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Editorial



# Ed Speak

STUART GALLAGHER

## The hot hatch – a new performance benchmark?



**WHEN DID HOT HATCHES** become so fast? I mean proper sports car fast with performance to make an M3 sweat and Porsche's Cayman roll up its sleeves and get stuck in.

The straight-line performance stats of the four hyperhatches in this issue's lead feature may not suggest they have the sprinting capability to make an M or Porsche engineer cry into the currywurst, but get any of them on a minor road, one that doesn't run arrow straight but mixes off-camber corners with pockmarked surfaces, and you have a performance combination that is becoming pretty much untouchable.

And it's not exclusive to these circa-300bhp hatches, either. Citroën sent us its latest DS3 Performance to try in the UK this month (visit [evo.co.uk](http://evo.co.uk) to read the review) and it too will cover ground at a blistering pace that, just a decade ago, would have required at least six cylinders, rear-wheel drive and a five-figure price tag starting with a six.

There are, of course, a number of factors to explain the evolution of the hot hatch from souped-

up shopper to a genuine supersaloon alternative. Damper and tyre technology has transformed the chassis of these regular high-volume sellers, turning them into genuine performance car heroes. But I also think this is the one sector that has benefited from advancing turbo technology.

Torque swollen by turbocharging is clearly an effective way to massage a car's performance. But the manner in which the power and torque are delivered suits the nature of today's hot hatch so much better than larger cars that have been forced to downsize. So while Audi RS, BMW M and Porsche, to name but a few, have had to do their best with smaller-capacity turbocharged engines, advances in turbo technology and engine mapping have been hugely beneficial to the already 'downsized' engines of the modern hot hatch.

The move to turbocharging has been an uncomfortable one for many car enthusiasts, but in today's hot hatch market it's resulted in some phenomenally accessible performance cars for the many rather than the few. Long may it continue.

*Nick Trott is away.* [stuartg917](https://twitter.com/stuartg917)**evo Worldwide** EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

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# evo

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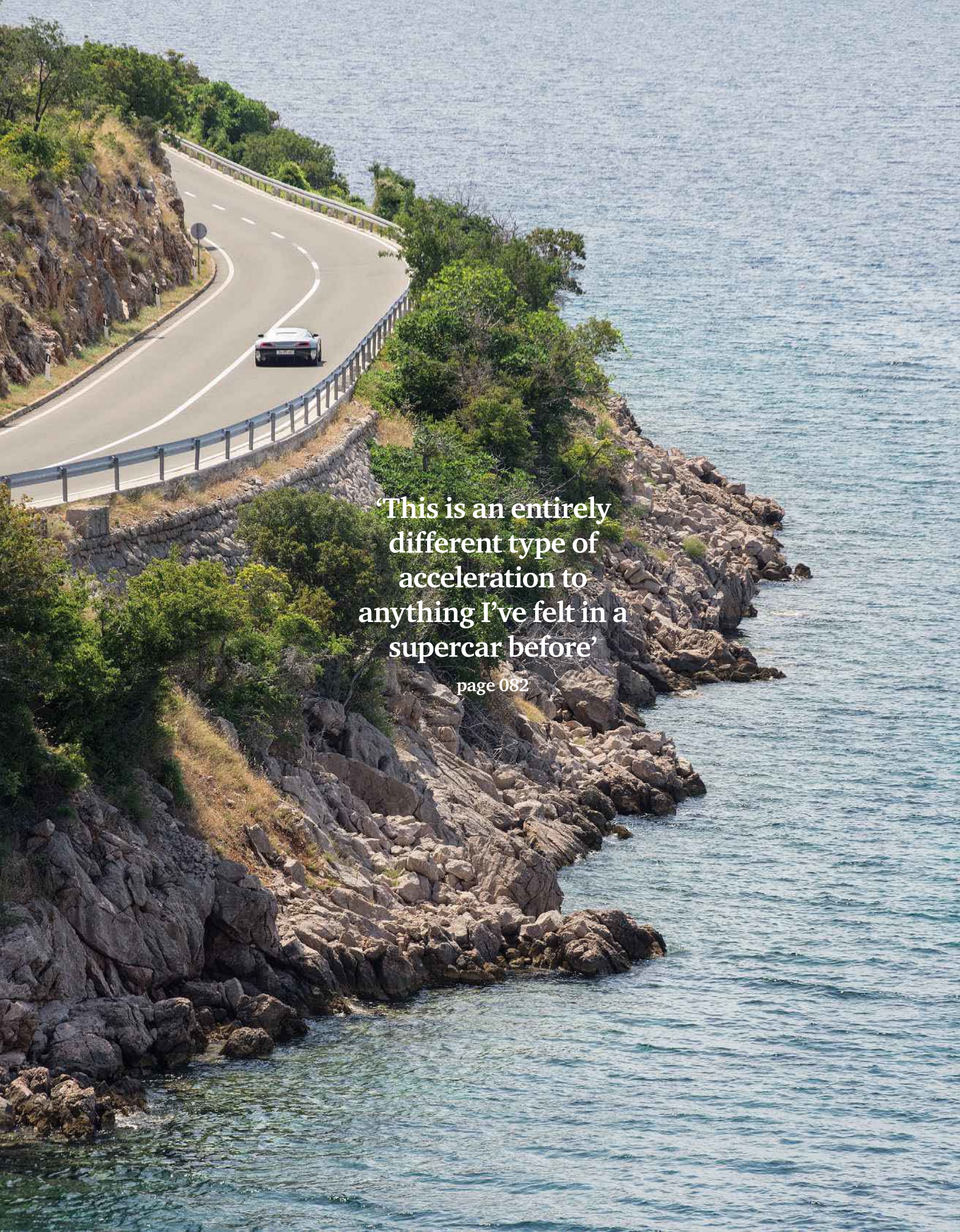
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anything I’ve felt in a  
supercar before’**

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*Tyres*  
**INSIDE EVO'S  
 TYRE TEST**



**K**IA IS LAUNCHING A SPORTS GT WHILE both Aston Martin and Lamborghini have SUVs on their drawing boards and running around their proving grounds. Then there are Tesla's plans to take on the world's best-selling pickup by launching a rival to the Ford F150. Moreover, those good ol' boys at Chevrolet are rumoured to be considering moving the Corvette's V8 to the middle of the car in order to make room for a hybrid powertrain.

Yep, the car industry is going through one of its biggest evolutions. Over the page we'll go into more detail on the above, and a number of evo's key contributors have detailed what they would like to see today's car manufacturers producing tomorrow.

## Tomorrow's World

Today's automotive landscape is travelling flat-out towards a very different future. Here's evo's guide as to what your next car could be

by ANTONY INGRAM

## KIA GT

Next year, Kia plans to release a GT model – a rear-drive, four-door coupe that could lift the brand's image from the Ford-fighting mainstream to a BMW-bashing and Mercedes-mauling premium contender.

It's new territory for a company known for producing small hatches, family cars and SUVs at competitive prices supported by long warranties. Kias are sensible, not exciting and desirable. The GT could be Kia's break from family-car mundanity into premium-style desirability.

## LAMBORGHINI URUS

Lamborghini's upcoming Urus is not its first foray into SUVs, though the LM002 'Rambo Lambo' wasn't the sophisticated we're expecting this time around. Hybrid power may feature, which is something of a surprise from a company that hasn't even turned to turbocharging in its low-slung supercars. The business case is clear,

however: SUVs are a growing market worldwide, and the Urus could triple the company's current sales.

## ASTON MARTIN DBX

Glorious though it is, Aston Martin's staple of V12-engined GTs may not survive for many more years. Tastes and, more pertinently, environmental regulations are changing.

The electric DBX is a whole new concept, potentially appealing to a new audience – one of younger customers, female customers, and countries where drivers aren't inclined to tuck away their vehicles in the garage during winter. If Porsche, Maserati and Lamborghini can build SUVs, why can't Aston Martin?

## AUDI HYDROGEN LMPI

Diesel power and hybrid technology are nothing new for Audi Sport, but as WEC rules open up to include the possibility of hydrogen fuel cells, the German squad has shown an interest.

It's unlikely to happen for some time, though, as Audi has no immediate hydrogen road-car plans, and its Le Mans technology (FSI, TDI and e-tron in the last few decades) has so far mirrored road-car development.

## TESLA MOTORS PICK-UP

CEO Elon Musk has sent rockets into space and proposed a *Futurama*-style tube transport system in California. Plans for a pickup, then, are about as shocking as him revealing Tesla's new HQ is a hollowed-out volcano, but it does involve leaping into a market populated by the opposite of the green Model S. Tesla's pickup doesn't just need to be eco-friendly, it has to appeal to middle-America, too.

## HYUNDAI i30 N

Dabbling in coupes is one thing, but Hyundai has never offered a car to appeal to the burgeoning trackday community, where RS Méganes and Clios mix with GT3s. 'N' will, in

“The aim for the Corvette is to entice younger buyers before the existing fan base literally dies off”

**Clockwise from bottomleft:** concept versions of Lamborghini Urus, Kia GT, Aston Martin DBX and Porsche's Mission E; plus, could Audi's LMPI car turn to hydrogen power?



theory, give Hyundai fans that option. evo has been told that Hyundai's new sub-brand will have a distinct track focus – the company even used the 2016 Nürburgring 24 Hours as a development session for its i30 N.

## C8 CORVETTE

Corvettes, as any fool knows, place their all-American V8s in the front, with noise, power and freedom exiting at the rear. That is expected to change with the eighth-gen car, whose small-block engine will sit amidships and – as apple pies are

dropped in shock across the country – may even offer hybrid tech and all-wheel drive for the first time. The aim is to entice younger buyers before the existing fan base literally dies off.

## PORSCHE MISSION E

Porsche is not a company afraid of stepping outside of its comfort zone. Even so, developing an all-electric car with a 300-mile range is a real leap into the unknown, and the company has already committed 200million euros and is recruiting 1400 new staff to develop the Mission E.

## CONCLUSION

We've billed these cars as a step into the unknown, but perhaps that's unfair. It's not hard to imagine all achieving some degree of success. No premium car maker can be seen without an SUV in its product portfolio, for instance – the potential market in countries such as the US and China is too big to ignore, and offering a high-riding vehicle stops your customers straying too far from the brand.

Neither does a Tesla pickup or electric Porsche sound far-fetched, while a mid-engined Corvette would be perfectly placed to offer NSX-style performance for half the price. Suddenly niche vehicles aren't so niche any more.



## What evo wants...



### RICHARD MEADEN

'I'd love to see Lotus build a new Elan. A small, ultra-lightweight – sub-750kg – two-seater with styling inspired by the original. Front-engined, rear-drive, using the motor and gearbox from the GT86. Emphasis on feel and fun. Then do a kickass "26R" version with a wider track and 50 per cent more power.'



### JETHRO BOVINGTON

'I've really enjoyed the alternative way Lexus does things lately, particularly with the GS F. I'd love to see it take the GT86 chassis, find a way to make that harsh boxer engine scream to 8500rpm, add hybrid power for low-end torque and drive it through a dual-clutch 'box. Keep it light but with a twist of Lexus luxury: the stunning LFA dash and some funky materials.'



### NICK TROTT

'It's been rumoured for almost as long as this magazine has existed, but I'd love to see that mid-engined Corvette. With prices of the traditional mid-engined supercars starting at £120k, Corvette has an opportunity to dip below £70k for a car that's as quick as the big boys but costs the same as a fully loaded Cayman. Of course, it should have a big V8 and plenty of torque – a mini Can-Am car then...'



### HENRY CATCHPOLE

'I'd like to see Porsche do a hot hatch. We might bemoan the switch to four cylinders in the new 718, but that engine would seem perfect for dropping into a more practical body style to take on the Focus RS brigade. Lightweight, rear-wheel drive... It could be a – rather premium – hoot.'



### DAN PROSSER

'I'd love to see a modern interpretation of the E46 M3. The target numbers would be 340bhp, 1400kg and £40k, with a rear-drive chassis, four seats, a manual 'box and a normally aspirated engine – just like the original, but with contemporary styling, chassis technology and cabin design.'



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# Monterey Motor Club

Limited-run production models and unique one-offs were uncovered at Pebble Beach during Monterey Car Week, with Quail Lodge the venue for a number of manufacturers to unveil their latest creations

## LAMBORGHINI CENTENARIO ROADSTER

Honouring the birth of company founder Ferruccio Lamborghini a century ago, 20 of these limited-production 217mph roadsters will roll off the Sant'Agata production line at £2million+ apiece. The running gear is taken from the Centenario coupe shown at Geneva this year. The carbon exterior surrounds a monocoque chassis guided via Lamborghini's four-wheel-steering system.



## VISION MERCEDES-MAYBACH 6

This contemporary 2+2 take on Maybach's pre-war coupes has futuristic in-car technology and the latest electric drivetrain. With 740bhp aided by four-wheel drive, the 5.7-metre-long coupe claims 0-62mph in under four seconds.



## McLAREN 570GT BY MSO

McLaren's MSO department has treated the new 570GT to a number of modifications. A 'more characterful' titanium exhaust is the sole mechanical change and, along with MSO's tint-adjustable electrochromic glass roof, is expected to find its way onto the options list of the standard 570GT, too. Occupants can alter the amount of light entering the cabin via touch-sensitive controls embedded in the headliner.

## ASTON MARTIN VOLANTE

Following the knee-weakening Vanquish Zagato coupe, Aston will satisfy demand by also producing 99 Zagato Volantes at its Gaydon HQ. The drop-top car gets the last iteration of Aston's 5.9-litre V12 engine. The distinctive rear lights utilise the same 'bladed' LED technology found in the £1.5million Vulcan hypercar.



## SINGER

Singer Vehicle Design flaunted two painstakingly reimagined Porsche 911 964s, one a Targa, the other a coupe. Both the property of one fortunate owner, they represent the extension of the 911's air-cooled lineage into the modern day. The Targa is powered by Singer's Cosworth-developed 4-litre flat-six, the coupe by a 3.8-litre variant, and both are fitted with a six-speed manual gearbox.

## BIG NUMBERS

£28,180

Starting price for Alfa Romeo's Giulia in the UK – for the 196bhp 2-litre turbocharged petrol model

2317

Number of Mustangs registered in the UK between Jan and July

2

Number of years Ford has extended GT production by



# New Arrivals

From a four-cylinder muscle car to a three-seater electric coupe, here are six newcomers that have caught our eye this month

## NISSAN BLADEGLIDER

Not yet pencilled in for production, Nissan has revived its DeltaWing-like BladeGlider prototype from 2013. With a powertrain developed in conjunction with Williams, each rear wheel gets a 174bhp electric motor. 0-62mph takes 'under five seconds', and the motors can offer torque vectoring. The cockpit is a McLaren F1-style three-seat formation.



## CHEVROLET CAMARO

The Chevrolet Camaro is now officially on sale in the UK. Packing either a 2-litre turbocharged four-cylinder (for £31,755) or a naturally aspirated, 6.2-litre V8 (from £38,245), the Camaro also comes with a convertible option but doesn't offer the choice of right-hand drive. That's probably something to do with the UK's tiny allocation: just 15 coupes and 3 convertibles this year.



## RANGE ROVER SVAUTOBIOGRAPHY DYNAMIC

Land Rover now offers a full-scale Range Rover tweaked by JLR's Special Vehicles Operations. It doesn't have full SVR badging like the Range Rover Sport, but it does get the same 542bhp, 5-litre supercharged V8 and a 5.1sec 0-60mph time. It sits 8mm lower than standard Range Rovers too, with Dynamic Response and Adaptive Dynamics chassis systems.



## HONDA CIVIC

Honda has whipped the covers off its new Civic five-door hatchback. While the car unveiled was presented in American specification, it's more or less what we'll see in Europe later this year. Power comes from a turbocharged 1.5-litre engine, with a 2-litre turbocharged Type R due in 2017.

## KOENIGSEGG AGERA XS

Koenigsegg has built a one-off version of the Agera RS – renamed XS – for an American customer, simultaneously marking the Agera's full homologation for US roads. The 1341bhp XS is painted in 'Karosserie Orange' and boasts the largest rear wing ever fitted to a Koenigsegg.



## McLAREN MSO HS

McLaren will make just 25 examples of its new MSO HS – and all are pre-sold. The new Super Series car features a tweaked version of McLaren's 3.8-litre twin-turbo V8, with 679bhp and 516lb ft. Aero changes, including a P1 GTR-style wing, contribute 225kg of downforce at 150mph.



# RAISING THE BAR

*The All-New Renault Mégane GT prioritises driving pleasure and backs it up with sharp looks, advanced technology, and plenty of space and comfort*



**‘The All-New Renault Mégane GT sets a fresh benchmark’**

**F**OR MANY YEARS now Renault has placed driving pleasure towards the top of its agenda when developing new models, and in the process it has won many friends amongst car enthusiasts. Now, with the advent of the All-New Mégane GT, Renault looks set to expand that fan base still further.

As if to emphasise its spirited soul, the All-New Renault Mégane GT has a low, sporting stance complemented by strong, dynamic exterior lines, a bold, attractively aggressive front end treatment and unique, distinctive lighting signatures front and rear.

This chic, confident look is echoed by the beautifully crafted and comprehensively equipped interior, the ergonomics of which place the driver firmly in control of the action.

With decades of experience fine-tuning the dynamic setup of Renault’s top-class race and high-performance road cars, Renault Sport engineers played an integral role in ensuring that the All-New Mégane GT’s handling and agility live up to its thrilling looks. One of the key features of a chassis and suspension packed with premium technology is 4CONTROL, an advanced four-wheel-steering system that adds a keen edge to the All-New Mégane GT’s cornering characteristics, while also enhancing its sense of security and surefootedness.

While 4CONTROL brings extra sparkle to the driving experience, so too does Renault’s MULTI-SENSE technology, a sophisticated semi-active suspension system that works in harmony with the engine management system to also control the All-New Mégane GT’s throttle

response. The amount of power assistance for the steering can be varied, too.

MULTI-SENSE operates in several different modes that the driver can choose from via an 8.7-inch portrait-format touchscreen. Depending on your mood or the type of road you’re driving on, you can swap the settings between Comfort, Neutral, Sport and Personalise, that last option allowing you to specify your own special mix of steering weight, ride quality and throttle response.

The All-New Renault Mégane GT sets a fresh benchmark for what you can expect from a car in this class. It looks sensational, it’s spacious and comfortable, and it’s brimming with the sort of top-end technology that makes life behind the wheel both convenient and fun. And in the great Renault tradition, it’s an absolute pleasure to drive, wherever the road takes you.



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# Audi Sport's secret weapon



Built under the radar in the '80s and having barely turned a wheel, Audi's Group S RS 002 is now alive

**T**HE FINAL PIECE IN one of motorsport's most mysterious jigsaws has been nudged into position at last – with the restoration of Audi's stillborn mid-engined Group S rally car.

Called RS 002, the odd-looking creation has spent much of its life on static display in Ingolstadt. It was created in 1986 by Audi Sport engineers without the direct knowledge of the company's management after an earlier, less radical-looking mid-engined project was captured by a spy photographer and dismantled hours after its existence was made public.

The 002 had been the only non-runner among the handful of known prototypes for Group S, which was designed to produce safer rallying than the legendary Group B regulations while creating

more freedom for manufacturers to enter the sport without building hundreds or even thousands of homologation road cars.

Earlier this year, though, the organisers of the Eifel Rallye Festival in Germany asked Audi if there was any chance of its skunkworks project taking part in a parade run.

Recommissioning the 002 took around three months of evening and weekend work by Audi Tradition, the small team responsible for the German brand's motorsport heritage fleet. With only 13km on its odometer, the 002 was said to be in fair condition. The biggest glitch during the restoration was finding a working ECU for its engine – a very late five-cylinder S1 E2 unit.

**evo** was afforded an exclusive passenger run in the RS 002 a couple of weeks after Walter Röhrl and his co-driver Christian Geistdörfer had

given the car a gentle run at the Eifel. With a few more kilometres under its belt, the 002 was deemed fit for a bit more performance; its turbocharger was operating at around 1.3bar, and the rev limit was nudged a little higher. This meant just over 350bhp to propel a vehicle weighing around a ton.

On a quiet road on the outskirts of Ingolstadt, the 002 was able to stretch its legs enough to hint at the potential of what could have been, had Group S not been canned in the immediate aftermath of the Tour de Corse accident that claimed the lives of Henri Toivonen and Sergio Cresto in May 1986.

In true Quattro style, the engine needs hard work to fully exploit its prodigious power; there's next to nothing below 4500rpm, and the kick in the kidneys only really happens between 6000 and

7000rpm. The oddest sensation of all is hearing that trademark five-cylinder wail from behind your head instead of it trying to shake itself loose of the mountings in front of you. Our driver, Tradition engineer Thomas Bauch, revealed that with its full 2bar of pressure, the engine would be pumping out 700bhp. The thought of that power in a car this light, with mid-'80s crowd control, is genuinely unnerving.

Future plans for the RS 002 remain hazy. 'Everything is open, but equally, nothing is planned,' says Audi Tradition boss Peter Kober. Expect outings at Goodwood and various Audi celebrations – though with gentle use only. As Bauch told us: 'If the gearbox goes, we can fix it. If the engine goes, we can fix it. But if we crash? There's no spare bodywork. One accident and it could be over.' ❏

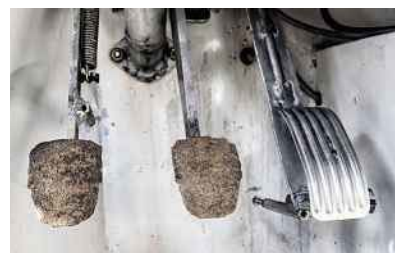




“ The thought of all that power in a car this light, with mid-’80s crowd control, is genuinely unnerving ”



**Above left:** switchgear is a mix of Sport Quattro S1 E2 spares and unique parts. **Left:** mid-mounted five-pot engine potentially good for 700bhp – in a car weighing only a ton. **Right:** by 1986 Audi had a twin-clutch ‘box prepped for the Quattro E2, but the tiny RS 002 retained three basic pedals



## INSIGHT



# The Racing Insider

Rallycross. Motorsport's saviour or motorsport's wrestling?

**I HAD DECIDED TO WRITE THIS COLUMN BEFORE** the recent entertainment in the rallycross paddock courtesy of Liam Doran. If you haven't seen it, a quick google should give you free access to the full bout.

Even before that, the structure and future of rallycross was being debated among motorsport's decision makers. It's the 'new old' motorsport. Established in 1967 in an attempt to fill airwaves destined for a cancelled RAC Rally, it has had a number of revivals along the way. Some of my favourite motorsport memories are from the British Rallycross Grand Prix at Brands Hatch on *Grandstand* and in person. Schanche, Gollop, Alamäki, Welch, Gartrac Escorts, Porsches, a Rover V8 (really), 6R4s, RS200s, Integrales, huge crowds, terrestrial TV coverage and then... Nothing.

Until the latest revival. And, this time, surely the perfect formula for distracted millennials (rubbish marketing speak for busy youngsters). Short races, loads of horsepower, bish-bosh driving tactics, Loeb, ex F1 drivers.

Last year I attended the final round of the Global Rallycross series. It had everything: Ken Block jumping his Monster Energy-sponsored Hoonigan Focus in front of the Luxor in Las Vegas against a full grid of Supercars. Millennial gold, surely?

But still no breakthrough. One obvious issue is the split between the US version (Global) and the European version (World), with an energy drink company heavily involved in each. A split of effort, rules and ethos. And yes, the Yanks have actually got jumps.

I quite like jumps. But I hate 'joker laps' where, once in each race, you have to take a different route to spice things up. Here's where it all comes apart. Casual fans need to be able to understand the rules in an instant, but joker laps mean the whole race feels irrelevant until the last half lap, after everyone has taken a joker.

It's as if rallycross doesn't know whether it wants to be the second 'serious' motorsport behind F1, with manufacturer involvement, or pure entertainment. The ingredients are there for rallycross to be the next big thing. But there are also many reasons why it won't.

One is something called Nitro Circus. A bunch of lunatics fill O2-sized arenas by performing death-defying stunts on motorbikes, snowmobiles and shopping trollies. It's motorised wrestling. The associated social media and promotion are edgy, engaging. And the show is just that – a show. You sit in a warm, accessible arena, drink your chosen chilled energy drink and eat your overpriced, oversized hot dog in comfort. To watch real rallycross you have to do what those pioneers did 49 years ago: brave the elements and the health dangers of the temporary 'food' stalls.

Perhaps rallycross is not enough like wrestling. Perhaps a bit of live-streamed fake bish-bosh from the warm, covered paddock adding to the real contact on track is exactly what's needed.

**Darren Cox**

Darren is the former head of Nismo and was the architect of the Nissan GT Academy

## NEWS

# Lamborghini set for Le Mans debut?

**S**OURCES IN ITALY have indicated that Lamborghini's new boss, former Ferrari F1 chief Stefano Domenicali, is strengthening the firm's motorsport ambitions.

The logical option is Le Mans, via an expansion of the existing customer motorsport programme (Huracán Super Trofeo) and using knowledge gained from racing the same car in GT3 categories. Lamborghini has never entered the 24-hour race as a factory team, although various privateers have competed with Diablos and Murciélagos – with little success.

At the 2016 Le Mans 24 Hours, five marques competed in the GTE classes: Ford, Ferrari, Aston

Martin, Chevrolet and Porsche. The category has seen a significant increase in exposure, partly due to the injection of marketing value from Ford. A Lamborghini entry would place the company in direct competition with some of its strongest road-car rivals.

Repurposing the existing Huracán GT3 (pictured) into a Le Mans-eligible GTE racer is a relatively straightforward process – and with competitiveness determined by Balance of Performance (at least that's the aim), overall development costs wouldn't be prohibitive.

Our view? Go for it, Domenicali. Just think of the noise of that V10 on the Mulsanne...



## BIG NUMBERS

## \$21,780,000

Price paid for Le Mans winning Jaguar D-type Le Mans at Pebble Beach

## 16,000kg

Full race weight of Dakar Rally-spec Red Bull Kamaz truck

## 500

Number of BTCC races started by Jason Plato



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## FOCUS

## PERFECTING THE ELECTRONIC EXHAUST



**T**ECHNOLOGY WITHIN cars doesn't come much more controversial than speaker-augmented engine sounds. We, as car enthusiasts, prefer our engine's exhaust system to have been tuned for performance, and if it happens to sound good as a result, then that's a welcome bonus. However, it's a different view when it comes to engine noise amplified through a car's stereo system.

Yet as turbocharged engines dull exhaust notes and all but eradicate induction noise, and as sound insulation improves and legislation restricts volume, engine sounds emanating from speakers may soon be the only way to hear any satisfying mechanical chorus from inside your car.

The task of trying to convince car enthusiasts that 'fake' engine sounds are acceptable is no mean feat, but car manufacturers from Audi to Porsche are investing millions in acoustic laboratories as well as turning to specialists to perfect the soundtracks of their latest performance models. Northamptonshire-based Red Arch is one such company tasked with the acoustic development of engine sounds. Currently, it works with BMW and Mini, developing their

optional sports exhaust systems – including the lairy and hilarious system fitted to the Mini John Cooper Works Challenge that *evo* recently helped develop.

To perfect the noises made by its range of exhausts and sound amplifiers (simple tubes into the cabin with tuned diaphragms that act as speakers driven by engine pulsations), Red Arch has worked with Loughborough University to create a range of bespoke tools and measuring techniques. These are used to establish the ideal size, length and diameter of an exhaust, as well as the spring rate and damping effect of the materials of the exhaust hangers, as these can also be used to hone the sound.

“*Speakers may soon be the only way to get satisfying noises into many cars*”

‘The overall powertrain sound from a vehicle comes from engine noise, intake noise and exhaust noise combined together,’ says Dr Mike Gore, engineering manager at Red Arch. ‘This delicate balance provides the overall complex sound quality and level, which if done correctly can produce the most beautiful soundtrack.’

The company's expansion into speaker-generated noises is a logical next step. However, rather than generating a synthetic soundtrack that masks any real engine noise, Red Arch's philosophy is to use the exterior sound generated by the engine and enhance it with sound through the speakers. This requires a connection to the vehicle's CAN (Controller Area Network) system, which is able to provide the engine's load and speed data so the speakers can replicate the correct volume and frequency.

Creating a convincing track to play through the car's speakers, one that has the correct tone and 'layered frequency', is the difficult bit. Gore admits that it's extremely subjective, but says that Red Arch is dedicated to improving sound within these constraints. Tailoring your car's engine noise is likely to be an option too, as Gore explains:

## GAME-CHANGER

## FOUR VALVES PER CYLINDER

**First application:** Peugeot L76  
**When:** 1912



The first car powered by an engine with four valves per cylinder was Peugeot's L76 Grand Prix car from 1912. But it wasn't until 1928 that a road car, the Alfa Romeo 6C 1500 Sport, offered the technology.

Like most engines with the four valves per cylinder, the Alfa used double overhead camshafts to operate two inlet and two exhaust valves, but twins cams aren't essential: the Triumph Dolomite Sprint used a single overhead cam and some complicated rocker arms to operate its 16 valves.

Having four valves per cylinder helps increase the area occupied by the valves, enabling more air and fuel to enter the cylinder to produce more power. The four-valve configuration also leaves a space in the centre of the cylinder for a spark plug in the optimum position to ignite the fuel and air mixture.

‘With increasingly integrated mobile technology it is easy to see the possibility of downloading sounds through your mobile phone to the vehicle for selection as the driver demands.’

What we've experienced so far in production cars is augmented engine noise in its infancy, but with developments such as those from Red Arch, it's likely that the soundtracks will become far less controversial and ever more scintillating and natural sounding.



**B**ACK IN JUNE I travelled to Continental's proving ground in Uvalde, Texas, to conduct *evo*'s annual tyre test (*evo* 226). There are several such facilities throughout Europe that we could have used, but we chose Uvalde for one very good reason: its state-of-the-art dry handling test track.

The £1.5million circuit, designed by Continental's test engineer, Angelo Pérez-Riemer, was completed earlier this year. We're told just as much design and engineering work went into the track as a high-performance tyre, making it one of the best circuits in the world to test and develop suspension systems, chassis electronics and, of course, tyres.

The track is around two miles in length and varies from six to 12 metres in width. There are 17 corners, significant elevation changes, tricky cambers and parabolic crossfalls (I didn't either; it's basically a pronounced crown in the road). In order for it to give representative results for European markets, the stones used for the track surface were shipped over from Germany. The grip levels, meanwhile, are more akin to a road than a race circuit.

Having consulted F1 circuit designer Hermann Tilke's



“On one corner the camber drops away exactly at the point where the car is most loaded up”

engineering firm, the target was to replicate the results quality of the Nürburgring, but in a fraction of the lap distance. ‘The Nordschleife is the benchmark test facility,’ explains Pérez-Riemer, ‘but the lap is so long. You can get the results you need and still have 10km to drive. We wanted to combine the fluid feel of

an old race circuit with the precise testing results of a modern track.’

The first two corners are high-speed fourth-gear sweepers with constant radii, the idea being any particularly unsettling traits in the suspension or tyres will reveal themselves where there's run-off and no sudden direction changes.

From there follows a series of tighter corners. One particular right-hander is approached by a sharp ascent, which is intended to reduce stress on braking systems – particularly important in the blazing Texan heat. The back end of the track is fast and flowing, with one particular fourth-gear left that's become known as the Widowmaker because the camber drops away exactly at the point where the car is most loaded up.

The dry handling circuit is both immensely satisfying to drive and incredibly revealing, too. During our test there were certain tyres that gave good, stable grip in the high-speed bends and others that tripped the Ford Focus ST into sudden oversteer. The daunting, 90mph Widowmaker, meanwhile, felt pretty uncomfortable on the worst-performing tyres, but on the Michelin, Vredestein and Continental the ST was completely unfazed. See last month's issue for the full results. **Dan Prosser**



**KUMHO SELF-SEAL**

Kumho has been busy gathering a small collection of awards for its innovative new Sealant tyre. The Sealant tyre lives up to its name by sealing itself if punctured, thus stopping any drop in tyre pressure. The product has won an International Design Excellence Award in the USA, a Red Dot Design Award in Japan, and Good Design awards in both Japan and Korea.

**McLAREN TYRE SNUB**

The McLaren F1 team has turned down the opportunity to test next season's new tyres. The Pirellis that will make their race debut next year are markedly different from the current, controversial tyres, where grip is designed to drop off dramatically. The new tyres have been constructed to behave more like a conventional race tyre and are much wider.

Ferrari has spent two days testing the new tyres at Fiorano, Red Bull has tested them at Mugello, and Mercedes at Silverstone. It may seem odd that McLaren hasn't taken the same opportunity, especially as it might help the team be more competitive early next season. However, McLaren believes the advantage of trying the new tyre immediately is minimal, as a lot of the test data is given to all the teams, so instead it has chosen to focus on trying to score points this season and not spend the time testing the latest Pirellis.



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# Tesla's master plan: part two



## Cars, batteries and solar: Elon Musk's vision gets even more ambitious

**E**LON MUSK, CEO OF TESLA Motors, has announced 'Part Deux' of his master plan for his electric car company. It follows on from his first master plan devised a decade ago, one that involved building an electric sports car (the Roadster), a more affordable car (which became the Model S), an even more affordable car (the upcoming Model 3) and providing power-generation options not necessarily related to cars – something Musk achieved by funding solar-panel manufacturer SolarCity.

Part two is a little more complicated, with plans for creating home-based solar-roof and battery storage options, expanding Tesla's product line to cover all major segments, developing autonomous vehicles to a point where they'll be ten times safer than manual driving, and allowing owners to make money from their autonomous Teslas when they're not using them by offering them for hire on the Tesla 'shared fleet'.

All very ambitious, but also all well underway. Tesla has

“The factory can churn out batteries for half a million EVs annually”

now officially opened its battery Gigafactory (pictured) – a \$5billion, 3200-acre plant half an hour from Reno in Nevada's desert. It will churn out batteries for as many as half a million electric cars per year, as well as products such as the Tesla Powerwall – a home energy-storage system.

Of the huge investment, electronics company Panasonic has contributed around \$2billion. The Japanese firm already makes the battery cells used in Tesla's electric vehicles and has recently raised over \$3.8million in corporate bonds to finance investments.

The factory will in turn serve the hundreds of thousands of 'affordable' Model 3s that Tesla intends to sell – 370,000 people have so far placed reservations for the car, the pricing for which starts

at \$35,000 (£27,000) in the US.

Given Tesla currently produces around 50,000 vehicles a year, increasing output by more than sevenfold will give the company plenty of headaches. But the availability of batteries won't be a problem, and being able to create huge quantities of a product that's in demand around the globe is a sensible move, even if Tesla can't yet build the cars to put them in.

And batteries are only part of the story. SolarCity has now merged with Tesla Motors. Tesla calls it 'the world's only vertically integrated sustainable-energy company' – the firm produces not just the cars, but also the means to power them. It's a little like a major car manufacturer owning an oil refinery, only less dystopian.

As with the Gigafactory, Tesla is expecting big savings by joining forces with the energy company, leveraging its Tesla stores to raise SolarCity's profile and giving customers a one-stop solution when they buy a car: put a Model 3 on the driveway, a Powerwall in the garage and some solar panels on your roof.



## TECHNOLOGY

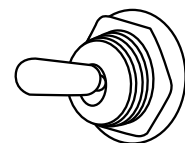
### Jag's autonomous future

Tesla isn't the only company with autonomy in its future. Jaguar Land Rover is set to trial more than 100 research vehicles over the next four years to test vehicle-to-vehicle (V2V) and vehicle-to-infrastructure (V2I) technology.

The aim is for vehicles to continually communicate data with both other vehicles and the world around them – traffic lights, roadside signs and more – not just to create a better picture of the world for full autonomy, but also to aid human drivers in making safe progress.

Tony Harper, head of research at JLR, says the technology could even enhance road driving for enthusiasts. He suggests a scenario where the car could warn you of an obstacle around a blind corner – potentially making the sort of roads we love to drive on a great deal safer.

Elsewhere, the technology could help cut congestion, allowing vehicles – both autonomous and under human control – to be less of an inconvenience to one another.



ON  
OR  
OFF?

### Electronic handbrakes

'On or off? Who knows!' writes Chris Stewart. 'You just get used to pushing a switch to engage the handbrake (Porsche, Mercedes) then you change car and find you need to pull (Audi, Jaguar). Argh!'





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WATCH TECH



Roger Dubuis  
Homage  
Millesime

Seriously wealthy horophiles like nothing more than the chance to own a unique piece the like of which they'll never see on the wrist of anyone else. So it wasn't surprising that the one-off Homage Millesime from Roger Dubuis was snapped-up soon after being announced – despite a price tag of a nice, round \$1million.

While that does sound a little steep, the engineering of the watch is undeniably impressive, not least because it features no fewer than seven centrally driven hands. The difficulties involved in making such a mechanism are extensive, both in terms of power supply and the logistics of containing the drive to the various hands within a central space.

Impressively, the dial is surprisingly uncluttered, despite offering indications for hours, minutes, seconds, date, day, week of the year and the flyback chronograph from the central hands, together with subdials for phases of the moon, running seconds, and minute counting. Oh, and then there's a 'minute repeater' chime, too...



THIS MONTH

Junghans Meister Driver  
Chronoscope

Price: £1790  
From: junghans.de

The Meister Driver Chronoscope harks back to the early 1900s when Junghans made automotive speedometers and dashboard clocks. A choice of 12-hour or 60-minute dials is available, each based on the design of a pre-war speedo, while the anthracite, cream and grey finish pictured here is said to have been inspired by the paintjob of a 1932 Maybach DS8 Zeppelin. Other dial colours are available.



Briston Clubmaster  
Gentleman Driver

Price: from £130  
From: briston-watches.com

Briston was founded in 2012 to make affordable quartz chronographs and three-handers with a sporting bent. An unusual feature of some models, such as the Gentleman Driver, is the tortoiseshell-finish acetate case, which measures 40mm square. A Japanese-made Miyota movement lives behind the dial, which can be had in a variety of sunray treatments, including red, blue and British Racing Green.



MHD  
CR1

Price: £300  
From: matthewhumphriesdesignwatches.com

The MHD CR1 is the latest offering from former Morgan designer Matthew Humphries. Sporting a '70s vibe with its brushed steel case (which is slightly reminiscent of an Omega Speedmaster Mark II's), the watch offers nice details such as the cut-out hour and minute hand and the gauge-like scale between eight and 12 o'clock. Black or white dials are offered, together with rally straps in black, blue, tan or brown.

CHRONO



Read more from Simon de Burton in *Chrono*, the interactive watch magazine for iPad and iPhone, available now from the iTunes Store.



ROLEX MILGAUSS

As worn by Geoff Dowding, director, Bentley Mulliner



'Back in 2005 I bought one of the original Breitling for Bentley Continental GT watches, which I wear on a frequent basis and have grown very fond of.

'For many years, however, I have been fascinated by the Rolex

brand. I bought my first Rolex, a Datejust model, when I was in my late 20s and later progressed to a steel Cosmograph Daytona. Recently, however, I spotted a lovely, blue-dial Milgauss with a green-tinted crystal.

It was an impulse purchase made purely on aesthetic merits – but I love the history of the Milgauss, too. The original version of the 1950s was one of the first seriously antimagnetic watches on the market.'



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MADE IN  
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LETTER OF THE MONTH

# Contender ready?

**I THINK I SPEAK FOR CAR FANS THE WORLD** over as I express my joy that the Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio is a genuine contender in the sports saloon class, especially after the immense let-down that is the 4C. Will my next car come from somewhere other than the established Germans?

However, it was on my second reading of your group test between the Giulia and the BMW M4 Competition Package, Lexus RC F and Mercedes-AMG C63 S Coupe (evo 226) that things started to look less rosy. The damping, build quality and the gearchange all leave something to be desired, it seems – and this in a left-hand-drive car on roads that are superior to the UK's.

With hope diminished, I turned to the Alfa website, where I found very limited information. Come on, Alfa

Romeo! There are so many of us ready to buy a genuinely good Alfa, but in the meantime, my pounds will continue to head to Germany until the cars and support are on par with established rivals.

**Mark Richardson**

## 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.



*Peter Jackson*  
THE JEWELLER



## End of an era

I couldn't be happier that you have added a Gen-F HSV GTS – sorry, Vauxhall VXR8 GTS – to your Fast Fleet. As an expat currently living in Brisbane I still subscribe to the UK edition of **evo** and I own a Gen-F HSV R8 Clubsport, the GTS's baby brother.

As Jethro rightly points out, with Ford Australia's FPV (Ford Performance Division) already gone, Holden Special Vehicles on its last hurrah and no more home-grown rear-wheel-drive V8 supersaloons on the horizon, it's the end of an era in Australia.

There's talk of one last crazy HSV after the GTS, a GTS-R that will be even more powerful than the current GTS, with an even bigger engine. And then? Well, nobody knows. HSV has been quiet on what it will do next and this is very sad, as these cars are so characterful and charismatic. Australia will be worse off for their demise.

**Mat Norman, Australia**

## Seller beware

I read with interest your article on how to best sell your performance car (evo Market, 226). When exploring the different ways, you discuss using a specialist dealer to sell your car on a sale-or-return basis. You mention the positives but don't highlight a key negative that I learned to my huge cost two years ago: the buyer pays the dealer and you are relying on them then making

**EVO'S MONTH**

**44**

Hours Henry Catchpole went without seeing a bed while doing the Three Peaks Challenge (see page 100).



Editor **Nick Trott** (@evoNickTrott) pops to B&Q in our Vauxhall VXR8 GTS long-termer.

*'25 litres of paint, a V8, a supercharger and rear-wheel drive. What could possibly go wrong?'*

**This month's subscribers' cover**  
Hakosuka GT-R gearknob photographed by Aston Parrott  
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## INBOX

the contractually agreed payment to you.

I did my homework and used a company that had been trading a number of years. I visited the dealership to see the multitude of high-end vehicles they had in stock. Although my car was sold within a fortnight I was two months chasing the agreed figure of £19,000 before the director entered the company into voluntary liquidation. To this date I have not received a penny.

**Stuart Day**

## Gone racing

In his latest column (The Racing Insider, issue 226), Darren Cox says he thinks *evo* readers would enjoy going racing more than doing trackdays. I'd like to say how truly right he is.

At the age of 59, having done many trackdays in Westfields and Clio 182s, I decided to go racing. I purchased a Toyota MR2 to compete in the Track Attack series, took my ARDS test and entered my first race (at Rockingham).

Trackdays are wonderful and I still love every minute of a trackday, but racing adds a whole new dimension to fast driving. The competition is great, the adrenalin and the high from a day's racing lasts until the next day, and the friendliness and good humour of the other competitors makes the time between races go quickly.

