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STUART GALLAGHER

# Rally cars don't need more grip...

**I AM PREPARED TO BE PROVED WRONG ON THIS.** In fact I hope I am. But I genuinely fear that those in charge of the World Rally Championship have lost the plot.

This month, those at **evo** who have a far more extensive anorak collection than me have spent more time with Citroën's WRC driver Kris Meeke than they have with their own families. The rest of the time they've been chasing the news on every 2017 WRC team from Ford to Toyota and Hyundai and even Volkswagen. And it's what they have reported back that's of concern.

For 2017, power is up. Corner speeds, too. The centre diffs are back, and programmable mid-stage, while aerodynamics are, well, judge for yourself on page 110. I grew up in Essex and even Harlow's finest tuning emporium of the 1990s, Ripspeed, would view next year's WRC cars as OTT in the flicks-and-wings department.

It's the aero that's the genuine concern. Rally cars don't need aero and the extra grip it provides. Does it really matter if Meeke is five seconds quicker over a stage than he was last year? It does if he wants to win, but to the spectator it means nothing. We really don't care about a tenth here or a hundredth there. We care about action and drama that we can actually see. That means watching a driver balancing a car between grip and slip on an unpredictable surface with no access to a pre-set differential that's going to haul them out of trouble. Or wind-tunnel-honed aero that allows for perfect flight over a Finnish yump.

WRC drivers are among the most talented in the world; their feel for a car is impossible to comprehend. But the way their sport is going, their exuberance, entertainment and skill are being dulled by engineers getting excited about the latest diff map and aero device. F1 was allowed to be ruined by engineers for the pleasure of the very few – please don't let it happen to rallying, too.

And on that cheery note, thank you for your support throughout 2016 and, from all at **evo**, I wish you a happy New Year. ☒

@stuartg917

*'F1 was allowed to be ruined by engineers for the pleasure of the very few'*

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**FUEL CONSUMPTION** Lotus Sport 410 (mpg\* [l/100 km]) Urban 20.8 (13.6), Extra Urban 39.8 (7.1), Combined 29.1 (9.7), CO2 emissions 230 g/km.

\*Performance results may vary depending upon the specification of the particular vehicle, environmental conditions, driving style and other factors. MPG figures are obtained from laboratory testing and intended for comparisons between vehicles and may not reflect real driving results. Published MPG figures and performance results are intended for comparisons between vehicles only. Verification of performance results should not be attempted on public roads. Lotus recommends that all local speed and safety laws must be obeyed and safety belts worn at all times.

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# RADAR

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*New metal*

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DB4 GT**

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**NEW  
INSIGNIA**

## Mazda MX-5 RF

Folding hard-top turns the roadster into a compact GT

by STUART GALLAGHER

**A**DDING A HEAVIER, RETRACTABLE metal roof to an MX-5 may strike some as counterintuitive to the whole philosophy behind Mazda's lightweight sports car. After all, the model has always championed simplicity and purity over appealing to a mass market by dangling trinkets and tricks in a bid to win their monthly payments. However,



for Mazda and the MX-5 a retractable roof is big news, and in today's world of £40,000-plus Porsche Boxsters, £30,000-plus Lotus Elises, flaccid BMW Z4s, outdated Mercedes-Benz SLCs and disappointing Fiat 124 Spiders, the Japanese two-seater remains a lone, bright star.

Of course, there is sound reasoning behind Mazda's introduction of the RF – which stands for Retractable Fastback – despite its potential to clash with the soft-top: the folding hard-top version of the old Mk3 MX-5 took more than 80 per cent of sales, demonstrating that while MX-5 owners might fancy the idea of wind in their hair, they actually prefer to have a tin lid over their heads rather than a fabric one.

The want is strong, then, which

also explains why the UK is bringing in 500 examples of an RF Launch Edition. It has the 158bhp 2-litre four-cylinder engine, a two-tone roof (its centre painted black in contrast to the Launch Edition's Soul Red or Machine Grey body colours), the chunky seats from the MX-5 Recaro Edition, and Alcantara trim for the dash and door cards. There's also a set of BBS alloy wheels in black and a black lip spoiler on the trailing edge of the bootlid, while Bilstein dampers and a limited-slip differential are standard.

The Launch Edition costs £28,995 – £3300 more than a Sport Nav model. That's a considerable sum for an MX-5. It's a sizeable wedge for any small car, in fact, but it would seem we now live in a world where new-car prices are on an upward trajectory –

witness the 1-litre EcoBoost Fiesta ST-Line that recently took up brief residence in the *evo* car park and wore a shocking £19,000 price tag. I mean, how easily must you be sucked in by the balloons and open tailgates at your local Ford dealer to think that represents a good deal?

Comprising three sections, the RF's roof is fully automatic in operation (there's no retaining hook to manually undo as in the previous-generation model), and while the front and middle sections stow away under the rear deck, the rear screen remains in place between the rear buttresses. To these eyes it's an incredibly clean and simple design and it's hard to believe that take-up of the RF won't match that of the folding hard-top Mk3 – especially as the RF offers the option

## RIVALS

Well, there aren't many...

Mazda claims that there aren't really any direct rivals to the MX-5 RF. However, the company has its sights set on the big-selling 'sports' cars from a class above, namely the Audi TT and Mercedes-Benz SLC. But with its lid on, the RF's fastback looks and rear-wheel drive might distract potential buyers of the Toyota GT86 and Subaru BRZ, prices of which span from £22,495 to over £29,000.

“ Many MX-5 owners prefer a tin lid over their heads ”



**500**  
units

Number of RF Launch Editions being produced

**12**  
seconds

Time it takes for the folding roof to open fully

**80**  
per cent

RF's likely cut of the UK market's MX-5 sales

**40**  
kg

Probable weight penalty for the fancy roof



**Left to right:** RF Launch Edition uses 2-litre Skyactiv engine with 158bhp; graphic display reveals roof's progress; Alcantara for the lower fascia, door cards and seats

of a six-speed automatic gearbox, a convenience offered to US buyers of the soft-top Mk4 but not to us Brits.

Naturally the RF will be heavier than the 1000kg at which the soft-top 2-litre MX-5 tips the scales, but Mazda won't yet reveal by how much. However, we understand that our estimate of an increase of around 40kg isn't too far adrift.

Prodding, poking and staring at an RF for an afternoon away from the

bright lights of a motor show stand makes you appreciate how rare and thin on the road small, affordable(ish) sports cars are. It also makes you question why the Toyota-Subaru alliance hasn't chopped the roof off the GT86 and BRZ yet; it's not as though it would have a detrimental effect on either model's sales, after all.

We enjoy the soft-top Mk4 MX-5. We're fans of its willingness to please and how it wears its credentials on

its sleeve and doesn't pretend to be anything it knows it can't be. It's a simple sports car that appeals to a wide demographic that is strongly supported by an aftermarket industry that can answer most needs—including the fitment of a V8, should you so wish. But even in its standard state of tune it delivers an honest approach to the thrill of driving. Fingers crossed when we drive the RF in a couple of months' time we'll find the same still applies.

#### SPECIFICATION

<b>Engine</b>	In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc
<b>Power</b>	158bhp @ 6000rpm
<b>Torque</b>	148lb ft @ 4600rpm
<b>0-62mph</b>	7.3sec (claimed)
<b>Top speed</b>	133mph
<b>Weight</b>	1040kg (est)
<b>Basic price</b>	£28,995
<b>On sale</b>	March 2017





## Bentayga sales pave way for V8 'Barnato'

Bentley EXP 10 Speed 6 concept of 2015 on course for production green light. Watch out, Aston Martin



**J**UST AS THE CAYENNE offended purists but made Porsche enough money to make endless GT3 derivatives, so the Bentley Bentayga SUV seems certain to allow the British firm to return to the two-seater sports car market.

The Bentayga (pictured right) has been a smash, comfortably outstripping its predicted production run of 3600 cars in 2016 to hit a total of almost 5500. And forthcoming long-wheelbase and 'coupe' editions will only add to the coffers at Crewe.

Bentley has been weighing up whether to base the next phase of its expansion towards annual production of 15,000 cars on a smaller SUV, or square up to rivals with a production version of the EXP 10 Speed 6 concept (pictured above) that was revealed at the 2015 Geneva motor show.

Now the firm's CEO, Wolfgang Dürheimer, has given the strongest indication yet that the two-seater is the preferred choice. He has confirmed that a plan for a third model line is in place (to sit alongside the Continental and Bentayga) and

“ Bentley is likely to keep its sports car rear-driven with twin-turbo V8 power ”

that it is no longer the baby SUV.

“The problem with a smaller SUV is that it ends up against many other premium brands [such as Porsche], not luxury ones,” he says. “The new car will be younger and more exciting than anything currently in our line-up, and we will be up against our luxury rivals; this is what I prefer.”

When asked if these rivals would include Aston Martin, Dürheimer replied, “They are a good example.”

The sports car, due in 2019, will probably be based on a shortened



version of the Porsche-developed MSB platform that will underpin next year's all-new Continental. Power could come from the twin-turbo V8 revealed in the new Panamera Turbo, although Dürheimer has confirmed that the Continental will also get a V6 during its life, so that could conceivably be slotted into the smaller model, too. MSB also supports four-wheel drive, but Bentley is likely to keep its sports car rear-driven.

The new model is expected to be priced from around £120,000.

It could well carry the 'Barnato' badge in a nod to famous Bentley racer Woolf Barnato (pictured top), who won the Le Mans 24 Hours in consecutive years between 1928 and 1930 – impressively, the only years he entered the race. Bentley applied to trademark the name around the same time it registered Bentayga, and the motorsport connection would be a useful one as it tries to establish itself as a serious luxury rival to the next generation of Aston V8 Vantage.

**John McIlroy**





# Lotus back in the black

Under the guidance of CEO Jean-Marc Gales, Lotus appears to be recovering, with more efficient operating practices and new models scheduled

**L**OTUS CARS HAS MADE a profit for the first time since Colin Chapman was at the helm of the Norfolk-based company.

It is confirmation that CEO Jean-Marc Gales has got it right when pulling Lotus out of the mire it was driven into by former boss Dany Bahar. In the 30 months he's been at Hethel, Gales has put his purchasing background to good use. 'Every nut and bolt, supplier and component that goes into every car has been scrutinised,' he reveals. 'Is this the best product for the job we need it to do? Are we sourcing it from the best supplier? Are we paying the *right price*?' This may seem a simplistic approach by Gales, but it's an effective and successful one. The Evora Sport 410 and Exige Sport 380 have been funded from the money the company is making, representing a self-sufficiency Lotus hasn't seen since 2000.

The turnaround has not only been because of the efficiency and quality improvements to all models. The Evora is now on sale in the US and is sold-out until March 2017. In 2016 the Hethel factory built around 1800 cars,

“The new Elise will be here in 2020. We need this car, it's integral to Lotus”

a 600 increase compared with when Gales took over in 2014. Since then he has also cut the workforce by 400 employees. 'We had the same number of staff as we were building cars. That's not sustainable,' he explains. Some 2000 cars are expected to be delivered in 2017, 2500 in 2018.

The next stage is for Lotus to take advantage of its recent success. Expect a steady flow of enhanced versions of current models. 'Our customers want the best,' states Gales. 'The Evora 410 sold out almost immediately, half the

Exige 380 production run was pre-sold when we announced the car. If we deliver the quality, the performance and the core Lotus DNA, our customers are willing to pay for it.'

But Gales knows he can't continue to rely on endless iterations of the current cars – an Evora Roadster arrives in 2017 – and that new models, crucially a new Elise, are needed: 'The new Elise will be here in 2020. 'We need this car, it's integral to Lotus and the new one will be as close to the original as possible. It will be everything you expect an Elise to be – lightweight [sub 1000kg], affordable and the best in its class.'

Plans for a Chinese-built SUV are progressing, but recent stories of Geely's interest in buying Lotus are a little wide of the mark, says Gales, suggesting he's exploring a manufacturing partner in China to build his SUV and conclusions have been jumped to.

After the folly of the 2010 Paris motor show, when Bahar announced Lotus would produce five all-new models within six years, there's every reason to believe that the future of Lotus is now back on the right track.

# New Arrivals

Track-inspired motors old and new, plus a Rolls-Royce SUV tweak our interest this issue



## ASTON MARTIN DB4 GT CONTINUATION

The original Aston Martin DB4 GT was built between 1959 and 1963, with eight of the original 75 in special lightweight form. Aston Martin has now announced it will build a further 25 lightweight cars, to original specification, each with 340bhp from their twin-spark straight-six engines. Production will commence in late 2017. It's clearly the latest fashion: Jaguar, Lister and Shelby have all created continuation cars in recent years. McLaren F1 continuation model, anyone?

## SEAT LEON CUPRA 300

You can now buy a SEAT Leon Cupra that matches the Volkswagen Golf R's power output. The new Leon Cupra 300 goes on sale in March 2017 and makes 296bhp. In estate form, it also matches the R's four driven wheels, giving customers a potential cut-price Golf R Estate rival. The latter is DSG-only and should hit 62mph in 5.1sec. Dynamic Chassis Control is standard; pricing for front-drive models should be similar to the existing Cupra 290's £28,380 starting point.



## McLAREN 570S TRACK PACK

GT3 and GT4 racing categories provide inspiration for McLaren's Track Pack for the 570S. The rear wing is 12mm higher – adding a surprising 29kg of extra downforce at 150mph – while kerb weight is 25kg lighter thanks in part to Alcantara-trimmed carbonfibre seats and new alloy wheels. McLaren's Track Telemetry system is standard. The Track Pack upgrade is priced at £16,500.



## FERRARI 488 CHALLENGE

The new Ferrari 488 Challenge can lap Fiorano in 1:15.5 – just half a second behind the 599XX Evoluzione. The turbocharged V8 engine gets new mapping and the seven-speed dual-clutch transmission has shorter ratios, while the remarkable Side Slip Control and E-diff from the road car are recalibrated for racing purposes. Significant aero tweaks reduce drag and increase downforce.



## ROLLS-ROYCE PROJECT CULLINAN

If the Bentayga was enough of a departure from traditional Bentleys to offend, then the Rolls-Royce Cullinan, recently spotted testing, is unlikely to reduce your blood pressure. Several traditional Rolls-Royce features will be incorporated: an imposing grille, suicide-hinged rear doors and unperturbed ride quality. It will be built on all-new aluminium architecture.





## BMW's electric future

**B**MW WANTS TO BE CONSIDERED A technology brand as much as it does a car manufacturer.

In a speech during a showcase of BMW's future product plans – there's an i8 Spyder coming in 2018 and improved batteries (in terms of range and output) for both it and the i3 – Dr Ian Robertson, board member for sales and marketing, explained how the company's move into autonomous driving and the digitalisation of how we connect with our car will see the German marque focus on digital technology as much as on its next generation of internal combustion engines.

This switch won't see BMW abandon the art of building cars completely, rather the development of its future models will be led by the requirements of electric mobility, autonomous driving and internet-based connectivity and digital services, which will be controlled and managed by BMW.

Robertson also revealed his goal of selling 100,000 i and iPerformance models in 2017 (equalling the numbers it has sold in the first three years since the i sub-brand's launch). 'Sales in this sector are growing and this target is achievable. We have the product and the

### Pursuit of evermore advanced technology set to shape the German firm's research and development programmes

technology transfer from i to iPerformance models and this is accelerating all the time.

'I believe we will have a more comprehensive set of plug-in hybrid and EV vehicles than any of our competitors.'

So is this the end of BMW as we know it? The Munich diehards will probably say it is, but by laying its stall out and presenting its strategy, BMW has demonstrated its focus for looking at the next 100 years rather than gazing fondly at its first 100.

And away from the EVs and plug-ins, what can BMW M fans expect in the near future? Something with a 5 in its name, and trust us, it won't disappoint.

## Quattro becomes Audi Sport

Audi has renamed its performance division from Audi Quattro to Audi Sport. The move has been instigated by Stephan Winkelmann, who moved from Lamborghini to head up Audi's performance division in the spring of 2016.

'Audi Sport better represents what we do here,' says Winkelmann. 'Quattro is synonymous with Audi, it's a core component of our performance vehicles, but it is only one component that goes into our cars. Audi Sport better represents what we stand for and the cars we are building.'

Crucially the switch will also see Audi Sport more directly involved in the development of future Audi road cars, right from the start of a new car's development programme. In the past, the subsidiary has had to wait until after the 'regular' cars had been signed off for production before developing its RS products.

And what does Winkelmann consider to be the epitome of Audi Sport and what its future products should look towards? The R8, naturally, and also his daily driver – as it has been since his Lamborghini days – the RS6.



### BIG NUMBERS

# 7:10.9

The Nürburgring lap time set by the Mercedes-AMG GT R

# £46k

Entry price for the Premier Edition of Alpine's new coupe

# 7:47.19

The latest Ring lap time set by VW with a Golf GTI Clubsport S

# 5.1sec

The 0-100kph time claimed for Kia's new performance saloon



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IN SHOWROOMS 2017**



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PEUGEOT RECOMMENDS TOTAL Official Fuel Consumption in MPG (l/100km) and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (g/km) for the all-new 3008 SUV Range are: Urban 37.2 - 67.3 (7.6-4.2), Extra Urban MPG figures are achieved under official EU test conditions, intended as a guide for comparative purposes only and may not reflect actual on-the-road driving conditions. Visit [Peugeot.co.uk](http://Peugeot.co.uk) for more information.



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## INSIGHT

# The Racing Insider

Programming a World Champion

**R**OBORACE IS THE first attempt at using autonomous technology in motorsport. As a lifelong fan of the sport and someone who studies the dynamics of the personal interactions of our sport on and off track between drivers, management, promoters and fans, I should really be writing about how this is going to kill our sport. Nope.

In fact, I proposed to the ACO (Automobile Club de l'Ouest) a few years ago that it should set a challenge that someone bring an autonomous car to Le Mans for the Garage 56 slot (for innovative vehicles) in 2020.

Today motorsport is struggling to find its place in society. Entertainment or engineering? Waste of resources or test bed for lower emissions? The debate rages on. Whilst it does, the world changes. Five years ago Elon Musk was a chancer, EVs were laughed at and Trump was just a reality TV star... Now everyone is stealing Musk's people and ideas, the entire VW group is all about EVs, and President Trump is a reality.

Autonomous will impact the automotive industry far more than EVs will. Electricity is just a propulsion method. Autonomous changes everything. Car ownership, road and city design, the law, the business model, the brands involved and and and...

So once we accept it's coming, as fans and guardians of our sport we have to see how we can make

sure motorsport contributes to and benefits from the seismic shift.

In parallel with their road car engineer cousins, motorsport engineers will have to programme in advance how their autonomous vehicles should react to billions of scenarios. The legal ramifications on the road are mind-boggling. But let's just take one scenario on track to illustrate the issue...

You can't win the championship for your brand (Uber Racing Inc) unless another programmer and their brand (Google Deutschland) finishes behind some other racing pods. You've spent your whole life getting to this point so you have to give your pod the right scenario to ensure it comes out on top, or there's no point competing.

So you try to slow down the Google by allowing the autonomous energy drink can and flying red branded baseball cap to have a chance of getting past them. This is exactly what your real life heroes would have done in the last century. Win at any cost. But you are also a reasonable guy, so the algorithm you deploy is not aggressive enough and Google wins the championship.

You are broken. This is the only reason you get up in the morning. It is your whole life. Yet you congratulate Herr Google and thank your IT team for all of their support. But back home the tech press attack your pre-programmed scenarios, saying you will be fired and even aggressively attacking your character and personality. Yet



“  
Autonomous  
will impact the  
automotive  
industry far  
more than  
EVs will.  
Electric is just  
a propulsion  
system.  
Autonomous  
changes  
everything  
”

all you did was try to win. Like your heroes did when men were men. Some of those men even say that you could have turned the 'backing up' scenario from 7 to 10.

With the tech press being so negative you decide the old way of talking to your fans via an outdated platform called 'the press' is not the most efficient way of communicating. You can show your fans what it's like to be a programmer of autonomous race cars directly, your message getting to them without interference from third parties. You even taunt the old industry by making yourself look like a rabbit in the headlights during an archaic tradition called a 'press conference'.

If we were programming our ultimate driver we'd likely add parts of Senna, Hunt, Gilles and others. Until this season I was on the fence with Lewis. But on and off track I really think we have a mix of those greats. His rebellion on Snapchat and team radio is the 2016 version of the rough edges that people loved in previous heroes.

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

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MotorSport Vision (MSV) is gearing up for a superb season in 2017, with a thrilling programme of major national and international race meetings at its four famous race circuits. Discounted advance tickets and the best grandstand seats are available online from our website.

21 January	MGI Engineering Winter Stage Rally	Brands Hatch	21-23 July	MCE Insurance British Superbike Championship	Brands Hatch (GP)
19 February	Snetterton Stage Rally	Snetterton	23 July	Vintage Festival	Cadwell Park
25/26 March	British Truck Racing Championship	Brands Hatch	29/30 July	Dunlop MSA British Touring Car Championship	Snetterton
1/2 April	Dunlop MSA British Touring Car Championship	Brands Hatch	5/6 August	British GT and BRDC British F3 Championships	Brands Hatch (GP)
14-17 April	Easter MCE British Superbike Championship	Brands Hatch	13 August	Festival Italia	Brands Hatch
15 & 17 April	British GT and BRDC British F3 Championships	Oulton Park	18-20 August	MCE Insurance British Superbike Championship	Cadwell Park
29 April - 1 May	MCE Insurance British Superbike Championship	Oulton Park	19/20 August	Deutsche Fest	Brands Hatch
6/7 May	Blancpain GT Series Sprint Cup	Brands Hatch (GP)	19 August	Mini Festival	Oulton Park
13/14 May	Mini Festival	Snetterton	26-28 August	Historic Gold Cup	Oulton Park
20/21 May	Dunlop MSA British Touring Car Championship	Oulton Park	2 September	Lotus Festival	Brands Hatch
27/28 May	Masters Historic Festival with Historic F1	Brands Hatch (GP)	9/10 September	British Truck Racing Championship	Snetterton
27/28 May	British GT and BRDC British F3 Championships	Snetterton	9/10 September	Supercar Challenge	Brands Hatch
10 June	Vintage Festival	Oulton Park	15-17 September	MCE Insurance British Superbike Championship	Oulton Park
10/11 June	American SpeedFest V	Brands Hatch	17 September	Vintage Festival	Snetterton
17/18 June	Historic Wolds Trophy	Cadwell Park	30 Sept/1 October	Dunlop MSA British Touring Car Championship	Brands Hatch (GP)
30 June - 2 July	MCE Insurance British Superbike Championship	Snetterton	13-15 October	MCE Insurance British Superbike Championship	Brands Hatch (GP)
1/2 July	Legends of Brands Hatch Superprix	Brands Hatch (GP)	4 November	Neil Howard Stage Rally & Fireworks Display	Oulton Park
8/9 July	Mini Festival	Brands Hatch	4/5 November	British Truck Racing and Fireworks	Brands Hatch

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\*All events and dates subject to change

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Alpine Adventure

Fri 16 - Tue 20 June, 2017

£2500 per car (2 people)



The Alpine Adventure is a 1500 mile, 5 day driving event that travels to Lake Lucerne, the San Bernardino Pass, the Julier Pass, St Moritz, the Umbrail Pass, the Stelvio Pass, the Bormio Pass, Lake Como, Monaco, the Col de Turini and the Route Napoleon, along the way staying in only the finest luxury hotels and chateau mansions. All cars are welcome.



California Run

Sat 16 - Sat 23 Sept, 2017

£6000 per car (2 people)



The California Run is a 1500 mile, 1 week driving event starting in Los Angeles, travelling to Las Vegas, Death Valley, Mount Whitney, the Sierra Nevada Mountains, the Yosemite National Park, San Francisco then finally down the Pacific Coast Highway back to Los Angeles. All participants get a 2017 Ford Mustang cabriolet for the week and are flown in to and out of Los Angeles.



Western Cape  
Safari

Sat 02 - Sat 09 Dec, 2017

£6000 per car (2 people)



The Western Cape Safari is a 1000 mile, 1 week driving event that travels along the Western Cape province of South Africa, starting at Cape Town, travelling to Cape Agulhas, Knysna, the Aquila Safari Park and back to Cape Town. All participants get a 2017 Jeep Wrangler cabriolet for the week and are flown in to and out of Cape Town.

Please visit our new website [www.circuit-days.co.uk](http://www.circuit-days.co.uk)  
for more information and to book.



## VAUXHALL INSIGNIA

# Svelte new saloon set for Geneva

All-wheel drive, torque vectoring and a link to the Focus RS. A drivers' Vauxhall at last?

**V**AUXHALL'S ALL-NEW Insignia, now going by the name of Insignia Grand Sport, is not an obvious *evo* subject. But as with many new mainstream cars, it's not the design, the segment it belongs to or the people who will buy it that interests us. No, what intrigues us are the future derivatives that the new Insignia, to be launched at the Geneva motor show in March, may spawn; something with a VXR badge, perhaps.

## BODY

Like most new cars, the Insignia will be lighter than before. Around 60kg has been shed from the body-in-white alone and, overall, up to 175kg has been saved, depending on which model you go for. Despite this, the wheelbase has grown by 92mm and the track widened by 11mm. The former should improve high-speed stability, the latter the car's poise and turn-in. The designers have also lowered the roofline by 29mm and the Cd has dropped to 0.26. The car is low, long and lean, in other words.

## ENGINES AND TRANSMISSIONS

Turbochargers. You didn't expect anything else, did you? And don't expect anything more than four cylinders either, because brutish V6 turbos are now a thing of the past. Capacity will peak at 2 litres, but some twin-spool trickery and twin turbos for some of the smaller-capacity engines will likely be offered. During the car's first year on sale expect power to peak



“  
*If the AWD system sounds familiar, that's because it's the same one used in the Ford Focus RS*  
”

at 250bhp, although Vauxhall has hinted that there is more to come.

The mainstay models of the range will be front-wheel drive and fitted with a six-speed manual gearbox. More powerful examples and those in higher trim lines will be offered with an eight-speed automatic and all-wheel drive.

Utilising two electronically controlled multi-plate clutches that replace the differential normally fitted to the rear axle of GM's four-wheel-drive system, the new AWD hardware will provide the Insignia with genuine torque vectoring – a first for an all-wheel-drive Vauxhall. If the system sounds familiar, that's because it's the same one developed by GKN and used in the Ford Focus RS.

## CHASSIS

The Grand Sport enhances the current Insignia's FlexRide chassis technology. The system is able to alter the damping, steering weight, throttle response and gearshift points (for the auto 'box) independently or based on one of three selectable driving modes.

## CONNECTIVITY

This will be impressive – no new car can come to market without Silicon Valley's latest must-have technology. For the Grand Sport, this will include the latest 'OnStar' concierge service and smartphone connectivity. A large infotainment touchscreen will replace the previous car's bucket of buttons, while outside you can expect slim LED headlights that can adapt to surrounding traffic.

## ANYTHING ELSE?

The Insignia Grand Sport product line will expand, with an estate (Grand Tourer) and a jacked-up Audi Allroad rival in the works. As for performance derivatives, Vauxhall remains tight-lipped. Its VXR brand has been successful, but the premium approach the new Grand Sport takes suggests Vauxhall may be looking to align its performance models with rival German brands' sub-performance models. So while it's unlikely we'll see a maniac state of tune to rival the outgoing VXR version, the prospect of an Audi S4/AMG C43-style Grand Sport has a certain intrigue about it.



The Jaguar D-Type is assured of its legacy in motorsport. A three-time winner of Le Mans, a piece of piston from one of these cars has been cut into the shape of its wheel spinner and sits behind the sapphire crystal backplate of our own C9 D-Type – limited to just 55 pieces. £2,995

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WATCH TECH

Chopard Full Strike

Chopard watch boss Karl-Friedrich Scheufele is an unashamed petrolhead who often drives to work in one of his dozens of classic cars – and he’s managed to integrate his love of them into his business by involving the company in historic motoring events such as the Monaco Historique and Italy’s Mille Miglia.

In 1996, Scheufele brought Chopard coveted ‘manufacture’ status through the foundation of the LUC (for Louis-Ulysse Chopard) atelier in Fleurier, Switzerland, to make in-house movements and high-end watches. It opened with a staff of three but now employs 160, and along the way has produced many complex in-house movements.

Its latest, the innovative Full Strike, is its first ‘minute repeater’: it chimes the hour, quarter hour and minutes past the quarter hour using gongs made from sapphire crystal, which are said to offer a clarity of sound far superior to any metallic material. Equally impressive is the fact that the minute repeater mechanism is activated not from a conventional slide at the side of the case, but from a small button integrated with the winding crown.

Such technical genius doesn’t come cheap, of course: a Full Strike will set you back around £200,000.



THIS MONTH

Halda Race Pilot Trackmaster

Price: €6000  
From: haldasweden.com

Halda reckons its new Trackmaster could be ‘the most advanced race watch available’. The electronic instrument displays lap times, maximum speed, maximum G-force, sector times and the best theoretical time, and can even record 0-60, 0-100 and 0-200mph times and standing quarters. It’s delivered as a set, complete with docking station and a separate, Zenith-powered mechanical watch head.



TAG Heuer Formula 1

Price: £1250  
From: thewatchgallery.com

London-based retailer The Watch Gallery has joined forces with TAG Heuer to create a limited edition version of the entry-level ‘Formula 1’ quartz-powered chronograph. The 43mm watch has its aluminium bezel and chronograph counters in The Watch Gallery’s signature sapphire blue colour, making for a nice contrast with the gloss black of the main dial. Just 200 examples will be made.



Armin Strom Edge Double Barrel Max Chilton Edition

Price: £21,300  
From: arminstrom.com

Fans of the British-born IndyCar driver Max Chilton can demonstrate their allegiance with this special version of Armin Strom’s Edge Double Barrel model. Chilton’s race number, 8, appears in the small seconds register, while the blue hour numbers match the colour of his turbocharged Chevrolet. The back of the watch carries a plate etched with Chilton’s ‘Max’ logo and the watch’s serial number (out of eight).

CHRONO



Read more from Simon de Burton in Chrono. The latest edition is available free in the **evo** app for iOS and Android.



APPLE WATCH

As worn by Peter Denton, general manager, Maserati North Europe



‘Until recently my daily wearer was a TAG Heuer Carrera that was a 40th birthday gift from my partner, Jill. I wore it regularly for ten years, but now I use an Apple Watch day-to-day and keep the Carrera for special occasions.

