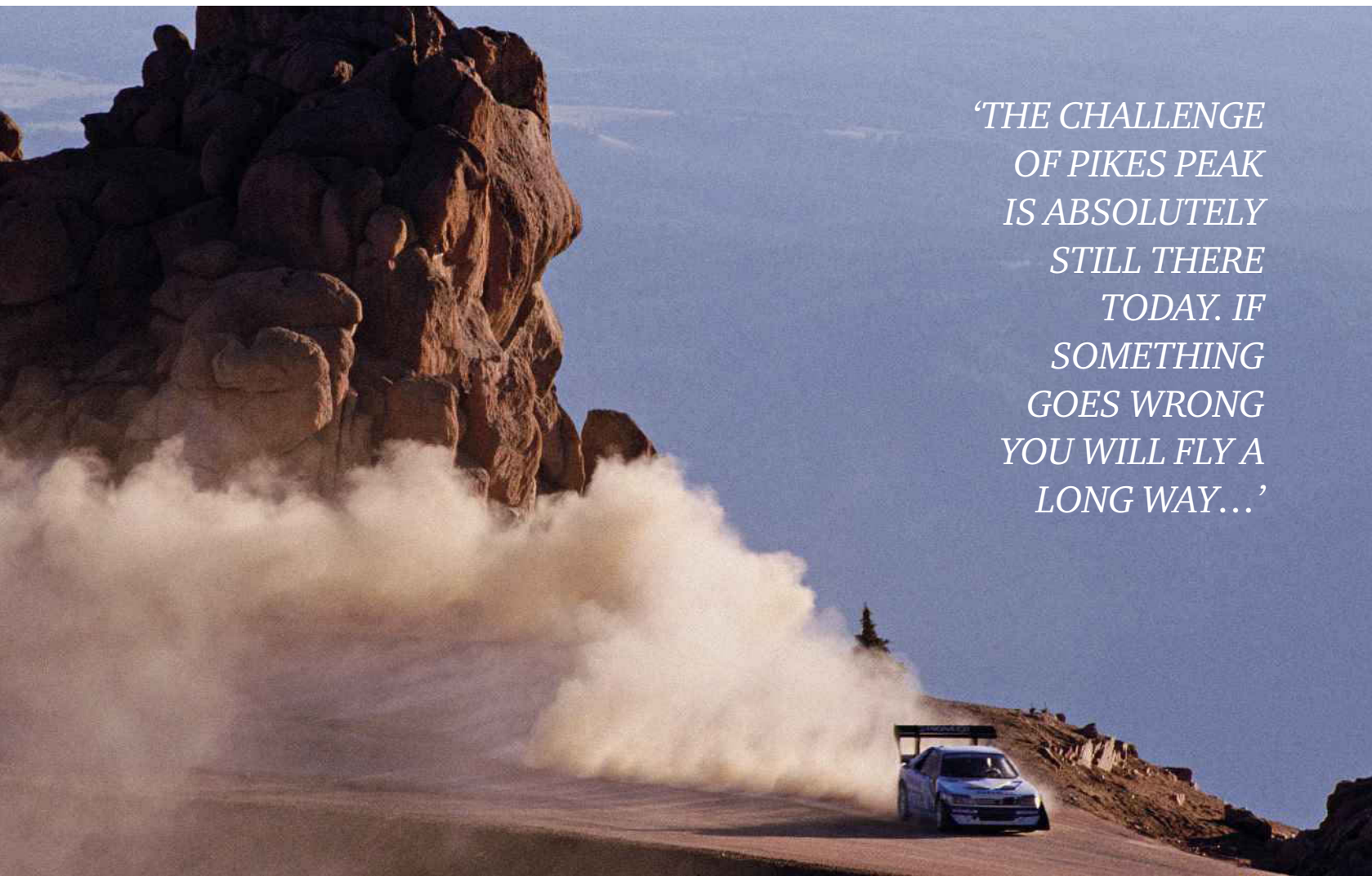
'I didn't really have to adapt my style either – the cars were so well balanced it was easy to drive. You'd left-foot brake, get it turning, floor it, and you're smiling. People think you're a magician – if only they knew how easy it was!'

Left: Vatanen may never have taken a WRC title with Peugeot, but boy could he make the 205 T16 fly. **Below:** A new course record at Pikes Peak in the 405 T16 cemented Vatanen's connection to the Peugeot brand

Ari on... Pikes Peak

'The 405 was easy to drive too, and the four-wheel steering didn't really affect the way you drove. It was certainly a lot more agile – in fast corners, the rear wheels turned in the same direction as the front wheels for stability, and in the opposite direction at lower speeds.

'The challenge of Pikes Peak is absolutely still there today. Okay, it's not as spectacular on tarmac, and the cars don't get as sideways. But there's still no run-off. If something goes wrong you will fly a long way...'



*'THE CHALLENGE
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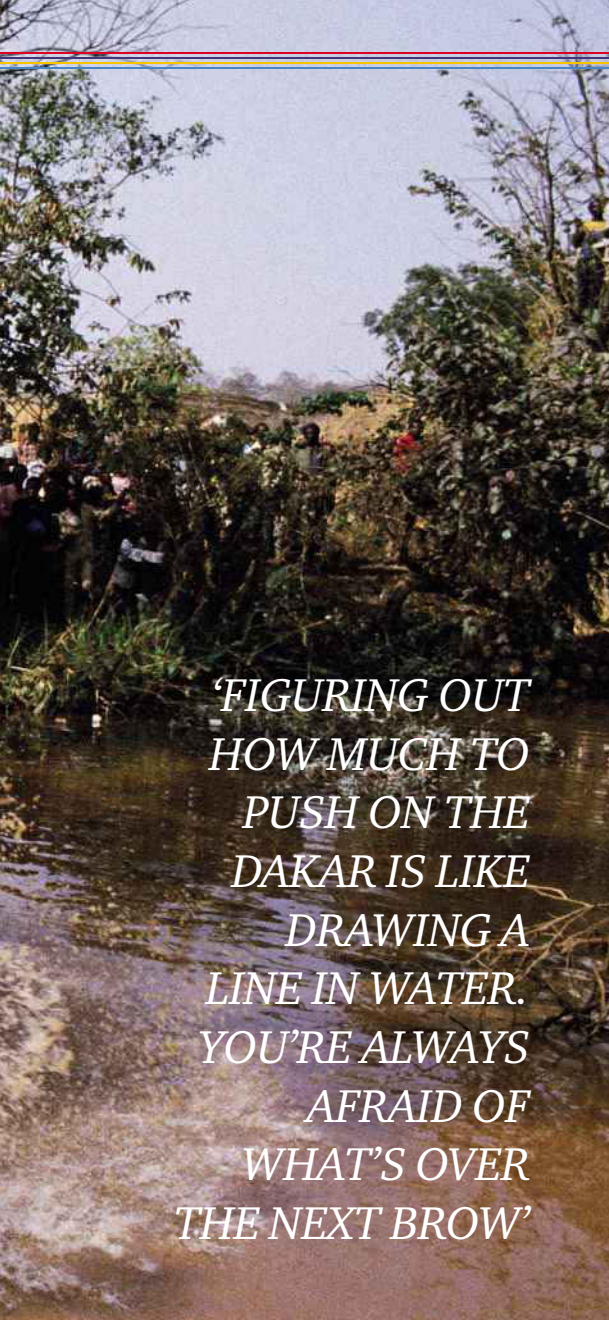


Ari on... Dakar

'Dakar today isn't really Dakar – it's more like a regular rally than it used to be back in the Africa days. But there are still plenty of unmade roads and it's always unpredictable, so you need completely different suspension to the WRC. That's why Peugeot built its car to buggy rules – you get big wheel travel, lots of ground clearance, enormous tyres. They've built a really fast off-road car.'

'Figuring out how much to push on the Dakar is like drawing a line in water. You're always afraid of what's over the next brow, so it's only in the evening you know whether your speed was any good. But that's the beauty of Dakar. When I started, you only had an approximate road book and a compass. Everybody got lost, maybe for half an hour, maybe an hour. But it was an eye-opener too – we were driving through the poorest countries in the world.'





'FIGURING OUT HOW MUCH TO PUSH ON THE DAKAR IS LIKE DRAWING A LINE IN WATER. YOU'RE ALWAYS AFRAID OF WHAT'S OVER THE NEXT BROW'



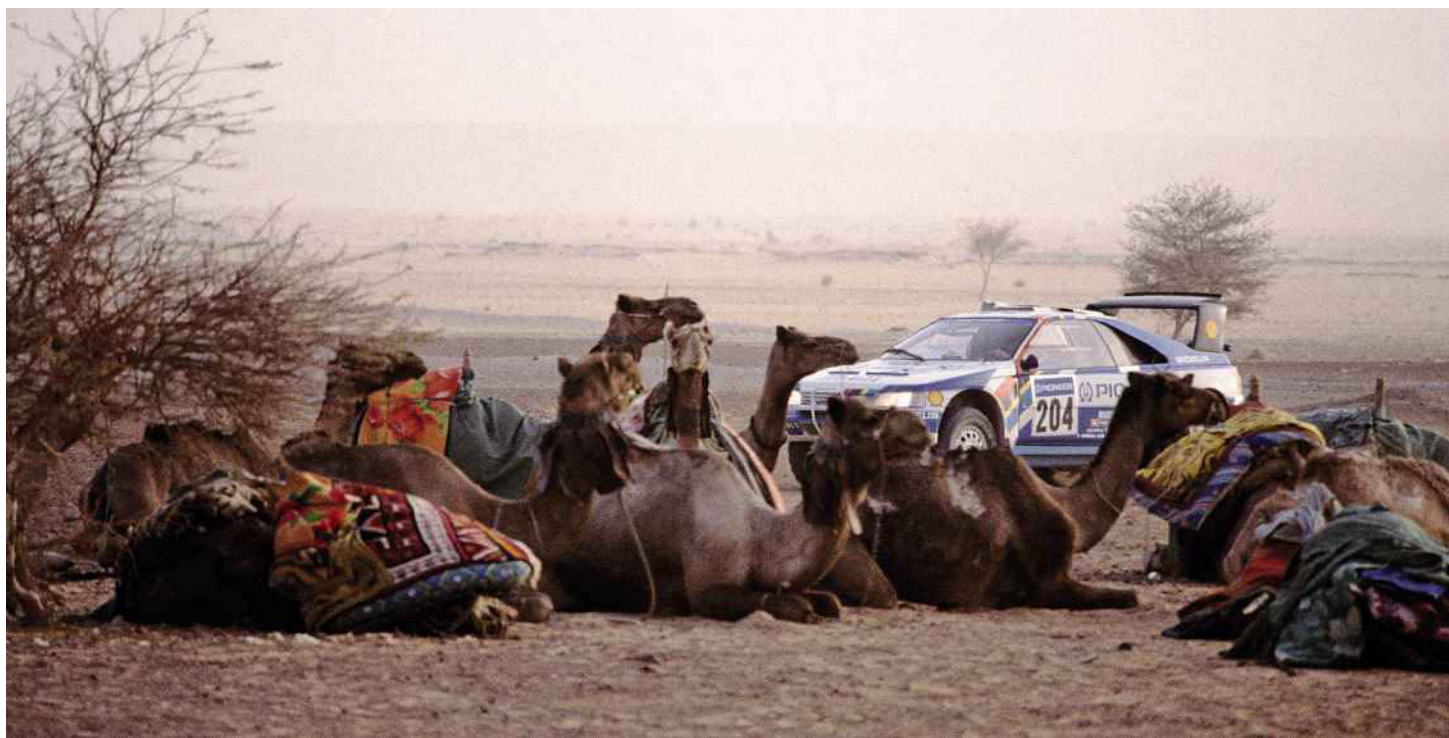
Above: Vatanen in the 205 T16 for the 1987 Pikes Peak. **Left, below left and below:** the Dakar Rally provided rich pickings for Vatanen and Peugeot, the Finn winning once in the 205 T16 (yellow car) and three times in the 405 T16

Ari on... modern WRC

'The first thing the WRC needs is what the rallying commission proposed a year or so ago. When they come to the very last stage, all the times should be divided by ten. If Ogier is leading by 20 seconds, his lead will be cut down to two seconds. If Meeke is next and 15 seconds from Latvala, he'll only have a 1.5-second gap.

'Currently, you might have a minute or more between cars after the first full day, so the drivers cruise for the rest of the rally – they can't catch up to the guy in front, and the guy behind won't often catch you. But if you know there'll only be seconds between you on the last stage, everyone would drive flat-out from the word go. And that would create much more drama. You don't want to know the murderer in Agatha Christie's books in the middle – you want to find out on the last page.

'Secondly, it has to be accessible. The sport is like a pyramid, and the base – the grassroots level – has to be very wide, and affordable. I think rear-wheel drive would be a good way of reducing costs. American motorsport is great at feeding the grassroots – they might not always run the latest technology, but the tech they do run is available to so many more people. I think the WRC is developing well, but it hasn't reached its full potential – far from it.'





Sébastien Loeb

Age: 42

Nationality: French

NINE WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIPS, 78 victories, 116 podiums, 905 stage wins: it's fair to say Sébastien Loeb had nothing more to prove when he hung up his WRC boots at the end of the 2013 season. But the 42-year-old Frenchman isn't the sort of person to sit still for too long, so what did the most successful rally driver of all time do next?

Dakar – the toughest rally

Peugeot is no stranger to the Dakar Rally. It won the original Africa-based event four times between 1987 and 1990 and 26 years after its last victory, Peugeot took its first South American Dakar win. Loeb was part of a three-car team comprising another WRC legend – Carlos Sainz – and 12-time Dakar winner (and 2016 winner), Stéphane Peterhansel.

Loeb's Dakar quest started in the same vein as his WRC career when he claimed Peugeot's first stage win of the event and then went on to claim a further three stage victories.



Pikes Peak – cloud catcher

As with Dakar, Peugeot is no stranger to the remarkable Pikes Peak hill climb, known as the Race to the Clouds. A former holder of the record courtesy of one A. Vatanen, the French team returned in 2013 with Loeb and the 863bhp 208 T16.

Although it was Loeb's first time at the event, he sliced over 1min 30sec from the course record when he completed the 12-mile, 156-corner climb in 8min 13.878sec at an average speed of 90mph.

WRX – the next chapter

2016 sees Loeb back behind the wheel of a 208, this time a World Rallycross Championship car.

At the opening rounds of the season in Portugal he made it all the way through to the final. On this occasion the Frenchman's expected podium finish didn't materialise, but he and Peugeot are in it for the long haul, so you can expect Loeb to claim a 10th motorsport world title sooner rather than later.

Top: Loeb joined the World Rallycross Championship in 2016. **Above:** Peugeot and Loeb contested the 2016 Dakar, with the Frenchman leading the South American event – his first – after just the second stage. Loeb's luck ran out but Peugeot went on to claim its fifth Dakar victory. **Right:** Pikes Peak hill climb is a daunting challenge, yet at his first attempt at it in 2013, in a Peugeot 208 T16, Loeb knocked a minute and a half off the record





King of the desert

Stéphane Peterhansel has won 12 Dakar Rallies: we ride in his 2016 winner, the Peugeot 2008 DKR

by MICHAEL TAYLOR

THERE'S ONLY ONE MAN YOU should sit beside in a rally raider if you want to know what it takes to win the Dakar. So we did.

Frenchman Stéphane Peterhansel won the world's most demanding off-road race six times on bikes and, after 15 days and nearly 3110 miles of special stages in January, he made it six victories on four wheels, too.

Peterhansel lined up this year in the upgraded, faster and significantly uglier Peugeot 2008 DKR. It shares nothing with any road-going Peugeot (even its grille is a sticker), probably because no road-going Peugeot could cope with the road surfaces this thing was born for, except a carefully ridden bicycle, or a patiently rolled pepper mill.

I figured the 50-year-old Peterhansel would be sick of the sight of the 2008 DKR, but evidently not. During a full day in the French hills, he only climbed out of it three times. He either genuinely loves it or it could be that whatever toiletry requirements he suffered were less uncomfortable than climbing out of the Peugeot and then back in again.

It's a massive spaceframe machine with a carbonfibre body, powered by a twin-turbo 3-litre V6 turbodiesel and punching 350bhp and 590lb ft through the rear wheels. It's built to

deliver 460mm of wheel travel so that it doesn't break everything – particularly those in the cockpit – when it lands.

There's not a lot of space on the passenger side for Peterhansel's long-time co-pilot, Jean-Paul Cottret, and he's tiny. I'm not. You're surrounded by four display screens, two floor-mounted buttons, a battery-powered rattle gun and all the system control switches, plus a compass readout. All of that and a cage that's built for strength, speed and security, with little regard to human elasticity, means the Dakar war machine is best left for smaller folk.

Peterhansel bends forward, smiles genially, introduces himself and then viciously attacks a piece of rutted, lumpy countryside as though he hates this car, rather than loves it.

There isn't the outrageous all-wheel-drive launch of a World Rally Car from a standing start, though it's not bad. There's plenty of wheelspin, and the springs are so soft they make the body squat down brutally, making it feel like it's launching harder than it actually is.

And then there's the noise, an odd sound, deep, with the perception of revving a lot higher than it actually does. And it's relatively quiet, partly because the turbochargers muffle its inner exertions.

You can't mask its potency, though, and as the

gears rise, so does the unrelenting drive coming from the back end. Any atom of rubber from either rear tyre touching the surface is all that's needed to punch the 2008 along.

You wouldn't say it flows. Flows are smooth. This isn't. You feel everything that's happening beneath you. Impossible not to. It delivers a disturbingly accurate assessment of what's going on way down there at road level as it flits from impact to impact. Peterhansel is deliberately aiming the car at the worst of it, just to show off, and it covers every attitude between crunching down onto its flat skid-plate and launching itself high in the air.

And all that's before we've found the first corner. It's a steeply downhill hairpin right-hander, with a heavy berm on the outside and a great mud puddle at the apex. Peterhansel brakes late and the desert rubber bites at the snow-covered road with the same sort of retardation you'd expect of a road-going sports car on a trackday.

He pounds the car headlong into the berm, still hard on the brakes, and cranks the wheel until it's almost at full lock, then uses both feet to play the brake and the throttle against each other while continuing to shockingly scrub the nose. He has the front wheels driving on the sidewalls, not the tread. Not one to question his

'ANY ATOM OF RUBBER FROM EITHER REAR TYRE TOUCHING THE GROUND IS ALL IT NEEDS TO PUNCH FORWARD'

mastery, I can only wonder if the differential is really that tight.

But there's something more disturbing going on than understeer. We've hit the water. The washer jets offer a miserable trickle, taking an age to clear the screen, by which time the Peugeot has lurched straight again. A couple of rough, blind jumps later and it tips into a left-hand hairpin, and he uses the same technique. Brake hard, crank the steering to the lock stops, keep braking and then fiddle with the pedals again. The first one was no miscue, then.

Fortunately, it turns into a more interesting, serious machine when the road gets quicker. Smooth, not smooth, exceedingly not smooth: at no time does Peterhansel back off the throttle to take it easy on the car over a regular rut or jump. But the balance of the big machine feels exquisite in faster corners. It's only once or twice tossed off its line by the topography, and then Peterhansel flicks a wrist to catch it and keeps driving forward easily. It's the sort of car that feels infinitely catchable and fun, but incessantly, deliberately, unburstably fast.

The only time he brakes is for a ditch of a type, size and depth the French mastered in the 1930s, without reckoning on any potential tank-wielding opponent transiting through Belgium without a ticket. Even then, he only knocks it back two gears, stands on the throttle and bounds through, while my helmet decides I don't need to see much anymore.

Then he steers towards a point where the road bends slightly right and stops existing; Peterhansel pulls sixth gear, deliberately aims at a jump on the apex, and hurls the car into the French sky. Sure, it's sharply downhill, but the Peugeot comes down like a dandelion with a parachute. It lands nose first, but it never gets near the (substantial) bump stops, even though it jumps maybe 40 metres in length

and 20 metres down, while pumping along at somewhere around 110mph.

All the while, the sophisticated V6 diesel does its best to sound anything but, vocally warbling and undulating with the road, turbo whistling old-school, then going very quiet mid-air.

Every day on the Dakar is like this (but presumably warmer, longer and sandier) with Peterhansel starting his daily battering at 6am and finishing around 5pm, covering a full WRC weekend every day for 15 days.

Cottret insists he's never worried with Peterhansel at the wheel. I couldn't say the same, though the master delivered only one real cause for mild panic and spiking adrenalin.

The humble dripping of water from the windscreen washer failed completely on a puddle in a hairpin, leaving the screen thickly plastered in mud and with brown water streaming in through the roof vents. It didn't concern Peterhansel. He had pulled four gears in the time it took for any hint of vision to be restored. He knew the road intimately. I didn't, but that wasn't the worrying thing.

No, I got the feeling it wouldn't have mattered much if he hadn't known the road intimately. He'd have still pulled four gears before he could see anything. Which might be why he has won the Dakar so often.

Peugeot 2008 DKR

Driver Stephane Peterhansel

Co-driver Jean-Paul Cottret

Engine V6, 2993cc, turbodiesel

Power 350bhp

Torque 590lb ft

Maximum rpm 5000rpm

Drive Rear-wheel drive

Transmission Six-speed sequential

Chassis Spaceframe, carbonfibre cockpit tub

Length/width/height 4284mm / 2200mm / 1794mm

Wheelbase 3000mm

Wheel travel 460mm

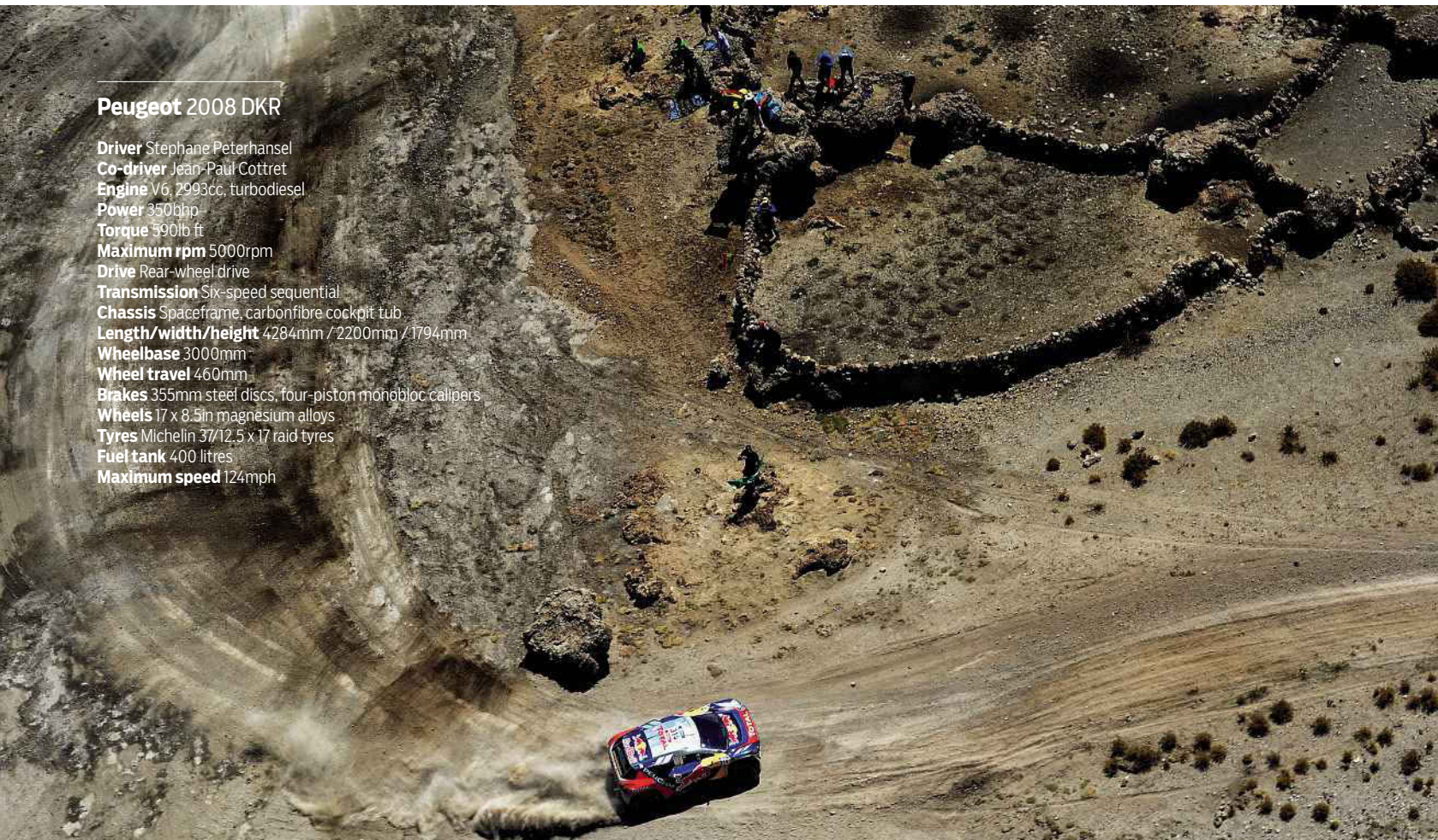
Brakes 355mm steel discs, four-piston monobloc calipers

Wheels 17 x 8.5in magnesium alloys

Tyres Michelin 37/12.5 x 17 raid tyres

Fuel tank 400 litres

Maximum speed 124mph



OUR FAVOURITE PEUGEOT MOMENTS

evo staffers fondly recall the Peugeot hot hatches that have brought thrills and verve to their motoring lives



106 GTI

Not too many great motoring memories are formed whilst following a Toyota Yaris SR, I suppose. But tailing John Barker back from Wales – on the most convoluted route ever devised in the history of road tests – was my Peugeot hot hatch epiphany. I was in a 106 GTI and still very wet behind the ears; John was in a Yaris and on the door handles everywhere. Fearful of the lift-off oversteer legend, I tried to be smooth and *never* waiver on the throttle mid-corner and, miraculously, the 106 GTI really looked after me. I still think it's the sweetest Peugeot hot hatch I've ever driven, 205 GTI included.