All credit to Prize Motorsport and Alec Fitness for the great job they do in storing, transporting and looking after my car at the race. And this is a great way to race – there are companies who will provide a complete backup service so all you do is turn up, qualify and race. I am now in my third season and have no intention of giving up until either failing eyesight or (excessive) old age forces me to. Indeed, I enjoy it so much I have ordered and will race a Hyundai Coupe in the BARC-run Hyundai Cup next year.

So my advice to anyone who loves trackdays is get your ARDS licence, buy one of the myriad of cars for which a racing series has been created, buy the racing kit, get your excuses ready and go for it. You will not regret it.

**Alan Evans**

## Plate debate

I read your article on how to convert the McLaren P1 GTR for the road (*evo* 225) with great interest. It answered many questions about how I should make my multi-million-pound track car street-legal, but it left me scratching my head about how best to affix the front registration plate.

Between a paper-thin splitter and countless air-intakes, there's precious little space into which to bang a couple of self-tappers. I'm concerned that the aerodynamics north of 220mph will play havoc with that double-sided reg-fixing tape you can get at Halfords, and I've no idea where you can still get those stick-on plates that adorned the noses of many a Lotus and Marcos in the '70s, or if they're still legal.

Or is it simply the case that if your car is worth a seven-figure sum, the requirement for it to wear a front plate doesn't apply?

**Duncan Stewart**

## Where's our Dan?

In response to Richard Porter's column in *evo* 225, I have no doubt that the average Australian has a different attitude to sport from an early age, but I believe the connection they have with 'Dan' (Daniel Ricciardo) is partly helped by his position on the grid, but more importantly by his heroically engaging and likeable character.

From the first moment he appeared in F1 he has captivated audiences with brave and skilled driving, but it has been his engagement with press, public and fans that has endeared him to all. I believe that if Jenson (or more importantly his car), was more of a front-row feature, he would be cheered louder. Lewis undoubtedly has megastar presence and talent, but despite his ability he has been a far harder character to like.

You only have to look at how, as a nation, we have supported the likes of Mo Farah, or in motorsport, James Hunt and Colin McRae. Give us a British 'Dan' at the sharp end of the grid and you will hear us all singing a little harder on race day.

**Charlie Bowmont,**  
**Roxburghshire**

## TRENDING

Hot topics in our inbox this month

*Hooray! Alfa has finally cracked it!*

*Renault must build the Clio RS16*

*Only madmen wash their own car, Dickie*



Fastest growing video at [YouTube.com/evo](https://www.youtube.com/evo)

Focus RS v Golf R drag battle: Which of these four-wheel-drive superhatches is faster in a straight line? We have the answer.



Most liked Instagram post on @officialvomagazine

The Ferrari 458 Speciale sideways, a lot, on video.



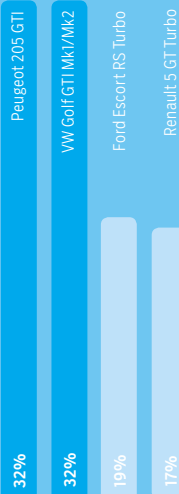
Most viewed story at [evo.co.uk](https://www.evo.co.uk)

'The best V8 engines ever – evo staff pick their favourites'

**Twitter poll:**  
Favourite '80s hot hatch

As voted for by followers of evo's sister title, classicandperformancecar.com (@CPCarsforsale on Twitter)

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**S**OMETIMES IN THIS game you find yourself out of step with your colleagues. You're enjoying a car, its agility, the booming power delivery and sweet balance. Then you step out and hear: 'Can't get on with that, can you?' Erm, well yes, actually. 'What's the steering all about?' pipes up the next voice. 'The chassis feels sharp but there's not enough feel,' joins in another. It doesn't help that these are people I respect and usually agree with. Even four-time IndyCar

champion Dario Franchitti is damning and I don't feel equipped to deep-dive into damping traits with him...

It's eCoty 2015 and the Mercedes-AMG GT S is being systematically torn apart by the savage roads and isn't winning many friends. I rather like it. Okay, for a 20-minute blast it's never going to touch the McLaren 675LT or Cayman GT4 also present, but as a fast, accessible and surprisingly focused sports GT, I reckon it's bang on target. Unlike many at eCoty, I leave with fond memories of at least

two fantastic drives in the GT S. I love how the centre of gravity feels down by your ankles, the massive traction, and the startling turn-in response.

Now, many months later and at the wheel of the entry-level AMG GT – less power, fixed-rate spool-valve dampers instead of electronically adjustable items – the criticisms I didn't recognise in Scotland come into sharp focus. It feels darty and nervous, the steering seems ludicrously fast and so light that you can't get any feel for the grip available,

and the car just can't cope with the vicious lumps of this moorland road. Neither of us is very happy. Can this really be practically the same car?

I clamber out confused and rather downtrodden. It's been a short drive but enough to dismantle my affection for the car. I still really like the incredibly clean shape, the fact it looks so lean and understated in profile but has that super-low and wide stance head-on. The 4-litre twin-turbo V8 is fantastic, too. This GT may be the base model (it's still



# Mercedes-AMG GT v Jaguar F-type R Coupe AWD

Two front-engined coupes powered by big, forced-induction V8s, but which should your £100,000 go on?

**Test location:** North York Moors  
**GPS:** 54.41666, -0.75





## THIS MONTH

**McLAREN** 540C  
**PORSCHE** PANAMERA TURBO  
**CATERHAM** SEVEN 310R  
**ALPINA** B4 BITURBO CONVERTIBLE  
**JAGUAR** XE 2.0d AWD  
**RADICAL** RXC TURBO 500R  
**DMS** MERCEDES-AMG C63 S

## THE TEAM

With a big hatch test in this month's issue, we asked our road testers to name their favourite hot hatch:



**NICK TROTT**  
Editor

'Loved my Clio V6 – but the Mégane R26.R is the daddy. A true GT3 RS of hot hatches.'



**STUART GALLAGHER**  
Managing editor

'A Renault 5 GT Turbo Raider. Because it's not a Peugeot 205 GTI.'



**HENRY CATCHPOLE**  
Features editor

'Another vote for the Mégane R26.R. Love the current Fiesta ST, too.'



**DAN PROSSER**  
Road test editor

'I've got a weird thing for the Mk5 Golf GTI. I'll own one some day soon.'



**JETHRO BOVINGTON**  
Contributing editor

'Has to be a Renault, but which one? I think the exquisite Mégane Z75 Cup-S.'



**RICHARD MEADEN**  
Contributing editor

'Very hard to resist a Clio Williams. Of the moderns I think I've just fallen for the Golf GTI Clubsport S.'



**DAVID VIVIAN**  
Contributing road tester

'One more vote for the sublime Mégane R26.R. Best makeover of a mundane family hatch ever.'



**ADAM TOWLER**  
Contributing road tester

'So hard to pick just one, but I wouldn't be without a 205 GTI.'



**WILL BEAUMONT**  
Staff writer

'Clio 200 Cup. Something about its proportions made it feel so natural and satisfying to drive quickly.'

£98,195) and have to make do with 456bhp and 442lb ft – down 47bhp and 37lb ft – but the noise is as startling as a clap of thunder and the engine responds with a storm of energy to every throttle input. The eight-speed dual-clutch gearbox matches the drama with shifts that pop like a tight, perfectly timed jab.

I like the driving position, too. It takes time to feel comfortable in the GT because you sit so low, the bonnet stretching out ahead of you like a great plain of metal. For the first few miles the GT feels ten-foot wide. But with familiarity the intimidation melts away and you begin to enjoy the sensation of being sat right over the rear axle. If only it wasn't leaping around quite so much...

Today the GT's nemesis might be these evil roads that stream over

the North York Moors, but we've also brought along another potential headache. Similar in concept, wildly different in execution and slightly tamed by four-wheel drive, the Jaguar F-type R Coupe AWD costs £91,680 but packs 542bhp and 501lb ft. It has an eight-speed auto 'box and its claimed weight is 1730kg to the GT's 1540kg (although we've actually weighed the Jag at 1825kg). These two cars are pretty evenly matched and promise the dream of GT usability and near-supercar performance. I head to the Jaguar expecting a more pliant and predictable experience.

The first surprise is that it looks rather clunky next to the pebble-smooth AMG GT. Inside it feels quite cheap and unimaginative, too. It's by no means a horrible interior, but it can't match the sense of occasion

you enjoy in the GT. Press the starter button and the 5-litre supercharged V8 erupts with the same volume, though. It's a hell of a racket, deep enough to rattle ribs and so loud you wonder how it can possibly be legal.

Even on these fast, jagged roads it makes sense to pull the little slider beside the gearlever back to engage Dynamic mode, and I much prefer to change gear manually on the paddles. Like the GT, the F-type takes a while to dial into. The steering is fast (but nothing like as responsive as the Merc's) and light, and again you don't get much feel. For the first few miles everything feels jumpy – lightweight in terms of feedback and agitated as the ride is always busy. It's worth persevering, though, because as confidence increases, so does the Jag's composure.

The most striking thing about this R is that it has traction. The rear-drive R is fun in a '60s muscle car sort of way, but soon its complete inability to put down its 542bhp becomes frustrating. It just makes you feel constrained rather than free to enjoy the performance, and you never really feel able to push the car and feel its balance because you're fearful of igniting the rear tyres. This AWD model is different. You can hurl it into turns and feel the front push a little, aggressively open the throttle mid-corner and let the tail really dig down into the surface as the turn opens out. All because there's a much greater sense that it's not going to suddenly drop away from you.

Freed from the constant need to be mindful of wheelspin and spikes of oversteer, you can start to enjoy the



R's other strengths. That crackling extrovert of a V8 really is fabulously exciting and its bite matches the wild noise. It's great to rip through a couple of gears and feel it grow in intensity, but it's even more fun to use it to alter your line through a corner. Such is the torque that you needn't barrel in and overload the front tyres before lifting to snap them back on line and loosen the rear. Instead, just pour the car into a turn and then really get into the throttle. The front stays locked on line and then the rear progressively starts to dictate things. Mostly it doesn't develop into a slide, more a sliver of angle that creates a really enjoyable near-neutral balance. But use all that noise and torque and the F-type still oversteers just fine.

These moorland roads rarely allow the R to show its playful side, though.



‘The AMG’s engine has a focused blast of energy that’s a laser beam to the F-type’s sawn-off shotgun’



**Above:** the GT boasts the nicer interior of the two cars – it's a natural in this price bracket, whereas the F-type is stretching up from an entry-level car that costs little more than half as much. **Left:** Jag's carbon-ceramic brakes are part of a £7550 pack; AMG has standard cast-iron discs



**Above:** twin-turbo V8 sits well back in the AMG's engine bay, aiding the car's balance.  
**Below:** beneath all the luxury-tourer garb the AMG GT is a proper sports car

**'The AMG feels in a different league to the F-type in terms of agility, control and purity'**



They're fast and splintered with wicked dips and crests and demand real body control and total confidence in high-speed direction changes. Roll up your sleeves and try to really master them and the R does feel more of a GT car than an out-and-out sports car. The ride might feel busy, but that doesn't quite bring the body control you'd expect. Dive into one of those compressions and the suspension thwacks into the bumpstops and then the rebound phase is out of control, the body movements unchecked and your confidence shaken. Over cresting corners there's a similar feeling of the suspension and body running out of sync. This makes the R feel heavy but also light on feel, the steering just not painting a picture of the action unfolding beneath. These are extreme roads, of course, but nevertheless something like a 911 Carrera S would retain its cohesion and precise poise.

What of the AMG GT? It's definitely not immune to those same lumps and bumps, but it has different problems. Body control is less of an issue because the car seems to ride so flat – the centre of gravity really does feel like it's scraping the road surface – and the dampers pull the body tight over crests and support it with determination into compressions. However, where the Jaguar might heave or float, the GT skips and trips, the wheels stuttering as they struggle to trace the contours of the road. At times this staccato gait can feel really disconcerting and is at odds with the fluency you crave when you're trying to exploit the fabulously potent V8. Indeed, there are times when you fear you might be bounced clean off the road.

Yet there are moments of magic. The engine has a focused blast of energy that's a laser beam to the F-type's sawn-off shotgun. The

## Specification

## Mercedes-AMG GT

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
V8, 3982cc, twin-turbo	216g/km	456bhp @ 6000rpm	442lb ft @ 1600-5000rpm	4.0sec (claimed)	189mph (claimed)	1540kg (301bhp/ton)	£98,195

+ A true sports car that also does luxury - Takes time to reveal its talent

**evo rating** ★★★★★

## Jaguar F-type R AWD

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
V8, 5000cc, supercharged	269g/km	542bhp @ 6500rpm	501lb ft @ 3500rpm	4.1sec (claimed)	186mph (limited)	1730kg (318bhp/ton)	£91,680

+ Epic soundtrack; four-wheel-drive chassis lets you play *and* make progress - Lacks poise on many UK roads

**evo rating** ★★★★★



dual-clutch 'box is so much punchier and more precise than the eight-speed auto of the R, and once you dial into the hyper-alert steering, you begin to appreciate just how agile this chassis is. It changes direction so quickly and yet stays so unerringly flat, and despite lacking four-wheel drive, it has quite staggering traction in the dry. In fact, the whole dynamic experience is much more authentic, incisive sports car than burly GT – it feels intrinsically like an R8 or 911 rival.

To uncover these qualities requires you to reduce your work rate, to gently tease the steering and carry good entry speed to lean on the natural athleticism. Once you recognise what's required, confidence soars and each corner is tackled with a surgical precision. It's a really satisfying sensation to just let the car do the work and it generates so much speed and grip. What's more impressive still is that this is just a platform

from which to really explore the GT's ultimate abilities. Now you can ramp up your work rate again to push the tyres harder, to release all the energy the engine has to give and start to play with the car's balance.

It's amazing just how edgy and intimidating the GT seems at first, only to reveal itself to be a car you can drive calmly at the limit with just a flick of the wrists to scythe through bends or even correct a slide. I'm not sure I know of another car that undergoes such a metamorphosis as the miles accrue. Of course, there's one big caveat... You might never reveal the inner sports car if you're on the wrong road at the wrong time. In the wet, up here on the moors? Too often the GT just feels unyielding and hyper-alert. And because it can't relax over this surface, you can't relax at the wheel. You're edgy, the car's edgy, and so everything feels slightly fraught. It's only when I have to do my

performing-monkey cornering shots that I start to trust the GT and then everything begins to fall into place.

Having said that, it takes a full week for me to really click with the GT. The shoot is long since passed and I'm at home. The GT is due for collection, so I decide to go for a long run on some great roads I know well. They're still narrow and bumpy in places but they're not quite as punishing. The GT is fantastic. It feels supremely agile and although it barely seems to roll, pitch or dive, there's still all the information I need to extract every last bit of grip and to pull the trigger on the fantastic engine very early in corners. Overall, it feels in a different league to the F-type in terms of agility, control and purity.

Of course, there's no question that the Jag's composure wouldn't be rocked on this route as it was in Yorkshire, either. But even on super-smooth roads, its less assertive body

control, softer gearbox response and slightly fuzzier controls can't hit the heights offered by the GT. I'm not about to pretend the GT has all the answers, but for **evo** its philosophy is just a better fit. It's a car that you might assume puts refinement and long-distance comfort ahead of sports car attributes, but in fact it prizes grip, control and adjustability above all else. That can make it feel confused at first, but in fact it's your brain that's misfiring – assuming it should be less intense and more, well, GT-like.

I'm pretty certain if you could drive an AMG GT and an F-type R AWD back-to-back for ten minutes, you'd disappear over the hills in the Jag and never come back... But for those with a little patience, the Mercedes has much to offer. It'll get you – slowly and with plenty of ups and downs – but it will get you in the end. ☒

**Jethro Bovingdon**  
(@JethroBovingdon)



**Test location:** A4086, north Wales  
**GPS:** 53.09357, -3.95485

## McLaren 540C

Is McLaren's most affordable car ever a cat amongst the usual sports car pigeons?

**F**OR PEOPLE WHO really care about the finer points of driving, the Mk5 Volkswagen Golf GTI was always a more appealing car than the faster, four-wheel-drive R32 model. Similarly, in Porsche circles the base-level 911 Carrera has often been considered the superior car to the faster, more expensive Carrera S. In fact, there are many examples in recent history of the cheaper, simpler version of a performance car being preferable to the range-topping model.

It isn't just a matter of affordability, either. In the case of the Golf GTI and R32, the front-driven model was genuinely more engaging and rewarding to drive (although the R32's six-cylinder engine was a much sweeter thing than the GTI's turbocharged four-pot). All this considered, then, what is the chance that this new McLaren 540C is

actually the pick of the company's Sports Series line-up?

At £126,000, the 540C isn't only the cheapest Sports Series model, it's also the cheapest McLaren yet. It's the least powerful, too, with 533bhp and 398lb ft of torque. This entry-level model undercuts the rather brilliant 570S by £17,000 and gives up 29bhp and 45lb ft. In order to keep production costs in check, the 540C also gets aluminium body panels where the more expensive car uses carbonfibre.

It still delivers meaningful performance, though, recording a 0-62mph time of 3.5 seconds with a 199mph top speed. That makes this the first McLaren road car ever to have a sub-200mph top speed, which neatly demonstrates an important point: the 540C treads new ground for McLaren, a territory where buyers have subtly different expectations.

The £17,000 price difference between the 540C and 570S doesn't seem like a huge amount, but it means the cheaper car is vying for the attention of buyers who would otherwise consider a well-equipped Audi R8 V10 or a Mercedes-AMG GT S; buyers who are more likely to have just the one sports car rather than a small fleet. To that end, the 540C gets revised suspension settings designed to improve ride quality over the 570S and make it more amenable in day-to-day use.

Visually the two models are almost indistinguishable, but the 540C does get its own alloy-wheel design and some of the styling treatment at the front of the car is subtly different to that of the 570S. In the case of this specific test car, however, the painfully sombre cabin trim absolutely does betray the fact that this is the entry point to the McLaren

line-up. Thin, rough black leather covers just about every surface, and it completely smothers the sculptural shapes of the dashboard and door cards. You can upgrade to the Extended Leather option that comes as standard on the 570S, but upgrading a 540C too liberally does completely defeat the point of buying the cheaper model.

For a car with this level of dynamic ability, the McLaren 540C does ride very well – although much the same is also true of the 570S – and with good stowage space in the front boot and behind the seats, the car is actually very useable every day, although its cabin is still trickier to access than a Porsche 911's or an Audi R8's.

However, in improving the car's ride, McLaren has also gnawed away at that dynamic ability. It's a marginal thing, but there are times when the 540C feels less well tied down than the 570S, particularly under heavy braking. That aside, it remains a tremendously entertaining car to drive quickly, with intuitive, feelsome steering, good body control and a sweet, playful balance.

All Sports Series models use conventional suspension arrangements – double wishbones front and rear with springs, dampers and anti-roll bars – whereas the

Super Series models (650S and 675LT) use McLaren's complicated interconnected hydraulic system that's intended to decouple ride from handling. McLaren has improved the latter system a great deal in recent years, but the Sports Series' simpler suspension does still deliver a more natural and connected driving experience.

The 3.8-litre twin-turbo V8 is familiar from the rest of the McLaren line-up, but in its least powerful guise it feels flatter and less energetic right at the top end than it has ever felt. In overall terms, though, the run to the red line – set at 8500rpm – is more exciting than those offered by most modern turbocharged engines. It needs at least 3500rpm before it really starts to pull hard, but from there onwards the engine delivers strong, urgent straight-line performance. The seven-speed twin-clutch gearbox, meanwhile, delivers rapid shifts in manual mode and is smooth and refined when left in automatic.

This isn't another case of the cheaper version being the better one, then. The 540C is a very good junior supercar, but the 570S – a five-star **evo** car – remains the pick of the Sports Series range. ❌

**Dan Prosser**  
(@TheDanProsser)



**Above:** unoptioned interior is finished to a lower spec than that of the 570S. **Bottom left:** you'll need to be a McLaren spotter to tell the difference between a 570S and the 540C



**‘For a car with this level of dynamic ability, the 540C does ride very well’**

**Specification**

➕ Ride and handling balance, strong performance ❌ 570S is better still to drive

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight (dry)	Basic price
V8, 3799cc, twin-turbo	258g/km	533bhp @ 7500rpm	398lb ft @ 3500-6500rpm	3.5sec (claimed)	199mph (limited)	1311kg (413bhp/ton)	£126,000

**evo rating** ★★★★★



**Test location:** Munich, Germany  
**GPS:** 48.08908, 11.61941

# Porsche Panamera Turbo

Improved looks and dynamics plus a new engine lift Porsche's sledgehammer supersaloon from flawed gem to truly desirable

**I**T'S BEEN SUGGESTED by some that the new Panamera Turbo is worth buying purely for the way its rear wing deploys. Standing in a lay-by somewhere near the Austrian border with Germany, I ask **evo** contributor Adam Towler to press the relevant button. Out of that now very 911-like backside, a portion of the rear deck rises, then separates and extends sideways quite mesmerisingly, to stretch almost the full width of the car. It's like a motorised version one of those extendable dining room tables. Only cooler.

The old Panamera Turbo had a similar wing, but the new car's aero appendage is bigger, and to be honest the whole car, while recognisably related, is much better-looking than the first-generation version. It is still imposing, but there is more of the 911 about its profile now and the face looks less gawky. It's the awkward teenager that's grown into its looks.

Get inside and the interior is a huge leap forward, too. With sleek black panel surfaces and a huge, 12.3-inch touchscreen, it looks beautiful. The

new seats are also elegantly imposing and with 18-way adjustability they can be tailored to all shapes and sizes. The only minor niggle inside is that, in the same way that the old car had obvious blank buttons if you didn't spec it highly enough, you can see the ghosts of unused decals (seat-cooling fans, for example) on the black panels in the new car. Overall, though, this Panamera feels like a very stress-free place to while away a long motorway journey. Whether you're stuck in traffic through roadworks or watching the white lines blur into one on the A8 south of Munich as you home in on the 190mph top speed, there is a serenity to the cabin.

Propelling the Turbo to that V-max is an all-new twin-turbo 4-litre V8 that drives through an eight-speed dual-clutch 'box to all four wheels. Interestingly (well, quite interestingly), it's a 'square' engine, with bore and stroke measuring the same 86mm – the same dimensions as the pots in a Veyron's W16. Outputs of 542bhp and 568lb ft are enough to propel two tons of Porsche to 62mph in 3.6sec, and it will go on to reach 100mph in a



claimed 8.1sec. A brief play with the launch control on a quiet straight proves there really are no histrionics; the car just fires up the road almost unimpressively unflustered.

Things are very impressive, however, when we find some corners. Up a smooth but testing stretch of tarmac littered with hairpins, the Panamera is staggeringly quick. On the narrower roads pottering through villages and squeezing past cars earlier in the day, it felt huge (it's 6mm wider and 34mm longer than before), but now, at speed and with the three-chamber air-suspension locked down in its Sport Plus setting, the Panamera appears to have shrunk remarkably. Rear-wheel steering (controlled through the new 4D Chassis Control) must take some credit for the agility, but there

is a sense of connection through the steering to the front end that lets you drive with incredible confidence. I remember having a terrifying drive in the old Panamera Turbo with the front and rear ends feeling like a couple that weren't talking to each other after a blazing row, but the new car feels very much in harmony, to the extent that you can even happily bully it into small slides on the exit of bends. Get greedy and you notice the weight on the way into corners, but thankfully the monster (optional) carbon-ceramic discs and ten-pot calipers on our test car feel up to the task.

The caveat is that the suspension still has questions to answer on a bumpy UK road – while the primary ride is exemplary, the secondary ride feels less than absorbent at times.

However, overall, this Panamera Turbo is deeply impressive. The biggest compliment I can pay it is that now I've driven it, that mind-boggling 7min 38sec lap of the Ring actually makes sense. Although, of course, you could just buy it for the rear wing. ❏

**Henry Catchpole**  
 (@HenryCatchpole)

## Specification

➕ Searing pace; interior quality and body control a real step up; superb rear wing

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed
V8, 3996cc, twin-turbo	212g/km	542bhp @ 5750-6000rpm	568lb ft @ 1960-4500rpm	3.6sec (claimed)	190mph (claimed)

## evo rating



Weight	Basic price
1995kg (276bhp/ton)	£113,975



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**Test location:** Riseley, Bedfordshire  
**GPS:** 52.23818, -0.51102

# Caterham Seven 310R

A Caterham with 'R' in its name should be enough to set the pulse racing, but does extra power and more grip add up to bigger thrills?

**O** ONLY CATERHAM aficionados looking closely might be able to spot the Seven 310R's unique visual identifiers. It's the first Caterham available with optional LED headlamps, true, but they look much the same as the old lights. And anyway, this is a Caterham, so what did you expect?

The mechanical changes made to create this new model are similarly stealthy. The 310R has the 1.6-litre Ford Sigma engine from the 270, but it's fitted with the upgrades required to move a Caterham Tracksport racer up to the company's Supersport series. That means new, more aggressive cams and a remap that increases peak power by 17bhp to 152bhp. The weight is the same as the 270R's at 540kg, but thanks to the extra power the 310 is 0.2sec quicker from 0 to 60mph, at 4.8sec.

Inside, the only change seems to be a high-pitched alarm that goes off whenever you use the indicators. It's so loud you can hear it over the melange of other noises the Caterham makes; so loud it puts you off using the indicators at all. The rest

of the interior is typical Caterham – awkward and cramped. But once you've acclimatised, and worked out how to stop your elbows hitting the transmission tunnel or the top of the sill, the tiny steering wheel and narrow pedal box feel completely natural. Even the seats, so lean they have patches of carpet instead of padding, feel surprisingly comfortable.

The engine may well be just a Ford unit, but the Caterham modifications have instilled it with a character that's much closer to a race engine's. Start it up and it doesn't want to idle without a little bit of extra throttle. But the speed with which it revs, seemingly almost free from inertia, is what makes it feel most like a competition engine. Sadly, the noise it emits isn't quite so invigorating. With the side-pipe exit only two feet away from your right ear, all you can hear is the parpy exhaust note as there's no audible induction noise. What's the point of a racy four-cylinder engine if it isn't to have a wailing induction note?

Engine noise doesn't really matter in the 310, though, as the exhaust is in turn almost completely blocked



out by the sound of the gearbox and rear axle – a high-pitched whine that swells as the speed rises. As the 7500rpm limit approaches things start to feel manic, the cacophony gaining visual reinforcement from glaring gearshift lights as all your senses are overwhelmed. You expect some respite in higher gears, but the close-ratio 'box means the revs barely drop, so there's no escape. You wouldn't want it any other way. It's thrilling and extremely addictive.

If the drivetrain doesn't trigger sensory overload, there's still the abundance of feedback you get from the chassis, steering and brakes to take you to the edge. You can brake hard knowing intuitively when the front wheels will lock, even in the wet, and then turn in knowing just

what the front tyres can cope with. Although the sticky 185/55 R13 Avon ZZS tyres contribute to the front end's predictability, they give the rear axle an incredible amount of grip, so the instant, any-time throttle adjustability of a higher-powered Seven isn't apparent in the 310R.

If you really commit to a corner, brake late and carry a touch too much speed, you can start to feel the rear tyres squirm. Then you can properly influence the rear end with the throttle and tease out a slide. The tiny steering wheel and incredibly quick rack mean that just the right amount of opposite lock can be applied instantly. Sitting right over the back axle means you can appreciate every single degree of angle the 310R adopts – a feeling almost unique to Caterhams. Such opportunities aren't that frequent on the road, though.

The 310R feels perhaps a little too well mannered, which doesn't square with the hardcore thrills expected. Too much grip is something of a buzz kill. I'd happily trade some subtlety for a dose of good ol' Caterham lunacy. **Will Beaumont** (@WillBeaumont)

## Specification

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-60mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
In-line 4-cyl, 1596cc	n/a	152bhp @ 7000rpm	124lb ft @ 5600rpm	4.8sec (claimed)	126mph (claimed)	540kg (286bhp/ton)	£24,995

+ Intense and exciting - Too much grip

**evo rating** ★★★★★



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# Alpina B4 Biturbo Convertible

**Test location:** Riseley, Bedfordshire  
**GPS:** 52.23818, -0.51102

It teaches the equivalent BMW model a lesson or two about luxury, but is the drop-top B4 also a credible drivers' car, or more of a cruiser?

**A** FRONT-ENGINEED, REAR-drive car with more than 400bhp should be treated with caution and respect, shouldn't it? So you'd expect the 3-litre twin-turbo, 404bhp Alpina B4 Biturbo to be a bit of an animal, regardless of the automatic gearbox and folding metal hard-top, wouldn't you?

However, first impressions are that of a luxury supercabriolet, because the changes Alpina has made to the standard 4-series interior might be subtle, but they elevate it to a much more elegant level. The leather feels plush, the Alcantara-covered steering wheel incredibly soft, and the blue dials are so much classier than the black items in BMW's M4. As you'd expect, the B4 has buttons on the back of the steering wheel to change gear with, instead of conventional paddles. Covered in leather, they're lovely to touch and satisfying to press, though being pound-coinsized they're not as easily found as a paddle when twirling the wheel.

Despite what the 20-inch wheels might suggest, the way this Alpina rides defies expectation. With the

car in Comfort mode, only the most extreme road imperfections send shudders through the body. In the sportier chassis settings, however, more is asked of the bodysheet and the extra flex caused by the lack of a fixed roof becomes evident.

Lowering that complicated metal hard-top is well worth doing as it gives you the opportunity to listen to the straight-six exhaust noise. The sound perfectly embodies the character of the motor: it's smooth while also being muscular. The B4's engine is based on BMW's 'N55' 3-litre straight-six, but rather than making do with just the single twin-scroll turbocharger that BMW's version has, Alpina has given it two turbos. They work sequentially to reduce lag, and with a new crankshaft and larger intercooler they help the engine produce over 100bhp more than the N55 in BMW's recently retired 435i. But rather than turning the engine into an unruly brute, the N55's linear delivery has been maintained.

Most of the time the B4 works best in Comfort, but when you really want to make progress, it pays to



choose Sport+. In this mode the steering weights up, and although it doesn't provide more feedback, it suits the more responsive throttle and firmer dampers Sport+ also brings. There's also no getting away from the fact that the B4 feels top-heavy in Comfort – it doesn't roll excessively but it does take longer than feels natural to right itself after a corner. The stiffer suspension almost eradicates this, and brings swift direction changes.

Sport+ does not, however, turn the B4 Convertible into a precision tool. The engine often feels heavy, and with the lack of feedback from the steering you can sometimes push into sudden understeer, though this only happens if you're driving hard.

For the most part, what's most

apparent is the sheer amount of grip from the Michelin Pilot Super Sports, which absorb almost all of the power (21bhp less than an M4). Indeed, the slight delay of the turbo engine, and the lazy delivery due to the auto 'box, means that you don't get an instant hit of torque that can overwhelm the rear tyres, even with ferocious use of the throttle. Instead, the momentum of the drivetrain seems to build as you exit a corner until the tyres can no longer cope and the rear arcs wide.

It all happens at such a calm pace and isn't in the slightest bit intimidating; far from what you'd expect from such a high-powered rear-driven car. Be a fraction less savage with the accelerator and it's easy to keep the B4's Michelins from slipping – instead the throttle just adds a degree of adjustability.

Overall, the sumptuous ride and interior, masses of traction and the smooth delivery of the engine make the B4 feel brisk rather than scarily fast, but its lack of aggression makes it a very competent grand tourer. ❏

**Will Beaumont**  
 (@WillBeaumont)

## Specification

➕ Luxurious and comfortable – a great GT    ❌ Not as impressive as the numbers might suggest

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	evo rating	Weight	Basic price
In-line 6-cyl, 2979cc, twin-turbo	186g/km	404bhp @ 5500-6250rpm	442lb ft @ 3000-4000rpm	4.5sec (claimed)	187mph (claimed)	★★★★☆	1840kg (223bhp/ton)	£62,950



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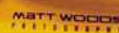
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**Test location:** B660, Bedfordshire

**GPS:** 52.215493, -0.409760

# Jaguar XE 2.0d AWD

The talented XE adds four-wheel drive to an already impressive skill set, but can this model's diesel drivetrain compete with Germany's best?

**J**AGUAR'S 3-SERIES RIVAL (copyright: Britain's weekly motoring press) has enjoyed a successful start in coaxing drivers not just out of their 3-series, but their C-classes and A4s as well. Understandable, maybe, given the XE's broad spectrum of charms, which seem to have its German rivals' specialist subjects covered. However, while the XE is selling solidly, its makers are acutely aware that it can't rely on a single, rear-drive configuration to build on that initial success, hence the introduction of today's must-have drivetrain accessory: four-wheel drive.

The XE was designed from day one to be offered with four-wheel drive. The system is that already used in the XF and F-Pace: a transfer case carrying a multi-plate wet clutch pack that runs a chain drive to the front propshaft. An on-demand system, 100 per cent of the engine's torque is sent to the rear axle, with the car's Intelligent Driveline Dynamics system (IDD) determining when and how much of that torque to redirect to the front axle. It does this by continuously measuring



yaw rate, lateral acceleration and steering angle while estimating friction between the tyres and the road's surface and thus how much grip there is. Within 165 milliseconds IDD can turn the rear-drive XE into a four-wheel-drive XE.

Engine choice is between Jaguar's 178bhp 2-litre turbodiesel – as tested here – and its supercharged 335bhp 3-litre V6. In four-wheel-drive form, XEs are only available with the ubiquitous eight-speed ZF automatic gearbox, though each engine gets its own optimised version of the transmission. The unit fitted to Ingenium diesel engine is also lighter

than that fitted to the petrol V6.

Where quattro leads, BMW's xDrive follows, and Mercedes' 4Matic has recently joined the four-wheel-drive tribe, too, so it's a no-brainer for Jaguar to latch on with the XE AWD. It may not be a necessity to have four driven wheels in the UK, but in the larger European and US markets four-wheel drive is less of a lifestyle accessory and more of a winter essential.

In the XE, the driving experience is barely changed from that of the rear-driven car. The steering is no heavier (with no detectable increase in feel either) and the chassis is just as quick to react. It's neatly balanced, too, with none of the pitch and roll suffered by the C-class and A4. The XE turns in sharply and settles early in a corner, instilling plenty of confidence.

Where the AWD comes into its own is when you start to ask more serious questions of the XE's chassis and drive it as hard as conditions allow. Turn in, let the nose settle on your chosen line and where the rear-drive car would start to wash away at the front as you feed

in the throttle, the AWD system pulls the nose round, allowing for a quicker, more composed corner exit. Approach the apex of a turn with too much enthusiasm and the XE does an impressive job of holding on, and even if you feel the tail go light, keep the throttle balanced and steering lock steady and the chassis will stay composed. Across country the XE AWD can be hustled with far greater commitment than any of its rivals.

The only downside is the AWD's limited engine options. Our diesel test car highlights how far behind Jaguar's engine development is compared with that of the Germans, and the supercharged V6 petrol is equally frustrating in its torque and power delivery. The XE is still crying out for smooth, refined large-capacity engines to match the excellence of the car's chassis. And while the AWD system adds another feather to the XE's cap, what the range really needs to match BMW, Mercedes and Audi on the sales front is a coupe and an estate variant, neither of which are currently on the drawing board, sadly. ❌

**Stuart Gallagher** (@stuartg917)

## Specification

➕ Great chassis gets more traction ❌ Shame engines aren't as polished

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-60mph	Top speed	evo rating	Weight	Basic price
In-line 4-cyl, 1999cc, turbodiesel	197g/km	178bhp @ 4000rpm	317lb ft @ 1750-2500rpm	7.5sec (claimed)	140mph (claimed)	★★★★☆	1615kg (112bhp/ton)	£34,825



**Test location:** Blyton Park, Lincolnshire  
**GPS:** 53.453830, -0.685840

# Radical RXC Turbo 500R

Radical's latest road car offers hypercar performance for supercar money, but is it too raw?

**W** E'VE GROWN USED to the mind-blowing performance of Radical's road-legal track monsters, but this new RXC Turbo 500R really is something special. Built around a simple but strong and light tubular steel spaceframe, the range-topping RXC is powered by a twin-turbo, 3.5-litre V6 Ford EcoBoost engine good for a mighty 600bhp and 465lb ft of torque. The seriousness of those figures really hits home when you learn the 500R weighs just 1070kg and costs £201,000, because combined they equate to a hypercar power-to-weight ratio for McLaren 650S money.

It's fun to pop the gullwing door, then step up and over the sill and drop yourself into the driver's seat. The view out is pure Le Mans racer, framed by that bubble windscreen and the vented tops of the front wheelarches. The view behind is restricted, but an LCD display hooked up to a discreet tail-mounted camera does the job of a conventional rear-view mirror. The driving position is low and snug, so you soon get settled

behind the small, Alcantara-wrapped steering wheel. Carpet and more Alcantara trim make the cockpit more habitable – the RXC is a road car, don't forget – but don't hide Radical's origins as a builder of race cars.

The upside of this is a driving experience that literally takes your breath away. The EcoBoost V6 is an absolute powerhouse – smooth and tractable, but with an unburstable, near-endless torrent of torque and top-end power that hurls you out of the corners and down the straights. The brakes have tremendous, tireless stopping power, a firm pedal and plenty of feel, and thanks to the nature of the Dunlop Direzza road-legal trackday rubber there's plenty of grip but no snappy breakaway when the limits are reached.

On track the aerodynamics really come into play through medium and fast corners, augmenting that mechanical grip with unseen but very welcome downforce. It's addictive and surprisingly accessible once you build the confidence to commit.

So the dynamics are dazzling, but the aesthetics are somewhat



challenging. The RXC's carbonfibre and GRP body is functional, but no more, and the lack of detailing means there's little to gawp at purely for pleasure. The workmanlike nature of the styling and finish falls well short of, say, the jewel-like (and considerably cheaper) BAC Mono.

The 500R might lack finish and flourishes, but there's no question it nails driver appeal. It really is a truly sensational thing to strap yourself into, and not just because of its raw pace. The motor is brilliantly tractable, the clutch progressive and the pneumatically actuated paddle-shift gearbox snappy but not too jerky at lower speeds. The brakes have feel at modest speeds and the electric power steering has five stages of assistance, from easy to hefty, so

you don't have to bust a gut to turn the wheel at low speeds. We haven't had the chance yet to drive the 500R on the road, but as with earlier RXCs it shows every sign of making a surprisingly good fist of it.

Effective air-conditioning and a heated front screen add another layer of usability, and it even has a front suspension lifter to cope with speed humps. Our test car didn't have it fitted, but production versions will also have Bosch M4 race ABS with multi-point settings and a traction control system to tame all that torque on damp tarmac. In the dry conditions of our test, traction and brake lock-ups were never an issue.

We'll be putting the RXC Turbo 500R to the ultimate track test in our upcoming Track Car of the Year extravaganza. On the evidence of this first taste we're fully expecting it to be the fastest road-legal car we've ever driven. That it's also one of the most approachable and enjoyable is testament to what is a very impressive machine. **X**

**Richard Meaden**  
 (@DickieMeaden)

## Specification

**+** Immense accessible performance **-** Fit, finish and detailing lacks finesse for £201k

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-60mph	Top speed	evo rating	Weight	Basic price
V6, 3500cc, twin-turbo	n/a	600bhp @ 6700rpm	465lb ft @ 4200-6200rpm	2.8sec (claimed)	185mph (claimed)	★★★★★	1070kg (561bhp/ton)	£201,000



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**Test location:** New Forest, Hampshire  
**GPS:** 50.885534, -1.539745

# DMS AMG C63 S

Mercedes-AMG hasn't made it easy for engine tuners to extract more power from its latest V8, so has their effort been worth it?



**T**HE AUTOMOTIVE industry's widespread shift to turbocharging should be very good news indeed for engine tuners. With nothing more than an ECU remap the likes of Southampton-based DMS can achieve massive power and torque gains, but they're locked in a tug-of-war with manufacturers who are trying to protect their carefully aligned model hierarchies.

The OEMs have long been trying to safeguard their ECUs with passwords and access codes, but these have a habit of slipping out the back door. In response, manufacturers have taken to locating the ECU somewhere that makes it near impossible to access.

'The ECU on a Mercedes-AMG C63 is hidden between the engine and the lower subframe,' says DMS founder Rob Young. 'It's tucked right back. With the car on a ramp you can get to two of the fixing bolts, but not the other two. It means you have to take out the charge coolers, remove the radiator fan and take off a few others brackets. There's two separate coolant circuits – one for the charge coolers, one for the radiators – and both need to be drained. Then you

can access the ECU. A remap on a C63 is a ten-hour job.'

This DMS upgrade lifts the C63's peak power to 624bhp at 6800rpm and peak torque to 584lb ft at 4100rpm, improvements over the standard C63 S of 121bhp and 68lb ft. The cost of the remap is £2280 and DMS will reapply the uprated map free of charge if a dealer flashes a car back to the factory map. The new software can be uploaded to any new Mercedes that uses the 4-litre, twin-turbo V8, including the AMG GT.

'Knowing this engine would be the basis for many of the new AMG models we put a lot of initial ground

work into this platform,' adds Young. 'Once we had developed the process of reading and writing to the ECU we sourced a car to carry out test and development work. Although it's a new engine, the structure of the ECU mapping has many similarities to Mercedes' 2-litre turbo engine and the old 5.5-litre biturbo V8.

'With our remap we also delimit the top speed. We've seen over 180mph in testing and I believe the car should be able to pass 200mph.'

In its standard form the 4-litre V8, with its 'hot vee' turbo arrangement, is a seriously impressive engine, with strong power and torque and very

sharp low-down throttle response. Along with Ferrari's new twin-turbo V8 and the similar 4-litre unit found in Audi's RS6, it's among the best turbocharged performance engines in the world. This modified version retains the immediacy and response of the standard engine, pulling hard from 2000rpm, but with appreciably more muscle throughout the rev range. It also pulls with real energy all the way to the red line.

The remap lifts the C63 S into a whole new performance category. It feels spectacularly quick. Impressively, however, the chassis is unfazed by the newfound power and torque, the rear axle coping with full throttle from third gear onwards remarkably well. In fact, this particular C63 actually has better traction than a standard BMW M3.