‘I’m a very keen cyclist and the Apple offers some useful functions to anyone who likes to keep fit – it can be used to monitor heart rate, for example, or the number of calories that have been burned. I also like the

fact that it’s possible to change the strap and bezel to create a different look cost-effectively. ‘One day, however, I’d very much like to own one of the Bulgari watches made for Maserati.’

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**DMS 135i (BMW CAR MAY '09)** "THE STANDARD CAR IS GREAT BUT DMS HAVE SOMEHOW MANAGED TO TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL"

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- AUDI RS4 B7/ R8 » 445 BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
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- AUDI 3.0TDi (ALL MODELS) » 315+ BHP
- AUDI 3.0 Bi-TDi (ALL MODELS) » 380+ BHP
- AUDI Q7/A8 4.2 TDi » 400+ BHP

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- M5 V10 » 548+ BHP (205 MPH)
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- M3 E90/92 » 445 BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
- M135i/ M235i » 402 BHP
- M4/M3 3.0T » 520+ BHP
- M5 F10/M6 (STAGE 1) » 680 BHP
- M5 F10/M6 (STAGE 2) » 730 BHP
- F10 520D » 240 BHP
- F10 530D » 305 BHP
- 335i/135i/X6 » 370+ BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
- 123D » 252 BHP

- 316D/216D/116D » 160 BHP
- 318D/218D/118D » 225 BHP
- 330D E90 » 296+ BHP
- 320D E90 » 215 BHP
- 420i/320i/220i/120i » 275+ BHP
- 435i/ F30 335i » 390 BHP
- 428i/328i » 295 BHP
- 535D / 335D / X5 SD » 355+ BHP
- 640D/335D/535D/435D » 390 BHP
- 730D » 305+ BHP
- X5 4.0D / 740D » 370 BHP
- X5 3.0D » 305 BHP
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- C350/CLS350/E350/S350 » 315 BHP
- E400 /C450 » 420+ BHP
- C400 » 400 BHP
- '63' 5.5 Bi-TURBO ALL MODELS » 690+BHP
- '500' 4.7 Bi-TURBO ALL MODELS » 498+BHP
- S65 (W222) » 780 BHP
- SL65 BLACK » 720+ BHP (+DELIMIT)
- SL65 AMG » 690 BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
- '55' AMG KOMPRESSOR » 580+BHP
- C63 AMG 6.3 » 530+BHP (+DE-LIMIT)

- C63 AMG 4.0T » CALL FOR DETAILS
- SL63 AMG 6.3 » 560+BHP (+DE-LIMIT, RE-MAP & LOWER ABC SUSPENSION)
- CL600 Bi-TURBO » 580+ BHP
- SLK55 AMG » 420+ BHP (+DELIMIT)
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- 350 CDI V6 » 312 BHP
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- EVOQUE/DISCO SPORT 2.2 DIESEL » 240+ BHP

**PORSCHE**

- 997 TURBO/S 3.8 INC PDK » 611 BHP
- 997 TURBO/GT2 » 625+ BHP
- 997 GT2 RS » 670+ BHP
- 996 TURBO/GT2 » 600+ BHP
- 997 CARRERA S PDK » 400+ BHP
- 997 CARRERA S » 376+ BHP
- 997 CARRERA PDK » 368 BHP
- 997 CARRERA GTS » 435 BHP
- 997 GT3 UP » 436 BHP
- BOXSTER 3.4S » 336+ BHP
- CAYMAN S » 342 BHP
- MACAN 3.0D » 315 BHP
- CAYENNE GTS » 440 BHP

- CAYENNE TURBO 4.8 » 578+ BHP
- CAYENNE TURBO S 4.8 » 600+ BHP
- CAYENNE 4.2 DIESEL » 450+ BHP
- CAYENNE DIESEL » 315+ BHP
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- MURCIELAGO LP640 » 707 BHP
- MASERATI GHIBLI 3.0S PETROL » 470 BHP
- MASERATI GHIBLI 3.0 PETROL » 400 BHP
- MASERATI GHIBLI 3.0 DIESEL » 312 BHP
- MASERATI GT/OPORT » 438 BHP
- MASERATI GT S / MC » 479+ BHP
- BENTLEY 4.0 T V8 » 690 BHP
- BENTLEY CGT / F-SPUR (INC 2013) » 680+ BHP
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## Future imperfect

It was fascinating to read 'Why the Thrill of Driving is in safe hands' (evo 230). Unfortunately, everything Mr Garrett and Professor Jackson of Ricardo had to say led me to fear the exact opposite. Electrification, autonomous driving, shared ownership?

I understand the virtues of electric cars and accept that they can be made to accelerate faster than a combustion-engined one while causing less pollution and making far less noise. But if I want rocketship acceleration with no soundtrack, I'll go to a theme park. And a great time I'll have too, but where's my input?

The Thrill of Driving is in the stimulation of all your senses (well, maybe not taste), not just a one-dimensional pursuit of speed. It's also about the hard work and sacrifice you make to realise your ambition to acquire something special, then the pride and joy of ownership when you get there.

As for autonomous driving, don't even get me started. The Thrill of Being Driven? That theme park analogy seems even more apt.

**Paul Cox**



## The case for owning

I enjoyed your Ricardo article very much. Interesting, though, that experts and policymakers alike insist on looking at things through such a narrow lens. Driving a non-depreciating car to work from Reading into central London and parking it in Park Lane costs me precisely half what my rail fare

for the same journey used to cost me. It's quicker, more convenient and more pleasant, too. Draw a conclusion of your choice.

**Hywel Rees**



## Stelvio? No

It seems that once again the bosses at Alfa are trying to breathe some much needed life into the marque.

The Giulia is a great step in the right direction. It's got a rear-drive chassis, a good range of engines and the class-leading ZF eight-speed auto. However, I find it odd that Alfa has decided to follow this car with an SUV (the Stelvio, see *evo* 230).

I know this is anecdotal, but I drive 25,000 miles a year, home and abroad, and I see many more 5-series saloons and estates than X3- and X5-type cars. In fact I see countless 5-series, A6 and E-class oil-burners out on the roads relative to SUVs at the Stelvio's price level.

Alfa would be wise to develop a really well-styled 5-series rival instead. The engines are there, including the vital six-cylinder diesel and eight-cylinder petrol from Maserati. Whilst 90 per cent will buy a four-banger, they aspire and long for a six or eight under there.

Coupes should follow. All of us dream of a big coupe winding down the Route Napoléon. None of us dream of an X3 plodding to Pets at Home. Alfa needs to sell the dream and get on with building a better Ghibli. This is where the real volume is, not some horrid compact, hard-riding, bad-handling small 4x4.

**Stephen Taylor,  
Helensburgh**



## LETTER OF THE MONTH

# Seize the day!

**GIVEN THAT THE COMBUSTION ENGINE AND MOTORING** as we know it are seemingly on borrowed time, can I suggest we all stop moaning about the prevalence of downsized turbo lumps and instead live in the moment and revel in the experience of simply hearing revs rise and fall, shifting gears ourselves and actually controlling the many facets of the cars we drive?

If the thought of a new four-pot Boxster turns you off, buy a second-hand six-cylinder version instead [pictured], plus a tasty French hot hatch from yesteryear – all for the same outlay.

The point being, we still have many options available to us. We can buy V8 nutters, six-cylinder growlers or four-pot howlers, all for less than a new Focus. No one is stopping us. The day will eventually come when we'll only be able to experience their aural delights on the likes of YouTube, so until then, fill your boots.

**Paul Haynes**

## The Letter of the Month wins an Aviator watch

The writer of this month's star letter receives an Aviator Airacobra Chrono. Inspired by the pilots' watches of the 1940s, it has a 45mm case, a Swiss-made quartz movement, and SuperLuminova indexes for outstanding legibility.



*Peter Jackson*  
THE JEWELLER





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## INBOX



### Formula SUV

I totally agree with Richard Meaden's column in *evo* 230 regarding changing the formula for Le Mans racing.

One of the main reasons the BTCC was so popular in the '90s was because the formula was designed around a type of car that most manufacturers made in a very competitive sector (the 'repmobile'). 'Win on Sunday, sell on Monday' couldn't have been more true for these cars. You may not have lusted after one, but how many Lagunas and Cavaliers and the like shot up the user-chooser list after Menu, Cleland [pictured above], et al had done their stuff at the weekend?

SUVs seem fashionable now, but might look a bit incongruous around a racetrack. However, what about a rally stage? They all purport to have a bit of off-road about them, and what a great way to add some glamour to the sector. Most manufacturers have an SUV in their range or in the pipeline, giving the prospect of varied grids and sensible development costs. Renault Sport could do a homologation version of the Captur...

If all racing formulas were based around what manufacturers built and needed to promote, the competitions would surely be far more exciting.

**Andrew Muffett**

### Unobtainiumgate 1

You asked if the Porsche 911 R [pictured above right] should have been included in eCoty (Inbox, *evo* 230). I'd argue not. Let me explain.

Okay, I can agree that the 911 R may have originally been designed with the Thrill of Driving in mind, but that isn't the way Porsche decided to market and sell it. Available only to the handpicked lucky few, it was clearly sold as an investment and as



such very few people will be lucky enough to own one, while fewer still will actually drive their car for fear of damaging their investment.

Far from being a great drivers' car I would argue that, as a direct result of the sales and marketing, the way the 911 R drives is almost irrelevant. Most will spend their time tucked up in storage or dehumidified garages, appreciating in value and never actually turning a wheel in anger. A great show car or investment it may be, but that doesn't sound like a great drivers' car to me.

Is this really the Thrill of Driving?

**Nick Smith, Bristol**

### Unobtainiumgate 2

While I sympathise with Roger Willatt and David Tysall (Inbox, *evo* 230) on the wisdom of including in eCoty cars that are essentially impossible to buy, the reality is that even if Porsche were to build the 911 R in unlimited numbers, for most of us its availability would remain moot.

We will never be able to buy an exotic like that. In fact many of us couldn't even stretch to a cooking 911, a car so widely available I'm surprised it hasn't made an appearance on *First Dates*.

I appreciate that there are *evo* readers for whom the magazine functions as a brochure for their next purchase, but for 90 per cent of us, reading about and looking at such cars is a purely academic experience, pure entertainment. So the Porsche 911 R is as available to us as it ever could be.

**Andrew Hatcher, London**

### Righting the ads

Richard Porter's column about the idiotic practices of classic car dealers



when they turn their talents to crafting ads was spot on (*evo* 229). However, he failed to mention some of the other ludicrous habits in their self-defeating pursuit of hauteure.

How about the Persistent Unfathomable Initial Caps, the use of 'Motor Car' instead of 'car', and parking seven-figure 'pre-owned' cars in big puddles for some kind of weird pictorial effect (I wouldn't want my Veyron to have soggy shagpile).

And pursuant to dodgy writing tics, I was disappointed to see in Richard Meaden's column in the same issue an example of the, ahem, aficionado's transposition of marque and model names, as in 'my 964 Porsche'. A recent book purchase has infuriated me with its numerous references to GT40 Ford, 250 Ferrari, P68 Ford, etc.

**Buchanan Jamie,**  
**Shirebuckingham**

## Type approval

Oh no. Have I pressured our beloved Integra into a rub upon its synchro ring? (*Art of Speed*, *evo* 230) Have I been overly handling its gearknob [pictured above], god forbid? I will promise from now on only to grip firmly as I bang up another gear, then will leave well alone.

When I drive our beloved DC2, I see no black plastic or fake carbon inserts while sitting deep down in its black Recaro seat. I search only apex to apex through that ice-thin glass and a spinning rev counter behind that Momo steering wheel, and then the Integra and I are as one. It becomes an extension of my hands, feet and backside. I love it to death.

Acquired in 2000, and even after 16 years of ownership, our red, 61,000-mile Integra is factory standard and one of the family. It is without doubt

the finest drivers' car I have ever driven – and I have driven a lot since I passed my test in 1959 when I was 17 years old. Yes, I am 74 going on 12 and I own an Integra type R.

**Bob Levine**

## Why wave?

I cannot understand how removing one's hand from the steering wheel to grope around in front of a screen in order to change a radio's volume [pictured above] is a 'slick touch' ('5-series fights back in technology arms race', *Connectivity*, *evo* 230). Is it not a lot easier and safer to simply use the wheel-mounted buttons that are directly under the driver's thumb?

Either car makers are trying to increase sales by encouraging distracted-driving accidents, or they are employing infotainment designers who have never driven a car in traffic.

Smartphone and tablet designers put volume-control buttons on the side of their devices because that is the most convenient place for them.

**John Tuleibitz,**  
**Simpsonville, SC, USA**

## Clone ranger

After seeing the image of Aston Martin's DBX [pictured below], I felt compelled to write. Due to the fact that I am on the other side of the globe, travel is prohibitive, so I would kindly ask that one of you please break into Aston's design studio and steal the Xerox machine. Thank you.

**Alex Gupton, Hawaii**



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# Driven

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2 4 6

LEXUS LC500 // BMW 5-SERIES // TECHART 718 BOXSTER //  
RENAULT TWINGO GT // AUDI S5 // ASTON MARTIN VANQUISH S





# Lexus LC500

Lexus used the 911 as a benchmark for its new 470bhp coupe. A sprinkling of LFA magic might help its chances, too



**I**'M A BIG FAN OF THE 911. Its driving feel drives me crazy! This is Koji Sato, chief engineer on Lexus's LC project and the man tasked with turning Lexus into a brand keen drivers no longer cross the road to avoid.

You've got to admire his ambition. Sato-san tells me his team benchmarked the 911 for steering feel, along with Lexus's own LFA – that most unlikely of supercars. Of course, Lexus has failed to get anywhere close to the stratospheric heights of the LFA in the six or so years since *evo* first got behind its wheel (and refused to get out). A couple of F models have arrived and disappointed, but, this time,

well it just might be different. After all, Lexus has had long enough to get it right – the LF-LC concept car was first seen five years ago, while the mainstream LC coupe made its debut a year ago. What have they been doing all this time?

The answer arrives in a car that's certainly striking, if not beautiful. It's a real head-turner in some colours, but not all (Brown? Really?). And while the front end looks sublime and could've been styled by one Dr Jekyll, the rear, with its mishmash of lines, looks like the work of Mr Hyde.

There are some delicious details, though. You'll struggle to take your eyes off front wings that sit so low over the front tyres that you'd

swear you'd hear the sound of rubber meeting metal every time you met a speed-hump (you won't hear a thing, of course – this is a Lexus, after all). The ultra-compact triple LED headlamps and 3D LED tail-lamps are fascinating to look at. The oversized-spindle grille leads up towards creases on the bonnet that carry on into the cabin, and there are tiny aerofins on the A-pillar to smooth airflow and reduce wind noise. Delightful.

But not as delightful as the news that under that fabulous bonnet is an even more fabulous V8 engine. And you'll notice we haven't attached the words 'twin' and 'turbo' to that, because neither has

Lexus. Now that's very un-2017-like. What was Sato-san thinking?

He probably had his boss in mind. Akio Toyoda is not only president and CEO of Toyota Motor Corporation, he's also Lexus's chief branding officer and, much more importantly, master driver. Apparently, Japanese Takumi craftsmanship applies not only to the guys who fastidiously stitch the LC's interior together, but also to the drivers who developed the car – including the boss.

This particular V8 takes the block used in the GS F and RC F models and changes pretty much everything else. The result is 470bhp at 7100rpm and 398lb ft of torque at 4800rpm. There's also a brand new ten-speed



(yes, ten-speed) automatic gearbox and, on Sport+ models, a limited-slip differential, rear-wheel steering and active aerodynamics.

You could choose the rather clever LC500h hybrid model with its 3.5-litre V6 and multi-stage hybrid system (which uses a combination of CVT and a four-speed auto gearbox), but unless you're a bit of a geek you should stick with the V8. Especially as the hybrid is slower, costs about the same and doesn't sound anywhere near as good.

That's another bit of benchmarking for you – seems Sato-san has been doing his research and has modelled the LC's exhaust note on the sound of a Maserati GT. Any more rivals he'd like to namecheck? Apparently the BMW 6-series is 'well balanced', but there's not much of a Jaguar F-type in the LC: 'It's very quick with agile response, but we don't want to follow that sort of behaviour,' he tells me.

Right. But back to that 911 – some might say a strange benchmark when the LC is 'a contemporary interpretation of the grand tourer'.

Especially when this car is the first to use the new GA-L (Global Architecture Luxury) platform that will also form the basis for next year's new LS saloon and every other rear-drive Lexus for years to come. But here's the good news: the LC500 is really rather good – in a grand tourer rather than 911 kind of way. And Lexus clearly knows it, letting us loose on the Circuito Monteblanco in southern Spain.

Circuits and road-going GTs aren't always happy bedfellows, but the V8 makes a decent fist of the twists, turns and short straights of Monteblanco, especially given the LC's 1970kg kerb weight.

Keep the revs high and the engine punches you nicely out of the tighter corners, while the soundtrack gets increasingly intoxicating as the revs rise. With the car in Sport+ mode, there's a little slip from the rear wheels before electronic aids rein you back, and in the Sport+ model, with its LSD and rear-steer, you can keep a tighter line through the bends and get the power on earlier to greater effect. You still need to keep

## **'The Sport+ version's limited-slip diff allows you to get the power on earlier and to greater effect'**

the revs up, otherwise you'll have to wait a moment too long for the full hit of power to arrive.

In manual mode, using the paddle-shifters, the ten-speed gearbox reacts quickly – the single multi-plate clutch performs on a par with a double-clutch gearbox, claims Lexus, but without the wear.

The first nine gears are evenly spread for more 'rhythmic' shifting (third and fourth cover the same bandwidth as third in the RC F's eight-speed 'box) and sure enough you can punch swiftly through the gears with very little kick as the ratios swap. The final, tenth gear acts as an overdrive to calm everything down when cruising.

The steering could do with slightly sharper reactions and a bit more feel. There's a slight dead spot just off-centre – probably to allow for the 'sneeze factor' on the autobahn – but after that it gives a nicely linear response to inputs, if not the feel to put you intimately in touch with the track. A 911 this is not. Sorry Sato-san.

Away from the track, the LC's

GT promise shines brighter. The double-joint wishbones at the top and bottom of the front suspension (angled slightly to move the cast-aluminium suspension towers inboard to help achieve that incredibly low bodywork over the wheels) and the multi-link rear provide a good balance of ride comfort and cornering balance in whichever mode you choose – Normal, Comfort, Eco, Sport or Sport+, with the last one just fine for us. Extra bracing around the engine bay mitigates the weight over the nose to good effect, too.

Keeping the revs high for the best response (and the best noise), it's easy to strike up a rhythm through a series of bends on our test route in the Andalusian hills. Rewarding, too – for a grand tourer.

In true Lexus style, the LC is eerily quiet at a cruise (that tenth ratio undoubtedly helps) enabling you to experience the premium Mark Levinson audio system – or Pioneer unit (remember them?) on lesser models. The Takumi craftsmanship is evident throughout the cabin,

nowhere more so than on the sweeping door panels, which feature what appears to be a floating handle – a minimalist delight.

Sadly, the dash and steering wheel are an ergonomic mess, with buttons littered about like popcorn on a cinema floor. The horns sticking out of the instrument binnacle, with controls for the driving modes on one side and the traction control on the other, look like the designers forgot to include a few more buttons elsewhere. Lexus would do well to benchmark BMW's iDrive system for vehicle and infotainment controls.

The instrument display is rather more successful, with an LFA-style single circular dial that slides sideways to reveal further information on a TFT screen.

Thankfully, that's not the only thing that reminds us of the LFA. There is a little LFA magic about the way the LC intrigues and rewards. Like the LFA, it's not absolutely perfect but, equally like the LFA, it's an unlikely and tempting alternative to the more obvious choices. ❌

**Steve Fowler** (@SteveFowler)



**Above:** interior is beautifully finished but has some clumsy details – witness the controls protruding from the instrument binnacle. **Right:** main attraction is the 5-litre, 470bhp, naturally aspirated V8, which just loves to rev



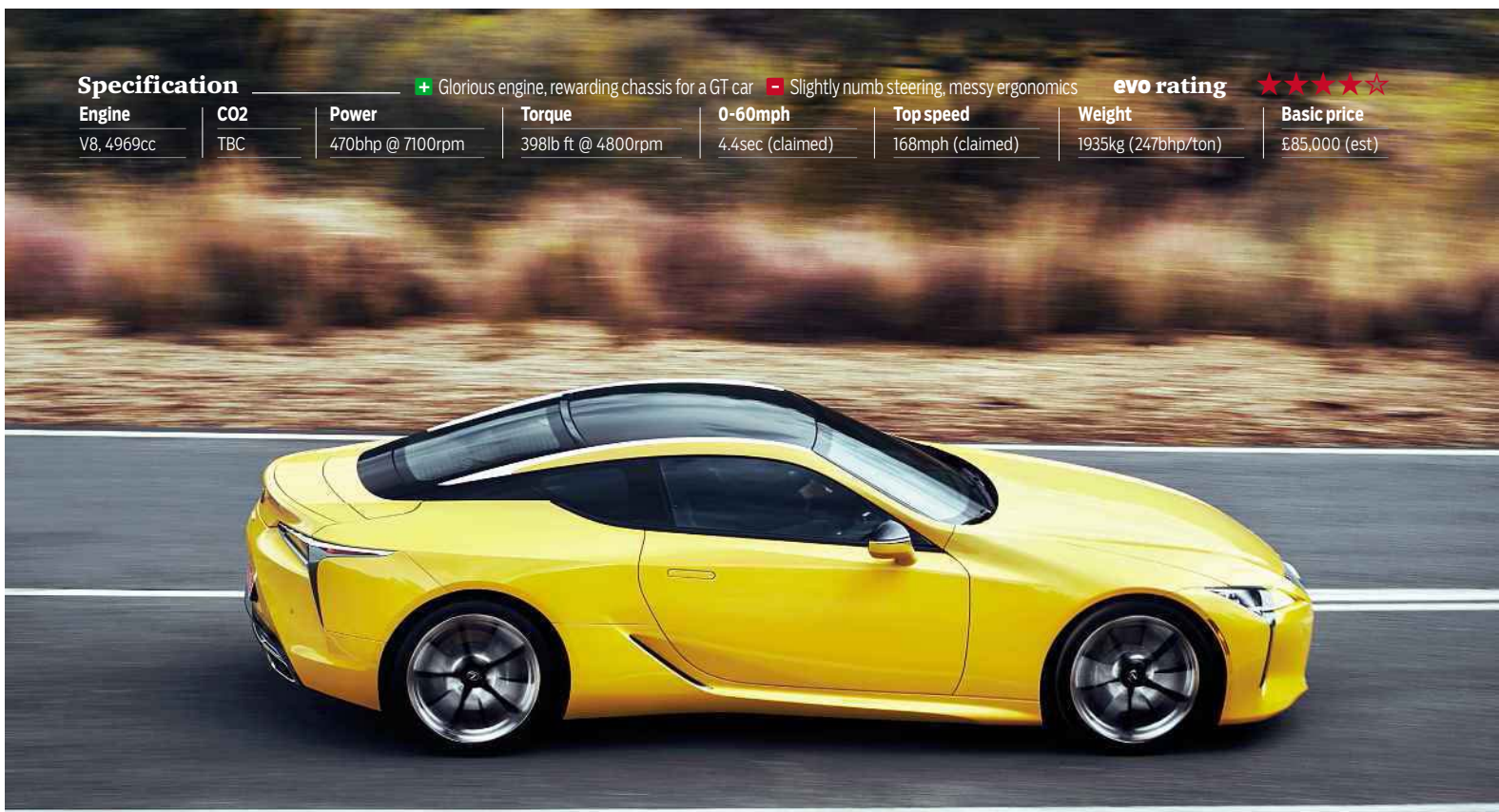
**Specification**

+ Glorious engine, rewarding chassis for a GT car - Slightly numb steering, messy ergonomics

**evo rating**



Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-60mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
V8, 4969cc	TBC	470bhp @ 7100rpm	398lb ft @ 4800rpm	4.4sec (claimed)	168mph (claimed)	1935kg (247bhp/ton)	£85,000 (est)



# BMW 5-series

Efficient and refined, the all-new 5-series also promises an improved driving experience. Does it deliver?



**W**ITHIN FIVE MINUTES OF getting behind its wheel, the new BMW 5-series is driving itself. This has the simultaneous effect of being impressive to the point of slack-jawed bewilderment and also crushingly depressing. Soon cars will no longer need us; people, like you and me, will be superfluous.

The new seventh-generation 5-series, coded G30, has enough driver-assistance technology to be just a few steps away from fully autonomous driving. It'll brake when required, steer through curves on the motorway, and execute a perfect lane-change manoeuvre if so commanded.

It's hardly the most promising prospect from an **evo** perspective, for while the 540i's turbocharged 3-litre straight-six fires up with its familiar cold-start theatrics, the drama is fleeting, and this new 5-series, bigger

in all directions than the previous model, is more distant to the driver than ever before. That's another way of saying it's superbly refined, because it sets new standards in this regard, but when the project manager of driving dynamics, Albert 'Mike' Maier, claims 'We've returned to the driving pleasure of the old 5-series cars,' expectations are inevitably high.

The G30 may be bigger outside and more spacious inside, but it's usefully lighter than the outgoing F10 model by as much as 100kg, and this without using a 7-series-style 'carbon core'. Instead, it's a case of intelligent materials useage, with an aluminium bootlid, a magnesium dashboard frame and weight-saving measures almost everywhere.

This new 'L7' platform once again uses double wishbones on the front axle and a multi-link rear, with various

suspension options: regular SE models have a passive setup, M Sport models the same but firmer and with a 10mm ride-height drop, and all 5s can be ordered with DDC variable dampers. The Adaptive Drive option combines DDC and Active Roll Stabilisation, with the adjustable anti-roll bars now operated via electric motors, not hydraulically. Finally, there is Integral Active Steering, also optional, which adjusts the toe angle of the rear wheels by up to three degrees depending on almost limitless parameters.

Old habits die hard, so it's the keys to the aforementioned 335bhp petrol version we grab first, even though it's a rear-wheel-drive car and initially in the UK this engine – the most powerful petrol unit in the launch line-up – will only be available with xDrive all-wheel drive. xDrive is now available as an option on every model; a manual

gearbox doesn't appear on the list at all – all cars have the eight-speed Steptronic automatic.

It's soon abundantly clear that the 540i is a very potent car. In UK xDrive form it'll hit 62mph in just 4.8sec, and with the Drive Performance Control set to Sport the throttle response is sharp and the gearshifts near-enough instantaneous.

And yet this isn't the most enjoyable new 5-series on sale: it has a bland, monotonous voice and linear delivery that gets strained at high revs, a cruel comparison to make with the great naturally aspirated BMW straight-sixes of the past. In the real world it's not really any quicker than the 530d, and is obviously thirstier.

It's the 530d that feels like the car the engineers really obsessed over. With the aid of BMW's SYNTAK (Synergy Thermoacoustic Capsule)

**‘It will take near enough full throttle early, surging out of a corner without pushing wide’**



**Clockwise from top:** styling is reserved, in the great 5-series tradition; biturbo 3-litre diesel majors on torque and refinement; cabin comfortable and loaded with the latest technology; all new 5-series are autos, no manuals

noise insulation, the 3-litre turbodiesel unit is brilliantly refined at low revs, but has that deep, straight-six rumble when called into action that’s familiar and so cosy on the ear. And with 261bhp and 457lb ft of torque it never, ever, feels short on acceleration. (For the record, it’s 5.4sec to 62mph.)

The rear-wheel steering has the effect of shortening the wheelbase, so the G30 disguises its size incredibly well. The electrically assisted steering is one of BMW’s best so far: easy-going yet precise in Comfort so that you tend to just forget about it, but with reassuring weight added in Sport. Both the petrol and diesel models that we sample feature variable

dampers, but the optional 19-inch wheels on the former occasionally make it feel like it has lead boots over bad road contusions. The 530d xDrive, meanwhile, on standard 18s, has a spectacularly good ride quality.

In the teeming rain on twisting, hilly roads, not once does the traction light blink, the system shuffling around all 457lb ft of torque so effectively and without any perceptible sign of doing so. There’s more stiction to the steering with xDrive, making it feel that bit more genuine; turn-in is crisp (with Integral steering), grip levels mid-corner notably strong, but best of all the car will take near enough full throttle early in the corner, surging out

without pushing wide. Point-to-point it’s hugely effective. Not dance-on-the-table exciting, but then this is ‘just’ a regular 5-series.

Yet for a car so refined, so imbued with a depth of competence and sense of long-term quality and solidity, it will still raise a quiet smile if your commute has a few interesting corners. Throw in the latest generation of iDrive – a triumph – and all the other tech (visit [evo.co.uk](http://evo.co.uk)) and as an overall, everyday package the new 5-series is top of its class in **evo**’s eyes.

Maybe Herr Maier has a point, then, after all; it certainly bodes well for the forthcoming M5. ☒

**Adam Towler** (@AdamTowler)

**Specification (530d xDrive)**

— + Extraordinary refinement, easy-going performance - Not sufficiently engaging; lacks character

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
Straight-six, 2993cc, twin-turbo diesel	124g/km	261bhp @ 4000rpm	457lb ft @ 2000-2500rpm	5.4sec (claimed)	155mph (limited)	1695kg (156bhp/ton)	£45,965 (SE)

**evo rating** ★★★★★



# TechArt 718 Boxster S

Porsche tuner TechArt has been busy with the 718's four-pot. We try its first effort

Photography: Aston Parrott

**P** PORSCHE'S DECISION TO swap the Boxster's naturally aspirated flat-six for a turbo'd flat-four may have resulted in abject disappointment from those who appreciate good acoustics, but there's been elation from those who tweak the cars.

Eking out extra power from a highly strung naturally aspirated engine is an involved and expensive process, and the gains are quite meagre compared with the effort required. However, a turbocharged engine can be made to churn out extra power with relative ease, and if you know what you are doing, it can do so reliably, too.

Knowing this doesn't make it any less surprising to see a Boxster with damned near 400bhp. German tuner TechArt has created just that, though, taking the 2.5-litre engine in the 718 Boxster S and increasing its power from 345bhp to 394bhp and torque from 310lb ft to 354lb ft. TechArt

claims the extra power means its 718 is good for 0-62mph in 4.0sec with PDK and Launch Control – two tenths quicker than the standard car – plus a top speed of 184mph (up 7mph).