Jethro Bovingdon



205 GTI 1.6

Driving Kris Meeke's championship-winning 207 rally car was pretty special, but competing in my first ever rally in my own 1.6-litre 205 GTI trumps it. The car was hopelessly slow and I wasn't much better. We did the whole of the Wydean Forest Rally using just the roadbook (my co-driver, Owen Brown, was a novice too), so I basically drove the stages blind. Looking back it seems absurd, but somehow we finished. I remember oversteer, I remember the exhaust being tremendously loud, and I remember the rear axle getting quite lively over big bumps. The beginning of an obsession.

Henry Catchpole



1.9 GTI, S2 106 RALLYE

My earliest Pug-related memory is buying an early 205 1.9 GTI with my mate Roger Green. We tweaked it a bit and did the CCC Speed Championship, which comprised a mix of sprints and hill climbs. Great fun. The future Mrs M owned a Miami Blue 1.6 GTI around the same time. Good taste in cars, my missus. Rogero and I sold our 205 yonks ago, but I've since bought an S2 106 Rallye, which is also hotted-up. Old habits die hard. At the other end of the scale, watching the screaming V10-engined Peugeot 905s come first and third at Le Mans in 1992 was unforgettable. Frenchest. Day. Ever.

Richard Meaden



306 RALLYE

My 306 Rallye, in white, was absolutely brilliant. After 12 months of driving a Ford Galaxy diesel (a company car, long story) the stripped-back nature of the 306 was irresistible. Its 2-litre engine felt so much stronger than the 167bhp figure suggested and the six-speed 'box was a wonderful match (if a little slow in shift speed), but it was the steering and chassis that were a pure delight. I could forgive the seats offering all the lateral support of a lettuce, the plastic steering wheel and manual windows, because of that oh-so intuitive feeling that made motorways a wasted opportunity and B-roads a necessity.

Stuart Gallagher

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The closing date for entries 1 August 2016

QUESTION

Who of the following isn't a Peugeot Sport FIA World Rallycross Championship driver?

- Timmy Hansen
- Kevin Hansen
- Hank Hansen

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AUDI RS Q3 // PORSCHE 996 GT2 // FORD FOCUS ST TCDi ESTATE // HONDA CIVIC TYPE R //
BMW E46 M3 // BMW 730Ld M SPORT // VW GOLF R // MAZDA MX-5 // FORD FOCUS RS Mk1

T THE NISSAN JUKE IS AN interesting phenomenon, and not only because from the front it looks uncannily like a smug hippopotamus. Since the model's launch in September 2010, Jukes have become a common sight on UK roads. On the back of this success, in 2013 the firm introduced a variant of less widespread appeal but far greater interest to those of

an evo mindset: the Juke Nismo. Even these have proved quite popular, and in 2015 the Nismo gained more power and became the Nismo RS. It's one of these that we've added one to our fleet.

The basic facts are as follows: the turbocharged 1.6-litre four-cylinder engine develops 215bhp and 206lb ft, all of which is sent to the front wheels alone. There's also stiffer

suspension, a limited-slip differential and meaty, 320mm front brake discs. The exterior, meanwhile, has been given all of Nismo's aesthetic trimmings, with the exception of an enormous wing. So there are red door mirrors, aerodynamically 'enhanced' bumpers and side skirts, black 18-inch alloys, red brake calipers, a Nismo RS front grille and a dainty little roof spoiler.



NEW ARRIVAL

Nissan Juke Nismo RS

Sticking the Nismo badge on a compact crossover was a brave move. We're going to find out whether it's deserved



Our car has optional Recaro bucket seats (£1300) and the Tech Pack (£900), which includes xenon headlights and lane-departure and blind-spot warnings. These come on top of a basic price of £22,180.

So you don't forget you've spent a not insignificant sum over that required for the second most expensive Juke, the £19,890, 187bhp 'Tekna', the interior of the RS is scattered with numerous Nismo badges and some fake carbonfibre. The half-Alcantara steering wheel is a nice sporty touch, but sadly this is overshadowed by the fact that the wheel only adjusts for rake, not reach. The heated Recaros, however, are already proving their worth, keeping me comfortable on long drives while supporting me in the corners. There's also a decent amount of space in the boot.

I'm a little ashamed to admit that I like the elevated driving position, which gives you just a bit more visual awareness. The drawback is body

'I'm a little ashamed to admit that I like the elevated driving position, but the drawback is body roll'

roll, and while the sports suspension tries its best to mitigate this, the roll is very noticeable in sharper corners. Luckily the lean forces the tyres to dig into the tarmac, and there's decent feedback on grip levels.

And the engine? Despite the Nismo-tuned sports exhaust, it sounds quite thrashy when you take it through the rev range. The LSD, on the other hand, works well to distribute the torque across the front axle, but can occasionally snap on you if you're rapidly changing direction on power.

Early indications, then, are that the Juke Nismo RS is a bit of a mixed bag. It's going to be interesting to see if it's one of those long-termers that can work its way under my skin. ✖

Aston Parrott (@AstonParrott)

| | |
|---------------------------|------------|
| Date acquired | March 2016 |
| Total mileage | 5785 |
| Mileage this month | 3785 |
| Costs this month | £0 |
| mpg this month | 31.6 |

END OF TERM

Ferrari Scuderia Spider 16M

Impressed but not in love, SSO bids farewell to a his drop-top Ferrari

T THE ARRIVAL OF MARCH brought both joy and anguish. The joy came from speccing out a very special car that will arrive later this year; the anguish from having to make a difficult decision. As I already have more cars than garage spaces, one of the current occupants would have to go. The decision was emotionally difficult, but it made sense as the replacement is a similar machine. As a result, the 16M has departed.

For a car with its roots in the early 21st century, the Spider 16M didn't

Jaguar F-type R Coupe AWD

Jaguar could be good enough to match the best, reckons Catchpole

A AFTER A DAY WITH THE wind tearing at my hair as I pretended my name was Hamilton (no clarification should be needed, but just to be clear, that's first name Duncan, not Lewis) in the wonderful but bare Proteus C-type replica (see Driven), I sank back into the F-type. Its lovely leather and Alcantara surroundings never felt plusher. Its steering also never felt lighter; the first few miles were like the first few steps you take in normal shoes after spending all day in heavy ski boots.

suffer from the 'that was cutting-edge but now feels very dated' technology drawbacks that a few of its contemporaries do. The single-clutch 'box still felt quick and was a joy. In fact, it was one of my favourite features of the car. The ceramic brakes were also hugely impressive and even worked moderately well when cold. The high-revving V8 was a work of art and with 503bhp didn't feel the least bit short of power. Yes, the Scuderia cars are ageing well.

However, I have to admit that I never quite bonded with the 16M in the same way I did with the Scuderia coupe I owned a few years ago. I put this down to two major differences. One is the ownership circumstances,

'A hard top just suits the raw, focused nature of the Scuderia much better'



the other is related to the car itself. In terms of the former, when I owned the coupe I had some great driving roads in my backyard. It was during the very regular outings on these roads that we bonded. With the 16M, it was mostly highways, which did little to bring out the best in the car. In terms of the car itself, I have to admit that in this case I preferred

the coupe version. A hard top just suits the raw, focused nature of the Scuderia much better.

Would I buy another Scuderia in the future? I'm not sure. If I was going to go down this route again, it would more likely be with a 458 Speciale. And definitely a coupe. ❌

Secret Supercar Owner
(@SupercarOwner)

| | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Date acquired | November 2014 |
| Duration of test | 16 months |
| Total test mileage | 400 |
| Overall mpg | 15.0 |
| Costs | \$55 emissions test \$2450 service |
| Purchase price | n/a |
| Trade-in value | n/a |
| Depreciation | \$0 |

Jaguar F-type R Coupe AWD



However, it's a mark of just how beautiful the F-type is that the lines of its aluminium bodywork still looked taut and flowing in the presence of the curves (also wrought in aluminium) penned back in the 1950s by Malcolm Sayer. Yes, the Proteus looked dinky next to it, but the F-type didn't look bloated.

The other car that I've had cause

to draw direct comparisons with recently is the M4 GTS, as the Jaguar was waiting for me at BMW UK's HQ in Farnborough when I dropped the GTS back there after our test last month. Starting up the supercharged V8 in the admittedly acoustically advantageous enclosed space of a multistorey, the Jaguar sounded just as raucous as the bombastic BMW.

The steering wheel instantly felt much nicer than the overly chunky GTS item, too, and the playful balance of the AWD F-type through the first couple of roundabouts still had me instantly grinning. All for £30,000 less than the BMW.

Ultimately I know that the Jaguar isn't quite as involving a driving experience as the BMW, especially

around a track, but the Proteus and the GTS both got me thinking about this. Firstly, Jaguar needs to go racing again. The C-type is a gorgeous car regardless of its motorsport pedigree, but the stories and images of it hammering around La Sarthe undoubtedly enhance its desirability. Secondly, Jaguar needs to build a proper M4 GTS/911 GT3 rival to reflect this newly imagined return to the racetracks. I know the SVR is coming, but sitting in one at the Geneva motor show, I couldn't say that it felt like any more of a stripped-back road-racer than our R. Just imagine a much lighter, sparser, more uncompromisingly focused F-Type. I think it deserves it. ❌

Henry Catchpole
(@HenryCatchpole)

| | |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| Date acquired | January 2016 |
| Total mileage | 5648 |
| Mileage this month | 1313 |
| Costs this month | £0 |
| mpg this month | 26.4 |

Bentley Continental GT V8 S

Bentley is shedding the smoking-jacket image with a little help from its new racing presence



ONE MONTH IN AND THE Bentley has already got me hooked. Of course it feels good to be driving a £200k car, but the way the Conti GT combines massive performance with everyday usability is truly addictive. The fact it never feels less than an occasion to drive is the icing on the cake.

One thing I feel I need to address is the 'footballer' image. I'm not saying every car to leave Crewe is a paragon of taste, but if I had a pound for every time one of my mates said 'footballer's car' when I told them what my next long-termer was going to be, I could afford a Conti of my own. Yet now they've seen it, they've all had to concede it's not the car that prejudice led them to expect.

One place the Bentley went down very well indeed was the paddock at Snetterton, when I popped in to see the launch of the 2016 British

'The fact the Conti GT looked at home in such a focused environment says a lot for how far Bentley has come in terms of image'

GT Championship. Race paddocks are always packed with cool road cars and Snett was no exception. Cayman GT4s and 991 GT3 RSs were thick on the ground, but the V8 S seemed to have a magnetic effect on people. The fact it looked at home in such a focused environment says a lot for how far Bentley has come in terms of product and image.

Of course, having a front-running GT3 race programme is the best way to foster enthusiasm and credibility. Bentley's global GT3 campaign is starting its second full season, the factory's efforts in the international GT racing arena bolstered by official customer teams running cars in national championships. Of those, the British GT Championship is very highly regarded, so it's great to see a Bentley will be in the thick of the action with a car run by Team Parker Racing.

Just as the Blower Bentley of the 1920s dwarfed the more delicate Bugattis and Alfas, Team Parker's Bentley looks like a brute compared to the low-slung Audis, McLarens, Lamborghinis and Ginettas. It even makes Aston's V12-engined Vantage GT3 look a bit undernourished. And it sounds epic, the twin-turbo V8 emitting all kinds of grunts and snorts as it thumps out of the pits like a charging bull. All of which leads me to conclude the only thing better than having a Conti GT as your daily driver would be having a Conti GT3 to race at weekends. Dear Bentley... ✕

Richard Meaden
(@DickieMeaden)

| | |
|---------------------------|---------------|
| Date acquired | February 2016 |
| Total mileage | 4441 |
| Mileage this month | 1422 |
| Costs this month | £0 |
| mpg this month | 23.2 |

Chevrolet Camaro Z/28

The 'wrong' tyre size leads to the sickening graunch of stone on metal

THE GENEVA MOTOR show... I love it, and try to find a way to get in early, on one of the press days, whenever I can. This year I managed just that, and lo and behold there were real journalists there, including *evo* editor Nick Trott. We met at the Porsche stand and drooled over the 911 R. I unkindly hoped that the snow flurries would mean his flight home would get cancelled so he could join us for ice-driving that evening. Fortunately it didn't, as the snow meant the circuit got closed!

On the subject of driving on slippery surfaces, I've come to realise that I screwed up slightly on my winter-tyre choice for the Z/28. I had happily taken narrower, 295-section rubber because I couldn't locate any 305s, but that has led to a couple of unintended consequences. Firstly,



as the rims stick out proud of the narrower tyres, I now have a few scratches on the alloys, and the front-left has lost some paint during a toll-booth stop. Then there's the tiny little hump at the entrance to my garage. Wearing 295s instead of 305s theoretically means the sidewalls are 3mm shallower. Add a couple of millimetres of tyre wear to that and the Z/28 just scrapes on the hump.

Fortunately it's nearly time to get the winter-spec Michelin Alpins off and the Yokohamas on – and then

to start looking forward to the Pirelli P Zero Trofeo Rs! I've never had a car that made me focus so much on tyres: their pressure, grip, size, seasonality... every detail.

In other news, one day on the autoroute from Chamonix to Geneva recently, four motorbikes surrounded me, flashing blue lights. Not a nice experience! They took me to a waiting Renault Scenic, where it became clear they were customs officers who'd spotted my rear-only (handy for speed cameras) Montana registration plate. I explained that

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Date acquired | June 2015 |
| Total mileage | 6218 |
| Mileage this month | 516 |
| Costs this month | \$121.50 four rubber floor mats for the coming spring mud |
| mpg this month | 16.2 |

the car was a six-month temporary import and in the end they only made me put the front plate on the dash. (I was concerned it might guillotine my passengers if I floored the throttle with it positioned there, so I've since bought some suction cups to hold it in place.)

Luckily the police liked the Camaro. We chatted about how it was unfair that they got a Scenic whereas the gendarmes get Renaultsport Mégane 265 Cups. And the fire brigade used to get Clios in the exact same red as the Clio Trophy, which meant you could overtake cops in a Trophy faster than you could in a 911! They waved me off on my way – after insisting on a throttle blip, of course. ☒

David Price

Audi RS Q3

Audi RS Q3

This or a GT4? Smith surprises himself with his choice



I M NOT ENTIRELY SURE what's happening to me.

I'm pretty certain that if Jethro Bovingdon had asked me just six months ago if I wanted to take a Cayman GT4 over the weekend and deliver it to Snowdonia for Monday morning, instead of taking my own long-termer, I'd have jumped at the chance. Yet 20 minutes after recently being asked to do just that, I found myself in 'my' RS Q3, not doubting my decision one bit.

Perhaps it's old age, fatherhood, or Bovingdon's complaints that the GT4's fixed-back seats are hideously uncomfortable (due to being set at such an upright angle). I put it down to the Audi's heated seats and its ludicrous turn of pace on tap.

Unlike with past long-terms, over the last five months I haven't tired of the RS Q3. Yes, there are some annoyances, but the 335bhp

turbocharged five-pot engine more than makes up for a slightly slow start/stop system and the fact that I can't skip music tracks via one of the many steering-wheel buttons.

The only downside to said engine is frequent fuel stops. If you're doing mainly motorway miles and driving sedately, a solid 30mpg can be achieved. However, heavy right foot plus five-cylinder warble equals smiles, which in return sees fuel economy drop to around 23mpg.

Thankfully, my finance manager is on maternity leave and hasn't noticed the big dents in the account balance quite yet. ☒

Dean Smith (@evoDeanSmith)

| | |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| Date acquired | October 2015 |
| Total mileage | 9850 |
| Mileage this month | 2046 |
| Costs this month | £0 |
| mpg this month | 23.8 |



Porsche 996 GT2

Strange marks on the paintwork with no obvious cause pose a conundrum

T HIS MONTH – THE curious case of the stripy bonnet... With the GT2 laid up over winter under a car cover, I checked it every couple of weeks or so for damp, mice, battery charge and all the other things that winter storage can conjure up.

One day, I pulled back the cover and a strange mark on the bonnet caught my eye – it looked as if something had dripped on it and then run down it, leaving a stripe. A good rub with a microfibre cloth didn't make a difference, which was odd, so I phoned Gtechniq to ask if it was anything to do with the Crystal Serum paint protection that was applied late last year.

'Very unlikely' came the response. Not only that, but having also seen some photos of the mark, Gtechniq was stumped as to what could have

caused it, and offered to send out one of its detailers to inspect it.

The mystery deepened, even after an inspection by an expert detailer. I wondered if brake fluid could have caused the mark (even though the car had not been anywhere near brake fluid over the winter), but Gtechniq didn't think this would penetrate the serum. Nevertheless, Gtechniq tested some DOT 4 brake fluid on the serum back at its lab and... the serum did indeed repel the fluid! Cue some more head-scratching.

Using a machine-polisher took some of the stripe away, but it was still visible, and with the rest of the car pretty much perfect, it was really bugging me. Also, having put all my spare cash into my 911 SC, I didn't really have much left in the piggy bank for a respray for the GT2's

'The mystery deepened, even after an inspection by an expert detailer'

bonnet. It was then that Gtechniq reminded me that Crystal Serum comes with a seven-year guarantee and – get this for customer service – volunteered to sort the respray. I didn't even have to ask!

As I write this, the GT2's bonnet is being rectified by SL Restoration near Gatwick – a firm with plenty of experience with Porsches – and afterwards will be recoated with Crystal Serum. When they start to remove the paint, I'm hoping that they may be able to solve the mystery. If not, I'll need to call in Mulder and Scully. ✕

Nick Trott (@evoNickTrott)

| | |
|---------------------------|-----------|
| Date acquired | June 2015 |
| Total mileage | 27,873 |
| Mileage this month | 208 |
| Costs this month | £0 |
| mpg this month | 23.0 |

Ford Focus ST TDCi Estate

We gave up quite a few luxuries when our courtesy car arrived, but did we miss them?

OUR FOCUS IS BACK FROM repairs to fix the damage caused when someone drove into it last month. Ford kindly loaned us a less generously specced ST while our long-termer was away, so I wanted to identify some of the differences between the two. Not the obvious engine differences – our long-termer has the diesel motor, while the ‘short-termer’ had the EcoBoost petrol unit – but more what’s lacking in terms of extras in a less expensive ST.

Both cars are top-of-the-line ST-3 versions, so feature cruise control with a speed limiter, a tyre-pressure monitoring system and blind-spot detection. However, our long-termer has the ST Style Pack (£450), with 19-inch alloy wheels and rear privacy glass. The latter is really handy, especially as I’m often carrying around a ton of valuable camera equipment. Our car also has the flip-out door-edge protectors (£85), which I haven’t seen on any other car. It’s such a simple idea, but it really comes into its own in the car park at Tesco. There’s also a rear-view

camera (£165), which is handy, and Ford’s ‘Sync 2’ infotainment system, with a ten-speaker Sony sound system (£400).

At first I wasn’t sold on the standard Recaro sports seats, but now I just can’t fault them. They hold you perfectly and are brilliant on long journeys. That they are heated was very welcome during the winter, too, and both the front seats are eight-way power-adjustable as standard, which is a luxury you might not expect to find in a Ford.

Then there is the Driver Assist Package (£450), which includes Active City Stop, lane-departure warnings, traffic-sign recognition, a lane-keeping aid, and automatic high-beam headlights that save you having to use any more brain power than is absolutely necessary on a late-night run home.

All these extras make our Focus ST feel like it’s in a completely different league to your average Ford. And given all the options fitted to our car, I have to say I’m impressed with its relatively modest total price: it came in at £29,470 when a basic ST-3 TDCi Estate was £27,395 (it’s now £250 more). None of those extras is essential, but I certainly missed them while they were gone. ❌

Sam Riley (@samgriley)

| | |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| Date acquired | August 2015 |
| Total mileage | 15,930 |
| Mileage this month | 2049 |
| Costs this month | £0 |
| mpg this month | 44.1 |



Honda Civic Type R

The best hot hatches really get under your skin. So, does the R?

IM FORTUNATE TO HAVE a variety of routes to choose from between **evo** Towers and my home. So at the end of any given working day, I can choose a journey to suit the time of day, the weather conditions, the car I’m in and my mood. Late and in a hurry? Main A-roads it is. Driving a small hot hatch? Nadgety, narrow back roads here I come. In something a bit special? Quiet but quick B-roads all the way.

For front-drive hot hatches equipped with a limited-slip differential, I often find myself drawn to one particular route, for two particular corners that lie along it. The first is a fast, wide, fourth-gear left-hander. The second, about seven miles later, is a tight, third-gear left. Well, actually it’s a flat-out straight that leads into a fourth-gear right immediately followed by a low humpback bridge and *then* the third-gear left. It’s a brilliantly technical sequence that’s a key section on my fantasy alternative Nürburgring layout.

I frequently took this route home in my old SEAT Leon Cupra 280 long-termer, just to experience the

car’s super-smooth diff in action. But with the Civic, I’m choosing this route *every* night. In the Type R, those two corners have become an addiction. The Honda’s diff may not be as technically clever as the Cupra’s, but it just does its job incredibly well, getting both front wheels pulling hard, bang on the correct line – understeer nowhere in sight, but no exaggerated pull towards the apex either. Seeing how quickly those corners can be taken, and how early I can get on the gas, is a daily highlight, the Civic feeling absolutely, 100 per cent in its element.

Pity, then, that **evo** is about to move to a new home near the Bedford Autodrome, meaning those corners will no longer be on an obvious route home for me. Hopefully I’ll find some good substitutes quickly. If not, regular detours may be called for. ❌

Ian Eveleigh

| | |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| Date acquired | January 2016 |
| Total mileage | 5776 |
| Mileage this month | 1899 |
| Costs this month | £0 |
| mpg this month | 30.8 |



NEW ARRIVAL

BMW E46 M3

Web editor Hunter Skipworth buys his first proper *evo* car, and it's one many will approve of

I I'D BEEN MULLING OVER the idea of buying a car for a while before I finally pulled the trigger on an E46 M3. For months I'd looked at Porsche 996s and 997s, but I could never quite make the man-maths work.