Naturally, if you want to provoke the car with your right foot you can do so at will, making this uprated model even more playful and throttle adjustable than the standard car. The prospect of a 624bhp C63 S Coupe – which has an even better resolved chassis than the saloon – is a very appealing one indeed. **x**

**Dan Prosser** (@TheDanProsser)



## Specification

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-60mph	Top speed	evo rating	Weight	Conversion price
V8, 3982cc, twin-turbo	n/a	624bhp @ 6800rpm	584lb ft @ 4100rpm	4.0sec (est)	200mph+ (claimed)	★★★★★	1655kg (383bhp/ton)	£2280

**+** Chassis copes with huge power and torque gains **-** Expensive for a remap

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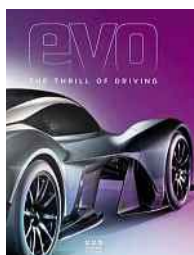
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# Outside Line

RICHARD MEADEN



*You don't need to take a far-flung vacation to acquaint your car with a great road. Just get up early, drink coffee, grab the keys and drive*

**H**ERE AT EVO WE PRIDE OURSELVES on our endless quest for great driving routes. TomTom and Garmin have nothing on our ability to sniff out a string of alpine hairpins, locate a stretch of derestricted autobahn or track down tarmac that unfurls itself across some rugged moorland vista. We call it work, but in our hearts we know the places we get to drive cars are often a fantasy only a fortunate few will have the funds, time or opportunity to enjoy.

But let me share a secret. There is another network of roads, as real and within reach as those in the pages of this magazine are distant and the stuff of dreams. They can be roads you know as intimately as the back of your hand, or roads you've never driven before in your life. What unites them is that by weekday they are plied by countless cars and trucks, school-run parents and swarms of delivery vans, the roads' potential for enjoyment and enlightenment hidden beneath a cloying, crawling train of slow-moving steel.

The pursuit of that disguised promise begins with the pain of an early alarm call. The temptation to hit the snooze button will be strong. But fight the urge to rest your head back on the pillow, and instead make your way downstairs, fix a coffee and plan your next few hours while the caffeine chases away any lingering zeds and sharpens your resolve. Trust me, it will be worth the effort.

It has long been the case that brutally unsocial hours are the best for driving. Some of you will prefer the immersive intensity of late-night journeys. They certainly have their own magic, especially if you're on the final leg of a long trip, propelled by the impetus to get home. For me, though, as any endurance racing driver will tell you, nothing beats being in your car as the sun comes up.

Any morning will do if you're prepared to set your alarm early enough. I've had some terrific crack-of-dawn drives from home to north Wales or North Yorkshire, dashing across the country for some **evo** group test or other. Likewise, there have been epic trips through Europe, chasing the best light and locations for

perfectionist photographers – and empty asphalt on which to have some fun. Still, I'd say Sundays are best. If only because it feels more special, because there's no rush to get back and, perhaps most importantly, because the roads you overlook or take for granted take on a new persona. You can plan a route or go where the wind blows you. No agenda, no schedule. No flight (or indeed light) to miss, no meeting to be late for or traffic jam to avoid. It's all about you, your car and the rare treat of all-but-empty roads.

The early morning thrash has even been the subject of a movie.

If you haven't seen *C'était un Rendez-vous* it's certainly worth a look, even if simply to enjoy the dubbed sound of a Ferrari 275 GTB being wrung through the gears. That it's not quite synched with the nose-cam footage (which was actually shot from a Merc 450SEL 6.9) spoils things, at least if you're a pedant like me, but the notion of hammering a very fast, loud car through the near-deserted streets of Paris at 5.30am is utterly intoxicating. Unfortunately it's also highly illegal.

Fortunately it's the release of simply being on the road before everyone else that's special, not the opportunity to drive like a lunatic. Of course, if you

live out in the sticks and not in a town or city you'll have the opportunity to find a faster flow. But wherever you are, being able to maintain your chosen speed effortlessly and uninterrupted is what makes the drive special. That's true whether you're sharing city streets with refuse collectors and bleary-eyed party stragglers, or bowling along a B-road in your own bubble. When you can focus solely on the road and your car, the driving is different. More intimate, more involved. A beginning and end in itself, rather than a painful process of getting from point A to point B along with everyone else.

So once in a while why not set an early alarm, reclaim the road from the clutches of tedium and frustration, and rediscover driving as an inspiring source of freedom and pleasure that doesn't require major planning and a large map. Just promise me you'll keep the secret between us, eh? ☒

**'When you can focus solely on the road and your car, the driving is different. More intimate, more involved'**

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- 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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# Petrolhead

RICHARD PORTER



*rusting bodywork is largely a thing of the past, but it's unlikely car makers will address certain other failing components, reckons Porter*

**I** **IF YOU'VE NOT YET CRESTED 40,** I have some bad news. Sometime, not long after you pass this age, the mechanical parts of your body will enter a phase of malfunction. I hate to sound like the old fart I clearly am, but since I entered my fifth decade, my knees clack and ache, my back has developed a twinge, and last week I slept funny and spent the next day having to turn my head in the manner of an uptight robot.

This shouldn't be a surprise. Vast improvements in diet and healthcare mean the average First Worlder can live well beyond 70, yet we're still based on the same kit as our prehistoric ancestors and they struggled to last much past the big four-oh. So while your mind can be fizzing away at full capacity on your 80th, your ankles are lifed for just half that.

And this makes human beings very similar to the cars of the 1970s and '80s. When I was a kid, for example, my mother had a Vauxhall Chevette. I remember several things about this, including the day I got my first taste of exciting rear-drive handling as Ma Porter went completely broadside on a misjudged snowy bend, and the part-vinyl back seat that on sunny days could sear youthful limbs like cheap tuna. I also remember that the dear old Chevette had barely seen five winters before it was riddled with great fissures of crusty tin-rot.

This seemed pretty normal 30 years ago. The single thing that could kill a car, long before its engine or electrics went, was the slow disintegration of its body. Japanese cars, with their scant rust-proofing and exacting mechanical engineering, seemed particularly prone, so most Datsuns, Toyotas and Mazdas seemed to end up as a perfectly working engine, smoothly spinning inside a pile of dust. Up until some point in the '90s, the ageing car was much like an ageing person: sound of heart and mind but bodily creaking and cracked.

Now cars are the opposite. In fact, it's quite astonishing how good they are at resisting the outward signs of ageing, notwithstanding certain Mercs and Fords that are built from the same stuff as Alfasuds. Look around the average town today and notice how many of the cars are a bit older than you think. In fact, there are plenty of models well over ten years old doing sterling service and

hiding their age by dint of crust-free sills and lustrous panelwork. In the last 20 years, great progress has been made in keeping the very structure of a car solid and stable where once it would have scabbed and flaked before half a decade was done. This is such an achievement you might wonder why there aren't even more older cars on our roads. Well, I think I have the explanation for this one.

Several times in the past few years I've been filming television programmes where we've needed some immobile cars to bash or crush, and every time I've been staggered at the quality of the stuff that's turned up from the local scrappie. The gleaming, barely-last-

generation metal carefully arranged on location frequently seemed too pristine to be one step away from the cubing machine. On one occasion I had to double-check with a colleague that we were in the right place after becoming convinced we were about to smash up actual punters' cars while the manky cadavers from the boneyard were hidden behind a hedge. They weren't. Scrapyards are full of shiny things that appear to have years of life left in them. And they probably have, if you're prepared to spend more than the value of the car on replacing what killed it in the first place. Which is, inevitably, a wonky ECU. And, what with the lure of the brand new and cheap PCPs making it

**'The gleaming, barely-last-generation metal seemed too pristine to be one step away from the cubing machine'**

achievable, no one ever does that.

Which is why cars have become more like those tragic cases of elderly people in uncommonly good physical shape who are struck down with dementia. The body is strong but the mind is cruelly failing. Medical science works furiously to address this. Car science, maybe not. Perhaps car makers could simplify electronics or upgrade them to reassuringly failsafe aviation-spec. But then we'd have cars that could last for a long, long time and that wouldn't be good for new car sales. So it's not likely to happen. The new generation of long-lasting bodies is really just a sop to keep each car looking nice until the day its brain or heart goes terminal.

So here's a thing, car companies. If you're going to keep doing what you're doing, could you at least get your talented physical durability experts to work on a new and unusual project for a precise over-40 demographic: making me a new set of knees. ✕



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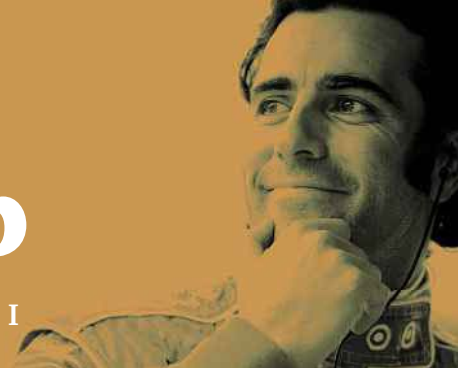
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# Champ

DARIO FRANCHITTI



*'Track limits' as we now know them shouldn't even exist, says Dario, who worries that Formula 1 is struggling to balance safety with the spirit of racing*

**I**LL PREFACE THIS MONTH'S COLUMN by saying that it absolutely isn't one of those 'Oh it was better in the old days' moans. That said, you can't ignore the fact that track limits have become a significant and potentially very problematic issue in motorsport, and it's a consequence of the acres of asphalt run-off that bubble-wrap many of today's circuits. The risk-to-reward ratio has changed beyond recognition and it means current drivers can go off-piste – either by taking a wider, faster line or getting away with serious errors – with almost total impunity. When it was grass or gravel or, god forbid, trees, 'track limits' simply didn't come into it, mainly because they were too obvious to be written down – something that made the racing all the more challenging and exhilarating.

I've had a bee in my bonnet about this for some time, mainly because I believe there's a requisite level of skill to taking a car to the absolute limit of its grip on the track provided. *That's* what we want to see. Moreover, forgiving circuits allow good drivers to close the gap on brilliant drivers, particularly during qualifying, because if an average driver gets ten attempts at a corner, he's probably going to nail it at least once. It undermines the genius of the driver capable of driving up to and even creeping over the limit on a flying lap with millimetre-perfect precision. It's why we love the unforgiving circuit at Monaco – just check out the race results from the 1996 GP...

The repeated abuse of track limits at Copse during this year's British GP was particularly irksome, because if you take a corner flat-out in qualifying, knowing all the while that the worst that's going to happen if you overcook it is that your lap is going to be voided, it takes away a bit of the buzz of racing. Get it wrong and you just reload, like in a computer game. Where's the nail-gnawing jeopardy in that?

I do, of course, understand that this abuse of track limits is not always quite as flagrant as it seems. After all, once you've turned in for a flat-out (or very nearly flat-out) corner – and when F1 drivers swoop for the apex at Copse, they now do so at more than 170mph – it's very difficult to change that trajectory from mid-corner to exit. You simply can't do it without getting yourself in a whole load of bother, mainly because with the rear axle already on the limit, if you add a little lock to tighten the line, it's likely you'll spin. You could always lift, and in days gone by you would have had to in order to avoid a crash, but

today it's optional. In further defence of the drivers, who I don't think are to blame in all this, there's also the fact that having the judgement to perfectly position your racing car 300 feet up a track on the basis of a painted white line you can barely see is a rare gift.

I'm not saying safety should be compromised, either. However, there has to be a competitive disadvantage if you run wide. Too often drivers fluff a corner but rejoin having lost less than a few tenths.

Part of the problem is the kerbing we now use. You can drive over it like it's not even there, which is odd when it's meant to mark the track boundary. Kerbs have, however, been known to launch a car into the air or break a driver's back – as happened to the late Justin Wilson – so the unintended consequences of exaggerating them can be huge.

We must assume, then, that large run-off areas and forgiving kerbs are here to stay (though I'm convinced the FIA is going down the wrong road with this). Maybe the solution is to have a low-friction strip behind the kerb. An errant wheel would then slow progress and without a lightning-fast catch there'd be a real risk of a spin. Enough of a deterrent? Yeah, probably. The proverbial spanner is that if you mess up a small amount you're punished, but if you're carrying enough speed (i.e. you've really cocked things up) to rocket straight over the low-grip surface, you'll be back onto the asphalt and then the track in no time at all! Make the low-friction surface

larger? Sounds good, but then you may as well have grass, and they got rid of that because it doesn't slow a car spinning towards the barriers one bit. In fact, in the car it feels like you're speeding up. Not nice, but that's why we tried very hard (with varying degrees of success) not to leave the track! The grass would also need to be as smooth as Centre Court at Wimbledon in order not to launch the car...

Perhaps I'm biased because I spent 20 years driving on tracks when half the time your 'track limit' was a concrete wall (that really focuses the mind) but I really think we've created our own problem here. We have circuits where the risks have been diluted over time, the cars are safer and we're now at the point where the drivers seem to think they're bulletproof and have started treating each other with very little respect. It's a slippery slope, and one we need to get off.

Or, is this just the same reaction fans and drivers had when trees were moved back from the circuit edge, or when catch fencing was introduced, or indeed when gravel traps started to appear? ❌

**'Get it wrong and you just reload, like in a computer game. Where's the jeopardy?'**

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# DAWN OF THE HYPERHATCH

*The hot hatch market has never been so competitive,  
and with the arrival of VW's Golf GTI Clubsport S,  
the competition has a real fight on its hands*

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*by* DAN PROSSER

PHOTOGRAPHY *by* ASTON PARROTT

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**JUST AS THERE HAS TO BE A WINNER, THERE** must also be a loser. The hot hatch sector has never been stronger than it is right now, but that point is actually better demonstrated by the car that loses this group test rather than the one that wins it. The machine that comes home in fourth position will be rampantly fast, hugely exciting to drive on road and track, and perfectly useable every day, too. But it will also be presented with the wooden spoon. The winner, by extension, will be a car of such radiant quality that it deserves to be recognised alongside the best performance cars of the moment at any price point.

Our search for the world's greatest hot hatch will take us to the spectacular and revealing moorland roads of the Yorkshire Dales, to Bruntingthorpe's two-mile runway and to the Bedford Autodrome's West Circuit. Over three days, we'll learn which is the most enjoyable hot hatch on the road, which is the fastest in a straight line, and which is the quickest on circuit.

After all of that, the victor will still have much to prove. The Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy-R is the most thrilling car of its type of the last few years – of all time, perhaps – and the winner of this test will square up against it in a meeting of giants. Ladies and gentlemen, place your bets, please.

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**‘THE  
HOT HATCH  
SECTOR HAS  
NEVER BEEN  
STRONGER  
THAN IT IS  
NOW’**









**FEW REAL-WORLD PERFORMANCE CARS HAVE** ever garnered more column inches and YouTube minutes than the new Ford Focus RS. It has been described by some as the best car on the planet, full stop, and by others as a let-down. The truth lies somewhere in the middle, but at least on one point we can reach a consensus: the RS is a more intriguing car for driving all four wheels. With a centre diff and a rear drive unit that juggles torque between the rear wheels via a pair of clutch packs, the RS finally has the sophisticated four-wheel-drive system Blue Oval devotees have been crying out for.

The Ford's 2.3-litre turbocharged four-cylinder engine develops 345bhp, with 347lb ft of torque from 2000rpm, making it comfortably the most powerful car in this line-up. At £31,000 it looks like strong value in this company, too.

The cheapest of the four cars, though, is the recently updated SEAT Leon Cupra 290, which starts at £28,380. Its 2-litre engine is good for 286bhp and 258lb ft – the latter from just 1700rpm. In our experience, however, these Leon Cupras always feel stronger than their claimed power and torque figures suggest. It's also the only car here that can be specified

with two pedals, though today we have the full complement.

The Leon shares its drivetrain and platform with the new Volkswagen Golf GTI Clubsport S, which is by some margin the most hardcore Golf ever built. Limited to 150 units for the UK – all sold out, despite the £33,995 price tag – the Clubsport S was developed for the sole purpose of snatching the front-wheel-drive production-car lap record at the Nürburgring. Clocking a time of 7min 49.2sec, it did just that earlier this year. Its engine is in a higher state of tune than the Leon's, delivering 306bhp – and 280lb ft from 1850rpm – and it does without rear seats in order to win a precious second or two around the Nordschleife.

The car it usurped at the Ring (leaving to one side for a moment the fact that this Nürburgring lap-time squabble is entirely unregulated and probably quite meaningless) was the Honda Civic Type R. The Civic matches the Clubsport S for power output, but with 295lb ft from 2500rpm it shades the Golf on torque. The Type R starts at £30,000.

In order to level the playing field as much as possible, all four cars wear the same rubber. The Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 is quickly becoming the go-to tyre for supercar, supercoupe



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## ‘OUT HERE A WELL-DRIVEN HOT HATCH WILL KEEP PACE WITH JUST ABOUT ANYTHING’



**Left:** Leon Cupra's part-Alcantara seats might look like they're from a Lamborghini options catalogue, but they're easily the least supportive in this test and are a real hindrance in a car that's so potent

and superhatch manufacturers alike. It's standard-fit on the Clubsport S and an optional extra on both the Focus RS and Cupra 290, but we've had to fit them ourselves to the Type R (this is our own long-term test car), which is only offered with Continental SportContact 6 rubber by Honda.

The Cup 2 is spectacular in the dry but dicey in the wet, so it's a relief to be welcomed to the Yorkshire Dales by dry, albeit murky, misty weather for the early part of the day. I've driven up in the Clubsport S from VW UK's headquarters in Milton Keynes, which has given me plenty of time to get acquainted. The unusual thing about the Clubsport S is that despite doing away with rear seats simply to save a few kilos, it just doesn't feel that hardcore on the road. This is an extreme hot hatch without actually being all that extreme, because it's still very refined over a long distance, it has a great cabin, and it rides comfortably. You do hear a little more road noise because there's no rear bench to dull the sound, but that aside, the Clubsport S feels much like a standard GTI on the motorway.

We'll be spending the day on the Buttertubs Pass, which runs north away from Hawes and into the uppermost corner of

the Dales. This is the kind of ground where a well-driven fast hatch will keep pace with just about anything on four wheels. The road is bumpy, too, but on first impressions the Clubsport S is pliant and fluid enough to take those bumps in its stride.

'I hope that Golf has more suspension travel than the Type R,' says *evo* features editor Henry Catchpole as I pull into the lay-by that'll serve as our base for the day. Curious, I swap out of the VW and into the Honda. I like its seats – they're heavily bolstered and clamp you in all the right places – but they just don't drop down far enough. The Type R won't be the only car here to disappoint in that way.

Within the first few hundred metres it's clear the Civic is a stiffly sprung car. Much more so than the Golf. It's constantly fidgeting over the bumps and undulations in the road surface, which means your head nods along involuntarily.

When you up the pace, that stiff ride quality becomes a problem rather than a mere nuisance. There's one particular stretch at the far end of the pass that really unties the Civic. Four sharp crests follow in quick succession, a gentle left-hand bend taken in fourth gear linking them. With each yump, the Civic's front axle gets airborne, wheels flaring up as the car gets light, then landing with a thump. The resolute suspension just can't absorb the big input at the bottom of the approach ramp, as it were, which fires the front of the car skywards.

It's an extreme scenario, certainly, but it demonstrates a point. The Type R's suspension doesn't have the travel or pliancy to deal with the shape of this particularly demanding road, the consequence being that you don't feel confident that the tyres are in firm contact with the ground. Try committing to a road when you're not even sure the car will stick.

I've driven this Type R enough to know that the chassis comes good when the bumps are taken away, at which point it feels super-agile with sharp steering and a neutral balance. But in the quest for the world's best hot hatch, that lack of pliancy on the kind of roads that make up a big chunk of our network in the UK is a weakness that's difficult to overlook.

**Below:** firmly sprung Civic doesn't deliver the kind of confidence you need to put a hot hatch down a bumpy road at maximum attack – will it come good on track?



—

**‘THE FORD IS  
A CAR THAT  
NEEDS TO BE  
DRIVEN HARD  
BEFORE IT  
STARTS TO  
MAKE SENSE’**



The 2-litre turbocharged engine, meanwhile, is strong, but it lacks responsiveness compared to some and it's thrashy at the top end. Throttle response improves in +R mode, but then the damping becomes even firmer. Why oh why doesn't Honda let us decouple those two things? To its credit, though, the Type R does have the best gearshift here.

It also has a strong identity and a very bold character, both of which are sorely lacking in the Leon. I find it an attractive car – in the company of the Type R it's almost completely missable, which isn't necessarily meant in praise of the garish Honda – but it seems to be without any discernable personality.

That's a pity because it really is a very good car indeed. It's much more at home on the Buttertubs Pass than the Civic because it has the suspension travel to breathe with the road, rather than skip along it. This latest Cupra 290 model improves over the previous Cupra 280 with slightly tauter body control, which really builds your faith in the car. The steering is still a touch light and vague, though, even in the weightiest 'Cupra' setting, and the limited-slip differential doesn't quite hook up enough to deploy the full arsenal without waste.

Its 2-litre turbo engine is responsive and it sings right up to the limiter, which really draws you in to taking the car by



**Above:** GTI Clubsport S boasts subtle styling tweaks, but they're in keeping with its sophisticated image and are pretty tasty once you get up close



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## ‘STEP UP THE PACE AND THE FOCUS COMES ALIVE, FEELING ALERT AND AGILE’

**Below:** no-one expects Ford to match VW when it comes to cabin quality, but like every Focus RS before it, the Mk3's driving position is still unforgivably high, whereas the GTI nails it



its scruff. More than any other car here, however, it settles right down and feels relaxed and grown-up when you're not gunning for a personal best along a moorland road. The SEAT is comfortably the most broadly capable car here.

What it doesn't do, however, is deliver the moments of ecstasy that you get in both the Focus RS and the GTI Clubsport S. With the sun having burned through the mist, I drop into the RS's cabin and curse, once again, the heinous seating position. The seat is set too high – the optional shell-backed buckets exacerbate this – but with time you do grow accustomed to the lofty driving position. Like the Type R, the Focus RS feels resolute over the road surface, but when it matters it manages to soak up bumps without deflecting its body.

The Ford is a car that needs to be driven hard before it starts to make sense. At medium speeds its steering is heavy and numb, and you're nowhere near approaching the balance and adjustability in its chassis. Step up the pace, however, and it comes alive, feeling alert and agile, and much lighter than its 1567kg weight (an *evo* figure – Ford claims 1524kg – and quite a bit heavier than our 1320kg weight for the Golf). The steering begins to feel natural and gives a real sense of connection with the road surface, and you can work the rear axle at the entry phase to a corner to get the nose tucked in. It's the most playful and adjustable car here. Exiting corners, you can just about feel the rear axle taking the strain – enough that you can open the steering wheel a little earlier – and it certainly has more point-to-point pace than its rivals on a road like this one.

‘I think the RS is actually better on the road on the standard

Michelin Pilot Super Sport tyres,' says Henry, 'because it's easier to get the car into that playful window.' He's a fan of the RS and I sense it's a bind for him to rank it behind the Clubsport S, but that's exactly what he does.

I do the same. In fact, with the Honda in last position, the SEAT in third and the Ford in second, we've arrived at exactly the same finishing order. It's a close-run thing between the RS and the Clubsport S for both of us, but we agree that the VW feels more special more of the time, and it doesn't demand you remove your brain before it starts to engage and entertain.

It begins the instant you fire the car up, actually, because after the initial burst of revs, you hear a loud report from the exhaust tips. Then there's the lovely suede steering wheel, the low-slung seating position and, if you look over your shoulder, the theatre of a strut brace where your kids should be sitting.

The Golf's steering is at its best in its heaviest mode, where it marries perfectly to the natural agility and balance in the chassis. This feels a high-quality machine within moments. There's the same polished, well-oiled precision to all the major controls and the same sophisticated way of combining body control and ride that you find in Porsche's GT cars, which should be no real surprise given that Karsten Schebsdat, formally of Porsche Motorsport, led the Clubsport S project.

It feels seriously quick in a straight line and the engine sounds raw and aggressive – from outside the car, at least. Its

differential also works more effectively than the one fitted to the SEAT, which means it rips from tighter corners at almost the same rate as the all-wheel-drive Focus RS. There's a useful degree of adjustability in the chassis, meanwhile, and you can feel the car being propped up by its outside rear corner on the way into a bend, keeping the front end on a tight line.

Whereas the Type R leaves you hoping the front tyres will bite on turn-in, the Clubsport S floods you with confidence. You can place the car right on the limit of grip corner after corner, mile after mile. With its lick of rear wing and subtly aggressive styling, I reckon it's the best-looking car here, too.

'The feel through the wheel sets the Golf apart,' adds Henry. 'The damping is also fantastic. Several of us mentioned Porsche in the same breath as the Golf and I can see why.'

The Clubsport S is a uniquely brilliant hot hatch, then, but with just two seats, is it better defined as a sports car? The non-S GTI Clubsport, which has rear seats and can be specified with Cup 2 tyres, will tick more boxes for most buyers, although it doesn't get the same suspension setup.

Nonetheless, the Golf GTI Clubsport S has earned itself an audience with the mighty Mégane 275 Trophy-R. Before that, though, all four cars must head to Bruntingthorpe and then to the Bedford Autodrome. We know the VW is the most enjoyable car to drive on the road, but is it the fastest against the clock, too?

## Volkswagen GTI Clubsport S

**Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1984cc, turbo

**Power** 306bhp @ 5800-6500rpm

**Torque** 280lb ft @ 1850-5700rpm

**Transmission** Six-speed manual, front-wheel drive, limited-slip differential

**Wheels** 19in front and rear

**Tyres** 235/35 ZR19 front and rear

**Weight** 1285kg (1320kg as tested)

**Power-to-weight** 242bhp/ton (claimed)

**0-62mph** 5.8sec (claimed)

**Top speed** 165mph (claimed)

**Basic price** £33,995

**On sale** Now

**evo rating:** ★★★★★

## SEAT Leon Cupra 290

**Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1984cc, turbo

**Power** 286bhp @ 5900-6400rpm

**Torque** 258lb ft @ 1700-5800rpm

**Transmission** Six-speed manual, front-wheel drive, limited-slip differential

**Wheels** 19in front and rear

**Tyres** 235/35 ZR19 front and rear

**Weight** 1300kg (1346kg as tested)

**Power-to-weight** 224bhp/ton (claimed)

**0-62mph** 5.7sec (claimed)

**Top speed** 155mph (limited)

**Basic price** £28,380

**On sale** Now

**evo rating:** ★★★★★

## Ford Focus RS

**Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 2261cc, turbo

**Power** 345bhp @ 6000rpm

**Torque** 347lb ft @ 2000-4500rpm

**Transmission** Six-speed manual, four-wheel drive, limited-slip differential, torque-vectoring

**Wheels** 19in front and rear

**Tyres** 235/35 ZR19 front and rear

**Weight** 1524kg (1567kg as tested)

**Power-to-weight** 230bhp/ton (claimed)

**0-62mph** 4.7sec (claimed)

**Top speed** 165mph (claimed)

**Basic price** £31,000

**On sale** Now

**evo rating:** ★★★★★

## Honda Civic Type R

**Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1996cc, turbo

**Power** 306bhp @ 6500rpm

**Torque** 295lb ft @ 2500-4500rpm

**Transmission** Six-speed manual, front-wheel drive, limited-slip differential

**Wheels** 19in front and rear

**Tyres** 235/35 ZR19 front and rear

**Weight** 1378kg (1406kg as tested)

**Power-to-weight** 226bhp/ton (claimed)

**0-62mph** 5.7sec (claimed)

**Top speed** 167mph (claimed)

**Basic price** £30,000

**On sale** Now

**evo rating:** ★★★★★



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# ACCELERATION

BRUNTINGHORPE

by HENRY CATCHPOLE

**UNSURPRISINGLY, THE FOCUS IS NOT ONLY THE** quickest, but also the easiest car to get off the line. Over 300bhp is so much more efficiently deployed through all four wheels. The front-wheel-drive cars take rather more patience...

The Golf and Leon are very similar, with their boisterous turbocharged torque all too easily overwhelming the front tyres not only in the initial phase, but also as the power peaks higher up the rev range in first gear or when the torque thumps back in with the change to second. Too few revs can be just as disastrous because the engines bog down, then reignite with no finesse. Judging an upshift is also challenging, as it has to be done through dial-watching, with no real aural cues. All in all, tricky, and nailing the Golf's 5.8sec dash to 60mph feels as much about luck as judgment, something that's evinced by the Leon refusing to go better than 6.4sec (although the SEAT did seem more prone to axle tramp than the Golf).

Perhaps surprisingly, the wild-looking Civic is much sweeter off the line. It doesn't feel quite as punchy as the German or the Spaniard, but the balance of torque to grip during the launch phase is just about perfect. A little bit of slip, a smooth progression through the revs and then LEDs that flash in the dash to help nail the upshifts. Very satisfying.



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## STANDING-START ACCELERATION (in seconds)

	Speed (mph)													
	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100	110	120	130	
Golf GTI Clubsport S	0.8	1.8	2.6	3.9	4.8	<b>5.8</b>	7.3	8.6	10.8	12.8	15.0	19.0	23.0	
Leon Cupra 290	0.9	1.8	2.7	4.0	5.0	<b>6.4</b>	7.7	9.0	11.4	13.4	15.8	19.6	23.5	
Civic Type R	0.7	1.6	2.4	3.4	4.4	<b>5.4</b>	6.9	8.3	10.3	12.4	14.9	19.0	24.2	
Focus RS	0.4	1.0	1.6	2.6	3.5	<b>4.7</b>	6.5	8.0	9.7	12.4	14.8	19.3	23.6	



**IN-GEAR ACCELERATION (in seconds, all in 3rd gear)**

	Speed (mph)					
	20-40	30-50	40-60	50-70	60-80	70-90
Golf GTI Clubsport S	3.0	2.3	2.3	2.4	2.5	--
Leon Cupra 290	3.1	2.5	2.4	2.4	2.6	--
Civic Type R	3.1	2.5	2.5	2.6	2.8	--
Focus RS	3.2	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.8	3.5

**BRAKING (100-0mph)**

	Distance (metres)									
	80	82	84	86	88	90	92	94	96	
Golf GTI Clubsport S	89.2m (4.04sec)									
Leon Cupra 290	87.4m (4.05sec)									
Civic Type R	90.7m (4.05sec)									
Focus RS	95.7m (4.40sec)									



GOLF GTI CLUBSPORT S v LEON CUPRA 290 v CIVIC TYPE R v FOCUS RS



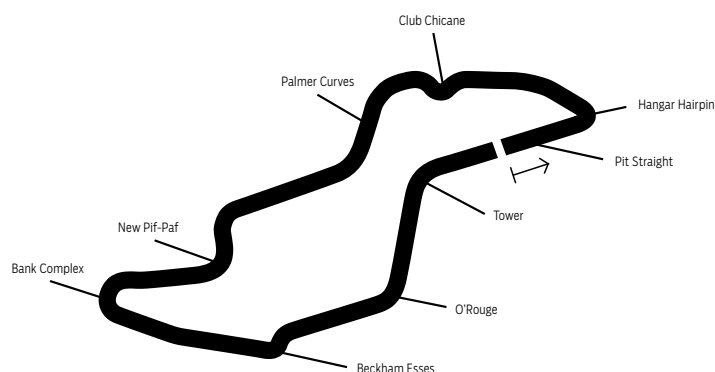


‘BEDFORD  
AUTODROME’S  
WEST CIRCUIT  
IS WHERE  
BRAGGING  
RIGHTS WILL  
BE WON OR  
LOST’

# ON TRACK

## BEDFORD AUTODROME WEST CIRCUIT

by RICHARD MEADEN



LOCATION Bedfordshire, UK GPS 52.235133, -0.474321 LENGTH 1.8 miles

**ANY CAR THAT DITCHES ITS BACK SEATS IN** search of performance needs to make that sacrifice count on track, so although the GTI Clubsport S has already proved its mettle on the road, Bedford Autodrome's West Circuit is where bragging rights will be won or lost.

With every dynamic mode set to its most aggressive and stability control disabled, the Clubsport S feels sharp and urgent. A few first-lap squirms and wriggles from the rear end suggest a certain dynamic instability, but as the Cup 2 tyres switch on with temperature, the Golf finds its feet. Traction is challenged out of the first tight hairpin, but it puts the torque down well. Braking stability into the awkward approach to the Palmer Curves lets you run deep, and there's plenty of grip to make the left-right direction change and chase full-throttle in third and then fourth as you make the final, 100mph right.

Typically the left-right at New Pif-Paf rewards patience, but the Golf finds enough bite to make each kerb without too much of a fight, while that generous swell of torque provides plenty of shove out of Bank and onto the back straight. The brakes feel strong into the Beckham Esses, with a firm pedal and no ABS intervention. The last two corners are always a test of high-speed turn-in and mid-corner balance. The Clubsport S can be coaxed in with a hint of oversteer to help it rotate, but once you get back on the power, it's neat and neutral. Fast and fun, the Golf nails a very impressive 1:24.09 for the others to chase.



It makes sense to try the SEAT next, for it and the Golf are blood brothers. We know from previous track experience that the Cupra 280 equipped with the Sub8 Performance Pack is blisteringly quick, and this 290 feels every bit as potent. In terms of outright grip and traction, there's very little in it – the Golf feels that little bit more crisp and connected, though it will hop a little if you really throw it at one of the chicanes. The Leon, meanwhile, is composed and very good on the brakes, so you can try to steal a little more ground. It all adds up to a 1:24.19 – just a tenth shy of the flying Golf.

Sticking with front-wheel drive, we switch to the Civic. If styling counted for lap time, the Honda would be a second clear of the mild-looking SEAT. Those spiky looks are matched by a sharp, high-energy delivery that's so typical of a Type R Honda. In +R mode it's clenched-fist hard, but the revvy motor and light, punchy gearshift all conspire to create a really full-on driving experience that gets you buzzing.

The engine in particular is worthy of praise because it gives you an extra 500rpm or so to play with. That doesn't sound like much, but it makes a big difference to how you drive. You can attack with a little more abandon, shifting intuitively at 7000rpm rather than having to consciously short-shift as you tend to in the VW Group duo. It struggles for traction out of the tighter corners – thanks to the overly hard suspension –

**Above:** no other car here can oversteer like the Focus RS, thanks to its four-wheel-drive chassis and generous 345bhp, but does that make it faster, or even any more fun?

#### LAP TIMES

Golf GTI Clubsport S	1:24.09
Leon Cupra 290	1:24.19
Civic Type R	1:24.59
Focus RS	1:24.59

and also when chasing full throttle through the long Palmer Curves. The brakes are up to the job, but the pedal goes softer than the others, which is a shame. Nevertheless, the Type R feels up for it and wears its heart on its sleeve where the Golf and especially the SEAT are reserved. It crosses the line in 1:24.59, a full half-second down on the Clubsport S.

The Focus RS goes about its business in a wholly different manner. It's the only car in which we have to back off from the Sport suspension mode to avoid pogo'ing, which is a bit daft as Bedford is very smooth. No matter, for in the softer suspension mode it flies, exploiting a traction advantage to pop out of tight corners and adopting a neutral-to-oversteer stance through the quicker stuff. What's more, it feels natural, not contrived.

The motor sounds fruity and packs a punch, too, though it doesn't quite deliver the advantage you might expect from 345bhp. The gearbox has a decent shift – more positive than that of the Golf or Leon, but not as sharp as the Honda's – and the brakes have feel, power and stamina. As a package it's perhaps the most fun, thanks to a more playful delivery and a genuinely expressive character. Whether that playfulness costs time is debatable. What's uncanny is that it matches the Civic Type R's best lap to the hundredth of a second.

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## **'THE LEON IS COMPOSED AND VERY GOOD ON THE BRAKES'**



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# THE WINNER v THE TROPHY-R

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by DAN PROSSER

**THE GOLF GTI CLUBSPORT S IS NOT ONLY THE** most enjoyable to drive on the road, then, but the fastest on circuit, too. That's a seriously impressive showing from the VW, a performance that underlines its sheer breadth of ability. Of the current crop, it really is the best hot hatch in the world.

That same title once belonged to the Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy-R, until production stopped in 2015. So how do the two cars compare? There are many similarities between them, of course, most notably the way they prioritise on-track performance over practicality by ditching their rear seats. Both run on Cup 2 tyres as standard, too, and while the Clubsport S holds the front-wheel-drive lap record at the Nürburgring with a 7min 49.2sec, the Trophy-R is a former holder of that title,

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**‘THE TROPHY-R’S PACE MIGHT BE FADING, BUT THE MAGIC STILL LINGERS’**

having set a time of 7min 54.4sec two years ago.

That difference in lap time is borne out at the Autodrome, where the VW betters the Renault by a full second. ‘The way in which the Trophy-R strings that lap-time together remains impressive and seductive,’ comments Richard Meaden. ‘It has the nailed-down, no-nonsense feel and aggression of a true road-racer – something even the Clubsport S can’t summon. There’s a sweet balance of torque and traction that makes you feel like you’re able to wring the most from the chassis, engine and tyres, rather than hold back. Trouble is, there’s just not enough torque or power to really take the fight to the younger, more potent Clubsport S between the corners. The Trophy-R’s pace might be fading, but the magic lingers.’

Despite their surface-level similarities, the Mégane and Golf actually feel quite different on the road. Their individual characters are summed up by their seats, in fact. The more compliant and relaxed VW uses heavily bolstered sports seats while the aggressive and very pointy Renault uses fixed-back buckets with five-point harnesses. The Trophy-R is a little busier over the road surface and perhaps even more exciting, but the Clubsport S shows its genius in the way it brushes off bumps and cambers with such composure.

Picking a winner almost feels arbitrary, but I won’t short-change you. For one last run over the Buttertubs Pass, one final lap of the West Circuit? I’m taking the Renault. ☒





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# PRACTICALLY INSANE

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by DAN PROSSER | PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

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*Hot hatches are adored for their practical approach to performance, but what happens when the remit changes from 'everyday' to 'race day'? We drive the new Peugeot 308 Racing Cup to find out*



#### THE LATEST 308 GTi TRULY IS A RETURN TO FORM FOR

Peugeot, so much so that we're running one on the Fast Fleet. But with a relatively modest 266bhp it would have been hopelessly outgunned in this month's hot hatch group test (starting on page 60). The French marque doesn't have a fully equipped rival for the likes of Volkswagen's Golf GTI Clubsport S for the time being, then, but if you know where to look, you'll find a 308 that makes the Clubsport S look about as thrilling as an overloaded wheelie bin.

'We start with the standard 308 GTi engine,' says Laurent Guyot, 'then we fit a massive turbo.' As the man responsible for Peugeot Sport's customer racing programmes, Guyot has overseen the development of the new 308 Racing Cup. 'It has more aero, more power and more grip than the car it replaces.'

The 308 Racing Cup is the successor to the RCZ Racing Cup, which served as Peugeot Sport's customer motorsport product for five years. The new car will compete in a single-make series from 2017 and it'll also be eligible for various championships across the globe, including the TCR Touring Car category, the 24H Series and the Nürburgring-based VLN championship. Peugeot Sport hopes to sell 60 cars in the first year, each at 74,900 euros (before tax).

The 308 Racing Cup has been developed by the new PSA racing department in Versailles – an amalgamation of Peugeot Sport and Citroën Racing. The new division is responsible for all group motorsport activities across Peugeot, Citroën and DS, including

customer and factory programmes. The new division will also be responsible for future high-performance road cars.

'The turbo is more or less from an R5 rally car,' says Guyot. To keep costs down, the engine internals are unchanged, but the 1.6-litre unit is still good for 304bhp and 295lb ft of torque – some 44bhp and 81lb ft more than the outgoing RCZ Racing Cup. The transmission is a development of the six-speed Sadev sequential that was used by the RCZ, with paddles mounted on the steering wheel. A limited-slip differential manages torque between the front wheels.

Naturally, the rest of the car has been overhauled to prepare it for racing, too. The brakes are by AP Racing, the uprated suspension is fully adjustable and the tracks are wider front and rear – the swollen arches both add visual muscle and keep the wheels within the bodywork – while the roll-cage is a welded-in item. The slick tyres are provided by Michelin, while the prominent front splitter and jutting rear wing generate as much as 160kg of downforce. Finally, a flat underfloor helps to reduce drag and accelerate air flow.

Although it's down on power compared with a current-day British Touring Car, the 308 Racing Cup has a more advanced chassis. At Circuit de Lury-Lévis, the Peugeot has so much cornering ability that even after two stints in the car I'm only starting to get to grips with it in a handful of the track's eight corners.

The third-gear right-hander that feeds onto the long back straight, for example, shows just how much front-end grip the 308 can





## PEUGEOT SPORT 308 R HYBRID: THE ULTIMATE HYPERHATCH?

The Racing Cup isn't the first time Peugeot has toyed with a seriously high-performance 308. With close to 500bhp and capable of hitting 62mph in four seconds, the 308 R Hybrid is supercar fast.

Revealed at the Shanghai motor show last year as a concept, the R Hybrid uses the 308 GTi's 266bhp engine to drive its front wheels while a pair of 113bhp electric motors power the rears. The tracks are 80mm wider front and rear than the standard car's and the suspension is heavily uprated, while 380mm front brake discs rein in the vast performance.

Peugeot is considering putting a version of the R Hybrid into production, too. 'We are quite well developed with the car and we're now in the process of commercialising it,' says Peugeot CEO Maxime Picat.

Expect a road-going version to be heavily toned down from the unhinged R Hybrid, if only because a 500bhp 308 would carry an unreasonably high price tag – circa £50,000-plus. A 350bhp version with a £35,000 list price would look very attractive indeed, however, as well as being perfectly aligned with the 345bhp, four-wheel-drive Focus RS.



generate. At the point where I expect it to start washing wide, there's actually enough grip in reserve that I can both stand on the power and feed in more steering lock without triggering any understeer whatsoever.

Compared with Mini's Challenge race car – although that car is much more affordable – the difference in cornering performance between the two is enormous. In high-speed corners in particular, with its aerodynamic devices working, the Racing Cup finds so much grip that the limiting factor is my own self-preservation instinct.

The 308 has good traction, too, even away from the circuit's tightest corner, which is taken in first gear. The brakes, meanwhile, take all the pedal pressure I can muster without ever locking up (there's no ABS).

You only need to use the clutch pedal when pulling away, which means you can left-foot brake for even finer control over the car's attitude. Grégory Guilvert, Peugeot Sport's development driver, likes to agitate the car at turn-in by braking hard and late with the brake bias wound as far as possible to the rear. With the car oversteering slightly between entry and apex, he can pin the throttle and drive hard through to corner exit.