TechArt doesn't delve into the 718's existing ECU and make irreversible changes. Instead, its 'Techtronic' engine management sits alongside the OEM system, making it easy to install and just as easy to remove. This approach means the upgrade doesn't affect the vehicle diagnostics or built-in engine-protection systems. Even so, TechArt takes over the warranty for the engine and gearbox.

To help liberate the extra power, a new exhaust has also been developed. Rather than being a full titanium system like those it makes for 911s, only the tips are titanium (and carbonfibre) here. The rest is stainless steel to keep costs down, though the power upgrade and exhaust still come to a hefty €7664 (c£6500).

As our test car demonstrates, though, you can spend a whole lot more. Its retractable rear spoiler has been replaced by a fixed wing, while at the front there's a two-part splitter and a GT3-style vent at the base of the bonnet. Together these cost €3225 (c£2700). The car also sits 35mm lower (25mm with PASM) thanks to new springs, but the dampers remain unchanged. The springs plus repainted brake calipers cost €2760 (c£2300). Finally, the wheels have been replaced with a set of TechArt's own 21-inch rims costing €7895 (c£6700). It's all relatively restrained, but the bodywork and stance changes add a degree of menace that's missing from the standard Boxster.

Despite the lower, stiffer springs and louder exhaust, this Boxster isn't really any less civilised. The suspension is firmer and the ride slightly busier, but the car retains enough suspension travel to remain composed on rough

---

**'This much power in a Boxster doesn't feel wild or over the top, it feels completely appropriate'**



**Left and below left:** GT3-style nose vent, jutting front splitter and a fixed rear wing are part of TechArt's styling package; enormous, 21-inch rims won't be to all tastes



roads. The noise from the exhaust isn't dramatically different, either. The sound is still the familiar thrumming of the 718's flat-four, only now an octave lower rather than being much louder. That deeper tone and the firmer ride, although subtle, infuse the Boxster with a more determined focus even before you've felt the extra power.

Not that the additional shove is immediately obvious. The module that liberates the extra power doesn't come into effect until you select Sport or Sport Plus mode, so by default the car has exactly same power as when it left the factory. However, when you do finally choose a mode that gives you the full monty, there still isn't the Jekyll-and-Hyde transformation you might have been hoping for.

This flat-four isn't the most linear of engines and the upgrade hasn't changed that. But where the standard engine pushes the Boxster S forwards determinedly, as it passes 4000rpm this 718 begins to fire you forward. Impressively given the big hike in power, the car deals with the more pronounced boost without the traction control going beserk or the rear wheels losing traction; 394bhp in a Boxster doesn't feel wild or over the top, it feels completely appropriate.

But don't go thinking it's boring. TechArt's 718 is properly fast, and the acceleration is now distracting enough to make you forget about the less-than-ideal noise from the engine.

The lower, firmer springs may have added a slight edge to the Boxster's

fluid handling, but they haven't affected the car's balance. It still changes direction beautifully, pivoting around its centre. The springs tighten up the chassis slightly, too, and help the steering response feel more immediate. However, in tighter corners where you really load up the outside tyres, there's a little more roll than you might expect – though no more than in a standard Boxster. As the body rolls, the inside rear wheel also spins easily thanks to the extra torque and lack of a limited-slip differential (there's one on Porsche's options list, mind, at £890, including torque vectoring). Also absent here are Porsche's carbon-ceramic brakes, but the standard cast-iron items are perfectly capable of hauling the car to a stop.

As you don't have to fit the entire TechArt package, you could choose to just have the extra power, but the combination of all the modifications elevates this 718 Boxster into a league above the standard car. Even though it hasn't dramatically improved the new engine's sound, the exhaust's bassier notes are more tuneful, while the new wing and splitter give the mid-engined Porsche a real presence. Finally, the unruffled way that the car copes with the extra 49bhp and 44lb ft of torque secures the 718 Boxster's position as a proper sports car – and one of the best available.

Just make sure the car you start with has a limited-slip diff. ☒

**Will Beaumont**  
(@WillBeaumont)

**Specification**

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
Flat-four, 2497cc, turbo	n/a	394bhp @ n/a rpm	354lb ft @ n/a rpm	4.0sec (claimed)	184mph (claimed)	1355kg (295bhp/ton)	See text

+ Ideal level of power for the Boxster - Mightily expensive; needs a limited-slip diff

**evo rating** ★★★★★

# Renault Twingo GT

Rear-mounted engine, rear-wheel drive, more power, and input from Renault Sport... The hottest Twingo ought to be a blast

**T**HERE ARE CERTAIN things I could tell you about the Twingo GT that would probably make it sound quite intriguing. It's rear-engined and rear-wheel-drive for one thing, and for another it's been given a good seeing-to by the hot-hatch wizards at Renault Sport. But I wouldn't want to mislead you because, as it turns out, the Twingo GT is much more interesting in concept than it is in reality.

The little Twingo shares its underpinnings with the Smart ForFour. That unusual mechanical layout isn't some laudable attempt to channel the spirit of the Porsche 911 into a city car, unfortunately, but instead it's a clever way of reducing the car's turning circle (with no engine between the front wheels, they can reach much greater steering angles). Hardly the stuff of a petrolhead's dreams.

With only 109bhp, the Twingo GT is one of the least powerful cars to carry the Renault Sport badge in the division's 40-year history, although with just 1001kg to lug around, that needn't be a deal-breaker. Power from the 898cc, three-cylinder, turbocharged petrol engine has been increased from 89bhp in the standard model thanks to revised engine-mapping and a GT-specific air-vent over the left rear wheel, which feeds cooler air to the intake. With a five-speed manual gearbox, the Twingo GT springs itself to 62mph in 9.6 seconds and tops out at 113mph.

Renault Sport has tweaked the Twingo's chassis, too, with springs and dampers that are 40 per cent stiffer, a ride height that's been lowered by 20mm and a thicker front anti-roll bar. The steering, meanwhile, has been revised to give more direct response

and the stability control now cuts in a little later – although it can't be turned off completely – in a bid to make the GT more fun to drive.

The Renault Sport-fettled model also gets 17-inch wheels, twin exhaust pipes and unique graphics. It looks quite cool in a tough-but-cute kind of way and with decent build quality and a good level of standard kit – part-leather upholstery, climate control, automatic lights and wipers, cruise control – the cabin is pretty good, too.

With much stiffer chassis settings than the base model, the GT does have a firmer ride quality, but not to the point of ruin. What's more of an issue is the variable-ratio steering, which is so vague and rubbery, despite Renault Sport's tuning efforts, that you wonder if there's a small component in there somewhere that's made of half-chewed liquorice.



‘The steering is so vague you wonder if there’s a component made of half-chewed liquorice’



You could live with the dull steering if the car were entertaining to drive. Although it's small and light enough to have an inherent agility and the bespoke Yokohama tyres do offer good grip, the Twingo GT just doesn't have the poise or balance of Renault Sport's best small cars. The chassis has been tuned to be very safe at the limit to mitigate the pendulous effects of the rear-engined layout, too, and although the stability control system has been revised for the GT, it still intervenes very early. In fact, it'll nibble away at the brakes and cut engine torque if you merely turn into a corner with any sort of enthusiasm, which means you could drive the car for mile after mile and never be aware that the power is being sent to the rear wheels.

The Twingo GT can be quite amusing to drive in the same way that any small, low-powered city car can be fun on the open road – maintain momentum and never brake – but it's a shame Renault Sport hasn't injected some genuine sporting ability and

**Above and left:** ideal for the cut and thrust of city driving, the GT is less well suited to the open road; it's still fun to be around, though, with neat detailing and plenty of toys

dynamism into its chassis.

Similarly, the engine labours through its rev-range rather than zipping to the red line, and with no rev counter the only way to be sure you're using all of the revs – absolutely critical in a small car such as this, of course – is to let it butt into the limiter. At least it has enough straight-line performance to nip its way through urban traffic. Throttle response is much improved over the standard Twingo and the gearshift is quite slick and precise, too.

Ultimately, though, the car's billing as a GT model rather than a full Renault Sport product tells us everything we need to know. This is not a successor to the hugely entertaining and very capable Twingo 133 of 2008-13, but instead it's a slightly quicker, funky-looking alternative to the basic Twingo. Judged that way, the GT is quite an appealing little city runabout.

We'll never see a full Renault Sport version, sadly, because the rear-engined layout means there's no room for a bigger engine and there isn't any more power to be squeezed from this three-cylinder unit. The third-generation Twingo, it seems, will never fulfil the promise of its unusual mechanical layout. ❌

**Dan Prosser** (@TheDanProsser)

## Specification

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
In-line 3-cyl, 898cc, turbo	115g/km	109bhp @ 5750rpm	125lb ft @ 2000rpm	9.6sec (claimed)	113mph (claimed)	1001kg (111bhp/ton)	£13,755

➕ Funky styling, nippy performance   ➖ Much less fun than a rear-engined Renault Sport-fettled car should be

**evo rating** ★★★★★

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# Audi S5

Audi's mid-sized coupe seemed a little flat on its European launch. So does it come to life in the UK?



**W**HEN WE FIRST DROVE Audi's new S5, in Portugal in *evo* 225, it felt balanced, quick and supremely assured. What it failed to convey on those sun-baked roads outside Porto was a sense of adjustability and, for want of a better word, fun. Now it's back for a second shot, this time on the colder, damper and altogether more challenging roads of the UK, to see if there's an entertainer hidden beneath those chiselled lines.

First, a recap. For the new S5 a 3-litre turbocharged V6 replaces the outgoing car's supercharged V6 unit. It produces 349bhp and 369lb ft – 21bhp and 44lb ft more than before. As you'd expect from a performance Audi, there's four-wheel drive, specifically the latest quattro system, which features an electronic clutch to control the centre diff. But the biggest change is the gearbox. Out goes the seven-speed dual-clutch unit, in comes an eight-speed torque-converter automatic. Our test car is also fitted with Audi's electronically controlled rear Sport differential – a £1200 option.

Grey seats, black leather and carbonfibre make the interior a slightly gloomy place, but it oozes quality. There's very little fuss or



decoration and the dash layout and centre console will be familiar to A4 drivers. Audi's Virtual Cockpit is also now available in the S5, its 12.3-inch multi-function display replacing the traditional instruments behind the steering wheel.

The new engine ignites with a subtlety and restraint that characterises the S5. There's no burst of revs, no pops or crackles; it just hums away, idling quietly. At low revs all you hear is a distant burbling from the exhaust, but this V6 is eager to spin and as engine speed rises, a deep growl percolates from the exhaust, complemented by a faint whooshing from the turbo.

This isn't the most distinctive engine and Audi hasn't engineered-in any histrionics to compensate for the lack of character. It feels honest, though, and you have to respect it for that. Don't mistake the lack of



**‘There is a sense that you’re tricking the car into behaving like an extrovert’**

theatre for a shortage of substance, though. With gearchanges that are quick most of the time, if not as snappy as a DCT's, the S5 will reach 62mph in a claimed 4.7 seconds, which is two-tenths quicker than the model it replaces.

In typical Audi style the new S5 will cover ground without fuss or drama when driven briskly, but where we found it a little flat on its feet during

our first drive, in the right conditions – i.e. in the wet – you can encourage the S5 to demonstrate its (well hidden) exuberant side. Lean on the grip the front axle and tyres generate – and there's plenty to call upon – and when the nose is turned in, lift off the throttle and dab the brakes. While the nose will stay hooked, the rear will arc wide, then you just need to reapply the throttle to neutralise the fun.

There's a sense you're tricking the S5 into behaving in this extrovert way, and that's because you are, but pair the S5's turn-in grip with its overwhelming corner-exit performance and stability and it deals its trump card: making devastating progress along almost any road. Fun? No. Impressive? Mightily so.

In essence the new S5 fulfils your expectations of a 2017 performance Audi: safe, secure, predictable and faster than the competition. But it can deliver more, and satisfaction can be had from teasing the S5 when it's at its limit. Ultimately, though, if rapid progress is your thing, the S5 has plenty going for it, but if you prefer a car that offers a challenge, you may prefer to look elsewhere. ❏

**Will Beaumont**  
(@WillBeaumont)

## Specification

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Price
V6, 2995cc, turbo	170g/km	349bhp @ 5400-6400rpm	369lb ft @ 1370-4500rpm	4.7sec (claimed)	155mph (limited)	1615kg (220bhp/ton)	£47,000

+ Chassis rewards commitment - Plain engine

**evo rating** ★★★★★



# Aston Martin Vanquish S

Aston Martin isn't done with its naturally aspirated V12 just yet, as this 595bhp Vanquish shows

**W**ITH OVER 3000 ORDERS already taken and more or less unwavering critical acclaim, the DB11 is proving every inch the game-changer Aston Martin hoped it would be. And every inch a rod for its own back. A good question to ask would be this: why would I want to buy a £192,995, 568bhp old-school Aston Vanquish when I could have a £154,900, 600bhp DB11, arguably the best GT currently on sale? A certain emotional pull and a last hurrah for that naturally aspirated 6-litre V12 can't be ruled out but, against its new sibling, the Vanquish... well, it doesn't.

Little surprise, then, that Aston has wasted no time distancing its old best GT from its new one and, adopting the idea that attack is the best form of defence, the elevation of the Vanquish to Vanquish S presses home the point that it's a 'super GT'. That is, at least

one better than a regular GT (read DB11) if you're into the best part of £200k for the thrill of driving.

The new Vanquish S costs £199,950. That's for the coupe you see here. You'll have to spend a little longer at the cashpoint if you want the drop-top Volante as it's £211,950. Either way, wringing the last drop of dynamic goodness from the Vanquish to earn the S badge has proved a comprehensive exercise in subtle and not-so-subtle alterations for Aston chief engineer VAE (Vehicle Attribute Engineering) Matt Becker, previously of Lotus. We'll come to those.

Thanks chiefly to a redesigned and larger intake manifold, peak power is up from 568bhp to 595bhp at 7000rpm, and although there's the same 465lb ft of torque at the same 5500rpm, more of it is available at lower revs, engineering a little more life

into the throttle response at medium revs to complement the harder punch higher up. In addition, revisions to the Touchtronic III eight-speed auto make it shift faster while being smoother around town. With the launch control engaged, the 0-62mph time of 3.5sec is three-tenths quicker than the regular Vanquish's and opens up a small but psychologically necessary gap to the 3.9sec of the twin-turbo V12 DB11. Top speed is unchanged at 201mph, again one better than the DB11's.

The S gets its own sexed-up sonic signature, too. The technical explanation breaks down to a little louder, more high-frequency content and an extra helping of throatiness – measures once more designed to feed excitement and distinguish the sound of the Vanquish S from the classy but comparatively muted V12 exertions of the turbocharged DB11.

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**'The Vanquish S sounds sensational: suitably violent and very, very V12'**

## Aston Martin Vanquish S



**Clockwise from above:** tweaks to V12 release 595bhp; lots of aero work improves high-speed stability; cabin rich and cossetting; chassis is tauter yet a good ride is retained



Aero plays an important part in the new model's dynamic make-up, the aim being to increase grip at the front while maintaining stability at the rear, so improving handling balance without compromising high-speed stability. A redesigned splitter reduces front lift from 66kg to 18kg at 150mph, Becker explaining that the underside profile is shaped like the leading edge of a wing to accelerate the flow passing beneath the car, while the small 'winglets' at the splitter's corners not only increase downward pressure on the upper surface but guide the airflow past the front wheels, reducing turbulence and drag, resulting in a drop in Cd from 0.372 to 0.369.

Spring rates are increased by a modest ten per cent front and rear and the dampers re-valved. The rear anti-roll bar is also three per cent stiffer. Tweaked geometry and revised damping software are the only other changes. Becker is adamant that you can have extra response, grip and agility and retain a comfortable ride; the two things aren't incompatible.

And out in the Shropshire hills on the Welsh border, that proves to be largely the case. But it isn't the first thing that nails my attention. The Vanquish S sounds sensational: sophisticated and multi-layered but, more importantly, suitably violent and very, very V12. The DB11 seems

positively couth by comparison and doesn't come close to matching this level of drama or intensity. The chassis is equally rewarding, supplementing huge grip with fast responses and acutely executed changes of direction. The steering is well-weighted with fine precision about the straight ahead and reassuring feel on lock, while body control is exemplary, finessed by damping that's taut yet supple.

The Vanquish S makes no attempt to steamroller rucked and rutted road surfaces into submission but, rather, it tracks the undulations with no wasted body movement and uses its damping to desensitise their impact. It would be a great car in which to

attack a big distance, and if it didn't do it with quite the effortless energy and cossetting charm of the DB11, it would be acceptably comfortable, easy on the nerves and constantly engaging. When the road straightens, the collision of bellowing V12 music and sustained surge is as glorious as it is addictive. And when the straight runs out, the rapidly accumulated speed is wiped away by the monster brakes like raindrops from a windscreen.

Old-school Aston? Absolutely. The DB11 may be the better, more rounded, more modern proposition, but the Vanquish S, as Aston intended, is the bigger rush. ☒

**David Vivian** (@davidjvivan)

### Specification

+ Noise, poise, drama and charm - Not as rounded as the DB11

**evo rating** ★★★★★

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
V12, 5935cc	302g/km	595bhp @ 7000rpm	465lb ft @ 5500rpm	3.5sec (claimed)	201mph (limited)	1739kg (348bhp/ton)	£199,950

# Outside Line

RICHARD MEADEN



*Money no object. Three words, endless possibilities for the imaginative petrolhead. Meaden gets the ball rolling with his perfect flight of fantasy*

**T** HINKING. ALWAYS A DANGEROUS PASTIME. Especially when you're a freelance journalist who has turned procrastination into an art form. Still, what is life without daydreams? That's what I say. Especially when you can turn a few hours of staring out of the window and drinking copious cups of coffee into a long-overdue **evo** column.

I blame my erstwhile colleagues Nick Trott and Jethro Bovingdon for prompting my latest catastrophic distraction and litany of missed deadlines. The former for asking us to concoct our ultimate McLaren Special Operations (MSO) project a few issues back, the latter for reminding me of his N24 drive in Jim Glickenhaus's eponymous home-brewed racer.

Where am I going with all this? Rather pleasingly, the haphazard wiring in my brain has taken these random sources of diversion and arrived at what is surely one of the most pressing questions of any petrolhead's life. Namely, what would you commission as your one-off supercar?

As is always the case with these flights of fantasy, money has to be no object. Likewise, I rarely allow my tenuous grip on engineering to inhibit my desires. In any case, if anyone dared say something wasn't possible, I'd refer them back to the 'money-no-object' bit, for as Bugatti proved with the Veyron, unlimited budget is the ultimate engineering solution.

So, the six million dollar (or in all likelihood, rather more) question is: what to build? After considerable deliberation, a number of blind alleys and one or two changes of heart, I've settled on... a Porsche. Surprise, surprise, I hear you cry, but incredibly, given you're reading **evo**, it has nothing to do with a 911. You see, while I have major lust for Stuttgart's rear-engined icon, I've got a real thing for Porsche's early sports prototype racers. Naturally this includes the 917, but the true apple of my eye is the unspeakably gorgeous Porsche 908/01 from 1968.

Why? Years ago I had the immense privilege of driving one of the original factory 908/01s during a trackday at the Nürburgring. Given the very same car raced in (but sadly retired from) the 1968 Nürburgring 1000km, this was truly a day to remember.

The beauty, delicacy, speed and exquisite engineering of this fierce and fragile machine stuck with me, only to return to the forefront of my mind during my aforementioned daydream.

Imagine, I thought, what it would be like to make a modern homage to the 908/01, in much the same manner Jim Glickenhaus did with his spectacular Enzo-based, Pininfarina-designed P4/5.

Initially I thought a 918 Spyder would be the ideal basis. But then I had to concede it would be too big and complex. And even if you could junk the batteries and motors, it would have a V8 when the 908 had a jewel-like 3-litre air-cooled flat-eight good for 350bhp.

It's at this juncture I should give special mention to **evo**'s resident curmudgeon, Stuart Gallagher, for his enduring tirade against the 718 Cayman's less-than-sonorous flat-four. I'm not a great fan of the engine myself, but if two were joined at the crank I reckon I'd have the perfect modern flat-eight. Strip away the turbos, drop in some high-compression pistons and prickly cams, have a play with

the firing order and speak to Mr Akrapovic and my project has a suitably special motor.

The 908 was built around a spindly alloy tubular spaceframe, which the bodywork wraps like an eggshell, only thinner. My 908 will have a chassis made from tubes, but ones fabricated from carbonfibre, perhaps collaborating with a bicycle manufacturer, as they understand the material. The body would also be carbon, the contours of which would be shaped by Rob Dickinson, obsessive genius behind Singer Vehicle Design. Not only would the panels be flawless, but

Dickinson's eye and lightness of touch would capture the essence of the 908/01's perfect proportions while adding a contemporary twist to elevate the car from re-creation to 21st century tribute.

Naturally my 908 would have a manual transmission, complete with birch gearknob, and the finished car would be painted white, like all Porsche's factory prototypes, perhaps with a flash of red or blue around the nose. It would have 600bhp and weigh less than 1000kg. It would be road-legal but track-capable; trimmed for minimalist comfort, but well suited for long European drives.

The trouble with this kind of fantasy is the whole process gets rather addictive. Indeed, as I prepare to conclude this column, I'm thinking the perfect accompaniment to the 908 would be a more ambitious, 917LH-inspired machine. Perhaps powered by an 8-litre, 1000bhp flat-12 made from a spliced pair of GT3 RS motors. It needs more thought, obviously, but I'm sold on the idea. Now if you'll excuse me, I think I'd best make myself another coffee. ☒

*'Initially I thought the 918 Spyder would be the ideal basis, but it's too complex'*

“Life should not be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in a pretty and well preserved body, but rather to skid in broadside in a cloud of smoke, thoroughly used up, totally worn out, and loudly proclaiming,

**‘Wow! What a Ride!’**

Hunter S. Thompson

# Petrolhead

RICHARD PORTER



*If supercars sit at the top of the automotive tree, what are their absolute polar opposites? Porter thinks he's nailed it*

**T**HE JOB OF THE SUPERCAR IS NOT TO streak flat-out up the Col de Turini or set a road-car record around Brands Hatch. Supercars are rarely driven like that in real life. Which is why whenever you see a supercar on the motorway it's invariably in the middle lane doing 67 with a silver-haired chap in the driver's seat. No, the main job of the supercar is to be the glamorous catwalk model of the car world. Supercars have to remain rare for a reason, and that reason is to make seeing one a treat. Hence why, a few years ago, I opened the door into a dimly lit underground garage to find a Ferrari F355 on the other side and let out an involuntary 'Oh helloooo' to the visible disquiet of a man walking past at the time.

So if the supercar is the necessary glamourpuss of machinery, what's at the opposite end? What gets no attention, no love and impedes not one jot on anyone's imagination. Well, it's airport cars.

You'll see airport cars at any major commercial airfield. Except, perhaps you won't because they're the forgotten, the unnoticed, the dispossessed. They're the forlorn hacks used by staff to get around what plane-y types call 'airside' and therefore visible only when you've got a plane ticket. Worse yet, at many airports in many countries, airport cars don't seem to wear number plates of any kind, which means they're forever trapped on the vast pans of international aviation. For this cruel reason, the airport car will never know what it's like to tear down an open road, or duck and dodge through an urban rat-run. The airport car won't trundle car parks or hammer motorways. The airport car can't do any of those things because it hasn't got a number plate. It's trapped forever at the airport where it will be driven by a hundred different people in hi-vis vests, all of whom will subject it to an unsympathetic ragging in first, a graceless thump into second and then a grim trundle at 20 over to Gate 37, where they'll perform an emergency stop before leaping out, carelessly slamming the door onto the seatbelt clasp as they go.

I feel sorry for airport cars in the same way I feel sad for those massive buses they dispatch when BA has pissed off someone in

airfield management and been forced to park the 15:45 from Düsseldorf two miles from the actual terminal. Poor old airport buses, too wide to go on a normal road and condemned to a life dodging Airbuses as a result. But at least the airport bus gets to do vaguely bus-ish things. It serves the same unsexy purpose as its road-bound cousins. No such luck for the airport car. It's a trapped, short-run hack enjoying no love, no attachment, and often suffering the rank indignity of a livery. What a horrible life for a car.

Last month I saw an amazing airport car at Wayne County in Detroit. It was a red, two-generation-old Volvo V70 with an exhaust so shagged I could see it dangling off as I gazed down from the lofty vantage of a taxiing A330. That poor old Volvo, chosen for its ability to resist the ravages of a Michigan winter yet never allowed to run free alongside its soccer-mom sisters out in the real world. It was one of the saddest sights I've seen in a while. But not the saddest airport car.

That came a few weeks earlier as my pay-extra-for-the-second-engine budget flight touched down at the building site where Luton Airport used to be. There, dumped on a holding pan, was a Volkswagen Golf Mk3 van. My God, that poor old Golf, trundling past 20 summers without once seeing a real road, yet soldiering on, almost certainly knackered, creaky and generally abused. I bet it's closing in on two decades old, I thought, yet it's probably barely got 14,000 miles on the clock. I wonder if they're going to keep it forever? The answer to that one came as we trundled back to the pushed-up Nissen hut they try to pretend is a terminal. There, a quarter of a mile away, in some wretched compound on the perimeter of the airfield, was the Golf van's identical twin. It was on the back of a scrapper's truck with its back broken by a HIAB. Such a tragic end for a machine that must have given sterling service for so long in the thankless trade of moving people around an airfield. Goodbye brave Golf, goodbye.

You can drool over supercars all you like, and there's nothing wrong with that. But every so often, we should all spare a thought for the airport car. ☒

*'That poor old Volvo, chosen for its ability to resist the ravages of a Michigan winter yet never allowed to run free'*





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Stainless Sport Rear Sections



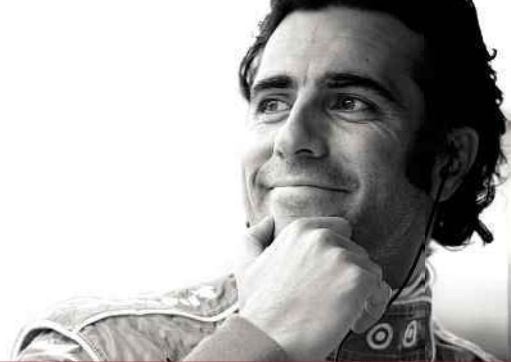
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**SUPERIOR EXHAUST SYSTEMS FOR THE WORLD'S FINEST CARS**



# Champ

DARIO FRANCHITTI



*Executing the most memorable mic drop that racing has seen for years, Nico Rosberg retired five days after securing the F1 title. Dario tries to make sense of it*

**N**ICO ROSBERG, F1 WORLD CHAMPION. SOME sort of mistake, surely? His Mercedes teammate Lewis Hamilton was robbed of a fourth title by mechanical woes, and even won ten races to Rosberg's nine. And then Nico retires! Rather a lot to fit into 850 words, this one...

The first question, though, is whether Rosberg deserved the title. The debate will smoulder for years to come, but it's undeniable he did a great job. He earned it by delivering when it mattered and minimising his bad days; by being consistent. Who can forget Lewis in Singapore? Nico played to his strengths and mitigated his weaknesses. You cannot do any more. Indeed, he came of age this season, sucking up pressure and delivering some brilliant qualifying drives and flawless races.

Paradoxically, it was his weaknesses that proved him a worthy winner. At 31 he should be the finished product, but he still struggles when he tries to be overtly defensive or aggressive. He's not an antagonistic, wheel-to-wheel driver by nature, and as a result often looks clumsy when circumstances demand this style. When a dogfight has been in the offing, Rosberg's moves have been crude, and he was caught flat-footed several times – in Austria, for instance, when he made a meal of a fairly straightforward situation.

In light of this, his performance in the final race of this season was something of a masterclass. He didn't win in Abu Dhabi, but he absorbed the pressure, stoically resisting Vettel during the closing laps after squeezing past Verstappen. Indeed, the pass on Verstappen was something special. Technically it was merely good, but the inescapable fact that Rosberg's life ambition was at stake – and that it was Verstappen, of all people, who had to be dispatched, and promptly – made it a special move.

For drivers at this level, a switchback isn't a difficult move. But when you're at close quarters with an unpredictable rival and the title is on the line, the ability to operate precisely without making errors is certainly not a given. In the end Rosberg made the pass on Verstappen look easy, but post-race interviews revealed a man who'd managed to suppress a nauseating overload of pressure during the race and was now letting it pour out of him in the media paddock (though at this stage he knew something we didn't).

The title wasn't a done deal after that pass, either. By ruthlessly and calmly backing Rosberg into the clutches of Vettel (nothing at all wrong with that, by the way, we'd all have done it), Lewis put Nico in a position where his fragilities were further exposed – where he would have to overtake his faster teammate or fend off a quadruple champion – and yet he didn't crumble. It was impressive.

Reliability? Well, since Lewis arrived at Mercedes, he's had four non-scoring races because of mechanical problems to Nico's eight. These things do have a way of evening out, and while doubts will remain for some, it's worth remembering that history is littered with cases where the fastest guy didn't win.

Indeed, F1 is a massively complex team sport with hundreds of people designing, building and operating these incredible machines. So many races, so many moving parts, so many uncertainties. And so much of it out of the driver's control. To end the season with most points, an endless list of things have to go right for a driver. If they do, that should settle it. And let's not forget the resilience Rosberg demonstrated after two years as runner-up – and by not a lot in 2014, where his season ended in KERS failure and Hamilton cruised to the chequered flag.

As for his shock retirement, Nico has always come across as an unemotional, pragmatic man. This decision exemplifies that, and I've never seen him so relaxed as he was at the Autosport Awards event in London in December. At the end of the night, when everyone usually filters out, he was wandering around, chatting. No security or PR handlers. Superb to see, and someone clearly at peace, for now.

As a new father, I somewhat understand his wish to walk away from the danger, the politics and the BS to spend more time at home. However, as a driver I struggle to comprehend how he could give up a seat in the best racing car in the world, especially while he's at the top of his game. For me, after one championship I wanted two, after two I wanted three, and so on. Is it something to do with the way he was brought up? The perceived silver spoon? I'm not sure, and I believe that before anyone makes such a sweeping statement, they should walk in his shoes a wee bit first.