I owe a lot to M-cars. It was an E92 M3 that convinced my parents that my decision to devote my career to all things automotive was a wise one. Five minutes in one with my dad – a man who had never been in anything quicker than a Saab 9-3 – and he was sold on the idea. All it took was a single sweep of the rev

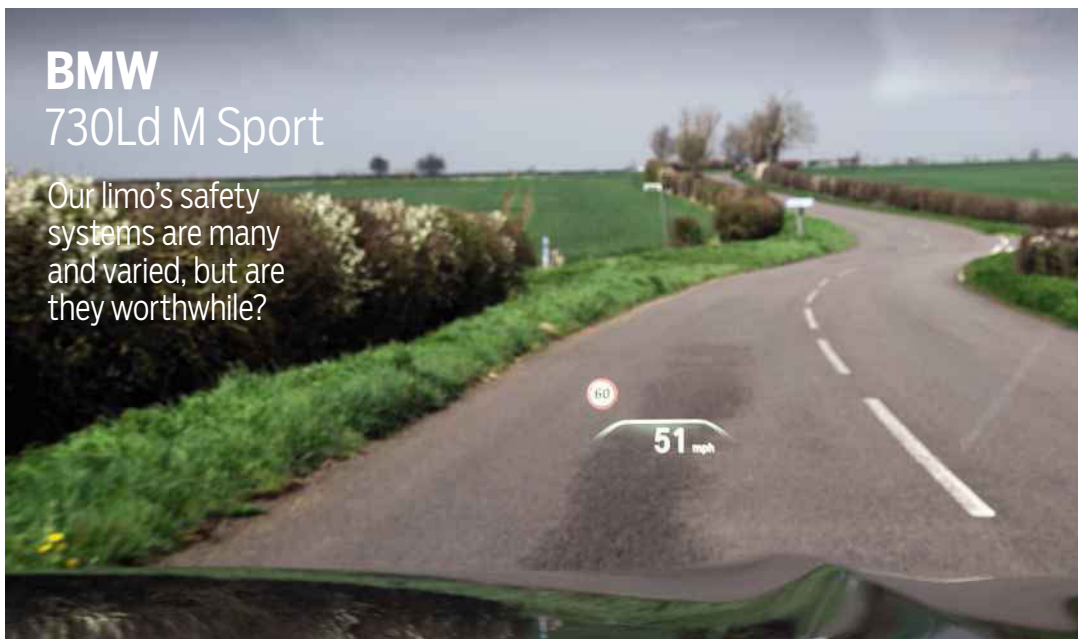
counter and that high-revving 4-litre V8 worked its magic.

I've spent a lot of time in E92 and F80 M3s, but had never driven an E46. What I did know was that I liked the way they look in Titan Silver and that this generation is universally loved by motoring journalists. So I booked a test drive in one.

What sold me was the straight-six engine. It's absolutely crackers that you can get a powertrain like this for less than £20,000. The noise, the throttle response – everything about the 338bhp S54 motor, I loved. It just felt special in a way

BMW 730Ld M Sport

Our limo's safety systems are many and varied, but are they worthwhile?



T THIS MONTH I'VE BEEN trying to avoid driving the 7-series. Well, sort of. It's been a month of trialling the various driver-assist systems – to the extent that on some trips I've questioned who, or what, was in control of the big Beemer.

Driving Assistant Plus is dialled up via the iDrive rotary knob, and its various settings can then be seen on the main screen. The 10.25-inch screen responds to touch and gestures, but I tend to use the dial because I find it allows me to achieve inputs with the least amount of time spent looking away from the road. Gesture control should be the best way of interacting, but it's inconsistent.

BMW claims Driving Assistant Plus offers 'partially autonomous



This page, far left and below: Skipworth has already treated his new pride and joy to the shorter, heavier gearknob from the 330Ci Clubsport, plus an Alcantara retrim for the steering wheel



that I don't think the turbocharged engines in modern M-cars will ever be able to replicate.

There's also something just right about the level of performance on offer. I'll be the first to admit that I'm not the quickest driver in the **evo** office, so I wasn't after anything faster than what this M3 offers. It means I can improve my driving technique at trackdays without completely overloading myself with outright speed.

My shopping list for the M3 was as follows: Titan Silver paint, black leather, a manual gearbox and less than 100,000 miles. Given that the E46 M3 has become so

'It's absolutely crackers that you can get a powertrain like this for less than £20,000'

affordable, a lot have been driven or modified in an 'interesting' way, so a good history was also important.

Thankfully there are lots of E46 M3s out there, so it's possible to take your time and buy a car from someone you trust. I contacted Eclipse Car Sales in Southampton about a one-owner example they had. It felt solid on a test drive, but it was its first owner showing me pictures of his Alpina CSL and E46 track car that had me convinced.

A lengthy email conversation ensued, much M3-geekery was had, and I put a deposit down. Eclipse were fantastic throughout, even lining up an E30 M3 Evo on the

forecourt when I collected my car.

So here you have it: my E46 M3. A one-owner, 81,000-mile, late-2005 car with a manual gearbox and black nappa leather interior. I've got big plans for this thing, the first being a pre-emptive subframe reinforcement. More soon. ✕

Hunter Skipworth
(@HunterSkipworth)

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Date acquired | February 2016 |
| Total mileage | 81,235 |
| Mileage this month | 980 |
| Costs this month | £60 gearknob £130 steering wheel retrim |
| mpg this month | 23.0 |

driving'. How? By combining Active Cruise Control, Stop&Go and a Steering and Lane Control Assistant. Active safety features are added to this mix, namely Lane Departure Warning, Lane Keeping Assistant with Active Side Collision Protection, Approach Control Warning, and Person Warning with City Braking.

The Active Cruise Control is excellent. It works in stop/start conditions and at up to around 130mph, and controls the distance ahead very effectively. I'm less convinced by Steering and Lane Control Assistant. Its purpose is to keep the car in the middle of its lane, and there's no doubt it works, but it's hard to decouple your instinct to gently nudge the car along the correct path. It turns an instinctive action into a prominent conscious

one by weighting up the system as you either try to mimic what the car is already doing, or respond out of sync with the car. For this reason, I tend to switch it off entirely.

Lane Keeping Assistant with Active Side Collision Protection will intervene if it thinks you are leaving a lane unintentionally or if you might hit something to the side of the car. Unfortunately it doesn't seem to be able to discern between a natural lane change and an unplanned one, so you find yourself steering back into the inside lane after an overtake, only to feel the wheel weight up as it tries to keep you in the overtaking lane. Indicating before you manoeuvre helps let the car know the lane change is deliberate, but indicating isn't always necessary. So, again, I've switched this off.



Next month I'll look at Approach Control Warning and Person Warning with City Braking in lower-speed scenarios. I'm hoping to get some better results. ✕

Nick Trott (@evoNickTrott)

| | |
|---------------------------|---------------|
| Date acquired | December 2015 |
| Total mileage | 10,934 |
| Mileage this month | 1707 |
| Costs this month | £0 |
| mpg this month | 33.1 |

VW Golf R

Dan Prosser unleashes his pent-up frustrations. No need to brace yourself

I I'VE BEEN PRETTY evangelical about the Golf R in the eight months I've spent with it so far, so in the interests of balance I thought I'd share my frustrations with it in this report. But before I go any further, I should acknowledge that some of these criticisms really are very petty indeed, and quite possibly more telling of my temperament than any particular shortcomings of the car itself.

When the parking sensors start to chime, the volume of the stereo is reduced to an inaudible level. This makes me want to put my fist through the infotainment screen. Repeatedly. How dare the car shut off whatever I'm listening to because it deems its own parking beeps to be more important.

As I said, very petty indeed. But there is a bigger point to be made here: this is an example of modern cars increasingly taking control away from the driver, albeit the most minor one imaginable, and I just



happen to find that infuriating.

Another annoyance is the driving position. It's actually inoffensive enough that I can put it to the back of my mind most of the time, but when I do stop to think about the seating position, I become acutely aware that my legs are much more cramped than I'd like them to be. The seat and steering wheel can be perfectly aligned, but then my feet are prodding the pedals from above as though I'm playing an organ. I

want them to be stretched out in front of me with just a slight bend at the knee. I can move the seat back to achieve that, but then the steering wheel, at full extension, is an uncomfortable reach away.

The manual gearshift, meanwhile, is a bit notchy and the clutch is very lumpy as it re-engages, which means you really have to trouble the old grey matter to drive the car smoothly. Maybe that's a good thing.

There are irritations, then, but

after more than 15,000 miles behind the wheel, I'm more convinced than ever that the Golf R is the best everyday performance car on sale at this price bracket. **✘**

Dan Prosser
(@TheDanProsser)

| | |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| Date acquired | September 2015 |
| Total mileage | 15,306 |
| Mileage this month | 1712 |
| Costs this month | £0 |
| mpg this month | 33.7 |

Mazda MX-5

Summer is finally on the horizon, and our MX-5 is increasingly in its element



T THERE ARE VERY FEW things worse than driving to and from work in the dark. The MX-5 kept me snug and warm throughout the winter when I regularly got lost between London and the *evo* office in Milton Keynes. Or is it Wollaston? But I'm still glad

that, finally, those cold, short days are behind us.

Recently I had my first ever door-to-door roof-down run. The Mazda's roof is so easy to open and close that you can do either in five seconds at a set of traffic lights. With the roof down, it doesn't get particularly windy in the cabin and there's appreciable protection from buffeting, which means even motorway hauls aren't too uncomfortable.

In fact, the MX-5 feels more at home with its roof down, which perhaps isn't too much of a surprise. You can hear the zingy 2-litre, four-cylinder engine a bit better and get the full hit of the stripped-back driving experience that the MX-5 has been all about since the first-generation car arrived in 1989.

However, my commute has me

thinking about the folding metal top featured on the recently announced MX-5 RF. While that car's chassis is said to be calibrated for touring, so should be a little softer than our Fast Fleet car's, I can't help but think that the RF might turn out to be the MX-5 to go for. The extra refinement of a solid roof will hopefully nudge the tyre and road-noise levels in the right direction for big journeys, and you could still enjoy open-top driving.

But hard roof or not, roll on the summer is all I can say; the MX-5 just keeps getting better.

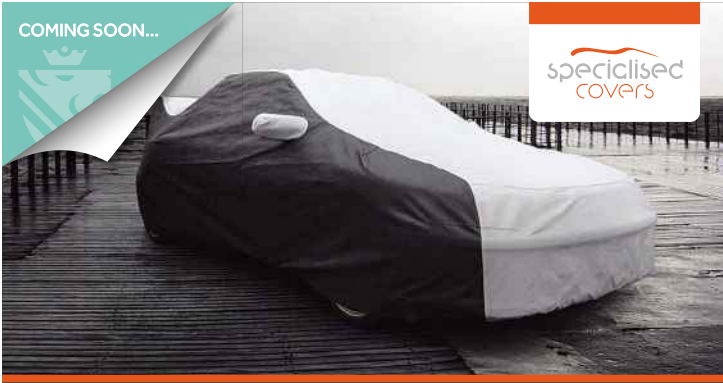
Hunter Skipworth
(@HunterSkipworth)

| | |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| Date acquired | October 2015 |
| Total mileage | 7122 |
| Mileage this month | 1124 |
| Costs this month | £0 |
| mpg this month | 36.7 |

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Ford Focus RS

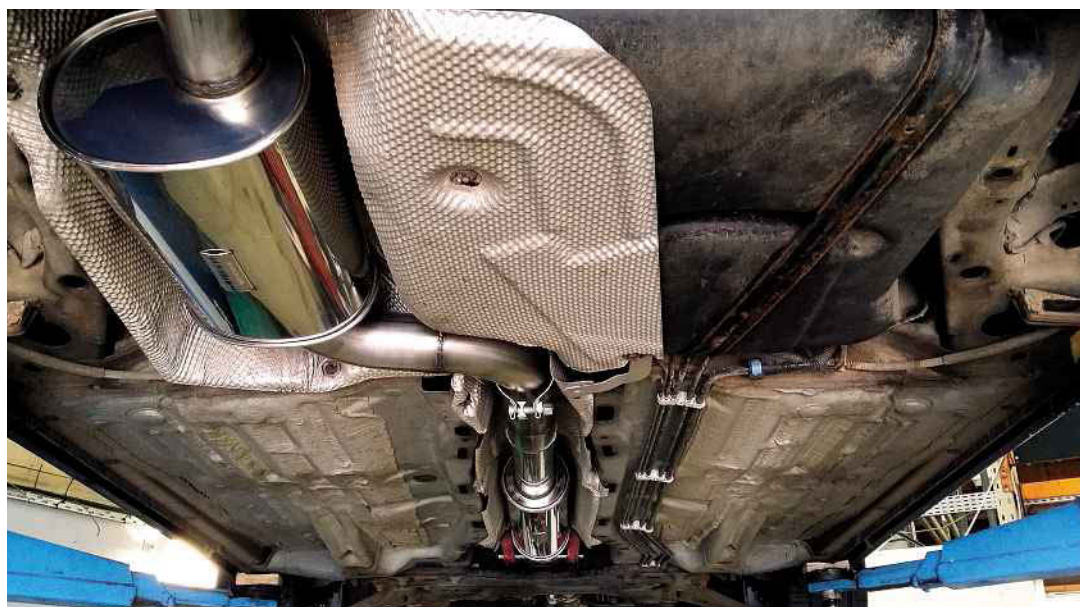
The RS gets a new voice – but nothing too loud

EAGLE-EYED COLLEAGUES and the keen of ear among my neighbours will have detected a subtle shift in the Ford's persona, because its rear end now smokes a pleasingly chubby pipe.

A tipsy evening on eBay? You'd be forgiven for thinking so, but no. You might remember that two of the original exhaust's hangers corroded, leaving the tubing to rattle around between the rear subframe and the floorpan. I can't adequately express how irksome this was, but I threw myself into finding a replacement.

My head said maintain originality, yet I've always thought the standard item looked a bit piddly, so when Ford wanted a kidney in return for one, I seized the moment. Besides, I'd always viewed the aftermarket artillery of other RSs with an odd blend of envious disdain, and here was a chance to indulge guilt-free.

Hand thus forced, for a week I fell asleep to the sounds of McRae's



RS WRC going left-over-crest to a symphony of anti-lag. The reality would have to be a little different, however. I wanted a system that would help the engine breathe by reducing back pressure. I also wanted some sort of sports cat and a more pronounced interpretation of the peppy rumble at idle and forcible bellow at higher revs that help define the Mk1 Focus RS. It would have to look mighty, too. Of course. What I absolutely didn't want was a straight-through affair; the sort

that sounds like someone let off a flashbang in your pantry.

Owners'-club chatter put me on to Powervalve of St Helens and I'm glad it did, because the RS now sports a magnificent mandrel-bent, stainless-steel exhaust from the turbo back. It's still early days, but as someone with a fetish for Italian road bikes, I feel reasonably well qualified in saying the TIG welding looks damn fine, and acoustically the car is now instantly recognisable as being something 'a bit special',

rather than just another hot hatch.

Unfortunately the sports cat has triggered a warning light, so a trip to Superchips in Buckingham for a new ECU map (and whatever juicy benefits that might yield in tandem with the exhaust) is imminent. ❌

Richard Lane (@_rlane_)

| | |
|---------------------------|---------------|
| Date acquired | January 2015 |
| Total mileage | 76,445 |
| Mileage this month | 255 |
| Costs this month | £1250 exhaust |
| mpg this month | 26.6 |



Skoda Octavia vRS

As B-roads beckon, the vRS shows its Q-car skills

THE vRS AND I HAVE avoided motorways lately, mainly because leading up to the Easter holidays they were insufferable. There are shorter – but longer in time – routes to the **evo** office, though, so the Octavia and I went on a B-road hunt.

This approach does require a few pre-drive selections, however. First, I need to set the six-speed DSG gearbox up for paddleshift changes. I also need to go into the mode configurator and select Sport for the engine map, because while the throttle response in Normal is fine on the M25, it's not when I'm on the A507 between Baldock and Buntingford and the window of opportunity to pass the farmer in his John Deere is a narrow one.

The engine note is also best in Sport, not that it transforms the car into a five-cylinder Quattro, but it makes a decent fist of masking the TDI's gruff note as the revs rise. The steering is permanently in Sport because it's the only setting that provides anything to work with (or rather lean against, as all it really does is add some weight).

All this doesn't turn the 181bhp vRS into a Caterham 420R, but it does improve on its already commendable Q-car status. It will cover ground deceptively quickly and allows me a large say in how it goes about it. It's all about momentum with the Octavia, not letting the revs drop out of the torque band, turning in decisively, and getting back on the power cleanly to prevent unsightly scrabble on corner exit. Hook it up and the vRS becomes an annoying magnet on the tail of perceptually quicker metal. A proper Q-car. ❌

Stuart Gallagher
(@stuartg917)

| | |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| Date acquired | October 2015 |
| Total mileage | 13,941 |
| Mileage this month | 1463 |
| Costs this month | £0 |
| mpg this month | 41.1 |

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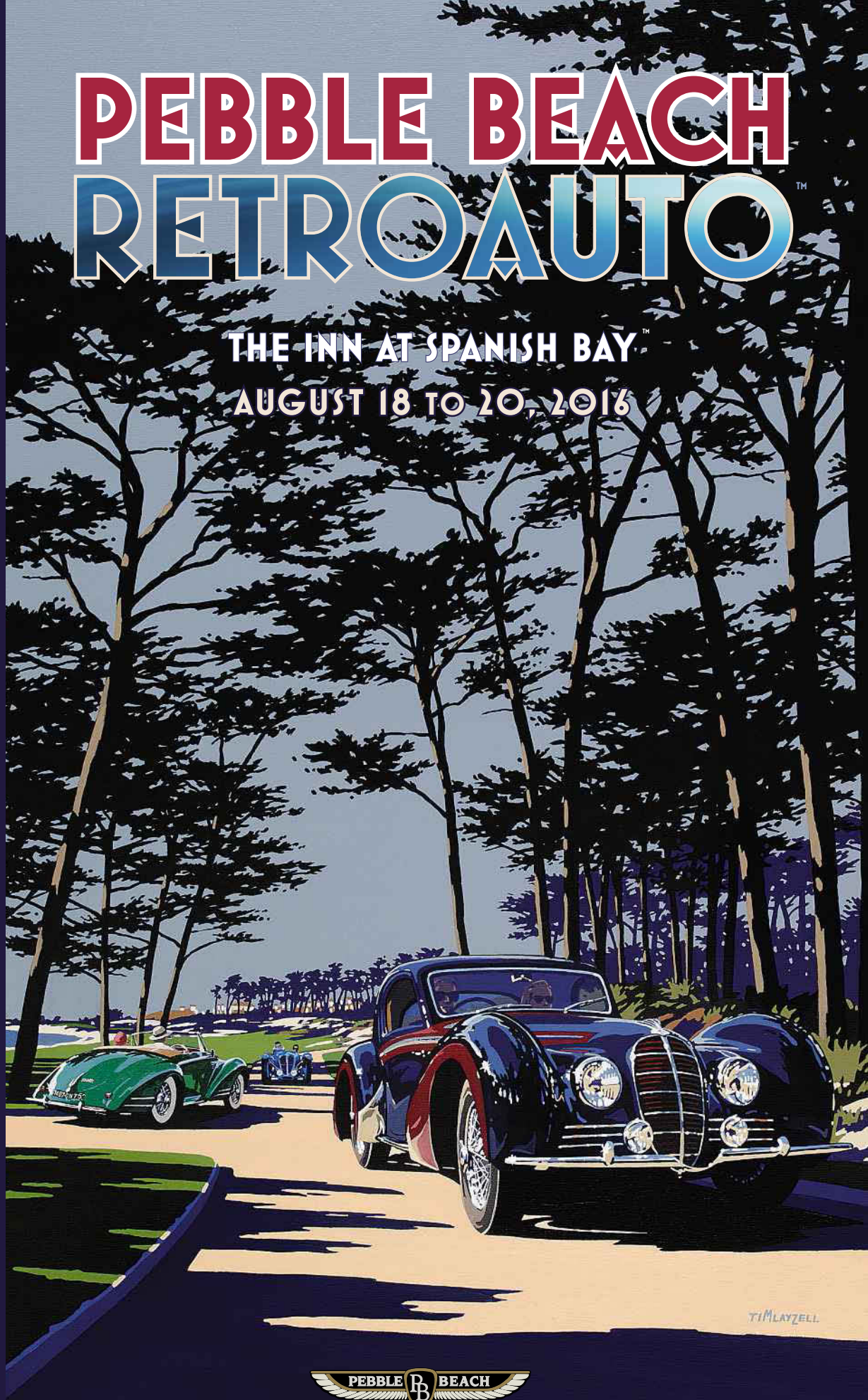
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- The Evolution of Racing at Indy with Bobby Rahal
- Life in the Pits with Stirling Moss
- Secrets to Car Valuation with Jay Leno & Donald Osborne
- When to Buy, When to Sell with Wayne Carini
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£366

For low weight and maximum support, Kirkey's aluminium competition seat should be on your list. Weighs 4.8kg and comes in three sizes – 14in to 17in. Think lightweight trackday specials, stock cars, drag racing, or anything where space and weight are at a real premium.

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**COBRA
NOGARO
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This fixed-back seat is aimed at high-end cars – think Porsches and Aston Martins. Various tasteful finishes are available (cloth, vinyl, leather or Dinamica fabric), with or without harness slots, and custom colour and trim options let you match it perfectly to your car.

4
**SPARCO
R100**
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Fixed-back seats aren't for everyone and reclining seats from big brands tend to be expensive. Sparco's R100 is usefully affordable and stands out with black, blue, grey or red accents on black trim. We think it would be ideal in a hot hatch, improving your seating position without sacrificing practicality.

5
**RECARO
PROFI
SPG**
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One of the more iconic aftermarket seats and popular for both road upgrades and race cars. Features full FIA approval, weighs in at just 6.5kg and comes in blue, black or red velour. Shoulder supports are trimmed in a different material for extra friction and support.

ESSENTIALS

THE ROUND-UP

The new motoring products that have caught our eye this month



SUNGLASSES

Sunwise Windrush Black/Yellow

£33.99

sunwise.co.uk



RC CAR

Tamiya Impreza Monte-Carlo '99

£199

hobbyco.net



DRIVING SHOES

Puma Red Bull Racing Disc

£98

uk.puma.com



BOOK

BMW Mini - An Enthusiast's Guide

£16.99

crowood.com



VIDEOGAME

Automobilista

£26.99

store.steampowered.com



T-SHIRT

S do Senna

£25

t-lab.eu



CAR CARE/MAINTENANCE

Rameder brake fluid Check-Pen

€38.99

rameder.eu



AUDIO

Pure Highway 400 DAB adapter

£129

halfords.com



MODEL

Brabham BMW BT52B Ayrton Senna 1983 test car 1:18

£102

racingmodels.com



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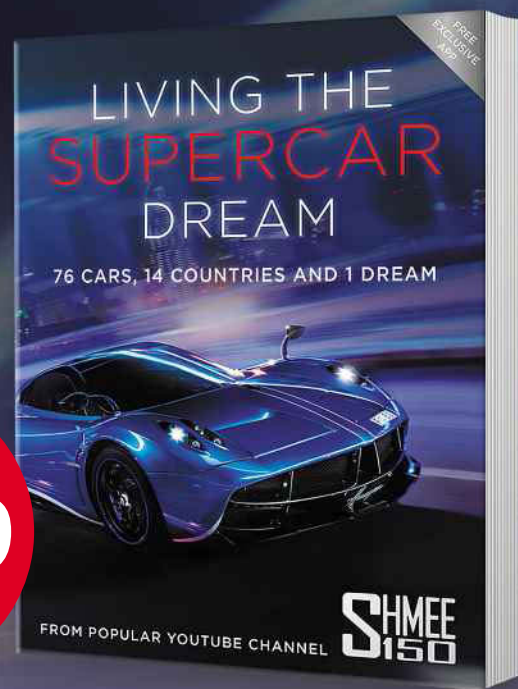
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ANALYSIS: **SHOULD YOU BUY A USED TURBOCHARGED EVO CAR?**

Ripe for tuning, or a recipe for disaster? As turbo engines take over, here's what you need to know
by Adam Towler

THE TURBOCHARGER. ONCE THE signifier of something exotic, a mystical method of extracting significantly more power without following the tried and tested route of enlarging displacement. Soon, it'll be hard to buy a new car without one. The reasons are well known, mired in the pursuit of lower fuel consumption and emissions – at least on the official testing cycle. So, whether old-fashioned, high-tech, small or large, what do turbos mean for the buyer of second-hand performance cars, and what should you be aware of?

There was a time when turbocharged cars could be temperamental beasts, primitive electronics and the effects of ferocious heat making for a troublesome combination. Modern technology has laid to rest many of those issues, but some of





‘They’re tempting to tune because the gains are so significant’

the old advice is still valid. One such piece is to have a proper warm-up and cool-down routine.