A good customer racing car needs to cater for a range of drivers, from seasoned professionals to young hotshots and well-funded rookies. The 308 Racing Cup is a physical car to drive, but it treads a neat line between accommodating amateurs and keeping experienced professionals on their toes. Now, if Peugeot Sport can inject some of its staggering performance into the 308 GTi, it really will have a Clubsport S rival on its hands. ❌

### Peugeot 308 Racing Cup

**Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1600cc, turbo

**Power** 304bhp @ n/a

**Torque** 295lb ft @ n/a

**Transmission** Six-speed sequential, front-wheel drive, limited-slip differential

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

**Rear suspension** Torsion bar, coil springs, adjustable dampers, anti-roll bar

**Brakes** Ventilated 378mm front discs, solid 290mm rear discs

**Wheels** 10 x 18in front and rear

**Tyres** 27/16-18 front and rear

**Weight** 1000kg

**Power-to-weight** 304bhp/ton

**0-60mph** sub-4.0sec (est)

**Top speed** 160mph (est)

**Basic price** €74,900 plus taxes

**On sale** Now

**evo rating:** ★★★★★



**Left:** 1.6-litre engine is based on the one from the road car, but produces 304bhp with help from a huge, rally-spec turbocharger. **Top:** Michelin slicks ensure there's massive grip to lean on in the corners

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# Ride the lightning

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by DAN PROSSER

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PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

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*Rimac's 1073bhp Concept One may run purely on electricity, but its creator is certainly more evo than eco. We meet him – and are the first to drive his revolutionary car*



**I** 'VE MET AUTOMOTIVE CEOs before and they don't look much like Mate Rimac, with his youth and his scraggly beard making him stand out against the suits. I've tested supercars before, too, and they don't drive much like the Concept One, the acceleration and unusual handling of which I'll get to later. And I've visited countless car companies before and they don't feel much like Rimac Automobili, with the camouflage-trouser-wearing workforce and the unconventional way in which things are done.

The Concept One is Rimac Automobili's first customer car. It costs £1million, give or take, and after driving it on the Croatian coast, I've got it pegged as a three-and-a-half-star car. That doesn't really add up, does it? It loses half a star because nobody over 5ft 10in will be comfortable in the cabin. It loses another half-star for its handful of dynamic shortcomings, most of which relate to its various braking systems – more of which later – and it loses another because I can't ignore the fact that it simply stopped working several times during my test drive.

New supercar manufacturers come, make unrealistic claims, and disappear shortly afterwards. The sorry, oxidising pile of over-ambitious, under-financed companies that didn't survive their infancy seems to grow bigger with every passing year. What you need to know here and now is that Rimac Automobili is the most convincing new car company I've ever come across. It already employs 200 people, is making its presence felt throughout the industry, and has recorded a profit for the past three years, even before it has delivered a single car.

'I've always been crazy about cars,' says the 27-year-old Mate. 'In 2007, when I was 18 years old, I bought an E30 BMW 3-series. I competed in drift events in it, but one day the engine blew up.

'Being from Croatia, I had read a lot about Nikola Tesla, who invented the electric motor as we know it today. I thought the electric motor was the perfect machine to power anything and everything, especially a sports car, but the image of electric cars back then was of a boxy little thing, like the G-Wiz. I wanted to change the mindset and prove electric cars could be fast.'

Working out of his garage, Rimac started to build an electric drivetrain for his E30. 'I used junkyard parts, such as a forklift motor. I built the first version in a year and took it to compete in drag races. Everybody was laughing at me, asking if they could charge



## 'RIMAC HAS RECORDED A PROFIT FOR THE PAST THREE YEARS – EVEN BEFORE IT HAS DELIVERED A SINGLE CAR'

their mobile phone from my car. The first race I had was against another E30, one with a petrol engine, and I won. Just.

'After that first race I went back and improved the car. I replaced the motor and removed the gearbox. The differential broke and I bought a stronger one, but then the driveshafts would break. I realised the components available on the market were very primitive. That's when I started to develop my own powertrain components.

'After each drag race the car got faster

and faster. I entered a regional competition against 300 cars and made it to the final. The other finalist was an American dragster with a supercharged V8 and nitrous. I won. That's when people started to pay attention.'

Rimac's E30 recorded a best quarter-mile time of 11.3 seconds – 'as fast as a Ferrari Enzo' – using a motor, battery packs and electronics that he had built himself. 'I'm a car guy,' he explains. 'I never wanted to make electric cars just to save fuel. I thought they could be faster and better. You can do things with an electric powertrain that aren't possible with a conventional powertrain.

'I didn't want to keep modifying the old BMW, though. I wanted to build my own car.'

**MATE FOUNDED THE COMPANY** that bears his name in 2009. With private funding, he moved out of his garage and into an industrial unit on the outskirts of Zagreb, Croatia. From that single unit the company has expanded into the surrounding buildings and workshops, adding office space, a design studio and production facilities as the business has developed.

It's midday by the time photographer Aston Parrott and I arrive. Rimac welcomes us into a spotless, ice-white atrium. He wears a branded black T-shirt, shorts and trainers,





CONCEPT ONE

ZG PP-451

more the uniform of a graduate programmer than a motoring industry CEO. 'The first two years were a complete nightmare,' he says. 'I have no idea how we survived. We were just seven people at the time, but somehow we managed to build the first Concept One prototype and show it at the 2011 Frankfurt motor show.'

The Concept One has evolved since then, but its fundamental technical specification is more or less unchanged. The chassis is a spaceframe rather than a carbonfibre monocoque – 'we didn't have the money for an autoclave back then' – with battery packs mounted along the spine of the car and behind the rear bulkhead. One of the key design elements is the use of one motor for each wheel, which forms the basis of Rimac's All Wheel Torque Vectoring system.

The output and performance figures are staggering. In fact, with 1073bhp, 1180lb ft,

**'THIS CAR  
BELONGS  
FIRMLY IN THE  
HYPERCAR  
CATEGORY  
ALONGSIDE THE  
LIKES OF THE  
McLAREN P1'**

a claimed 0-62mph time of 2.6 seconds and a 221mph top speed, the Concept One belongs firmly in the hypercar category alongside the likes of the McLaren P1. At 850,000 euros before taxes, it also has a price tag to suit, but with only eight cars due to be sold to customers, it'll be much more exclusive than its hybrid competitors.

The car doesn't need a conventional transmission but, uniquely, it does use a pair of small, twin-clutch two-speed gearboxes in the rear axle. The shorter ratio is simply there to deliver maximum acceleration and that remarkable 0-62mph time. First gear will pull to around 100mph, but owners will be encouraged to drive in second gear most of the time.

The bodywork is all carbon, but despite that the car still weighs 1850kg. Rimac describes it as a 'heavy bitch', a comment that earns him a glare from his PR man, but he insists that the clever torque-vectoring system makes it feel an awful lot lighter than it is. With a grin, he recalls the time a chief test driver from an Italian supercar manufacturer sampled the Concept One. When

Rimac asserted that torque vectoring made it feel 500kg lighter, the test driver replied, 'No, 370kg'.

Even before leaving the atrium and venturing into the heart of the business, it's clear Rimac Automobili is much more than just a niche supercar maker. It proudly displays a Greyp electric bicycle – designed and manufactured on site and capable of outrunning a hot hatch off the line – alongside a Concept One. The company applies its electric drivetrain know-how to all manner of other vehicles, too, from boats to wheelchairs. It also consults and supplies componentry throughout the automotive industry. 'What we are today is a technology company,' says Rimac, 'not just a car company. With the Concept One, we are showing what we can do, but the real business is doing this sort of thing [electric drivetrains] for others. We work with pretty much everybody who makes electric cars. We work a lot with the British car industry and we make the batteries for the Koenigsegg Regera.' Let me remind you now that the company didn't exist seven years ago.

'We are different to other car makers because we design, engineer and manufacture everything here. We are completely vertically integrated, whereas McLaren doesn't manufacture a single part in-house. Everything is made by suppliers.

'This is our fifth-generation motor, for example, and it has a better power-to-weight ratio than a 2014 Formula 1 engine: 900bhp from 105kg. You can't do that with off-the-shelf parts. We had to make it ourselves.

'When I started the company, I was aware how the car industry worked and I never would have imagined we would do our own electronics, infotainment system, body and so on. I went to Bosch and Continental, companies that supply other manufacturers, and asked them to supply something to us. They wouldn't even talk to us.

'I realised I was going to have to make this stuff on my own, and that's the only reason we still exist today. If we had just done it the normal way we would have been dead five years ago.

'Look at Fisker. Henrik Fisker raised \$1.5 billion privately and another \$500 million from the government. Since he had a lot of money, he hired people from the industry with really impressive CVs, people who were working at BMW, Mercedes, Ferrari. When they got to Fisker, they just did the same thing they did at their previous companies, so when they needed a motor, they went to Bosch. They outsourced all the engineering. Even the assembly was done outside, so when it went bankrupt they didn't have anything to show for it. They paid hundreds of millions to other companies and were left with nothing. We were the opposite. We couldn't pay for experienced people. We had to innovate because we had no other way.'

In building its own battery packs, control units, motors, bodywork and headlights (most





automotive CEOs will tell you this is impossible), the company accrued a huge amount of knowledge in a short space of time. It then refined this into expertise by investing shrewdly and hiring wisely. That expertise has become Rimac's greatest asset, one that's in huge demand among OEMs. Being the go-to electric drivetrain supplier in 2016 is like knowing the EuroMillions numbers for the next 52 weeks.

The company raised 10million euros in its first round of funding in 2014, and several times that in its second round, earlier this year. Rimac remains the majority shareholder. That investment will help the company continue its rapid rate of expansion with a state-of-the-art, purpose-built facility on the horizon and an all-new hypercar just three years away. The new model, which Rimac refers to as the C2, will be bigger than the Concept One, will be built in much greater numbers and will have a carbonfibre tub (Rimac eventually got his autoclave, as well as the engineer responsible for the LaFerrari's carbon chassis to go with it). It will be lighter, too.

'We are still in the start-up phase. The next step is to become a tier-one supplier. Our new facility will have an automated production line making batteries, motors and control units. We want to

crank out tens of thousands of batteries each year and supply them to all kinds of manufacturers.'

Later that evening we drive two hours to Karlobag, a town on Croatia's spectacular Adriatic coast, where, tomorrow morning, **evo** will become the first publication anywhere in the world to test-drive the Rimac Automobili Concept One.

#### **THE NEW DAY DAWNS WARM AND BRIGHT.**

I saw the car in the workshop yesterday – it was still being put together at 9pm last night – but in this gravel lay-by next to a mountain road it looks incredible. Wide and impossibly muscular. The detailing is neat. The roofline barely reaches up to my hip. They tell me it's a similar height to a Miura.

The consequence, of course, is that cabin space is uncomfortably tight, and if I sit upright in the seat I have to crank my head to the side. If I slouch in it like a bored teenager, I have just enough headroom, but 15 minutes later my back is screaming. The cabin is attractive otherwise and the fit and finish pretty good, albeit with a distinctly hand-built feel.

I'm surprised a few hundred metres down the road to realise that the steering is hydraulically assisted rather than electronically, which would be

**Above:** Concept One has a hint of Jaguar C-X75 about its design; its successor will have a carbon tub. **Right:** 20-inch aluminium alloys display carbon-ceramic brakes from Brembo, while the adjustable pushrod suspension is from KW



**‘THE ROOFLINE  
BARELY REACHES  
UP TO MY HIP.  
THEY TELL ME IT’S  
A SIMILAR HEIGHT  
TO A LAMBORGHINI  
MIURA’**

more efficient but less feelsome. It’s a reminder that Rimac Automobili isn’t in the business of building guilt-free supercars; it’s in the business of building supercars that harness the virtues of an electric drivetrain. There’s lots of weight to the steering, but real precision and genuine feedback, too.

On the marble-smooth coastal road the ride quality feels very good, but on the mountain roads it gets a touch fidgety. With 250lb ft deployed through each front wheel, the car has a habit of drawing itself across the width of the road, too, but only on bumpier sections does it become an irritation.

The Concept One effectively has three braking systems. The first is the kinetic energy recovery, which slows the car significantly when you lift off the throttle. This means you can ‘one-pedal drive’ in town, which is convenient, but when you’re picking apart a mountain road it tends to disrupt your rhythm. Usefully, you can turn the KERS down.

The second system is the regenerative braking, which inverts the motors when you stand on the brake pedal. The third is the conventional brake system, which uses Brembo carbon-ceramic discs and six-piston calipers (along with the KW suspension, the brakes are one of the few bought-in





### Rimac Concept One

**Engine** Four dual-permanent-magnet, oil-cooled electric motors **CO2** 0g/km **Power** 1073bhp **Torque** 1180lb ft @ 0-6500rpm  
**Transmission** Two single-speed gearboxes (front axle), two two-speed gearboxes (rear axle), four-wheel drive, torque vectoring **Front suspension** Double wishbones, coil springs, adjustable dampers, anti-roll bar **Rear suspension** Double wishbones, coil springs, adjustable dampers, anti-roll bar **Brakes** Ventilated carbon-ceramic discs, 390mm front, 380mm rear, ABS, plus regen braking and KERS **Weight (dry)** 1850kg **Power-to-weight (dry)** 589bhp/ton **0-62mph** 2.6sec (claimed) **Top speed** 221mph (claimed) **Price** c£880,000

evo rating: ★★★★★

components). Marrying these together to give natural, predictable braking performance is the devil's own job and on this occasion Rimac Automobili hasn't quite pulled off the impossible. With both KERS and the regen braking turned down, the Concept One feels its most organic, but still the brake pedal is lifeless and uncomfortably heavy.

If the car feels its weight under braking, it feels half its weight under acceleration. The Concept One is fantastically quick. The full torque figure is available instantly, of course, which means throttle response is immediate. The motors do generate more power the faster they spin, however, and as there's only one ratio (or two if you choose to use first), the car accelerates harder the faster you go. The impression is that the rate of acceleration actually increases, whereas in a conventional car it begins to wane straight away. This is an entirely different type of acceleration to anything I've felt in a supercar before.

And then there's the torque vectoring. Most high-performance cars use some sort of torque vectoring today, but electronic, all-wheel torque vectoring is the ultimate form because it gives the most precise control. Using steering-wheel-angle and yaw sensors to guide it, the torque-vectoring super-brain diverts less torque to the inside front wheel than the outer wheels on the way into a corner, and actually applies negative torque – effectively a braking input – to the inside rear. This pivots the car into the corner, making it feel agile and responsive.

Away from the corner the computer then favours the outside rear wheel. From the driver's seat it makes the Concept One feel freakishly positive through a bend, and whereas most cars would exhibit some sort of rogue behaviour at corner exit – power understeer in a front-wheel-drive car, for example – the Rimac just fires itself away without histrionics, even if you apply full throttle much earlier than you think should be possible. It's this that gives the car its staggering pace.

The point is that the Concept One truly is fun and engaging to drive quickly. An intoxicating soundtrack and dramatic power delivery will always be central tenets of the conventional supercar experience, but in the Concept One's curious, chest-crushing way of gathering speed and in the staggering handling afforded by its torque-vectoring system, there is enough character and excitement that I soon forget what's missing.

Rimac claims a 200-mile range, which I've no reason to doubt, but less convincing is the reliability. On a number of occasions the drivetrain simply dies, necessitating a quick reset to bring it back to life. Mate and his team will resolve that issue, I'm quite sure.

The Concept One is a flawed car, then, but it shows that electric supercars do have a place in our corner of the world. Moreover, Rimac Automobili is well on its way to being a world leader in electric drivetrains and given its rate of progress so far, I would bet confidently on its next car being world class, too. ☑



**Above:** battery cells – lots of them – waiting to find a home in the Concept One's T-shaped power pack.

**Below:** Mate Rimac – not your usual car company CEO





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**AKRAPOVIČ**

ICON: NISSAN SKYLINE GT-R 'HAKOSUKA'





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by JETHRO BOVINGDON

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PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH

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# ORIGIN *of* *the* SPECIES

*The legendary 'Hakosuka' was the first  
Nissan Skyline GT-R, and now we've  
driven one the DNA is clear to see*



**S** KYLINE . IT'S SUCH A familiar term amongst car enthusiasts and conjures strong images and even stronger reactions. There are lovers and haters. The former, as is so often the case, fuel the fire of the latter. They're almost religious about the big, complex Japanese coupe and their fanaticism is matched by the blind rage that characterises those who take against the Skyline.

Of course, I'm talking about the Skyline GT-R, the car that arrived in 1989 with four-wheel drive, four-wheel steer and twin turbochargers, and then evolved through two more generations and endless refinements. The car that swept all before it in Group A touring car racing and was inevitably banned. But the Skyline we're driving today couldn't be more different: small, light, rear-wheel drive and without even power steering. And everyone seems to love it. This is the 1971 Skyline GT-R. Also known as a KPGC10 or, for many, simply Hakosuka ('hako' for box-shaped, 'suka' as an abbreviation of Skyline in Japanese).

The early Skyline story is complicated and littered with all sorts of codes unintelligible to the uninitiated. So much so

that I hesitate to try to explain it all for fear of *evo*'s offices being razed to the ground by those who like to quote chassis numbers. Anyway, for the good of the story, here goes...

The Skyline was actually launched by the Prince Motor Company in April 1957 and featured a 1.5-litre four-cylinder engine with a heady 59bhp. In 1964 the Prince Skyline GT (S54-generation) was created and a seed of something special was planted. This new model took the 2-litre 'G7' straight-six from the bigger Gloria saloon and was devised to go racing. Prince built 100 road cars (S54A with a single-carb 104bhp engine and S54B with triple carbs and 123bhp) and turned up at the 1964 Japanese GP at Fuji to contest the GT-II race.

The Skyline GT was a narrow, square-edged saloon but in race tune it produced 163bhp at 6800rpm and weighed 990kg. It was fast. So fast that for one glorious lap it headed the Porsche 904 GTS that would eventually go on to win the race, while Skyline GTs finished in positions second to sixth. Tetsu Ikuzawa's overtake on the 904 GTS became the stuff of legend and, perhaps, the Skyline myth was guaranteed. In 1966 Prince merged with Nissan and the former was quickly phased out. 'Skyline', of course, couldn't be erased so easily and in '68 a new generation – the C10 – was launched. The now iconic GT-R badge was created in February 1969, attached to a four-door Skyline fitted with a 2-litre, 24-valve



## 'TACKED-ON BLACK WHEELARCH EXTENSIONS AT THE REAR ADD A SENSE OF MUSCLE'

straight-six engine (called the S20) related to the GR8 motor seen in a mid-engined prototype, called the R380, that had finally vanquished Porsche (now with the 906 GTS) at Fuji in '66. That first Skyline was called the PGC10 and in March 1971 it was joined by a two-door coupe version: the KPGC10. In Japan, the GT-Rs enjoyed a period of complete domination, winning 50 races in two years and ten months with 49 victories consecutively.

Okay, so now you're up to speed. Or horribly confused. What you need to know is that this particular Skyline GT-R coupe was built in August 1971 and arrived in the UK in January 2016 thanks to the expertise and persistence of Torque GT, who hunted down and imported the car for new owner Ian Griffiths. That double-overhead-camshaft S20 engine produces 158bhp at 7000rpm and 131lb ft at 5600rpm and the car weighs around 1100kg. It features struts up front and a semi-trailing-arm arrangement at the rear, a five-speed manual gearbox and a limited-slip differential. There's no power steering, the brakes are unassisted (and feature rear drums) and it looks, well, boxy. But these cars are rare and highly sought after. You want one? Be prepared to pay six figures.

So this is it. The beginning of the GT-R story, laid out before us on the windswept North York Moors. Out of context, certainly. But still it's an intriguing shape and I can't wait to find out if this

car lives up to the legend and maybe even trace the DNA I know so well from the modern GT-R and the Skyline R32, R33 and R34 generations. In size, this Skyline is not dissimilar to an E30 3-series, but it packs plenty of presence into a relatively small footprint. Firstly, it's very low. Older cars tend to have massive wheelarch gaps and look like they're on tiptoes, but the GT-R squats low. The tacked-on black wheelarch extensions at the rear add a sense of muscle and the extreme negative camber is a clear indication of this car's authentic motorsport pedigree. Of course, there are other details that could only feature on a Japanese car. The peculiar little black plastic mirrors mounted way down the wings towards the nose of the car, the strange rear spoiler that nearly butts into the curvature of the bootlid... It's only right and proper that this thing should have its own foibles, like all the best Japanese machines. Back in '71, as now, the GT-R trod its own path.





Before I get in, I want to look at the S20 engine. It's a real treat: crackle-black in finish and marked with the firing order '1.5.3.6.2.4', burnished coppery-blue exhaust headers gripping it on one side and the triple side-draught carb setup on the other. It's set so low too, the top of the cam covers miles below the bonnet shuts. For me, the Skyline story has always started with the R32 and I'll admit I'm nervous about driving the KPGC10. It's so revered in certain circles and yet, I have suspected until now, it might not be that good to drive. That lovely straight-six mounted way down low gives me hope, however. It revs to 7500rpm, too.

Inside, expectations continue to rise. The small bucket seats aren't quite as snug as I'd like, but the centre sections in textured, almost rubberised material literally stick me in place. The lovely little three-spoke steering wheel is a bit of a reach away and the end of the footwell slightly too close (although the pedals are well spaced and feel substantial), but the car feels small, airy and like it'll be easy to manage. The lovely cylindrical shifter for the five-speed manual 'box feels perfect, nestling into the palm of my hand with a lovely cool tactility. A

## 'THE ENGINE REALLY IS THIS CAR'S HEART AND SOUL'



**Top:** with 158bhp and modern tyres, this Hakosuka has more grip than power, but can be coaxed into mild oversteer once in full flow. **Left:** S20 straight-six sits very low in the engine bay – a design feature that hints at the Hakosuka's racing pedigree



couple of exploratory shifts reveal a long throw but a narrow gate and a slightly indistinct feel. So I give the heavy throttle pedal one big push, release and then twist the key and push the throttle halfway down again. The S20 fires quickly and it's not rorty and rough but smooth and busy. I knew this car had a straight-six but still the cultured, turbine-like note with a wicked rasp layered over the top is a surprise.

It takes a bit of coaxing and clutch-slip to get the GT-R off the line without the engine bogging, and boy is the steering heavy at low speeds. Like all the GT-Rs I've ever driven, it's a physical experience. As speeds rise, the Hakosuka continues to test your commitment. You know how all old cars feel soft and floaty? Even stuff that was criticised for being too stiff when new generally feels slightly lacking in control by today's standards. Not this Skyline. As far as Ian knows, it's running on standard suspension (although the rear ride height looks lower than standard to me) but it hops, skips, bounces and rattles across the moors. It feels as uncompromising as a modern GT-R Nismo, which is a real surprise. On top of the steering effort, which remains high even at speed, and the unassisted brakes, this Skyline never lets you relax. In fact, it can feel like it's beating you up rather than encouraging you to drive harder to discover its true character.

Even so, it's hard not to smile. The engine really is this car's heart and soul, and despite not venturing to the 7500rpm red

line due to the car burning a bit of oil and being scheduled for an engine rebuild, the smooth character and ever-fiercer delivery as the revs start to pile on above 5500rpm is highly addictive. I'd love to wring it right out and feel the fire at the top end and hear the legendary high-pitched howl of the S20, but that can wait for another day (Ian is an exceptionally kind chap and will let us into it again post-rebuild). Even reined-in slightly, the S20 has real character. Beneath the aggressive suspension settings, the chassis feels pretty good, too.

Modern 195- and 225-section tyres actually provide loads of grip, and with the rev restriction we're using, there's no scope for power oversteer on this coarse, grippy surface. In fact, the Skyline just digs in and sticks to its line. Body roll is very limited, understeer pretty much non-existent. So you can just throw the car at a corner and then jump straight on the throttle.

As your confidence goes up, so the Skyline starts to show a bit more of its playfulness. In longer, third-gear turns, you can feel the rear wheels start to gently break free and push the fronts right into the apex. It doesn't require proper correction, just a gentle loosening of the lock to maintain an equilibrium, but it's a sense at least of this car's excellent balance, which I'm sure would be revealed fully on a track, and 7500rpm with which to play. For the good of the camera – and my ego – I do try the old turn-lift-full-power trick and, sure enough,

the tail loosens, such is the turn-in grip. The straight-six then has just enough power to push it wide and hold it there for a few brilliant moments. The diff doesn't feel like it's locking very effectively, but the Skyline is benign beyond the limit.

Benign but with fast reactions and requiring the same of the driver. This is not an old-fashioned car that breaks away easily, floats beyond the limit and makes you feel like a hero at 40mph. It has grip and agility, is physical and uncompromising, and the control weights all have a surprising degree of heft – from the steering to the brakes and gearbox. Sound familiar?

Now, I'm not going to pretend that a small rear-drive coupe built in '71 feels the same as a four-wheel-drive, twin-turbocharged monster from the '90s or has the sheer eye-widening lunacy of the R35-generation GT-R, but there's no question it has a similar sense of unerring focus. In truth, it's not built for the fast, ragged roads that flow like forbidding rapids over the moors, but there are moments even here where you can feel why the Skyline GT-R was so effective and successful on the racetrack. It has an intrinsic athleticism that you feel with every turn of those RS Watanabe wheels.

It takes a while but finally the wild wind blows away the thick blanket of light grey cloud and my final drive in the Hakosuka is in brilliant sunshine. I use just a few hundred revs more but it's enough for the exhaust note to climb a few octaves and sing

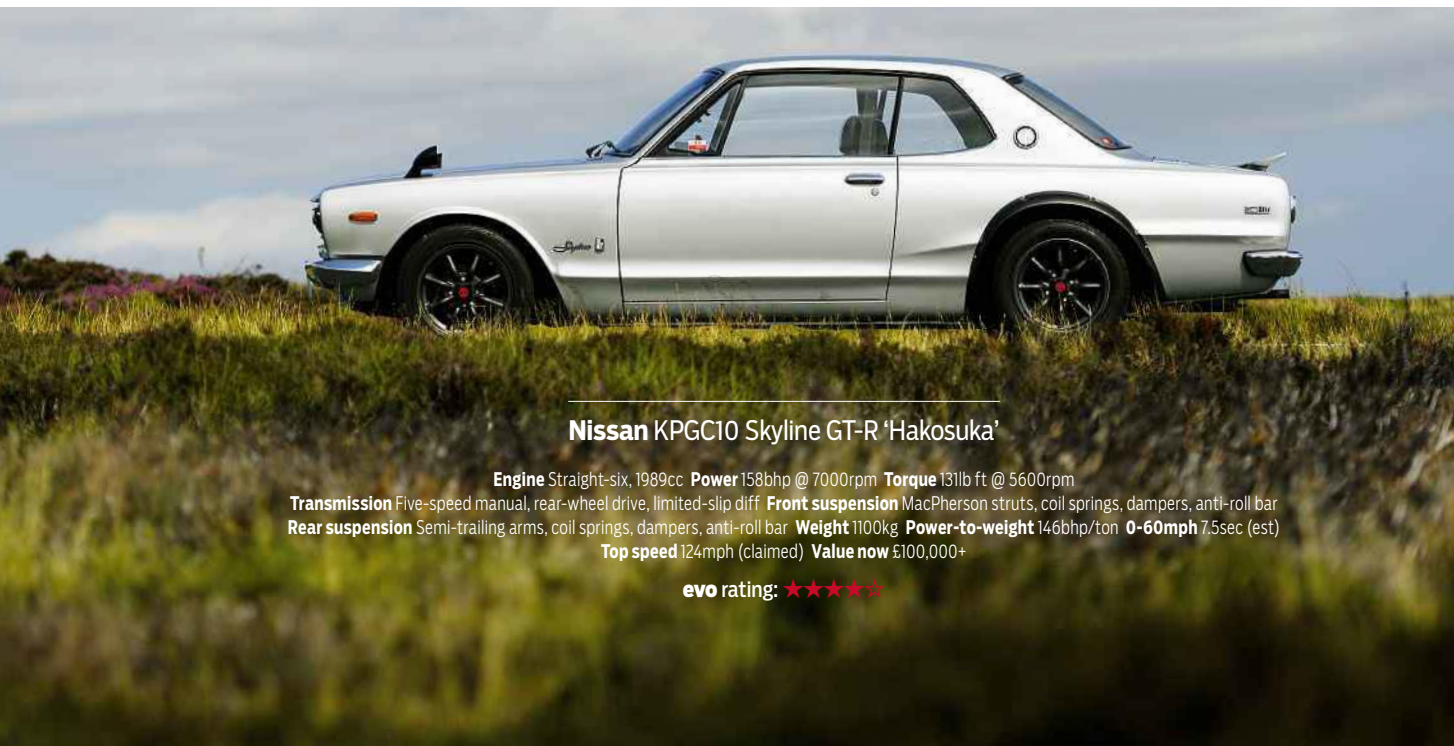
## 'IT HOPS AND BOUNCES BUT ROLLS UP ITS SLEEVES AND GETS STUCK IN'



its serrated song with seemingly twice the energy. I use the rock-solid body control to scythe cleanly through a series of S-bends and feel the balance shift to that gentle oversteering stance that it loves to adopt. The car still rattles and bangs, the rear axle hops and bounces over the worst lumps and bumps, but although clearly out of its comfort zone, the car rolls up its sleeves and gets stuck in.

These last miles are a frantic experience, a million miles from the fleet-footed fluidity you might expect, but it's still hilarious fun and although I'm not one to prize a car for its rarity, there's no doubt that knowing the significance of this car adds something intangible to its appeal. It's the start of a story that's delivered us some of the most exciting and charismatic cars ever. The start of an adventure that would wend its way from Fuji to Spa and Bathurst with those unstoppable flame-spitting Group A cars, even on to Le Mans. It's the Skyline GT-R that everybody loves. For me the name 'Skyline GT-R' still means boost and ATTESA E-TS and Super HICAS and side-exit exhausts belching fire. But I can see why everyone loves the Hakosuka. It's quite a car. ✕

*With thanks to Torque GT ([torque-gt.co.uk](http://torque-gt.co.uk)) and Ian Griffiths*



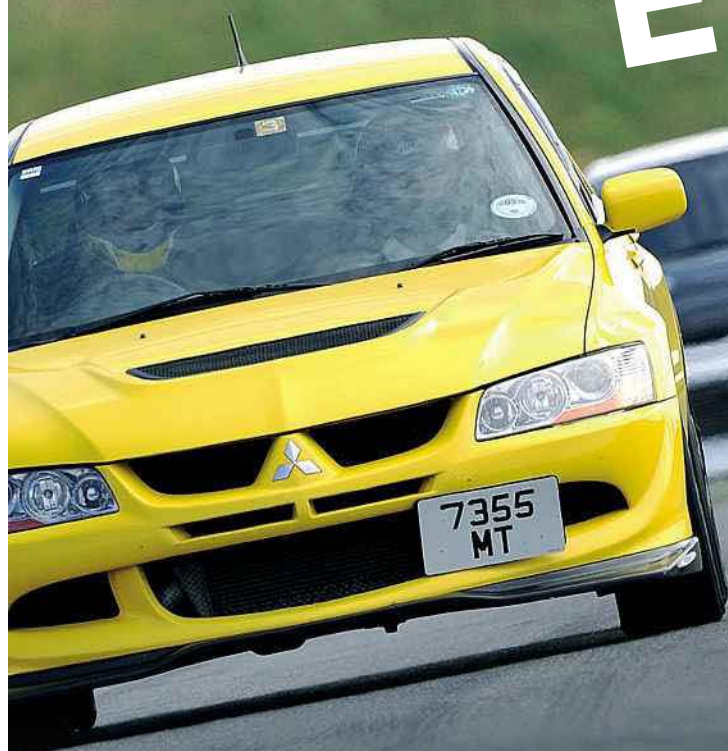
### Nissan KPGC10 Skyline GT-R 'Hakosuka'

**Engine** Straight-six, 1989cc **Power** 158bhp @ 7000rpm **Torque** 131lb ft @ 5600rpm  
**Transmission** Five-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip diff **Front suspension** MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar  
**Rear suspension** Semi-trailing arms, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar **Weight** 1100kg **Power-to-weight** 146bhp/ton **0-60mph** 7.5sec (est)  
**Top speed** 124mph (claimed) **Value now** £100,000+

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# PEAK PRACTICE

by HENRY CATCHPOLE

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

& HENRY CATCHPOLE







**‘THE NICE LADY IN THERE,’** says Oliver Gavin, motioning to the Glen Nevis visitor centre that he’s just emerged from, ‘informed me that there’s still quite a lot of snow on the top of the mountain.’

I look at the boot of the Corvette in front of me. It’s a huge boot. Bigger than any boot in any other 650bhp two-seat sports car I can think of. And it’s stuffed to the gills with waterproof clothes and glucose-filled supplies. But it doesn’t have any crampons in it. For what won’t be the last time in this adventure, I wonder if we might have taken a bit more kerb than our dampers are set up for.

Oliver Gavin, in case you aren’t familiar, is arguably the UK’s greatest current endurance racing driver. With five wins in the GT class at Le Mans (including 2015), five wins at the 12 Hours of Sebring, five Petit Le Mans class wins and the nail-biting class win that he took in the 24 Hours of Daytona this year, his palmarès speaks for itself. He hails from the same village in Bedfordshire as perhaps the only other person who could lay claim to the title, Nick Tandy, so clearly there’s something in the taps of The Sun Inn.

Unfortunately for Olly, he also happens to live near me and so we cycle together occasionally. Him training for Le Mans, me training for, well, small local Thursday evening bicycle races... Anyway, it was on one of these rides that I suggested doing the Three Peaks Challenge. The ruse is that you have to climb

**Left (from top):** Z06’s head-up display rather useful when you’re in charge of 650bhp; Corvette Racing Yellow paintjob like a lightning bolt through the Scottish Highlands; hatchback makes for a surprisingly capacious supercar; Oliver five-class-victories-at-Le-Mans Gavin slogging it out atop Ben Nevis...  
**Below:** ...and posing for a well-earned selfie with *evo*’s features editor, Henry Catchpole



**'THE Z06 SUITS  
SCOTLAND.  
ITS 6.2-LITRE  
SUPERCHARGED  
V8 NEEDS A BIT  
OF ROOM'**

the highest peaks in each of Scotland, England and Wales within 24 hours and as a bonus you get to drive through three of the greatest sets of driving roads in the country as you travel between each mountain. Clearly, given that Olly races a Corvette C7.R and has been with the American team since 2002, the only sensible car to take was a Corvette Z06. Using anything more practical would have just been daft...

So, Olly picked me up at 5.30 this morning, we breakfasted in the ever wonderful Tebay services and now, just after 5pm, we're about to begin our 24 hours. It's already been a long day, but the theory is that we complete Ben Nevis before it gets dark and then drive through the night to Scafell Pike. It is a beautiful evening and as we're ascending we meet several people on their way down the mountain. About halfway up we stop and chat to a worryingly well-equipped couple with a Border collie. While I throw a ball for the dog, Olly enquires about the snow.

'Oh the snow's not that bad,' says the man. 'You know the bit where it goes...' Olly listens to a detailed description of the local topography, nodding knowledgeably despite the fact he has as much experience of the top of Ben Nevis as I have of Watkins Glen. 'Well I didn't want us to look like complete amateurs!' he says when they're out of earshot.

We hit the white stuff about half an hour later, our knobbly trainers struggling for traction on the slush.

Thankfully, as well as the footprints of others, there is a line of cairns (the piles of stones, not the small dogs) to guide the way through the white wilderness, each one emerging from the cloud just as the previous one is hidden from view. I know that it's important to keep to the right on the summit, away from the huge cliffs on the north face, and we reach the trig point not long after 7pm. I set up the camera on a timer, smile, and then we begin half walking, half sliding back down. The friction increases at about the same time as we emerge from the cloud and the view is spectacular, with Lochs Eil and Linnhe spread out below, their surfaces sparkling in the evening light.

By the time we're back at the Z06, the light is definitely fading and the car park is pretty much empty, but the Corvette is still getting a lot of attention and people seem to have driven out from Fort William especially to take photos of it. Admittedly, it does look extraordinarily aggressive with the optional aero additions of the Z07 Performance Package, including the adjustable 'wickerbill' on the rear wing.

The Z06 suits Scotland, or perhaps it's the other way round, but something as elemental as its 6.2-litre LT4 supercharged V8 needs a bit of room. Pointing the angular yellow bonnet across the vast open expanse of Rannoch Moor, the Eaton supercharger feels like it can get into its stride and the whole car and those in it seem imbued with the mighty forces created by the







**‘SNOOZING  
WHILE A CAR IS  
PULLING WHAT  
FEELS LIKE  
2 G THROUGH  
ROUNDBABOUTS  
ISN’T EASY’**

engine. The best thing is to select third on an empty stretch and then hold the throttle open from low revs, feeling the surge build and build as the speed piles on and on, daring your right foot not to lift all the way to the limiter. It’s a bit like standing next to a huge stadium speaker with the volume being turned up, and up, and up until you want to run away, but you feel trapped by the sound as it seems to take over every fibre of your body. It’s intoxicating and ever so slightly scary.

I try to get some sleep before Glasgow, but snoozing while a car is pulling what feels like 2 G through roundabouts isn’t terribly easy. The ride quality of the magnetic dampers can be adjusted (Tour, Sport or Track) and it’s actually comfier than I’d feared it might be, but as you’d expect, the Z06 always retains an underlying firmness. As we cross the Erskine Bridge we’re on schedule, but then we hit the equivalent of a full course yellow as roadwork diversions take us off first the M8 and then the M74. It’s as we’re sitting in a sea of stationary red tail lights that we both realise that supper would probably be a good idea.

Which brings us to perhaps the lowest point of the whole venture. Standing in a slightly dilapidated garage just south of Glasgow at about 1am, Olly and I are surveying an almost empty fridge. There is a middle-of-the-night stillness to the forecourt, and only the hum from the refrigerator is breaking the silence inside the shop. It’s hard to make decisions when you’re tired and I sway back and forth between the choice of a lone jumbo sausage roll and abject hunger.





Eventually I plump for the former because I've been staring at the thing so long it would be embarrassing to leave it there. Eating is unappealing when you're tired, which is why Olly has a protein shake as soon as he gets out of the car at Le Mans. Tonight he bravely decides to test the naming strategy of an all-day breakfast triple. Efficient refuelling this is not.

'It's one of the most challenging times of any race,' says Olly when we're back in the car and on the M74 with me behind the wheel. 'Whether it's the middle of Le Mans or the latter stages at Sebring, your perspective is very, very different at night. You realise that you're relying on some real key markers, either on the racetrack or just off it, to get your references.'

'In the day you pick out your escape routes and hope you don't ever have to use them. Then at night, in high-pressure moments, you're trying to remember what's in the darkness – in the light I know that I can go *here* and I can do *this*. A classic spot at Le Mans is the second chicane, because you can easily lose the car on the brakes on the bump on the way in and you can end up sideways as you enter that first left part. You know that you've got most probably one to one-and-a-half car widths where you can run round the inside of the kerb on the right-hand part of the chicane before you then go in the gravel, so you're all the time trying to get the car to that point where you know you've got that tiny bit of room.'



**Top left:** Gavin has a stint at the wheel – his Le Mans racer is a Corvette C7.R homologated from the Z06 he's driving here. **Above right:** fuel tank is a decent 70 litres, but it doesn't last too long

'You realise you can make up big chunks of time on your competitors by being quick in the night, but you really are taking big risks. It's usually the second or third hour of the darkness that's the most dangerous. You've got guys that have come out of the pits, they don't know where they are, it might be the first time they've ever raced at Le Mans in the dark. That's when you see the most gravel on the track. That's when you see cars being driven slowly with punctures and you also know you're very susceptible to punctures from the debris. So your senses are really heightened at that point. You're really looking for everything, even smelling the burning rubber from cars in front.'

I keep my nostrils alert, but thankfully there is no whiff of scorched tyres during my stint as we head towards the Lake District, picking up the A595 (and then the A596 thanks to another diversion) the far side of Carlisle. I love the head-up display, particularly at night. It's been a feature of Corvettes for some years and it's brilliant. For some reason I didn't expect Apple CarPlay too, but it's here. What's not so great is the optional, slow-witted Hydra-Matic 8L90 eight-speed automatic transmission. While it's undeniably quite nice as a labour-saving device on a journey like this, it really doesn't do the car any favours and I'd go for the seven-speed Tremec manual all day (and night) long.

Olly takes over for the last 45 minutes and we rumble into the deserted National Trust car park at

**Right:** Catchpole at the foot of Snowdon  
**Below right:** roadworks make a tough job even tougher



the far end of Wasdale just after 3am. Our schedule says we don't have to start for another hour and I would dearly love some more sleep (this is why official websites, and **evo's** legal department, recommend getting someone else to do the driving if you're going to attempt the Three Peaks), but now I'm awake, we decide that it's better to push on. In the dark it takes forever to get ready, but eventually, with rucksacks on, I blip the key, the hazards flash to show that the car is locked, and we set off.

Except in the pitch black it's not entirely clear where we need to go. I look at Olly, Olly looks at me, and we both blind each other with our head torches. Luckily I have a cunning piece of technology. Every time you buy an OS map, you now get a code that lets you download a digital version of the cartography to your phone through the Ordnance Survey app. It then uses your phone's GPS to pop a little arrow on the map so that you can find your way. Obviously you shouldn't just blindly follow such things, but it's a huge help in at least picking up the thread. We head out of the car park, wander through a field with some slumbering livestock, clamber over a stile, and then begin our ascent of Scafell via Lingmell Gill.

'You can really pick up time at this point in the race,' says Olly, mind clearly thinking forwards a few weeks to when he will most likely be in the car at La Sarthe. 'It's the coldest time of day, but if you can get the tyres to switch on then you can pick up three or four seconds a lap on your rivals. The Astons always seem to manage it but we're pretty good, too.'

I certainly don't feel like I'm picking up any time at the moment, with my legs really struggling to get going. What on paper had looked like the easiest of the three mountains is proving to be relentlessly steep and quite tricky. Wasdale stretches out behind us and ahead the dawn is slowly breaking. Not far from the summit a horizontal orange slit opens in the grey cloud far away to our left. We pause to watch the brief sunrise. Seeing Earth's star rise is arguably the most memorable moment of any 24-hour endeavour, and with no one else around, up here it feels like a rare privilege. There is something encouraging about the way it chases away the darkness, spreading light over a landscape, whether it's lush mountains and lakes or stripy kerbs and gravel traps.

The trig point on top of Scafell Pike is wreathed in cloud and although there's no snow, the wind and the





lingering chill of the night mean it's far colder than the top of Ben Nevis. With no view to linger over, we begin descending quickly but there is no obvious path through the morass of sharp, loose rocks. It is prime ankle-breaking territory and the placement of every footstep needs attention, particularly with tired legs. It might not be mountaineering, but it's rather more than just an easy stroll and not for the first time I wonder if this was a terribly bright idea. After all, much as I don't want to break my own limbs, it would be disastrous if Olly injured himself just a few weeks out from the biggest race of the year. I look at his skinny ankles and hope that they hold out. He drove the F1 safety car between 1997 and 1999, so I convince myself he must be a very safe person...

We're back at the car by 8am and on our way soon after, having consumed a couple more protein shakes. Olly drives initially so that I can hop out and take the odd photo, but after about half an hour he pulls into a lay-by. Sensibly, he has recognised that the tide of sleep is lapping too far up the shores of consciousness. Thankfully I feel relatively spritely so we do a driver change and push on, Olly jamming a pillow betwixt seat and B-pillar and nodding off almost instantly.