However, for such a rational man, it seems a knee-jerk, emotional reaction. I hope he doesn't regret it, because he's a class act. ❏

**'Lewis put Nico in a position where his weaknesses were exposed, and yet he didn't crumble'**



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Stainless Sport System inc. Carbon tips



F Type SVR 2016 on



Stainless Sport Rear Section inc. Carbon tips



XE 3.0 Supercharged 2016 on



Stainless Sport Rear Section



XF 3.0, 4.2 & 5.0 inc. Supercharged & SV8 2013-15



Stainless Sport Rear Section



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Stainless Sport System



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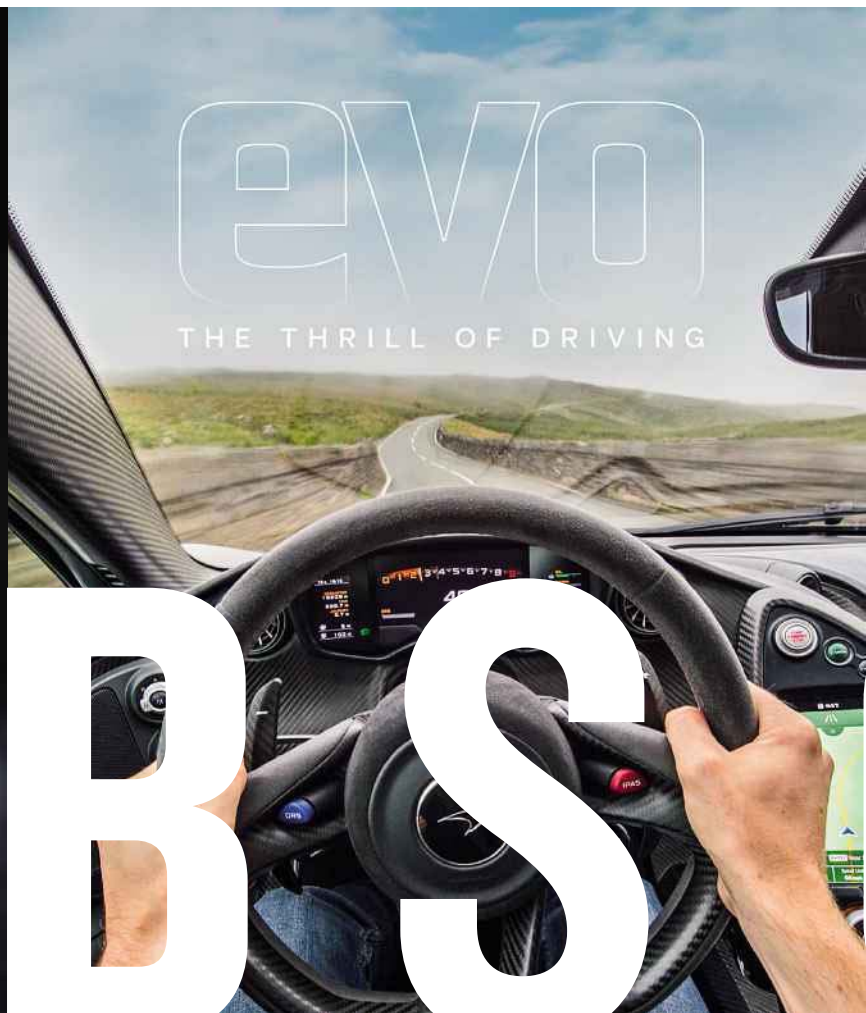
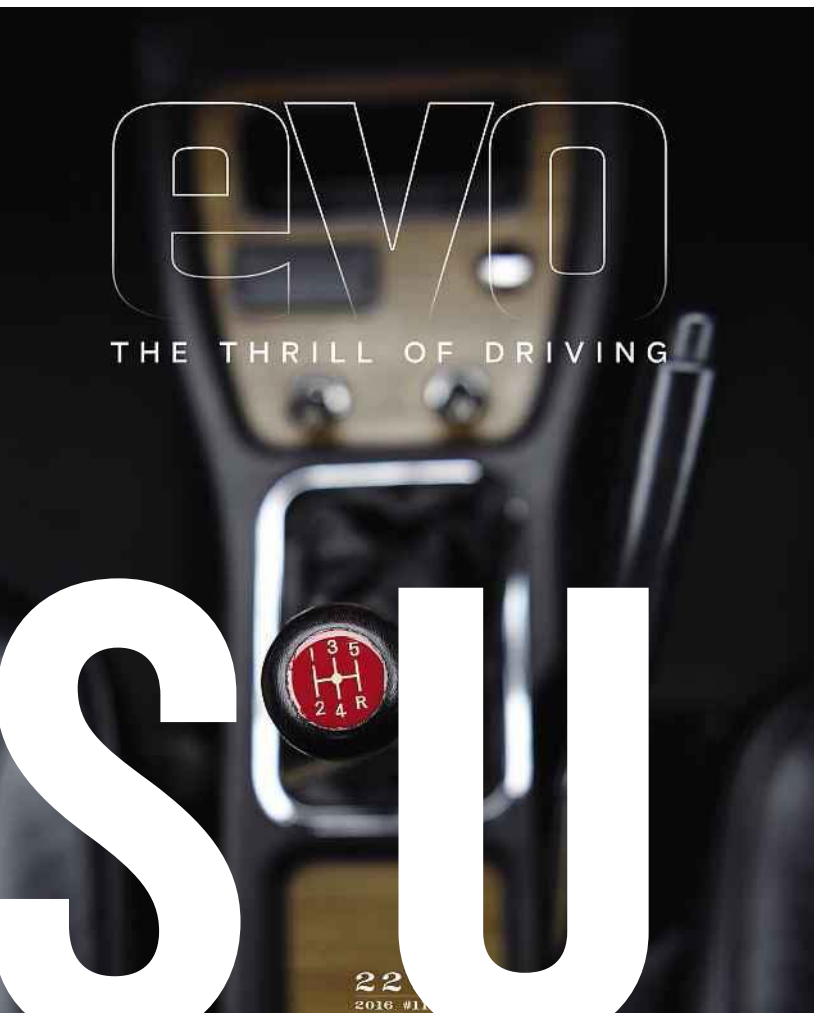
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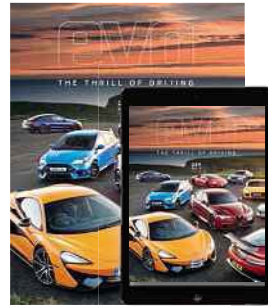
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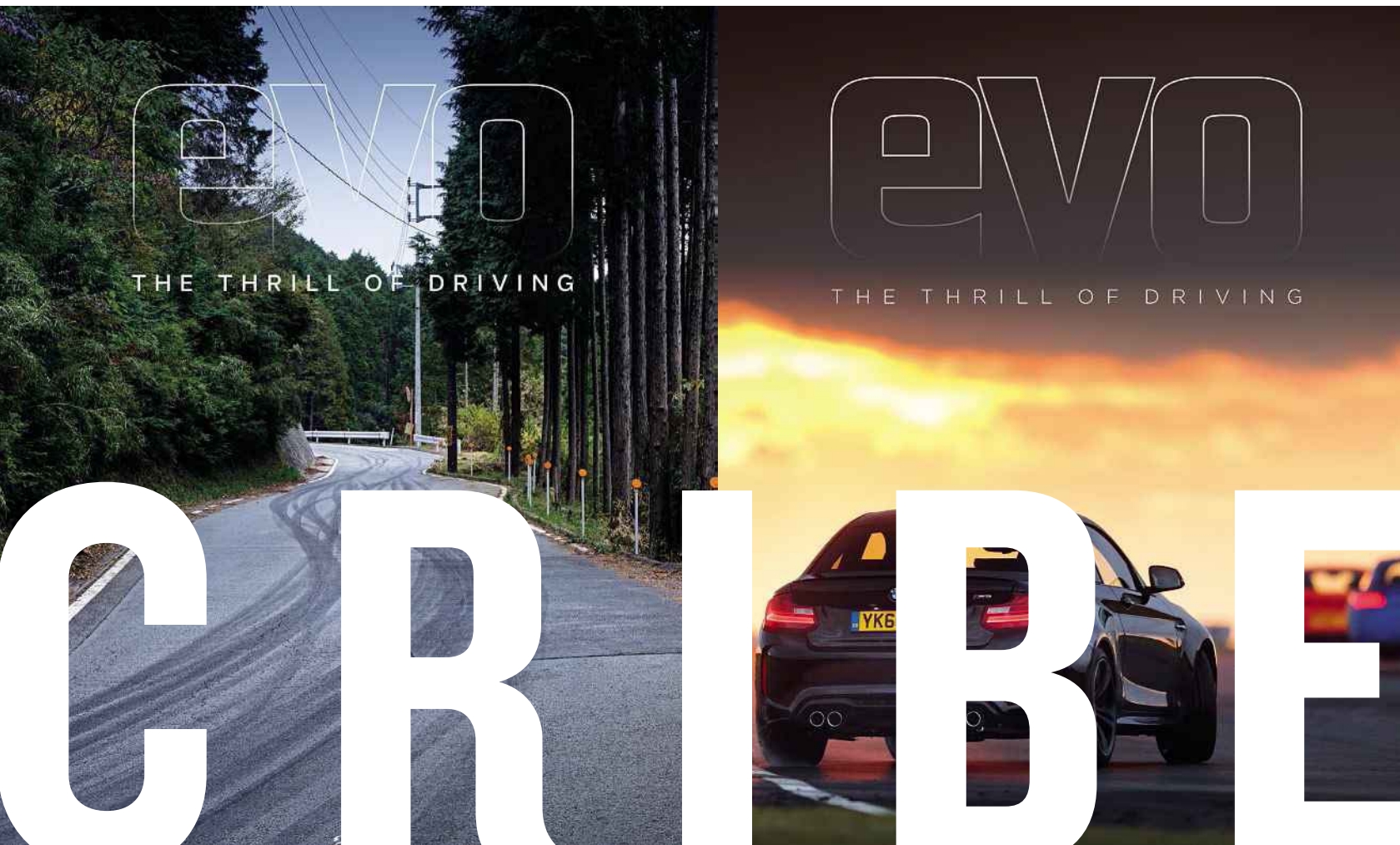
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# £20k

## HEROES

*'Modern classics' are starting to appreciate in value. We say get in quick before they're out of reach*

by ADAM TOWLER

PHOTOGRAPHY by PAUL HARMER



### **IN DAYS GONE BY WE PRODUCED PIECES LIKE THIS**

because new performance cars and depreciation went hand-in-hand, their values plummeting quicker than they could lap the Ring. That's all changed now. Appreciation is the name of the game. Buy new for list price today, flip for a 10-15 per cent mark-up tomorrow.

This situation is having a knock-on effect with used **evo** icons. Cars that, not so long ago, could only find homes with those who *got* them. Lusted after them from new. Promised themselves that, one day, they'd own one. Even these cars are now finding favour with those looking for a quick buck in the growing 'modern classics' market.

But we haven't selected the cars you see here because we rate them for their investment potential; that couldn't be further from the truth. Rather, these are a handful of **evo** icons we think you should buy now to enjoy before the speculators ruin it for everyone. A TVR was never built to lie silent in a dehumidified garage. Tommi Mäkinen didn't put his name on the tail of an Evo VI so it could be polished to a mirror shine, and no RS4 was ever made to be pampered. These, along with Caymans, Mini GPs and many more of their ilk were designed to be driven. If you buy one, please do just that. You won't regret it.

So join us in the photographic studio and on the challenging roads of south Wales as we enjoy the performance heroes you can buy now for less than £20,000. Many won't be that cheap for long.





# PORSCHE CAYMAN S (987)

**‘I TELL YOU NOW,’ SAID WALTER RÖHRL** between mouthfuls of dinner, ‘the best current Porsche for driving would be a Cayman with a limited-slip differential.’ Okay, I’m paraphrasing the great man, but it was a long time ago now, on the original press launch for the 987-generation Cayman S in Tuscany, 2005. It was out of earshot of the PR men, but Walter wouldn’t have cared anyway – he tends to say what he thinks.

The PR types were oblivious to the fact they’d just dodged a bullet, for this was when accusations that the Cayman was being deliberately held back to protect the 911 were at their height. Having Walter Röhrli say such a thing could have been... awkward.

The point is, though, that if it’s good enough for Walter, it’s more than good enough for the rest of us. The original Cayman S was a brilliant car at launch and nothing has changed since. Moreover, the one you can buy new, now, has a serious flaw: somehow it has lost a pair of cylinders, making a right din in the process. For your £20,000 you will have no such worries, as you’ll be serenaded by the pure howl of naturally aspirated flat-six.

There are many reasons why this is one of the best performance cars you can buy full-stop, let alone for £20,000. To start with, it’s the right size: big enough to get comfortable in every day, and with surprisingly good luggage space across two compartments and a rear parcel shelf, its small-ish footprint is ideal on crowded, narrow British roads. It’s a point often overlooked, but you’re not a prisoner to your lane in a Cayman, you have options within it.

Inevitably the real prize is the driving experience. The controls are something really special: the delicacy and precision of the steering, superior to that of the current model, the terrific gearshift, the weighting of the pedals.

You sit low in a 987, the view out through the letterbox windscreen framed at the lower edges by the rise of the

front wings, and right behind you, stuffed up against the bulkhead, is that compact horizontally opposed six. Even if you weren’t aware of this it becomes obvious as soon as the Cayman’s wheels being to rotate, and increasingly so when the car is driven how you will inevitably be compelled to drive it. ‘Balanced’ is a great way to describe a Cayman S, because it always feels as though it’s working as one, both ends of the chassis – every element of the car, in fact – in perfect harmony.

That’s part of what makes it an ‘easy’ car to drive, one that can be pushed hard on any road and in all conditions, but it is this same malleability of character that attracts the accusations of blandness and of not offering enough of a ‘challenge’ from those who tend to confuse horsepower and top speed with driving enjoyment. Simply refer them back to Walter’s comment if needs be.

The, styling? That’s a little more controversial. The original Cayman polarises opinion between those who think its curvaceous form is stunning (me), and those who think, particularly from the rear three quarters, that it looks very odd (okay, I’ll have to agree with that, too). But it is distinctive, and arguably gets better with the passing years.

So why aren’t we all driving around in a cheap Cayman S, then? There are a few key potential weaknesses with the M97 engine that you should be aware of before parting with any cash: if you’re really unlucky it could get very costly, very quickly. The 3.4-litre lump isn’t as prone to issues with the cylinder bores as the 3.8 in the 997 Carrera S, but it’s still a possibility, and changing the intermediate shaft bearing with the clutch is very much recommended as well.

Still, the horror stories are only applicable to a very small percentage of Caymans. So do your homework first and grab a classic Porsche in the making.

## Porsche Cayman S (987)

**Engine** Flat-six, 3436cc

**Power** 316bhp @ 7200rpm

**Torque** 273lb ft @ 4750rpm

**Transmission** Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive

**Tyres** 295/35 R19 front, 305/30 R20 rear

**Weight** 1350kg

**Power-to-weight** 237bhp/ton

**0-62mph** 5.2sec (claimed)

**Top speed** 172mph (claimed)

**On sale** 2006-13

**Value now** £15,500-19,990

**evo rating:** ★★★★★





**‘The controls are something really special: the delicacy and precision of the steering, the terrific gearshift, the weighting of the pedals’**



**TVR**  
Tuscan Speed Six (4.0)

**Engine** In-line 6-cyl, 3996cc

**Power** 360bhp @ 7000rpm

**Torque** 310lb ft @ 5250rpm

**Transmission** Five-speed manual, rear-wheel drive

**Tyres** 225/35 ZR18 front, 255/35 ZR18 rear

**Weight** 1250kg

**Power-to-weight** 293bhp/ton

**0-60mph** 4.4sec (claimed)

**Top speed** 180mph (claimed)

**On sale** 1999-2006 (all versions)

**Value now** £19,999-46,000

**evo rating:** ★★★★★





## TVR TUSCAN SPEED SIX

**THE TUSCAN SPEED SIX: TVR AT ITS** Zenith. And its nadir. The Tuscan wasn't the best TVR – that accolade surely goes to the Sagaris – but it was the glamorous pin-up sports car with the wicked allure, the great British hope for the new millennium. It's worth remembering what made TVR so appealing to so many in this era: its cars were more powerful, more spectacular, noisier, faster, and more bespoke inside and out than their competitors, for a lot less money.

The Tuscan was Peter Wheeler continuing to push TVR towards making sports cars with no outside influences, no longer reliant on Rover power as it had been with the Griffith and Chimera. The psychotic Cerbera with its in-house AJP V8 motor began that process; it was latterly available with straight-six power and it was this engine, TVR's Speed Six, that would drop into the nose of the Tuscan, unveiled at the 1998 British motor show.

Interest from the public was colossal, most chequebooks falling open with that first glimpse of the exterior, although a peek inside or a bark from the exhausts would usually seal the deal if more persuasion was required. The future looked bright.

Sadly history shows the TVR dream slowly ground to a halt for all sorts of reasons. Among them was that bold – or foolhardy – attempt to go it alone with a unique engine. Whatever was wrong at the launch in 2000, be it poor design, a lack of testing or inferior components, the Speed Six engine had major issues that soon crippled the company with warranty claims and ill-feeling amongst all those once-enthusiastic buyers.

That's a devastating shame. This is a bespoke, naturally aspirated straight-six full of fire, brimstone and latent Lancashire intent, with more charisma in a single combustion cycle than most modern downsized turbocharged engines can muster in a lifetime. Just

as the Speed Six might be the reason you'd steer clear of a Tuscan, so it is also the very reason why you'll be helplessly drawn to it.

Fortunately you're not buying a Tuscan in 2000; you're contemplating one in 2017, which is an altogether different prospect. So much has been learnt about this engine over the years, and established specialists now offer their own upgrades, so it need not be the frightening prospect it once was. Still, if you want frightening for your £20k the Tuscan is more than capable of seeing you right. This is not a car to suffer fools lightly, and a Tuscan can enter the scenery at all sort of angles – and many did. As with the engines, the Tuscan developed significantly over the models and years, and later cars were much calmer and nicer to drive, not to mention more reliable.

However, our £20k budget comes nowhere near the very rare Mk3 models built during the final days of 'Blackpool' TVR, or even the Smolenski-era Mk2 from 2005 onwards. It probably won't stretch to an early 390bhp 'S' either, or at least not one you'd want to buy. So it'll be an early car, a 3.6 or a 4-litre, probably with a good few miles on the clock, and the odd story to tell. It's not going to be an easy purchase, and an inspection will be one of the better ideas you've had in your car-buying lifetime. It's not just the engine you've got to be cautious of with the Tuscan, it's just about everything: chassis outriggers, electrics, suspension bushes, and the rest.

But buy a car that's had a loving, attentive owner and it really needn't be a headache. In any case, just imagine the thrill of opening that garage door on a Sunday morning and seeing a brooding, menacing Tuscan sat there, key pressing into your palm, birds tweeting, the sun on your back. That feeling has got to be worth the price of admission alone, and if nothing else, life with a Tuscan will never be boring.

**'This is a bespoke, naturally aspirated straight-six engine full of fire, brimstone and latent Lancashire intent'**

£20k  
HEROES



## FORD FOCUS RS (Mk2)

**Engine** In-line 5-cyl, 2522cc, turbo

**Power** 300bhp @ 6500rpm **Torque** 324lb ft @ 2300-4500rpm **Weight** 1467kg (208bhp/ton)

**0-62mph** 5.9sec (claimed) **Top speed** 163mph (claimed)

**On sale** 2009-11 **Value now** £15,500-28,000

**Rating** ★★★★★

**A RECENT IMPROMPTU STRAW POLL** of the *evo* office uncovered something decidedly odd about the Focus RS. Despite the current version offering four-wheel drive, thereby answering so many of the issues associated with both the first and second iterations, there was a general consensus that we'd rather be driving the snarling, thuggish, often divisive Mk2.

Granted, we've been a bit cooler on the Mk3 RS than some other media commentators, but was this just nostalgia taking over? I don't think so: as much as cornering ability, traction, performance and all the other

measurable attributes are important, a great *evo* car needs to have more. It needs to generate a frisson of excitement that makes you yearn to own it, to look over your shoulder unnecessarily after you walk away from it, to truly desire it. The Mk2 has that presence, visually and, unquestionably, aurally.

And while the Mk2's front-wheel-drive layout does limit both its ultimate ability and the breadth of the driving experience, particularly in the wet, let's not overlook just how quick this car can be point-to-point. Sensible? Well, just look at the long-term residual values of classic fast Fords...

# LOTUS ESPRIT TURBO SE

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**Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 2174cc, turbo  
**Power** 264bhp @ 6500rpm **Torque** 261lb ft @ 3900rpm  
**Weight** 1300kg (192bhp/ton) **0-60mph** 4.7sec (claimed)  
**Top speed** 159mph (claimed) **On sale** 1989-93  
**Value now** £19,000-28,000  
**Rating** ★★★★★

**THE EXCITEMENT GENERATED** at the prospect of having a Lotus Esprit Turbo along to our photoshoot was visceral. Classifieds were frantically scanned, voices raised, and the older ones amongst us were already driving badly around the posh, hilly suburbs of Los Angeles. It matters not that the boisterous TVR elbowed it aside in the final reckoning, the point had been made: despite only four cylinders, the Esprit will always have the magnetic aura of a genuine supercar. That's partly why we're crying out – still – for a new one.

The Turbo SE is also unequivocally a classic

car: this is not the sort of purchase you're going to drive daily. It's too old, too rare, and – dare I say it? – too valuable for that now. Don't expect Germanic build quality, but by the same token, don't let yourself be put off by the tired old Lotus gags: find an Esprit that's been loved and you should be fine.

An SE will mean the charge-cooled version of the venerable 2.2-litre turbocharged four-pot, with 264bhp and 261lb ft of torque, sub-5.0sec 0-60mph performance, brilliant steering and the unmatched handling prowess that seems peculiar to that small corner of Norfolk. Tempting, isn't it?



## BMW M3 (E90/E92)

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**Engine** V8, 3999cc  
**Power** 414bhp @ 8300rpm **Torque** 295lb ft @ 3900rpm  
**Weight (E92)** 1580kg (266bhp/ton) **0-62mph (E92)**  
4.8sec (claimed) **Top speed** 155mph (limited)  
**On sale** 2007-13 **Value now** £18,000-34,000  
**Rating** ★★★★★

**THE E90/E92 BMW M3 IS ONE OF** a select band of performance cars that appears to be getting more desirable with each passing day. Born in an era when German manufacturers in particular seemed obsessed with F1-influenced, manically high-revving powerplants, prioritising raw horsepower over almost everything else, it's rapidly become a car disconnected from the present: it's impossible to imagine BMW making such a machine today.

The MDCT gearbox is the sensible choice, a brilliant partner for the V8, allowing access to that elevated powerband as often as possible. Yet as driving enthusiasts it's hard not to get twitchy with excitement about finding a manual car: a naturally aspirated 414bhp V8 with an 8300rpm red line combined with a third pedal is an almost extinct combination today, let alone in a sports saloon (E90) or coupe (E92) that can double as comfortable, useable, everyday transport.

That mix of characteristics really is the great thing about the E90/E92 M3. Less brash than the current car, it may well have had its detractors when new for being even further removed from the E30 M3 genome, but it now feels like a forbidden fruit. Sampling that regularly would surely be a real pleasure.

£20k  
HEROES

by DAN PROSSER

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

# VARIETY CLUB



*The sheer breadth of choice with £20,000 at your disposal is wonderful, so we've picked three used heroes from disparate corners of the evo world to tempt you with*



I

**T'S MORE PHOTOGENIC IN ITS USUAL** dark grey, but it's a pale sort of beige right now. In fact, everything up here on this scrubby hillside has a sandy tint to it today, from bodywork to wheels to my beaten-up old shoes. Even the dim-witted, dead-eyed sheep seem to be more off-white than usual.

Caked in a thick layer of salt, the road that noodles itself over this little corner of the Brecon Beacons in south Wales, normally the darkest of graphite greys with crisp white lines, has turned into a long and winding sandpit. And the grit is spreading, coating everything from passing cars to footwear and even livestock in a fine, dusty layer.

On any other day that would cause havoc on a photoshoot. The photographer would soon launch his camera at a rock face in frustration, or at the very least one writer or another would moan so hard at having to wipe down a car for the umpteenth time that hour with nothing but a gritty microfibre cloth and some icy stream water that he'd soon be abandoned on the mountaintop by the rest of the team, left to find his own way home.

I've seen it happen. I've heard the moaning. Heavily salted roads and car magazine photoshoots do not go well together. But it's working today because the winter sun is very low, scarcely above the hilltop, and whenever one of our three cars kicks up a plume of grit, the big, arching cloud is lit up from behind, giving the car its own radiant aura.

Framed like that they all look special somehow, holy even. But of the diverse trinity we've assembled – all three completely brilliant in their own way and each one so much more interesting than anything fresh off the factory floor at the same price – there's only one that truly deserves to be worshipped.



**‘The RS4 is in its comfort zone with a bit of a lick on. It feels a shame to ever let it slow down’**





Our little gathering highlights an important point: the sheer variety of serious kit that can be had for £20,000 on the used market is immense, from an angry little two-seat hot hatch to a big V8 wagon, via a rally-bred turbo weapon. And this is just a snapshot. As we've seen, the full spectrum includes rear-driven roadsters, four-seat coupes, habitable hot hatches and even mid-engined junior supercars. It begs the question: need one ever spend more than £20,000 on a performance car?

It's a biting cold morning in Wales, the first day of winter, in fact, but with clear skies over frosted fields the view from the car park we're in is one to savour. The car park itself is worth a peek, too, the swollen curves of the Audi RS4 Avant looking so plump against the sharp lines of the Mitsubishi Evo VI Tommi Mäkinen Edition; the squat Mini John Cooper Works GP sitting alongside them.

I'm drawn to the Audi first. If there's a more handsome super-estate out there than this B7 RS4, I'd like to see it, and if there's a better colour for it than this Daytona Grey I'd like to know what it is.

In the bright sunshine the paint is rich and deep with a sparkling fleck. It looks superb. This car has the optional bucket seats with their adjustable wingback bolsters, which just sit so right in a slightly dated but very solid, sophisticated cabin.

I don't know of any other car that has two such disparate characters depending on speed. At a crawl the RS4 feels quite stodgy and heavy, with horribly gloopy steering that doesn't self-centre, a tough ride quality and an engine that, despite its 4.2 litres and eight cylinders, actually feels a touch limp through the mid-range.

With a bit of speed – perhaps 40mph or so – things change. What manner of witchcraft is going on within that steering system to change a rack akin to over-thick porridge to a crisp, direct one? And what alchemy is it that turns a lumpy low-speed ride to a fluid, controlled and pliant one? The RS4 is so much happier at medium and high speeds, so much more in its comfort zone with a bit of a lick on, that it feels a shame to ever let it slow down. It's as though driving slowly makes it feel

**Above:** Evo VI TME is a performance legend, but the R56 Mini GP has a level of focus rarely seen in the hot hatch realm. Given that their power-to-weight ratios are within touching distance, it could be a close call between the pair

anxious and uptight, like an edgy chain-smoker trapped on a long-haul flight. Release it and the thing just relaxes.

And the engine more than comes good once you start to dig into the rev range. It's one that lives on crank speed rather than mid-range torque, so although it doesn't thump the RS4 down the road with a wrecking-ball wallop, it does fling it along with some insistence between 6000 and 8000rpm. In second and third gears it feels every bit as quick as you could want it to. I've no idea why I'm so surprised that a 414bhp car feels as fast as this one – perhaps, deep down, I imagine it to be much older than its ten years, the product of a simpler, slower time – but I just don't need any more performance from an estate car.

The V8 soundtrack is sweet without being artificially enhanced by a show-offy exhaust system, and the manual gearbox – which already feels anachronistic, a proper throwback in this DCT world – makes the car all the more engaging. Snatch fourth after a bit of a squirt in second. Block shift on the way down with a blip. The gate is springy and well defined, but if you don't bleed in a bit of throttle as the clutch comes back up, the whole drivetrain can be quite shunty.

On fixed-rate dampers the RS4 needs speed before the ride settles, and on one particularly broken, pockmarked stretch at a quick right-hander – I'll return to it later, so let's call it Brecon Pavé – it can feel a touch brittle. It's the sort of brittleness that modern adaptive-damping systems and a decade of NVH research and development have all but eradicated, and which ages the RS4 as much as its manual gearbox. But almost everywhere else the car is classy and competent.

It turns into a corner very well, for instance, but when you lift the bonnet and see that the entire engine is ahead of the front axle, like lead ballast in the nose of a bobsled, you wonder how the thing navigates bends at all. The RS4 is so safe and secure-feeling that it isn't long before you start throwing it around with more enthusiasm than a heavy estate car should be comfortable with.

It is a shame the all-wheel drive never overworks the rear axle enough for it to drift out a degree or two under power, but there is still plenty of fun to be had in the Audi. All of which leaves me with one simple question: is there a better, more tempting day-to-day car out there for the same money?

From one four-wheel-drive machine to another. Just six short years separate the RS4 from this

**Bottom right:** RS4 and Evo littered with details to make petrolheads smile.  
**Below:** grippy, supportive Recaros aside, the Evo's cabin is hilariously low-rent, as though lifted directly from a mid-'90s minicab. Which it was, of course





**‘Just as soon as the Evo’s front  
tyres are loaded up on the  
way into a bend, the rear axle  
starts to swing around gently’**



**Right:** despite forced induction, the TME's in-line four is happy to fizz right up to its 7000rpm red line. **Far right:** Mini GP's unit is also turbocharged with four cylinders, but that's where the similarities end – it's just not as characterful



perfectly preserved Evo VI Tommi Mäkinen Edition, but for the quality of the materials and overall fit and finish within their cabins, the difference feels like two decades or more. The Evo also feels very small, and although the driver's seat is set a little too high and the steering wheel is unusually large in diameter, the simple fact that 'T. Mäkinen' is embroidered into each seatback is enough to excuse any shortcomings.

This limited-edition model paid tribute to the laconic Finn's string of World Rally Championship titles in the late-'90s. With 2500 examples built, many but not all in Passion Red with rally-themed decals (the other colours are more likely to fit our budget), the TME, as it's known, ranks alongside the Impreza P1 and 22B as the most iconic road-bound versions of the era's pre-eminent rally cars.