That’s a recommendation from most of our experts, including Pete Petch at Turbo Technics (turbotecnics.com), a major supplier of modified and rebuilt turbos and associated technology. He adds: ‘The main parts that wear on a turbo are the thrust bearing and journal bearing. The seals, shaft and wheels only tend to wear with high mileage. It’s bearing wear, or foreign object damage, that destroys turbos.’

What leads to this situation? ‘Oil!’ exclaims Pete. ‘Oil service intervals on modern cars are too long. If it’s not changed frequently it can lead to oil starvation problems and hard

carbon deposits that will score the bearings. Foreign object damage is usually from lack of care when fitting a replacement air filter. Small gritty bits will damage the compressor wheel, putting the turbo out of balance, which leads to failure. A further issue is turbo over-speed, which tends to occur when an air filter is restricted or blocked. In this scenario, the turbo has to work harder to generate the boost the ECU is requesting, which can lead to excessive load on the thrust bearing.’

Turbocharged cars are so tempting to tune because the gains on them are so significant versus the expenditure. That applies to everything from a remap on a VW 2.0 TFSI to one of Litchfield Import’s

(litchfieldimports.co.uk) rebuilt, enlarged, substantially redeveloped R35 GT-R engines, which can exceed the 1000bhp mark. ‘The engines are so well engineered now,’ says Iain Litchfield. ‘They’re so stifled by legislation that the base engine has to be really good [to still make the power as standard]. For example, the current Audi RS6 will go to 700bhp with just a remap. Exhaust systems are so dense now; if you fit a good aftermarket system the engine can breathe like it was designed to do.’

Experience also gives Iain a unique insight into the customer’s mindset: ‘With any modified car, there’s a natural stopping point where it all just works, but people always want more and the cost exponentially



Top left, top right and above: Porsche’s 9971 Turbo, VW’s 2-litre petrol and Audi’s RS6 all respond well to remapping

FOUR TO BUY



FERRARI F40
£830,000

Turbocharged cars don’t come much more feisty, or famous. This later-build F40 was originally delivered in Italy during 1991, but came to the UK in 2008. It has just 5500km on the clock, so adding to that number could prove costly.

joemacari.com
0208 870 9007



NISSAN GT-R
£62,995

At 768bhp, this 2011 Recaro Edition GT-R is far from one of Litchfield’s most potent offerings, but with that much power – plus Bilstein suspension, an Akropovic titanium exhaust and 400mm Alcon brakes – this still promises to be a wildly exciting car.

litchfieldimports.co.uk
01684 850999



SKODA OCTAVIA vRS
£5000

A ten-year-old Octavia vRS featuring the eminently tuneable 2.0 TFSI engine, this 80,000-mile hatch offers not only a lot of motoring square footage for the money, but also the prospect of significantly more power when tuned properly.

crossstreetusedcars.co.uk
01793 953241



SUZUKI CAPPUCCINO
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Now for a completely different sort of turbocharged performance car: the tiny Cappuccino, with its 657cc turbocharged ‘triple’. This 60,000-mile 1994 car has clearly been loved, being waxoiled from new and retaining its original floor mats.

classicandperformancecar.com
07043 229593



increases. When you've got a car with 1000bhp it does require more maintenance and regular checks. With our GT-Rs, I tell our customers that 800-900bhp is a nice level, but at 900bhp you have to redo the gearbox, and then they can't stop themselves. They're still reliable above that and we warranty all our builds, but our demo car [with 1200bhp] terrifies me on an airfield it's so fast.'

Lawrence Stockwell at Porsche experts Parr (parr-uk.co.uk) sees a shift with Porsche's engines: 'With

the old turbocharged Mezger engine [think 996/997.1 Turbo] we can tune to 630bhp on standard internals, and then build 3.9-litre engines with stronger internals that go up to 735bhp. With the 997.2 Turbo and 991 Turbo DFI engine, none of the suppliers we deal with touch the internals or the turbos, so a remap and exhaust will go to 585bhp. Nobody knows what the tuning potential of the new turbocharged Carreras is yet, but the potential will be more limited.'

Expert view



NEIL MCKAY

BBR GTI

'Ninety-five per cent of turbo failures are due to contaminants in the oil, so I'm not a fan of long-life oils and every-two-years servicing: the oils may last longer, but there's still debris in the oil. When you're buying a turbocharged car, look for one in standard condition unless a specific company with experience has tuned it. A lot of cheap remaps run too much boost, over-speeding the turbo and raising exhaust gas temperatures, which means the bearings get too hot. Keeping the torque unchanged low down maintains the right exhaust gas temperatures and allows power to be added further up'

bbrgti.com
01280 700700



KEV HALL

Revo Technik

'It's easy to make more power with a turbo engine, but hard to make efficient power. It's about getting the balance right. The key is to have the knowledge and experience to make the most of the factory ECU. We'll spend 15 months on learning them and developing new software; if you just take a few days and don't look at exhaust gas temperatures then things will wear out. If the oil is bad, then that's a big problem. Like any car, you want to let it warm up before driving it hard, then cool down after. It's also worth replacing little things like boost hose seals, as these are often overlooked but do make a difference as a car ages.'

revotechnik.com
01327 301901

SUMMARY

Maintaining a turbocharged car, and contemplating whether or not to tune it, are likely to be issues that affect most of us as new cars switch to turbocharged engines.

Modern technology means these engines are more reliable than ever before, and looked after they should give little trouble for years to come.

For tuning, the latest crop of turbocharged engines offers both positive and negative attributes. Many of the less performance-focused engines use small but very responsive turbochargers, and while this means lag is almost non-existent, it can give trouble if the tuning process isn't sympathetic to their requirements. On the other hand, the sheer sophistication of computer-aided engine design and the need to meet stringent emissions regulations while producing ever-more power has led to certain engines having massive potential to make additional power.

OPINION

'I BOUGHT ONE'

HUGO MABBOTT

NISSAN SKYLINE GT-R (R32)

'My R32 had the standard ceramic turbos, so I set the boost controller to 0.9bar to protect them. Unfortunately, it failed, and the engine ingested bits of shattered turbocharger. The rebuild cost me almost what I paid for the car, but I still loved it.'

THE SPECIALIST

PETE PETCH

Turbo Technics

'The biggest perk to having a turbo rebuilt, instead of replaced, is that if the standard unit has known issues a Turbo Technics unit will be modified to solve them. Always ensure any rebuilt turbo has been balanced properly on the correct equipment.'

EVO VIEW

STUART GALLAGHER

We wouldn't shy away from buying a used turbocharged performance car, in fact we'd actively encourage it. Old-school Imprezas and Mitsubishi Evos, or GT-Rs and 996 and 997 Turbos, would all be on our list. So too the Golf GTI Mk5 and Focus RS. The tuning potential would be hard to ignore, too.



MORE DIESEL EMISSIONS RECALLS

Ripples from the VW emissions scandal are still being felt as 630,000 diesels from the VW Group, Mercedes-Benz and Opel have been recalled. The law allows a car's ECU to avoid certain fuel-saving measures to protect the engine, but the German government believes that some manufactures have bent the rules too far.



AMY SHORE

NEW CLASSIC CAR SELLING EVENT

Bicester Heritage in Oxfordshire has added a new section to its regular Sunday Scramble gatherings. Called Motor Market, it allows private sellers to buy a pitch for their pre-1990 car and then deal directly with other enthusiasts looking to buy. The Hagerty Valuation Arena will value cars for a £15 donation to charity.



BONHAMS GOODWOOD LOTS ANNOUNCED

Bonhams has released a list of cars that will go under the hammer in its Goodwood Festival of Speed auction this year. The sale, which will take place on 24 June, includes a unique Bentley Continental V8 S Convertible (see page 197), plus a Ferrari 275 GTB, a BMW M1, an Alfa Romeo 1600 GTA and a rally prepared Audi Quattro.

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| 1966 | ASTON MARTIN DB6 Mk 1 VANTAGE White/Blue Hide, Factory Restored, Great History, Lovely Condition, 19,000m, Just Serviced | £375,000 |
| 1979 | FERRARI 512 BB Rosso/Black 1 of only 101 RHD UK Cars, Recently Restored By Ferrari, Only 21,000m, 1 Owner, Pristine..... | £350,000 |
| 1995 | FERRARI 512M Rosso/Crema, E/Windows, 1 of only 41 RHD UK Cars, Great History File, 3 Owners, 38,000m FSH, Perfect..... | £249,950 |
| 1995 | FERRARI 512M LHD Rosso/Black, E/Windows, 1 of only 501, 14,600m, Great Condition | £239,950 |
| 1971 | FERRARI 246 GT DINO Rosso/Beige, E/Windows, Spare Wheel, 1 of only 488 RHD UK Cars, Immaculate Condition Throughout..... | £329,950 |
| 1988 | FERRARI TESTAROSSA Rosso/Black Hide, E/Windows, 7,000m FFSH, Immaculate Condition Throughout | £179,950 |
| 1998 | FERRARI TESTAROSSA Rosso/Black Daytona Seats with Rosso Inserts, E/Windows, 1 of only 438RHD UK Cars, 23,000m FFSH, Immaculate Condition Throughout..... | £159,950 |
| 1991 | FERRARI TESTAROSSA Argento Nurburing/Black, E/Windows, 1 of only 438 RHD UK Cars, 2 Owners, 41,000m Just Serviced..... | £139,950 |
| 1989 | FERRARI 328 GTS (ABS) Rosso Corsa/Crema, Rear Aerofoil, Great History File, 5,000m FSH, Unbelievable Condition | £149,950 |
| 1982 | FERRARI 308 GTSi Rosso/Beige, E/Windows, 1 of only 67 RHD UK Cars, 32,000m, Good History and in Excellent Condition..... | £POA |
| 1970 | PORSCHE 911 2.2 T Light Yellow/Black, Completely Restored, Massive History File Including Books and Tools, Great Investment | £114,950 |
| 1983 | LAMBORGHINI JALPA P350 TARGA Red/Cream, 1 of 35 RHD, Featured in many articles, Original Tools, Books & Spare Wheels, Award Winning Example, 40,000m | £109,950 |
| 1973 | LAMBORGHINI URRACO P250 Orange/Cream & Orange, Extensive History File, Very Rare RHD, UK Supplied, 24,000m, Concours Condition | £99,950 |
| 1958 | MERCEDES-BENZ 190SL LHD White/Black, Hardtop, Comes with Service Book and History File, 1 of Only 3 Cars originally imported to Greece, 54,000m | £114,950 |
| 1973 | RANGE ROVER 2 DOOR White/Beige Interior, Nut & Bolt Restoration with Invoices totaling over £60,000, 28,000m, 2 Owners, Beautiful..... | £59,950 |

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| 98 | F355 SPIDER F1 Giallo Fly/Black Stitched Yellow, Yellow Calipers, Shields, 14,000m, Fantastic Service History, As New | £114,950 |
| 12 | CALIFORNIA 2+2 Silver with Black Roof/Black Daytona E/Seats, Sat Nav, Carbon Driving Zone & LED's, Magneride, 20" Alloys, Massive Spec, 12,000m FSH | £109,950 |
| 10 | CALIFORNIA 2+2 Daytona Black/Rosso Daytona E/Seats, Sat Nav, 20" Alloys, Red Calipers, Shields, Massive Spec, 18,000m FSH..... | £94,950 |
| 94 | DIABLO Black/Black Leather, Carbon Interior, Large Rear Wing, Split Rim Alloys, Sports Exhaust, 32,000m | £129,950 |
| 07 | GALLARDO E-GEAR Silver/Blue E/H/Seats, Sat Nav, Branding Pack, R'Camera, 19" Callisto, Glass Engine Cover, 7,500m | £79,950 |

PORSCHE

| | | |
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| 15 | 918 SPYDER Carrera White/Black Stitched Green, Satellite Navigation, Magnesium Alloys, Green Calipers, 3,500m, Stunning..... | £1,000,000 |
| 05 | CARRERA GT GT Silver/Ascot, Sat Nav, Full Fitted Luggage, 9,000m FSH, Immaculate Throughout | £579,950 |
| 14 | 991 TURBO PDK Jet Black/Black Leather, Sat Nav, Sport Chrono, Glass Roof, Cruise, BOSE, Park Assist, Privacy, 11,700m, As New | £99,950 |
| 64 | 991 GT3 COMFORT Rhodium Silver/Black Leather & Alcantara, PCM, Phone, Lifting Axle, 20" Titanium Alloys, Great Spec, 600m, As New | £139,950 |
| 03 | 996 GT3 CLUBSPORT Silver/Black Racing Seats, Front & Rear Roll Cage, A/C, Radio, CD, Special Features, 21,000m, Just Serviced, As New..... | £69,950 |

BENTLEY & ROLLS ROYCE

| | | |
|----|---|----------|
| 16 | BENTAYGA FIRST EDITION Dark Sapphire/Linen, Naim, Adaptive Cruise, Panoramic Roof, Cameras, Many Bespoke Features, Delivery Mileage | £254,950 |
| 13 | GHOST EWB Royal Blue/Magnolia, Sat Nav, Rear DVD's, Picnic Tables, Cameras, Panorama Roof, 20" Polished Alloys, Massive Spec, 25,000m FSH, Perfect..... | £149,950 |
| 59 | PHANTOM COUPE Diamond Black/Light Grey, Steel Bonnet, Piano Black Veneer, 21" Sports Alloys, 52,000m FSH, Extended RR Warranty..... | £119,950 |
| 13 | FLYING SPUR W12 Onyx Back/Linen Stitched Black, Sunroof, Rear Blind, R'Camera, 21" Propellar Alloys, Great Spec, 6,000m..... | £89,950 |
| 15 | CONTINENTAL GTC V8 'S' 2016 MDL Dark Sapphire/Linen, Massage & Ventilated Seats, Neck Warmer, R'Camera, Servotronic, 1,600m, As New | £134,950 |
| 14 | CONTINENTAL GTC V8 'S' Onyx Black/Black & Red, Massage & Ventilated Seats, Neck Warmer, Piano Black Veneer, Sports Exhaust, 20" Alloys, Launch Spec, 20,000m, As New..... | £109,950 |
| 11 | CONTINENTAL GT MULLINER 2012 MDL Moroccan Blue/Linen, Naim, 21" Split Rim Alloys, Ceramic Brakes, Massive Spec, 63,000m FSH, Great Condition..... | £59,950 |

OTHERS

| | | |
|----|--|----------|
| 08 | MERCEDES-BENZ SLR ROADSTER Crystal Galaxite Black/Black Contrast Red Stitching, BOSE, 19" Turbines, Red Calipers, UK Supplied, 9,900m FSH..... | £365,000 |
| 61 | MERCEDES-BENZ SLS AMG ROADSTER Le Mans Red/Black Designo H/Seats, Comand, Carbon Int & Ext Mirrors, Painted Alloys, R'Camera, Huge Spec, 9,800m, As New..... | £159,950 |
| 65 | MERCEDES-BENZ AMG GT-S Silver/Black & Red Nappa, Comand, Sports Exhaust, AMG Ride Control, 10 Spoke Alloys, Big Spec | £102,950 |
| 61 | McLAREN 12C Ice Silver/Black Hide, Sat Nav, 20" Diamond Cut Alloys, 19,000m FSH, As New..... | £112,950 |
| 13 | RANGE ROVER 5.0 V8 S/C AUTOBIOGRAPHY Loire Blue/Tan, Panoramic Roof, Privacy, 22" Turbine Alloys, Deployable Side Steps, 27,000m FSH, 1 Owner, As New | £69,950 |
| 63 | RANGE ROVER 4.4 SDV8 VOGUE SE Loire Blue/Ivory, Piano Black Veneer, Privacy Glass, 21" Diamond Turned, 37,000m FSH, Great Condition | £59,950 |

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USED RIVALS: TRACKDAY TIN-TOPS

by Adam Towler



MINI COOPER S WORKS GP

| | |
|------------|-------------------------------------|
| Engine | In-line 4-cyl, 1598cc, supercharged |
| Power | 215bhp @ 7100rpm |
| Torque | 184lb ft @ 4600rpm |
| Weight | 1090kg |
| 0-62mph | 6.5sec (claimed) |
| Top speed | 149mph (claimed) |
| On sale | 2006 |
| evo rating | ★★★★★ |

'I BOUGHT ONE'

'The character of the car is different to other hot hatches. It's just got that X-factor – it's hard to describe. On a track the handling is very predictable; you can drive it to the edge. My car is highly modified so has needed work, but as standard they're reliable. I've noticed values are starting to rise, but I'm never going to sell mine.' **Mark Hutchison**

EXAMPLES



2006 £12,950

Giles Cooper Automotive

This GP – number 1589/2000 – has only done 38,000 miles and comes with a full main dealer service history.

BUYING ADVICE

'People tend to keep the GP cars tidy. They're either very original, or heavily modified. They can be prone to oil leaks, some of which are hard to reach. Superchargers and gearboxes are strong, but the bushes may well be tired by now. The wheels are quite heavy, so we'd recommend fitting 17in OZ items instead of the 18in originals, and a reduced supercharger pulley will give a bit more power, too.' **Emma Dutton, lohen.co.uk**

THIS MONTH, THREE unashamedly hardcore, fast-road/trackday tin-tops, two of which junk the rear seats in pursuit of fighting the flab.

The original Mini GP is a fantastically intense, unyielding little car that never provides a dull moment, and values have been rising of late.

As for the Renault Mégane R26.R, it's been written about many times in these pages.



RENAULT MÉGANE R26.R

| | |
|------------|------------------------------|
| Engine | In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc, turbo |
| Power | 227bhp @ 5500rpm |
| Torque | 229lb ft @ 3000rpm |
| Weight | 1220kg |
| 0-62mph | 6.0sec (claimed) |
| Top speed | 147mph (claimed) |
| On sale | 2008-2009 |
| evo rating | ★★★★★ |

'I've had it a year, and bought it on the strength of the reviews. It's definitely lived up to them – it's great. I've done lots of trips to the Ring and trackdays, plus I use it every day. It's not expensive to run and everything has lasted well. The feedback, the feel through the steering, it's not like a modern car; the cornering speeds are awesome.' **Kyle Reid**



2008 £15,500

Private sale

A '58' car with 53,500 miles, a remap to 249bhp, specialist service history and the roll-cage.

'These cars lead a varied life. The good thing is that they tell their own story with careful inspection. Discoloured – burgundy – brake calipers tell you the brakes have seen some serious heat; gravel trapped in nooks and crannies suggests a trackday "off"; also look for discolouration on the carbon bonnet above the turbo. Servicing is as per the normal R26, but "R" parts can be hard to source, even from Renault.' **Sean Martin, k-tecracing.com**



MITSUBISHI EVO X RS

| | |
|------------|------------------------------|
| Engine | In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc, turbo |
| Power | 276bhp @ 6500rpm |
| Torque | 311lb ft @ 3500rpm |
| Weight | 1420kg |
| 0-62mph | 5.0sec (estimated) |
| Top speed | 155mph (claimed) |
| On sale | 2007-2008 |
| evo rating | ★★★★★ |

'I've had four Evos before this one, and used it as my daily for a while. It's a bit noisier inside than my old X FQ330 as there's less sound deadening and there's no radio either, but I listen to the engine anyway. It's a lot of fun on a trackday, and does everything in any weather: I put winters on it and even used it in the snowy weather.' **Mark Eddy**



2008 £39,995

Private sale

The spec on this 2008 RS sounds ferocious: 480bhp from a forged engine with uprated turbo.

'Look for faults with the differentials, knocking noises from the suspension – expensive if rear arms – and stretched timing chains. Stretched chains will rattle and the engine light will be on. They're heavy on brakes, too. Look out for accident damage and underside rust as they tend to lead a hard life. The main thing is to keep on top of servicing: do so and they're really strong cars.' **Jamie Lumley, evotune.co.uk**

THE EVO CHOICE

The Mini is a four-wheeled riot that delivers a raw driving experience matched with a genuine sense of involvement and precision. On the road it can feel unbeatable and it's the same story on track, where it offers a level of adjustability unexpected of a car from its class.



The Mitsubishi is a vicious weapon that can bite just as hard as it can excite. Being a genuine homologation special means many of its road-car components were designed to be ditched for competition parts the minute it left the showroom, so upgrades are strongly recommended.

Which leaves the Mégane R26.R, a car that combines the usability of the Mini with the outrageous performance of the Mitsubishi. Its stripped-back nature makes it the most compromised of the three, but we'd have one in a blink. **Stuart Gallagher**

BUYING JOURNEY

From Mini to Audi, an **evo** reader lays out his driver-centric ownership history



MATTHEW ROBINS

1st **Mini Clubman Estate**

'My first car. Nut Brown, but that's not what my friends called it. A great way to learn about the basics of car dynamics, and I carried up to seven people in it.'



1985



2015

7th **Audi R8**

'It's a V8 manual in the right spec – simple, driver-focused. It is as absolutely awesome as its reputation suggests and feels so special in every situation. One to keep forever?'



6th **Mini Cooper S Works GP**

'The biggest surprise of any car I've bought. I loved it: it had more character and spirit than almost anything I've driven – a real randy terrier of a car, entertaining on every drive and at all speeds.'



2014

5th **Porsche 996 Carrera 4S**

'I'd loved these from the day I first saw them, and I'd always promised myself a 911. After a few weeks I noticed from the reg it was the cover car of **evo** 043! All the miles were a true pleasure.'



2009

2nd **BMW E30 325i Sport**

'My first car with true evoness, aged 24. It looked the business in Dolphin Grey, and with plenty of power and no traction control there was inevitably a big heart-in-mouth moment first time out in the wet.'



1994

Tip

Sorry to tempt you, Matthew, but did you read the 'Model Focus' piece on the Ferrari FF in last month's mag?



3rd **Lotus Elise S1**

'My first – and still only – new car. It felt so good and I can vividly remember moments from magical drives in France. Owned another one from 1999 to 2001, and a 111R more recently.'

1998

4th **Porsche 968 Club Sport**

'Sold the Elise for this – when the chance comes up to own a CS, you take it. Still up there in the three best cars I've owned. Mine was white with blue wheels and decals.'



1999

What's next?

'I can see myself in our ML as an everyday hack for a while. Ok, maybe a year. An AMG version might be fun. It seems heretical to even think about what might replace the R8 in the garage; it's such a special thing. The only thing I lust after as a future replacement – if funds ever allowed – is a Ferrari FF. Maybe I'll be back here in ten years' time!'



evo view

Matthew's rich and varied car history contains far too many gems for us to cram onto this page. It was a tough call to leave out his two Honda Integra Type Rs, for example, or the GC8 Impreza Turbo and Clio 197.


Despite the Porsches and R8, there has been plenty of more humble machinery, too: the Champagne Metallic Mk2 VW Golf 1.3 CL that managed to entertain on the Route Napoléon with only 54bhp; the 1978 Toyota Corolla estate owned for a couple of months while touring New Zealand; a Mazda MX-5 'California' edition, and a V8-powered Series IIA Land Rover.

With children, Matthew has also needed a family car. First it was an Audi A6, then a Volvo XC90 for a number of years, changing again when his trusty Subaru Outback 3.0R made way for a Mercedes-Benz ML500.

Tell us your buying journey. Email eds@evo.co.uk



1983 Ford Escort RS1600i
Estimate (£): 8,500 - 10,500




1978 Porsche 911 Turbo (930)
Estimate (£): 40,000 - 45,000


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1969 Mercedes-Benz 280 SL Pagoda
Estimate (£): 35,000 - 40,000



1957 Land Rover 109 Inch Chassis #34
Estimate (£): 12,000 - 15,000

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BUYING GUIDE: ASTON MARTIN RAPIDE 2010-

An Aston for the family man, the Rapide is a rare and seriously under-appreciated machine
by Peter Tomalin

ULRICH BEZ ALWAYS SEEMED TO have one eye on what his old comrades at Porsche were up to. The V8 Vantage was positively laser-targeted at the 911, and when Porsche revealed it was launching a four-seat, five-door saloon, it didn't take long for Aston to respond. The Panamera appeared in April 2009; less than a year later, in early 2010, the first Rapides were rolling out of a dedicated facility at the Magna Steyr factory in Austria.

Bez outsourced production because he envisaged annual sales of 2000 cars – far too many for Gaydon to cope with. In fact the Rapide never sold in anything like those numbers, and in 2012 production relocated to the UK. Indeed the Rapide is one of the rarest of modern Astons

– according to howmanyleft.co.uk, only around 650 are currently registered in the UK (contrast with around 4000 Panameras).