It means that I get to do the A595, which is one of those great bits of road that we could never use in a photo shoot (too hedgy) but is nonetheless cracking to drive, especially early in the morning. With

**'NOT FOR THE  
FIRST TIME,  
I WONDER  
IF THIS WAS  
A TERRIBLY  
BRIGHT IDEA'**

285-section tyres on the front and 335s on the back, the Z06 has monumental amounts of grip and you can make wonderfully swift yet smooth progress. As you follow the undulations it feels like there's almost no need to brake for corners on the road, such is the tenacity on turn-in. There could be a bit more feel from the steering, but you quickly build huge confidence in the grip. The only problem with the wide rubber is one that is exposed both on the Lake District's narrower roads and the inside lane of the M6. At the hint of a camber or imperfection, the huge Pirellis begin to hunt around the surface, meaning you can never entirely relax with the small Alcantara-covered wheel.

We stop at Lancaster Services on the M6 and I promptly fall asleep in Costa. Apparently it's only at the third time of asking that Olly actually manages to wake me up. Unsurprisingly, he does the next stint behind the wheel. When I rub my eyes blearily an hour or so later, we're in Wales and the weather looks remarkably good. We'd take the roof panels off if the boot wasn't filled with half of Ellis Brigham's stock.

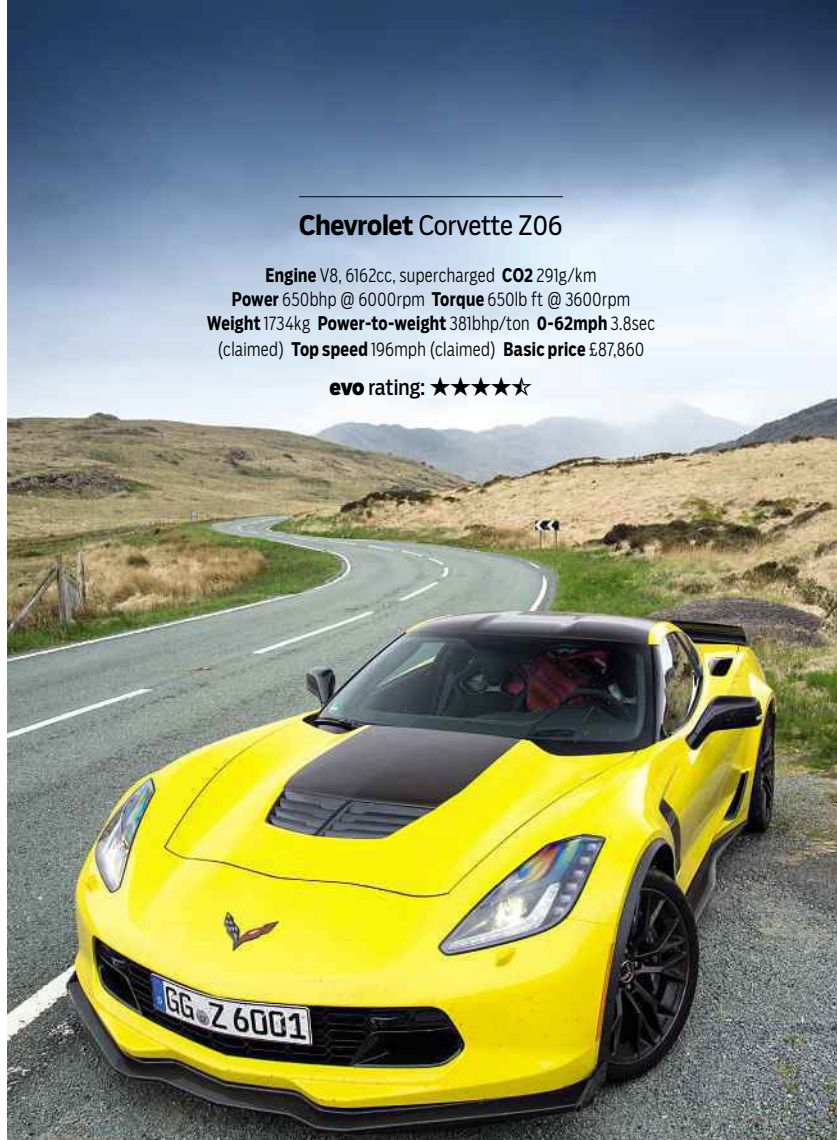
We're doing well for time, but then a traffic jam on the way up from Betws-y-Coed means we're stationary for half an hour. We use the delay to repack rucksacks and generally get ready so that when we arrive at the Pen-y-Pass car park we simply hop out, give the keys to the waiting Aston Parrott, **evo's**

## CORVETTE Z06 THREE PEAKS CHALLENGE

staff photographer, and head off on the Miners' path in blissful 19-degree sunshine.

A little under two hours later we are on the top of Snowdon wearing every item of clothing we have, with rain and wind testing various bits of Gore-Tex to the maximum. If ever we needed a display of fickle mountain weather... The route feels pretty exposed with the wind trying to tear us off the side of the mountain, but we are certainly not ill-prepared compared to others. About a quarter of an hour into the descent, an elderly man has fallen and cut his head quite badly. Two doctors are already on the scene along with three other people, so there's little we can do to help, but they gratefully take my survival bag and the small medical kit I've been carrying. As we push on down, the rescue helicopter hovers above us as it tries vainly to find a way into the low cloud. It's all quite sobering (thankfully the mountain rescue did manage to carry the injured gentleman out on foot and he made a full recovery).

The last few miles are relatively flat, so Olly and I break into a run back to the car park just to keep warm (he's a sub-three-hour marathon man, so if they ever bring back the traditional Le Mans start, he'll be in good shape). We reach the car with 40 minutes to spare and after 467 miles of driving and 26 miles and 71,600 steps of walking, running and scrambling over 3000 metres of vertical ascent, it's fair to say we're knackered. Having burned nearly 7000 calories each, we were probably even less fuel-efficient than the Z06, too. Just the press duties to attend to, which involves a few photos, before Olly has to dash off to catch a flight from Heathrow the following morning... ❌



### Chevrolet Corvette Z06

**Engine** V8, 6162cc, supercharged **CO2** 291g/km  
**Power** 650bhp @ 6000rpm **Torque** 650lb ft @ 3600rpm  
**Weight** 1734kg **Power-to-weight** 381bhp/ton **0-62mph** 3.8sec  
(claimed) **Top speed** 196mph (claimed) **Basic price** £87,860

**evo rating:** ★★★★★

## ANOTHER 24 HOURS

Two months later and a week or so after Le Mans, Olly and I meet up for a cycle and then sit down in a local coffee shop.

'Doing the Three Peaks was actually really good training for Le Mans,' says Olly. 'The timescale is obviously similar in that it's more than just the 24 hours. You get minimal sleep and what you do get has to be grabbed in fits and starts, not necessarily when you want it. You need to get your nutrition right too, not that we really did. There's teamwork and communication involved. There's obviously the driving between the peaks, too, but it's actually the bits on the mountains that more closely equate to the driving stints in the race. The physical exertion is different but equally hard and you have to concentrate intensely every second because every footstep on a steep, slippery slope has the potential for disaster in the same way a fraction too much pressure on a pedal could spell the end in the race.'

Gavin then goes on to describe the knife-edge braking into Mulsanne corner. As he sheds great chunks of speed and tries to keep the car as straight as possible through the right-hand kink, he's also

watching the lights that tell him how close he is to full lock-up on each wheel. Things were made trickier still after the team had to wind almost all the wing out of the car in a vain effort to keep up with the rampant turbocharged Fords.

Olly is one of the most fascinatingly analytical people to listen to on the subject of driving. He can dissect a car's balance and behaviour down to what feels like an almost molecular level. He talks about problems that a couple of psi difference between the front and rear tyres gave them throughout the 2016 race. He recounts the perils through the chicanes and Porsche Curves of having understeer when you turn one way and oversteer when you turn the other.

As the fall on Snowdon showed, there is real danger in doing the Three Peaks, too, if you're not careful. But what the Three Peaks Challenge can't replicate is the mental pressure of competing at Le Mans. Yes, Olly and I wanted to complete the challenge in 24 hours, but we didn't have an entire team of people and millions of dollars of investment behind us, there weren't other people competing against us and there wasn't worldwide glory (other



than this feature!) waiting for us if we got to the end.

This year was particularly stressful because of the widely documented Balance of Performance issues in the GT Pro class. And then physically it was really tough, but in a different way. During his first stint, Olly lost his left earplug. It was a freak occurrence, but given how loud the Corvette is meant he was almost deaf in that ear at the end of his three hours. He was having to press his helmet into the side of his head down the straights to try to alleviate the pain...

'I'd definitely do the Three Peaks again, though,' says Olly. 'It felt like a real achievement.' It felt like an achievement to me, too, but it's nice to have these things confirmed by a proper endurance racer.

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TETSU IKUZAWA COLLECTION

# JAPANESE



by HENRY CATCHPOLE

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

*In an anonymous building outside Tokyo lies the incredible private car collection of former Porsche factory racing driver Tetsu Ikuzawa. It's not open to the public, but evo was granted a special audience with the collection and the man himself*

# OBSESSION







**I F YOU'VE READ THIS ISSUE'S** story on the 'Hakosuka' Nissan Skyline GT-R (see page 92) then you'll have read that Tetsu Ikuzawa, the 74-year-old pictured on the preceding pages, is the man credited with starting the legend of the Skyline. But there is more to the story. During our day with Ikuzawa in his amazing personal museum, he confesses that it was a friend of his who was driving the far superior Porsche 904 on that day and before the race he asked this friend to let him lead for just one lap. The friend acquiesced, the crowd went wild as the boxy Prince saloon came past in the lead for one lap and the legend was born. Ikuzawa's own incredible story was just beginning too...

Ikuzawa raced a Brabham BT21 for Frank Williams in the late 1960s, winning a string of European F3 races. He then moved up to F2, racing a Lotus 69 against the likes of Ronnie Peterson, François Cevert and Emerson Fittipaldi. F1? Never quite made the jump. As a team manager he would go on to win Japanese F2 titles in the early '80s and just fail to break a team into F1 in the mid-'90s.

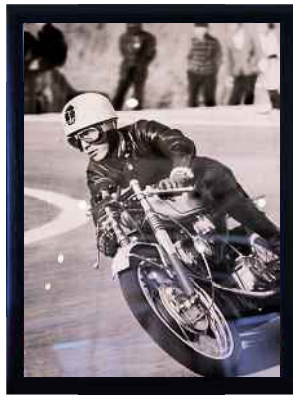
His next stop as a driver took him to Le

Mans. In 1973 he raced there for the first time, driving a Sigma. Many years later Ikuzawa returned to La Sarthe, racing a Mazda RX-7 and a distinctive pink-and-white Porsche 935 K3. He would also go there as director of the Nissan Europe Racing Team and must take some credit for the amazing pole lap set by Mark Blundell in the R90CK. Knowing they wouldn't last the race he decided to go for partial glory and wind it up for qualifying.

His very private museum is on a nondescript industrial estate south of Tokyo, a clean white building behind security gates. Take off your shoes, put on the specially provided slippers and the first room you enter has walls covered in a mosaic of beautiful, mostly black and white photos of Ikuzawa's life. He built a motorcycle and ran a team that competed at, among other places, the Isle of Man TT. But he is perhaps best known as the only Japanese Porsche factory race team driver (taking a 908 to sixth place at Watkins Glen in 1968). Even the briefest glance at the photos of him in single-seaters, on motorbikes and mountain bikes shows he is one of those people who doesn't do anything by halves and as a consequence has lived enough for a dozen men.

**'IKUZAWA RACED  
A LOTUS 69  
AGAINST THE  
LIKES OF RONNIE  
PETERSON,  
FRANÇOIS CEVERT  
AND EMERSON  
FITTIPALDI IN  
F2 BUT NEVER  
CRACKED F1'**

TETSU IKUZAWA COLLECTION



## TETSU IKUZAWA COLLECTION



There are even various downhill mountain bikes that bear his name, and they come complete with Akebono brakes. He says he set up the partnership between Akebono and McLaren after talking to Ron Dennis, who was a mechanic when Tetsu was racing for Williams.

Walk through another door, change into a different pair of slippers (different coloured floor), and you'll find a much larger space. Here there is a selection of his old race cars all in the same immaculate white and red livery. There is also a vast array of trophies and memorabilia. About a dozen pit bikes are lined up in tight formation (his wife's collection, apparently) and there is a Petronas edition Mercedes A45 AMG, which he claims is his daily driver, though it looks far too pristine.

Up the spiral staircase is a much airier space with arguably the most remarkable collection of all. Ikuzawa had a 911 Targa in the '70s in London. He sold it, but many years later he



**'HE HAD A 911 TARGA IN THE '70S. HE SOLD IT, BUT MANY YEARS LATER TRACKED IT DOWN AND BOUGHT IT BACK, RESTORED IT, THOUGHT IT WAS TOO GOOD TO DRIVE AND SO BOUGHT ANOTHER'**

tracked it down and bought it back. He restored it, but then thought it was too good to drive. He bought another, restored it (same colour, same interior) but then that was too good to drive too. He then decided he'd like one of every Targa that Porsche has produced. Including the Carrera GT. All of them are yellow.

It didn't stop there, though. For a while he also had a collection of Porsche speedsters until he was made an offer he couldn't refuse. Now, perhaps most bafflingly, he has a vast collection of 964s. There must be a couple of dozen, in a rainbow of hues. They're not RSs or Turbos, just Carreras. There are three in Rubystone Red. One Guards Red car has just 80km on the clock and he outbid the Porsche Museum for it. He doesn't drive any of them.

Back downstairs there are boxed spares galore for his 964s, his hi-fi collection, his mountain bikes and goodness knows what else. It is a private, slightly OCD, treasure trove and one I feel very privileged to have seen. ❏



JASON PLATO

GORDON SHEDDEN

SAM TORDOFF

COLIN TURKINGTON

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MATT NEAL

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# Fast Fleet

## THIS MONTH

PEUGEOT 308 GTi 270 // PORSCHE 911 GT2 // FERRARI 599 HGTE // HONDA CIVIC TYPE R //  
BMW E46 M3 // AUDI RS6 PERFORMANCE // FERRARI 458 ITALIA // JAGUAR F-TYPE R AWD //  
PORSCHE 911 SC // BENTLEY CONTI GT V8 S // KIA PROCEED GT // PORSCHE 996 CARRERA



NEW ARRIVAL

## Mini John Cooper Works Challenge

The most hardcore Mini money can buy arrives at **evo**, and as we helped develop it, there's a lot at stake

**T** 'THIS IS ALL JETHRO'S fault,' I thought as I drove home in our new Mini John Cooper Works Challenge for the first time. The ride quality was hilariously stiff. I mean properly, spine-crushingly stiff. Jethro and I had played a small part in the development of the Challenge – a track-going, UK-only, limited-edition model – and during the process he'd pressed for the suspension settings to be as uncompromising as possible. 'He's made this thing *un-bloody-driveable* and I've got to live with it for six months,' I ranted to myself.

Yeah, okay, so I had pushed just as hard for a really focused chassis setup. But if you can pin the blame on some other sucker before accepting responsibility yourself, you probably should. Anyway, I knew the Challenge ran on sophisticated adjustable dampers, so I should be able to make some quick adjustments and dial in some ride quality. But what if they were already in their softest settings? Having pulled into a lay-by, I paused for a moment. If there was no adjustment left in the dampers, I'd not only be stuck with a damn uncomfortable car for the foreseeable, but I'd also have to explain in these very pages how we'd got it so catastrophically wrong. Or maybe move to New Zealand without telling anybody.

I lifted the bonnet and found the little screw on top of one of the dampers, praying it would twist in the direction of the minus symbol. It did. One click at first. Then another.

It kept on rotating. I didn't count the clicks, but with every one the relief just poured into me. I did the same on the other side and moved to the rear dampers. They had even more in reserve.

The ride improved immeasurably. Still fairly resolute, but now perfectly acceptable for a focused little hot hatch. I cancelled my Rightmove alert for cheap flats in Auckland and continued on home, falling for the Challenge with every passing mile.

Three days into 'ownership' I'm already pretty smitten. My very favourite cars tend to be more extreme versions of already high-performance models – think 911 GT3 and M4 GTS – because they combine real drama and excitement with genuine day-to-day and long-distance usability. The John Cooper Works Challenge fits right into that category, albeit at a much more attainable price point (£32,000).

And I've got big plans. It'll find itself on the Ring within 120 hours of it arriving with us and it'll be used on circuit at every opportunity. I cannot wait to start fiddling with the damper clicks, ride height and front camber settings to find my ideal road and track setups. I suspect that range of adjustability – unique in this segment – will make the next six months very interesting indeed. ☒

**Dan Prosser** (@TheDanProsser)

<b>Date acquired</b>	July 2016
<b>Total mileage</b>	1360
<b>Mileage this month</b>	300
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	33.1



## Peugeot 308 GTi 270

The ergonomics of steering wheel and instrument binnacle are sacrosanct, but not to Peugeot

**T** TOYOTA HAS HAD A BAD time of late, regularly finding itself stealing headlines due to recalls on bazillions of cars over safety concerns. There are others, too: Jaguar's F-Pace had a recall as soon as it went on sale because of a wiring issue, Porsche's 991 GT3 had an engine recall, and Vauxhall is recalling its Zafira due to the cars being so unremittingly dull. Or something.

So recalls happen. They're often just manufacturing glitches or caused by third-party parts. But what about design issues, where something is obviously wrong or so unsafe that it surely shouldn't have passed the prototype stage?

Take the 308 GTi's steering wheel. When you first sit in the car, you snigger at how small the wheel is. Then, after grabbing it, you think it may not be a bad idea and, actually, aren't all steering wheels just

'I'm not over-dramatising this: you cannot see what speed you're going unless you happen to be between 70 and 90mph'

massive these days? Then you start to creep out of the showroom and *stop!* You can't see 90 per cent of the speedo. I'm not over-dramatising this either. Genuinely, you cannot see what speed you're going unless you happen to be somewhere between 70 and 90mph.

The owner's manual suggests adjusting the driving position – seat,



wheel and mirrors – to ‘ensure you can see the “head-up” instrument panel clearly, over the reduced-diameter steering wheel.’

Well, I can't see the instrument panel at all if I'm sitting in a normal driving position. In order to be able to see the instrument panel, I have to move the wheel to the bottom of its height-adjustment setting, where it's practically sitting in my lap. It feels ridiculous and rather unsafe. Admittedly, not everyone who has driven our 308 has had the same issue, but I'm not alone either.

And then you notice the miniature wheel has been matched with regular-length control stalks. Not a problem if you need to flick one to indicate, but if you want to pull one to, say, flash the headlights, you have to stretch your fingers right out to get them around the end of the stalk.

How does something so obviously wrong get put into production? It's almost as if nobody drove the car in its development phase, and it's quite a deal-breaker. ☒

**Dean Smith** (@evoDeanSmith)

<b>Date acquired</b>	July 2016
<b>Total mileage</b>	5662
<b>Mileage this month</b>	3206
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	34.4



## Porsche 911 GT2

Leaky dampers aren't ideal at the business end of a rear-engined, rear-driven supercar

**W** WHEN I POPPED OVER to RPM Technik recently to see how work on the SC was progressing (see page 122), I took the GT2 so that they could take a look at its right rear corner. I'd detected a loose feeling from that corner (well, looser than normal!) since returning from the Scotland trip and so wanted to get it checked out. With the car up on the ramps, sure enough a leaking damper was spotted. This would be an MOT failure, so I've taken the car off the road until it's fixed. So that's two 911s off the road – great!

The options are to get the current damper repaired and reconditioned

by Bilstein (around £100) or buy a brand new one (around £400) or to go nuts and get an exquisite Öhlins setup. My wife would go ballistic at the indulgence of the Öhlins, but she never reads this, so...

In other news, the Covercar indoor cover is proving to be money well spent. The quality and finish is of the highest level, and the tailored fit very snug. When I first saw the **evo** logo that is printed on it, I wondered if it

<b>Date acquired</b>	June 2015
<b>Total mileage</b>	28,074
<b>Mileage this month</b>	78
<b>Costs this month</b>	£320 car cover
<b>mpg this month</b>	19.1

would wear off, but so far, so good. I also particularly like the fact that the cover goes down to just a sniff above floor level. This has been particularly useful recently because we've had building work carried out in our garage and the dust has found its way into every nook and cranny. Even the kids are complaining that their toy cars are covered in dust! I wonder if Covercar can produce miniature covers? I might ask – seriously. Covercar's parent company, Confezioni Andrea Group, has made protective covers for everything from cars and motorcycles to aircraft in the past... ☒

**Nick Trott** (@evoNickTrott)

'My wife would go ballistic at the indulgence of the Öhlins, but she never reads this, so...'





**T**HE LAST FEW MONTHS have seen uninterrupted slumber for the mighty Ferrari 599 HGTE. With the range of other cars in my garage at the moment, its services have just not been called upon, as the McLaren 650S serves as the daily driver and the P1 is the default choice for weekend drives. Recently, though, the 599's luck changed when my eldest suggested we take the 12-cylinder beast for a spin.

With the cover off the car, I hit the boot-open button on the key so we could unplug the battery conditioner. The boot popped right up and the cord was quickly unplugged. With that out of the way, it was time to open the doors, climb in and bring the Enzo engine to life. This gave the first indication that something might not be quite right, as it took three attempts to get the doors to unlock. Once in the driver's seat, I inserted the key, turned it to the right, and the dashboard lit up

## Ferrari 599 GTB HGTE

Electrical hiccups in an Italian supercar? Surely not...  
But that's what happened to the 599 after a lay-up period

like a Christmas tree, every single warning light illuminated.

My first guess was that this was just another exciting example of Maranello electronics – a result of the car sitting for so long – and would disappear as soon as I hit the starter button. Two seconds later, that theory was disproven when nothing, not even a single turn of the starter motor, happened when the big red button was pressed. My next guess was that a very low battery in the key was not deactivating the immobiliser, so with new batteries in place, it was on to start-up attempt number two. Same outcome...

**'Was this just another example of Maranello electronics?'**

At this point we turned to the car's battery as the likely culprit. As the Ferrari-branded battery conditioner seemed to be operating properly when we first checked the car, the battery did not raise any initial suspicions. However, a quick check of the voltage indicated that it was basically flat, so out came my new Ctek charger to bring it back to life.

After several days in recovery, the 599's battery had taken enough charge and we were able to head out for a good long drive on the following weekend. Having driven mostly mid-engined cars for many months, I did notice the shift in



weight from behind me to right in front. The 6-litre V12 remains magnificent and in my mind is the defining characteristic of the car. Lesson learned, however, on older OEM battery conditioners. ❌

**Secret Supercar Owner**  
(@SupercarOwner)

<b>Date acquired</b>	October 2015
<b>Total mileage</b>	6365
<b>Mileage this month</b>	40
<b>Costs this month</b>	\$92 new battery conditioner and key batteries
<b>mpg this month</b>	12.0

## BMW E46 M3

Our M3 has been to the M Festival at the Ring, but will it ever make it back?

**I** IT WAS MEANT TO BE A road-trip that I'd never forget. And it most definitely was, but not necessarily for the right reasons.

The plan was to drive in convoy with a BMW M2 to the Nürburgring 24 Hours, complete a parade lap of the circuit in the M2, watch the race, then take the E46 to Berlin for a holiday with the girlfriend.

We set out as a group early on the Friday morning, with editor Nick Trott and videographer Sam Riley in the M2, and me following in my M3. Everyone was in good spirits and we swapped between cars en route, at which point I discovered that I really wanted an M2! The journey there couldn't have gone better.

Then we arrived at the circuit to the news that Jethro Bovingdon's race car, the Scuderia Cameron Glickenhaus P4/5, had crashed in qualifying, which put a dampener on things, but having the M2 and M3 parked up outside Devil's Diner cheered me up, at least.

On the Saturday I drove the M2 on the M Corso parade that takes place each year before the big race. Admittedly, it's at a slow pace, but it felt very special to drive that car around a fan-filled Nordschleife.

Incidentally, 'our' M2 was DCT-



equipped. I can see the argument for a dual-clutch gearbox, but really you want the manual. It's simply a better 'box and it puts the M2 closer in philosophy and feel to earlier M-cars.

After the race finished on the Sunday we all went our separate ways and I set out on my Berlin run. On the Autobahn I couldn't help but notice just how quick the M3 was. In fact, I was shocked at just how much performance it had given that it's more than ten years old now. I've also changed the exhaust and intake recently, so it sounded really good, too. More on those upgrades soon.

During this Currywurst-filled motorway schlep, I really started to fall in love with my car. I've always thought you need to do a proper adventure to bond with a car, and in the case of the M3, this was it.

Arriving late at night in east Berlin, I didn't really want to stop driving. The combination of the car and the neon-lit streets made the M3 feel really, really special. Still, I parked up and said hello to the girlfriend. And that was the last time the E46 moved under its own power.

Upon returning to it the next day it decided it didn't want to start – at all. It was devastating. I had the car recovered to a local garage, hoping more than anything that they could get it running in time for me to drive it home. But they couldn't. I had to fly back, leaving it behind.

The garage is still investigating, so hopefully I'll have an answer as to what exactly is wrong soon. But worryingly, right now I don't. ❌

**Hunter Skipworth**  
(@HunterSkipworth)



<b>Date acquired</b>	February 2016
<b>Total mileage</b>	83,356
<b>Mileage this month</b>	1511
<b>Costs this month</b>	TBC – but hopefully covered under warranty
<b>mpg this month</b>	17.0

## Audi RS6

It would be hard to name a better fast estate to drive to Le Mans, but maybe there is one – and it's another RS6

**I** IT TOOK TWO WEEKS TO run-in the RS6. Which was handy, as I'd already committed to take it to Le Mans.

Throwing a single bag into the RS6's boot felt a little wasteful and I thought perhaps I should have asked a colleague or two if they wanted to join me. Then I remembered that I had, but I'm a miserable bugger when it comes to road trips so Henry Catchpole rather sensibly asked Audi if it had another RS6 he could take, which is how he came to join me with a quite splendid C5 RS6 Avant Plus.

Boy, did it look cool. I mean achingly, retro cool without even trying. In an instant I was reminded why this particular RS product line is held in such high regard. RS3s, 4s and 5s come and go, but there is something about the 6 that always hits the spot.

Parking line astern provided the 'weren't cars smaller ten years ago' moment, 'my' C7 making Henry's C5 look no bigger than an A4. But look closely at the old stager and all



the trademark RS6 design cues are there, if more subtly applied. The RS6 Performance looked huge and cartoonish by comparison.

The C7 breezed the 250-odd-mile run to La Sarthe, shadowed all the way by the C5. But these big-engined Audis – both V8s, albeit separated by 128bhp and 140lb ft, and three gear ratios – have never been taxed trampling over the miles, and before the first barbecue was lit we arrived for a weekend that would deliver a frustrating result for our hosts, an unexpected one for Porsche and a heartbreaking finish for Toyota.

The return journey was as drama-free as the trip out, except that I had managed to drag Henry from

the C5 and enjoyed the quickest and easiest run back from Le Mans I've had in the last 20 years. The C5's Cosworth-developed V8 may not have the pent-up aggression of the C7's unit, its gearshifts aren't as slick and the controls feel less precise, too, but all those traits I'm falling for in the modern car were there in abundance in the old stager: that muscular powertrain, the sense that it's delivering exactly what you need with so much more in reserve.

Short sprints and long-distance drags are equally well served. As with the C7, the C5's ride can sometimes feel on the hard side of firm, but not to the point of you wishing you'd taken the bus. And it's still quick.

Keep the turbos on the boil and the old RS6 reminds you that it has plenty to keep today's hot hatches honest. It really was a delight and would certainly have been the more appropriate fast Audi for Dickie Meaden to take to Classic Le Mans two weeks later. Instead he took mine, loaded it with a film crew and their kit and marvelled at its ability to shrink France once again. ✘

**Stuart Gallagher**  
(@stuartg917)

<b>Date acquired</b>	June 2016
<b>Total mileage</b>	7480
<b>Mileage this month</b>	3431
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	25.1



## Nissan Juke Nismo RS

Going camping with a Juke isn't such a bad idea, but if it's a Nismo you expect it to be part of the fun, too

**A** WEEK TRAVELLING along the Devon and Cornwall coastline was the plan – and a perfect opportunity to figure out what makes the Juke so popular with the British public.

My girlfriend Cara and I wanted our stopovers to be as close to the sea as possible, and the best way to achieve this was by camping. So we packed the Nissan full of all the necessities for surviving in the wild, which with the Juke's modest boot space basically meant transforming it into a van and watching the back windows and rear seats get steadily filled with kit.

We started our week away inland in the picturesque city of Bath. The Juke was completely at home in this urban environment, its extra height over a 'normal' hot hatch affording a good view of signposts and looming side roads. This was just as well given that the car's satnav could

have been beamed in from the '90s. Try to imagine the graphics from the Nokia 3310 game *Snake* and you might get close to visualising the crudeness of the display.

Over the next couple of days we travelled to Woolacombe beach and then on to St Ives, and the Juke performed brilliantly. Brilliantly if it was a regular Juke, that is. But this is not just any Juke – it's a Juke Nismo RS. A Nismo should provoke some emotion while you're driving; it should put a smile on your face when you hear the turbo spool up and the exhaust grumble. Even just sitting in traffic it should feel special, giving little hints of the latent performance. But the Nismo RS simply doesn't deliver these thrills that its name suggests it should.

On our way back from Land's End to St Ives, I had the chance to push a little harder on a quiet stretch of B-road and was reminded that the



performance is, to be honest, not at all bad considering it's a 1.6-litre unit under the bonnet. But uphill twisties require you to concentrate on your gear choice, as you can't rely on torque to help you out if the turbo hasn't completely spooled up. Off-boost equals pretty sluggish. At least the brakes work well and give confidence if you need to brake late.

The truth is that the Juke Nismo is fine in isolation, but if you find yourself behind the wheel of anything that could be considered a rival – as is inevitable in this job

– you're reminded of where it falls short. But if it's not an affordable slice of hardcore Nismo madness that you're after, but a regular-ish car that's individual, practical and easy to live with (and great for camping trips) I can see why the Juke, in any of its guises, would appeal. ✕

**Aston Parrott** (@AstonParrott)

<b>Date acquired</b>	March 2016
<b>Total mileage</b>	14,416
<b>Mileage this month</b>	2473
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	32.7

## Porsche 911 SC

A year has passed without a wheel turning but plans are in place to get the SC back on the road

**I**T'S BEEN A YEAR SINCE the SC went pop. I can't quite believe it either. To recap, its moment of mechanical (and financial) destruction occurred at an **evo** track evening when I wrong slotted from fourth to first. Nothing much happened to be honest; as I released the clutch pedal I felt a tiny nip as engine speed attempted to catch up with road speed. I caught it just in time, or so I thought. The rears didn't lock and there was no outward sign of problems. However, inside the engine, valves hit pistons – rather evenly it would appear during the post mortem – and over the next couple of weeks the car gradually

lost power. There was no smoke, no oil, and certainly no sparks or flames – just a sad and rather pathetic gradual loss of performance.

So why has it taken a year to fix? And why is it still not on the road? Well, that's down to me partly adopting the ostrich position and ignoring the substantial nature of the repair, and partly because initially I'd just bought the GT2 and was experiencing a rather blissful honeymoon period with that. So I told RPM Technik to schedule the repair of the SC around their other, more pressing deadlines.

The repaired engine has been ready for installation for a couple of months now, but the broken gearbox

(discovered when RPM were mating the pair back together) has inevitably caused another delay. The key issue was the worn first-gear input shaft. I've spent a fair amount of time (and so has Ollie at RPM) investigating options here – from trying to track down a reconditioned shaft (or whole gearbox) to commissioning a bespoke fabrication. Why? Because the only option on the table is to buy a new shaft from Porsche for £2000. I've hit a brick wall, and with

<b>Date acquired</b>	March 2014
<b>Total mileage</b>	90,993
<b>Mileage this month</b>	0
<b>Costs this month</b>	TBC
<b>mpg this month</b>	n/a

summer running out fast I've asked Ollie to go ahead with the repair so I can at least get some late-autumn drives in. I'm hoping that the next time I see the car it'll look a damn sight prettier than it does here. ✕

**Nick Trott** (@evoNickTrott)



END OF TERM

# Ferrari 458 Italia



Used 458 Italia for sale (soon). One owner. Seven thousand different drivers...  
Yep, life has been tough for WX11, but it's now a testament to modern-era Ferrari

**B** BELIEVE IT OR NOT, IT'S been more than five years since WX11 first graced these pages. Ferrari 458s were still pretty thin on the ground back then and there are few who won't recall the well-deserved hype the new V8 from Maranello attracted.

As regular readers will know, WX11 was purchased primarily to run on 6th Gear's supercar driving experience events, but I couldn't help 'appropriating' the new arrival and using it as a daily driver on the long commute from the office near Tamworth to just north of Sheffield. Admittedly, we got off to a shaky start when a faulty fuel sender left the car stranded on the hard shoulder of the M1. It then took a while before I trusted it fully...

To be quite candid, looking back I was probably a bit hard on the 458, because for the previous two years I'd been negotiating the short nose of a Lamborghini Murciélago along the same commuter run. The two were simply poles apart in just

about every area. The Murciélago LP640-4 is a heavy supercar that requires a lot of input and much concentration to drive quickly. And as I've said in previous reports, big V12 Lamborghinis don't tolerate mistakes – even the more modern Aventador is no different.

The 458 Italia, on the other hand, is lighter, equipped with far more technology to save one's bacon, and is simply less tiring to drive long distances. At first I couldn't quite get my head around the fact that this new Ferrari was a car that in auto mode my mum could quite literally nip down to the shops in – and then the very next day an instructor could hurtle in Race mode around Castle Combe at such a pace he or she would return shaking their head having driven nothing road-legal with more grip!

As the months went by, I found myself getting less frustrated at its attempts to thwart simple tasks (due to the complicated on-board computer) and much more inclined



'The 458's maintenance records show that it's nipping at Audi R8 V10s in terms of reliability'

to marvel at the enormous range of talents the car possessed. Even the then-quirky wheel-mounted indicator buttons, while annoying at first, are sorely missed now. Indicator stalks seem, well, so old.

The 458's maintenance records for the last two years show that it's nipping at 6th Gear's Audi R8 V10s in terms of reliability. That's some result, and especially impressive given the unrelenting punishment the Ferrari constantly takes on road and track. It has covered about 55 per cent of its 78,000 miles on circuits, with around 7000 customers having had the pleasure of thumbing the red engine-start button.

Obviously it goes through tyres fairly promptly, which unsurprisingly are expensive and cost around £260 each, and oil, too, at £120 per change, while a standard service costs in the region of £650. All of these added up as the mileage climbed. However, the interior trim is still tightly screwed together, there are no rattles, and

that sublime free-revving V8 sounds as magnificent as it did when the car was new back in 2011. Moreover, the Ferrari still feels tight on the track and, given a good valet, scrubs up like new. In this respect it has been head and shoulders above 6th Gear's old 430, which while a stunning road car, quickly exhibited signs of fatigue after sustained track use.

So what for the future for WX11? Well, it'll be on the 6th Gear fleet until the end of the year, when two newer 458s will take up the reins. A 488 GTB isn't on the cards just yet (I can almost hear the sigh of relief in Maranello) since the majority of our customers are the gift-buying public and, respectfully, would struggle to tell the difference.

But leaving aside the aforementioned (and deserved) praise the press showered the 458 Italia with in 2010, for me the greatest revelation has been the way this car has taken mechanical punishment and come back for more. What a brilliant machine. ✕

**Simon George**  
(@6gearexperience)

## Caterham Seven Tracksport

A third outing of Caterham Academy racing proved to be our road test editor's toughest challenge yet

**T**HERE'S NO WAY OF dressing this up, so I'm just going to come out and say it: I qualified 17th out of 18 cars at Snetterton. The back row of the grid.

I do, of course, have a great many excuses to explain such a dire performance and, naturally, I'm now going to run through them in detail. One: the first lap I drove in qualifying was the first time I'd been around Snetterton, full stop. Actually, that's the only excuse I've got...

Snetterton was the venue for my third outing in my Caterham racing car. If you've been following these reports, you'll know that I'm exploring the Caterham racing ladder this season, working my way up the rungs until I reach the R300-S category at Croft. I competed in the Roadsport series at Brands Hatch and Anglesey before stepping up to the Tracksport series at Snetterton.

The upgrades that Caterham makes to the cars for the Tracksport category are minor, but they make a useful difference. The headlights are removed and the windscreen is swapped for a small aeroscreen to save weight and make the car both look and feel a bit more like a competition car – the Roadsport car was basically a standard road car with sticky tyres. The front track is also widened and the suspension is a bit stiffer, while power is bumped up by 10bhp or so to 135bhp.

The Tracksport car feels a good bit sharper than the Roadsport. It doesn't roll around so much and the wider track gives better turn-in response, which means you can be neater and more precise. During the weekend I also started to get to grips with the unique Caterham driving technique, which I summarised to myself as finesse in the slow stuff

(this car still doesn't have a limited-slip diff, so any wheelspin away from tighter corners is time lost) and aggression in the quicker stuff. Pity I didn't work that out during the 20-minute qualifying session...

Anyway, I managed to pass a couple of cars in the first race to finish 14th, which set my starting position for race two. I managed another good start and after 30 minutes of the most intense racing I've ever experienced I finished eighth. A shoddy start to the weekend, then, but things improved.

Oulton Park is next up and I've been sure to book a day of testing. ✕  
**Dan Prosser** (@TheDanProsser)

<b>Date acquired</b>	April 2016
<b>Total mileage</b>	n/a
<b>Mileage this month</b>	n/a
<b>Costs this month</b>	n/a
<b>mpg this month</b>	n/a



<b>Date acquired</b>	May 2011
<b>Duration of test</b>	5 years, 3 months
<b>Total test mileage</b>	78,855
<b>Overall mpg</b>	13.7
<b>Costs</b>	See text
<b>Purchase price</b>	£197,000
<b>Trade-in value</b>	£100,000 (est)
<b>Depreciation</b>	£97,000 (est)



## Kia Proceed GT

That we rate Kia's warm hatch on the road is no secret, but what about its ability on track?

**W** WITH TRACK TIME AT ONE of *evo*'s track evenings booked but my Eunox Roadster currently awaiting a few bits and pieces, it was the Kia's time to shine on circuit this month.

There were a few certainties: it would be a great deal faster than my MX-5 and a doddle to get used to if its road handling was any indication. I was less certain about whether it would be fast *enough*, and as it's

one of the less extreme front-drivers around, I also wasn't sure whether it'd be particularly fun.

I needn't have worried. After chatting to Kia's performance-car chief Albert Biermann recently, he most likely has something tasty planned for the next Proceed GT, but the current car is as much a hidden gem on track as it is on the road. The steering, already precise, transmits an extra layer of detail under load,

and while the front Michelin PS3s capitulate early on the road, they found extra reserves on the grippier tarmac of Bedford Autodrome.

Both highlight the GT's surprisingly adjustable balance. It's responsive to movements of the throttle without ever being snappy, allowing you to trim understeer with the tiniest of lifts and helping out in long, fast sweepers. And the 1.6-litre engine does indeed have just enough performance to have fun with – I clocked around 120mph down the South West circuit's back straight before leaning on the middle pedal.

This was one of the GT's only real deficiencies during the day – at 1359kg it's a heavy beast and after four sessions (twice myself; once each for production ed Ev and subeditor Ricky) the brakes were feeling decidedly mushy.

And if you think I'm also coming over all soft on Kia's warm hatch, Ev jumped out after a handful of laps and declared it more fun on track than our Golf R. Can't wait to try Biermann's 'spicier' version... ❌

**Antony Ingram** (@evoAntony)



<b>Date acquired</b>	December 2015
<b>Total mileage</b>	11,307
<b>Mileage this month</b>	645
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	29.9

## Mazda MX-5

After nine months in our web editor's hands, the MX-5 bites back

**T** THE MX-5 WAS LONG overdue a trackday, and with its new Dunlop SportMaxx RT 2 tyres fitted, I didn't really have an excuse. So it was off to an *evo* track evening on Bedford Autodrome's South West circuit that the MX-5 and I went.

The Dunlops have done a good job in giving the MX-5 that extra bite that it so badly required on the road, and so it also proved on track, but

the body-roll issue was even more noticeable on circuit, where the car could be pushed that bit harder.

Roll aside, the MX-5's brakes stood up surprisingly well. It's wearing OEM pads, but even after five-lap runs they continued to perform. This is largely due to the MX-5's low weight, which means the car just doesn't lean on its consumables in quite the same way a heavier hot hatch might.

The Mazda feels like it just wants to be driven hard, but it's at its best at about seven tenths. In fact, anything more than that and you can quite quickly come unstuck, as I discovered.

Reader Russell Watson was following the MX-5 in his Mini, filming on his GoPro. He managed to capture the moment where I very rapidly had to learn how to deal with oversteer. Just a lap before, staff writer Antony



RUSSELL WATSON

Ingram had returned in the car saying, 'It's much better with the traction control off.' Gauntlet laid down, I set out on a non-TC attempt at a lap.