It's either desperately bobble-happy, then, or really rather cool depending on your view of such things. Either way, it drips so heavily with evocative logos – Ralliart, Momo, Enkei, Recaro – there's no doubting its authenticity. The turbocharged 2-litre four-cylinder engine develops 276bhp and 275lb ft of torque, with turbo response times improved by an exotic titanium turbine. The TME also got white 17-inch wheels, a front strut brace, a lower ride height and a quicker steering ratio.

Not that you'd recognise this as a faster, more immediate helm today. There's enough slack in the rack off-centre that you can wobble the wheel by a few degrees without provoking any kind of response from the front wheels, but that's just about the only criticism that can be levelled at it. It's wonderfully detailed and intuitive, giving a clear impression of what's going on at road level.

With that hint of compliance in the steering and body movements that seem quite exaggerated by today's standards, the TME can feel a little lazy at first, but in fact the car is super-alert and ultra-agile. It feels so light on its wheels, too, with suspension that soaks up bumps so beautifully that the car almost seems to float above the road.

Just as soon as the front tyres are loaded up on the way into a bend, the rear axle starts to swing around gently, giving the car a neutral-to-oversteer balance that makes it feel so playful on a winding road. Rather like the RS4, the Mitsubishi won't readily slide under power, its four-wheel-drive system sending just enough torque rearwards to sustain that gentle rotation from apex to exit.

Over our rough Brecon Pavé section there's so much pliancy in the TME's damping that you scarcely notice the change in surface. Unburdened by electronic control systems and endless drive modes, the Evo's chassis is pure and uncomplicated, too. In fact, its chassis is as capable and entertaining as any I've driven in 2016.

The industry talks so enthusiastically about the advances made in turbocharging over the last few years, but there aren't many forced-induction in-line engines on sale today that are more exciting than this one. It needs 3000rpm before it wakes up, but from there it pulls hard throughout the rev range. It actually delivers enough of a hit that you can change up at 6000rpm and still feel like you're whipping along. The gearshift, incidentally, is as mechanical and precise as they come.

This Mitsubishi UK heritage fleet car must be one of just a handful left unfettled. I can understand the temptation to squeeze more power

### Audi RS4 Avant (B7)

**Engine** V8, 4163cc  
**Power** 414bhp @ 7800rpm  
**Torque** 317lb ft @ 5500rpm  
**Transmission** Six-speed manual, four-wheel drive, electronic diff lock, ESP  
**Front suspension** Four-link, coil springs, DRC dampers, anti-roll bar  
**Rear suspension** Double wishbones, coil springs, DRC dampers, anti-roll bar  
**Brakes** Ventilated discs, 365mm front, 324mm rear, ABS, EBD  
**Wheels** 8.5 x 18in front and rear  
**Tyres** 255/40 R18 front and rear  
**Weight** 1710kg  
**Power-to-weight** 246bhp/ton  
**0-62mph** 4.9sec (claimed)  
**Top speed** 170mph (claimed)  
**On sale** 2005-08  
**Value now** £13,750-30,000  
**evo rating:** ★★★★★

### Mini John Cooper Works GP (R56)

**Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1598cc, turbo  
**Power** 215bhp @ 8300rpm  
**Torque** 206lb ft @ 2000-5100rpm  
**Transmission** Six-speed manual, front-wheel drive, ESC  
**Front suspension** MacPherson struts, coil springs, adjustable dampers, anti-roll bar  
**Rear suspension** Multi-link, coil springs, adjustable dampers, anti-roll bar  
**Brakes** Ventilated discs, 330mm front, 280mm rear, ABS  
**Wheels** 7.5 x 18in front and rear  
**Tyres** 215/40 R19 front and rear  
**Weight** 1160kg  
**Power-to-weight** 192bhp/ton  
**0-62mph** 6.3sec (claimed)  
**Top speed** 150mph (claimed)  
**On sale** 2005-08  
**Value now** £16,000-22,000  
**evo rating:** ★★★★★

### Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution VI Tommi Mäkinen

**Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1997cc turbo  
**Power** 276bhp @ 6500rpm  
**Torque** 275lb ft @ 2750rpm  
**Transmission** Five-speed manual, four-wheel drive, rear LSD, Active Yaw Control  
**Front suspension** MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar  
**Rear suspension** Multi-link, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar  
**Brakes** Ventilated discs, 320mm front, 305mm rear, ABS  
**Wheels** 17in front and rear  
**Tyres** 225/45 R17 front and rear  
**Weight** 1365kg  
**Power-to-weight** 205bhp/ton  
**0-60mph** 4.6sec (claimed)  
**Top speed** 150mph (claimed)  
**On sale** 1999-2001  
**Value now** £15,000-40,000  
**evo rating:** ★★★★★



from a car like the TME, but for my tastes this Evo just doesn't need any more straight-line performance. The WRC cars of the time would only have had ten or 15 per cent more power, after all, and they seemed to go well enough...

I almost feel sorry for the Mini GP. The Evo is quite an act to follow, but perhaps a powerful little hot hatch with no rear seats and semi-slick tyres will be up to the job. Not just yet, though, because with the temperature hovering a point above freezing and the road surface icy cold, the Kumho rubber is well out of its operating range. After a few exploratory runs over the B4560 the temperatures start to build, but with 215bhp and not a locking differential in sight, traction is always at a premium in the lower gears.

It's the rear end that's got my attention, though. There's so much roll stiffness across the back axle that the GP wants to oversteer everywhere. As the tyre temperatures build further, the balance does shift towards neutral, but the R56 GP's chassis has clearly been engineered to be very alert and pointy. Of

course, the GP has manually adjustable Bilstein coilovers, so this side of its character can be amplified or tamed with some tinkering. As it is, this example has been wound up so tightly that it almost feels unstable. But that's also where its freakish agility comes from. There's not a trace of understeer and no slack in the steering whatsoever, the slightest inputs causing the front end to dart one way or the other. Over the Brecon Pavé section there just isn't enough pliancy or travel in the rear suspension to smother the bumps, which causes the car to snap into a little moment of oversteer.

The highly strung GP couldn't feel more different to the fluid, composed Evo if it sprouted feathers and started clucking. But the Mini's hypertension is also the better part of its charm, because once you've accepted that it is going to skip and bounce along the road and drag you towards the grass verge under power and try to swap ends on turn-in, you can get on with the rather brilliant business of trying to tame the damn thing. It mightn't be the most

sophisticated hot hatch of recent times, but it is undoubtedly one of the most exciting to drive.

It's a shame the engine doesn't deliver the same thrill as the chassis. It's plenty strong enough and starts to pull 1500rpm sooner than the Evo's motor, but it doesn't rev through its mid-range as crisply and by 6500rpm it's had enough. The gearshift, too, feels rubbery around the edges.

With just 2000 of these second-generation GPs built, the Mini is the most exclusive car here, and with uprated engine internals, those trick coilovers, revised suspension geometry and six-piston brake calipers, it's just as much a performance thoroughbred as the RS4 or Evo.

It isn't the stand-out car of the three, though, and neither is the one with the big V8 and the swollen arches. Instead, it's the Evo VI Tommi Mäkinen Edition that emerges – most probably at some extraordinary speed – from its own salty dust cloud, turbo engine fizzing into the limiter, chassis deflecting bumps like they're not there, halo gleaming. ☒



£20k  
HEROES

## NEW HEROES

### NOT IN THE MOOD FOR SPENDING

£20,000 on a used **evo** icon? Don't worry, we won't hold it against you. Much. Seriously, though, we understand that a used car, especially a used performance car that requires more than just a regular service and an MOT every 12 months, isn't everyone's cup of tea. Especially so when you don't actually have £20,000. A monthly payment of one per cent of that amount will get you into all manner of motor cars, however. Question is, are any of them worth your direct debit?

In today's new car market, £20,000 will buy you a lot of dreary and worthy four-wheeled devices that would struggle to raise the pulse of a Tizer-fuelled toddler. But there are still some gems to be plucked from the dross.

With **evo's** esteemed The Knowledge (see page 160) laid open, the process starts promisingly, because under 'A' we discover Abarth's 595 Competizione (pictured above right), for £19,090. Of course, this would require conversing with a Fiat dealer and for many, public transport is a less stressful option. But as a car the Abarth 595 is more than a marketing exercise – just. Its 155bhp per ton power-to-weight ratio is usefully muscular,

and its four-cylinder turbocharged motor spins with spirit, as all good superminis' should. It also looks neat and has some nice details, too, but there is always a sense that more time was spent on the design and finishing than tuning the dynamics to match the engine.

The DS 3 Performance (£20,495) steers a similar path, sharing some of the ingredients of the 208 GTi by Peugeot Sport but falling short in serving up the same feast of fun. We suspect over time, though, the DS 3 could offer more than it suggests on first acquaintance. As for the 208 GTi (pictured below), we would always favour the aforementioned 'by Peugeot Sport' version. It's will worth the £3100 premium over the standard £18,895 GTi model.

Ford's Fiesta ST Mountune – £18,144 – is an **evo** favourite, and our pick of the sub-£20k

new cars, but it's ageing now – the new Fiesta has recently been revealed – and struggles to hide it. (This does mean, however, you may find bargains on regular Fiesta ST base cars at dealers keen to move remaining stock, leaving you with more to spend at Mountune.)

It's not as sharp or involving as the Fiesta, but Mini's Cooper S (above left), for £18,840, has become a default choice for many in the supermini sector. Shame that we'd always have a nagging doubt about not stretching to a JCW Challenge, the model that unlocks the F56's true potential.

The ubiquitous VW Group struggles at this price point. The Polo GTI (£19,235) leaves us feeling flat after every drive, and somehow SEAT's Ibiza Cupra (£18,100) doesn't have the excitement of its Leon Cupra big brother. Hopefully the forthcoming VW Up GTI will solve this issue.

If you're thinking long-term, Kia's Proceed GT (£20,205) may be too sensible for some, but we rate the Korean warm hatch for its honest approach to doing things: well built, clean design, strong engine, honest chassis and a nicely rounded first performance car package. But we'd be inclined to buy a used example, strip some weight from it, find some more power from the 1.6-litre turbocharged four and build our first road and track car.

And that's your lot. No sports cars, coupes or roadsters – a 1.5-litre MX-5 is within budget but the 2-litre is a sweeter steer in our view and costs £22,000.

While the likes of the Fiesta ST Mountune and Mini Cooper S are **evo** staples, when you're lining them up against a TVR Tuscan or Mitsubishi Evo VI or V8-engined RS4, they can feel a bit below par. If ever there was a time for car makers to stop getting aroused by the thought of another niche SUV, it's now. New performance cars shouldn't be prohibitively expensive and exclusive, and there aren't enough used icons to go around. ❌

*'There are some gems to be plucked from the dross'*





by RICHARD MEADEN

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

# SPEED OF LIGHT

*Lotus has chipped away more weight from the Exige to create the Sport 380. No mere track warrior, it's one of the most enthralling road cars we've ever driven*





**T**

**HE JOY OF THE SPORT 380 BEGINS LONG** before you drive it. If you're a geek – and you will be if the idea of this ultimate Exige floats your boat – your juices start flowing when you read the specification, the best bits of which reveal an array of detail improvements and an obsessive pursuit of weight saving.

The original V6-engined Exige S was always a mouth-watering machine. The step to the lighter Sport 350 was a delight, so it's no wonder the evolution to the even lighter, even faster Sport 380 instinctively seems like the best thing Lotus has done in years. Excess mass has been hunted down with dogged determination, to the point where the quartet of rear lights has been pared down to a pair, with the inner duo replaced by small reversing lights. Weight saving? 300g. Geek value? Priceless...

The whole car is peppered with such changes. Big wins are scored with a lithium-ion battery that saves 10.3kg. Pared-back carbonfibre seats slice another 6kg from the kerb weight. Carbonfibre has also been used in place of glassfibre on key body panels to save weight and lower the centre of gravity. Forged wheels save 2.5kg per corner. A polycarbonate rear window saves another 900g. The list goes on (and on) until more than 30kg is saved over the Sport 350, and closer to 45kg if you go for the optional titanium exhaust and carbonfibre sill covers.

Being Lotus, the tweaks don't stop there. Gallingly, some of those hard-won savings are undone by aero-improving barge boards along the sills, a new fuel pump, a larger fuel tank and a more effective transmission-oil cooler to ready the Sport 380 for track work. Together they put 15kg back on the car, bringing the kerb weight to 1110kg, or 1100kg



**'IT'S EASY TO IMMERSE YOURSELF IN THE MINUTIAE, BUT LIKE ANY GREAT CAR THE EXIGE SPORT 380 IS ALL ABOUT THE DRIVING'**



**Above:** canard wings at the front corners and the fixed carbonfibre rear wing contribute to downforce of 140kg at the Sport 380's 178mph top speed, though drag remains unchanged from the Sport 350

with all the lightweight options. For comparison, the original V6 Exige S (now discontinued) was 1176kg.

It's easy to immerse yourself in the minutiae, but like any great car the Sport 380 is all about the driving. No matter how keen you are to get going, you can't just saunter up to the Exige, jump in and drive it. Partly because there's the small matter of folding yourself up and posting your body through the door aperture, but also because it looks so good. Small, squat and bristling with aerodynamic devices from nose to tail (a package that increases maximum downforce from 88kg to 140kg with no penalty in drag), there's a delightful, toy-like quality about this pocket-sized supercar that makes you feel good just being in its company.

Once you've slid across the sill and wriggled down into the driver's seat, it's time to pause once more to enjoy the cockpit, driving position and view out through the windscreen. It's sparse in here, but what fixtures and

fittings there are create a fantastic ambience. Precisely stitched leather and Alcantara trim, neat alloy fixings, the bare aluminium tub and that intriguing exposed gear linkage are all spot-on, both in terms of aesthetics and tactility. It looks and feels the part.

Sounds it, too. The Toyota-supplied 3.5-litre V6 might be of relatively humble stock, but the crisp, brassy soundtrack is a long way from a Camry. Especially when breathing through the optional titanium exhaust, as fitted here. With outputs increased via a supercharger pulley change and ECU remap, the motor gives an honest 375bhp (380 PS) and 302lb ft of torque, which is plenty in a car of this weight.

The bald performance figures are impressive enough – 0-60mph in 3.5sec and a top speed of 178mph – but there's much more to the Sport 380 than straight lines. For starters it laps Lotus's Hethel test track in 1:26.5, which is just 1.5sec slower than the road-legal 3- Eleven.



That's mighty impressive, believe me.

This might create the impression that the Sport 380 is an all-or-nothing, track-obsessed, road-compromised machine, yet that impression is confounded the moment you select first gear and pull away. The clutch bites smoothly and the engine pulls lustily without a hint of histrionics, leaving you free to surge along on a wonderfully elastic reserve of readily accessed torque.

If you're used to more mainstream metal the Exige's unassisted steering will come as a bit of a shock. Initially for its weight at parking speeds (be warned, it's hefty), but mostly for its level of feel and connection once above walking pace. There's no slack, no filtration, no sense of driving with a pair of oven mitts on your hands. Instead the road surface tingles through your palms and fingers to create a high-definition picture of what's going on where tyres and tarmac meet.

Which is just as well, for the Yorkshire Dales is treating us to a wet and wintry day. Mercifully the temperature is hovering around 8C, so the standard-issue Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2s stand some chance of waking up, but the roads are saturated, with plenty of standing water waiting to trip us up. Not exactly ideal conditions for a quick, light, torquey mid-engined sports car, which accounts for the tension spreading up my arms from wrists to shoulders as we splash our way towards the Buttertubs Pass.

Given the conditions, I'm expecting the Exige to be

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flighty and skittish, but it's actually behaving impeccably, even when slimy fallen leaves enter the equation. If there's a slip or slither it's well telegraphed. Better still, the car catches itself before any electronics need to intervene, which helps to build a strong level of trust. So long as you drive with respect for the weather and work the throttle with equal consideration, the Exige copes remarkably well, even when you increase the pace.

If that comes as a pleasant surprise, so too does the fact there's so much to enjoy about the Exige at moderate speeds. Thanks to the engine note, cockpit environment and connection you feel to the car, it's never less than an event to be in. Simply to feel it working is enough. The way it remains utterly taut, yet compliant enough to work with what are demanding roads even by UK standards. The way you're drawn into the process. The detailed feel and measured immediacy with which the Exige responds to your inputs. Far from isolating you from what's going on, the Exige does all it can to involve you. For instance, I love the fact you feel and hear water and grit splash and clatter in the wheelarches when you power through puddles. That's not for everyone, and indeed you can spec additional sound-deadening and carpets if you want to feel more cosseted, but for me it's what makes the Exige uniquely involving. This is driving.

Just as we're beginning to wonder whether the promised afternoon sunshine was a cruel lie, the clouds part and sunlight bursts out across the Dales. It's a spectacular sight, the road spooling out irresistibly towards the horizon. With 'glory shots' in the bag we head back out, taking advantage of drying roads to explore the Sport

380's abilities that bit further.

Using the torque in the higher gears has been fun and highly effective, but the Sport 380 takes on a whole new demeanour when you slot a low ratio and pin the throttle. Gone is the mellow, muscular delivery, replaced with genuine ferocity that builds as you work to the red line. It's a fabulous feeling. One of being picked up and thrown towards the next corner.

The gearshift is the sweetest I've felt in a modern Lotus. I'm not sure if it's directly related to the exposed linkage, or simply the result of the continual fettling a car manufacturer makes to improve its products. Whatever, the shift quality is quick, clean and precise. It feels engineered, and encourages you to punch the lever up, down and across the gate as rapidly as your wrist can move it.

If there's a downside, it's that the motor is so tractable and the car so light compared with the effort required to propel it that there's a reduced need to actually change gear. However, you feel a strong desire to work the gearbox, so you end up making shifts just for the sake of it. The pedal spacing is okay for heel-and-toe downshifts, but much like in the Evora Sport 410, there's a dead zone in the throttle response that makes measured, sweetly timed blips trickier than they should be.

The brakes are sensational, as they should be given they hail from the 3-Eleven. The pedal is firm, the response smooth and measured even at low speeds. Work them harder and they give you a supreme feeling of confidence in their outright potency and stamina, and also in the way they can work right up to the ABS threshold, even in

**Above:** a removable soft-top is standard, while a carbon roof and louvred tailgate are an option, but they offer no weight saving. **Right:** cabin is a paragon of minimalism, yet strangely stylish, particularly the exposed gear linkage (below right)



difficult conditions. Few road cars in my experience have brakes as good as this.

The truly special thing about the Sport 380 is that all these stand-out qualities come together seamlessly to create a car that's completely intuitive to drive. The way it combines such detailed feel with such high levels of grip and traction is exceptional. So too is the way you can deploy such performance, even on roads apparently more suited to something like a Focus RS.

Across the Dales it crystallises into an experience that I genuinely can't get enough of. Point-to-point there are few cars that can carry more speed; fewer that wrap you up in the process so completely. Your senses feel heightened, but not through the fight-or-flight fear response some fast, mid-engined cars can induce on tricky roads in dicey conditions. In the Exige you look further ahead, reading the road and plotting your line. On fast, flowing stretches you slice from one corner to the next, charting the path of

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### Lotus Exige Sport 380

**Engine** V6, 3456cc, supercharged **Power** 375bhp @ 6700rpm  
**Torque** 302lb ft @ 5000rpm **Transmission** Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive **Front suspension** Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar **Rear suspension** Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar **Wheels** 7.5 x 18in front, 10 x 18in rear **Tyres** 215/45 ZR17 front, 265/35 ZR18 rear, Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 **Weight** 1110kg **Power-to-weight** 343bhp/ton **0-60mph** 3.5sec (claimed) **Top speed** 178mph (claimed) **Price** £67,900

**evo rating** ★★★★★

**Above:** weight-saving regime for the Exige included removing the inner pair of tail lights and replacing them with smaller reversing lights, thus lopping a whole 300g from the kerb weight...



least resistance, steering almost by squeezing the steering wheel rather than actually making a perceptible input. At these speeds it's surgical, but never clinical.

Over the more gnarly sections, where dips and crests lie unseen and the road jinks evasively, you drive more on your wits, relying on the Exige's poise, balance and consistency to keep things in check. It's fun to work the intermediate gears, wringing it out in second and third before calling on those stonking AP brakes to set you up for the next corner. Driven thus it's an intense, absorbing and truly exciting experience.

You have a choice of dynamic settings, from Normal, through Sport and Race to Race+ (which completely disables the traction and stability systems). In the worst of the rain I've run in Normal and Sport, for they offer plenty of reassurance without getting in the way of your enjoyment. Race mode allows you to work up to and far enough beyond the limits of grip and traction to feel the car slip and slide beneath you. Hard acceleration over crests on wet tarmac sends the revs flaring and the tail shimmying, but even then there's a layer of control.

Very occasionally the Sport 380 betrays its lack of a limited-slip differential, but these moments are generally in tight, uphill corners in Race or Race+. Clearly the rain doesn't help, but when the inside rear submits to the supercharged V6's generous torque, the resulting flurry of wheelspin feels at odds with the Exige's polish and finely honed abilities. Of course, a diff would come with a weight penalty (approximately 5kg), and might make the car a bit twitchier in wet conditions, so simply sticking one in isn't an instant cure-all. And Lotus reckons it wouldn't appreciably improve lap times, either. It's an interesting conundrum, particularly as the Evora Sport 410 now features an LSD, but while the occasional scabble of wheelspin is unseemly, it's far from a deal-breaker.

The Sport 380 is not as everyday useable as something like a Porsche 911 – or indeed a Cayman GT4, arguably its closest rival. It takes more commitment to buy a Lotus and live with it, but that's always been the case; I'm sure Lotus owners wouldn't have it any other way. Ultimately the Sport 380 is brilliantly capable and truly covetable – drivers' cars don't come much better at any price. ✕



R.S.16

CLIO R.S.16

HY64 PRX

Renault Classic





# The Golden Years

*Renault Sport has been creating our kind of cars  
for over three-and-a-half decades. We drive its  
greatest hits... and the one that got away*

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PHOTOGRAPHY *by* ASTON PARROTT

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## CLIO V6

by HENRY CATCHPOLE

**EVEN NOW, EIGHTEEN YEARS AFTER** it made its debut at the 1998 Paris motor show, the Clio V6 still looks wonderfully outlandish. If you ever chance to see one on the road, it commands at least as much attention as any Ferrari. Look at one for long enough and, even though you know it has a mid-engined ancestor in the Renault 5 Turbo, you start to wonder how on earth it came about...

Back in 1998, Renault was keen to find suitable homes for the 3-litre V6 engine that it had developed jointly with PSA. A plan was even hatched to put it in a Twingo (with a Spider chassis). But top management decided the next Renault Sport project should be a Clio. So the Clio V6 concept appeared in Paris, initially as a track car, with the announcement of a one-

make race series. It was after the show that Christian Contzen (director general of Renault Sport) contacted TWR about the possibility of turning the Clio V6 into a road car.

A key player in the project was Stephen Marvin. These days Marvin works for Renault Samsung Motors in Korea, but back in the late '90s and early 2000s he worked at TWR (he later went on to join Renault Sport, where he masterminded such cars as the R26.R).

Marvin recalls how TWR had just three months to build two mules as proof of concept. One was yellow, one was black; one was based on one of the race cars and one had lashed-up arches. Both were driven to Kemble airfield in early 1999 to be assessed by the great and the good of Renault Sport and TWR. Happily for us they were convinced and, just 18 months later, 30 cars were ready for the launch in Nice. Marvin recounts that they weren't exactly production-ready and every night there was a fair amount of remedial work (particularly on the gearboxes) using the one ramp available to

the team at the local Renault dealership.

We loved it. Richard Meaden's conclusion in *evo* 026 was that it was 'one of the most desirable cars on the planet', and he concluded: 'Twenty-six grand won't buy you a bigger thrill.'

However, perhaps inevitably with a road car that had been productionised from a racer in such a short time, not everything was perfect, and the Phase 1 car had quite a reputation in terms of its handling. Weight distribution and suspension geometry produced both roll oversteer and lateral-force-induced oversteer, or what Marvin describes rather nicely as 'the rucksack effect'. There were also criticisms that the V6 was underpowered with 227bhp.

For Phase 2, Marvin was project manager. The engine got unique pistons and valves and a new inlet manifold (the mule was kicking out around 270bhp although this was tempered to 251bhp for production). There were new gear ratios and a revised gearshift. Best of all, the chassis was reworked. More caster at the front, more camber at the rear, longer rear trailing

**'You'd probably go faster down a B-road in a Clio Trophy, but the V6 isn't about pure speed. Never has been'**



**Top:** Phase 2 car had a myriad of chassis changes, including wider track and longer wheelbase, to tame Phase 1's wayward handling. **Above:** it's still a shock to see that big V6 where the rear seats should be

arms, stiffer top mounts to give more camber support, firmer springs, longer and softer bumpstops, stiffer front anti-roll bar, wider front track, longer wheelbase, bespoke new Michelins... all helped change the balance. With just 40 per cent of the weight on the lightly laden nose, it's easy to see why it was difficult to get a good contact patch working on the front tyres.

Launched in the spring of 2003, the Phase 2 V6 was a vast improvement. It finished third in eCoty, beating both the Ferrari 360 Challenge Stradale and the BMW M3 CSL in the process.

Driving one today is still an absolute joy. I always wonder if it will feel slow and awkward on re-acquaintance, but if anything it feels better than ever. The V6 engine is really special, revving so smoothly and with a mellifluous soundtrack that has elements of V8 in its timbre. It's not the quickest to rev, so you take your time with the gearchanges, but it pulls sweetly, building and building all the way to a joyous 7000rpm.

Turn into a bend and all those old 911 analogies come flooding back. The front end feels light, and

it will push wide if you lean on it, the slightly oddly angled wheel unweighting in your hands though not in a really loose or scary way. You just need to manage the front-end grip until you can get on the power and then let the traction do the talking. You'd probably go faster down a B-road in a Clio Trophy, such are the liberties that you can take with that front-wheel-drive hooligan, but the V6 isn't about pure speed. Never has been.

With the passage of time, it's more incredible than ever that Renault sanctioned not just one but two iterations of the Clio V6. It's crazy but brilliant and, to me, its flaws somehow make it all the easier to love. In fact, it's about time Renault Sport created another mad-engined marvel. The current Twingo's got the running gear in the right place. I wonder what you could squeeze in there...

### Renault Sport Clio V6 255

**Engine** V6, 2946cc **Power** 251bhp @ 7150rpm  
**Torque** 221lb ft @ 4650rpm **Weight** 1400kg (182bhp/ton)  
**0-60mph** 5.8sec (claimed) **Top speed** 153mph (claimed)  
**On sale** 2003-2005 **Rating** ★★★★★



# CLIO TROPHY

by WILL BEAUMONT

## THE CLIO TROPHY'S INTERIOR

is, let's be frank, a bit rubbish. The steering wheel is covered in a material that looks like a close approximation of leather, yet manages to be shiny and sticky at the same time. The plastic of the facia looks and feels so brittle that you fear one slip when changing gear and you'd punch a hole right through it. And yet, far from being a major problem, the shoddy interior is part of what makes the Trophy so fantastic.

The Trophy is all about necessity. It's about what is needed to make a fast, fun, hot hatch. So there are no carbonfibre body panels or Perspex windows because the back-to-basics interior and the lack of luxuries save enough weight. And there's no more power than a standard Renault Sport Clio 182 because the 180bhp from the naturally aspirated 2-litre 16-valve four is perfectly sufficient.

What you do get is Recaro front seats that sit 10mm lower than the standard 182 items, the spoiler from a Clio V6, red paint, lightweight Speedline wheels and, most importantly, remote-reservoir dampers.

It seems insane to suggest that dampers that cost ten times the price of the ones on an already fine-handling car such as the Clio 182 Cup might be a necessity but, 200 yards up the road and a couple of corners later, you'll be convinced you couldn't live without them.

These very special dampers are made by Sachs Race Engineering. The bump and rebound characteristics are different from those on the 182 and they also include hydraulic bump-stops so that the ride height can be lowered without the worry of the suspension abruptly bottoming-out. The damper rods are significantly thicker, too, which means they can continue to work just as effectively even under high lateral loads. An external reservoir is needed so that the oil displaced by the wider rod has somewhere to go.

The experience is just as impressive as the theory. The first few corners are a revelation; the way the Trophy's front axle responds so immediately is nothing short of startling. Yet you're acutely aware there's more to come. The steering and chassis transmit such detail about how hard the tyres are working that you know you're going to have to try much harder than those exploratory first corners before you really begin to feel everything the Trophy has to offer.

Even when it has goaded you to the speeds at which it likes to operate, there's still ample grip. It isn't only about pace, though. The Trophy responds dutifully to every input, and each of its

controls allows you to manipulate its balance. The front axle is so keyed-in to the surface that you can begin to use the rear to fine-tune your line as it relinquishes its grip first. There aren't big, old-school hot hatch lift-off oversteer moments; it's far more nuanced as you dictate the perfect angle of attack with the steering, brakes and throttle (or lack of) all at once.

The Trophy's humble hatchback roots do reveal themselves as the shell loses the fight with the stiff suspension and it shimmies and quivers over bumps. However, that firm setup means there's absolutely no slack and the Trophy responds immediately to every twitch of your right foot and flick of your wrists. It's so alert that the quoted weight of 1090kg actually feels too high.

The V6 Clio might look wilder and the R26.R and Trophy-R Méganes might be more focused, but the little Trophy represents Renault Sport's philosophy in the purest, most basic way. It's unashamedly still a small French hatchback, but one that has benefited at the hands of gifted engineers who know what's most valuable in a performance car. Engineers who favour quality dampers over premium interior plastics.

## Renault Sport Clio Trophy

**Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc **Power** 180bhp @ 6500rpm  
**Torque** 148lb ft @ 5250rpm **Weight** 1090kg (168bhp/ton)  
**0-60mph** 6.6sec (tested) **Top speed** 140mph (claimed)  
**On sale** 2005-2006 **Rating** ★★★★★

# SPIDER

by STUART GALLAGHER

**THE MID-NINETIES WITNESSED A** renaissance for the two-seater sports car. Just as today we're going through a purple patch for hot hatches, two decades ago you were spoiled for choice if you were in the market for something low, lithe and exciting. Certainly more exciting than the hot hatches of the day (Mk3 Golf GTI, anyone?). While hot hatches had never been so bad, in terms of sports cars we had never had it so good.