Some were no doubt deterred by its relatively cramped rear seats and limited luggage space, others perhaps by the wilfully sporting character of its chassis and drivetrain. Aston always described it as a four-seater sports car, and it wasn't kidding. Despite its extra length and weight, the Rapide was every bit as agile and involving as a DB9, with which it shared most of its underpinnings.

At launch, the Rapide came with a 470bhp version of the familiar 5.9-litre V12, driving the rear wheels through a six-speed automatic transaxle gearbox with the option to shift manually via paddles – Touchtronic II in Aston-

speaking. The performance claims were 0-60mph in 5.2sec and a top speed of 188mph.

In January 2013, the original car was replaced by the Rapide S. A deeper grille and new headlight treatment ramped-up the road presence; variable valve timing and new engine management lifted peak power to 550bhp, dropping the 0-60mph time to just 4.9sec.

Then, in late 2014, the S was given an extensive refresh, which included the latest – and rather brilliant – eight-speed Touchtronic III gearbox, along with tauter suspension and a host of detail refinements. Revised gearing and a small increase in power enabled Aston to claim a truly astonishing 203mph and 0-60 in just 4.2sec. More than ever, the Rapide was Aston's four-seater sports car – and Panamera-beater.

CHECKPOINTS

ENGINE

Our guide is John McGurk, boss of independent Aston specialists McGurk Performance Cars. It's fair to say he's a huge fan of the Rapide – in fact he rates it so highly he has one himself. 'For me, the Rapide is the most overlooked Aston,' he says. 'It handles brilliantly, and with two young children, it's perfect for us.'

The Rapide is one of the best-sorted of all modern Astons, thanks to sharing so much with the DB9, whose teething problems had long been addressed. That includes the V12 engine, which, provided it's regularly serviced (in practice that means every year) and the oil level checked religiously, gives very few problems. The only serious issues with

the V12 over the years have been caused by oil starvation, but the Rapide appears not to be affected. 'Although on any V12 Aston I do a cold start and listen for any noise from the bottom of the engine, just to be sure,' says John. Similarly, where early V12s eat coil-packs, Rapides have the later, improved items. The only other thing to check for is timing cover oil leaks.

TRANSMISSION

All Rapides have a version of Touchtronic – a conventional torque-converter auto with steering-wheel-mounted paddles. Most Rapides have a six-speed; the eight-speeder was introduced in 2014. 'We've never had any issues with the auto, either on the Rapide or the DB9,' says John McGurk. Make sure you try it in both

modes, and check that the transmission is smooth and responsive on slow-speed take-up.

SUSPENSION, STEERING, BRAKES

The Rapide has adaptive damping (ADS) as standard. Check the dampers for leaks – replacements are getting on for a grand each – and during the road

test make sure the different damping modes are clearly working; same goes for the Sport button, which gives a more aggressive throttle response and quicker gearshifts.

It's a heavy car (205kg heavier than the DB9) so it eats brakes and tyres for fun, and these don't come cheap (see Parts Prices). So check how much life is left in



Above: brakes and tyres can wear out quickly.
Right: interior is plush, but rear quarters are cosy.
Bottom: V12 reliable if serviced regularly



them and budget – or haggle – accordingly.

BODY, INTERIOR, ELECTRICS

The Rapide inherited much of the DB9's bonded aluminium monocoque. Most of the bodywork is aluminium, too, and, contrary to popular belief, it does corrode – check for any signs of bubbling along panel edges. Much of the underside is covered,

so we'd recommend paying a specialist for a full inspection.

Check all the toys work – replacements will be formidably expensive. Same goes for windows, central locking, seat adjustment, etc.

Battery age and condition is important, as a poor battery can lead to electrical gremlins. If the owner has invested in a trickle-charger, that's a good sign.

RIVALS

PORSCHE PANAMERA TURBO

Roomier than the Aston, more powerful, too, with 493bhp on tap, and with the bonus of 4WD. Very appealing, but not as involving as the Rapide. Good examples from c£60k.

MASERATI QUATTROPORTE V

Set a dynamic benchmark for big, four-seater, luxury performance cars. Sport GTS 4.7 with 433bhp the one to have. Currently from £40k, rising to £50k for late examples.

BENTLEY FLYING SPUR

It can't match the Aston for handling, but the Flying Spur was once the world's fastest four-door production saloon, its 552bhp twin-turbo W12 seeing it good for 195mph.

INFORMATION

ASTON MARTIN RAPIDE

(2013 'S' in brackets)

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Engine | V12, 5935cc |
| Max power | 470bhp @ 6000rpm (550bhp @ 6000rpm) |
| Max torque | 443lb ft @ 5000rpm (457lb ft @ 5000rpm) |
| Transmission | Six-speed automatic, rear-wheel drive, LSD |
| Weight | 1990kg |
| Power-to-weight | 240bhp/ton (281bhp/ton) |
| 0-60mph | 5.2sec [4.9sec] claimed |
| Top speed | 188mph [190mph] claimed |
| Price new | £139,950 [£149,995] |

PARTS PRICES

Prices from mcgurk.com. Tyre price from blackcircles.com. All prices include VAT but exclude fitting charges.

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Tyres (each) | £188.57 front, £200.95 rear (Bridgestone Potenza S001) |
| Front pads (set) | £594.61 |
| Front discs (pair) | £718.32 |
| Damper (front) | £978.32 |
| Exhaust (cat-back) | £4015.16 |
| Catalyst | £552.20 |
| Spark plugs (set) | £213.02 |
| Air filter | £82.46 |
| Oil filter | £23.75 |

SERVICING

Prices from mcgurk.com, including VAT. Service every 10,000 miles or annually.

| | |
|-------------------------|---------|
| 1st year service | £669.12 |
| 2nd year service | £927.60 |
| 3rd year service | £669.12 |

USEFUL CONTACTS

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amoc.org/forum
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INDEPENDENT SPECIALISTS

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CARS FOR SALE

used.astonmartin.com
 pistonheads.com
 classicandperformancecar.com



'I BOUGHT ONE'

NICK ELWOOD

'We bought our Rapide new in December 2011: Onyx Black with a Sandstorm and Obsidian Black leather interior. We have since done about 15,000 miles in it, mostly on long drives, including numerous trips to France and one with all the skiing gear on board as well!

'We were initially sceptical about the Rapide as a viable way to carry the family over a distance of more than 200 miles, so we considered some much bigger traditional saloons such as an S-class, but having lived with it for over four years, it was absolutely the right choice. We have a family of four with teenage sons and have managed numerous cross-continental journeys in absolute comfort.

Provided you aren't carrying much more than four medium-large bags the boot is well sized and will take everything needed for a week's break – although that skiing gear was admittedly a squeeze!

'We mainly take the car out on weekends and for trips, so the majority of driving has been on open roads and motorways. It manages about 20-22mpg, which seems quite reasonable for a 5.9-litre V12! The car has never gone wrong and so the main running costs are yearly servicing charges and extras such as winter tyres.

'However, the main reason we

bought the car wasn't to do with practicalities. It was after we heard it roar through 5000 revs, chucked it through a few corners and had enough time to soak up its utter beauty that we decided to take the plunge. I don't know of another four-door that will sit equally happily on a track, concours or snow-lined mountain pass. It brings four smiles to the faces of the family every time we drive it and, as such, will definitely be a long-term keeper.'



IN THE CLASSIFIEDS



2010 (60) RAPIDE
£55,995

36,000 miles, Tungsten Grey, black hide with silver stitching, piano black veneers, rear entertainment, 20in alloys, full AM history
christopherjacksonltd.com



2012 (60) RAPIDE
£71,900

21,300 miles, Onyx Black, Obsidian Black full leather, piano black veneers, rear entertainment, 20in diamond-turned alloys, full AM history
johnhollandsales.co.uk



2013 (13) RAPIDE S
£84,950

22,000 miles, Copi Bronze, Cream Truffle, piano black trim, rear entertainment, 20in diamond-turned alloys, full AM history
hamiltongrays.com

WHAT WE SAID



GROUP TEST, MARCH 2010

'Mooching around town, the Rapide feels a little lazy, the responses of its torque-converter auto soft, its 5.9-litre V12 surprisingly subdued after the flourish of revs and throaty roar that announced its firing up. There's a Sport button that sharpens throttle and gearbox response, and prodding it and using the wheel-mounted paddles puts the car on higher alert and puts you more in charge, which bolsters your confidence.

'The view from behind the wheel is pure DB9, but you're aware that there's more mass along for the ride. That said, the button to select a firmer damper setting goes un-pushed because the big Aston is quite firmly sprung, nicely taut, and feels rewardingly precise as it is. In places where you can read the road's curves and plot where you'd like to apex, the Aston delivers.

'Grip from the bespoke Bridgestone Potenza S001s is strong and there's hardly a flicker from the stability control light as the 470bhp V12 digs deep. Aurally, the V12 comes alive from 3000rpm, as if a dozen trumpet mutes are doffed in unison, the sound becoming heavy, gravelly, glorious.

'There's an easy, natural feel to its dynamics and, when you ask, it delivers. Its steering relays more information [than its rivals'], and its chassis is especially good in the transient moves, flicking left, right, left. The upshot is that the Rapide is a more impressive steer than the DB9 or DBS.' – **evo** 141

WHAT TO PAY

£?
£55,000+

The Rapide, like many Astons, suffers from steep initial depreciation before values start to stabilise. Early examples (2010/11) are now reaching the point where that curve begins to flatten out. So if you buy wisely, avoid doing a huge mileage and pay meticulous attention to upkeep, you shouldn't lose more than a few grand over a couple of years. Early cars (2010/11) with average to high miles start at around £55k, the best low-mileage examples are c£65k, and 2012 cars are from £70k. Rapide Ss start at c£80k, eight-speed cars £95k.



Lamborghini Aventador LP 750-4 SV (RHD)
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Porsche 991 GT3 RS 4.0 (RHD)
£277,995 An exquisite RHD Lava Orange GT3 RS, with just 700 miles from new.



Ferrari 430 Scuderia (RHD)
£179,995 An impressive RHD Scuderia, with just 22k miles from new.



Ferrari Dino 246 GT
£339,995 A fully restored 246 GT, with just 20k miles and Classiche certification.



Porsche 964 Carrera RS NGT
£179,995 One of only 290 NGTs produced, with just 25k miles from new.



Bentley Continental GTC V8S
£149,995 A highly spec'd MY2016 V8S, with just 6k miles from new.



Ferrari 360 Spider F1 (RHD)
£79,995 A RHD 360 Spider, with just 16k miles and great history.



Porsche 993 3.8 RSR
£POA The very last of just 30 RSRs, one owner and less than 9k miles.



Ferrari 458 Speciale (RHD)
£SOLD A perfect 2016 RHD Speciale with just 2k miles from new.

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REQUIRED**



**SIMILAR CLASSIC
AND SUPERCAR
STOCK REQUIRED**



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Renault 5 Turbo
£79,995



Porsche 964 Carrera 2 Manual
£49,995



Mercedes E500 Limited
£29,995



Peugeot 205 GTI 1.6
£7,995

MODEL FOCUS: RENAULTSPORT CLIO V6

Mid-engined and a ferocious rep: we'll likely never see such a rampant hot hatch again

by Adam Towler

THERE HAVE BEEN FEW CARS QUITE like the Renaultsport Clio V6, and sad as it is to say, it's unlikely there'll be another. It's a car that's not without its faults, but one that's hard to beat on an emotional level.

Launched in 2001 with 227bhp, the Phase 1 Clio V6 rapidly acquired a reputation for brutal oversteer when provoked. A number of these cars have been damaged, so a history check is vital, and this is where the energetic V6Clio.net community plays a significant part: anyone serious about buying a Clio V6 should visit. The Phase 2 version arrived in 2003 and featured a higher-revving engine (now with 251bhp) and a significantly modified chassis. Renault marketed a select range

Expert view

SCOTT GLANDER at SG MOTORSPORT

'The V6s tend to have more mature owners now: they became cheap, and many were abused, but today even Phase 1 cars are £16,000-plus. The condition of cars out there varies a lot, and to find a very clean Phase 1 is now very hard. Look for corrosion on the body, faulty air-con systems, seized rear suspension track-rod ends and cracked rear cats on any V6. On Phase 1s the brake calipers often need refurbishing and front splitters go missing, while camshaft dephaser pulleys and flywheels can clatter on Phase 2s, amongst other common faults. It's easy to find a shiny Clio V6, but it's what's under the skin that counts.'

SEAN MARTIN at K-TEC RACING

'Handling on the Phase 2, along with build quality, is greatly improved, and this is reflected in the prices. A good specialist history is often better than a main dealer history, as you need to know what to look for, and most dealers have only ever seen a handful. The cambelt and water pump is a big job and can easily be £1500 – and that's required every five years. Suspension parts such as ball joints, arms and driveshafts can now be very difficult to source through Renault, and are hefty in price as well, while body panels are now obsolete. Regular coil and spark-plug changes will also be on the agenda, especially for examples that don't get driven that far in a year.'



of colours under the 'ID' badge, and these – Liquid Yellow, Acid Yellow and Lunar Grey – are the ones the market really wants.

Renaultsport expert Steve Murr of R-Sport Cars says: 'The Clio V6 has grown rapidly in price in the last three years. Phase 1 V6 prices are rising fast, and for a 35,000-mile example you'll pay around £17,500. Silver was the standard colour, but Mars Red and Iliad Blue are in high demand and priced accordingly. With the Phase 2 there seems to be two strands of pricing based on standard and ID colours. Standard-colour – silver, black, blue – cars on 20,000 miles and with full history are now worth up to £28,000; ID colours with similar mileages are worth up to £5000 more.'



SERIAL BUYER

DAWN COUCH

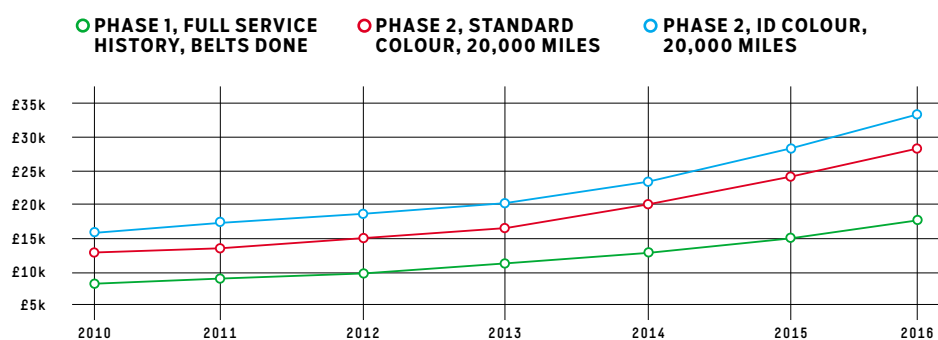
'My very first car was a 1.2-litre Clio, and I remember seeing the brochures for the Phase 2 V6 in the showroom and wanting one. After two years, I bought an RS Clio 182, then a 197, and then the black Phase 2 V6 that I still own now – that was six years ago. Since then I've also had loads of 182s, 172s, a Twingo, and then in December 2014 a Phase 1 Clio V6 joined the Phase 2. I also have a 172 Cup and a Mégane R26!'

'The Phase 2 is my favourite, though – that one's not going anywhere. It's a different sort of car: people really look at it, and while it's not the quickest, you really know you're driving it. I was nervous the first time I drove it, but buzzing on the way home – I couldn't believe I'd got one.'

'The only things I don't like are how low it is – you've got to check where you're going in advance – and the very poor turning circle, which is a nightmare if you get lost. The Phase 1 is a different sort of car; more comfortable but not as highly tuned. I've had no problems with either: I even used the Phase 2 as my daily, but it's in storage now that the values have risen. I'll get the Phase 1 out for the summer, even if that one was bought more as an investment.'

Trends

Data supplied by Steve Murr of R-Sport Cars



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Increased return of **£10,000**

Porsche Cayman GT4

| | |
|---------------------------------|---------|
| Part exchange valuation | £85,000 |
| Guaranteed buy price in 30 days | £88,000 |
| SOLD FOR | £95,000 |
| Returned customer (less fee) | £93,500 |



Increased return of **£19,995**

Ferrari 599 GTB

| | |
|---------------------------------|----------|
| Part exchange valuation | £100,000 |
| Guaranteed buy price in 30 days | £110,995 |
| SOLD FOR | £119,995 |
| Returned customer (less fee) | £118,495 |



Increased return of **£12,995**

Porsche GT3

| | |
|---------------------------------|---------|
| Part exchange valuation | £67,000 |
| Guaranteed buy price in 30 days | £72,000 |
| SOLD FOR | £79,995 |
| Returned customer (less fee) | £78,495 |

Why sell your car privately or get below trade 'book' price from dealers when you can sell your car this way?

Example stock cars



Porsche 911 GT3 RS 4.0
£279,995



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Aston Martin Vanquish
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Bentley Continental GT V8
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Porsche Panamera Turbo S
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SHOULD YOU KEEP IT?

Nissan Juke Nismo



Relight the spark that made you buy your car in the first place by treating it to some choice upgrades and accessories **by Antony Ingram**

NISSAN'S JUKE NISMO IS AN unusual choice in a market teeming with talented hot hatchbacks, but their unexciting shapes are exactly why the curious crossover may appeal. It's surprisingly talented, but if you've found yourself drawn to more accomplished rivals, the Nismo is only a few tweaks away from being even better.

The droning engine note (also common to the Clio 220 that shares its 1.6-litre lump with the Juke) can be fixed with Milltek's

cat-back exhaust system (£558.50 from tarmacSPORTZ.co.uk). It liberates a fruitier note without being offensively loud.

It's also tempting to take some height from the Juke's lofty stance, both for styling and the added benefit of reducing body roll without compromising the Nismo's pliant ride. Eibach offers Pro-Kit performance springs that shave either 15mm or 25mm from the front and rear ride height – a modest £216 for either set at eibachshop.co.uk.

Aftermarket news



PORSCHE 996/997 LOWER ARMS

RPM Technik and suspension specialist Eibach have worked together to develop a new lower arm for Porsche's 996, 997, 986 and 987 models. It offers more geometry adjustment than standard and individual parts can be replaced, saving costs down the line.



BRABUS RESTORATIONS

Best known for its Mercedes tuning, Brabus used the Techno-Classica show in Essen to present its '6-star' restoration service. Each restoration starts from bare metal, takes as long as 4000 hours, and comes with a two-year unlimited mileage warranty.



POP-ART BENTLEY

Far from the worst paintwork we've seen on a Conti GT, Bentley and artist Sir Peter Blake have teamed up for a pop-art take on the Continental GT V8 S Convertible. The Bentley will be auctioned by Bonhams at the 2016 Goodwood Festival of Speed for the Care2Save Charitable Trust.



MANSORY CARBONADO-V

Much as we complain about the likes of Mansory, they do rekindle the visual impact that supercars used to have. These new centre-lock wheels are a perfect example, with forged centres and carbon rims. They fit the Lambo Aventador, and Mansory's own Carbonado models.

NEXT MONTH

ANALYSIS

The V12 performance cars you must own: Aston, Ferrari, Lamborghini, Bentley and Mercedes.

USED RIVALS

Mid-engined supercars: Audi R8, Lamborghini Gallardo and Ferrari F430. Which should you pick?

BUYING GUIDE

Gen 1 and 2 987 Boxster: the best value flat-six Porsche? Find out what to look out for.

MODEL FOCUS

Ariel Atom: wind in your hair (and everywhere else). Motoring at its barest.

'Why I've kept it'

TONY CORNER

VAUXHALL ASTRA GSI TURBO



'I have always had performance cars. I'm now 48 and back in the '90s I owned a Renault 5 Gordini Turbo: it was amazingly fast and handled superbly. I also had a Cavalier SRI 130 that I loved but so did the car thieves. I still remember every Saturday night, without fail, chasing them up the street. After getting through three sets of locks I reluctantly got rid of it.

'I then bought a Rover 620ti, the ultimate wolf in sheep's clothing. I had it running approximately 260bhp! It was so quick: I took it on the track at Croft and had Cossie drivers crying as I went past them on the straights.

'Next came a BMW 328i SE E36 with full Alpina spec. It was a very nice car and built like a tank, but I missed the turbo boost so bought a Japanese-spec 2001 Subaru Impreza STI with a Genome exhaust. My son was only seven at the time – he's now 20 – and the *Fast and Furious* film had just come out so he thought it was amazing and all his mates couldn't believe it.

'The STI was fast but the running costs were unbelievable – 14mpg and £1800 insurance. So after a year I traded it in for an Astra GSI Turbo in Star Silver, which I still own. It was only a year and a half old with 13,000 miles on the clock. I'm now coming up to 12 years of ownership and the car is still totally standard. It's never let me down once; I service it every year. The mileage is now up to 68,000 and I still get a buzz every day I drive it.

'There aren't many left now, especially in standard spec – they're very popular with the young lads who tune them then either blow them up or crash! My son has always loved it so much he now owns one the same colour.'