I was immediately made aware of how much the MX-5 likes to move about. So aware, in fact, that I almost span the car onto the grass. Thanks again Russell for mistaking it for some

excellent oversteer management! ❌

**Hunter Skipworth** (@HunterSkipworth)

<b>Date acquired</b>	October 2015
<b>Total mileage</b>	11,455
<b>Mileage this month</b>	793
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	27.1



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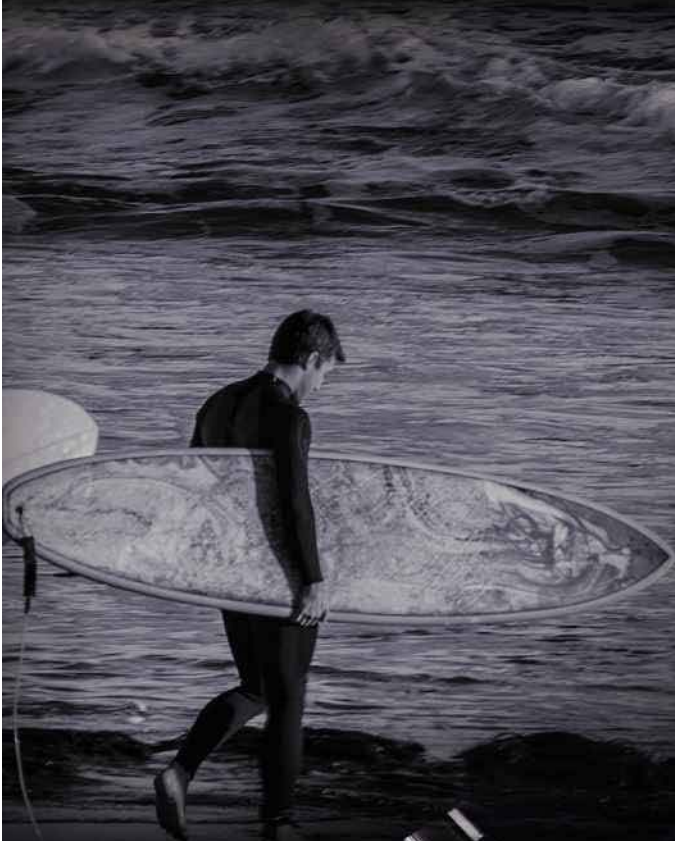



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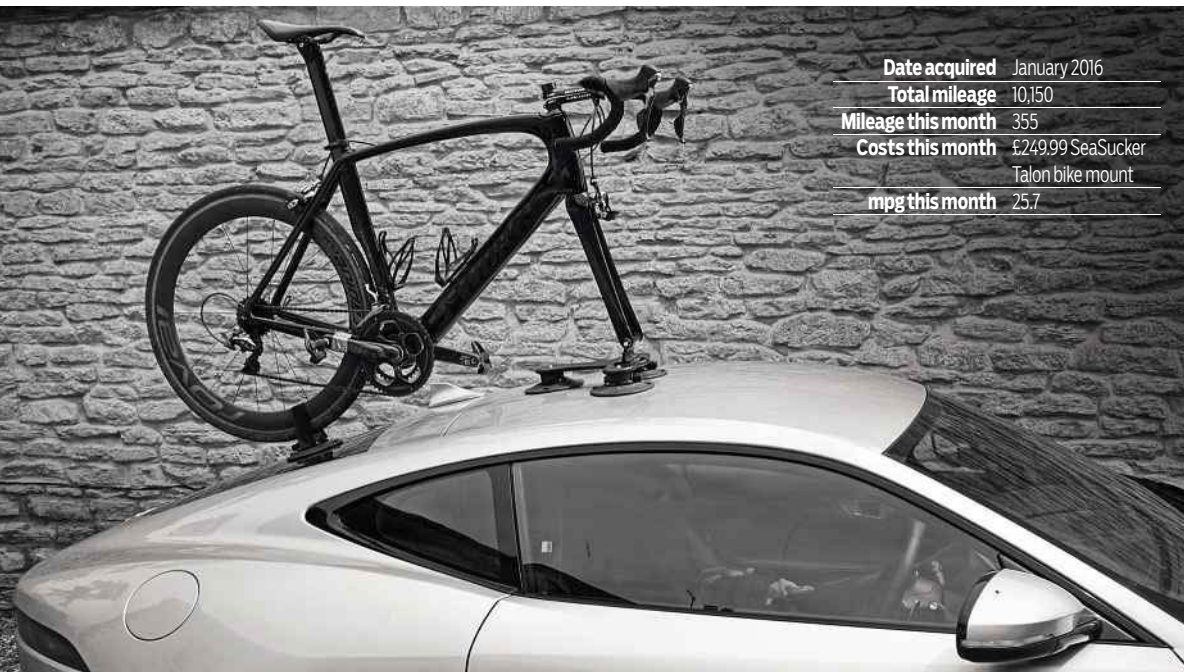
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Date acquired	January 2016
Total mileage	10,150
Mileage this month	355
Costs this month	£249.99 SeaSucker Talon bike mount
mpg this month	25.7

## Jaguar F-type R Coupe AWD

Desperate times call for desperate measures – in the form of an unusual rack for Henry's road bike

**H** 'HOW ARE YOU GOING TO fit a bike in there?' was the first question my friends asked me (slightly sarcastically) when they first saw the F-type. In response, I generally laughed and changed the subject, because deep down I'd thought the same thing. The boot is pleasingly capacious, but there's no denying that it's just not the right shape for a bicycle.

For a couple of years, Jaguar

sponsored the all-conquering Team Sky road-racing team and even developed a special F-type to carry a couple of bicycles during time-trial stages. It involved removing the rear screen and replacing it with a specially moulded piece of carbonfibre. Sadly, the sponsorship swapped to Ford at the beginning of this year, so my plan to half-inch this special adaptation came to naught.

Fortunately, though, there is

still a solution. A company called SeaSucker produces bike racks that attach to almost any car using suction cups. Richard Lane reviewed the firm's two-bike Mini Bomber model a while back (Tried & Tested, *evo* 212), but I've plumped for the more affordable, single-bike Talon.

You just need a couple of flat surfaces to stick it to – in this case the roof and rear screen – then you remove the front wheel of the bike, fix the forks in place and attach the rear wheel with a heavy-duty Velcro strap. For extra safety, I gaffer-tape the driveside crank to the chainstay. I've tried this setup on other cars, too. You can make an attractive bonnet mascot for a Caterham and the Specialized S-Works Venge looks good on an Aventador SV.

I confess I drove more gingerly than usual the first time I used the SeaSucker on the Jag, but it works. There's barely any whistling when you're on the move (possibly helped by the very aero profiling of the Venge). What's more, although I thought it wasn't possible for the F-type to attract more attention, it seems that if you pop a bicycle on top then the remaining three per cent that didn't previously stop and stare subsequently do. ❌

**Henry Catchpole**  
(@HenryCatchpole)

**I** I'VE BEEN IN DENIAL FOR the last couple of weeks, but now I have to confront the fact that I only have a month of Bentley custodianship left to enjoy.

Life with a Bentley is an odd mix of the ordinary and extraordinary. It's such a fabulous thing, you feel as though it should be kept for best – special occasions that warrant its pomp – but it's so accomplished and accessible you find the most tenuous excuse to drive it. Let's just say the Meaden fridge has never been so well stocked with milk.

Is there anything I don't like about the Conti? Not really, but if I was forced to be picky I'd say the powered bootlid is a bit slow to raise (especially if you're waiting in the pouring rain!) and the satnav could be quicker-witted in high-

## Bentley Conti GT V8 S

Downsides to life with this Bentley? The list is short

pressure situations. Some might dislike Bentley's VW DNA, but if it means stuff works intuitively, I don't mind. Besides which, the more prosaic bits are so well buried, you're largely oblivious as to where certain hardware might have been sourced.

And then there's the effect the car has on other people. The spec of 'my' car is refreshingly non-bling, but like most prestige cars of this value, the Conti has an innate aura about it. The crucial difference between it and, say, an Aston, is that it manages to draw

attention through presence rather than pin-up curves and a rock 'n' roll soundtrack. The sight of a slightly scruffy bloke climbing out tends to throw people a bit, but the days have long since gone when Bentleys were driven exclusively by men in brogues. I wasn't sure I'd feel right in a Bentley, but on the evidence of the last five

Date acquired	February 2016
Total mileage	8453
Mileage this month	692
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	21.1

months, I shouldn't have worried. ❌

**Richard Meaden**  
(@DickieMeaden)



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## Porsche 996 Carrera

Chassis upgrades breathe new life into this '90s 911 – but not without an unwanted side effect

LEE MARSHALL

**I**T'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE my last 996 update, but perhaps you remember I signed off on the eve of picking it back up from Litchfield. With new Powerflex bushes, refurbished Bilstein PSS9 dampers and new Agency Power rear control arms to allow me to lower the car but still get the correct camber settings, it's fair to say I was quite excited. Litchfield had been in touch with Bilstein (and its Porsche guru, Jörg Hoffmann) and after much discussion we all agreed that GT3 ride height was perfect for my aim to create a road-optimised but track-capable 911.

This setup also looks cool, which shouldn't really come into it but inevitably does! The front runs one degree of negative camber and the rear 1.52 degrees – all within the tolerance of Porsche's standard GT3 setup. The dampers were set to four clicks at the front and five at the rear (they have nine clicks and the higher the number, the stiffer the damper).

First impressions were good... and

bad. All looseness had been chased out of the car with the new bushes. The steering felt a little lighter and much cleaner – the old front bushes were badly worn and so previously there had been an occasional rattling sensation through the wheel. The car just felt more controlled and thankfully the ride remained amazingly fluid once above only 20mph. The 996 changed direction more keenly, too. All very good news and noticeable within just a few hundred yards.

Less good was that those sexy-looking blue anodised Agency Power arms creaked and clonked and rattled like mad. Oh dear. I'd wondered why the previous owner had removed them and suddenly it became crystal clear. Could I live with the metal-on-metal noise? I feared not, but decided that for the time being they were my only option.

Since then I've covered quite a few miles in the 996 and things have only improved. The arms have settled down a bit but they remain a bugbear.

### 'The upgrades have created an experience that's special and much more focused'

I'm told RSS arms, which perform the same role and have similar adjustability, are much quieter, so they're probably the next upgrade. But the setup is so, so good that the odd teeth-chattering noise doesn't seem so bad. The semi-solid engine mounts I'd fitted previously and now the refreshed and more aggressive suspension have combined to ramp up control, introduce a bit more mechanical noise inside the car and also create an experience that's special and much more focused.

The balance is supreme, too. There's a bit of understeer if you just barrel into a corner without using

your brain, but even the tiniest lift restores the balance or tips it into oversteer if you so choose. Even better, if you turn in well within the limit of the front tyres and just pin the throttle, the car makes a neat transition into perfectly managed little slides. It's not spectacular stuff, but the small, consistent yaw angle is so satisfying and gives you the feeling that you're getting everything from the engine, chassis and tyres.

Of course, I'm not averse to a bigger angle and lots of smoke, so the 996 has also ventured on circuit at one of *evo's* recent track evenings at the Bedford Autodrome. Aside from one monster spin (oops) the car performed pretty damn well. More on that next time. ✖

**Jethro Bovington**  
(@JethroBovington)

<b>Date acquired</b>	May 2013
<b>Total mileage</b>	145,146
<b>Mileage this month</b>	125
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	27.8



# evo NEXT MONTH

ISSUE 228

ON SALE 5 OCTOBER

FROM  
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EVERY  
McLAREN  
DRIVEN

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# ESSENTIALS

## THE ROUND-UP

New motoring products that have caught our eye this month



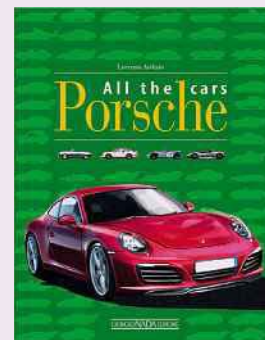
**CAR CARE**  
Simoniz Insect & Tar Remover  
£4.49 (500ml)  
[halfords.com](http://halfords.com)

Last month Dickie Meaden described a bug-splattered car as evidence of a fun summer drive. The difficult bit is cleaning the blighters off again. This spray does the job: just spray on and wipe off. As well as bugs and tar, it's useful for bird droppings too.



**T-SHIRT**  
VW Golf GTI Mk2  
€10  
[khryptonss.com](http://khryptonss.com)

Here's a T-shirt with *evo* snapper Aston Parrott written all over it: a Volkswagen Golf Mk2 GTI in Mars Red, chunky plastic bumpers and all. Good value, too, and available in blue, white grey, black or red. A similarly styled hoodie is also available, for 20 euros.



**BOOK**  
Porsche: All the Cars  
€21.25  
[giorgionadaeditore.it](http://giorgionadaeditore.it)

A while back we reviewed a beautifully illustrated book titled *Maserati: All the Cars*. This is the latest from the same publisher, covering every Porsche up to the end of 2015, including models such as the barnstorming Cayman GT4 and the slightly less B-road-friendly Macan GTS.



**TUNING**  
Remus exhaust for BMW M2  
€2388  
[remus.eu](http://remus.eu)

Standard M2 not fruity enough for you? Remus now offers a cat-back exhaust system with four 102mm tips. It's 1.1kg lighter than the standard exhaust, increases power and torque by a claimed 8.6bhp and 8.7lb ft respectively, and is said to have a deep, cultured sound.



**DRIVING SHOES**  
Sparco Imola  
€69.90  
[sparcofashion.com](http://sparcofashion.com)

Dedicated race boots are great but you can't really wear them outside of a racing paddock without looking like a prat. The answer is boots like these from Sparco – well-made and shaped for driving but suitably styled for daily attire.



**VIDEOGAME**  
Assetto Corsa 'Red Pack' DLC  
£6.99  
[store.steampowered.com](http://store.steampowered.com)

If you already own *Assetto Corsa*, the latest downloadable content is a must-have: the Italian-themed pack includes incredible cars such as the Maserati 250F, Ferrari 488 GT3 and the 2015 Ferrari F1 car. Austria's Red Bull Ring circuit is also included.



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# Market

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**I**F YOU'VE SAT BACK AND watched in amazement the rise in values of classic 1980s hot hatches, then you may already have left it too late to acquire one. Led by the 205 GTI 1.9, but with Renault's 5 GT Turbo and the hardy Mk2 VW Golf GTI in close company, the '80s performance hatch has become the latest 'affordable' classic. However, with values of the best 205s now soaring over £20,000, the obvious place to look for more realistic alternatives is the following decade: the 1990s.

## ANALYSIS: 1990s HOT HATCHES

They're no longer modern, but not yet classics, so is now the time to buy an underappreciated '90s hot hatch? by Adam Towler





The '90s was a decade of mixed fortunes for the hot hatch. On one hand the breed nearly became extinct altogether as thefts, insurance costs and fashion conspired to turn manufacturers and buyers alike towards a new wave of coupes. But it was also the decade that saw the arrival of genuine **evo** greats, such as the Renault Clio Williams. These were more habitable, safer, more capable cars than their predecessors, but still with that raw edge and involvement often missing from their modern-day counterparts.

The Williams may be over 20 years old now, but this car is arguably still the finest exponent of the small hot hatch there's ever been, 205 included. In fact, if there's one car to really put the wind up the 205 GTI in every sense, it's the Williams: prices for the best cars are already strong. And remember, over its three iterations it was the Williams that introduced us to the reality of a solid 150bhp in a small French hatch.

Richard Northrop, from the excellent community site [williamsclio.co.uk](http://williamsclio.co.uk), paints a picture of surging values: "This last year they've gone crazy – or at least the "1" has. Tatty ones have more than doubled and can now be five grand, while the really good cars, with less than 50,000 miles on them, can be £25,000. The trend I've noticed now is that most of the good cars go to auction; they're seen as an investment, and owners are starting to restore rather than just get rid."



## 'The fabulous Peugeot 306 ruled the hot hatch world in its lifetime'

But the path to a good Williams is fraught with difficulty: 'Parts are becoming hard to find – there are lots you can't get now. Mechanically they're okay, but the body lets them down – the rear arches and sills are terrible for corrosion, and the "3" seems to be the worst for that.'

Such fanatical interest is anathema to the world of the Peugeot 306 GTI 6. Sure, they weren't numbered, or a homologation special, but the fabulous 306 ruled the hot hatch world in its lifetime as convincingly as anything before or since. Somehow, this isn't currently

reflected in values. Stuart Farrimond is the chairman of the Peugeot Sport Club UK ([pscuk.net](http://pscuk.net)): 'The 306 is still in banger territory with most around £500-1500. The GTI 6 can have engine problems, and they do suffer from corrosion in awkward places. So that – along with the engines once going into 205s – has meant a lot being scrapped. We only had 40 turn up to our recent Pugfest day, and remember the most recent was only made in 2000. In fact, we've stopped putting them on our club stands because people either tend to think they're too modern or just an

## FOUR TO BUY



**RENAULT CLIO WILLIAMS**  
£10,990

A low-mileage Williams 3 in that slightly lighter shade of blue. With only 46,000 miles on the clock and a full service history, this 1995 car has been in the same ownership for the past nine years.

[mortimersprestige.co.uk](http://mortimersprestige.co.uk)  
01403 785911



**PEUGEOT 306 GTI 6**  
£7995

A very rare find – a cared for, low-mileage 306 GTI 6 with a full service history and just three owners, hence the unusually high price. Looks lovely in Diablo Red. Canny buy or overpriced rarity?

[pembertoncars.co.uk](http://pembertoncars.co.uk)  
01728 831544



**SEAT IBIZA CUPRA**  
£1795

Modified by a McLaren employee and reportedly good for 270bhp. With extensive modifications and 111,000 miles on the clock, this car is perhaps a bit of a risk, but could be a lot of fun for the money.

[RVS Vehicle Maintenance](http://RVS Vehicle Maintenance)  
01733 897727



**PEUGEOT 306 RALLYE**  
£1600

With the head unit and exhaust the only non-standard items, this two-owner, 119,894-mile Rallye is as close to original as you're likely to find. It's due a cambelt change, but at this price is still tempting.

[306gti6.com](http://306gti6.com)  
07786 080397

old banger. Even the Rallye version isn't worth much more, due to the same corrosion and engine issues. Having said that, we're starting to get more chatter on the forums and interest in the club about the cars, and I wouldn't be surprised if values rise significantly over the next few years. I can't see them ever going over £10,000 though, but I might be wrong!

Remember those crazy little SEATs in the wild colours and with the white wheels? The Mk2 SEAT Ibiza Cupra, to be precise, was a homologation special for SEAT Sport to go rallying, – something it did with great success in the mid- to late-1990s. Just ask yourself, though, when was the last time you saw one? Mark Forbes is from seatcupra.net and tells a story of a car almost forgotten: 'There's not a great deal of chatter about Mk2s in

general – it's not a burgeoning scene. Pricing is anyone's guess: they don't come up for sale very often, and tend to go quickly when they do. Prices can range from hundreds to a couple of grand, but it's finding one that's hard.'

And what of the Renault 19 16v, which for a brief period at the beginning of the '90s was the hot hatch choice du jour. 'The scene is pretty dead,' says Neal Wright of the Renault 19 owners' and enthusiasts' Facebook group. 'There is a small group of die-hards, probably ten to 20, that have owned them long-term, and there are only a handful of cars left now. They tend to be £500-700 and you can even get given them sometimes. They don't have any motorsport association and the Clio has always overshadowed it. Rust is the big thing, with the later cars being particularly bad.'



## SUMMARY

The world of classic cars is a fickle one: if a car has all the right ingredients of perception, image, ability and desirability, it can ascend to that hallowed classic status where expenditure becomes justified and the 'for sale' advertisements ever-more pretentious; if not, it can simply fall off the cliff into oblivion.

With more attainable performance cars, such as these hot hatches of the 1990s, the fall from 'latest hot property' to 'cheap fast car' territory can be more pronounced than most. Many of these cars are unlikely to

recover from the years of abuse and neglect, and unfortunately '90s cars seem no more immune to the issues of corrosion, fragility and parts supply than equivalent vehicles from preceding decades.

All the more reason now to snap up one while you still can, whether that's joining the Clio Williams investment trail or taking a punt on something more below the radar – a Peugeot 306 Rallye, for example. Whatever your choice, given the manner in which these kinds of cars drive, it's unlikely to be a boring home for your cash.

## Expert view



**JAMES MANN**

4starclassics.com  
01420 479909

'When these cars are worth so little, they're bought to be cheap and fast. However, I'm sure they'll reach classic status in time. The '80s cars appeal to those now in their mid-30s to mid-40s, so it'll be the next generation who will be interested in these. It happened with 1970s cars, too. It's always the most desirable low-mileage cars that go up first.'

'Remember, five years ago only the very best Peugeot 205 GTIs were big money, but the days are long gone when you could buy anything for a grand. Now is the time to buy. Often cars such as the Peugeot 306 GTI break, and the guy who paid a grand for the car can't afford to fix it so it just gets left. I doubt loads have been scrapped – you'll have noticed how with 205 GTIs a lot have simply come out the woodwork recently.'

### 'I BOUGHT ONE'

**IAN BIRCH**  
Renault Clio Williams

'I do about 500 miles a year in my Clio Williams. I've had two, but this one is really good and as it's gone up in value I've become more and more nervous of using it. It really is a great drivers' car.'

### THE SPECIALIST

**WILL**  
Brightwells Auctioneers

'Memories play a big part with these modern classics. People think they're cool and fast, but sometimes they jump in a car and realise that they're not that exciting – just a soggy old car. Some cars are different, but also each individual car is different, depending on how it has been maintained.'

### EVO VIEW

**STUART GALLAGHER**

'How can such iconic cars of evo's youth be worth so little? Our sensible head says buy a good Clio Williams, invest in it and hope it appreciates like its forbears did. But the 306 Rallye was – is – such a brilliant hot hatch it's impossible to ignore at these prices and worth a punt.'



### PEUGEOT 205 GTI SELLS FOR £31k

The Silverstone Classic auction in August broke a new record for a Peugeot 205 GTI price, with a silver, 7986-mile 1.9-litre example selling for £30,983 – around £12,000 over the higher estimate. With 2015's £60k Escort RS Turbo, the values of the very best condition 1980s hot hatchbacks are showing no sign of plateauing.



### DINO PROTOTYPE UNDER THE HAMMER

The world's only Dino 206 P Berlinette Speciale – a Ferrari prototype that predated the production Dino – will be auctioned at the Retromobile show in Paris in February 2017. Styled by Aldo Brovarone, the alloy-bodied 206 P used a 2-litre, 180bhp V6. It's being sold after many years in the Le Mans museum collection.



### AUDI A4 SUPER TOURING

Prior to his sportscar-racing career, Emanuele Pirro had a brief spell in Germany's Super Touring series, driving this Audi A4 quattro Super Touring and scoring a victory at Zweibrücken. One of 31 factory cars, the 300bhp A4 will be auctioned by RM Sotheby's in Battersea on 7 September and has an estimate of £130,000-160,000.

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# USED RIVALS: HERCULEAN GT CARS

by Adam Towler



## PORSCHE PANAMERA TURBO

Engine	V8, 4806cc, twin-turbo
Power	493bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque	516lb ft @ 2250-4500rpm
Weight	1970kg (254bhp/ton)
0-62mph	4.2sec (claimed)
On sale	188mph (limited)
Top speed	2009-2016
evo rating	★★★★★

### 'I BOUGHT ONE'

'I bought the Panamera as a daily driver. I had been looking at a 4S, but this Turbo came along and once I'd sampled the acceleration I was smitten. It's an incredibly versatile car, comfortable one minute and then ludicrously rapid the next. I took it to Germany and cruised at 180mph. I can't think of anything that could replace it.' **Brian Kennedy**

### EXAMPLES



**2014 £79,950**  
**Romans International**  
A sinister Turbo in black with just 11,000 miles and one owner from new. Has all the usual Turbo kit.

### BUYING ADVICE

'The only issue we've seen so far is with the air-suspension system. We've had a couple turn up only a few centimetres off the ground, with the damaged compressor rattling at the back of the car. Nearly made me cry! It's a straightforward, if expensive job to fix, but it's rarely just that: usually an air spring fails first and then puts strain on the compressor, leading it to burn out.'  
**Rob Clarey, eliteporsche.co.uk**



## FERRARI FF

Engine	V12, 6262cc
Power	651bhp @ 8000rpm
Torque	504lb ft @ 6000rpm
Weight	1880kg (347bhp/ton)
0-62mph	3.7sec (claimed)
On sale	208mph (claimed)
Top speed	2011-2015
evo rating	★★★★★

'I don't tend to drive the FF that often, but I know I could – it's a really useable, comfortable, practical car, although it can feel quite big at times in urban situations. The V12 is a force of nature, and never fails to leave me shocked at the sheer power it has. It's an interesting car, and unlike any other I've owned.' **David Finlay**



**2012 £155,850**  
**Bramley Motor Cars**  
Grigio Silverstone with Cuoio Toscana leather interior. Comes with Ferrari Service Plan.

'The reality is that you probably won't be using one of these every day – it uses an enormous V12 engine, after all. They're a heavy car, so forget the official fuel consumption, too, but the new twin-clutch gearbox is a revelation compared to the old F1 'box. I'd budget £2000-3000 a year to run one, and that's even if it has a seven-year Ferrari Service Plan at a main dealer.'  
**Matt Honeysett, simonfurlonger.co.uk**



## BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GT

Engine	W12, 5998cc, twin-turbo
Power	552bhp @ 6100rpm
Torque	479lb ft @ 1700rpm
Weight	2385kg (231bhp/ton)
0-62mph	4.8sec (claimed)
On sale	197mph (claimed)
Top speed	2003-2011
evo rating	★★★★★

'I've had two W12s – a Convertible and a Speed. They're classy cars, but I'm not sure they have the image people think they do. The interiors are nice, but they're big, lumbering things with horrendous thirst, and they cost a fortune when they go wrong. They're good on the motorway – but not as good as the Panamera Diesel I have now.' **Matt Cadman**



**2009 £49,990**  
**HWM Aston Martin**  
This car has 60,000 miles on the clock but if well maintained that needn't be a problem.

'You need to be really discerning when you buy one. Make sure it has full history, with invoices – so many have fallen into the wrong hands. Check the drain holes – they can drown the electrics. The radiators can also corrode and the car must be plugged into a trickle-charger if not used daily – and make it a genuine Bentley battery at that. They're a fantastic car, but expensive when they go wrong.'  
**Ian Pinder, rrbgarages.com**

### THE EVO CHOICE

All three are cars you look at and think, 'How expensive can it really be to run?' In the case of both the Bentley and Ferrari, very. It's the former we would discount first. While it's undoubtedly a special car and offers huge prestige for BMW 3-series money, running costs and the numbers

built take some of that specialness away. It's also the least involving of the three. The FF is a tantalising proposition, especially when you consider a used example is half its new price. Running costs would be scary but I can't think of a more extravagant way for four people to travel. It may break the bank,

but what a way to go. The sensible option is the Panamera Turbo. It may not have the presence of the Conti GT or FF, but it has the performance and dynamic ability to make family travel very tolerable indeed. The FF would be our choice, the Porsche a close second. **Stuart Gallagher**

# BUYING JOURNEY



**ALEX CHESTER**

From GTL to XKR, an **evo** reader shares his ownership history

1988



**1st Renault 5 GTL (Mk1)**

'A very soft and unsporty car – rolled round corners like a galleon! Still, it was insurable and a first set of wheels that meant independence.'

1992



**2nd Renault 5 GT Turbo (Mk2)**

'Loved this car! Build quality was flimsy, but I loved the turboboost. It had heavy steering, and clutch cables didn't last long. I had it lowered and increased the boost. Had a lot of fun with this.'

1995



2004



2011



**4th TVR Tamora**

'Loved the looks, interior, performance, sound, compactness. Hated the reliability – I had two engine rebuilds and numerous niggles – and the roof. In the end I lost all confidence in the car.'

**3rd Nissan 200SX (S13)**

'My first rear-wheel-drive car – I wanted to learn how to tame oversteer. Bought privately, the turbo expired on the way home. Other than that it was good, although soft after the 5 Turbo.'

## evo view

Before Alex's love of convertibles came to the fore, there were coupe favourites – a Fiat 20V Turbo and a rather more controversial Mitsubishi 3000 GTO before that. Alex reckons the big Japanese tech-fest was 'truly an underrated car', although admits it was unreliable and expensive to maintain.

For the past 15 years or so, Alex has run a daily driver to take the strain off his performance cars. The first was a Citroën Xantia and more recently there have been a pair of Golf Mk5s: first a TDI 140 and then a manual GTI, the latter owned by his wife from new in 2006 and taken over by Alex in 2009. The GTI is still going strong today.



**5th Porsche Boxster S (987)**

'I looked at a 996 C4S cab but went for a 3.4-litre Boxster in the end. Fast, great handling and surprisingly practical, but I missed more power and exclusivity.'

2014

**6th Maserati 4200 Spyder**

'This car proved to be poorly made, unreliable and expensive to maintain. I loved the engine, and actually liked the old-tech Cambiocorsa gearshift, but on every drive it felt like something would fail.'



2016



**7th Jaguar XKR Convertible**

'Early days with this one, but it's so much better than the Maserati. The engine is fantastic, the roof great, plenty of toys in the cabin – so far very pleased.'

## What's next?

'I probably won't be moving on from the Jaguar for a while now, and maybe it's time to change the Golf? However, ever since doing a Bedford Autodrome trackday I've loved the idea of a Caterham – but that would have to be my third car and our fourth car. Tricky to justify...'

## Tip

Don't sell the Mk5 Golf GTI, Alex – it's a future classic. Start saving for a Seven – it's so different to anything else you've owned, and we're sure you could get the economics of another car to add up!



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## BUYING GUIDE: LOTUS EXIGE S 2012-2015

Joint winner of evo Car of the Year 2012, one of the great modern Lotuses, and now with prices starting below £40k

**R**EMEMBER DANY BAHAR? Back in the late 2000s the ex-Ferrari marketing man promised to transform Lotus with an entire new range of cars – no fewer than five of them, topped by a new Esprit. It never happened, and Bahar quickly fell from grace. But the Bahar years did give us some cracking cars – not least the V6-engined Exige.

Previous Exiges were pocket road-racers: tiny Elise-based coupes with fizzing four-pot engines. When the Series 3 arrived in March 2012, priced at a smidge over £50,000, it was immediately clear this was a different sort of Exige. It used the 3.5-litre supercharged Toyota V6 from the Evora S, with increases in track and wheelbase to make space and add some extra composure.

At 1176kg, it was around 240kg heavier than

its four-cylinder forebear but still 200kg less than the Evora, and the extra power and torque of the bigger engine – with peaks of 345bhp and 295lb ft – meant a power-to-weight ratio on a par with a contemporary 911 Turbo. A properly quick car, then: 0-60mph in 3.8sec, 0-100 in 8.5, and this with a six-speed manual gearbox.

Underneath was the familiar, bonded-aluminium tub, and suspension was largely carried over from the Evora. Changes included a quicker steering ratio and the addition of a rear anti-roll bar. It also had Dynamic Performance Management – Lotus's switchable ESP (no limited-slip diff on the Exige) with Touring and Sport modes. If you specified the Race pack (a £2000 option), you also got a Race mode that optimised the handling for track driving, as well

as firmer suspension and track-biased P Zero Trofeos in place of the standard Corsa tyres. Even in standard guise, the combination of power and poise was breathtaking – so much so that the Exige shared 2012 evo Car of the Year honours with the Pagani Huayra.

The following year the £52,900 Roadster appeared, and from 2014 hardcore drivers could choose the Exige V6 Cup for an extra £10,000. Earlier this year the S was revamped as the Sport 350.

And Dany Bahar? Dismissed from his post just a few months after the Exige S was launched, he's now running ARES, a Modena-based 'atelier' (and unfortunate anagram) that adds bodykits and swanky trim to various Bentleys and Mercs. A perfect fit, Lotus fans might say...

## CHECKPOINTS

### ENGINE

The good news – and no real surprise here – is that the Series 3 Exige's Toyota-sourced V6 is proving pretty much bomb-proof. Jamie Matthews, Lotus sales manager at specialist Bell & Colvill, has seen no major recurring issues with the engine or its Eaton supercharger, either in the Exige or the Evora S. 'That said, Exiges are often

driven hard – it's what they were designed for – and if you can find a car with some of the three-year manufacturer's warranty left, even if it's just a few months, that's a big plus,' says Jamie. 'It's the first thing I'd be looking for.'

The next would be signs of meticulous servicing – every 9000 miles or annually, whichever comes

sooner. The V6 has a timing chain, so there's no belt to worry about.

The cooling fan bearings sometimes go, causing a racket when the fans cut in, but most have been replaced with upgraded ones under warranty.

### TRANSMISSION

Again, it's the same gearbox as in the Evora (there was a slightly

lighter flywheel for faster pick-up), and so far there are no common major issues. The quality of the cable-operated gearshift is one of the few aspects of the car that attracts mild criticism, as it does on other mid-engined Lotuses. The Exige S is better than some in this respect, but it can vary from car to car. Adjustments can be made to cable

alignment to improve the shift.

Do check the clutch operation carefully for any slippage or juddering (or smell) that could indicate it's on the way out: it's a major job to replace it (reckon on around £2k for parts and labour). There's no diagnostics for clutch life, but an engine download can tell how many launches a car has been subjected to.

### SUSPENSION, STEERING, BRAKES

'No problems here as yet,' says Jamie. 'I wouldn't worry at all if a car has done a few trackdays – two or three times a year is exactly what it was designed for.' The Trofeo tyres originally fitted to some cars are no longer road-legal; the P Zero Corsa is fine though for road



**Left:** stripped-back interior means it's easy to check all the cabin kit is working; Toyota V6 has a reputation for reliability

## INFORMATION

### LOTUS EXIGE S

<b>Engine</b>	V6, 3456cc, supercharged
<b>Max power</b>	345bhp @ 7000rpm
<b>Max torque</b>	295lb ft @ 4500rpm
<b>Transmission</b>	Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive
<b>Weight</b>	1176kg
<b>Power-to-weight</b>	298bhp/ton
<b>0-60mph</b>	3.8sec [claimed]
<b>Top speed</b>	170mph [claimed]
<b>Price new</b>	£50,850 [basic]

### PARTS PRICES

Prices from bellandcolvill.co.uk. Tyre prices from blackcircles.com. All prices include VAT but exclude fitting charges.

<b>Tyres (each)</b>	£177.12 front, £195.67 rear [P Zero Corsa]
<b>Front pads (set)</b>	£208.34
<b>Front discs (pair)</b>	£485.95
<b>Damper</b>	£698.15
<b>Clutch kit</b>	£616.70
<b>Spark plugs (set)</b>	£131.33

### SERVICING

Prices from bellandcolvill.co.uk, including VAT. Service at 12 months or 9000 miles, whichever sooner.

<b>Annual service</b>	£520
<b>Major service (every 4 years)</b>	£816.63

### USEFUL CONTACTS

#### FORUMS, ADVICE, EVENTS

thelotusforums.com  
seloc.org  
lotustalk.com

#### SPECIALISTS

bellandcolvill.co.uk  
lotussilverstone.co.uk  
jct600.co.uk  
murraylotus.co.uk

#### CARS FOR SALE

lotusapprovedusedcars.co.uk  
pistonheads.com  
classicandperformancecar.com

and occasional track use. Check the inside edges of the tyres, as they tend to wear faster.

The standard brakes (with AP four-pot calipers) are more than adequate for most owners; there was a brake upgrade with drilled discs for more frequent track use. Because of the Exige's relatively low weight, they last well, as do suspension components.

### BODY, INTERIOR, ELECTRICS

The overall condition of the car is as good a guide as anything to the sort of life it's led and whether it's suffered any abuse, says Jamie, so check the plastic body panels carefully – particularly the nose of the car for chips and grazes, also the front splitter and the underside of the sills for any sign of kerbing damage.

## RIVALS

### PORSCHE CAYMAN/BOXSTER

The 981-gen Caymans and Boxsters in 'S' trim (321 and 311bhp respectively) are the Exige's closest rivals. Loads of 2012/13 examples of both from around £40k.

### BMW M4

BMW's ferociously quick coupe is a match for the Exige in a straight line (425bhp, 0-62 in 4.3sec) if not as light on its feet. Low-mileage 2014 examples from c£42k.

### NOBLE M12 GTO-3R

Conceptually similar to the Exige, with a plastic body and mid-mounted, biturbo V6. Blisteringly quick (0-60 in 3.8sec, 170mph) and handles, too. £35-37k buys the best.





## 'I BOUGHT ONE'

**IAN LOCKWOOD**

'I've had my 2013 Exige for two years, covering 4500 miles in that time. I'd sold a 421bhp RX-7 and wanted a good-looking but newer rear-wheel-drive coupe for road and track, with my FD2 Civic Type R as my daily driver. The Exige was the only choice really – nothing else can deliver the performance, looks and driver involvement for the price.

'I made sure to choose one with the Race pack, which not only maximises corner exit speed, but also reduces trackday rear pad wear; with no LSD, the other DPM modes use rear braking to control wheelspin. I have the diamond-cut alloys, which look great but I believe are no longer available due to some issues with the lacquer.

'I get around 22mpg on the road and 6mpg on track, which makes the small tank frustrating. Tyre choice is limited due to the unusual front wheel size, but the official "LS" P Zero Corsas are reasonable considering their performance and are decent on track. I'm 39 and my insurance is under £900 per year, covering me for six trackdays and business use. Servicing is quite pricey thanks to the effort required to get at anything mechanical.

'I haven't modified the car, as most power upgrades exceed trackday noise limits. The only issue I've had was recently, when I got warning lights on the dash that were diagnosed as the brake pedal switch, a common fault. Sadly, that didn't fix it

and I'm about to have the ABS unit replaced, thankfully under warranty as it's a £1200 part and requires the clam off to fit!

'It's not the most practical car, but a couple can easily go away for a long weekend in it. The speakers are rubbish and it isn't the quietest car inside, but the seats are comfortable so long journeys are OK. I love every second driving it and I suspect it will be a while before a worthy replacement surfaces.'



## WHAT WE SAID



### GROUP TEST, JULY 2012

'Twist the key and the Exige S bursts into life with a theatrical whoop and settles to a barrel-chested, fast idle. Wow, this doesn't sound much like an Exige. But then it isn't really an Exige at all, more a sort of Exige/Evora mash-up that concentrates on raw excitement, handling accuracy and astonishing performance.

'The bad stuff? It's a massive pain to get in and out of, and the cabin is tiny. However, that does make it feel pretty special. In fact with the extended wheelbase and wider build, the Exige looks low and exotic with a kind of Noble vibe to it. It has grown up. And like all grown-up supercars in 2012, it's highly configurable. So try to resist blipping that coarse, edgy V6 and concentrate on Lotus's version of Ferrari's manettino...

'Touring is for sensible driving; Sport opens up a valve in the exhaust for even more noise and introduces a fair degree of slip so you can really experience the Exige's limits with a reassuring sense of security. Race "learns" the road surface as you drive and constantly adapts to provide maximum cornering speed and acceleration. Sounds spooky. Feels almost entirely intuitive.

'The engine really is sweet and sounds great, a tight ball of motorsport fury, and, of course, there's the most delicious [unassisted] steering you can imagine. It's the most exciting Lotus we've driven since the 2-Eleven... It feels special, it looks stunning, sounds like a racer and goes like one, too.' – **evo** 171

## IN THE CLASSIFIEDS



### 2013 EXIGE S COUPE

£39,950

25,100 miles,

Laser Blue, Race pack, Premium Sport pack, air con, two owners

[murraylotus.co.uk](http://murraylotus.co.uk)



### 2014 EXIGE S ROADSTER

£43,000

4000 miles,

Solar Yellow, black interior with contrast yellow stitching, Premium Sport, harnesses, Convenience pack

[lotussilverstone.co.uk](http://lotussilverstone.co.uk)



### 2015 EXIGE S ROADSTER

£44,950

2400 miles,

Arctic Silver, Venom Red quilted leather, Premium pack, Convenience Pack, air con

[oakmeremotorgroup.co.uk](http://oakmeremotorgroup.co.uk)

## WHAT TO PAY

£?  
£40k-50k

Early cars are now edging below £40k. £42k-£46k gives you an excellent choice of 2014/15 cars, while the very last cars with delivery miles are around £50k. Many have the Race pack and practically all either the £2000 Premium pack (leather, carpets, better trim) or £1500 Premium Sport pack (no carpets, but leather/Alcantara). Nearly all also had air con, which is essential on the coupe and still desirable on the Roadster.

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## MODEL FOCUS: MERCEDES C43/C55/C63

It seems unlikely that AMG will ever build another naturally aspirated V8, so fill your boots while you can **by Adam Towler**



**W**E'VE LIVED THROUGH THE ERA of the small sports saloon with a big, naturally aspirated V8 motor, and are now comfortably into the age of turbos and downsizing. But before all of this took place, you could guarantee that Mercedes' offering would dwarf all others in terms of cylinder count and displacement. It all started officially with the W202-based C43 AMG in 1997. A replacement for the straight-six-powered C36, the '43' debuted the classic M113 V8 engine in 302bhp form. This was hooked up to a five-speed torque-converter

transmission, so while there were chassis changes and a subtle bodykit, AMG maintained its position by providing a more mature, comfortable offering, albeit with a tyre-shredding wild side.

After the advent of the W203-generation C-class, by 2004 there was a new AMG powerhouse: the C55, using an un-blown version of the 5.4-litre V8 (also an M113) that in supercharged form powered the E55 and SL55, among others. With 361bhp, the C55 comfortably out-muscled BMW's E46 M3 of the same period, but the usual five-speed auto and less focused chassis made it quite a different car. It was also now available as an estate.

In 2011 the C63 appeared, and this time AMG met its rivals head-on, introducing the extraordinary M156 V8 – the first V8 it had designed from scratch. With 6208cc and 451bhp (or 480bhp in Performance Pack versions), not to mention a far sharper chassis, the C63 will be remembered in future as a classic 'small' muscle-saloon.

**'C63 prices are dropping like a stone at the moment, but they're expensive to run'**

### Expert view

**JOHN WILLIAMS**  
**AMGCOLLECTION.CO.UK**

'C43s are rising slowly in value at the moment. Some classic dealers are trying to get crazy prices, but the majority of those are on sale-or-return. A few years ago they were £2000-3000, but higher-mileage ones are £5000 now and good cars can be £10,000-15,000. They do suffer from corrosion – this was Mercedes' bad era. I think the C55 is far superior, though, and prices are in the same bracket: they've nearly done their depreciation. The C63 is dropping like a stone at the moment. They're more expensive to run than a C55, especially the brakes from Mercedes.'

**OLLY STONER**  
**PRESTIGECARSERVICE.CO.UK**

'Rust is the main issue with C43s, so check underneath for corrosion. Prices for the C55 seem to be stagnant, with good cars from £10,000. Really good estate versions can be £15,000 – the wagon is rare and worth more. C55s are really reliable, but do suffer a bit from the same rust issues as the C43. The C63 tends to start from £20,000 now, but they will drop. There are a couple of engine issues – snapped head bolts and noisy start-up from cold – but they're easily fixed. Lots have been crashed, so check them out carefully. And be prepared for some big bills.'



### SERIAL BUYER

**TERRY GATES**

'I've owned a C43 in the past and currently have a C63 wagon, but I've also driven quite a few C55s [Terry runs Wayne Gates Mercedes-Benz Servicing – visit [mercservicing.co.uk](http://mercservicing.co.uk)]. They are completely different cars in every way. A good C43 is now an appreciating asset, but if I were to advise on what to look for I'd have to brainstorm on about four pages of A4! The biggest enemy is rust, and the gearbox broke on mine, too – and it cannot be repaired, only replaced. And it's unique to the C43. I actually preferred my old C36 to the C43; in some ways it felt faster and it was also the last of the real AMGs. Look also for rust around the jacking points on C43s. The brakes used to be expensive, but needn't be now.'