TVR was in full flow with the Griffith and Chimaera, Mazda's MX-5 could do no wrong, BMW and Mercedes-Benz were fully behind the roadster resurgence, and so too Porsche with the Boxster. And then there were the small British sports car specialists. Caterham had taken the plunge to branch out from building Sevens by developing the 21, which sadly wasn't the hit its sweeping lines suggested it could be. Evante offered to relieve you of your credit rating with its classic-Elan-style ragtop, and Ginetta went

old-school by fitting a Rover V8 in the G33. Arguably the best of the lot was Lotus's sublime Elise, a car that is still in production today and will be until 2020, when the first all-new Elise in 24 years will be revealed.

There's one other name to add to the mid-'90s sports car roll-call: the Renault Sport Spider. We revisited the Spider back in issue 183 but, for anyone who may have missed that, a quick recap. Revealed at the Geneva show in 1995 and launched the following year, the Spider has an aluminium box-section chassis, a glassfibre body and the 2-litre 16-valver from the Clio Williams, making 148bhp and 136lb ft of torque in a car weighing 930kg. The 96 Spiders sold in the UK were fitted with a conventional windscreen as opposed to the wind deflector fitted to the show car and examples sold in other markets. In all, Renault sold 1685, a figure dwarfed by the 10,619 Series 1 Elises Lotus sold. That must have smarted in Paris.

Of course, selling only a sixth of the number of a contemporary rival gives the Sport Spider genuine cult status 20 years on. I mean, when was the last time you saw one? You'd remember if you did, too, because, while it's as low as you'd guess, it's much wider than you might imagine,

with big, curvy hips exaggerated by the body's flat-top design. The wheels are tucked in to the bodywork and – compared with most of its rivals at the time – the Spider looked the least lithe of roadsters, its wide and heavy-set chassis giving inflated proportions. The overly tall roll-hoop didn't help, either, but the Sport Spider also had a motorsport remit to answer and this was the best way of meeting it.

Drive an S1 Elise today and you can still get a sense of the wonderment that the road-testers of the day experienced. The Spider doesn't hit those highs. The Clio engine doesn't engage, the gearshift makes an Elise's feel quick-witted and precise, and the unassisted steering doesn't deliver any of the benefits such a system should. It just feels a little flat; more show car than drivers' car. Like a number of its contemporary rivals in that '90s glut, kerbside appeal never quite translated into driver appeal. Sometimes you can have too much of a good thing.

## Renault Sport Spider

**Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc **Power** 148bhp @ 6000rpm  
**Torque** 136lb ft @ 4500rpm **Weight** 930kg (157bhp/ton)  
**0-60mph** 6.5sec (claimed) **Top speed** 131mph (claimed)  
**On sale** 1996-1999 **Rating** ★★★★★





# MÉGANE R26.R v MÉGANE 275 TROPHY-R

by RICHARD MEADEN

**IT'S ALWAYS SUCH A PLEASURE TO** get back in an R26.R. Not least because you've generally forgotten quite how good it is. Whenever you pull down the shoulder straps of the harness you ask yourself: 'Can this car still be as brilliant as I remember it?' And all it takes is one corner to answer with an emphatic 'yes!'.

The qualities of the R26.R are truly timeless. Every facet is so well matched to the next: the amount of grip to the amount of power and torque; the quest for weight-saving tempered by the desire to ensure the R26.R was as capable on the road as it was exciting on the track.

Today we're here to compare its on-track capabilities with those of its illustrious

descendent, the Mégane 275 Trophy-R. For that we've come to Bedford Autodrome's West Circuit, *evo's* home test track. The West configuration plays to Renault Sport's strengths, with plenty of tricky corners and big braking areas to reward modest mass and maximum poise, and only a short straight where power and torque will make the difference.

Even in its heyday, the R26.R never felt especially ballistic in a straight line, but that didn't matter because it was balletic through the corners. Both those aspects strike me again now: the initial yearning for a bit more stonk out of the turns and down the straights, followed by a growing appreciation for the sense of agility and athleticism brought about by a radical weight-loss programme that included a carbonfibre bonnet, Perspex windows, no rear seats and an optional titanium exhaust.

It still comes as quite a shock when you take stock of those changes. Such single-mindedness is rare at any price point, but it's practically unheard of in the hot hatch sector. It makes for a memorable experience before you even turn a wheel. But as the track-biased Toyo R888s begin to get some heat into them, the R26.R takes you to a whole new level.

You don't need to drive it against the clock to appreciate its brilliance, but that added pressure and focus throw a spotlight on its precision and total exploitability. The lack of inertia pervades every aspect of the driving experience. You turn the steering wheel and the nose responds immediately, and without any hint of mass overworking the tyres or dampers. You can brake late and deep, work the wheel and play with the balance in minute detail.

What you're left with is a car that allows you to wring every last drop of pace from it – and yourself – without ever feeling that you're asking too much of it. It's a pure, honest, analogue, uncompromising machine, and about as much fun as a front-drive car can be.

That's a tough act for anything to follow, but the Mégane 275 Trophy-R is a class act itself. Following in the R26.R's wheel tracks to secure a Nürburgring Nordschleife hot hatch lap record, it has significantly more power and torque than the R26.R but remains true to that car's ethos when compared to its rivals.

Along with the obvious differences, you'll find clear similarities. The DNA of the Trophy-R is clearly descended from the R26.R, and you feel it in almost every area. Certainly in the

character of the engine (it's easy to clip the rev-limiter in both as the red line is modest) and the gearshift, in the tautness of the suspension and in the spirit of chasing ultimate driving dynamics and driver connection over headline power outputs or gimmicky handling modes.

The newer car is physically bigger and heavier, though the weight gain is a relatively modest 70kg or so. You do notice that it's harder to balance at, or just over, the limit of front-end grip all the way through the corner, and because you have 36lb ft more torque to play with, you have to work harder to manage wheelspin out of the tightest turns. Both cars are supremely stable, though the Trophy-R doesn't possess the same repertoire of nuanced moves, preferring a slightly more nose-led stance through medium- and high-speed corners.

This might sound like we're being hard on the Trophy-R. In a way we are, but then that goes with the territory when you're comparing two of the very best hot hatches of modern times. There are few surprises in the lap times – 1:25.15 for the Trophy-R versus 1:27.14 for the R26.R – but, unless you're actually racing, objective pace is secondary to the subjective pleasure from stringing each lap together.

Both cars are exciting, finely honed and truly memorable, but it's the R26.R that lives in the memory longer. It's an exquisitely executed car, an all-time-great hot hatch and quite possibly Renault Sport's finest hour.



**'Both chase driving dynamics and driver connection over power outputs or gimmicky handling modes'**

#### Renault Sport Mégane R26.R

**Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc, turbo **Power** 227bhp @ 5500rpm **Torque** 229lb ft @ 3000rpm **Weight** 1220kg (189bhp/ton) **0-60mph** 5.8sec (tested) **Top speed** 147mph (claimed) **On sale** 2008-2009 **Rating** ★★★★★

#### Renault Sport Mégane 275 Trophy-R

**Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc, turbo **Power** 271bhp @ 5500rpm **Torque** 265lb ft @ 3000rpm **Weight** 1297kg (212bhp/ton) **0-62mph** 5.8sec (claimed) **Top speed** 158mph (claimed) **On sale** 2014-2015 **Rating** ★★★★★



# CLIO RS16 & RENAULT 5 TURBO 1

by RICHARD MEADEN

## **THIS SHOULD HAVE BEEN A PARTY.**

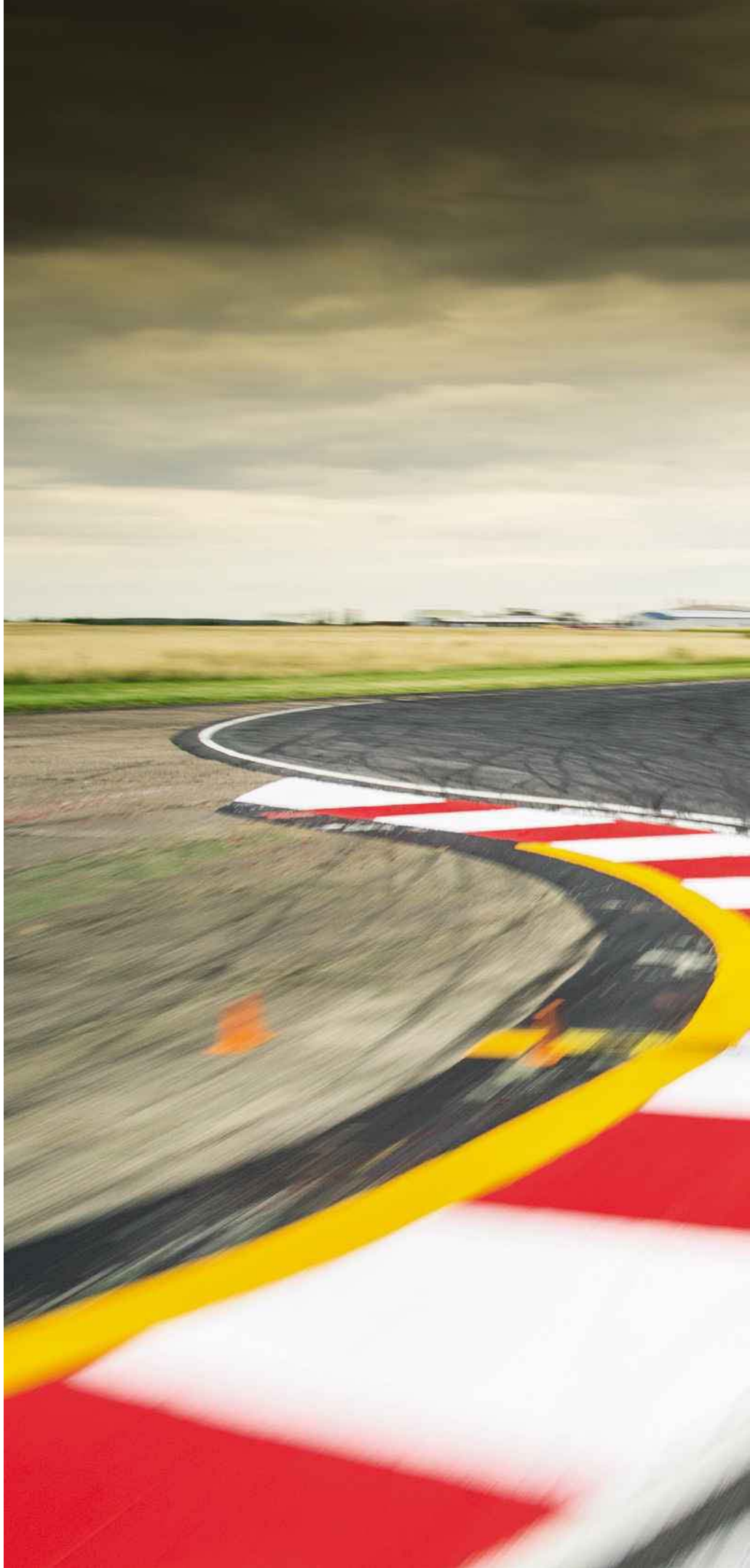
The moment we could finally welcome the Clio RS16 as a production car (albeit a limited edition), proclaim it one of Renault Sport's finest efforts and introduce it to its great, great, great grandfather. Instead it's a bitter tale of what might have been.

When the notion of grafting the best bits of the Mégane 275 into a current Clio was first mooted, our hearts skipped a beat. Big fans of the RS Mégane, but frustrated by the patchy charms of little brother Clio, we couldn't wait to experience the latter with the best bits of the former transplanted into it. Sure enough, when we first drove the RS16 concept back in *evo* 226, it seemed like a winner.

So when Renault invited us to pluck some of the most significant RS models from its incredible collection and have them dispatched to the UK, like kids in a sweet shop we grabbed armfuls of Clios and Méganes and the boss of all hot hatches, the ultra-cool Renault 5 Turbo 1. Plus, of course, the Clio RS16.

You've seen the others on the preceding pages, but for me it's the big-ass 5 and the Frankenstein Clio that make the most fabulous and fascinating pair, for they bookend Renault's unique ambition and ability. That which pushes the engineers and designers to create cars other manufacturers wouldn't even consider, or would flirt with as a motor show concept but never go on to explore seriously.

In this respect Renault is and always has been different. In the '80s, when the insane R5 Turbo was created, this independent spirit was fuelled by a hugely ambitious and highly successful motorsport programme that had already seen the French manufacturer win at Le Mans, in F1, and, in the case of the R5, on the stages of the World Rally Championship.





'The big-ass 5 and the Frankenstein Clio make the most fabulous and fascinating pair, for they bookend Renault's unique ambition and ability'



Working to the Group 3 and 4 rules of the day (those which predated Group B), Renault subjected its chic and super-successful shopping hatch to an astonishing transformation. One in which it turned from a front-engined, front-wheel-drive hatchback into a rear-mid-engined, rear-drive monster.

The plan was to build the minimum 400 road cars required by the rulebook, but, when the first R5 Turbo was shown at the Brussels motor show in 1980, requests flooded in. Renault responded by building more than 1800 mid-engined 5s, though fewer than 600 of these were Turbo 1s with all the trick homologation parts, which included lightweight aluminium roof and doors, plus strengthened bodysells. The rest were Turbo 2s, built from 1983: more conventional (and therefore less costly) in construction, if no less wacky in concept.

Open one of the T1's lightweight alloy doors and you gain access to possibly the wildest car interior ever to reach production: mad, modernist and minimalist in equal measure.

By today's standards the T1's mechanical spec is rather feeble; an old 1.4-litre pushrod four delivering 160bhp thanks to the added puff of a large, laggy turbocharger. A kerb weight of just 900kg helps make the most of that, and in a funny sort of way the lag that leaves you becalmed below 4500rpm seems to intensify the rush you get when the boost gauge begins to twitch and you hear the engine fill its lungs.

It takes a while to dial yourself into the T1, especially the power delivery and slightly knotty gearshift, but then you appreciate there's a harmony to the way it goes about its business. The steering is slow by modern standards, but it's in tune with the chassis, the rate of turn



matched to the rate of roll so you don't upset the balance as soon as you turn the wheel.

The comedically knobbly period Michelin TRX tyres offer modest grip, but the way they build lateral load and then allow it to bleed away suits the car well. You're always aware of the mass sitting behind you – much like in an old 911 – but, unless you provoke it, the T1 remains pretty benign. This of course means you start to poke and prod until you get a response. In the case of the T1, a mid-corner lift of the throttle is enough to wag the tail. This would certainly temper your enjoyment (and commitment) on an unfamiliar road, but on a track it simply encourages further exploration.

The harder you try, the more the parallels with old 911s become apparent. If you want to go the full Ragnotti you have to lift on the way in, wait just long enough to allow the tail's momentum to start it swinging, then open the throttle to get the rear wheels spinning and apply corrective lock to balance the ensuing slide. It sounds dicey, but feels delicious.

Of course, you always need to be mindful of

the sting in the tail, but I'd love to experience the T1 on a great road. The driving experience is packed with quirks, but also with quality. Created by people who knew their stuff and understood how to get the best from a car, the Renault 5 Turbo 1 can truly be described as the genesis of Renault Sport's hot hatch brilliance.

The RS16 is less outlandish, but no less an achievement. You don't need to know what lies beneath its skin to appreciate that this is no ordinary RS Clio. But when you understand the lengths to which Renault Sport has gone to graft in the engine, gearbox and front suspension from the Mégane 275 Trophy-R, there's no question your level of lust increases tenfold.

All of which makes the fact it has been canned all the harder to bear. Had the RS16 been the product of motorsport homologation requirements (like the R5 Turbo 1) it would undoubtedly have been a different story, but with genuine ties between road, race and rally cars long since severed, the super-Clio needed to make sound financial sense. With attention and effort focused on gearing-up for



**'As soon as you turn into a corner you can feel that it's a much keener, grippier and more agile car'**

**Left:** RS16 shows us what we're missing with the current generation of RS Clios. **Above:** we've no idea what the interior designer of the 5 Turbo was on, but we're guessing it wasn't Gauloises



the forthcoming Alpine sports car, Renault's bean-counters couldn't risk the distraction or justify the effort required to hand-build such a specialised, low-volume hot hatch. It must have been as heartbreaking for the engineers involved as it is for the rest of us.

The RS16 is more desirable than arguably any previous RS Clio, but especially the current 200 Auto. The stance, the wider track, the lower ride height, the Akrapovic exhaust, the black badges... Everything about it feels and looks more authentic. The 220 Trophy has been a big step in the right direction, but this car signposts how far it still has to go.

Junking the rear seats immediately sends out an uncompromising message. Bucket seats up front with proper harnesses (plus regular inertia reels for practicality) underline that racer vibe. And because you sit lower, the driving position feels better.

With that void behind you and the rip of the

Akrapovic exhaust, the RS16 is a firecracker, popping and cackling as you work up and down the manual gears. Though much of the important oily bits are from the Mégane, the RS16 still uses Clio power steering. Unfortunately this means it's still a little bit numb, but as soon as you turn into a corner you can feel that it's a much keener, grippier and more agile car, equally happy to be chucked in or placed with precision.

Simply having a gearstick makes a huge difference. It'd be fascinating to try a 220 Trophy with a manual 'box, for I'm sure it would be the missing piece of the puzzle for what remains Renault Sport's nearly car.

If the stillborn RS16's legacy could be to encourage a stick-shift Trophy that restored the RS Clio to the top of its class, that would be some consolation. Albeit tinged with the knowledge that a truly world-beating, heart-pounding machine has been mothballed.

### Renault 5 Turbo 1

**Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1397cc, turbo **Power** 160bhp @ 6000rpm **Torque** 163lb ft @ 3250rpm **Weight** 900kg (181bhp/ton) **0-60mph** 6.6sec (claimed) **Top speed** 130mph (claimed) **On sale** 1980-1983 **Rating** ★★★★★

### Renault Sport Clio RS16

**Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc, turbo **Power** 271bhp @ 5500rpm **Torque** 265lb ft @ 3000rpm **Weight** c1230kg (224bhp/ton) **0-60mph** 5.7sec (estimated) **Top speed** 159mph (estimated) **On sale** Never **Rating** ★★★★★



## Renault Sport Archive

*Renault is the only manufacturer to win top level races in five motorsport categories. Starting with the A442 at Le Mans, these are the cars that did it*

by ANTONY INGRAM

11 June 1978

## FIRST LE MANS WIN

The iconic bubble canopy and tall airbox define the shape of the Renault-Alpine A442, but its victory at Le Mans in 1978 (in modified A442B form) secured its place in the history books. Renault won the event at the third attempt with Didier Pironi and Jean-Pierre Jausaud holding off Wollek, Ickx and Barth's Porsche 936 at an average of 131mph. It remains Renault's only victory at Le Mans.





1 July 1979

## FIRST FORMULA 1 WIN

Renault debuted its turbocharged RS01 at the British Grand Prix in 1977, but it was 1979 before Jean-Pierre Jabouille drove the new, ground-effect enhanced RS10 to its first Formula 1 victory, fittingly at the French Grand Prix in Dijon. While the race is best remembered for a dramatic wheel-to-wheel tussle for second position between Gilles Villeneuve and René Arnoux, J-PJ's win was the first of many for Renault and notably for Renault engines – as of 2016, 168 Grands Prix have been won with Renault power.

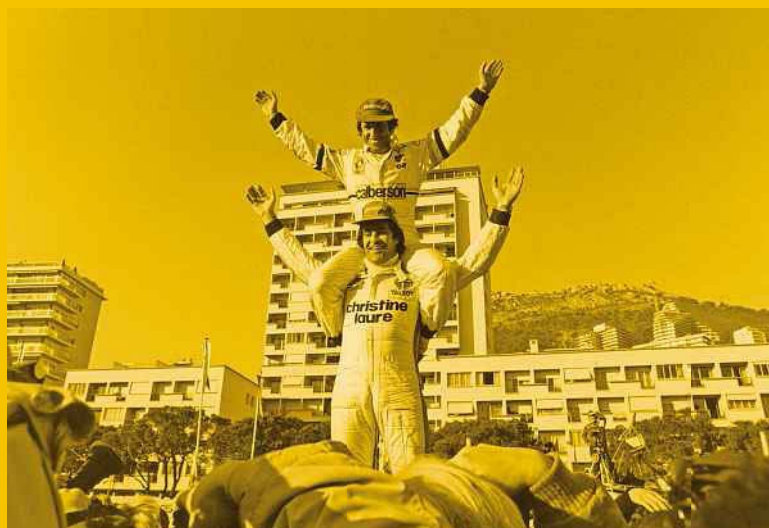




*30 January 1981*

## FIRST WRC WIN

After nine hours, fifty-five minutes and fifty-five seconds of special stages, Jean Ragnotti crossed the line in the 1981 Monte Carlo Rally and gave Renault its first World Rally Championship victory. Renault had won rallies before, of course (with the 8 Gordini and Renault-Alpine A110, among others), but this one with the Renault 5 Turbo was the first since the WRC became an officially sanctioned FIA series in 1973.



1995

## FIRST BTCC TITLE

Renault's first BTCC race win came in 1993, with Alain Menu taking the unloved 19 to victory at Donington Park. But a switch to the newer Laguna brought great improvements: in 1994 Renault finished second to Alfa Romeo, then in '95 sealed the manufacturers' title with a string of victories from Menu (pictured) and Will Hoy towards the end of the season. The Laguna's potential was realised fully in 1997, Menu finally taking the drivers' title with a record 12 wins.





*13 December 2014*

## FIRST FORMULA E WIN

It's little surprise Renault has become a dominant force in Formula E, as the French marque has led development of the all-electric single-seaters since the series' inception. The Renault e.dams squad took the teams' title in its first two seasons and e.dams driver Sébastien Buemi won the 2014-15 Drivers' Championship. Buemi also gave Renault its first Formula E victory: he won Round 3 of the inaugural season, at Punta del Este in Uruguay.





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**S T I L L  
C R A Z Y ?**

*AMG wants its latest cars to be more civil. We, on the other hand, don't.  
So does the new 603bhp E63 S look to the future or the past – or both?*

---

by DAN PROSSER

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**WE'RE REACHING A TIPPING POINT.** IT wasn't all that long ago that hot hatches were fairly modestly powered things, but these days the quickest of the breed are closing in on 400bhp. Supersaloons are now beyond 600bhp, too, thanks to the new Mercedes-AMG E63 S. The darling old brake horsepower is going to have to be retired soon, the poor little poppet. As a unit for describing a car's performance, it's just falling hopelessly out of touch.

But there could be a solution. Perhaps we can adapt the earthquake-measuring Richter scale, reimagine it for our own purposes. As the fastest, baddest cars on the planet, the million-quid, carbonfibre-everything hypercars would slot in right at the top with a 9.0, which, according to the wording of the Richter scale, is enough to cause 'permanent damage to ground topography'. Seems about right. A really quick sports coupe, meanwhile, would come in at 6.0 ('damage to a high number of poorly built structures') and one of

those baby-faced little electric cars would be rated at 2.0 ('felt slightly by some people').

I reckon that would place the new E63 S at around 7.0: 'causing damage to many buildings, even some well-designed ones'. But, strangely, it wasn't the ludicrous power output that made me spit tea at my keyboard when the car was unveiled ahead of the LA motor show in November last year, but the inclusion of a drift mode. It caused outrage amongst well-adjusted individuals, as well as some stupid ones, because a drift mode – the very hallmark of a pea-brained performance car – seemed so incongruous on such an expensive and prestigious sports saloon.

The E63's 4-litre twin-turbo V8 is familiar from the AMG GT and the smaller C63, but this version, the most potent one yet, gets uprated internals and twin-scroll turbos. The range-topping S model is good for 603bhp and 627lb ft from 2500rpm, while the entry-level version plods along with a mere 563bhp and 553lb ft.

For the first time on an E63 there's no rear-wheel-drive option, which to sideways merchants everywhere must seem like a monumental disaster, but to the rest of us comes as quite good news given that seismic power output. The 4Matic+ system sends drive to the rear axle only until it senses the rear tyres losing traction, at which point up to 50 per cent can be diverted forwards. The base model gets a mechanical locking differential in the rear axle while the S uses an electronically controlled item. The gearbox is a newly developed nine-speed automatic.

The chassis uses clever air suspension, with double wishbones on the front axle and a multi-link setup at the rear, just like a regular E-class. However, the AMG gets a reinforced bodyshell, a new rear axle, wider tracks, a hollow rear anti-roll bar, bespoke wheel carriers and more aggressive suspension geometry. Indeed, the chassis makeover leaves no kerbstone unturned in the pursuit of sharper, more responsive dynamics.

Eighteen hundred and eighty kilograms plus enough torque to rotate Anglesey requires some stopping power, so the front brakes use 390mm discs with six-piston calipers. Carbon-ceramic brakes are an option on the S and come with huge 402mm rotors at the front.

That all looks very promising, but there is one little bug hiding away in the spec sheet. The steering is an electrically assisted system with a variable, speed-dependent ratio. Mercedes claims it delivers 'optimum steering feel'. If that turns out to be true it'll be a world first, because most variable steering systems are remote and unintuitive.

Clearly, modern AMGs are quite different to the fire and brimstone, all torque and no traction brutes that defined the brand for so long. Four-wheel drive and downsized, turbocharged engines are a far cry from the likes of the 6.2-litre C63 AMG or the untameable SLS AMG Black Series – cars that dripped with character and had no need for such artifice as a drift mode. They would have kicked such a thing to the ground then done a burnout on it.

AMG CEO Tobias Moers has been on a crusade to refine the brand's image and bring some civility and dynamic precision to its cars – to inject its road-going models with some of the polish of Mercedes-AMG's ultra-civilised and ultra-precise Formula 1 team. That's all well and good, but let's just hope he's remembered the importance of character and a little bit of old-fashioned silliness in amongst it all.

This new E63 doesn't have the wings and diveplanes and distended arches of the most extreme AMGs, but it isn't that sort of car. Beneath an autumnal Portuguese sun, it looks the part, the sinister Grey Magno paint with dark wheels being a particularly gorgeous combination. The cabin, too, is superb,

**Top right:** drift mode in all its sideways, smoky glory.

**Right:** 4-litre V8 gets twin-scroll turbos for the first time as well as new pistons; it also features cylinder deactivation.

**Below right:** deep bolstered sports seats are paragons of support

## 'It picks apart a twisting road with a grace and agility I've never before experienced in a car this vast'

with premium materials and a low-slung driving position.

Although the car is refined in town and on the motorway, and the ride quality is mostly very good, there's just enough about the tension over bigger bumps, the subdued rumble from the exhaust note, the stiff-feeling structure and the weight in the steering to let you know there's something more to this E-class. It's familiar but different, like shaking hands with an athlete.

And when you switch the car into Sport Plus, that athlete turns out to be a mixed martial arts champion who's suddenly got you in a headlock with one arm while smashing you in the mush with the other, your face both reddening and whitening as the punches rain in but the oxygen drains away. It's quite a transformation. It's true that all AMG E-classes have had a split personality of sorts, but there's more bandwidth now between the buttoned-down Monday morning and shirtless Saturday night aspects of its persona.

It's just so damn fast. With close to two tons to haul, it doesn't quite fling itself down the road with the ferocity of a 911 Turbo or modern McLaren, but with huge performance, so much grip on turn-in and mid-corner, unimpeachable traction and such good body control, it picks apart a twisting road with a grace and agility I've never before experienced in a car this vast.

There's good pliancy over bumps in all but the stiffest damper mode, and even in the most comfortable setting the chassis keeps the huge body weight under tight control, so it rarely feels as though the car is getting wayward or scrappy. The way it responds to steering inputs is very impressive, too, helped by the fact that the E63 is technically a rear-wheel-drive car on the way into bends. Four-wheel-drive cars can feel understeery because their front tyres are dealing with steering inputs at the same time as trying to transfer torque to the road, but the E63's 4Matic+ system only sends drive to the front axle on the way out of a corner. If you stand on the power very early you can just about feel the rear axle starting to swing around, but as quickly as it begins, that oversteer is stamped out by the four-wheel-drive system shuffling torque forwards.

Hit a compression heavily or rattle the E63 over a rough road surface at speed and you quickly appreciate the quality of the damping. The steering is very good, too, and although 'optimum steering feel' is somewhat misleading, the rack is very direct with a predictable and intuitive rate of response.

Any number of pseudo-biblical phrases could be used to describe the E63's engine, but 'thundering powerhouse' would seem to do it best. It combines massive torque output throughout the rev range with the response and linear delivery





**Above:** ceramic brakes are an expensive option, but perhaps a worthwhile one given the car's 1880kg kerb weight.

**Above, far right:** dash is dominated by a broad digital display featuring instrumentation and the infotainment system

of a normally aspirated engine. Even the massive, rumbling soundtrack is right on point despite the muting effects of two turbochargers. The gearbox is quick and responsive, too, only losing out to a dual-clutch transmission when upshifts are called for right at the limiter.

Inevitably the car starts to feel a little out of its depth when we're released ducks-and-drakes style onto Portimão circuit, but with the pace set by the brilliantly disobedient Bernd Schneider – who may well have been instructed to keep us hacks under a watchful eye but after two or three corners has clearly stopped giving a damn – we do have an opportunity to try out the controversial drift mode.

And let me tell you now: we were wrong. The E63's drift mode is a wonderful thing. All it does, and I really mean all it does, is make the car rear-wheel drive. Whereas the system in the Focus RS overloads the outside rear tyre to pitch the

car into a slide before firing torque forwards to gather itself up again – easy, prescriptive and not particularly rewarding – the E63's drift mode simply locks the centre-clutch open, dumping every ounce of power onto the rear axle.

Sideways merchants rejoice! Whereas other drift modes do all the work for the driver, the E63's still requires skill and judgement, which is where the fun in such loutish behaviour comes from. If there's a fundamental problem with the E63's drift mode, it's simply the choice of epithet.