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1998 Mitsubishi 3000GT Twin Turbo
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Lamborghini Murcielago LP670-4 SV Ceramic Brakes High Level Rear Wing Small Decal option 4,000 miles 2009 **£369,990**



Lamborghini Murcielago LP670-4 SV colour Satnav, Ceramic Brakes, High level Rear Wing, Grey, 5,000 miles, 2010, **£199,990**



Lamborghini Diablo Roadster 5.7 Sports exhaust, Full leather interior, 30,000 miles, 1997, **£179,990**



Lamborghini LP550-2 Superleggera Singapore Transparent engine cover, Skorpius Alloys, Carbon Driving Zone, 25,000 miles, 2011, **£139,990**



Lamborghini Gallardo Superleggera LP570-4 Rear Lifting Gear, Rear Camera, High level rear wing, 25,000 miles, 2010, **£124,990**



Lamborghini Gallardo LP550-2 HIGH Skorpius Alloys, Lifting Gears, 11,000 miles, 2011, **£104,990**



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Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4 Spyder LHD Lifting Gear Reverse Camera Full Electric Heated Seats 8,000 miles 2009 **£94,990**



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Lamborghini GALLARDO Spyder RARE MANUAL Switchable sports exhaust, Calisto Alloys, 34,000 miles, 2006, **£79,990**



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Ferrari F12 BERLINETTA Ferrari F12 BERLINETTA JBL sound upgrade, LED and Carbon steering wheel, 8,000 miles, 2013, **£219,990**



FERRARI 599 GTB Full Electric Heated Seats, Satellite navigation system, 26,000 miles, 2006, **£114,990**



FERRARI 599 GTB HGTE Alloy Wheels, Ceramic Brakes, 2007, 29,000 miles, **£104,990**

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THE KNOWLEDGE

⊕ = 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.

| MAKE & MODEL | 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 | £19,090 | 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 | £33,055 | 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 Giulietta QV | 199 D | £28,330 | 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 | £25,595 | 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 | 73 | 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 | £31,230 | 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 Sportback | 221 R | £40,795 | 5/2480 | 367/5500 | 343/1625 | 1520kg | 242 | 4.3 | - | 155 | 189 | 34.9 | + Addictive five-cylinder noise; monster pace - Chassis not exactly playful | ★★★★★ |
| 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 | £27,060 | 4/1997 | 218/5000 | 228/1350 | 1420kg | 156 | 6.4 | - | 155 | 154 | 42.8 | + Performance, price, running costs - Dull four-pot soundtrack | ★★★★★ |
| BMW M135i | 212 R | £32,010 | 6/2979 | 321/5800 | 332/1300 | 1430kg | 228 | 5.1 | - | 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 | 261/6650 | 232/2750 | 1430kg | 183 | 6.1 | 15.3 | 155 | - | 34.0 | + Fantastic engine - Suspension can still get a little boingy | ★★★★★ |
| 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 | 10*-15 | 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 | ★★★★★ |
| DS 3 Performance | 222 D | 70*-495 | 4/1598 | 205/6000 | 221/3000 | 1175kg | 177 | 6.5 | - | 143 | 125 | 50.4 | + All the right ingredients - Undercooked | ★★★★★ |
| 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 | ★★★★★ |
| Ford Focus 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 | 213 R | £18,144 | 4/1596 | 212/6000 | 236/2750 | 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 - Grown up compared to Twingo/Swift | ★★★★★ |
| Ford Fiesta Zetec S Mountune | 132 R | 08*-13 | 4/1596 | 138/6750 | 125/4250 | 1080kg | 130 | 7.9 | - | 120 | 134 | 48.7 | + As above, with a fantastically loud exhaust... -...if you're 12 years old | ★★★★★ |
| Ford Fiesta ST | 075 D | 05*-08 | 4/1999 | 148/6000 | 140/4500 | 1137kg | 132 | 7.9 | - | 129 | - | 38.2 | + Great looks, decent brakes - Disappointing chassis, gutless engine | ★★★★☆ |
| Ford Focus ST TDCi Estate | 219 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 - Gets ragged when really pushed | ★★★★★ |
| Ford Focus ST | 207 R | £22,745 | 4/1999 | 247/5500 | 265/2000 | 1362kg | 184 | 6.5 | - | 154 | 159 | 41.5 | + Excellent engine - Scrappy when pushed | ★★★★★ |
| Ford Focus ST Mountune | 187 D | £23,940 | 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 | 295/2000 | 1392kg | 187 | 5.8 | 14.3 | 155 | 224 | - | + ST takes extra power in its stride - You probably still want an RS | ★★★★★ |
| Ford Focus RS (Mk3) | 220 R | £29,995 | 4/2261 | 345/6000 | 347/2000 | 1524kg | 230 | 4.7 | - | 165 | 175 | 36.7 | + Torque-vectoring 4WD brings new sensations to hot hatch sector - Engine isn't thrilling | ★★★★★ |
| Ford Focus RS (Mk2) | 195 R | 09*-11 | 5/2522 | 300/6500 | 324/2300 | 1467kg | 209 | 5.9 | 14.2 | 163 | 225 | 30.5 | + Huge performance, highly capable FWD chassis - Body control is occasionally clumsy | ★★★★★ |
| Ford Focus RS500 (Mk2) | 181 R | 10*-11 | 5/2522 | 345/6000 | 339/2500 | 1467kg | 238 | 5.6 | 12.7 | 165 | 225 | - | + More power and presence than regular Mk2 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 | + Revvy engine, sparkling chassis, bargain used prices - Rusty rear arches | ★★★★★ |
| 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 | 216 R | £29,995 | 4/1996 | 306/6500 | 295/2500 | 1378kg | 226 | 5.7 | - | 167 | 170 | 38.7 | + Great on smooth roads - 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 | 142/5600 | 1267kg | 158 | 6.8 | 17.5 | 146 | 215 | 31.0 | + Looks great, VTEC more accessible - Steering lacks feel, inert balance | ★★★★★ |
| Honda Civic Type R 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 | 217 D | £20,205 | 4/1991 | 201/6000 | 195/1500 | 1359kg | 143 | 7.3 | - | 150 | 170 | 38.2 | + Fun and appealing package - Soft-edged compared to rivals | ★★★★★ |
| 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 S Sport | 132 R | £15,995 | 4/1948 | 102/6000 | 101/4000 | 1030kg | 107 | 10.4 | - | 117 | 135 | 48.7 | + Fun and funky - Feels tiny after a Mini | ★★★★★ |
| Mazda 3 MPS | 137 R | 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-AMG A45 | 221 R | £39,995 | 4/1991 | 376/6000 | 350/2250 | 1480kg | 258 | 4.2 | - | 155 | 162 | 40.9 | + Tremendously fast - But not a true great | ★★★★★ |
| Mercedes-Benz A45 AMG | 194 R | 12*-15 | 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 | ★★★★★ |
| Mini Cooper (F56) | 194 D | £15,485 | 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 | £18,840 | 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 | 11*-15 | 4/1998 | 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 (R53) | 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 (R53) | 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 | £21,995 | 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 | ★★★★★ |
| 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 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 | ★★★★★ |



WIN 2-NIGHTS AT HOTEL DE FRANCE

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If you're heading to Le Mans this year, make sure you head to Hotel de France.

This famous hotel, in La Chartre-sur-le-Loir 40km from Le Mans, was used as the HQ for manufacturers such as Aston Martin and Porsche. It's an incredible venue, dripping with Le Mans history.



OUR CHOICE

Renaultsport Mégane 275. This generation of Mégane has got better and better with every update, and the 275 is simply sublime.



BEST OF THE REST

The latest Ford Focus RS (left) is our favourite super-hatch, with the more grown-up Golf R close behind.

Table with columns: MAKE & MODEL, ISSUE NO., PRICE, ENGINE CYL/CC, BHP/RPM, LB FT/RPM, WEIGHT, BHPTON, 0-60MPH, 0-100MPH, MAX MPH, CO2 g/km, EC MPG, and EVO RATING. Contains a comprehensive list of cars with their specifications and performance ratings.



There's another reason to visit, too. evo has joined forces with TOTAL – the leading international oil and gas company and technical supporters of Aston Martin Racing – to hold the 24hrs of evo.



There will also be a limited number of exclusive gift packs available to evo readers who visit the Hotel de France during the Le Mans 24h weekend.

HOW TO ENTER

You will need to visit the hotel between 12 noon on Friday 17th and 12 noon on Saturday 18th. First place is 2-nights off-season free accommodation at the Hotel de France, an exclusive motorsport gift from TOTAL and a one-year subscription to EVO.



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OUR CHOICE

BMW M5. The turbocharging of BMW's M-cars met with scepticism, but the current M5's 4.4-litre twin-turbo V8 feels a perfect fit. It's a brutally fast car, and there are clever (and useable) adjustable driving modes. 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 G63 AMG rival has more approachable limits. If you must have an SUV, take a look at Jaguar's F-Pace or Porsche's Macan Turbo, Macan GTS or Cayenne GTS.

| | ISSUE NO. | PRICE | ENGINE CYL/CC | BHP/RPM | LB FT/RPM | WEIGHT | BHP/TON | 0-60MPH | 0-100MPH | MAX MPH | CO2 g/KM | FC 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 RS4 | ★★★★★ |
| 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) | 216 R | '12-'15 | 8/4163 | 444/8250 | 317/4000 | 1795kg | 251 | 4.5 | 10.5 | 174 | 249 | 26.4 | +Looks and sounds the part, thunderously fast - Unnatural steering, dull dynamics | ★★★★★ |
| Audi RS4 (B7) | 088 R | '05-'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 | 1620kg | 236 | 4.8 | 12.1 | 170 | - | 17.0 | +Effortless pace - Not the last word in agility, Bends wheel rims | ★★★★★ |
| Audi RS2 | 214 R | '94-'95 | 5/2226 | 315/6500 | 302/3000 | 1595kg | 202 | 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 Plus | 217 D | \$97,700 | 8/3993 | 597/6100 | 553/2500 | 1990kg | 305 | 3.8 | - | 155 | 229 | 28.2 | +Fantastic drivetrain, quality and refinement - Dynamic Steering feels artificial | ★★★★★ |
| Audi RS Q3 | 206 D | \$45,495 | 5/2480 | 335/5300 | 332/1600 | 1650kg | 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 unsporing | ★★★★★ |
| 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 Bentayga | 217 D | \$160,200 | 12/5950 | 600/5000 | 664/1350 | 2347kg | 260 | 4.0 | - | 187 | 296 | 21.6 | +Sublime quality, ridiculous pace, capable handling - Inert driving experience, SUV stigma | ★★★★★ |
| 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 | 224/5000 | 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 | 324/3750 | 1580kg | 285 | 4.4 | - | 180 | 295 | - | +Saloon chassis + weight savings + GTS engine = best E90 M3 - Just 67 were made | ★★★★★ |
| 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 | \$64,525 | 6/2993 | 376/4000 | 546/2000 | 2190kg | 155 | 5.3 | - | 155 | 173 | 42.8 | +Straight-line pace - Driving experience identical to standard X5, despite the M badge | ★★★★★ |
| BMW X6 M | 212 D | \$93,080 | 8/4395 | 567/6000 | 553/2200 | 2265kg | 245 | 4.2 | - | 155 | 258 | 25.4 | +Big improvement on its predecessor - Coupe roofline still of questionable taste | ★★★★★ |
| BMW X6 M | 134 D | '09-'15 | 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 | \$333,000 | 12/6233 | 720/5100 | 811/2100 | 1850kg | 395 | 3.8 | - | 217 | - | - | +Seven hundred and twenty bhp - Three hundred thousand pounds | ★★★★★ |
| Cadillac CTS-V | 148 R | \$67,030 | 8/6162 | 556/6100 | 551/3800 | 1928kg | 293 | 3.9 | - | 191 | 365 | 18.1 | +It'll stand out among M-cars and AMGs - But the novelty might wear off | ★★★★★ |
| Ford 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 | ★★★★★ |
| 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 | 213 D | \$44,865 | 6/2995 | 335/6500 | 332/4500 | 1590kg | 214 | 4.9 | - | 155 | 194 | 34.9 | +Great chassis; neat design - V6 loses appeal in the real world | ★★★★★ |
| Jaguar XF S | 214 D | \$49,945 | 6/2995 | 375/6500 | 332/4500 | 1635kg | 233 | 5.0 | - | 155 | 198 | 34.0 | +Outstanding ride and handling balance - Engine lacks appeal | ★★★★★ |
| Jaguar XF S Diesel | 219 D | \$49,945 | 6/2993 | 296/4000 | 516/2000 | 1675kg | 180 | 5.8 | - | 155 | 144 | 51.4 | +Great chassis, good looks, better engine than V6 petrol - It's still a diesel | ★★★★★ |
| Jaguar XFR | 181 D | '09-'15 | 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 | '13-'15 | 8/5000 | 542/6500 | 501/2500 | 1800kg | 306 | 4.4 | - | 186 | 270 | 24.4 | +XF gets turned up to 12 - Tyres aren't cheap | ★★★★★ |
| Jaguar XFR-S Sportbrake | 203 R | '14-'15 | 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 | \$58,690 | 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 | \$91,755 | 8/5000 | 542/6500 | 502/2500 | 1805kg | 302 | 4.4 | - | 174 | 270 | 24.4 | +Hot-rod vibe, fine cabin - Opinion-dividing looks | ★★★★★ |
| Jaguar F-Pace 3.0 V6 Supercharged | 222 D | \$65,275 | 6/2995 | 375/6500 | 332/4500 | 1861kg | 205 | 5.1 | - | 155 | 209 | 57.7 | +A match for Porsche's SUVs - Supercharged V6 needs to be worked hard | ★★★★★ |
| 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 GS F | 221 D | \$69,995 | 8/4969 | 471/7100 | 391/4800 | 1790kg | 267 | 4.6 | - | 168 | 260 | 25.2 | +Superb engine, exploitable chassis - Gearbox is off the pace | ★★★★★ |

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| | ISSUE NO. | PRICE | ENGINE CYL/CC | BHP/RPM | LB FT/RPM | WEIGHT | BHP/TON | 0-60MPH | 0-100MPH | MAX MPH | CO2 G/KM | EG MPG | EVO RATING | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|----------|---------------|----------|-----------|--------|---------|------------|-------------|---------|----------|--------|--|-------|
| Lexus IS F | 151 R | '07-'12 | 8/4969 | 417/6600 | 372/5200 | 1714kg | 247 | 4.7 | 10.9 | 173 | 270 | 24.4 | + Shockingly good Lexus - The M3's available as a (second hand) four-door too | ★★★★★ |
| Lotus Carlton | 170 R | '91-'93 | 6/3615 | 377/5200 | 419/4200 | 1658kg | 231 | 4.8 | 10.6 | 176 | - | 17.0 | + The Millennium Falcon of saloon cars - Every drive a work-out | ★★★★★ |
| Maserati 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 Levante Diesel | 221 D | €53,000 | 6/2897 | 271/4000 | 442/2000 | 2205kg | 125 | 6.9 | - | 143 | 189 | 39.2 | + Impressive blend of ride and handling - Diesel performance is mild for a Maserati | ★★★★★ |
| Maserati Quattroporte S | 137 R | '08-'12 | 8/4691 | 425/7000 | 361/4750 | 1990kg | 226 | 5.1 | 12.1 | 174 | 365 | 18.0 | + A QP with the bhp it deserves - Grille is a bit Hannibal Lecter | ★★★★★ |
| Maserati Quattroporte Sport GTS | 141 R | '08-'12 | 8/4691 | 433/7000 | 361/4750 | 1990kg | 221 | 5.1 | - | 177 | 365 | 18.0 | + The most stylish supersaloon - Slightly wooden brakes, unforgiving ride | ★★★★★ |
| Maserati Quattroporte | 085 R | '04-'08 | 8/4244 | 394/7000 | 333/4500 | 1930kg | 207 | 5.1 | - | 171 | - | 17.9 | + Redefines big-car dynamics - Don't use auto mode | ★★★★★ |
| Mercedes-Benz 190E 2.5-16 | 185 F | '89-'92 | 4/2498 | 201/6750 | 177/5500 | 1360kg | 147 | 7.2 | - | 142 | - | 24.4 | + M-B's M3 alternative - Not as nimble as the Beemer | ★★★★★ |
| Mercedes-Benz CLA45 AMG | 186 D | €42,270 | 4/1991 | 355/6000 | 332/2250 | 1510kg | 239 | 4.6 | - | 155 | 161 | 31.0 | + Strong performance, classy cabin - Pricey compared to A45 AMG hatchback | ★★★★★ |
| Mercedes-Benz GLA45 AMG | 205 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 Estate | 216 R | €61,260 | 8/3982 | 469/5500 | 479/1750 | 1710kg | 279 | 4.2 | - | 155 | 196 | 33.6 | + Much more fun than it looks - Gearbox dim-witted at low speeds | ★★★★★ |
| 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 C63 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 | 577/5500 | 590/1750 | 1795kg | 327 | 4.1 | - | 155 | 229 | 28.8 | + Effortless power; intuitive and approachable - Dim-witted auto 'box | ★★★★★ |
| Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W212) | 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 (W212) | 134 D | '09-'11 | 8/6208 | 518/6800 | 465/5200 | 1765kg | 298 | 4.5 | - | 155 | 295 | 22.4 | + As below, but with an extra 1lbhp and squarer headlights - Steering still vague | ★★★★★ |
| Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W211) | 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 | 1760kg | 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 | 577/5500 | 664/2250 | 1995kg | 294 | 4.4 | - | 155 | 237 | 27.9 | + Monster pace - Average steering feel | ★★★★★ |
| Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG S | 199 D | €86,500 | 8/5461 | 577/5500 | 590/1750 | 1795kg | 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 a 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 GL63 AMG S | 218 D | €94,405 | 8/5461 | 577/5500 | 560/1750 | 2270kg | 258 | 4.2 | - | 155 | 276 | 23.9 | + Stonking pace, extreme refinement - Feels remote | ★★★★★ |
| Mercedes-Benz GL63 AMG S Coupe | 213 D | €96,555 | 8/5461 | 577/5500 | 560/1750 | 2275kg | 258 | 4.2 | - | 155 | 278 | 23.7 | + Subtler than an X6 M - More force than finesse | ★★★★★ |
| Mercedes-Benz ML63 AMG | 176 R | €87,005 | 8/5461 | 518/5250 | 516/1750 | 2270kg | 232 | 4.7 | - | 155 | 276 | 23.9 | + Great engine, surprisingly good dynamics - £85K buys a Boxster and an ML350... | ★★★★★ |
| Mercedes-Benz G63 AMG | 172 D | €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 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 VI Makinen 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 | €86,000 | 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 GT | 217 D | €55,188 | 6/2997 | 355/6000 | 369/1650 | 1895kg | 190 | 5.2 | - | 159 | 212 | 30.7 | + Handles like an SUV shouldn't - Still looks like an SUV | ★★★★★ |
| 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 - Not a match for a proper sports saloon | ★★★★★ |
| Porsche Cayenne GTS (Mk2, V6) | 211 D | €72,523 | 6/3604 | 434/6000 | 442/1600 | 2100kg | 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 | 444/6500 | 380/3500 | 2085kg | 202 | 5.6 | - | 162 | 251 | 26.4 | + Dynamically the best SUV of its era - Two tons, it's still no sports car | ★★★★★ |
| Porsche Cayenne Turbo (Mk2) | 212 D | €93,574 | 8/4806 | 513/6000 | 533/2250 | 2185kg | 239 | 4.5 | - | 173 | 261 | 25.2 | + Remarkable performance, handling, completeness - Vague steering, dated engine | ★★★★★ |
| 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 Si4 | 160 D | €46,660 | 4/1999 | 237/6000 | 251/1900 | 1760kg | 144 | 7.0 | - | 135 | 199 | - | + Striking looks, sporting dynamics - Hefty price, and petrol version is auto-only | ★★★★★ |
| Range Rover Sport SDV8 | - | €84,350 | 8/4367 | 334/3500 | 546/1750 | 2359kg | 144 | 6.5 | - | 140 | 219 | 33.6 | + A brilliant long-distance machine - Doesn't live up to the 'Sport' branding | ★★★★★ |
| Range Rover Sport V8 Supercharged | 186 D | €84,350 | 8/5000 | 503/6000 | 460/2500 | 2335kg | 199 | 5.0 | - | 155 | 298 | 21.7 | + Deceptively quick and capable sports SUV - It's still got a weight problem | ★★★★★ |
| Range Rover Sport SVR | 212 D | €95,150 | 8/5000 | 542/6000 | 501/3500 | 2335kg | 236 | 4.5 | - | 162 | 298 | 21.7 | + Characterful drivetrain; genuine off-road ability - Not a match for its rivals on the road | ★★★★★ |
| 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 | 2300kg | 242 | 4.7 | - | 155 | 317 | 20.8 | + It's quicker than you think - It's more enjoyable driven slowly | ★★★★★ |
| 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 RB200 | 105 R | '07 | 4/2457 | 316/6000 | 332/3750 | 1495kg | 215 | 4.8 | - | 155 | - | - | + Fitting tribute to a rallying legend - Too hardcore for some? | ★★★★★ |
| Subaru Impreza WRX STI PPP | 073 R | '03-'05 | 4/1994 | 300/6000 | 299/4000 | 1470kg | 207 | 5.2 | 12.9 | 148 | - | - | + A Subaru with real edge - Bit too edgy in the wet | ★★★★★ |
| Subaru 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 R | '99 | 4/1994 | 237/6500 | 258/3500 | 1235kg | 195 | 5.0 | 14.1 | 143 | - | - | + | |

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OUR CHOICE

Lotus 3-Eleven. It may not be groundbreaking but it is hugely exciting. The V6 sounds fabulous and the open linkage on the manual gearbox looks fantastic. A circuit is obviously its natural habitat but it has surprisingly civilised road manners, so you could happily drive to and from a trackday in it.



BEST OF THE REST

Porsche's 781 Boxster S (left) has lost some character and desirability with the switch to four cylinders, but its performance and handling are still exemplary. Jaguar's F-type also impresses in both V6 and V8 forms, while an Ariel Atom or Caterham Seven offer an even more extreme alternative to the 3-Eleven.

| ISSUE NO. | PRICE | ENGINE Cyl/CC | BHP/RPM | LB FT/RPM | WEIGHT | BHP/TON | 0-60MPH | 0-100MPH | MAX MPH | COC 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 |
| <i>Alfa Romeo 8C Spider</i> | 161 R | '09-'11 | 8/4691 | 450/7000 | 354/4750 | 1675kg | 273 | 4.5 | - | 181 | - | - | + Beauty meets beast. They hit it off - Boot is useless for touring |
| Alpina D4 Biturbo Convertible | 212 D | \$54,950 | 6/2993 | 345/4000 | 516/1500 | 1815kg | 193 | 5.0 | - | 171 | 156 | 47.9 | + As much torque as a 997 Turbo - A diesel convertible wouldn't be our choice of Alpina |
| Ariel Atom 3.5 Supercharged | 180 D | \$38,000 | 4/1998 | 310/8400 | 169/7200 | 550kg | 573 | 2.7 | - | 155 | - | - | + As mad as ever - Rain |
| Ariel Atom 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 | 475/10,500 | 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 | 212 R | \$147,000 | 12/5935 | 565/6750 | 457/5750 | 1745kg | 329 | 4.1 | - | 201 | 343 | 19.2 | + A brilliant two-seat roadster... - Let down by a frustrating gearbox |
| <i>Aston Martin V12 Vantage Roadster</i> | 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 |
| <i>Aston Martin DBS Volante</i> | 133 D | '09-'12 | 12/5935 | 540/6500 | 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 | \$41,805 | 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 TTS 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 RS5 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 | '11-'15 | 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 |
| 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 drivers' Bentley - Excessively heavy, feels like it could give more |
| Bentley Conti GT Speed Convertible | 172 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 |
| <i>Bentley Continental Supersports</i> | 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 | \$37,100 | 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 - Dynamic chassis is upset by ragged surfaces |
| <i>BMW Z4 3.0si (Mk1)</i> | 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 |
| <i>BMW Z4 M Roadster</i> | 091 R | '06-'09 | 6/3246 | 338/7900 | 269/4900 | 1410kg | 244 | 4.8 | - | 155 | - | 23.3 | + Exhilarating and characterful, that engine - Stiff suspension |
| <i>BMW M Roadster</i> | 002 R | '98-'02 | 6/3246 | 325/7400 | 258/4900 | 1375kg | 240 | 5.3 | - | 155 | - | 25.4 | + Fresh-air M3, that motor, hunky looks - M Coupe drives better |
| BMW 435i Convertible | 194 D | \$45,680 | 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 M4 Convertible (F83) | 202 D | \$61,145 | 6/2979 | 425/5500 | 406/1850 | 1705kg | 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 | 414/8300 | 295/3900 | 1810kg | 232 | 5.3 | - | 155 | 297 | 22.2 | + M DCT transmission, pace, slick roof - Extra weight blunts the edge |
| <i>BMW M3 Convertible (E46)</i> | 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 |
| <i>BMW Z8</i> | 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 | \$19,710 | 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 | 219 R | \$23,795 | 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 | \$27,795 | 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 | 220 R | \$30,795 | 4/1999 | 210/7600 | 150/6300 | 560kg | 381 | 4.3 | - | 136 | - | - | + It's the one we built for ourselves - Trickier on the limit than lesser-powered Sevens |
| Caterham Seven 620S | 220 D | \$44,995 | 4/1999 | 310/7700 | 219/7350 | 610kg | 516 | 3.4 | - | 155 | - | - | + Ludicrous, near-620R pace, with added habitability - Well, 'habitable' for a Seven... |
| Caterham Seven 620R | 187 R | \$50,795 | 4/1999 | 310/7700 | 219/7350 | 572kg | 551 | 2.8 | - | 155 | - | - | + Banzai on track, yet still relevant on the road - £50k for a Seven? |
| Caterham Seven CSR | 094 R | \$47,295 | 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 Roadsport | 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 | '13-'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 GT 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 | 212 D | \$154,460 | 8/3855 | 552/7500 | 557/4750 | 1729kg | 324 | 3.6 | - | 196 | 250 | 26.9 | + Turbocharged engine is a triumph - Still places daily usability 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 | - | - | + 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 | 8/5000 | 542/6500 | 501/3500 | 1665kg | 331 | 4.0 | - | 186 | 255 | 26.4 | + Pace, characterful V8 - Costs £25k more than the S |
| Jaguar F-type Project 7 | 212 R | '15 | 8/5000 | 567/6500 | 501/2500 | 1585kg | 363 | 3.9 | - | 186 | - | - | + Noise, performance, adjustability - Expensive, and not the GT3 rival we would have liked |
| 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 |
| 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 |

PAST MASTER



NOBLE M12

It evolved from an Elise rival, but was quicker to 60mph than a 911 GT3. Here's what John Barker thought

'Press the throttle a bit and the pulse of the 310bhp twin-turbo V6 motor deepens as the M12 surges forward - you can sense that there's a colossal amount of urge waiting to be released and not a lot of inertia resisting it. 'In feel, the M12 is like a Lotus Esprit only better because it's

lighter and seems better planted. Its handling encourages a clean, economical approach.

'There's no question in your mind that the M12 will be able to cope with full power. The whole car has a polish and integrity that inspires confidence. And it does cope, even though the

shove in the back you get when the throttle hits the stop almost knocks the wind out of you. It feels as quick as the new 911 Turbo, and sounds rather better.