'My C63 has the limited-slip diff, even though it's not a Performance Pack car – that's really important to have, although some fit aftermarket diffs if they haven't got a factory item. I use my car daily, and apart from a small fuel tank and the fact that it's a bit small inside for a wagon, I love it. I've toyed with the idea of an E63 biturbo, but I know it wouldn't make me smile as much as the C63. And anyway, Mercedes isn't going to make another big naturally aspirated engine.'

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**Lamborghini Diablo 6.0 VT Final Edition**  
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**Lamborghini Murcielago LP 640 Coupe**  
Ceramic brakes, Carbon Driving Zone, Alcantara Roof Lining, Only 9,000 miles, 2007, **£169,990**



**Lamborghini Murcielago LP640 Coupe**  
Factory carbon sports seats (£22,000 option!), ceramic brakes, carbon pack and a Larini exhaust, 12,000 miles, 2008, **£164,990**



**Lamborghini Murcielago LP640 Coupe**  
Titanium Hercules alloys, Parking Camera, 10,000 miles, 2008, **£164,990**



**Lamborghini Murcielago LP640 Coupe**  
Parking Camera, Titanium Hercules alloys, Carbon racing seats, 19,000 miles, 2007, **£154,990**



**Lamborghini LP550-2 Singapore Edition**  
Transparent engine cover, Skorpius Alloys, Carbon Driving Zone, 25,000 miles, 2011, **£139,990**



**Lamborghini Gallardo LP 560-4 Spyder**  
1 Owner, Branding Pk, Calisto Alloys, Reverse camera, 15,000 miles, 2012, **£117,990**



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## UPGRADES: VALENTINO BALBONI



You can take the legendary test driver out of Lamborghini, but you can't take Lamborghini out of the legendary test driver by **Antony Ingram**

**V**ALENTINO BALBONI IS BEST KNOWN for his 40-year career at Lamborghini, during which time he helped develop some of the brand's most iconic models. While Italy's working laws saw him retire in 2008, the legendary test driver has been hard at work creating his own tuning brand – VB.

Its first product is a new exhaust system for the Lamborghini Aventador LP750-4 SV. While no power improvements have been revealed, the 6.3kg grade 2 titanium system should shed

some weight from the back of the SV.

All TIG-welded by hand, right down to the billet-cut titanium mounts, the system takes 350 hours to produce. It's why VB will make only 30 units, each for an 'unspecified' cost.

The system had its debut at the Concorso Italiano during the recent Monterey Car Week. No other VB products have yet been revealed, but it's not hard to imagine Balboni becoming as big a name in Lamborghini tuning as he was at Lamborghini itself.

## Aftermarket news



### STARTECH BENTAYGA

Startech, a subsidiary of Mercedes tuner Brabus, offers a range of styling and performance upgrades for other luxury marques. For the Bentley Bentayga, it can supply the kit shown above, including 23-inch wheels and a new exhaust system. Engine tuning options will follow soon.



### ABT AS4

Until Audi's own new S4 and inevitable RS4 arrive, the aftermarket is the best place to provide you with a fast A4 saloon or Avant. Abt's AS4 takes the 3-litre turbodiesel to 321bhp (from 268bhp) and the 2-litre petrol to 325bhp, up from 249bhp. Styling and chassis tweaks complete the package.



### VOLTES TESLA IN UK

UK start-up Voltes has seen a gap in the market to bring Tesla Model S styling and accessory packages into the UK. Its first offerings are styling kits from Unplugged Performance in California and Larte Design in Germany. Fitting is undertaken by specially selected body shops.



### LIBERTY WALK F430

The trend for wild overfenders is showing no sign of abating: Japanese firm Liberty Walk has released images of a new kit for the Ferrari F430, with a ground-scraping splitter, huge arches, and the obligatory ducktail spoiler and rear diffuser. The price? Around £22,000.

## NEXT MONTH

### ANALYSIS

Group A specials: Integrals, M3, Sierra Cosworth, Celica GT4, Impreza, Sunny GTI-R

### USED RIVALS

997 Carrera S v Aston Martin V8 Vantage v Maserati 4200 GT

### MODEL FOCUS

The inside track on what's happening with values of Jaguar's hot GT, the XKR

### BUYING GUIDE

BMW's underrated M6 goes under the microscope

## 'Why I've kept it'

DAVID SEXTON

SUBARU IMPREZA WRX300



I can pinpoint the day it started. A typically overcast day, in a damp field in the Irish Midlands, waiting patiently behind a ditch for the leading cars. As a Sierra RS Cosworth popped, banged and lit up the countryside by spitting flames, I asked my dad what that noise was. "It's the turbo. It makes the car go faster," came the reply, and a seed was sown.

"Which is how, 21 years on, I bought my first Impreza, a limited-edition WRX300. The test drive was a formality, although I will never forget the sensation of peering out over a blue bonnet scoop, one hand guiding the projectile via the leather-bound Momo steering wheel and the other dialling up ratios, marvelling at the precise, accurate gearbox.

"The run back to Holyhead provided several opportunities to test the electric windows and sample the symphony of high-frequency turbo whistle, underlaid by the characteristic flat-four warble and guest starring a dump valve. The novelty has never worn off. The sheer idiosyncrasy of a humdrum Japanese saloon married to a 2-litre turbo engine and four-wheel-drive chassis is an intoxicating blend. A WRC-winning car that can outpace all but the most rapid exotica while laden with baby seats and a week's groceries.

"The car is off the road now, a new job and a longer commute necessitating a more economical daily driver. The Subaru is awaiting some TLC when funds allow but it will never be sold. The Impreza has been with us through all that life has thrown in our direction. It's the car that leapt from the posters on my bedroom wall to my driveway. It allowed a teenager of the PlayStation generation to play McRae for real. Most of all, the little boy in the field who marvelled at the '80s turbocharged tarmac warriors lived the dream every time he turned its key."

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**Lamborghini Huracan LP 610-4 Spyder (RHD)**  
**£SOLD** Similar required.



**Lamborghini Huracan LP 610-4 Spyder (RHD)**  
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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, FF = Fast Fleet). 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	★★★★☆
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	13	4/1984	253/6000	258/2500	1420kg	181	5.7	-	152	199	32.8	+ Polished 253bhp all-wheel-drive A1 - Just 19 for UK, Porsche Cayman price	★★★★☆
Audi S3	188 R	£31,230	4/1984	296/5500	280/1800	1395kg	216	<b>5.4</b>	<b>12.5</b>	155	162	40.4	+ Lots of grip and one of the best-sounding four-pot turbos - Still a little too clinical	★★★★☆
Audi RS3 Sportback	221 R	£40,795	5/2480	362/5500	343/1625	1520kg	242	<b>3.6</b>	-	155	189	34.9	+ Addictive five-cylinder noise; monster pace - Chassis not exactly playful	★★★★☆
Audi S3	106 R	106 R	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1455kg	183	<b>5.6</b>	<b>13.6</b>	155	198	33.2	+ Very fast, very effective, very... err, quality - A little too clinical	★★★★☆
Audi RS3 Sportback	156 R	11'-12	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1575kg	216	4.5	-	155	212	31.0	+ Above, with added five-pot character - Again, see above...	★★★★☆
BMW 125iM Sport	176 D	£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	<b>5.2</b>	-	155	188	35.3	+ Powertrain, noise, chassis, price - M235i looks nicer, and has an LSD on its options list	★★★★☆
BMW 130iM Sport	106 R	05'-10	6/2996	261/6650	232/2750	1450kg	183	<b>6.1</b>	<b>15.3</b>	155	-	34.0	+ Fantastic engine - Suspension can still get a little boingy	★★★★☆
Citroën Saxo VTS	020 R	97'-03	4/1587	120/6600	107/5200	930kg	130	<b>7.6</b>	<b>22.6</b>	127	-	34.9	+ Chunky, chuckable chassis - Can catch get a little boingy	★★★★☆
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	£20,495	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 Fiesta ST	207 R	£17,545	4/1596	197/5700	214/2500	1088kg	184	<b>7.4</b>	<b>18.4</b>	137	138	47.9	+ Chassis, price, punchy performance - Not as powerful as key rivals	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST Mountune	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 ST200	225 R	£22,745	4/1596	212/6000	236/2500	1088kg	198	6.7	-	143	140	46.3	+ Massive fun - Mountune version offers the same power for considerably less	★★★★☆
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 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	<b>6.7</b>	<b>16.8</b>	150	224	30.4	+ Value, performance, integrity - Big engine compromises handling	★★★★☆
Ford Focus RS (Mk3)	223 R	£31,000	4/2261	345/6000	347/2000	1524kg	230	<b>4.7</b>	<b>12.4</b>	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	208	<b>5.9</b>	<b>14.2</b>	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	239	<b>5.6</b>	<b>12.7</b>	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	<b>5.9</b>	<b>14.9</b>	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	<b>8.6</b>	<b>27.6</b>	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	<b>7.8</b>	<b>23.2</b>	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	<b>5.4</b>	-	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	<b>6.8</b>	<b>17.5</b>	146	215	31.0	+ Looks great, VTEC more accessible - Steering lacks feel, inert balance	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type R 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 (EP3)	075 R	01'-05	4/1998	197/7400	145/5900	1204kg	166	<b>6.8</b>	<b>16.9</b>	146	-	31.7	+ Potent and great value - 'Breadvan' looks divide opinion, duff steering	★★★★☆
Kia Proceed GT	217 D	£20,205	4/1591	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 2.1S Sport	132 R	£15,995	4/1498	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	<b>6.3</b>	<b>14.5</b>	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	<b>3.9</b>	-	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	<b>4.3</b>	<b>10.6</b>	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, nimble - Chassis lacks sparkle found in previous JCWs	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works Challenge (F56)	224 R	£32,000	4/1998	228/5200	236/1250	1215kg	191	6.3	-	152	155	42.2	+ A more hardcore JCW, honed with help from evo! - Just 100 being built	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works Coupe (R58)	164 R	11'-15	4/1598	208/6000	206/2000	1175kg	180	6.3	-	149	165	39.8	+ The usual raucous Mini JCW experience - But with a questionable 'helmet' roof...	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper (R56)	185 F	09'-14	4/1598	120/6000	118/4250	1075kg	113	9.1	-	126	127	52.3	+ Brilliant ride and composure; could be all the Mini you need - You'll still buy the 'S'	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S (R56)	149 R	06'-14	4/1598	181/5500	177/1600	1140kg	161	<b>7.0</b>	-	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	<b>7.2</b>	<b>16.7</b>	148	165	39.8	+ A seriously rapid Mini - Occasionally just a little unruly	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works 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	<b>7.8</b>	<b>19.9</b>	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	<b>6.8</b>	<b>17.9</b>	143	125	47.9	+ Agile chassis works well on tough roads - Could be more involving	★★★★☆
Peugeot 208 GTI by Peugeot Sport	225 R	£21,995	4/1598	205/5800	221/1750	1185kg	176	6.5	-	143	125	47.9	+ The most focused small hatch on sale - Nearly £4k more than a Fiesta ST Mountune	★★★★☆
Peugeot 208 GTI 250 by Peugeot Sport	223 R	£26,855	4/1598	246/6000	243/1900	1205kg	207	6.2	-	155	139	47.1	+ A very capable hot hatch... -...that lacks the sheer excitement of the best in class	★★★★☆

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Praga R1R tested



## OUR CHOICE

**Renaultsport Mégane 275.** This generation of Mégane has got better and better with every update, and the 275 is simply sublime. Optional Öhlins dampers and Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 rubber (taken from the Trophy-R) aren't essential, but improve things even further.



## BEST OF THE REST

The latest Ford Focus RS (left) is our favourite super-hatch, with the more grown-up Golf R close behind. The SEAT Leon Cupra 290 (which replaces the 280 and has an extra 10bhp), is a real buzz, especially with the Sub8 pack and sticky tyres, while the Fiesta ST Mountune is our pick of the smaller hatches.

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 MPGS	EVO RATING
Peugeot 308 GTI 270 by Peugeot Sport	215 D	£28,250	4/1598	266/6000	243/1900	1205kg	224	6.0	-	155	139	47.1	★ As above - As above
Peugeot 205 GTI 1.9	195 R	'88-'91	4/1905	130/6000	119/4750	910kg	145	7.9	-	124	-	36.7	★ Still scintillating after all these years - Brittle build quality
Peugeot 306 GTI 1.6	020 R	'93-'01	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1215kg	139	<b>7.2</b>	<b>20.1</b>	140	-	30.1	★ One of the great GTIs - They don't make them like this any more
Peugeot 306 Rallye	095 R	'98-'99	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1199kg	142	<b>6.9</b>	<b>19.2</b>	137	-	30.1	★ Essentially a GTI-6 for less dosh - Limited choice of colours
Renaultsport Twingo 133	175 R	'08-'13	4/1598	131/6750	118/4400	1050kg	127	8.6	-	125	150	43.5	★ Renaultsport experience for pocket money - Optional Cup chassis gives bouncy ride
Renaultsport Clio 200 Auto	184 R	£20,445	4/1618	197/6000	177/1750	1204kg	166	<b>6.9</b>	<b>17.9</b>	143	144	44.8	★ Faster, more refined, easier to drive - We miss the revvy nat-asp engine and manual 'box
Renaultsport Clio 220 Trophy	213 R	£21,780	4/1618	217/6050	206/2000	1204kg	183	6.6	-	146	135	47.9	★ Improves on the 200 Auto - Still not a match for previous-generation Renaultsport Clios
Renaultsport Clio 200 Cup	195 R	'09-'13	4/1998	197/7100	159/5400	1204kg	166	<b>6.6</b>	<b>16.7</b>	141	190	34.5	★ The hot Clio at its best - They don't make it anymore
Renaultsport Clio 197 Cup	115 R	'07-'09	4/1998	194/7250	158/5550	1240kg	161	6.9	-	134	-	33.6	★ Quick, polished and capable - Not as much sheer fun as 182 Cup
Renaultsport Clio 182	066 R	'04-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1110kg	165	<b>6.6</b>	<b>17.5</b>	139	-	34.9	★ Took hot hatches to a new level - Flawed driving position
Renaultsport Clio 182 Cup	187 R	'04-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	168	6.5	-	139	-	34.9	★ Full of beans, fantastic value - Sunday-market upholstery
Renaultsport Clio Trophy	200 R	'05-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	168	<b>6.6</b>	<b>17.3</b>	140	-	34.9	★ The most fun you can have on three (sometimes two) wheels - Just 500 were built
Renaultsport Clio 172 Cup	048 R	'02-'04	4/1998	170/6250	147/5400	1011kg	171	<b>6.5</b>	<b>17.7</b>	138	-	-	★ Bargain old-school hot hatch - Nervous in the wet, no ABS
Renaultsport Clio V6 255	057 R	'03-'05	6/2946	251/7150	221/4650	1400kg	182	5.8	-	153	-	23.0	★ Super car without the original's edgy handling - Uninspired interior
Renaultsport Clio V6	029 R	'99-'02	6/2946	227/6000	221/3750	1335kg	173	<b>5.8</b>	<b>17.0</b>	145	-	23.0	★ Pocket supercar - Mid-engined handling can be tricky
Renault Clio Williams	195 R	'93-'96	4/1988	148/6100	126/4500	981kg	153	<b>7.6</b>	<b>20.8</b>	134	-	26.0	★ One of the best hot hatches ever - Can be fragile
Renault 5 GT Turbo	195 R	'87-'91	4/1397	118/5750	122/3000	855kg	140	7.3	-	120	-	28.4	★ Clio Williams' grand-daddy - Few unmodified ones left
Renaultsport Mégane 275 Cup-S	223 D	£23,935	4/1998	271/5500	265/3000	1394kg	198	5.8	-	158	174	37.7	★ Cup chassis, LSD, the same engine as the Trophy-R - Could be too hardcore for some
Renaultsport Mégane Nav 275	-	£25,935	4/1998	271/5500	265/3000	1394kg	198	5.8	-	158	174	37.7	★ A more luxurious 275 - Cup chassis is an option
Renaultsport Mégane 265 Cup	195 R	'12-'15	4/1998	261/5500	265/3000	1387kg	191	<b>6.4</b>	<b>14.8</b>	158	174	37.7	★ A hot hatch benchmark - Cupholder could be better positioned
Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy	212 R	'14-'15	4/1998	271/5500	265/3000	1376kg	200	5.8	-	159	174	37.7	★ Another cracking Trophy model - Stripped-out Trophy-R is even more thrilling
Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy-R	215 R	'14-'15	4/1998	271/5500	265/3000	1297kg	212	5.8	-	158	174	37.7	★ As absorbing as a 911 GT3 RS on the right road - Too uncompromising for some; pricey
Renaultsport Mégane 250 Cup	139 R	'09-'12	4/1998	247/5500	251/3000	1387kg	181	<b>6.1</b>	<b>14.6</b>	156	190	34.4	★ Fantastic chassis... - partially obscured by new-found maturity
Renaultsport Mégane dCi 175 Cup	119 R	'07-'09	4/1995	173/3750	265/2000	1470kg	119	<b>8.3</b>	<b>23.5</b>	137	-	43.5	★ A diesel with a genuinely sporty chassis - Could take more power
Renaultsport Mégane 230 F1 Team R26	195 R	'07-'09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1345kg	171	<b>6.2</b>	<b>16.0</b>	147	-	-	★ The car the R26.R is based on - F1 Team stickers in dubious taste
Renaultsport Mégane R26.R	200 R	'08-'09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1220kg	189	<b>5.8</b>	<b>15.1</b>	147	-	-	★ One of the true hot hatch heroes - Two seats, plastic rear windows
SEAT Ibiza Cupra	225 R	£18,100	4/1798	189/4300	236/1450	1185kg	162	6.7	-	146	145	45.6	★ Quick, competent, refined, and manual only - Not exciting enough
SEAT Ibiza Cupra	183 R	'10-'15	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1259kg	144	6.9	-	142	139	47.9	★ Punchy engine, unflappable DSG - Lacks engagement, DSG only
SEAT Leon Cupra 290	221 D	£28,375	4/1984	286/5900	258/1700	1300kg	224	5.8	-	155	156	42.2	★ As below, but with another 10bhp - As below
SEAT Leon Cupra 280	220 R	'14-'15	4/1984	276/5600	258/1750	1300kg	216	5.8	-	155	149	44.1	★ Serious pace and agility for Golf GTI money - The Mk7 Golf R
SEAT Leon Cupra	105 R	'07-'11	4/1984	237/5700	221/2200	1375kg	175	6.3	-	153	190	34.0	★ Great engine, composure - Doesn't have adjustability of old Cupra R
SEAT Leon Cupra R	139 R	'10-'12	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1375kg	193	<b>6.1</b>	<b>14.0</b>	155	190	34.9	★ Bold car, blinding engine - Lacks the character of its rival mega-hatches
SEAT Leon Cupra R 225	067 R	'03-'06	4/1781	222/5900	206/2200	1376kg	164	6.9	-	150	-	32.1	★ Cross-country pace, practicality, value - Not as thrilling as some
Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk2)	146 D	'10-'14	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1218kg	148	7.3	-	139	148	45.6	★ Well priced, well made, with great engine and DSG 'box - Dull steering
Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk1)	077 R	'04-'07	4/1896	130/4000	229/1900	1315kg	100	9.6	-	127	-	55.4	★ Fascinatingly fun and frugal hot hatch - A little short on steering feel
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk3)	187 D	£24,230	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1345kg	164	6.8	-	154	142	45.6	★ Quick, agile, roomier than a Golf - Ride is harsh for what could be a family car
Skoda Octavia vRS 230 (Mk3)	215 D	£26,350	4/1984	227/4700	258/1500	1345kg	171	6.7	-	155	142	45.6	★ Limited-slip diff makes for a sharper steer - It could handle more than the extra 10bhp
Skoda Octavia vRS TDI 4x4 (Mk3)	223 D	£27,590	4/1968	181/3500	206/1750	1475kg	125	7.6	-	142	129	57.7	★ Four-wheel drive tightens the vRS chassis - Diesel and DSG only
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk2)	163 R	'05-'13	4/1998	197/5100	206/1700	1395kg	143	7.3	-	149	175	37.7	★ Drives like a GTI but costs much less - Green brake calipers?
Subaru Impreza STI 330S	124 R	'08-'10	4/2457	325/5400	347/3400	1505kg	219	4.4	-	155	-	-	★ A bit quicker than the STI... - but not better
Suzuki Swift Sport (Mk2)	175 R	£13,999	4/1586	134/6900	118/4400	1045kg	130	8.7	-	121	147	44.1	★ The Swift's still a great pocket rocket - But it's lost a little adjustability
Suzuki Swift Sport (Mk1)	132 R	'05-'11	4/1586	123/6800	109/4800	1030kg	121	8.9	-	124	165	39.8	★ Entertaining handling, well built - Lacking in steering feedback
Vauxhall Corsa VXR	211 R	£18,125	4/1598	202/5800	206/1900	1278kg	161	6.5	-	143	174	37.7	★ Begs to be wrung out - You'll need the £2400 Performance Pack
Vauxhall Corsa VXR	154 R	'07-'14	4/1598	189/5850	192/1980	1166kg	165	6.8	-	140	172	38.7	★ Looks snazzy, punchy engine - Lacks feel, uncouth compared with rivals
Vauxhall Corsa VXR N'ring/Clubsport	164 R	'11-'13/'14	4/1598	202/5750	206/2250	1166kg	176	6.5	-	143	178	-	★ VXR gets more power and a limited-slip diff - But they come at a price
Vauxhall Astra VXR (Mk2)	207 R	£27,850	4/1998	276/5500	295/2500	1475kg	190	5.9	-	155	184	34.9	★ Better than the car it replaces; loony turbo pace - Lacks RS Mégane's precision
Vauxhall Astra VXR (Mk1)	102 R	'05-'11	4/1998	237/5600	236/2400	1393kg	173	<b>6.7</b>	<b>16.7</b>	152	221	30.7	★ Fast and furious - Lacks a little composure and precision
VW Up/SEAT Mii/Skoda Citigo	171 R	£8275+	3/3999	59/5000	70/3000	854kg	70	14.1	-	99	105	62.8	★ Accomplished city car is dynamically sound... - but predictably slow
VW Polo GTI	211 R	£19,125	4/1798	189/4200	236/1450	1197kg	160	6.7	-	146	139	47.1	★ Smooth and brawny - Fiesta ST is more engaging
VW Polo GTI	154 R	'10-'14	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1184kg	153	6.8	-	142	139	47.9	★ Modern-day mki Golf GTI gets twin-clutch DSG - It's a little bit bland
VW Golf GTD (Mk7)	200 D	£26,955	4/1968	181/3500	280/1750	1302kg	141	7.5	-	143	114	64.2	★ Pace, fuel economy, sounds good for a diesel - Lacks the extra edge of the GTI
VW Golf GTI (Mk7)	207 R	£27,495	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1276kg	173	6.5	-	153	139	47.1	★ Brilliantly resolved - Mégane 265 beats it as a pure drivers' car
VW Golf GTI Clubsport Edition 40 (Mk7)	218 D	£30,935	4/1984	286/5350	280/1700	1300kg	224	6.3	-	155	162	40.4	★ A faster, sharper, more entertaining GTI - Some rivals are more exciting on track
VW Golf GTI Clubsport S (Mk7)	225 D	£35,000	4/1984	306/5800	280/1850	1285kg	242	5.8	-	165	172	38.2	★ Another front-wheel-drive Ring record winner - We've only driven it on the Ring so far
VW Golf R (Mk7)	220 R	£31,685	4/1984	296/5500	280/1800	1401kg	215	<b>5.2</b>	<b>12.4</b>	155	165	39.8	★ A VW 'R' model you can take seriously - Mégane 275 just edges it as a pure drivers' car
VW Golf GTI (Mk6)	172 R	'09-'13	4/1984	207/5300	207/1700	1318kg	160	<b>6.4</b>	<b>16.5</b>	148	170	38.7	★ Still a very accomplished hot hatch - 207bhp isn't a lot any more
VW Golf R (Mk6)	140 D	'10-'13	4/1984	266/6000	258/2500	1521kg	178	5.5	-	155	199	33.2	★ Great engine, tremendous pace and poise - High price, ACC only optional
VW Golf GTI (Mk5)	195 R	'04-'09	4/1984	197/5100	207/1800	1336kg	150	<b>6.7</b>	<b>17.9</b>	145	-	-	★ Character and ability: the GTI's return to form - Lacking firepower?
VW Golf R32 (Mk5)	087 R	'06-'09	6/3189	246/6300	236/2500	1510kg	165	<b>5.8</b>	<b>15.2</b>	155	-	26.4	★ Traction's great and you'll love the soundtrack - We'd still have a GTI
VW Golf R32 (Mk4)	053 R	'02-'04	6/3189	237/6250	236/2800	1477kg	163	<b>6.4</b>	<b>16.3</b>	154	-	24.6	★ Charismatic - Boomy engine can be tiresome
VW Golf GTI 16v (Mk2)	195 R	'88-'92	4/1781	139/6100	124/4600	960kg	147	7.9	-	129	-	26.6	★ Still feels everyday useable - Very hard to find a standard one
VW Golf GTI (Mk1, 1.8)	224 R	'82-'84	4/1781	112/5800	109/3500	840kg	135	8.1	-	112	-	26.0	★ The car that started it all - Tricky to find an unmoleshed one
Volvo C30 T5 R-Design	122 R	'08-'12	5/2521	227/5000	236/1500	1347kg	165	<b>6.6</b>	<b>16.9</b>	149	203	32.5	★ Good-looking, desirable Volvo - Lacks edge of best hatches. Avoid auto

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OUR CHOICE

**BMW M5.** The turbocharging of BMW's M-cars met with scepticism, but the current M5's 4.4-litre twin-turbo V8 feels a perfect fit. It's a brutally fast car, and there are clever (and useable) adjustable driving modes. The '30 Jahre' special edition, which has an extra 40bhp, is especially worth a look.



BEST OF THE REST

Mercedes' E63 AMG (pictured) pips BMW's M3 for us, although Alfa Romeo's Giulia Quadrifoglio is hugely tempting, being the first Alfa in a long time that's a serious threat for its rivals. 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	LD FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-60MPH	0-100MPH	MAX MPH	CO2 g/km	EC MPGS	EVO RATING	
Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio	226 R	£59,000	6/2891	503/6500	443/2500	1524kg	335	3.9	-	191	198	40.3	+ If Ferrari built a saloon (really) - Lacks the final polish of German rivals	★★★★★
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 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	£107-13	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 (B9)	225 D	£44,350	6/2995	349/5400	369/1370	1630kg	218	4.7	-	155	166	38.7	+ Strong response and delivery from turbo engine - Chassis feels softer than before	★★★★★
Audi S4 (B8)	166 D	£08-76	6/2995	328/5500	328/2900	1705kg	195	4.9	-	155	190	34.9	+ Great supercharged powertrain, secure chassis - The RS4	★★★★★
Audi RS4 Avant (B8)	216 R	£12-75	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	201	4.8	13.1	162	-	18.0	+ Storming performance (thanks to Porsche) - Try finding one	★★★★★
Audi S6	091 D	£06-71	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	223	29.4	+ Performance, foolproof powertrain, beefy looks - Feels a bit one-dimensional	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant Performance (C7)	224 D	£86,420	8/3993	597/6100	553/2500	1950kg	311	3.7	-	155	223	29.4	+ As above, but with even more power - A stern test of self-control	★★★★★
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 Sportback	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 Sportback	171 D	£63,700	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	1655kg	206	4.8	-	155	203	32.1	+ Surprisingly characterful; better than many RSs - High centre of gravity	★★★★★
Bentley Flying Spur V8	200 D	£142,800	8/3997	500/6000	487/1700	2342kg	217	4.9	-	183	254	25.9	+ Effortless performance with real top-end kick - Determinedly 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	575/1750	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	223 F	£252,000	8/6752	530/4200	811/1750	2610kg	206	4.8	-	190	342	19.3	+ Characterful; superb build quality - A bit pricey...	★★★★★
BMW 320d (F30)	168 R	£29,475	4/1995	181/4000	280/1750	1495kg	123	7.4	-	146	120	61.4	+ Fleet-friendly new Three is economical yet entertaining - It's a tad noisy	★★★★★
BMW 328i (F30)	165 D	£30,470	4/1997	242/5000	258/1250	1430kg	172	5.8	-	155	149	44.8	+ New-age four-pot 328i is great all-rounder - We miss the six-cylinder soundtrack	★★★★★
BMW 330d M Sport (F30)	180 D	£36,975	6/2993	254/4000	413/2000	1540kg	168	5.6	-	155	129	57.6	+ Great engine, fine handling, good value - Steering confuses weight with feel	★★★★★
BMW 435i Gran Coupe	203 D	£41,865	6/2979	302/5800	295/1200	1585kg	194	5.5	-	155	174	34.9	+ Superb straight-six, fine ride/handling balance - 335i saloon weighs and costs less	★★★★★
BMW M3 (F80)	211 R	£56,590	6/2979	425/5500	406/1850	1520kg	284	4.1	8.6	155	204	32.1	+ Looks, performance, practicality - Body control on rough roads; engine lacks character	★★★★★
BMW M3 (E90)	123 R	£08-71	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	£66-88	6/3453	282/6500	251/4500	143kg	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	£09-75	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	★★★★★
Brabus Bullit	119 R	£330,000	12/6233	720/5100	811/2100	1850kg	395	3.8	-	217	-	-	+ Seven hundred and twenty bhp - Three hundred thousand pounds	★★★★★
Cadillac CTS-V	148 R	£67,030	8/6162	556/6100	551/3800	1928kg	293	3.9	-	119	365	18.1	+ It'll stand out among M-cars and AMGs - The novelty might wear off	★★★★★
Cadillac CT6	226 D	£69,990	6/2997	411/5700	409/2500	1950kg	214	5.7	-	149	223	28.2	+ Caddy's S-class rival scores on comfort - But not on driver involvement	★★★★★
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	1635kg	208	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	1710kg	223	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	1750kg	172	5.8	-	155	144	51.4	+ Great chassis, good looks, better refinement 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	£13-75	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	£14-75	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	1835kg	150	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	1875kg	294	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	1884kg	202	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	<b>4.7</b>	<b>10.9</b>	173	270	24.4	+ Shockingly good Lexus - The M3's available as a (second hand) four-door too	★★★★★
Lotus Carlton	170 R	'91-'93	6/3615	377/5200	419/4200	1658kg	231	<b>4.8</b>	<b>10.6</b>	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	404/4500	406/4500	1810kg	221	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	404/4500	406/1750	1860kg	221	5.1	-	177	242	27.2	+ Tempting alternative to V8 - Feel-free steering, ride lacks decorum	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte GTS	226 D	£110,405	8/3798	523/6800	479/2250	1900kg	280	4.7	-	193	250	26.4	+ Still pretty - Off the pace dynamically	★★★★★
Maserati Levante Diesel	221 D	£54,335	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	216	<b>5.1</b>	<b>12.1</b>	174	365	18.0	+ A QP with the bhp it deserves - Grille is a bit Hannibal Lecter	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte Sport GTS	141 R	'08-'12	8/4691	433/7000	361/4750	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	<b>4.4</b>	<b>9.7</b>	160	280	23.5	+ Monstrous pace and extremely engaging - Same-era M3 is just a little better...	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C55 AMG	088 R	'04-'08	8/5439	367/5250	376/4000	1635kg	228	5.2	-	155	-	23.7	+ Furiously fast, commendably discreet - Overshadowed by M3 and RS4	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG E63	187 D	£74,115	8/5461	549/5500	531/1750	1770kg	315	4.2	-	155	230	28.8	+ Power, response and accuracy in spades - A little lacking in originality	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG E63 S	208 R	£84,700	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	<b>4.8</b>	<b>10.2</b>	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 an option - Not as desirable as a Bentley or Aston	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL563 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, silky price	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-300 SST	118 R	'08-'13	4/1998	290/6500	300/3500	1590kg	185	<b>5.2</b>	<b>13.9</b>	155	256	26.2	+ Evo gets twin-clutch transmission - Not as exciting as it used to be	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-360	122 D	'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	<b>4.3</b>	<b>10.9</b>	157	-	-	+ Gives Porsche drivers nightmares - Points. Lots of	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo IX MR FQ-360	181 R	'05-'07	4/1997	366/6887	363/3200	1400kg	266	3.9	-	157	-	-	+ Well-executed engine upgrades - Prison food	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VIII	055 R	'03-'04	4/1997	276/6500	289/3500	1410kg	199	5.1	-	157	-	-	+ The Evo grows up - Brakes need beefing up	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VIII MR FQ-300	057 R	'03-'05	4/1997	305/6800	289/3500	1400kg	221	4.8	-	157	-	20.5	+ Extra pace, extra attitude - Extra money	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VII	031 R	'02-'03	4/1997	276/6500	282/3500	1360kg	206	<b>5.0</b>	<b>13.0</b>	140	-	20.4	+ Terrific all-rounder - You tell us	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo 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	<b>3.6</b>	<b>8.9</b>	188	270	24.6	+ Fast, refined and dynamically sound - It still leaves us cold	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera Turbo S	159 D	'11-'13	8/4806	542/6000	590/2250	1995kg	276	3.7	-	190	270	24.6	+ Pace, excellent ergonomics - Steering feel, ride	★★★★★
Porsche 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 GTS	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	<b>4.5</b>	<b>11.1</b>	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	414/6500	380/3500	2085kg	202	5.6	-	162	251	26.4	+ Dynamically the best SUV of its era - At two tons, it's still no sports car	★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (Mk2)	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	1670kg	144	7.0	-	135	199	-	+ Striking looks, sporting dynamics - Hefty price, and petrol version is auto-only	★★★★★
Range Rover Sport SDV8	222 FF	£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	219	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	512/6000	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	2360kg	242	4.7	-	155	317	20.8	+ It's quicker than you think - It's more enjoyable driven slowly	★★★★★
Rolls-Royce Phantom	054 R	£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 RB320	105 R	'07	4/2457	316/6000	332/3750	1495kg	215	4.8	-	155	-	-	+ Fitting tribute to a rallying legend - Too hardcore for some?	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WRX STI PPP	073 R	'03-'05	4/1994	300/6000	299/4000	1470kg	207	<b>5.2</b>	<b>12.9</b>	148	-	-	+ A Subaru with real edge - Bit too edgy in the wet	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza Turbo	011 R	'98-'00	4/1994	215/5600	214/4000	1235kg	177	<b>5.4</b>	<b>14.6</b>	144	-	27.2	+ Destined for classic status - Thirsty	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza PI	200 R	'00-'01	4/1994	276/6500	260/4000	1283kg	219	<b>4.9</b>	<b>13.3</b>	150	-	25.0	+ One of our favourite Imprezas - Doesn't come cheap	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza RB5 (PPP)	187 R	'99	4/1994	237/6500	258/3500	1235kg	195	<b>5.0</b>	<b>14.1</b>	143	-	-	+ Perfect blend of	

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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	GDC G/KM	EC MPG	EVO RATING
Abarth 124 Spider	225 D	£29,850	4/1368	168/5500	184/2500	1060kg	161	6.8	-	143	148	44.1	★☆☆☆☆
Alfa Romeo 4C Spider	223 R	£60,255	4/1742	237/6000	258/2200	940kg	256	4.5	-	160	161	40.9	★★★★★
Alfa Romeo 8C Spider	161 R	09-11	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1675kg	273	4.5	-	181	-	-	★★★★★
Alpina D4 Biturbo Convertible	212 D	£54,950	6/2993	345/4000	516/1500	1815kg	193	5.0	-	171	156	47.9	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3.5 Supercharged	180 D	£38,000	4/1998	310/8400	169/7200	550kg	573	2.7	-	155	-	-	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3.5R	205 R	£64,800	4/1998	350/8400	243/6100	550kg	647	2.6	-	155	-	-	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3 245	113 D	08-12	4/1998	245/8200	155/5200	500kg	498	3.2	-	150	-	33.0	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3 Supercharged	138 R	09-12	4/1998	300/8200	162/7200	550kg	554	3.3	-	155	-	-	★★★★★
Ariel Atom V8en	165 R	12-13	4/1998	270/8300	188/6000	550kg	499	2.9	-	150	-	-	★★★★★
Ariel Atom V8 500	165 R	10-12	8/3000	475/10,500	284/7750	550kg	877	3.0	5.8	170	-	-	★★★★★
Ariel Nomad	210 R	£33,000	4/2354	235/7200	221/4300	670kg	365	3.4	-	134	-	-	★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage Roadster	130 R	£89,994	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1710kg	250	4.7	-	180	328	20.4	★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage S Roadster	161 R	£108,995	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1690kg	258	4.6	-	189	299	21.9	★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage S Roadster	212 R	£147,000	12/5935	565/6750	457/5750	1745kg	329	4.1	-	201	343	19.2	★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage Roadster	175 R	12-14	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1760kg	294	4.4	-	190	-	-	★★★★★
Aston Martin DBS Volante	150 D	05-15	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1815kg	263	4.6	-	190	368	18.2	★★★★★
Aston Martin DBS Volante	133 D	09-12	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1810kg	286	4.3	-	191	388	17.3	★★★★★
Audi TT S Roadster	207 D	£41,085	4/1984	306/5800	280/1800	1450kg	214	5.2	-	155	169	38.7	★★★★★
Audi TT RS Roadster	122 D	08-14	4/1984	268/6000	258/2500	1455kg	187	5.6	-	155	189	34.9	★★★★★
Audi TT RS Roadster	133 D	09-14	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1510kg	225	4.7	-	155	212	31.0	★★★★★
Audi S5 Cabriolet	130 D	£46,770	6/2995	328/5500	325/2900	1875kg	178	5.6	-	155	199	33.2	★★★★★
Audi RS4 Cabriolet	094 D	06-08	8/4163	414/7800	317/5500	1845kg	228	4.9	-	155	-	-	★★★★★
Audi R8 V8 Spyder	186 D	11-15	8/4163	424/7900	317/6000	1660kg	259	4.8	-	187	337	19.6	★★★★★
BAC Mono	189 R	£124,255	4/2261	280/7700	206/6000	540kg	527	2.8	-	170	-	-	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT V8 Convertible	168 R	£150,200	8/3993	500/6000	487/1700	2395kg	212	4.7	-	187	254	25.9	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT V8 S Convertible	194 D	£160,500	8/3993	521/6000	502/1700	2395kg	221	4.5	-	191	258	25.4	★★★★★
Bentley Conti GT Speed Convertible	187 D	£181,000	12/5998	626/6000	605/1700	2420kg	263	4.1	-	203	347	19.0	★★★★★
Bentley Continental Supersports	147 D	10-12	12/5998	621/6000	590/2000	2395kg	263	3.9	-	202	388	17.3	★★★★★
BMW M235i Convertible	207 D	£37,100	6/2979	321/5800	332/1300	1600kg	204	5.2	-	155	199	33.2	★★★★★
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	★★★★★
BMW Z4 3.0si (Mk1)	094 D	06-09	6/2996	265/6600	232/2750	1310kg	205	5.7	-	155	-	32.9	★★★★★
BMW Z4 Roadster	091 R	06-09	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1410kg	244	4.8	-	155	-	23.3	★★★★★
BMW M Roadster	002 R	98-02	6/3246	325/7400	258/4900	1375kg	240	5.3	-	155	-	25.4	★★★★★
BMW 435i Convertible	194 D	£45,680	6/2979	302/5800	295/1200	1740kg	176	5.6	-	155	190	34.8	★★★★★
BMW M4 Convertible (F83)	202 D	£61,145	6/2979	425/5500	406/1850	1750kg	247	4.6	-	155	213	31.0	★★★★★
BMW Z8	026 R	00-03	8/4941	400/6600	369/3800	1585kg	256	4.8	11.1	155	-	14.4	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 160	205 R	£19,710	4/660	80/7000	79/3400	490kg	166	6.5	-	100	-	-	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 270	219 R	£23,795	4/1595	135/6800	122/4100	540kg	254	5.0	-	122	-	-	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 360	209 R	£27,795	4/1999	180/7300	143/6100	560kg	327	4.8	-	130	-	-	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 420	223 R	£30,795	4/1999	210/7600	150/6300	560kg	381	4.0	10.3	136	-	-	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 620S	220 D	£44,995	4/1999	310/7700	219/7350	610kg	516	3.4	-	155	-	-	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 620R	187 R	£50,795	4/1999	310/7700	219/7350	572kg	551	2.8	-	155	-	-	★★★★★
Caterham Seven CSR	094 R	£47,295	4/2261	256/7500	200/6200	656kg	460	3.8	-	155	-	-	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Roadster 125	105 R	07-14	4/1595	125/6100	120/5350	539kg	235	5.9	-	112	-	-	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Supersport	165 R	11-14	4/1595	140/6900	120/5790	520kg	273	4.9	-	120	-	-	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Supersport R	180 D	13-14	4/1999	180/7300	143/6100	535kg	342	4.8	-	130	-	-	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Superlight R300	150 R	09-12	4/1999	175/7000	139/6000	515kg	345	4.5	-	140	-	-	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Superlight R500	123 R	08-14	4/1999	263/8500	177/7200	506kg	528	2.9	-	150	-	-	★★★★★
Caterham Levante	131 R	09-10	8/2398	550/10000	300/8500	520kg	1074	4.8	8.2	150	-	-	★★★★★
Caterham Seven R300	068 R	02-06	4/1796	160/7000	130/5000	500kg	325	4.7	-	130	-	-	★★★★★
Caterham Seven R500	200 R	99-06	4/1796	230/8600	155/7200	460kg	510	3.6	8.8	146	-	-	★★★★★
Donkervoort DB GTO Performance	185 R	£120,000	5/2480	375/5500	350/1750	695kg	548	2.8	-	168	-	-	★★★★★
Ferrari California T	212 D	£154,460	8/3855	552/7500	557/4750	1729kg	324	3.6	-	196	250	26.9	★★★★★
Ferrari California	171 D	08-14	8/4297	483/7750	372/5000	1735kg	283	3.8	-	193	299	-	★★★★★
Honda S2000	118 D	99-09	4/1997	237/8300	153/7500	1260kg	191	6.2	-	150	-	28.2	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type Convertible	186 R	£56,745	6/2995	335/6500	332/3500	1587kg	214	5.5	-	161	234	28.8	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type S Convertible	183 R	£65,745	6/2995	375/6500	339/3500	1604kg	238	5.3	-	171	234	28.8	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type R Convertible	-	£92,295	8/5000	542/6500	501/3500	1665kg	331	4.0	-	186	255	26.4	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type Project 7	212 R	15	8/5000	567/6500	501/2500	1585kg	363	3.9	-	186	-	-	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type V8 S Convertible	183 R	13-14	8/5000	488/6500	461/2500	1665kg	298	4.3	-	186	259	25.5	★★★★★
Jaguar XKR Convertible	130 R	09-14	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1725kg	296	4.6	-	155	292	23.0	★★★★★
Jaguar XKR-S Convertible	167 R	11-14	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1725kg	319	4.2	-	186	292	23.0	★★★★★
KTM X-Bow GT	183 D	£95,880	4/1984	281/6400	310/3200	875kg	326	4.1	-	144	189	34.0	★★★★★
KTM X-Bow R	165 R	£87,480	4/1984	296/5500	295/3300	818kg	368	3.6	-	144	-	-	★★★★★
KTM X-Bow	138 R	08-12	4/1984	237/5500	229/2000	818kg	294	3.8	-	137	-	-	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Sport	-	£35,880	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	866kg	157	6.0	-	127	149	45.0	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Sport 220	-	£43,800	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	924kg	239	4.2	-	145	173	37.7	★★★★★

PAST MASTER



BENTLEY CONTINENTAL T PERSONAL COMMISSION

ISSUE 029, MARCH 2001

A £300,000 one-off motor-show car propelled by the classic 6.75-litre hand-built V8, this was the ultimate Conti T. Richard Meaden drove it

'The Personal Commission is an illustration of the lengths to which Bentley will go to create a truly bespoke car. In this case that means incredible cabin detailing and myriad discreet changes to the body. But it's the big red button in the wall of a dash that is the starting point for

one of the most incredible driving experiences in the world. This is performance on an epic scale: 420bhp, 645lb ft, 60mph in 5.7sec, 100mph in 15.1sec and a top speed of 170mph. Introduce the floorboard-sized throttle to the Wilton carpet and the endless bonnet rises like the bow

of a Sunseeker powerboat, the colossal V8 rumbling beneath you like a modest earthquake. 'Perhaps more amazing is the chassis. Despite weighing several tons, this Bentley feels positively nimble. It's easy to dismiss the Conti T PC as a showboat, but there's real depth to its abilities.'