This is where AMGs old and new intersect. This E63 is the fastest, most refined and most clinically effective car of its type, but with that centre-clutch locked wide open it suddenly becomes as brutally overpowered and wantonly excessive as any fast Mercedes to date. Slotting in right at the top of the class, the new E63 has just caused permanent damage to the supersaloon establishment. ❌

### Mercedes-AMG E63 S 4Matic+

**Engine** V8, 3982cc, twin-turbo **CO2** 203g/km **Power** 603bhp @ 5750-6500rpm **Torque** 627lb ft @ 2500-4500rpm **Transmission** Nine-speed automatic, four-wheel drive, limited-slip differential, torque vectoring **Front suspension** Double wishbones, hydraulic cylinders, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar **Rear suspension** Multi-link, hydraulic cylinders, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar **Brakes** Ventilated carbon-ceramic discs (option), 402mm front, 360mm rear **Wheels** 9.5 x 20in front, 10 x 20in rear **Tyres** 265/35 ZR20 front, 295/30 ZR20 rear **Weight** 1880kg **Power-to-weight** 326bhp/ton **0-62mph** 3.4sec (claimed) **Top speed** 155mph (limited; 186mph with AMG Driver's Package) **Basic price** £85,000 (est)

evo rating: ★★★★★

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*Getting a Citroën Dispatch van sideways is all in a day's PR work for WRC star Kris Meeke, but soon the serious business begins again with the start of the 2017 championship. We get the inside line*

---

by HENRY CATCHPOLE

**OBVIOUSLY HE DOESN'T SAY IT, BUT KRIS MEEKE HAS** definitely got the rougher deal today. We're at Silverstone and, over on the circuit, MotoGP rider Jorge Lorenzo is doing some promotional work for his sponsor, Monster Energy Drinks, which involves him driving a Mercedes Formula 1 car. On the rally stage next door, Kris is also performing promotional duties for his employer. He's driving a Citroën Dispatch van.

To be fair, we have a laugh in the Dispatch. I wouldn't have thought you could get a completely standard van quite so sideways quite so precisely, but Meeke does it lap after lap, carrying more and more speed into corners with judicious use of the handbrake to get the angles. If this is what he has to do occasionally as payback for a solid WRC contract, then Meeke is more than happy to oblige.

The 2016 season wasn't really meant to be Kris Meeke's breakthrough year, but that's what it was. Sure, 2015 saw his first WRC victory and the signing of a three-year deal with Citroën. By comparison, 2016 was always going to be largely spent testing the new C3 WRC (see page 109), with only a partial



# DISPATCH



# DRIVER



KRIS MEEKE



programme of WRC rallies in the old car to keep his eye in. But, if your name is Sébastien Ogier, then I'd argue that 2016 was the year that made you sit up, take notice and regard Kris Meeke as a very real threat to your dominance.

Why? Well, there were Meeke's victories in Portugal and Finland. At one point in the season he had won half the rallies he had competed in. And while he would be the first to admit that he had an advantageous road position in Portugal, in Finland it was pure speed that propelled him to the top step of the podium. And it was his stage times throughout the year that really left people flabbergasted. In modern WRC, you don't win stages by 35 seconds, but that's what Meeke did on stage nine of the Tour de Corse. To give that some context, the next five drivers were covered by less than ten seconds.

Van demo over, we have a chat about it all. 'Ogier's done it to us a bit over the years,' says Meeke in his quiet Northern Irish accent. 'But this year it just seemed to click. Monte, stage two, we were 12 seconds quicker than anybody. In Portugal we were going quickest by seven and eight seconds on what were really sprint stages – you know, 20km stages. Then on Ouninpohja [in Finland – arguably rallying's most famous stage] we managed to

No question, 2017 is a big year, not just for Meeke and Citroën, but for the whole of WRC, because the new regulations mean that we will see faster and wilder-looking cars on the stages (see page 110). So, just how different has the new C3 felt in testing?

'A lot of things are different and that was one of the big challenges for me,' he says, 'because Citroën has obviously employed all the new aspects of the new regulations but they've also changed a little bit their philosophy in terms of geometry and suspension and everything. So there's separate things you have to look at and isolate – the gains that everybody will have from the new regulations, but also the gains that we're experiencing from having the new philosophy. It's been a nice challenge to work through all that with the engineers, but you certainly notice the difference from the current World Rally cars.'

'The cars are anything up to 70bhp more powerful than the current cars and that's the immediate thing when you get into the car. To have that big a step is unheard of in the World Championship for years.'

'We also have a wider track – it's 55mm wider – which obviously gives more stability, and corner speeds are a little bit higher. You've a centre diff, which makes the car turn better, making it slightly more efficient in the corners, and that's an area where Citroën have quite a lot of experience from the past. Plus the aerodynamics are bigger. It's a bit of a nod back to the Group B era, with massive skirts on the front and side and bigger rear wings so they look a lot more aggressive.'

'I haven't driven much with aero cars, but obviously in rallying it's become more and more important over the years, and now you're allowed a big step in aero compared to before. Citroën has spent a lot of time in the wind tunnel – I think everyone will have – but it's becoming so, so important because when you're allowed to take those gains you have to take them.'

'In terms of overall speed, I think the slower the stages, the bigger the difference. The faster the stages, the less difference you see. But yeah, they're fascinating to drive and it's fascinating for me just to be involved in a new project with the full force of Citroën Racing behind it, because over the last few years, since my involvement in the World Rally Team, they've been focusing on World Touring Cars. Now things have changed and you really notice that experience in the team and the depth of knowledge. Their target is to win and that's certainly what we hope to do.'

By November, the team had already made the most of the big decisions for homologation. 'It's then we start to get a little bit nervous and anxious, thinking, "Have we done enough testing? Are we making the right decisions for the future?" because you never truly know where you are until you go up against the opposition.'

'That's your only true reference point and everyone – the Hyundai guys, the Ford guys, with Toyota coming – they're all going to feel their cars are good because they feel so much better than what we have currently. But how good they are we won't know until the season is underway.'

## 'I WOULDN'T HAVE THOUGHT YOU COULD GET A COMPLETELY STANDARD VAN QUITE SO SIDEWAYS QUITE SO PRECISELY, BUT MEEKE DOES IT LAP AFTER LAP'

**Above left:** Meeke is enjoying the security of a three-year contract with Citroën Racing. **Top left:** he made a big impression on the WRC events he attended in 2016 with an outdated DS3

clear the field by 13 seconds. To do that, especially against [Finn] Jari-Matti [Latvala], was pretty special. And in Corsica to do it by margins of over half a minute... okay, you have 55km stages, but I hope I just sent a little bit of a message to the others, you know, because the DS3 hasn't been developed at all in the last two to three years.'

'My mind's certainly in the right place now. I know Citroën are totally focused now on the new car, which we've been testing all year, and to have that commitment that you're going to be part of that project for three years gives you a lot of confidence. For me, that's been the difference. I've never had a long-term future in my career before, so to have that now... it's so much more fun and pleasant to drive a rally car because you're not hell-bent on proving yourself; you can just relax and enjoy it. And that's what I've been doing, so hopefully we can carry the lessons that we've learnt through to 2017. Even when there are points to be scored we just have to enjoy it. And when I do enjoy it, the points seem to come.'

We're not like F1, where we have pre-season testing where we can sort of get a benchmark.'

After watching the various videos of the new C3 WRC car testing, I've been staggered by how composed it looks – and how little steering lock is required.

'I think a little bit of that comes from aerodynamics,' says Kris. 'You're arriving at stuff with that much more speed, you turn a bit earlier, nail it and you can carry the aero through the corner. We'll have to wait and see how all the driving styles figure it out because the addition of a centre differential also changes your attitude in the car; it changes the way you approach it. You're working with engineers now to help you round a corner. With the DS3 you had no centre diff and you just had to play with your front and rear [diffs], but now you can ask an engineer to help you in a corner and program-in a new map. It'll be interesting to see how that all pans out.'

I ask if it will be possible to alter the character of the diff mid-stage, thinking of F1 and how Hamilton, Vettel and the rest all seem so busy with the buttons on the wheel during the course of a lap.

'Yeah, within a stage you'll be able to change a centre diff map. If the rain comes on or you go onto a loose, slippery section, you'll be able to change a diff map, so it's a hell of a lot of work for engineers to start to think about all that...'

And for Kris and co-driver Paul Nagle, too, presumably. 'Yeah, even to the point that the speed in the car is now so high, especially on tarmac, that you simply can't have the same amount of information in your notes. In Corsica on the recce we did an exercise making notes, thinking about 2017 and removing lots of little bits of information that I would have had with a DS3. With the new car we will be

arriving at stuff with more speed and you won't have time to digest all the information.'

So is there a way they can shorten certain words in the notes, almost using a type of code?

'We're working on certain words,' Kris reveals, 'but when there's a sequence of corners now, instead of grading the corner we just say left-right or whatever it is, instead of actually calling what each corner is. You just have to anticipate it and go with the flow.'

It's certainly going to be a season of change, but the advantage Meeke has from only competing in a partial programme in 2016 is that he's been able to do so much testing (see separate story, right).

'Yeah, by the time we arrive in Monte Carlo I might have 5000 or 6000km done in the car, and that's going to be, hopefully, a benefit for me. But we certainly know our rivals won't leave any stone unturned and, with drivers of the calibre of Ogier, it's never going to be easy against them. But we'll see.'

Indeed we will. Since our interview, VW has announced its withdrawal – but also the likelihood of a private team running a newly homologated Polo. Ogier, however, will be driving a Ford Fiesta for the M-Sport World Rally team. Whatever, there are so many new aspects to the WRC for 2017 that it should be fascinating to watch, to see if the new cars can capture a little bit of the excitement of the Group B cars of old – and to discover if anyone not called Séb can win the title.

Kris Meeke is certainly in the right frame of mind for 2017. As he says: 'You want to leave a place excited about coming back and I'm really excited to go back to every rally that I competed at in 2016, so that bodes well.'

**Below:** Meeke (left) and co-driver, Irishman Paul Nagle, will resume a partnership that began back in 2009

**'EVERYONE WILL BE KEEN TO SEE IF THE NEW CARS CAN CAPTURE A LITTLE BIT OF THE EXCITEMENT OF GROUP B'**



## TESTING THE C3 WRC

by JOHN MCILROY



**A FEW WEEKS AFTER MEETING KRIS MEEKE AT Silverstone, evo caught up with the Citroën star again, this time with the Dispatch van swapped for the 2017 C3 WRC.**

No driver in a regular seat for 2017 has more experience of the new breed of WRC car than Meeke, his part-time campaign in 2016 keeping him match-fit while he developed Citroën's all-new WRC contender. And whereas Hyundai and M Sport/Ford have split their testing pretty evenly between their drivers, Meeke has racked up at least 75 per cent of the C3's running. This is *his* car.

We were granted access to the team at the very first test of the C3 in southern France, and then again at subsequent runs on asphalt and in the soaking wet forests of Wales. So what did we learn? There's no doubt that the C3 looks faster than the World Rally cars we're used to watching – that it hangs on more effectively through corners, deals more comfortably with bumps and has much-improved throttle response. But it remains a tricky beast to set up effectively.

'Having the centre differential has opened a whole new bag of tricks,' says Meeke. 'Citroën Racing had some experience from before, with the Xsara and C4, but it's still been a steep learning curve. We did a gravel test in Spain and thought we'd nailed the settings, but when we put them back into the system for the first run on dry Welsh gravel it was incredibly hard to drive. Getting the right balance on those parameters will be crucial.'

The C3 represents a major rethink from Citroën Racing on suspension – a move from the DS3's fairly firm settings, inherited from the C4 WRC (and, whisper it, the Xsara before that), to a setup that offers scope for huge travel at each corner. Modern WRC events almost always use each special stage twice, and Meeke and his French engineers have known for some time that they've been losing out on

repeat runs, particularly to the VW Polos, whose Sachs-tuned suspension had an extraordinary ability to claw down through the ruts and find traction.

You can see the new approach quite clearly on the C3. It's so soft that it almost drags its rear bumper along the ground under hard acceleration, yet aggressive turn-ins and big corner cuts no longer slow its momentum; the inside wheels have so much travel that they're still doing their work, propelling the car forwards.

The final element is aerodynamics – not something you may have considered important for a car that spends so much of its life sideways or in mid-air. 'If you lose something like the front splitter at one corner, you can get to the next and the ability to turn-in is affected markedly,' says Meeke. 'So one of our biggest challenges has been developing parts like that, or the rear diffuser, that are 90 per cent efficient for the whole stage, instead of being 100 per cent brilliant for the first few corners before they get ripped off.'

On gravel, the C3 is fast to the point where even seasoned spectators at Meeke's Wales test were taking an extra step back into the bushes as it drove by. On asphalt, it demonstrates how the new regs won't automatically bring greater spectacle: it is quicker, without a doubt, but it achieves this with no greater level of drama.

Citroën did back-to-back tests with the DS3 and C3 on asphalt, and we're told the time gain along a twisty road was considerable. But this, in turn, reveals one of the frustrations of Meeke's development year. 'Our problem, really, is that this has all been done in isolation,' he says. 'We know the C3 is good. But is it as good as everything else? It's impossible to say. Monte Carlo and Sweden aren't really representative rallies, either, and Mexico and Argentina are odd gravel rounds, so we may not know how we really compare until Portugal in May.'

# WRC 2017 PREVIEW

**THE WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP USHERS** in a new era of cars in 2017 – and the series has been dealt an even tastier script by the sudden withdrawal of the dominant Volkswagen team.

The arrival in November of four-time champion Sébastien Ogier and his teammates Jari-Matti Latvala and Andreas Mikkelsen onto the driver market was a major last-minute curveball for many of VW's rivals. They'd been planning to spend the final two months of the year nailing down the specs of their cars ahead of the first round of WRC 2017, Rallye Monte Carlo. Instead, there was frantic activity from the likes of Toyota and M-Sport (which runs the Ford Fiesta WRCs) as they moved to get proven rally-winning talent on their books.

In the end, rumours of a privately funded team running the Polos weren't quite enough to sway Ogier, who elected to join M-Sport and put number one on the side of a Ford for the first time in a generation. Latvala, meanwhile, signed up to a Finland-based super-team at Toyota, while Mikkelsen was still without a seat as we closed for press.

Ogier sampled the latest Fiesta before committing to Malcolm Wilson's M-Sport team, so he must have seen something he liked – but his preparations will still have been compromised. The car he starts the season with in Monte will not be a vehicle that he has developed to his tastes. And to compound matters, this has all been happening as the sport makes one of its relatively rare jumps between World Rally car regulations. How quickly Ogier overcomes all of the disruption may well decide the title, and define his legacy as one of the sport's true greats.

The technical changes are extensive, and designed to improve the spectacle while still keeping development costs at a manageable level. The 1.6-litre engine format remains, but the turbo restrictor increases in size from 33mm to 36mm. As a result, the cars are expected to produce as much as 380bhp, and 500lb ft of torque should be achievable.

Under the skin, the active centre differential – removed at the introduction of the 1.6-litre era back in 2011 on grounds of cost – is now back in, allowing the teams to play around with how the power is distributed to the mechanical front and rear diffs.

And while the basic format for the cars remains similar – front-engined cars, a minimum length of 3.9 metres – the teams have been allowed to widen the tracks, creating more dramatic shapes with the resulting wheelarch

*Next year's WRC will feature cars so advanced that some observers are already predicting a return to the Group B-style performance of the 1980s. Here's what you can expect*

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by JOHN McILROY

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extensions. The 'box' into which rear wings must fit has been enlarged, too – as some of the extreme solutions explored during a year of testing have revealed.

There's a tweak to the controversial rules on running order, too. The crews will still start the opening day's stages in championship position – forcing the points leader to run first on the road and, on gravel events, sweep the loose gravel clear to expose a grippier surface beneath for his rivals. But instead of doing the same on the second leg, crews will now run in reverse order on the second and third days. It could result in some closer finishes – and you can bet that those affected will not be shy in venting their frustration when it works against them.

Of the official teams remaining after VW's withdrawal, Citroën and Hyundai have been the most active with 2017 cars. The French marque took a year out, in effect, to develop a C3 that marks a return to the sport after six years with a DS. The Korean team's i20 Coupe WRC is its third new World Rally car in as many years – a sign of how hard it has been fighting to establish itself against VW and Citroën Racing.

This is a year of potential for Hyundai, though; stability in its driver line-up, with Hayden Paddon and Thierry Neuville gunning for wins and steady hand Dani Sordo there to pick up points, makes it a strong contender for the manufacturers' title.

M-Sport's Fiesta certainly looks the part – and with promising Estonian Ott Tänak back in the fold, alongside Ogier, the Cumbrian team has what's arguably its strongest pairing since the days of Colin McRae and Carlos Sainz.

Toyota team boss Tommi Mäkinen says 2017 is a learning year, and based on the footage of Ogier trying the Yaris WRC on asphalt, he could be right. Much will depend on the fickle mentality of Latvala, who can have blinding speed when he has 'the feeling' but is just as likely to fade into obscurity in the middle of the top ten when he doesn't. And any team with a purely Finnish driver line-up risks obliteration on the WRC's asphalt rounds.

More than anything, though, rallying's hardcore fan base will be hoping there's no dominance from any particular party, potentially taking the World Rally car rules back to their heyday, when Ford, Peugeot, Mitsubishi, Toyota and Subaru could each win on any given event. That sort of competition, and the increased spectacle of the cars in action, would be as good a sign as any of the WRC being back on course.

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## OPINION

The new cars live up to that age-old mantra of looking fast while standing still. We're also encouraged that they'll back this up when they're on the move.

We were lucky enough to watch Kris Meeke and Citroën at one of the C3 WRC's final tests in Wales, and the car's ability to carry speed on a soaking, muddy stage was everything that rallying should be: a jaw-dropping vehicle allowing a top crew to display skill, judgement and cajones on terrain that would overcome mere mortals. The new cars will be even better to watch over the snowy tracks of Sweden or in the murky depths of Welsh forests.

The technical shake-up and the absence of the all-conquering VW factory team should deliver a more open series, too, and it's conceivable that by the final quarter of 2017 we could have four teams and six drivers capable of winning every event.

There's also good news regarding coverage of the WRC. After years of its promoter being caught between a desire to land global television deals and a growing realisation that internet streaming could deliver the immersion rallying's die-hard followers crave, it has been announced that the 2017 season will be broadcast on Red Bull TV (available at redbull.tv or via a dedicated app) and available to watch free of charge. There will be live coverage from each round, plus highlights shows, while a series of guest hosts are set to include a certain Mark Webber.

So not only could WRC in 2017 deliver close competition and a dazzling spectacle, it should now be easier for more people to actually see it.

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## 2017 WRC CALENDAR

19-22 January  
Monte Carlo

9-12 February  
Sweden

9-12 March  
Mexico

6-9 April  
France

27-30 April  
Argentina

18-21 May  
Portugal

8-11 June  
Italy

29 June-2 July  
Poland

27-30 July  
Finland

17-20 August  
Germany

5-8 October  
Spain

26-29 October  
Great Britain

16-19 November  
Australia



**Clockwise from left:** 2017's contenders... Citroën C3 WRC prototype in testing; Hyundai's i20 Coupe WRC with aero addenda clear to see; VW has canned its works team but privateers may run the Polo WRC; M-Sport's Ford Fiesta WRC; Toyota's WRC entry is the meanest Yaris you've ever seen

# RED

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by ADAM TOWLER

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PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

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# A



ICON: FERRARI F355




*Scottish mountain roads, alive with the sound of an F355's flat-plane-crank V8... If you like your red cars compact, lithe and gorgeous, it doesn't get much better than this*

# LEERT

ICON: FERRARI F355





‘AS ICONS  
GO, FEW  
ARE MORE  
WORTHY  
THAN THE  
GLORIOUS  
F355’

T

**THE CAIRNGORMS MUST SURELY BE ONE OF THE** most beautiful places on the planet. Whether you're standing in the shadow of Braemar Castle, dazzled by the sunlight dancing off the River Dee or, like today, on a surprisingly brisk autumnal morning, high up in the mountains with the impression of standing on top of the world, it's utterly captivating. No wonder the Queen likes to spend time here. You would, too, and for one other significant reason that I suspect we'd have no trouble agreeing on: the Old Military Road, a spectacular ribbon of asphalt that runs up the spine of this National Park. It has everything you've ever dreamed of in a road.

Today, however, the scenery has competition. It's in the form of an unfashionably small, low, red projectile that's disarmingly handsome. As far as the subjects of 'Icon' features go, few are more worthy than Ferrari's glorious F355 – a pivotal machine in the history of the most famous car company of them all.

'Want One', screamed the cover of the July 1994 issue of *Performance Car* magazine (*evo's* forefather) as it clanked through our letter box. I reached it before the dog, clocked the 'Ferrari's £84,000 bargain' sub-heading with mouth agape, then read and re-read the feature aboard the bus bound for secondary school. From that day onwards, I have lusted after this relatively simple supercar, watched values plummet but still remain out of reach, and then seen those prices accelerate away once again. Despite these towering expectations, driving one has never been a disappointment. Today, on this road, I'm genuinely fearful the needle on the *evometer* might bend and break against the stop.

The roots of the F355 have become the stuff of motoring lore, recited by every bar-room expert. The 348, so the legend goes, was a stinker. Now, I'm not saying those early 348 TBs weren't poor, but, like a lot of performance car history, perceived truths become distilled and streamlined into a simple narrative all too easy to repeat. A late 348 GTB is by no means a bad car, but the early 348 did look half-hearted, even complacent, next to Honda's sparkling NSX, a car that redefined the concept of a useable supercar. The 348 was neither quick enough nor useable enough, and simply not very nice to drive quickly.

Ferrari needed a riposte, and damn quickly, the result being a very thorough evolution of the 348: the F355. Although closely related to those late-model 348s, the F355 was a massive step forward and also heralded the return of the beautiful Ferrari after the brash brutality of the 1980s machines.

I must have missed an entire GCSE Geography module swatting up on the new F129B V8 engine. Ferrari had looked to its contemporary V12 F1 programme, adopting five-valve-per-cylinder heads that helped raise the rev limit to a stunning



8500rpm. Titanium rods featured, too, while a 2mm increase in bore took the overall capacity from 3.4 to 3.5 litres. The result was 375bhp, a substantial increase over the 348 GTB's 312bhp, giving the F355 the highest specific horsepower per litre of any naturally aspirated engine on sale, McLaren F1 included.

The steel monocoque body, tubular steel rear subframe and unequal-length wishbones were all Italian supercar staples left fundamentally alone, but Ferrari worked on everything else, rethinking the chassis again from the GTB, incorporating bigger alloy wheels, two-stage electronic dampers and power steering. The gearbox was now rod-operated, not a cable mechanism as on the 348, while more emphasis was placed on aerodynamics with a neat rear spoiler incorporated into the body, and crucially, a flat undertray.

What, then, of that body? The overall shape is surprisingly cab-forward in profile, while the frontal aspect does rather date the car with its long, flat snout hiding pop-up lights – technology from another, distant age. Things get sexier around the sides, with the crisp flying buttresses (the last V8 Ferrari to feature this styling device, and also the F355's biggest corrosion weak-spot) and the loss of the 348's side-strakes allowing clean, gaping intakes. But for me the real beauty of the F355 is its bum, specifically the form of those rear wheelarches, their curvature and the perfect bone-line that runs through them, then the way it all flows effortlessly, coquettishly into that flipped-up spoiler.

This F355's Crema leather seats are probably what you'd visualise if I said 'classic Ferrari interior'. The cabin architecture is disarmingly simple, almost slabby around the upper ring of the cockpit, and really quite subtle with no outlandish features. There is one element, though, that gets the blood pumping in anticipation: an open-gate manual gearbox.

When the F355 was launched at the Geneva motor show in 1994, it was available only with a six-speed manual gearbox and in Berlinetta (coupe) or GTS (targa roof) form, with a full convertible (the Spider) arriving the year after. The devil's work /shiny bright future (delete as applicable) arrived in 1997 in the form of the F1 gearbox, Ferrari's first attempt at a single-clutch automated transmission and developed from its pioneering work in F1 during the 1989 season. By the time the F355 arrived, any Grand Prix team worth its grid position had a semi-automatic gearbox.

Driving the F355 is really easy but never anything other than special. There is no form of electronic safety net, but, for reasons I'll come to in a little while, that's not a problem – certainly not in the dry. The clutch is agreeably light, and the car is soon moving forwards, requiring your first Ferrari open-gate gearchange. It feels divine. If you're expecting an awkward resistance then fear not; the mechanism is fast and, with the guidance of the gate, there's no prospect of mis-slotting a gear. Forget the *click-clack* cliché, the spindly lever makes more of a *skreech* sound as it squeezes between the metal cutaways, a noise that would be comparable to fingers down a blackboard were it not for the satisfyingly tactile sensations of mechanical components meshing precisely with one another.

The flat-plane-crank V8 doesn't actually sound that good when you're just ambling along. It's a busy sort of engine note, hard-edged like the tip of an industrial drill. It's only when you breach 5500rpm that it homogenises into something petrolheads like us would call musical, which is precisely the point at which the F355 pulls itself taut and accelerates with real determination. To make genuinely rapid progress in an F355 you need to keep the engine spinning between 6000rpm



**Left, from top:** wonderful open-gate manual gearbox is just one reason to love this F355; classic Crema leather looks fab, airbagged wheel less so; V8 is 3.5 litres and has five valves per cylinder (hence 355)



and a little over 8000rpm. Oh man, what a chore. Only kidding – driven thus, an F355 is pure bliss, with seemingly no limit to the speed with which cogs can be swapped, the engine revving tirelessly, the noise consuming everything.

I want you to do something for me now. Just for a moment stare without distraction at Aston Parrott's extraordinary photography on these pages, then close your eyes. Imagine the 'little' V8 spinning furiously, nuzzling up against the red line. Hear it? Notice how the sound drifts off in waves over the hillside as the car passes, how it adopts a quadrasonic effect over little stone bridges and against dense, dark forests bordering the verge. On and on the little red Ferrari goes, a tiny speck in an endless landscape, yet dominating its surroundings with its howl. That's what driving this car on this road is like.

The F355 isn't intimidating partly because it doesn't feel that potent through the mid-range. This may have something to do with this example being a later model, or a '5.2 Motronic' car to be precise. F355 aficionados will be aware that, when the car was launched, it was equipped with a more primitive Bosch 2.7 Motronic system that had two air mass flow sensors, two fuel pumps and two lambda sensors among other differences, all clearly visible in the engine bay. There is no definitive opinion on this one, but a vague consensus among marque experts suggests that '2.7' cars have a sharper throttle response and more power, despite the official claims remaining the same.

The difference can be anything from 'so little that you won't notice it' to 'as much as 30bhp', depending on which expert you happen to be talking to. The advantages of the 5.2 Motronic setup include a smoother delivery and idle, and they're cleaner, too. The changeover happened for the 1996 model year so that Ferrari could sell the car in the US, and around the same time the delectable Momo steering wheel was changed for a clumsy airbag-equipped design.

Whatever the setup, the quoted maximum torque figure for the F355 is a pretty humble-sounding 268lb ft at a peaky 6000rpm. Consider, too, that the quoted dry weight is 1350kg, so likely to be c1450kg with a full load of fluids, and suddenly that crucial but rarely quoted torque-to-weight figure doesn't look terribly impressive. Compared with the kind of volcanic mid-range thrust we expect from a modern supercar, this undoubtedly gives the F355's chassis an easier time of things, but that doesn't mask the fact that it's a gem all the same.

After the twitchiness of a 348 TB, it takes only 500 yards to get a sense that the F355 is going to be a faithful friend: malleable, exploitable, enjoyable. It rides like a pliantly suspended sled, with the feeling that the track is broad and with a big, sticky tyre right at the extremity of each corner.

The winters really take their toll on the road surface around here, so for most of the time I leave the dampers in their normal setting, trading body roll for some compliance over the worst of



**Top:** red line isn't till 8500rpm, and engine doesn't really come alive until the needle passes 6000rpm. **Above:** F355 was one of the first road cars to use underbody aero to create downforce



the rutted sections. Like this, the car rides really well, which must make it comfortable as a long-distance machine (aided by a pedal box nowhere near as offset as you might expect). The steering is reasonably light, with the whole car feeling delicate to the touch: whether moving the gearlever around the gate or turning into a corner, the F355 is a car you tend to drive using just your fingertips once familiarity sets in.

Push harder and the car's limits are that much more visible, albeit much lower, than in a 'modern'. The Old Military Road has a habit of dropping random S-bends into ostensibly flat-out sections, and there are some steep, twisting descents too. The F355 pivots somewhere just aft of the driver's spine, and as it begins to reach the limit of grip it rolls further, leaning on the outer edge of the tyre, starting to arc a wider line at the rear. It's a process that has several clearly defined stages, in the dry at least, which makes it an easy car to 'read'.

My only wish – OK, bar a little more torque – is for a slightly quicker steering rack. The F355 is always beautifully poised on the road, but that initial turn-in to a corner is never quite as immediate as you'd hope, always requiring a few degrees more lock than the brain anticipates. The car is never quite as agile in reality as you know deep down it could be.

The answer could potentially have been found in the F355 Challenge, the one-make race car built up in period from a

Berlinetta with a kit of official parts. Ferrari never made an F355 Challenge Stradale, and, having driven a road-legal example of the race car, I can tell you that this is a tragedy worth flooding your garage with tears over (to the backing track of some tragi-opera). That early Challenge car – lighter, with any hint of steering vagueness banished, and without the rear wing and stripped-out interior of later Challenge cars – remains among my all-time top-three drives. The Fiorano handling pack, available late in the F355 production run, also got that quicker steering rack, but only around 14 cars so-equipped made it to the UK.

Still, I can forgive the steering, for it's a minor flaw akin to a miniscule slip of the brush on a mesmerising portrait from a grand master. The F355 bridges the gap between old Ferrari and new; between quaint, classic, small V8s and the recent 200mph V8 supercars; the last hand-built Ferrari, but also the first to really embrace modern technology. I still live in hope that, one day, one of the 11,273 F355s built will have my name on the V5, and this drive has predictably only served to galvanise that ambition. If you share the same dream, I promise you won't be disappointed. ☒

*With many thanks to the owner of this Ferrari F355 Berlinetta for allowing us to enjoy his wonderful car.*

### Ferrari F355 Berlinetta

**Engine** V8, 3496cc **Power** 375bhp @ 8250rpm **Torque** 268lb ft @ 6000rpm **Transmission** Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive **Front suspension** Double wishbones, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar **Rear suspension** Double wishbones, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar **Wheels** 7.5 x 18in front, 10 x 18in rear **Tyres** 225/40 ZR18 front, 265/40 ZR18 rear **Weight** 1350kg (dry) **Power-to-weight** 282bhp/ton **0-62mph** 4.7sec (claimed) **Top speed** 183mph (claimed) **On sale** 1994-1999 **Value today** £70,000+

**evo rating:** ★★★★★

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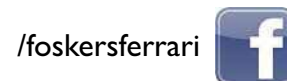
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# Market

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## **ANALYSIS:** **THE LAST NATURALLY ASPIRATED ENGINES**

Downsizing has brought about their demise, so grab one while you can. But which models are the hits and which the misses?

by Adam Towler

ONE OF THE MOST documented aspects of the car industry in recent years has been the trend for downsizing: making engines smaller to meet ever more stringent emissions regulations and the desire for improved fuel economy. In the face of this, the responsibility for clawing back power – to satisfy the thirst for performance from both marketing types and customers – has fallen to the turbocharger, and the naturally aspirated engine is rapidly becoming a thing of the past, like carburetors and those anti-static strips that used to hang off the back of Ford Cortinas.