'Britain has a new supercar maker. Noble's only problem now is that the M12 doesn't yet have the kudos of a big-name badge'

ISSUE 023, SEPTEMBER 2000

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Table with columns: 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, and EVO RATING. Rows include Lotus Elise Sport, Lotus Elise Sport 220, Lotus Elise 1.6 Club Racer, Lotus Elise S Club Racer, Lotus Elise R, Lotus Elise SC, Lotus Elise S18, Lotus Elise 111S, Lotus Elise Sport 135, Lotus Elise Sport 190, Lotus Elise (SI), Lotus Exige Sport 350 Roadster, Lotus Exige S Roadster, Lotus 3-Eleven, Lotus 2-Eleven, Lotus 2-Eleven Supercharged, Lotus 2-Eleven GT4, Lotus 340R, Lotus Elan SE, Maserati GranCabrio, Maserati GranCabrio Sport, Maserati GranCabrio MC, Mazda MX-5 2.0i Sport (Mk4), Mazda MX-5 2.0i Sport Tech (Mk3.5), Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk3), Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk2), Mazda MX-5 1.6 (Mk1), Mercedes-AMG SLC43, Mercedes-Benz SLK 55 AMG, Mercedes-Benz SLK 55 AMG, Mercedes-Benz SLK 55 AMG Black Series, Mercedes-Benz SL500, Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG, Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG, Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG, Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG, Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG, Mercedes-Benz SL500, Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG Roadster, Morgan 3 Wheeler, Morgan Plus 8 Speedster, Morgan Plus 8, Morgan Aero SuperSports, Morgan Aero 8, Nissan 370Z Roadster, Porsche 718 Boxster S, Porsche Boxster (981), Porsche Boxster S (981), Porsche Boxster GTS (981), Porsche Boxster Spyder (981), Porsche Boxster S (987), Porsche Boxster Spyder (987), Porsche Boxster (986 2.7), Porsche Boxster S (986), Radical SR3 SL, Radical SR8LM, Renault Sport Spider, Rolls-Royce Dawn, Toyota MR2, TVR Tamora, TVR Tuscan Convertible, TVR Chimera S.0, TVR Griffith 4.3, TVR Griffith 500, Vauxhall VX220, Vauxhall VX220 Turbo, Vuhl 05, Zenos E10 S.

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OUR CHOICE

Porsche Cayman GT4. Porsche's Motorsport department has finally been let loose on the Cayman and the result is exactly what we all hoped for. In fact it's so good it won our 2015 Evo Car of the Year test – even despite the 991-generation 911 GT3 RS also being in attendance. Who saw that coming?



BEST OF THE REST

The 911 GT3 RS is still fabulous, of course (it came third at eCoty 2015). If you fancy something less hardcore, the 911 Carrera (left) and Carrera S haven't been ruined by the addition of turbos. Aston Martin's Vantages are thoroughly entertaining, and Jaguar's F-type R Coupe is a hoot.

| | 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 | 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 | '07-'09 | 8/4691 | 450/7000 | 354/4750 | 1585kg | 288 | 4.1 | - | 181 | - | - | + Looks, exclusivity, noise, balance - They're all sold | ★★★★★ |
| Alpina D4 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 | ★★★★★ |
| 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 | 218 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 | + Amongst the best Astons ever made - Old-school automated 'box | ★★★★★ |
| Aston Martin Vantage GT12 | 214 R | £250,000 | 12/5935 | 592/7000 | 461/5500 | 1565kg | 384 | 3.5 | - | 185 | - | - | + The GT3-style Vantage we've been waiting for - Only 100 being made | ★★★★★ |
| Aston Martin V12 Zagato | 146 R | '09-'13 | 12/5935 | 510/6500 | 420/5750 | 1680kg | 308 | 4.4 | 9.7 | 190 | 388 | 17.3 | + The car we hoped the V8 Vantage would be - Erm, a tad thirsty? | ★★★★★ |
| Aston Martin V12 Zagato | 181 F | '13 | 12/5935 | 510/6500 | 420/5750 | 1680kg | 308 | 4.2 | - | 190 | 388 | 17.3 | + The looks, the noise, the way it drives - It's several times the price of a V12 Vantage | ★★★★★ |
| Aston Martin DB9 | 178 R | £133,495 | 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 DB9 GT | 214 D | £140,000 | 12/5935 | 540/6750 | 457/5500 | 1785kg | 307 | 4.5 | - | 183 | 333 | 19.8 | + More power; still has bags of character - Needs eight-speed auto 'box | ★★★★★ |
| Aston Martin DBS | 142 R | '07-'12 | 12/5935 | 510/6500 | 420/5750 | 1695kg | 306 | 4.2 | - | 191 | 388 | 17.3 | + Stupendous engine, gearbox, brakes - Pricey. Can bite the unwary | ★★★★★ |
| Audi TT 2.0 TFSI (Mk3) | 204 R | £29,915 | 4/1984 | 227/4500 | 273/1650 | 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 | 273/1650 | 1335kg | 173 | 5.3 | - | 155 | 149 | 44.1 | + Looks, interior, decent performance and handling - Lacks ultimate involvement | ★★★★★ |
| Audi TTs (Mk3) | 209 R | £38,790 | 4/1984 | 306/5800 | 280/1800 | 1365kg | 228 | 4.9 | - | 155 | - | - | + The most dynamically interesting TT yet - Still not as interactive as a Cayman | ★★★★★ |
| Audi TTs (Mk2) | 193 R | '08-'14 | 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 | '09-'14 | 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 | '12-'14 | 5/2480 | 355/5500 | 343/1650 | 1450kg | 249 | 4.3 | - | 174 | 209 | 31.4 | + Stonkingly fast cross-country - Shockingly expensive for a TT | ★★★★★ |
| Audi TT Sport (Mk1) | 081 D | '05-'06 | 4/1781 | 237/5700 | 236/2300 | 1390kg | 173 | 5.9 | - | 155 | - | 30.3 | + Deliciously purposeful interior, crisp chassis - Numb steering | ★★★★★ |
| Audi S5 | 189 D | £43,665 | 6/2995 | 328/5500 | 325/2900 | 175kg | 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 | 175kg | 263 | 4.5 | - | 155 | 246 | 26.9 | + Brilliant engine and improved chassis - Lack of suspension travel; inconsistent steering | ★★★★★ |
| Audi R8 V8 | 201 R | '07-'15 | 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 | ★★★★★ |
| 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 - W12 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 | 212 D | £168,300 | 12/5998 | 626/6000 | 605/1700 | 2245kg | 283 | 4.0 | - | 206 | 338 | 19.5 | + Desirability meets exclusivity and performance - We'd still have the V8 | ★★★★★ |
| 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 | '11-'12 | 6/2979 | 335/5900 | 369/1500 | 1495kg | 228 | 4.8 | - | 155 | 224 | - | + Character, turbo pace and great looks - Came and went too quick | ★★★★★ |
| BMW 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 M2 | 220 R | £44,070 | 6/2979 | 365/6500 | 369/1450 | 1495kg | 248 | 4.5 | - | 155 | 199 | 33.2 | + More progressive chassis balance than M4 - Engine isn't inspirational | ★★★★★ |
| BMW M4 | 218 R | £57,055 | 6/2979 | 425/5500 | 406/1850 | 1515kg | 285 | 4.3 | - | 155 | 204 | 32.1 | + Ferociously fast - A handful on less-than-perfect or less-than-bone-dry roads | ★★★★★ |
| BMW M4 Competition Package | 221 R | £60,005 | 6/2979 | 444/7000 | 406/1850 | 1515kg | 298 | 4.3 | - | 155 | 204 | 32.1 | + Better tied-down than the regular M4 - Torque delivery still rather abrupt | ★★★★★ |
| BMW M4 GTS | 222 R | £120,500 | 6/2979 | 493/6250 | 442/4000 | 1510kg | 332 | 3.7 | 8.0 | 190 | 199 | 34.0 | + Vast improvement on lesser M4s - So it should be at this price | ★★★★★ |
| BMW M3 (E92) | 196 R | '07-'13 | 8/3999 | 414/8300 | 295/3900 | 1580kg | 266 | 4.3 | 10.3 | 155 | 290 | 22.8 | + Fends off all of its rivals - ...except the cheaper 1-series M | ★★★★★ |
| BMW M3 GTS (E92) | 171 R | '10-'11 | 8/4361 | 444/8300 | 324/3750 | 1530kg | 295 | 4.3 | - | 190 | 295 | - | + Highly exclusive, one of the most focused M-cars ever - Good luck trying to find one | ★★★★★ |
| BMW M3 (E46) | 066 R | '05-'07 | 6/3246 | 338/7900 | 269/5000 | 1495kg | 230 | 5.1 | 12.3 | 155 | - | 23.7 | + One of the best BMWs ever. Runner-up in eCoty 2001 - Slightly artificial steering feel | ★★★★★ |
| BMW M3 CS (E46) | 219 R | '00-'07 | 6/3246 | 338/7900 | 269/5000 | 1495kg | 230 | 5.1 | - | 155 | - | 23.7 | + CSL dynamics without CSL price - Looks like the standard car | ★★★★★ |
| BMW M3 CSL (E46) | 200 R | '03-'04 | 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-'98 | 6/3201 | 321/7400 | 258/3250 | 1460kg | 223 | 5.4 | 12.8 | 157 | - | 25.7 | + Performance, image - Never quite as good as the original | ★★★★★ |
| BMW M3 (E30) | 165 R | '86-'90 | 4/2302 | 212/6750 | 170/4600 | 1165kg | 185 | 6.7 | 17.8 | 147 | - | 20.3 | + Best M-car ever! Race-car dynamics for the road - LHD only | ★★★★★ |
| BMW Z4 M Coupe | 097 R | '06-'09 | 6/3246 | 338/7900 | 269/4900 | 1420kg | 242 | 5.0 | - | 155 | - | 23.3 | + A real drivers' car - You've got to be prepared to get stuck in | ★★★★★ |
| BMW M Coupe | 005 R | '98-'02 | 6/3246 | 321/7400 | 258/4900 | 1375kg | 237 | 5.3 | - | 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) | 218 R | £93,500 | 8/4395 | 552/6000 | 501/1500 | 1850kg | 303 | 4.2 | - | 155 | 231 | 28.5 | + Mighty ability, pace, technology - You'll want the Competition Package upgrade too... | ★★★★★ |
| BMW M6 (Mk1) | 106 R | '05-'10 | 10/4999 | 500/7750 | 384/6100 | 1635kg | 311 | 4.8 | 10.0 | 155 | 342 | 19.8 | + Awesome GT, awesome sports car - SMG gearbox now off the pace | ★★★★★ |
| BMW i8 | 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 Camaro Z/28* | 220 R | \$71,750 | 8/7008 | 505/6100 | 481/4800 | 1732kg | 296 | 4.2 | - | 175 | - | - | + Scalpel-sharp engine, great chassis (really) - Feels very stiff on UK roads | ★★★★★ |
| Chevrolet Corvette Stingray (C7) | 197 R | £62,450 | 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 | £87,860 | 8/6156 | 650/6400 | 650/3600 | 1598kg | 413 | 3.2 | - | 186 | - | - | + Mind-boggling raw speed; surprisingly sophisticated - Edgy when really pushed | ★★★★★ |
| Ford Mustang 2.3 EcoBoost | 222 D | £30,995 | 4/2261 | 313/5500 | 319/3000 | 1655kg | 192 | 5.8 | - | 155 | 179 | 35.3 | + Ninety per cent as good as the V8 - Missing ten per cent is what makes the Mustang | ★★★★★ |
| Ford Mustang 5.0 V8 GT | 219 R | £34,495 | 8/4951 | 410/6500 | 391/4250 | 1720kg | 242 | 4.8 | - | 155 | 299 | 20.9 | + Looks, noise, performance, value, right-hand drive - Comes undone on rougher roads | ★★★★★ |
| Ford Mustang Shelby GT350* | 221 R | £48,695 | 8/5162 | 526/7500 | 429/4750 | 1715kg | 312 | 4.3 | - | 180 | - | - | + Engaging when driven fast - Doesn't flatter half-hearted commitment | ★★★★★ |
| 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-'00 | 4/1797 | 187/8000 | 131/7300 | 1101kg | 173 | 6.2 | 17.9 | 145 | - | 28.9 | + Arguably the greatest front-drive car ever - Too raw for some | ★★★★★ |
| Honda NSX | 188 R | '90-'05 | 6/3179 | 276/7300 | 224/5300 | 1410kg | 196 | 5.5 | - | 168 | - | 22.8 | + The useable supercar - 270bhp sounds a bit weedy today | ★★★★★ |
| Honda NSX-R* | 100 R | '02-'03 | 6/3179 | 276/7300 | 224/5300 | 1270kg | 221 | 4.4 | - | 168 | - | - | + Evo Car of the Year 2002 - Honda never brought it to the UK | ★★★★★ |
| 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 | 218 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 F-type R Coupe AWD | 217 R | £91,660 | 8/5000 | 542/6500 | 501/3500 | 1730kg | 318 | 4.1 | - | 186 | 269 | 25.0 | + Better in the wet - Less involving in the dry | ★★★★★ |
| Jaguar XKR | 168 R | '09-'14 | 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 | '11-'14 | 8/5000 | 542/6000 | 502/2500 | 1678kg | 328 | 4.2 | - | 186 | 292 | 23.0 | + Faster and wilder than regular XKR - The F-type R Coupe | ★★★★★ |
| Jaguar XKR-S GT | 193 R | '14 | 8/5000 | 542/6000 | 502/2500 | 1638kg | 336 | 3.9 | - | 186 | 292 | 23.0 | + The most exciting XKR ever - Very limited numbers | ★★★★★ |
| Lexus RC F | 206 R | £59,995 | 8/4969 | 542/6000 | 391/4800 | 1765kg | 271 | 4.5 | - | 168 | - | - | + Great steering, noise, sense of occasion - Too heavy to be truly exciting | ★★★★★ |
| Lotus Elise S Cup | 207 D | '15 | 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 | ★★★★★ |

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|--------------------------------------|-----------|----------|---------------|----------|-----------|--------|---------|------------|-------------|---------|----------|--------|--|
| Lotus Evija Sport 350 | 221 R | £55,900 | 6/3456 | 345/7000 | 295/4500 | 1125kg | 312 | 3.7 | - | 170 | 235 | 28.0 | + Further honed, and with a vastly improved gearshift - Still not easy to get into and out of ★★★★★ |
| Lotus Evija S (V6) | 209 R | 12-15 | 6/3456 | 345/7000 | 295/4500 | 1176kg | 298 | 3.8 | - | 170 | 235 | 28.0 | + 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 (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 | 216/6400 | 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 spurs with the Porsche 911... ★★★★★ |
| Lotus Evora 400 | 216 R | £72,000 | 6/3456 | 400/7000 | 302/3500 | 1395kg | 291 | 4.1 | - | 186 | 225 | 29.1 | + Evora excitement levels take a leap - Gearbox still not perfect; punchy pricing ★★★★★ |
| 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/1308 | 228/8200 | 156/5500 | 1660kg | 162 | 6.5 | 16.4 | 146 | 299 | 24.6 | + Never mind the quirkiness, it's a great drive - Wafer-thin torque output ★★★★★ |
| Mercedes-AMG C63 S Coupe | 217 D | £68,070 | 8/3982 | 503/5500 | 516/1750 | 1725kg | 296 | 3.9 | - | 155 | 200 | 24.8 | + Mouth-watering mechanical package - Might be too firm for UK roads ★★★★★ |
| 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 | + A proper two-door M3 rival - C63 saloon looks better ★★★★★ |
| Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Black Series | 171 R | 12-13 | 8/6208 | 510/6800 | 457/5200 | 1635kg | 317 | 4.2 | - | 186 | 286 | - | + The C63 turned up to 11 - Too heavy, not as fiery as Black Series cars of old ★★★★★ |
| Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG | 092 D | 06-09 | 8/6208 | 481/6800 | 464/5000 | 1755kg | 278 | 4.6 | - | 155 | 199 | - | + Power, control, build quality - Lacks ultimate involvement ★★★★★ |
| Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG Black Series | 106 R | 07-09 | 8/6208 | 500/6800 | 464/5200 | 1760kg | 289 | 4.2 | - | 186 | - | - | + AMG goes Porsche-hunting - Dull-witted gearshift spoils the party ★★★★★ |
| Mercedes-AMG S63 Coupe | 205 D | £125,595 | 8/5461 | 577/5500 | 664/2250 | 1995kg | 294 | 4.2 | - | 155 | 237 | 28.0 | + Thunderously fast S-class built for drivers - Lacks badge appeal of a Continental GT ★★★★★ |
| Mercedes-AMG S65 Coupe | 209 D | £183,075 | 12/5980 | 621/4800 | 737/2300 | 2100kg | 299 | 4.1 | - | 186 | 279 | 23.7 | + Almighty power, fabulous luxury - Nearly £60k more than the S63! ★★★★★ |
| Mercedes-AMG GT S | 216 R | £110,495 | 8/3982 | 503/6250 | 479/1750 | 1570kg | 326 | 3.8 | - | 193 | 219 | 30.1 | + Fantastic chassis, huge grip - Artificial steering feel; downshifts could be quicker ★★★★★ |
| Nissan 370Z | 204 R | £27,445 | 6/3696 | 323/7000 | 268/5200 | 1496kg | 219 | 5.3 | - | 155 | 248 | 26.7 | + Quicker, leaner, keener than 350Z - Not quite a Cayman-killer ★★★★★ |
| Nissan 370Z Nismo | 209 R | £37,585 | 6/3696 | 339/7400 | 274/5200 | 1496kg | 230 | 5.2 | - | 155 | 248 | 26.6 | + Sharper looks, improved ride, extra thrills - Engine lacks sparkle ★★★★★ |
| Nissan 350Z | 107 R | 03-09 | 6/3498 | 309/6800 | 264/4800 | 1532kg | 205 | 5.5 | 13.0 | 155 | - | 24.1 | + Huge fun, and great value too - Honestly, we're struggling ★★★★★ |
| Nissan GT-R (2012MY onwards) | 218 R | £78,020 | 6/3799 | 466/3200 | 466/3200 | 1740kg | 316 | 3.2 | 7.5 | 196 | 275 | 24.0 | + GT-R is quicker and better than ever - But costs over £20k more than its launch price ★★★★★ |
| Nissan GT-R Track Edition | 216 D | £88,560 | 6/3799 | 542/6400 | 466/3200 | 1740kg | 316 | 2.7 | - | 196 | 275 | 24.0 | + Recreates much of the Nismo's ability, without the rock-hard ride - Interior feels dated ★★★★★ |
| Nissan GT-R Nismo | 199 R | £125,000 | 6/3799 | 592/6800 | 481/3200 | 1720kg | 350 | 2.6 | - | 196 | 275 | 24.0 | + Manages to make regular GT-R feel imprecise - Compromised by super-firm suspension ★★★★★ |
| Nissan Skyline GT-R (R34) | 196 R | 99-02 | 6/2568 | 276/7000 | 289/4400 | 1560kg | 180 | 4.7 | 12.5 | 165 | - | 20.1 | + Big, brutal, and great fun - Needs more than the standard 276bhp ★★★★★ |
| Nissan Skyline GT-R (R33) | 196 R | 97-99 | 6/2568 | 276/6800 | 271/4400 | 1540kg | 182 | 5.4 | 14.3 | 155 | - | 22.0 | + Proof that Japanese hi-tech can work (superbly) - Limited supply ★★★★★ |
| Noble M12 GTO-3R | 200 R | 03-06 | 6/2968 | 352/6200 | 350/3500 | 1080kg | 323 | 3.8 | - | 170 | - | - | + The ability to humble exotica - Notchy gearchange can spoil the flow ★★★★★ |
| 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 | + Distinctive looks, highly capable handling - Could be a bit more exciting ★★★★★ |
| Peugeot RCZ R | 209 R | £32,250 | 4/1598 | 266/6000 | 243/1900 | 1280kg | 211 | 5.9 | - | 155 | 145 | 44.8 | + Rewarding and highly effective when fully lit - Dated cabin, steering lacks feel ★★★★★ |
| Porsche Cayman (981) | 209 R | £39,694 | 6/2706 | 271/7400 | 214/4500 | 1330kg | 207 | 5.7 | - | 165 | 195 | 33.6 | + Very enticing for the money in basic spec - You might still want the power of the 'S' ★★★★★ |
| Porsche Cayman S (981) | 202 R | £48,783 | 6/3436 | 321/7400 | 273/4500 | 1320kg | 247 | 4.5 | 10.5 | 175 | 206 | 32.1 | + The Cayman comes of age - Erm... ★★★★★ |
| Porsche Cayman GT3 (981) | 219 F | £55,397 | 6/3436 | 335/7400 | 280/4750 | 1345kg | 253 | 4.9 | - | 177 | 211 | 31.4 | + Tweaks improve an already sublime package - Slightly 'aftermarket' looks ★★★★★ |
| Porsche Cayman GT4 (981) | 221 R | £64,451 | 6/3800 | 380/7400 | 310/4750 | 1340kg | 288 | 4.4 | - | 183 | 238 | 27.4 | + evo Car of the Year 2015; 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 | + Still want that 911? - Yeah, us too ★★★★★ |
| Porsche Cayman R (987) | 158 R | 11-13 | 6/3436 | 325/7400 | 273/4750 | 1295kg | 255 | 4.7 | - | 175 | 228 | 29.1 | + Total handling excellence - Styling additions not to all tastes ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 Carrera (991.2) | 218 R | £76,412 | 6/2981 | 365/6500 | 332/1700 | 1430kg | 259 | 4.6 | - | 183 | 190 | 34.0 | + Forced induction hasn't ruined the Carrera - Purists won't be happy ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 Carrera S (991.2) | 217 R | £85,857 | 6/2981 | 414/6500 | 369/1700 | 1440kg | 292 | 4.3 | - | 191 | 199 | 32.5 | + As above, but blindingly fast - You'll want the sports exhaust ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 Carrera S (991.1) | 201 R | 12-15 | 6/3800 | 394/7400 | 324/5600 | 145kg | 283 | 4.3 | 9.5 | 188 | 223 | 29.7 | + A Carrera with supercar pace - Electric steering robs it of some tactility ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 Carrera 4S (991.1) | 179 R | 13-15 | 6/3800 | 394/7400 | 324/5600 | 1465kg | 273 | 4.5 | - | 185 | 233 | 28.5 | + More satisfying than rear-drive 991.1 Carreras - Choose your spec carefully ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 Carrera 4 GT (991.1) | 208 D | £95,862 | 6/3800 | 424/7500 | 324/5750 | 1470kg | 293 | 4.4 | - | 189 | 233 | 28.5 | + The highlight of the 991.1 Carrera line-up - Pricey for a Carrera ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.2) | 121 R | 08-11 | 6/3800 | 380/6500 | 310/4400 | 1425kg | 271 | 4.7 | - | 188 | 242 | 27.4 | + Poise, precision, blinding pace - Feels a bit clinical ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.1) | 070 R | 04-08 | 6/3824 | 350/6600 | 295/4600 | 1420kg | 246 | 4.6 | 10.9 | 182 | - | 24.5 | + evo Car of the Year 2004; like a junior GT3 - Tech overload? ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 Carrera (996 3.4) | 008 R | 98-01 | 6/3387 | 296/6800 | 258/4600 | 1320kg | 228 | 5.2 | - | 174 | - | 28.0 | + 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 | + evo Car of the Year 2013 - At its best at licence-troubling speeds ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 GT3 RS (991) | 216 R | £131,296 | 6/3996 | 493/8250 | 339/6250 | 1420kg | 353 | 3.3 | - | 193 | 296 | 22.2 | + Sensationally good to drive - They won't all be painted Ultra Violet ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 GT3 (997.2) | 182 R | 09-11 | 6/3797 | 429/7600 | 317/6250 | 1395kg | 312 | 4.2 | 9.2 | 194 | 303 | 22.1 | + Even better than the car it replaced - Give us a minute... ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 GT3 RS (3.8, 997.2) | 200 R | 10-11 | 6/3797 | 444/7900 | 317/6750 | 1370kg | 329 | 4.0 | - | 193 | 314 | - | + Our favourite car from the first 200 issues of evo - For people like us, nothing ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 GT3 RS 4.0 (997.2) | 187 R | 11-12 | 6/3996 | 493/8250 | 339/5750 | 1360kg | 368 | 3.8 | - | 193 | 326 | - | + evo Car of the Year 2011 - Unforgiving on-road ride; crazy used prices ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 GT3 (997.1) | 182 R | 07-09 | 6/3600 | 409/7600 | 298/5500 | 1395kg | 298 | 4.3 | 9.4 | 192 | - | - | + Runner-up evo Car of the Year 2006 - Ferrari 599 GTBs ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.1) | 105 R | 07-09 | 6/3600 | 409/7600 | 298/5500 | 1375kg | 302 | 4.2 | - | 193 | - | - | + evo Car of the Year 2007 - A chunk more money than the brilliant GT3 ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 GT3 (996.2) | 221 R | 03-05 | 6/3600 | 375/7400 | 284/5000 | 1380kg | 272 | 4.3 | 9.2 | 190 | - | - | + evo Car of the Year 2003 - Chassis is a bit too track-focused for some roads ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 GT3 RS (996.2) | 068 R | 03-05 | 6/3600 | 375/7400 | 284/5000 | 1330kg | 286 | 4.2 | 9.2 | 190 | - | - | + Track-biased version of above - Limited supply ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 GT3 (996.1) | 182 R | 99 | 6/3600 | 360/7200 | 273/5000 | 1350kg | 271 | 4.5 | 10.3 | 187 | - | 21.9 | + evo Car of the Year 1999 - Porsche didn't build enough ★★★★★ |
| Radical RXC | 189 R | £94,500 | 6/3700 | 350/6750 | 320/4250 | 900kg | 395 | 2.8 | - | 175 | - | - | + A real trackday weapon - Can't match the insanity of a Caterham 620R ★★★★★ |
| Radical RXC Turbo | 205 R | £129,000 | 6/3496 | 454/6000 | 500/3600 | 940kg | 491 | 2.6 | - | 185 | - | - | + Eats GT3s for breakfast - Might not feel special enough at this price ★★★★★ |
| Radical RXC Turbo 500 | 209 D | £143,400 | 6/3496 | 530/6100 | 481/5000 | 1100kg | 490 | 2.6 | 6.8 | 185 | - | - | + Huge performance, intuitive adjustability, track ability - Compromised for road use ★★★★★ |
| Rolls-Royce Wraith | 205 D | £229,128 | 12/6592 | 624/5600 | 590/1500 | 2360kg | 260 | 4.6 | - | 155 | 327 | 20.2 | + Refinement, chassis, drivetrain - Shared componentry lets cabin down ★★★★★ |
| Subaru BRZ | 204 R | £22,495 | 4/1998 | 197/7000 | 151/6400 | 1230kg | 163 | 7.6 | - | 140 | 181 | 36.2 | + Fine chassis, great steering - Weak engine, not the slide-happy car they promised ★★★★★ |
| Toyota GT86 | 219 R | £22,495 | 4/1998 | 197/7000 | 151/6400 | 1240kg | 161 | 7.6 | - | 140 | 181 | 36.2 | + More fun than its cousin (above) - Same lack of torque, poor interior quality ★★★★★ |
| TVR Sagaris | 097 R | 05-07 | 6/3996 | 406/7500 | 349/5000 | 1078kg | 383 | 3.7 | - | 185 | - | - | + Looks outrageous - 406bhp feels a touch optimistic ★★★★★ |
| TVR Tuscan S (Mk2) | 076 R | 05-07 | 6/3996 | 406/7000 | 315/5250 | 1100kg | 369 | 4.0 | - | 185 | - | - | + 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 | + Golf GTI price and performance - Interior lacks flair ★★★★★ |
| VW Scirocco R | 200 D | £32,580 | 4/1984 | 276/6000 | 258/2500 | 1426kg | 187 | 5.7 | - | 155 | 187 | 35.3 | + Great engine, grown-up dynamics - Perhaps a little too grown-up for some ★★★★★ |

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OUR CHOICE

McLaren 675LT. The 'long-tail' is the step forward we've been hoping for from McLaren's super-series cars, adding a real sense of involvement to the incredible pace that's been building since the 12C. In fact, the 675LT is so intense it might even make you question if you need a P1.