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LOVE SOMETHING  
GROW SOMETHING  
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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	EC MPG	EVO RATING	
Lotus Elise Cup 250	224 R	£45,600	4/1798	243/7200	184/3500	931kg	265	3.9	-	154	175	37.7	+ Quickest Elise yet - Prioritises grip over adjustability	★★★★★
Lotus Elise 1.6 Club Racer	183 R	11-15	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	852kg	160	6.0	-	127	149	45.0	+ Even lighter, even more focused - Are you prepared to go this basic?	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S Club Racer	189 D	13-15	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	905kg	244	4.2	-	145	175	37.5	+ Purist approach intensifies ability - Lightest, option-free spec requires commitment	★★★★★
Lotus Elise R	068 R	04-11	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	860kg	223	5.6	13.9	150	196	34.4	+ Most thrilling Elise yet - Blaring engine note	★★★★★
Lotus Elise SC	131 R	08-11	4/1794	218/8000	156/5000	870kg	254	4.5	11.4	148	199	33.2	+ All the usual Elise magic - Supercharged engine lacks sparkle	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S 18	104 R	06-10	4/1794	134/6200	127/4200	860kg	158	6.3	18.7	127	-	37.2	+ Brilliant entry-level Elise - Precious little	★★★★★
Lotus Elise 111S	049 R	02-04	4/1796	156/7000	129/4650	860kg	199	5.1	-	131	-	40.9	+ A genuinely useable Elise - Air-con? In an Elise?	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Sport 135	040 D	03	4/1796	135/6200	129/4850	726kg	189	5.4	-	129	-	-	+ One of our fave S2 Elises - Brakes need more bite and pedal feel	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Sport 190	044 R	03	4/1796	190/7800	128/5000	710kg	272	4.7	12.1	135	-	-	+ Fabulous trackday tool - Pricey	★★★★★
Lotus Elise (S1)	126 R	96-01	4/1796	118/5500	122/3000	731kg	164	6.1	18.5	126	-	39.4	+ A modern classic - A tad impractical?	★★★★★
Lotus Exige Sport 350 Roadster	-	£55,900	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1125kg	312	3.7	-	145	235	28.0	+ An Exige with added sunny-day appeal - A Boxster would be a better everyday bet	★★★★★
Lotus Exige S Roadster	186 R	13-15	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1166kg	301	3.8	-	145	235	28.0	+ Like the hard-top Exige S, but more road-friendly - 981 Boxster S is a better all-rounder	★★★★★
Lotus 3-Eleven	220 R	£82,500	6/3456	410/7000	302/3000	925kg	450	3.3	-	174	-	-	+ A fantastically exciting Lotus - If not exactly a groundbreaking one	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven	126 R	07-11	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	720kg	267	4.3	-	140	-	-	+ Not far off supercharged car's pace - Pricey once it's made road-legal	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven Supercharged	123 R	07-11	4/1796	252/8000	179/7000	670kg	382	3.8	-	150	-	-	+ Impressive on road and track - Not hardcore enough for some	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven GT4	138 R	09-11	4/1796	266/8200	179/7200	670kg	403	3.7	-	155	-	-	+ eva Track Car of the Year 2009 - It's a 76-grand Lotus with no roof	★★★★★
Lotus 340R	126 R	00	4/1796	190/7800	146/5000	658kg	293	4.5	12.5	126	-	-	+ Hardcore road-racer... that looks like a dune buggy from Mars	★★★★★
Lotus Elan SE	095 R	89-95	4/1588	165/6600	148/4200	1022kg	146	6.7	-	137	-	21.0	+ Awesome front-drive chassis - Rather uninvolved	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio	142 D	£98,940	8/4691	434/7000	332/4750	1980kg	223	5.2	-	177	337	19.5	+ As good to drive as it is to look at - Lacks the grunt of some rivals	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio Sport	161 D	£104,535	8/4691	444/7000	376/4750	1980kg	228	5.0	-	177	377	19.5	+ Looks, performance, cruising ability - Brakes could be sharper	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio MC	185 D	£112,370	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1973kg	234	4.9	-	179	337	19.5	+ Most powerful GranCabrio yet - The GranCabrio is starting to show its age	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 2.0i Sport (Mk4)	219 R	£22,505	4/1998	158/6000	147/4600	1000kg	161	7.3	-	133	161	40.9	+ Lightest MX-5 since the Mk1 - Lacks intensity	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 2.0i Sport Tech (Mk3.5)	212 R	09-15	4/1999	158/7000	139/5000	1098kg	146	7.6	-	138	181	36.2	+ Handles brilliantly again; folding hard-top also available - Less than macho image	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk3)	091 R	05-09	4/1798	124/6500	123/4500	1080kg	108	9.3	-	122	-	-	+ Gearchange, interior - Lost some of the charm of old MX-5; dubious handling	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk2)	017 R	98-05	4/1839	146/7000	124/5000	1065kg	140	8.6	-	123	-	32.5	+ Affordable ragtops don't get much better - Cheap cabin	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.6 (Mk1)	131 R	89-97	4/1597	115/6500	100/5500	971kg	120	9.0	-	114	-	-	+ The original and still (pretty much) the best - Less than rigid	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG SL C43	222 D	£45,950	6/2996	362/5500	383/2000	1520kg	242	4.7	-	155	178	26.2	+ Twin-turbo V6 well-suited to baby roadster - But also highlights the chassis' age	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK 55 AMG	186 R	12-15	8/5461	416/6800	398/4500	1615kg	262	4.6	-	155	195	33.6	+ Quicker and more economical than ever - Needs to be sharper, too	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK 55 AMG	087 R	05-10	8/5439	355/5750	376/4000	1455kg	229	4.9	-	155	-	23.5	+ Superb engine, responsive chassis - No manual option, ESP spoils fun	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK 55 AMG Black Series	110 R	07-08	8/5439	394/5750	383/3750	1495kg	268	4.9	11.2	174	-	-	+ AMG gets serious - Dull-witted TG-Tronic auto box, uneven dynamics	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG C63 S Cabriolet	226 D	£68,115	8/3982	503/5500	516/1750	1850kg	276	4.1	-	155	208	31.7	+ A born hooligan - Body flex takes away some control	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL500	169 D	£81,915	8/4663	429/5250	516/1800	1710kg	255	4.6	-	155	212	31.0	+ Wafly performance, beautifully engineered - Lacks ultimate sports car feel	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	171 D	£112,510	8/5461	530/5500	590/2000	1770kg	304	4.3	-	155	231	-	+ Monster performance, lighter than before - Still heavy, steering lacks consistency	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG	183 D	£170,815	12/5980	621/4800	731/2300	1875kg	336	4.0	-	155	270	24.4	+ Chassis just about deals with the power - Speed limits	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	117 D	08-13	8/6208	518/6800	464/5200	1970kg	278	4.6	-	155	328	20.0	+ More focused than old SL55 AMG - Lost some of its all-round appeal	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG	071 D	04-10	12/5980	604/4800	737/2000	2035kg	302	4.1	-	155	-	-	+ Gob-smacking performance - Gob-smackingly pricey	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG Roadster	167 R	12-14	8/6208	563/6800	479/4750	1660kg	345	3.7	-	197	308	21.4	+ Loses none of the coupe's talents - But (understandably) loses the gullwing doors	★★★★★
Morgan 3 Wheeler	198 R	£31,140	2/1976	82/5250	103/3250	525kg	159	6.0	-	115	215	30.3	+ Quirky, characterful, brilliant - Can become a two-wheeler if you push too hard	★★★★★
Morgan Plus 8 Speedster	202 R	£71,140	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1000kg	368	4.2	-	148	282	23.3	+ Fantastic old-school roadster experience - Gets unsettled by big bumps	★★★★★
Morgan Plus 8	171 R	£86,345	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1100kg	334	4.4	-	155	256	25.7	+ Hilarious mix of old looks and new mechanicals - Refinement is definitely old-school	★★★★★
Morgan Aero SuperSports	145 R	£128,045	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1180kg	312	4.2	-	170	-	-	+ As above, with a V8 and target top - It's proper supercar money	★★★★★
Morgan Aero 8	105 R	02-08	8/4799	362/6300	361/3400	1100kg	334	4.5	-	170	-	25.2	+ Glorious sound, view over bonnet, dynamics - Awkward-looking rear	★★★★★
Nissan 370Z Roadster	143 R	10-14	6/3696	326/7000	269/5200	1554kg	213	5.5	-	155	262	25.2	+ The Zed's old-school character remains intact - Its purposeful looks don't	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Boxster	224 D	£41,739	4/1988	296/6500	280/1950	1335kg	225	5.1	-	170	168	38.2	+ Chassis as good as ever - Four-cylinder's tuneless din would be hard to live with	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Boxster S	222 R	£50,695	4/2497	345/6500	310/1900	1355kg	259	4.4	9.8	177	184	34.9	+ Still sensationally capable - Turbo four-cylinder engine lacks appeal of the old flat-six	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster (981)	172 R	12-16	6/2706	261/6700	206/4500	1310kg	202	5.4	-	164	192	34.5	+ Goes and looks better - Shame about the electric steering	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster S (981)	186 R	12-16	6/3436	311/6700	265/4500	1320kg	239	5.1	-	173	206	32.1	+ Boxster steps out of 911's shadow - But gets 911's less appealing electric steering	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster GTS (981)	203 D	14-16	6/3436	325/6700	273/4500	1345kg	246	5.0	-	174	211	31.4	+ Superb dynamics, fantastic engine, great looks - Sport suspension is very firm	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster Spyder (981)	2123 R	15-16	6/3800	370/6700	310/4750	1315kg	286	4.5	-	180	230	28.5	+ The fastest, most rewarding Boxster yet - Feedback trails the Cayman GT4's	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster S (987)	161 R	05-12	6/3436	306/6400	265/5500	1355kg	229	5.3	-	170	223	29.7	+ As above, but with more power - As above	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster Spyder (987)	188 R	10-12	6/3436	316/7200	273/4750	1275kg	252	5.0	-	166	221	29.1	+ Lighter, more driver-centric Boxster - Collapsed-brolly roof not the most practical	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster (986 2.7)	049 R	99-04	6/2687	228/6300	192/4700	1275kg	182	6.3	-	155	-	29.1	+ Still an impeccable sports car - Very little	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster S (986)	070 R	99-04	6/3179	260/6200	228/4700	1320kg	200	5.5	-	164	-	26.9	+ Added power is seductive - As above	★★★★★
Radical SR3 SL	174 R	£69,840	4/2000	300/6000	265/4000	775kg	393	3.4	-	161	-	-	+ Our 2011 Track Car of the Year, and it's road-legal - You'll need to wrap up warm	★★★★★
Radical SR8LM	138 R	09-12	8/2800	460/10,500	260/8000	680kg	687	3.2	-	168	-	-	+ Fastest car around the Nordschleife - Convincing people it's road legal	★★★★★
Renault Sport Spider	183 R	96-99	4/1998	148/6000	136/4500	930kg	157	6.5	-	131	-	-	+ Rarity, fabulous unassisted steering feel - Heavier than you'd hope	★★★★★
Rolls-Royce Dawn	222 D	£250,000	12/6592	563/5250	575/1500	2560kg	223	4.9	-	155	330	20.0	+ Effortless driving experience - Driver involvement not a priority	★★★★★
Toyota MR2	187 R	00-06	4/1794	138/6400	125/4400	975kg	141	7.2	21.2	130	-	38.2	+ Tight lines, taut dynamics - Minimal luggage space	★★★★★
TVR Tamora	070 R	01-07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1050kg	338	4.5	-	160	-	-	+ Well-sorted soft-top TVR - Awkward styling	★★★★★
TVR Tuscan Convertible	091 R	05-07	6/3996	365/6800	315/6000	1100kg	337	3.8	8.1	195+	-	-	+ Spirit of the Griff reborn - Over 195mph? Really?	★★★★★
TVR Chimaera 5.0	007 R	93-03	8/4988	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	4.6	-	167	-	26.4	+ Gorgeous noise, tarmac-rippling grunt - Details	★★★★★
TVR Griffith 4.3	068 R	92-93	8/4280	280/5500	305/4000	1060kg	268	4.8	11.2	148	-	-	+ The car that made TVR. Cult status - Mere details	★★★★★
TVR Griffith 500	009 R	93-01	8/4988	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	4.8	11.2	167	-	22.1	+ Griff diamond - A few rough edges	★★★★★
Vauxhall VX220	023 R	00-04	4/2198	145/5800	150/4000	875kg	168	5.6	-	136	-	34.4	+ Absurdly good Vauxhall - The badge?	★★★★★
Vauxhall VX220 Turbo	066 R	03-05	4/1998	197/5500	184/1950	930kg	215	4.7	-	151	-	-	+ Nothing comes close for the money - Marginal everyday usability	★★★★★
Vuhl 05	220 R	£59,995	4/2000	285/5600	310/3000	725kg	405	3.7	-	152	-	-	+ Impressive pace and quality - You can get a more thrills from a Caterham at half the price	★★★★★
Zenos E10 S	214 R	£30,595	4/1999	250/7000	295/2500	725kg	350	4.2	-	145	-	-	+ Neutral and exploitable - Prescriptive balance	★★★★★


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**RATINGS** ★ Thrill-free zone ★★ Tepid ★★★ Interesting ★★★★ Seriously good ★★★★★ A truly great car



## OUR CHOICE

**Porsche 911 GT3 RS.** The 911 GT3 RS may only have finished third at eCoty 2015, but it is, of course, still fabulous. Its naturally aspirated flat-six is mesmerising as it revs to its manic top end, while the chassis mixes colossal grip with a dreamy balance and incredible composure.



## BEST OF THE REST

Lower down the 911 range, the 991.2 Carrera and Carrera S haven't been ruined by the addition of turbos. Elsewhere, Jaguar's F-type R Coupe (left) is a real hoot, and we'd take a Mercedes-AMG C63 S Coupe over BMW M4, while Lotus's Exige and Evora continue to offer sublime handling in all guises.

	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 Vantage GT8	224 R	\$165,000	8/4735	440/7300	361/5000	1530kg	292	4.4	-	190	-	-	+ Enough drama to fill a Netflix mini-series - Just 150 being made	★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage S	224 D	\$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 (so get the manual)	★★★★★
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 Vantage	146 R	'09-'13	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1680kg	308	4.4	9.7	190	388	17.3	+ The car we hoped the V8 Vantage would be - Erm, a tad thirsty?	★★★★★
Aston Martin DB11	226 R	\$154,900	12/5204	600/6500	516/5000	1770kg	344	3.9	-	200	333	19.8	+ An excellent GT - Suffers in outright handling terms as a result	★★★★★
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 DB9	178 R	'04-'16	12/5935	510/6500	457/5500	1785kg	290	4.6	-	183	368	18.2	+ A great start to Gaydon-era Astons - Automatic gearbox could be quicker	★★★★★
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	273/1600	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 TT RS (Mk2)	159 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	4.4	-	174	209	31.4	+ Stonkingly fast cross-country - Shockingly expensive for a TT	★★★★★
Audi S5	225 D	\$64,500	6/2995	349/5400	369/1370	1615kg	220	4.7	-	155	166	38.7	+ Sweeter chassis than previous S5 - Still not engaging enough	★★★★★
Audi RS5	206 R	\$59,870	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1715kg	263	4.5	-	155	246	26.9	+ Brilliant engine and improved chassis - Lack of suspension travel; inconsistent steering	★★★★★
Audi R8 V8	201 R	'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 - V12 suddenly seems pointless	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT V8 S	204 F	\$149,800	8/3933	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, thurst	★★★★★
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	\$232,900	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	225 R	\$35,225	6/2979	321/5800	332/1300	1455kg	224	5.2	12.7	155	189	34.9	+ Powertrain, chassis, looks, size - Limited-slip diff is an option, not standard	★★★★★
BMW M4	223 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 M2	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	226 R	\$60,065	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	499/6250	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	'00-'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	'05-'07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1495kg	230	5.1	-	155	-	23.7	+ CSL dynamics without CSL price - Looks like the standard car	★★★★★
BMW M3 CSL (E46)	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	'96-'98	6/3201	321/7400	258/3250	1640kg	223	5.4	12.8	157	-	25.7	+ Performance, image - Never quite as good as the original	★★★★★
BMW M3 (E30)	165 R	'83-'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	+ A race-engine and economy, excellent build - Numb steering, unsettled B-road ride	★★★★★
BMW M6 (F13)	218 R	\$93,150	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 (E63)	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	8/6162	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	4/1261	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	225 R	\$34,995	8/4951	410/6500	391/4250	1711kg	243	4.8	11.6	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 - Scrappy 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	223 R	\$91,660	8/5000	542/6500	501/3500	1730kg	318	3.5	8.1	186	269	25.0	+ Better than the rear-drive R in the wet - Less involving in the dry	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type SVR Coupe	224 D	\$110,000	8/5000	567/6500	516/3500	1705kg	338	3.5	-	200	269	25.0	+ Sharper, quicker and lighter than ever - But only by fractions	★★★★★
Jaguar XKR	168 R	'99-'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	★★★★★
Lexus RC200T F Sport	225 R	\$36,495	4/1998	242/5800	258/1650	1675kg	147	7.5	-	143	168	39.2	+ Fluid ride - Lacks body control and outright grip	★★★★★
Lexus RC F	226 R	\$59,995	8/4969	470/6400	391/4800	1765kg	271	4.5	-	168	251	26.5	+ 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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**RATINGS** ★ Thrill-free zone ★★ Tepid ★★★ Interesting ★★★★ Seriously good ★★★★★ A truly great car

	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-60MPH	0-100MPH	MAX MPH	CO2 g/km	ECMPG	EVO RATING	
Lotus Exige 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 Exige 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 Exige S (S2)	105 R	106-11	4/1796	218/7800	158/5500	930kg	238	4.5	-	148	199	33.2	+ Lightweight with a hefty punch - Uninspiring soundtrack	★★★★★
Lotus Exige (S1)	200 R	100-01	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	<b>5.6</b>	<b>13.6</b>	162	217	30.3	+ Sublime ride and handling. Our 2009 car of the year - Pricey options	★★★★★
Lotus Evora S	168 R	\$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	<b>5.5</b>	<b>12.7</b>	177	330	19.8	+ Striking, accomplished GT - Doesn't spike the pulse like an Aston or 911	★★★★★
Maserati GranTurismo Sport	188 R	\$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	★★★★★
Mazda RX-8	122 R	103-11	2R/1308	228/8200	156/5500	1429kg	162	<b>6.5</b>	<b>16.4</b>	146	299	24.6	+ Never mind the quirks, it's a great drive - Wafer-thin torque output	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG C43 4Matic Coupe	225 D	\$46,280	8/2996	362/5500	383/2000	1735kg	212	4.7	-	155	178	36.2	+ Fast and instilled with a real sense of quality - Not enough emphasis on fun	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG C63 S Coupe	226 R	\$68,710	8/3982	503/5500	516/1750	1725kg	296	3.9	-	155	200	24.8	+ Mouth-watering mechanical package; better than an M4 - Light steering	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupe	162 R	11-14	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1655kg	277	<b>4.4</b>	<b>10.3</b>	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	-	19.9	+ Power, control, build quality - Lacks ultimate involvement	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG Black Series	106 R	07-09	8/6208	500/6800	464/5250	1760kg	289	4.2	-	186	-	-	+ AMG goes Porsche-hunting - Dull-witted gearshift spoils the party	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG S63 Coupe	205 D	\$125,595	8/5498	577/5500	664/4250	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	210kg	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	\$31-09	6/3498	309/6800	264/4800	1532kg	205	<b>5.5</b>	<b>13.0</b>	155	-	24.1	+ Huge fun, and great value too - Honestly, we're struggling	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R (2017MY)	224 D	\$79,995	6/3799	562/6800	470/3300	1725kg	326	2.7	-	196	275	24.0	+ More refinement, much improved interior, still fast - Feels a touch less alert	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R Track Edition	223 R	\$88,560	6/3799	542/6400	466/3200	1740kg	316	<b>3.4</b>	<b>7.7</b>	196	275	24.0	+ Recreates much of the Nismo's ability, without the rock-hard ride - Interior feels dated	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R Nismo	205 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 GT-R (2012MY-2016MY)	218 R	12-16	6/3799	542/6400	466/3200	1740kg	316	<b>3.2</b>	<b>7.5</b>	196	275	24.0	+ GT-R is quicker and better than ever - But costs over £20k more than its launch price	★★★★★
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R34)	196 R	99-02	6/2568	276/7000	289/4400	1560kg	180	<b>4.7</b>	<b>12.5</b>	165	-	20.1	+ Big, brutal, and great fun - Needs more than the standard 276bhp	★★★★★
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R33)	196 R	97-99	6/2568	276/6800	271/4400	1540kg	182	<b>5.4</b>	<b>14.3</b>	155	-	22.0	+ Proof that Japanese hi-tech can work (superbly) - Limited supply	★★★★★
Peugeot RCZ 1.6 THP 200	155 R	\$27,150	4/1598	191/5500	202/1700	1421kg	141	<b>7.3</b>	<b>18.1</b>	147	155	42.1	+ Distinctive looks, highly capable handling - Could be a bit more exciting	★★★★★
Peugeot RCZ R	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 718 Cayman S	225 D	\$48,843	4/2497	345/6500	310/1900	1355kg	259	4.6	-	177	184	26.4	+ Faster and better to drive than ever - Turbo four-cylinder robs it of some of its charm	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman S (981)	202 R	16-16	6/3436	321/7400	273/4500	1320kg	247	<b>4.5</b>	<b>10.5</b>	175	206	32.1	+ The Cayman comes of age - Erm...	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman GT4 (981)	219 F	14-16	6/3436	335/7400	280/4750	1345kg	253	4.9	-	177	211	31.4	+ Tweaks improve an already sublime package - Slightly 'aftermarket' look	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman GTS (981)	221 R	15-16	6/3800	380/7400	310/4750	1340kg	288	4.4	-	183	238	27.4	+ evo Car of the Year 2015 (even though the 991 GT3 RS was there!) - Second-hand prices	★★★★★
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	1415kg	283	<b>4.3</b>	<b>9.5</b>	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 GTS (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)	223 R	\$131,296	6/3996	493/8250	339/6250	1420kg	355	<b>3.0</b>	<b>7.1</b>	193	296	22.2	+ Sensationally good to drive - They won't all be painted Ultra Violet	★★★★★
Porsche 911 R (991)	224 R	\$136,901	6/3996	493/8250	339/6250	1370kg	366	3.8	-	200	308	21.2	+ GT3 RS engine, manual gearbox, light weight - Limited availability	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.2)	182 R	09-11	6/3797	429/7600	317/6250	1395kg	312	<b>4.2</b>	<b>9.2</b>	194	303	22.1	+ Even better than the car it replaced - Give us a minute...	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (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	<b>4.3</b>	<b>9.4</b>	192	-	-	+ Runner-up evo Car of the Year 2006 - Ferrari 599 GTBs	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.1)	105 R	07-09	6/3600	409/7600	298/5500	1375kg	302	4.2	-	193	-	-	+ evo Car of the Year 2007 - A chunk more money than the brilliant GT3	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.2)	221 R	03-05	6/3600	375/7400	284/5000	1380kg	272	<b>4.3</b>	<b>9.2</b>	190	-	-	+ evo Car of the Year 2003 - Chassis is a bit too track-focused for some roads	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (996.2)	068 R	03-05	6/3600	375/7400	284/5000	1330kg	286	4.2	9.2	190	-	-	+ Track-biased version of above - Limited supply	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.1)	182 R	99	6/3600	360/7200	273/5000	1350kg	271	<b>4.5</b>	<b>10.3</b>	187	-	21.9	+ evo Car of the Year 1999 - Porsche didn't build enough	★★★★★
Radical RXC	189 R	\$94,500	6/3700	350/6750	320/4250	900kg	295	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	223 R	\$22,495	4/1998	197/7000	151/6400	1240kg	161	<b>6.9</b>	<b>16.5</b>	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	400/7000	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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17 EDD £2900	M8 GGS £7900	0057 JAK £695	N1 KAB £995	102 LOG £695	G7 MLW £595	P21 OSS £595
203 EDD £895	84 GH £6700	P26 JAM £695	E9 KAB £595	777 LOG £595	P21 MMC £595	OUR 728 £795
V333 EDD £595	A9 GJP £595	T26 JAM £695	T6 KAD £595	R23 LOL £695	M60 MMC £595	333 OVX £595
47 EDH £595	333 GK £3600	R23 JAN £1600	Y3 KAM £1100	470 LOO £695	508 MMU £595	22 OXP £995
Y11I EDH £595	GKZ I9 £595	E72 JAN £1500	L2 KAN £595	R21 LOR £695	R23 MOG £695	99 OYR £1300
Y6 EEE £695	K1 3882 £1800	78 JAN £5400	H2 KAP £595	H10 LOT £795	Y700 MOG £595	6738 OZ £1300
P21 EES £595	424 GLY £1200	E449 JAN £795	W4 KAR £895	P31 LOU £1600	P25 MON £595	4000 P £4300
L16 EFC £595	G6 GNB £695	69 JAP £895	Y12 KAR £595	880 LPI £595	Y3 MOR £695	P29 PAD £595
A99 EFC £795	A11 GMD £595	M70 JAR £595	KAT 473V £595	SR LRW £1200	57 MOR £695	247 PAD £2100
EFW I49 £595	53 GN £3700	P26 JAS £595	L14 KAY £1600	S1 LTR £595	R25 MOR £595	S8 PAL £895
56 EGG £595	GN 486I £2300	R12I JAS £895	R21 KAY £1500	Y9 LTS £595	P27 MOR £595	H8 PAM £1700
L555 EGG £595	GND I77 £595	D11 JAW £795	P25 KAJ £595	R26 LUK £595	R29 MOT £595	V25 PAM £795
G1 EIH £595	GNH 904 £795	R23 JAX £795	KAZ 828 £1200	P29 LUK £595	W5 MPG £595	T41 PAM £595
EJW 6V £595	179 GNM £595	P32I JAX £595	KAZ 6694 £595	500 LXB £895	MR 6646 £3300	PAM 592Y £695
43 EK £3600	K3 GOS £695	P27 JAY £895	K82 KBB £1300	555 LXE £595	R24 MRC £595	T14 PAR £795
4FK 617 £595	P51 GOT £595	X8 JCA £595	882 B5 £595	898 LXP £595	B20 MRH £595	R29 PAR £595
6977 EL £595	Y9 GPC £595	E8 JCF £595	59 KE £4500	P29 LYO £595	V123 MRK £695	P26 PAS £595
ELE 81D £695	L8 GPC £595	Y6 JCK £795	J3 KED £595	555 LYF £595	N8 MSA £595	P32I PAS £595
V11I ELE £595	K12 GRA £595	D4 JCL £695	P25 KEL £795	P29 LYN £1400	W6 MSJ £595	W12 PAT £595
D2 DELL £1200	R23 GRA £795	R32I JCS £595	X5 KEN £1800	31 LYN £5900	N66 PAT £595	N66 PAT £595
C20 ELM £595	T33 GRA £695	P25 JCW £595	KEN 22P £1500	Y900 LYN £795	Y1 MSTR £595	D98 PAT £795
P9 EMD £595	J8 GRE £595	J60 JDJ £595	M44 KEN £1300	1972 M £5900	MI INST £595	847 PAT £2400
782 EMD £595	Y300 GTR £595	M60 JDC £595	86 KEN £3800	W24 MAB £795	P23 MUD £595	P24 PAW £595
P28 EMM £695	788 GTV £795	Y6 JDD £795	KEN 884 £2800	P26 MAC £1200	D11 MUM £895	R27 PAW £595
R12I EMM £595	975 GUN £595	L9 JDH £895	R23 KER £595	R29 MAC £1500	G40 MUM £795	102 PBP £695
R12I EMS £695	W88 GUN £695	P24 JDS £595	S19 KER £1400	P12 MAD £895	MUM 77V £695	PBZ 37 £1200
57 EN £3600	K7 GUS £1300	V4 JDT £595	J27 KEV £1300	P25 MAD £695	T300 MUM £595	1978 PC £3300
80 8769 £595	X28 GUS £595	Y5 JEF £1300	V11 KEV £1500	M46 546 £2600	P21 MUR £595	P21 MUR £595
200 GXJ £995	R31 JEF £795	E644 KEV £695	R74 KEV £595	P8 MAF £695	W29 MUR £595	M1 PDT £795
R900 JEF £595	R7 JEL £695	7471 KEV £595	909 KEY £595	K3 MAG £1800	MVA 766 £795	8348 PE £1400
R7 JEL £695	GZ 7348 £795	R7 JEL £695	909 KEY £595	S19 MAG £595	483 MVX £595	800 PE £1500
R2 HAC £795	L6 ERN £895	EL 867 £1500	KEZ 878 £795	D165 MAG £595	R7 MWS £695	P31 PEE £595
V3 HAD £695	513 HAD £695	P24 JEM £795	KEZ 878 £795	T666 MAG £695	A5 MYN £595	M9 PEG £1300
HAG I4T £895	L200 JEM £695	R002 JEN £695	4692 KF £1300	F666 MAH £595	R24 NAG £595	K18 PEG £595
C6 HAM £1200	P26 JEN £595	222 KFJ £595	167 KHG £595	R26 MAK £595	B18 NAM £595	R31 PEG £595
K12 HAM £595	P25 JES £595	167 KHG £595	K11 45 £1300	P31 MAL £900	R28 NAS £595	PEZ 35 £595
R29 HAM £595	C77 JES £1500	K11 45 £1300	K11 45 £1300	R23 MAL £3100	P31 NAS £595	PEZ 595 £695
R25 HAR £595	B166 JES £895	K11 45 £1300	K11 45 £1300	103 MAL £2900	91 NAS £4100	X4 PGH £4100
P21 HAS £595	S16 JET £595	72 KMS £595	862 KKM £1400	C777 MAL £1200	P28 NAT £795	5142 PH £1900
R25 HAS £695	JET I33N £595	S16 JET £595	72 KMS £595	P31 MCR £2100	P21 NCK £595	P12I PHL £595
J10 HAT £595	H4 JFC £595	438 KOM £595	C1 KOS £795	R151 MAR £595	6973 ND £1500	PIA I22 £695
R1 JFD £595	H3 HAU £595	91 JFD £595	KP 8655 £2300	P32 MAS £595	N30 NDA £595	P13 PIA £1300
HCZ1 £5900	P2 JGB £795	W7 KRS £595	W7 KRS £595	P29 MAT £595	42 NDW £1400	3841 PJ £595
W9 JGR £595	852 JGW £1100	1970 KS £2900	W7 KRS £595	P12I MAT £895	P12I NDY £595	R1 PJA £795
VII HEL £1400	JH £5 £55000	W7 KRS £595	W7 KRS £595	R23 MAW £595	53 NE £3700	P12I NDY £595
W6 JHD £595	E3 JHN £595	KUI I10 £895	548 KTW £1300	MAV 6N £1800	X6 NED £795	P12I NDY £595
J3 HEV £895	J11 363 £1200	55 KVI £1100	55 KVI £1100	R24 MAY £695	Y8 NER £595	P32I PIM £695
HIL 878 £1400	P31 JIH £595	12 NYM £4300	12 NYM £4300	W50 MAY £595	P24 NER £695	E8 PJN £595
J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	T21 KYM £795	T21 KYM £795	P32I MCA £595	R25 NER £595	697 PKO £595
J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	R26 LAB £595	R26 LAB £595	R32I MCM £595	70 NES £6900	Y9 PKS £595
P24 JLM £595	J9 LAP £695	V644 LAN £595	V644 LAN £595	R23 MCP £595	P84 NES £595	A2 PLG £595
J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	E20 MCR £595	74 NET £5400	D007 PMB £695
J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	Y3 MED £695	K18 NEV £595	A6 PMG £795
J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	K18 MEG £795	R21 NEV £595	4126 RO £1300
J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	P26 MEL £1400	NEZ 90 £1500	K22 ROD £895
J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	P12I MEL £1100	G60 NJ £3300	A62 ROD £995
J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	W800 MEL £895	Y3 NJG £595	G81 ROD £795
J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	R23 MER £595	700 NK £3700	ROT I75W £695
J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	P31 MER £1800	P12I NPK £595	857 ROD £2200
J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	P32I MER £795	Y1 MES £1400	R29 ROE £595
J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	Y1 MES £1400	479 NMT £895	ROG 4 £2500
J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	R13 MER £595	B13 MET £595	ROG 321V £895
J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	R27 NMA £595	R27 NMA £595	W700 ROG £795
J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	P29 NYM £595	S44 NMY £595	X002 RON £595
J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	P24 LEE £595	44 NNS £2900	R21 RON £1700
J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	MGF 4Y £895	P29 NNY £595	RON 95Y £1500
J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	P29 LEE £1300	P32I NNY £595	Y9 RON £795
J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	G4 MGW £695	P32I NNY £595	I33 RON £2700
J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I £595	J1I J7I				

**RATINGS** ★ Thrill-free zone ★★ Tepid ★★★ Interesting ★★★★ Seriously good ★★★★★ A truly great car



**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 Superveloce 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/HPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-60MPH	0-100MPH	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	'05-'07	12/5935	520/7000	425/5800	1875kg	282	<b>4.9</b>	<b>10.1</b>	200	-	-	+ Vanquish joins supercar greats - A tad intimidating at the limit
Aston Martin One-77	179 R	'10-'12	12/7312	750/6000	553/7600	1740kg	438	3.7	-	220+	-	-	+ The engine, the looks, the drama - Gearbox hates manoeuvring; only 77 were made
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	<b>3.9</b>	<b>8.4</b>	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	<b>2.8</b>	<b>5.8</b>	253	596	11.4	+ Superbly engineered 4WD quad-turbo racer - 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	<b>3.8</b>	<b>7.6</b>	205	355	18.8	+ Huge pace and character - Take plenty of brave pills if there's rain
Ferrari 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	398/6000	1485kg	384	<b>3.2</b>	<b>6.8</b>	202	307	20.6	+ An astounding achievement - Paddleshift only
Ferrari 458 Speciale	203 R	'14-'15	8/4497	597/9000	398/6000	1395kg	435	3.0	-	202+	275	23.9	+ evo Car of the Year 2014 - If you don't own a regular 458, nothing
Ferrari F430	163 R	'04-'10	8/4308	483/8500	343/5250	1449kg	339	4.0	-	196	-	18.6	+ Just brilliant - Didn't you read the plus point?
Ferrari 430 Scuderia	121 R	'07-'10	8/4308	503/8500	347/5250	1350kg	378	<b>3.5</b>	<b>7.7</b>	198	-	15.7	+ Successful F1 technology transplant - Likes to shout about it
Ferrari 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	<b>3.5</b>	<b>7.4</b>	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	<b>4.2</b>	<b>9.6</b>	202	-	12.3	+ Fiorano pack makes 575 truly great - It should have been standard
Ferrari 550 Maranello	169 R	'97-'02	12/5474	485/7000	415/5000	1716kg	287	4.3	10.0	199	-	12.3	+ Everything - Nothing
Ferrari GTC4 Lusso	225 D	£230,000	12/6262	680/8000	514/5750	1920kg	360	3.4	-	208	350	18.8	+ Rear-wheel steering increases agility - Not as engaging as other Ferraris
Ferrari FF	194 R	'11-'15	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 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	<b>3.5</b>	<b>6.7</b>	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	£140,000	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 Veyron money
Koenigsegg One:1	202 R	£52.0m	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	224 R	£155,400	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	209 D	£186,760	10/5204	602/8250	413/6500	1532kg	399	3.2	-	202+	290	22.6	+ Defies the numbers; incredible point-to-point pace - Takes work to find its sweet-spot
Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4	180 D	'08-'13	10/5204	552/8000	398/6500	1410kg	398	3.7	-	202	325	16.0	+ Still a missile from A to B - Starting to show its age
Lamborghini LP570-4 Superleggera	152 R	'10-'13	10/5204	562/8000	398/6500	1340kg	426	<b>3.5</b>	<b>2.2</b>	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	<b>4.3</b>	<b>9.4</b>	196	-	-	+ On a full-bore start it spins all four wheels. Cool - Slightly clunky e-gear
Lamborghini 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 SVX	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 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	<b>3.2</b>	<b>7.3</b>	212	-	-	+ A supercar in its truest, wildest sense - Be prepared for stares
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 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	1440kg	397	3.1	-	204	258	26.6	+ A truly fun and engaging sports car - McLaren doesn't call it a supercar(!)
McLaren 570GT	224 D	£154,000	8/3799	562/7500	443/5000	1495kg	382	3.4	-	204	258	26.6	+ Blurs the line between grand tourer and supercar brilliantly - 570S is more involving
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 extra
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	1490kg	616	2.8	-	217+	194	19.0	+ Freakish breadth of ability - At its mind-bending best on track
McLaren F1	205 R	'94-'98	12/6064	627/7500	479/4000	1137kg	560	3.2	6.3	240+	-	34.0	+ 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	<b>4.1</b>	<b>8.4</b>	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	'03-'07	8/5439	617/6500	575/3250	1693kg	370	3.7	-	208	-	-	+ Zonda-pace, 575-style drivability - Dreadful brake feel
Noble M600	186 R	£200,000	8/4439	650/6800	604/3800	1198kg	551	<b>3.8</b>	<b>7.7</b>	225	-	-	+ Spiritual successor to the Ferrari F40 - It's a bit pricey
Pagani Huayra	185 R	c£1mm	12/5980	720/5800	737/2250	1350kg	542	3.3	-	224	-	-	+ Our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Engine isn't as bone-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 blingy next to a Carrera GT
Pagani Zonda Cinque Roadster	147 D	'09-'10	12/7291	669/6200	575/4000	1400kg	485	3.4	-	217+			

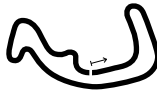


# TRACK TIMES

⊕ = 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	Yes
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 Z.O1 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 275 Trophy-R (fastest hot hatch)	1:07.3	205	Yes
SEAT Leon Cupra 280 Sub8	1:07.6	220	-
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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# Art of Speed

by RICHARD LANE



## Alfa Romeo 'Busso' V6

**T**HERE'S ONLY EVER BEEN ONE PURE-BLOODED ALFA V6 and it's difficult to say for which characteristic we love it more – its swooning good looks or its spine-tingling wail. *evo* old boy John Simister once compared the latter to a choir of tenors channelling 'O Sole Mio' down a drainpipe, but today we make the case for this wonderful engine's visible charms.

A 60-degree V6 designed by Giuseppe Busso, it debuted almost four decades ago as a 2.5-litre single-overhead-camshaft powerplant in the Alfa 6. Since then it's featured in numerous Alfa specials and is practically a dead cert on any 'greatest engines' shortlist. Transversely mounted, longitudinally mounted (notably for the SZ), carburetted, fuel-injected, turbocharged, naturally aspirated, given additional camshafts and valves, it was ultimately bored out to 3.2 litres before emissions standards sounded a death knell in 2005. As for Signor Busso, he was the first technical director Enzo ever hired and led the design of Ferrari's very first Grand Prix car during the 1940s. A move (back) to Alfa soon followed and that's where he stayed for the rest of his career. Busso died shortly after the last of his V6 engines left Alfa's Arese plant in Milan, but what a legacy he left (a legacy for which the engine wizards at Cosworth unsuccessfully tried to buy the tooling).

With no plastic shroud, the Busso V6 is an engine on perma-show, and there's plenty to gawp at. First is the timeless rocker cover atop the foremost bank of cylinders. Rendered in bare, straked aluminium with the

elegant Alfa script in red, it wouldn't look out of place in the back of a *Tee-po* 33. Closer to the bulkhead is a similarly styled air intake plenum bearing letters and numbers that on this particular variant indicate a displacement of 3.2 litres and application within a Gran Turismo Alleggerita – for Grand Touring Lightweight – model.

What never fails to unleash your inner magpie, of course, is the chromed sextet of inlet pipes that leave the intake plenum and cascade down between the fuel rails. If the rocker cover looks like it came from Alfa's universally loved prototype racing car of the '60s, then these subtly offset chutes would be right at home in a Targa Florio Maserati. Now consider that the unit pictured was available in 2002 under the bonnet of a £22,500 hatchback – the 147 GTA – and it's very hard to think of another engine that's quite as spectacular for such a modest outlay. Suggestions on a postcard, please, but be warned, you'll struggle.

A punchy 247bhp at 6200rpm from 3179cc of double-overhead-camshaft, 24-valve V6 meant the 147 GTA was very much a case of nuclear bomb meets shoebox, but sharp throttle response and a delivery gloriously skewed towards the 6900rpm limiter gave it character, too. And that's the irresistible, enduring appeal of the Busso V6 – it looks, sounds and delivers its payload, if not to quite the same effect as a full-blown supercar, then at least with the same colourful sentiment, which in a hatchback or saloon such as the 147 or 156 GTA is priceless. So as for good looks versus personality, then, with the Busso V6, you get both. ❧

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