BEST OF THE REST

The Ferrari 488 GTB (left) has a stunning turbocharged engine and the chassis to exploit it. Lamborghini's Aventador offers true supercar drama, especially in Supervoce form, while the Pagani Huayra rivals it for theatre (albeit at four times the price) and was our joint 2012 Car of the Year.

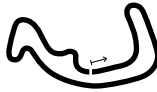
| | ISSUE NO. | PRICE | ENGINE CYL/CC | BHP/RPM | LB FT/RPM | WEIGHT | BHP/TON | 0-60M/PH | 0-100M/PH | MAX MPH | CO2 G/KM | EC MPG | EVO RATING | |
|------------------------------------|-----------|----------|---------------|-----------|-----------|--------|---------|------------|-------------|---------|----------|--------|--|-------|
| 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 | £205,000 | 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 | ★★★★★ |
| Audi R8 V10 Plus | 217 R | £134,500 | 10/5204 | 602/8250 | 413/6500 | 1555kg | 393 | 3.2 | - | 205 | 287 | 23.0 | + Timeless drivetrain, huge performance - Needs to be driven hard to really engage | ★★★★★ |
| Audi R8 V10 | 181 D | £10-15 | 10/5204 | 518/8000 | 391/6500 | 1620kg | 325 | 3.9 | 8.4 | 194 | 346 | 19.0 | + Real supercar feel - The V8 is cheaper, and still superb | ★★★★★ |
| Audi R8 V10 Plus | 190 R | £13-15 | 10/5204 | 542/8000 | 398/6500 | 1570kg | 351 | 3.8 | - | 198 | 346 | 19.0 | + An R8 fit to take on the 458 and 12C - Firm ride may be too much for some | ★★★★★ |
| Audi R8 GT | 169 F | £10-12 | 10/5204 | 552/8000 | 398/6500 | 1520kg | 369 | 3.6 | - | 199 | - | - | + Everything we love about the R8 - Not as hardcore as we wanted | ★★★★★ |
| Audi R8 LMX | 208 R | £15 | 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 | ★★★★★ |
| 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 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 | ★★★★★ |
| Chevrolet Corvette ZR1 | 133 R | £09-13 | 8/6162 | 638/6500 | 603/3800 | 1528kg | 424 | 3.8 | 7.6 | 205 | 355 | 18.8 | + Huge pace and character - Take plenty of brave pills if there's rain | ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari 488 GTB | 222 R | £183,964 | 8/3902 | 661/6500 | 561/3000 | 1475kg | 455 | 3.0 | - | 205+ | 260 | 24.8 | + Staggeringly capable - Lacks a little of the 458's heart and excitement | ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari 488 Spider | 216 D | £204,400 | 8/3902 | 661/6500 | 561/3000 | 1525kg | 440 | 3.0 | - | 203+ | 260 | 24.8 | + As above, but with the wind in your hair - See left | ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari 458 Italia | 221 R | £09-15 | 8/4497 | 562/9000 | 398/6500 | 1485kg | 384 | 3.2 | 6.8 | 202 | 307 | 20.6 | + An astounding achievement - Paddleshift only | ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari 458 Speciale | 203 R | £14-15 | 8/4497 | 597/9000 | 398/6500 | 1395kg | 435 | 3.0 | - | 202+ | 275 | 23.9 | + evo Car of the Year 2014 - If you don't own a regular 458, nothing | ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari F430 | 163 R | £04-10 | 8/4308 | 483/8500 | 343/5250 | 1449kg | 339 | 4.0 | - | 196 | - | 18.6 | + Just brilliant - Didn't you read the plus point? | ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari 430 Scuderia | 121 R | £07-10 | 8/4308 | 503/8500 | 347/5250 | 1350kg | 378 | 3.5 | 7.7 | 198 | - | 15.7 | + Successful F1 technology transplant - Likes to shout about it | ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari 360 Modena | 163 R | £99-04 | 8/3586 | 394/8500 | 275/4750 | 1390kg | 288 | 4.5 | 9.0 | 183 | - | 17.0 | + Worthy successor to 355 - Not quite as involving as it should be | ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari 360 Challenge Stradale | 068 R | £03-04 | 8/3586 | 420/8500 | 275/4750 | 1280kg | 333 | 4.1 | - | 186 | - | - | + Totally exhilarating road-racer. It's loud - It's very, very loud | ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari F355 F1 Berlinetta | 163 R | £97-99 | 8/3496 | 374/8250 | 268/6000 | 1350kg | 281 | 4.7 | - | 183 | - | 16.7 | + Looks terrific, sounds even better - Are you kidding? | ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari F12 Berlinetta | 190 R | £241,053 | 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 F12tdf | 217 R | £339,000 | 12/6262 | 769/8500 | 520/6250 | 1520kg | 514 | 2.9 | - | 211 | 360 | 18.3 | + Alarmingly fast - Doesn't flow like a 458 Speciale | ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano | 101 R | £06-12 | 12/5999 | 611/7600 | 448/5600 | 1688kg | 368 | 3.5 | 7.4 | 205 | 415 | 15.8 | + evo Car of the Year 2006 - Banks are getting harder to rob | ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari 599 GTO | 161 R | £11-12 | 12/5999 | 661/8250 | 457/6500 | 1605kg | 418 | 3.4 | - | 208 | - | - | + One of the truly great Ferraris - Erm, the air con isn't very good | ★★★★★ |
| Ferrari 575M Fiorano Handling Pack | 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 | £238,697 | 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 | £13-15 | 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 | 222 R | £87-92 | 8/2936 | 471/7000 | 426/4000 | 1100kg | 437 | 4.1 | - | 201 | - | - | + Brutally fast - It's in the dictionary under 'turbo lag' | ★★★★★ |
| 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 | ★★★★★ |
| Honda NSX | 217 R | £400,000 | 6/3493 | 565 | 476 | 1725kg | 333 | 2.9 | - | 191 | - | - | + Like a baby Porsche 918 - Lacks typical Japanese character | ★★★★★ |
| 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 1 | 180 R | £109m | 8/5032 | 1124/7100 | 885/2700 | 1435kg | 796 | 2.8 | - | 273 | - | - | + As fast and exciting as your body can handle - It's the Vepron money | ★★★★★ |
| Koenigsegg One:1 | 202 R | £62.0m | 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 CCRX Edition | 118 R | £08-10 | 8/4800 | 1004/7000 | 796/5600 | 1280kg | 797 | 2.8 | - | 250+ | - | - | + One of the world's fastest cars - Spike power delivery | ★★★★★ |
| Lamborghini Huracán LP580-2 | 209 R | £160,000 | 10/5204 | 572/8000 | 391/6500 | 1389kg | 418 | 3.4 | - | 199 | 278 | 23.7 | + More seductive than the 4WD Huracán - Feels like there's more to come | ★★★★★ |
| Lamborghini Huracán LP610-4 | 218 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 | £10-13 | 10/5204 | 562/8000 | 398/6500 | 1340kg | 426 | 3.5 | 2.2 | 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 | 216 R | £321,723 | 12/6498 | 740/8400 | 509/5500 | 1525kg | 493 | 2.8 | - | 217+ | 370 | 17.7 | + More exciting than the standard Aventador - ISR gearbox inconsistent | ★★★★★ |
| Lamborghini Murciélago | 089 D | £01-06 | 12/6192 | 570/7500 | 479/5400 | 1650kg | 351 | 4.0 | - | 205 | - | - | + Gorgeous, capable and incredibly friendly - V12 feels stressed | ★★★★★ |
| Lamborghini Murciélago LP640 | 093 R | £06-11 | 12/6496 | 631/8000 | 487/6000 | 1665kg | 385 | 3.3 | - | 211 | - | 21.3 | + Compelling old-school supercar - You'd better be on your toes | ★★★★★ |
| Lamborghini Murciélago LP670-4 SV | 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 570S | 217 R | £143,250 | 8/3799 | 562/7500 | 443/5000 | 1313kg | 435 | 3.1 | - | 204 | 258 | 25.5 | + A truly fun and engaging sports car - McLaren doesn't call it a supercar(!) | ★★★★★ |
| 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 675LT | 216 R | £259,500 | 8/3799 | 666/7100 | 516/5500 | 1328kg | 510 | 2.9 | - | 205 | 275 | 24.2 | + Runner-up at eCoty 2015; asks questions of the P1 - Aventador price tag | ★★★★★ |
| McLaren 675LT Spider | 222 D | £285,450 | 8/3799 | 666/7100 | 516/5500 | 1368kg | 495 | 2.9 | - | 203 | 275 | 24.2 | + Spectacularly fast; involving, too - Might mess up your hair | ★★★★★ |
| 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 | £13-15 | 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 | £49-98 | 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 SLS AMG | 159 R | £10-15 | 8/6208 | 563/6800 | 479/4750 | 1620kg | 335 | 4.1 | 8.4 | 197 | 308 | 21.4 | + Great engine and chassis (gullwing doors too!) - Slightly tardy gearbox | ★★★★★ |
| Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG Black Series | 204 R | £13-15 | 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-gate, 575-style drivability - Dreadful brake feel | ★★★★★ |
| Noble M600 | 186 R | £200m | 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 | £31m | 12/5980 | 720/5800 | 737/2250 | 1350kg | 542 | 3.3 | - | 224 | - | - | + Our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Engine isn't as bap-prickling 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 bingy 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 S (991.2) | 220 D | £145,773 | 6/3800 | 572/6750 | 553/2250 | 1600kg | 363 | 2.9 | - | 205 | 212 | 31.0 | + Enormous performance - Not as thrilling as some rivals | ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 Turbo S (991.1) | 217 R | £13-15 | 6/3800 | 552/6500 | 553/2200 | 1605kg | 349 | 3.1 | - | 197 | 227 | 29.1 | + Superb everyday supercar - At times disguises the thrills it can offer | ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 Turbo (997.2) | 218 R | £09-13 | 6/3800 | 493/6000 | 479/1950 | 1570kg | 319 | 3.2 | 7.3 | 193 | 272 | 24.4 | + The Turbo at the very top of its game - Favours outright grip over adjustability | ★★★★★ |
| Porsche 911 GT2 RS (997.2) | 204 R | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

TRACK TIMES

⊕ = new this month. **Red** denotes the car is the fastest in its class on that track.

ANGLESEY COASTAL CIRCUIT

📍 **LOCATION** Anglesey, UK
 📏 **GPS** 53.188372, -4.496385
 📏 **LENGTH** 1.55 miles



| Car | Lap time | issue no. | YouTube |
|--|----------|-----------|---------|
| Radical RXC Turbo 500 (fastest coupe) | 1:10.5 | - | Yes |
| McLaren P1 (on P Zero Trofeo R tyres) (fastest supercar) | 1:11.2 | 200 | Yes |
| Porsche 918 Spyder | 1:12.4 | 200 | Yes |
| McLaren P1 | 1:12.6 | 200 | Yes |
| Porsche 911 GT3 RS (991) | 1:13.6 | - | Yes |
| Porsche 911 Turbo S (991) | 1:13.6 | - | Yes |
| Ferrari 458 Speciale | 1:14.2 | 198 | Yes |
| Porsche 911 Turbo (991) | 1:15.2 | 210 | Yes |
| Aston Martin Vantage GT12 | 1:16.0 | 214 | Yes |
| Nissan GT-R (2014MY) | 1:16.9 | 210 | Yes |
| Mercedes-AMG GT S | 1:17.0 | 210 | Yes |
| Porsche 911 Carrera S Powerkit (991) | 1:17.6 | 201 | - |
| Porsche 911 Carrera (991) | 1:17.8 | 199 | Yes |
| Porsche Cayman (981) | 1:18.9 | 209 | - |
| Aston Martin N430 | 1:19.1 | 210 | - |
| Lotus Exige S (V6) | 1:19.1 | 209 | - |
| SEAT Leon Cupra 280 Sub8 (fastest hot hatch) | 1:19.1 | 212 | - |
| BMW M4 | 1:19.2 | 199 | Yes |
| BMW i8 | 1:19.4 | 210 | - |
| Honda Civic Type R (FK2) | 1:19.5 | 212 | - |
| Renaultsport Mégane Trophy 275 | 1:19.6 | 212 | - |
| BMW M5 Competition Pack (F10M) (fastest saloon) | 1:19.7 | - | Yes |
| Audi TTS (Mk3) | 1:19.9 | 209 | - |
| Audi R8 V8 (Mk1) | 1:20.1 | 201 | - |
| BMW M135i | 1:20.4 | 212 | - |
| Nissan 370Z Nismo | 1:20.5 | 209 | - |
| Alfa Romeo 4C | 1:20.7 | 209 | - |
| Mercedes-AMG S65 Coupe | 1:21.4 | - | Yes |
| VW Golf R (Mk7) | 1:21.6 | 212 | - |
| Peugeot RCZ R | 1:22.0 | 209 | - |
| Toyota GT86 TRD | 1:23.7 | 193 | - |
| Jota Mazda MX-5 GT (Mk3) (fastest sports car) | 1:24.6 | 193 | - |

BEDFORD AUTODROME WEST CIRCUIT

📍 **LOCATION** Bedfordshire, UK
 📏 **GPS** 52.235133, -0.474321
 📏 **LENGTH** 1.8 miles (track reconfigured May 2015; earlier times not comparable)



| | | | |
|---|--------|-----|-----|
| SEAT Leon Cupra 280 Ultimate Sub8 (fastest hot hatch) | 1:23.1 | 215 | - |
| BMW M3 (F80) (fastest saloon) | 1:23.3 | 211 | Yes |
| Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy-R | 1:23.6 | 215 | - |
| Mercedes-AMG C63 S Saloon | 1:24.0 | 211 | Yes |
| Honda Civic Type R (FK2) | 1:24.9 | 215 | - |
| VW Golf R (Mk7) | 1:26.1 | - | Yes |
| Audi RS3 Sportback (2015MY) | 1:26.6 | - | Yes |
| Ford Fiesta ST Mountune | 1:29.5 | 213 | - |
| Mazda MX-5 2.0i Sport (Mk4) (fastest sports car) | 1:29.8 | - | Yes |
| Toyota GT86 (fastest coupe) | 1:29.9 | - | Yes |

BLYTON PARK OUTER CIRCUIT

📍 **LOCATION** Lincolnshire, UK
 📏 **GPS** 53.460093, -0.688666
 📏 **LENGTH** 1.6 miles



| | | | |
|--|--------|-----|-----|
| Ariel Atom 3.5R (fastest sports car) | 0:58.9 | 205 | - |
| Radical RXC Turbo (fastest coupe) | 1:00.4 | 205 | Yes |
| BAC Mono | 1:01.4 | 189 | - |
| Porsche 911 GT2 RS (997.2) (fastest supercar) | 1:01.8 | 204 | Yes |
| Porsche 911 GT3 (991) | 1:01.9 | 205 | Yes |
| Caterham Seven 620R | 1:02.1 | 189 | - |
| Nissan GT-R Nismo | 1:02.1 | 205 | Yes |
| Mercedes SLS AMG Black Series | 1:02.5 | 204 | Yes |
| Pagani Huayra | 1:02.5 | 177 | - |
| McLaren 12C | 1:02.7 | 187 | - |
| Radical RXC | 1:02.9 | 189 | - |
| Ariel Atom 3.5 310 | 1:03.4 | 189 | - |
| Audi R8 V10 Plus (Mk1) | 1:03.4 | - | Yes |
| Porsche Cayman GT4 | 1:03.6 | 221 | Yes |
| Lotus Exige S (V6) | 1:04.4 | 177 | - |
| Porsche 911 Carrera (991) | 1:05.1 | 177 | - |
| Chevrolet Camaro Z/28 | 1:05.1 | 220 | Yes |
| Porsche 911 GT3 (997) | 1:05.2 | - | Yes |
| Porsche Boxster S (981) | 1:05.5 | 177 | - |
| Porsche Cayman GTS (981) | 1:05.5 | - | Yes |
| Porsche Cayman S (981) | 1:05.5 | 189 | - |
| Caterham Seven 420R | 1:05.7 | 220 | Yes |
| Jaguar F-type S Convertible | 1:06.5 | - | Yes |
| Vuhi 05 | 1:06.5 | 220 | Yes |
| Zenos E10 S | 1:06.6 | 214 | - |
| Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Black Series | 1:06.9 | 177 | - |
| Renaultsport Mégane Z75 Trophy-R (fastest hot hatch) | 1:07.3 | 205 | Yes |
| SEAT Leon Cupra 280 Sub8 | 1:07.6 | 220 | Yes |
| BMW M135i | 1:07.7 | 177 | - |
| Porsche Cayman (981) | 1:07.7 | - | Yes |
| BMW M235i | 1:08.7 | - | Yes |
| Mini John Cooper Works GP (R56) | 1:08.7 | 181 | - |
| Renaultsport Mégane R26.R | 1:08.9 | 181 | - |
| Ford Focus RS500 | 1:09.4 | 181 | - |
| VW Golf GTI Performance Pack (Mk7) | 1:10.3 | 192 | - |
| Toyota GT86 | 1:12.8 | 177 | - |



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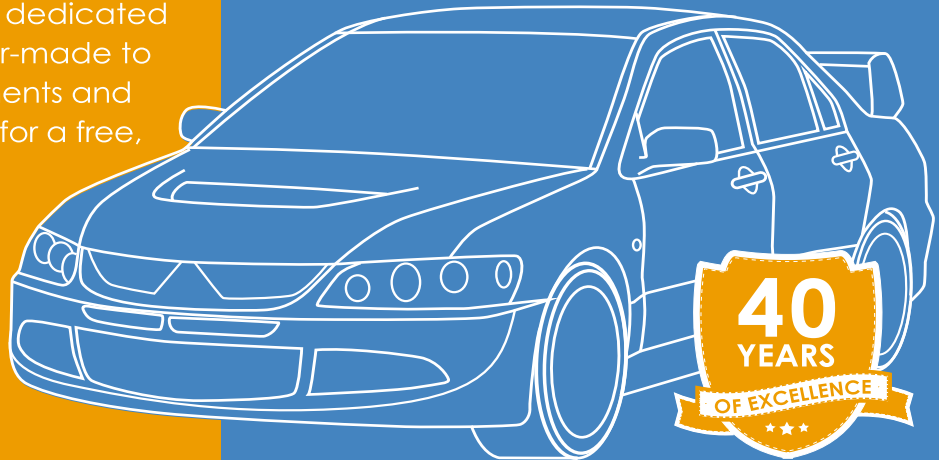
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Art of speed



Subaru Impreza bonnet scoop

by RICHARD LANE

S SUBARU'S IMPREZA IS A PHENOMENON, PLAIN and simple. For starters, no car has ever been quite so happy to hand out hidings to machinery beyond its price bracket. The RB5 cemented that perception with a third-place finish at eCoty 1999, seeing off a BMW M5, an Aston Martin DB7 and a Nissan Skyline, amongst others. Things had changed little eight years later, when an STI Type UK met a Gallardo Superleggera on the roads of Snowdonia (*evo* 115) and made the V10-engined supercar work very hard indeed. The latest Imprezas are a tad malnourished compared with their competition, there's no denying that, but over the years the performance has nearly always been addictively potent.

And then there's a culture – all the variety and the pedantry – that serves as a confusing but equally fascinating microcosm for those on the outside. So nuanced is the Impreza back catalogue that it's possible to become hopelessly ensnared in the fog of Type RAs, PPP 250s, V3 Type R V-Limiteds and, who could forget, WRX STI S201s. And when tracts of a person's driving life are lost to the cult of Scooby, the wider four-wheeled world, with all its mouth-watering temptations, can cruise by unnoticed.

A religion to some, then, fittingly the Impreza has its own symbolism. The

honest silhouette of the original has proved far from sacrosanct, evolving from saloon to hatchback and back again, so it isn't that. The wing, you might have noticed, has also 'matured', so that's out. And the WRC connection, once so strong, is now dead in the water. But a massive scoop built threateningly into the aluminium bonnet? Pretty much unchanged.

The scoop feeds an intercooler mounted high at the back of the engine bay. This isn't an ideal position for an intercooler, but for the original Impreza Turbo's quad-cam boxer it sufficed. With 75 per cent of the intake sustaining the intercooler and the rest shuffling air to the turbo, the 1994cc engine made 208bhp; Prodrive later teased out 276bhp for the rabid P1.

Imprezas became even faster, but the intercooler remained in situ. And while the scoop grew with time, this wasn't always the plan. The reason it lurches like Hokusai's Wave on some second-gen cars, for example, is because Subaru execs were forbidden from flying in the wake of 9/11. Because of this, they never made the journey from Toyko to Norfolk to green-light Peter Stevens' less ostentatious but more aerodynamic proposal for the post-'bugeye' facelift. Allegedly Stevens was a bit peeved, but presumably not as peeved as he would have been had Subaru been left to design the rest of the car... **x**

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