Of course, there's a lot more to the engineering than simply 'putting the



power back': a turbocharged engine produces power, and even more importantly torque, without lots of indulgent, fuel-slurping revs. Sadly, it's those same revs and uncorrupted exhaust gas flows that give naturally aspirated engines their core appeal – their voice and their response.

The upshot has been a sense that recent naturally aspirated performance cars, from 981-generation Porsche Boxsters to Ferrari 458s, are cars to buy now. In some cases prices have risen markedly. The same thing appears to be happening with manual gearbox cars, too, as they face the similar prospect of extinction. Combine the two and you have a powerful force in the market – if it's a great car and has the right badge on the nose to start with, that is.

The Ferrari F430 manual is a great case in point, with such a car currently being worth an easy £20,000 more than its F1-'box equivalent. As Tony Glynn of Ferrari specialist Foskers attests, these have risen markedly in value compared with where prices were two years ago, and the same thing is affecting the 599. Rarity helps too, as ever, but it's still amazing to reflect on how cars that are still a long way from 'classic' status are appreciating so strongly in value.

It's still rather early to know what will happen in the Porsche market. Of course, the 911 Turbo has always been a downsized, turbocharged car in a world of extravagant supercar rivals – that's always formed part of its appeal. However, the gen2 991 Carrera models and the new 718 Boxsters and Caymans have switched from naturally aspirated flat-sixes, so it'll be very interesting to see how they do over the coming year or two. Certainly, at the moment the word is that good gen1 991s and last-of-the-line 981 Boxsters and Caymans are very much in demand, with traders suggesting to us they 'can't get enough' of these cars, particularly the 981s.

The same phenomenon doesn't seem to be affecting the Aston Martin V12 just yet, maybe because the new turbocharged DB11 is yet to make its way into the hands of owners. Perhaps if we revisit this market in 18 months or so, when the



**'It's amazing how these cars that are still a long way from "classic" status are appreciating so strongly in value'**

Vantage will also be turbocharged, things will be different.

Lamborghini has remained true to its naturally aspirated heritage, shunning the 'easy' power of twin-turbo engines available elsewhere in the VW group and retaining high-revving, aurally rich powerplants. Increasingly, it's the brand's point-of-difference in a crowded marketplace, which could help keep values up.

Another great naturally aspirated

engine of recent years is the extraordinary 'S85' BMW M V10. Although something that would never get made today, the M5 and M6 models in which this engine appeared remain rather unfashionable, with values depressed, particularly for M5 saloons. High running costs (see expert view) and an unfortunate pairing with the SMG gearbox probably don't help.

The other obvious naturally aspirated hero engine is the Honda VTEC, but outside of the original Civic and Integra Type R models, which show a healthy interest and some growth in values, there's little to suggest a general movement. S2000s remain good value for money, and while the original NSX has increased hugely in price of late, its core appeal is spread across not just its engine, but also its image, styling, usability and gearbox.

## SUMMARY

Savvy buyers are well aware that supply is one of the key influencers in any market, and if naturally aspirated engines are to be a thing of the past, it stands to reason that what you can no longer buy will be in greater demand: just look at prices of Land Rover Defenders now they've finally gone out of production.

While turbocharging technology will develop further with time, the most memorable naturally aspirated engines will always hold a special allure to car enthusiasts, so expect them to be valued accordingly.

However, as our examples show, simply having a great naturally aspirated engine does not necessarily make a car a good investment – the whole package needs to appeal, so choose carefully.

**Clockwise from left:**

Aston Martin's 5.9-litre V12; Ferrari 458's 4.5 V8; V10-engined E60 M5; 981 Boxster the last with a flat-six; Honda VTEC sought after in some applications; BMW's S85 V10 in an M6

**EXPERT VIEW****DANIEL PARKER**

vvsuk.co.uk  
01580 714597

'We're getting lots of requests for Ferrari 458s – they've gone up in value – and a good customer of ours recently bought a new Ferrari F12: he thinks it's a good buy because the next one is likely to be a hybrid. Murciélagos are the same. The connoisseurs, the purists, they love the engines in these cars. A new 911 Turbo S is an amazing car, but it doesn't have *sound*. We've had customers replace their Cayenne V8 S with the new turbo V6 and find they miss the roar of the old car.'

**TONY GLYNN**

foskers.com  
01474 874555

'We've seen very strong interest in cars like the 458 – the last of the naturally aspirated V8 Ferraris. The fact they're not turbocharged is driving the market. A 2013 458 Spider will fetch the same today as it did two years ago, and we can't get enough 599s – we sold three in three weeks recently. Customers say they don't like the sound of the 488, but I think in the new market people will always want the latest Ferrari, just because it's exactly that – the latest Ferrari.'

**JOHN MCGURK**

mcgurk.com  
01926 691000

'We've not had customers asking specifically for naturally aspirated V8s and V12s because they don't like the idea of the twin-turbo Aston DB11. Having driven that car, it's amazing, anyway. A manual Vantage V12 is always a desirable car, and at £80,000 looks very good value at the moment compared with the DBS, which has been performing very strongly of late. There are more Vantage V12s on the market at the moment, which has something to do with it.'

**RAIKKU**

waffzuff.co.uk  
07534 659055

'BMW's S85 V10 is a brilliant engine, but the problem is the accountants had the final say on what materials were used, such as the throttle actuators. The worst problem is the rod bearings: the clearance is too tight and the oil too thick, so cold-start wear is high. With any V10 I'd set aside £5000 just in case. Porsche's Mezger engine is way more reliable. The only real failure is the "rattle of death" from the chain tensioners, but it's fairly simple to rectify.'

**FOUR TO BUY****FERRARI 599 GTB HGTE**

£149,850

This stealth-spec 599 from 2008 has just 9100 miles on the clock. It's got the F1 gearbox rather than the manual, but there's still that stunning 611bhp 6-litre V12, while this car also benefits from the HGTE Handling Package.

BRAMLEY.COM

**PORSCHE CAYMAN GTS**

£62,995

This gorgeous 2015 GTS is a perfect example of why buyers might be tempted by the last of the old Caymans over a new flat-four 718 version. Finished in Guards Red, this 8000-mile car is one to keep.

ALEXANDERSPRESTIGE.CO.UK

**FERRARI F430 FI**

£104,990

A typical low-mileage (14,000 miles) F430, with a desirable spec: Rosso Scuderia on the outside, two-tone grey and black interior, plus carbonfibre race seats, the carbon driving zone, ceramic brakes and Scuderia shields.

VVS.CO.UK

**ASTON MARTIN V12 VANTAGE**

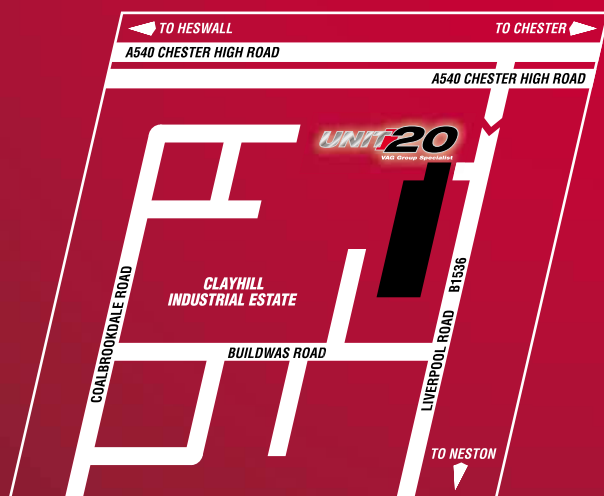
£86,950

It's a Fire Red V12 Vantage manual – what's not to like? This 20,100-mile car is a good example of that recipe. Inside there's black leather with red stitching, an upgraded hi-fi and lightweight sports seats.

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# USED RIVALS: SUPER SALOONS

by Adam Towler

## AUDI S8 V10 (D3)



### SPECIFICATIONS

Engine	V10, 5204cc
Power	444bhp @ 7000rpm
Torque	398lb ft @ 3500rpm
Weight	1940kg (232bhp/ton)
0-62mph	5.1sec (claimed)
Top speed	155mph (limited)
On sale	2006-2010
evo rating	★★★★☆

### EXAMPLE

**2008 £15,995**

Andy Hall Cars

This black, 58-plate S8 has travelled 95,000 miles and all we really know, other than its essential spec, is that it's a 'very tidy car' – according to the vendor, of course.



### BUYING ADVICE

'They have no real Achilles' heel: tyres are expensive, and be careful if it has ceramics – a front disc is £3000 compared with a steel one at £190. The engine is cheaper to maintain compared with a V10 with turbos, but it does have to be removed from the car for even small jobs: a lambda sensor is £160, but the labour is £1200. There are no real problems with the suspension – the front gas struts are £1800 but it's rare for them to go wrong. We've changed a couple of PAS pumps, and inlet manifolds – these can break up internally and be swallowed by the engine. Like all FSI engines they suffer from carbon build-up, so a £900 de-coke gives good results. Overall, incredible value.'

Martin Adams, [unit20.com](http://unit20.com)

## JAGUAR XJR (X350)



### SPECIFICATIONS

Engine	V8, 4196cc, supercharged
Power	394bhp @ 6100rpm
Torque	399lb ft @ 3500rpm
Weight	1665kg (240bhp/ton)
0-60mph	5.9sec (claimed)
Top speed	155mph (limited)
On sale	2004-2009
evo rating	★★★★☆

### EXAMPLE

**2006 £13,950**

Parkway Motor Group

Great value from the big Jag as always. This 06-plate XJR is black with black leather interior and the usual high spec. 63,000 miles down, with a complete service history.



### BUYING ADVICE

'They get through suspension bushes, and a lot of them can't be replaced on their own: the whole arm has to be changed. Some people take the rose joints out and fit polybushes, but they're not as rigid and not as good for the car in my view. Also watch out for the air struts failing. We're starting to see issues with the Brembo calipers, which can seize, but otherwise the brakes are good. The gearboxes are supposedly sealed for life, but we service them with new oil and the sump and filter assembly. The 4.2-litre engine is robust and major issues are rare. We tune quite a lot of them: up to 475bhp easily, and 600bhp+ with a new supercharger. Forget the year; go on condition.'

Tom Lenthall, [tomlenthall.co.uk](http://tomlenthall.co.uk)

always struck a fine balance between limousine comfort and incisive handling, even if the old world styling won't appeal to everyone.

Finally, if you want to be truly decadent, it's hard to beat a sub-£20,000 S65 AMG. With over 600bhp on tap, these really were the plutocrat's limo of true excess, although the depreciation must have hurt anyone who actually handed over their own money. Buy a bad one and it'll be your wallet that's hurting, so shop with care.

## MERCEDES S65 AMG (W221)



### SPECIFICATIONS

Engine	V12, 5980cc, twin-turbo
Power	604bhp @ 4750rpm
Torque	737lb ft @ 2000-4000rpm
Weight	2260kg (272bhp/ton)
0-62mph	4.4sec (claimed)
Top speed	155mph (limited)
On sale	2005-2013
evo rating	★★★★☆

### EXAMPLE

**2007 £21,950**

FTC Leasing

Finished in unusual Andorite Grey, this long-wheelbase S65 has 59,000 miles on the clock and has just had a major service, including belts. It also comes with a 12-month warranty.



### BUYING ADVICE

'It's very common for these to have a faulty coil-pack, and most of the time both will go down at the same time. Total cost to replace a pair is £3500. It can be hard to know the car has a fault, as it's only when it's pushed hard that it will start misfiring. The intercooler pump is another common fault. It requires specialist equipment to bleed the system, and even some main dealers don't own it. The pumps are only £200, but it needs to be done right. If there's a problem with the ABC suspension it's £1500 to replace a front strut and £1200 for a rear, while the pump is £600 plus six or seven hours to fit. Discs and pads are very expensive, too. However, the engines and gearboxes are very strong.'

Andy Willis, [eurocharged.com](http://eurocharged.com)

# BUYING JOURNEY



## CALLUM TAYLOR

An evo reader's evolution from hatchback to supercar



**3rd** 2007  
**BMW Z4 2.5si (2007)**

'I couldn't stretch to the 3.0, so searched for the more powerful of the 2.5si. Handling not always predictable, but I developed as a driver.'



**2nd** 2006  
**Ford Fiesta ST (2006)**

'I really wanted a Clio 182, but couldn't afford the insurance. The ST's engine lacked torque, but it had a decent chassis. Started to crave rear-wheel drive.'



**1st** 2004  
**Fiat Punto 1.2 (2002)**

'I fitted Abarth HGT skirts, bigger wheels, the "compulsory" K&N induction kit, and uprated Eibach suspension. Not fast, but looked fantastic.'



**4th** 2009  
**BMW 135i (2009)**

'After reading about this one in evo I started doing man-maths. The performance was addictive. Overshadowed by the brilliant 1M.'

## What next?

'I'm enjoying my R8 at the moment, but I may try to move to V10 power further down the line, if I can make the numbers work. My head tells me that a later R8 V10 would be the one to go for, whilst my heart pulls me in the direction of an early Gallardo LP560. If I could have just one car for the family it would have to be an F80 M3 – with three pedals!'

## What else?

Callum Taylor's ascent through the ranks of evo-style cars has been rapid, his first wheels a traditional example of budget hatchback motoring modified for looks but insurance-friendly. Within three years he'd switched to rear-drive with the BMW Z4 coupe, before adopting something with real firepower in the form of the BMW 135i. That gave way to a Porsche Boxster, which impressed but felt slightly toothless after the BMW. His only disappointment has been the big Maserati, but we know the feeling: it ought to be entertaining yet isn't. He's currently enjoying an Audi R8 manual. These mid-engined supercars are incredibly good value at the moment, and a terrific car as well.

**5th** 2013  
**Porsche Boxster (981) (2012)**

'My father owned a 986 Boxster when I was at school, and I'd always fancied one. Great handling. Sadly it lacked the grunt of the 135i.'



**6th** 2014  
**Maserati Ghibli (2014)**

'Needed four doors, wanted to keep things fun. Alas... The Ghibli felt under-engineered and numb; it was replaced by a Volvo V60 CC.'

## evo tip

It's hard to resist the appeal of the raging bull, but then again any V10 is something special...

**7th** 2015  
**Audi R8 V8 (2010)**

'I've always loved the R8's design and Dickie Meaden's long-term reports on the R8 sealed it. The perfect blend of modern and analogue.'





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# Buying guide

**O**NE HUNDRED AND NINETY-SEVEN BHP barely raises an eyebrow these days, but back in 2001 this was proper hardcore. 'The specification suggests the Type R is about as focused a front-drive machine as there has ever been,' we declared in our original Driven review (evo 035).

The bald stats – 0-62mph in a claimed 6.8sec, top speed 146mph – were impressive but not exceptional. As ever with Type R Hondas, it was the way the Civic delivered its performance that was special, the 2-litre i-VTEC engine providing an extra kick at around 6000rpm, with peak power at 7400rpm, matched to a wonderfully snickety six-speed manual gearbox. →

## HONDA CIVIC TYPE R (EP3) 2001-2005

Just £2000 could get you behind the wheel of one of these high-revving, hard-wearing Japanese hot hatchbacks

by Peter Tomalin





## CHECKPOINTS

### ENGINE

Maz Christofi at Honda tuning specialist Hond-R.com loves the EP3. 'Brilliant cars,' he says. 'Best way to get into a hot hatch. Cheap, reliable, easy to fix, plethora of parts available. You go to any trackday, there's an EP3 there, because they're cheap, reliable fun.'

So what do you need to look out for? 'Regular servicing,' says Maz. 'And monitoring how much oil it burns, because revving them hard will inevitably cause engine wear.' So frequent oil checks are essential – if you're

buying privately, check the owner knows this. 'Properly maintained, the engine is incredibly strong,' says Maz. 'We're running a supercharged EP2 with 437bhp, standard internals. Phenomenal.'

'The only issue we see is with chains and tensioners. There's no rhyme or reason to when they go. We've seen them fail at 80,000 miles, others go on to 150,000. It's around a £650 job for genuine Honda parts and labour. Once that's done, they go on forever. We look after cars that have done 180,000 miles and more. If you're

buying one with around 100k and it hasn't had the chain done, for peace of mind budget an extra £650 and fit a chain, then you're going to have hassle-free motoring.'

If the car feels like it wants to stall when it's warm, that typically means the idle control valve needs adjusting – a simple fix. A light tappety sound from the engine usually simply means the valve clearances need adjusting – part of the big, 72k service.

### TRANSMISSION

The gearchange can be obstructive – it's

quite common to get a crunch from the gearbox when changing into second, especially when the 'box is cold. So try to drive the car before it's been warmed up. And check for a heavy clutch, too – a sign that it's on the way out.

If the car's had a limited-slip differential fitted by a reputable specialist, that's a big tick. 'It's the best modification that you can have done to an EP3, for fast road driving and trackdays,' says Maz. If you want to add one later, various options are available, starting from around £750 fitted.

### SUSPENSION, STEERING, BRAKES

Steering-rack problems are a known issue, particularly on pre-facelift cars, though many were replaced under warranty. 'They start creaking and they don't self-centre,' says Maz. A replacement from Honda is around the four-figure mark, so find a used rack from a facelifted car and have that fitted.

The suspension's robust, but the alloys are quite prone to corrosion, so check them carefully. Honda replacements are £250 a corner.

### BODY, INTERIOR, ELECTRICS

'The build quality on these isn't quite what it was on pre-2000 Hondas. You can tell the accountants were involved,' says Maz.

That said, though some of the materials look and feel a bit cheaper, they're holding up well.

Check for any signs of accident repairs, but note that differences in paint between the bumpers and the bodywork are not uncommon and don't necessarily mean the car's had a respray.

Ensure the electrics all work, including the air con, if fitted.



Underneath, the structure was beefed-up, the suspension lowered and stiffened. The mini-MPV looks that earned this CTR its 'breadvan' nickname weren't universally admired, though the subtle bodykit, Recaro-style bucket seats, thin-spoked 17-inch alloys and sprinkling of Type R graphics upped the want-one factor.

In fact, in our initial Driven (evo 035, September 2001) we were a little lukewarm about the new hot Honda, Richard Meaden declaring that the chassis 'lacked sparkle'. Truth was, we were still in awe of the DC2 Integra Type R, one of the all-time greats, and the Swindon-built Civic wasn't quite in that league. But at £15,995 it was conspicuously good value and was soon attracting a strong following.

Even better was to come with the facelifted version introduced at the end of 2003. The styling tweaks, which included triple projector headlights, a new front spoiler and a larger H badge on the grille, were only part of the story. A lighter flywheel and clutch assembly improved throttle response, while stiffer mounts for steering and suspension, recalibrated springs, dampers and anti-roll bars and a new variable-ratio steering rack all helped sharpen the handling. The 0-62mph dash was cut to 6.6sec.

A couple of special editions to be aware of: the pre-facelift 30th Anniversary (celebrating the Civic's 30th birthday) and the post-facelift run-out Premier Edition. Both came with some tasty extra kit, including genuine Recaros, air con as standard and a Momo steering wheel. You might also come across JDM cars. These featured uprated engine internals, freer breathing, different gear ratios and a limited-slip diff, along with the Recaros and Momo, but they're rare and hence a chunk more money.

The EP3 CTR has sustained a strong following – there's a vibrant tuning and trackday scene and a supportive online community – with good reason:



## WHAT TO PAY

You occasionally see EP3 CTRs for as little as £1500, but £2000 is realistic starting money for a standard(ish) early car with high miles in tidy condition. £2500-3500 brings well-loved examples within range, including some facelift cars, though the best of these are £3.5k-4.5k.

Most sought-after of the early cars is the 30th Anniversary edition. Expect to pay at least £4000 for a good example. Most highly prized of all is the post-facelift Premier Edition, currently £4500-plus, with the very best commanding c£6k or even more.

## INFORMATION

### SPECIFICATION (2004MY)

Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc
Max power	197bhp @ 7400rpm
Max torque	145lb ft @ 5900rpm
Transmission	Six-speed manual, front-wheel drive
Weight	1204kg
Power-to-weight	166bhp/ton
0-62mph	6.6sec [claimed]
Top speed	146mph [claimed]
Price new	£16,013 [2004]

### PARTS PRICES

Prices from Hond-R.com. Tyre price from blackcircles.com. All prices include VAT but exclude fitting charges.

Tyres (each)	£103.33 [Bridgestone Potenza RE050A]
Front pads (set)	£45 [OEM], £120 [upgrade]
Front discs (pair)	£110 [OEM], £190 [upgrade]
Set of coilovers	from £730
Clutch kit	£240 [OEM], £375 [upgrade]
Exhaust (cat back)	£450 [OEM], upgrade from £600
Spark plugs (set)	£70

### SERVICING

Every 12,000 miles or 12 months, whichever is sooner. Prices from Hond-R.com including VAT.

Oil change	£86
Major service (72k miles)	£490

### USEFUL CONTACTS

#### FORUMS, ADVICE, EVENTS

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## WHAT WE SAID



### HOT HATCH GROUP TEST, APRIL 2004

'Great attention has been paid to the things you touch. Highlights include a deliciously tactile steering wheel, along with a cool metal gearknob and super-supportive front seats. Twist the key and the engine catches with a distant, slightly tinny note. You can sense there's zero inertia. This engine was built to rev.

'Much has been written about the legendary VTEC kick as the cams switch to the second set of lobes, but in the CTR it's less pronounced. It still happens as the needle passes 6000rpm, but now with more mid-range torque there's a gradual transition rather than the old-school jolt. While that means some of the magic has gone, it also means the CTR has more low- and mid-range meat to work with, which makes a big difference exiting tight corners. It's still a high-workrate car, though, requiring you to keep it above 6000rpm to really get the best from it.

'Numb to the point of general anaesthesia, the CTR's steering also has a disconcerting stickiness. I can only assume Honda engineered this trait to absorb any flurries of torque steer. A good limited-slip differential would sort it out...' – *evo* 066

## RIVALS

### RENAULT SPORT CLIO

Plenty of choice here. £2500 gets you a tidy 182, while £3500 buys a 182 Cup or maybe a 197. If you want the purest hit, though, it has to be a 182 Trophy for £5k-6k.

### MINI COOPER S (R53)

£2500-4000 gives you heaps of first-gen supercharged Cooper Ss to choose from. With a more modest 161bhp, they're not as quick as a CTR, but they're still a lot of fun.

### VW GOLF GTI (Mk5)

£3500 and upwards brings the Mk5 GTI onto the radar, with a CTR-matching 197bhp, a very decent chassis, and lots of grown-up Golf-style goodness. £5k buys a really tidy one.

## 'I BOUGHT ONE'

**KRIS McCLOY**

'I've owned my 2006 CTR for nine months now, though in fact it has been in the family for more than five years. It was my mother's car before – she agreed to part-exchange it for my 2008 FN2 Type R GT when I needed some cash for the purchase of my first home! In fact, when I was a teenager I made sure I sealed the underside, as I reckoned I would probably end up with it at some point! It's a late-2006 run-out Premier Edition, so it's got all the good bits.

'The gearchange was a bit obstructive when I first got the car, but a new OEM clutch and 2 litres of MTF-3 transmission fluid soon had it feeling good as new. The K20 powerplant mated to that slick, close-ratio six-speeder still excite to this day.

Coming from the FN2, the EP3 feels very analogue in its power delivery, with an obvious power surge in VTEC, although it will happily pootle around at 30mph in sixth.

'I've covered 6000 miles so far, taking the total to 72,000. Running costs are reasonable in performance car terms. I average 28-30mpg but I have seen 35-38mpg on long journeys. Tax is relatively hefty at £303 a year and, being in my mid-20s, regular insurance companies weren't willing to quote, which led me to a specialist insurer.

'It really is a great all-rounder. Handling-wise, the front end feels agile and the rear lively, which contributes towards an Integra Type R

DC2 kind of balance. The pedals are nicely weighted and the steering, while not go-kart-like in feel, is more than acceptable and a positive improvement over the 2001-2003 model. It's a car you could track on Sunday and commute to work in on Monday, which is a credit to Honda's engineering.

'What next? Having got a taste of track driving at Croft and Knockhill, I've acquired a rebuilt gearbox complete with the almost-obligatory limited-slip differential.'



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### 2003 (03) CIVIC TYPER £4695

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### 2006 (06) CIVIC TYPER PREMIER EDITION £6995

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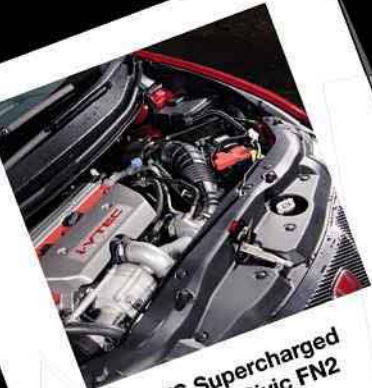
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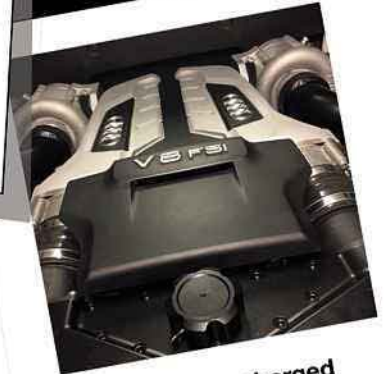
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## MODEL FOCUS: FERRARI F430

**Maranello melded performance and usability with the F430, and you can even get it with a manual gearbox! by Adam Towler**

**T**HE F430 IS ARGUABLY THE FIRST truly modern, mass-market Ferrari. It's a car no excuses had to be made for, one that could be used every day without issue. It was also the point where the 'junior' Ferrari took off into the performance stratosphere, offering nearly 500bhp and a price to match, the car retailing in the UK for around £117,000.

The all-new 4.3-litre engine (fundamentally shared with Maserati) was chain-driven, so the belt-change maintenance regime of older V8 Ferraris was a thing of the past. Overall, it really was good news in terms of reliability and running costs, as our two experts (right) attest.

There are four variants of the F430: the berlinetta and the Spider (both 483bhp, and arriving in 2004 and 2007 respectively), plus the 430 Scuderia and its roofless Scuderia Spider 16M counterpart (both 503bhp, and launching in 2007 and 2009 respectively).

Tony Glynn at Foskers says: 'It's a shock they've

gone up in value so soon – 18 per cent in two years. The strongest sellers are manual-gearbox cars – people perceive them to be the last manual Ferrari, and good to have in years to come. The Scuds and 16Ms are very strong, too. You can expect to pay around £95,000 for a 15,000-mile Spider with the F1 'box, with a coupe perhaps £5000 less. A manual car would be around £110,000, with a Scuderia £200,000 and a 16M £275,000. The collector market wants sub-10,000-mile cars but these can't be driven. Up to 20,000-mile cars can be used, but over 30,000 there's quite a tail-off in values. A Scuderia with that mileage is almost unsaleable – it would need to be kept long-term.'

If the thought of paying £200,000-plus for a Scuderia you can't drive sounds absurd, you'll be interested in the prices of those leggier examples. We've seen a 42,000-mile Scuderia priced below £130,000 at an official Ferrari dealer. Such cars may not appeal to investors, but they're begging to be bought, loved and – above all – driven.



## Expert view

### TOM KEYS, FERRARI-SERVICING.COM

'Mechanically these are very strong. Engine and gearbox issues are rare but the operating systems linked to the E-diff and the F1 system can occasionally give trouble, although it's usually easily rectified. Exhaust manifolds are known to crack and in extreme circumstances could cause engine damage. Numerous solutions exist, such as fitting aftermarket manifolds or having them "rebuilt" with thicker-gauge steel to prevent future issues.

'Servicing is relatively cheap. The 430 is chain-driven so no cambelts. An annual service costs £600 and a major is £1320 here at Keys Motorsport.

'Ball-joints are a common failing point. Signs of this are rattling from the suspension over bumpy and uneven ground. We fit upgraded, Hill Engineering ball-joints and shields as they are superior quality and actually cheaper than the Ferrari part. Budget approximately £300 to supply and fit each individual ball joint – there are eight on the car in total.

'F430s came with either carbon-ceramic or steel brakes. Steel-equipped cars are friendlier on the wallet; budget £14,400 to replace ceramic discs and pads, if fitting genuine parts.'

### ALASTAIR GILL, FOSKERS.COM

'The thing is to make sure you get the right example in the first place. From there, maintenance is key: stick to the service schedule, as this will pay dividends in the long run. These cars must always be kept on battery conditioners – the electronics will kill a battery within two weeks. Jump-starting is a major no as this can lead to serious electrical issues with blowing ECUs.

'Clutch replacement is a grey area. It all depends on how the car has been used and if it's an F1 or a manual. The cost to replace a clutch assembly on either works out at approximately £3600. F1 pumps are sometimes an issue, but sadly on the 430 there is no cheaper alternative – unlike on the 360 – as it has a different pump that also supplies the E-diff.

'The suspension ball-joints, front track rod ends and also the rear suspension tie bars are weak points. The other key issue is the exhaust manifolds. These were prone to breaking up and blowing, which if left and continually driven could result in serious engine issues. Most of them have been replaced now, but if they need renewing this can be very costly as the manifolds alone are around £2400 per side.'



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# ESSENTIALS

## THE ROUND-UP

New motoring products that have caught our eye this month



### GAMING

Nintendo Classic Mini  
£49.99

[store.nintendo.co.uk](http://store.nintendo.co.uk)

No, there's no *Super Mario Kart* – that arrived in 1992 with the SNES, while this retro console emulates the original 1986 Nintendo Entertainment System. But to unwind after a frustrating commute? Perfect. It comes with 30 games, and fans of classic racing games will be pleased to see *Excitebike* on the list.



### TOY

Ikonik Wooden Racing Car Transporter  
€27.95

[ikonictoys.nl](http://ikonictoys.nl)

There's been a resurgence in the popularity of wooden toys recently. However, this race car transporter – along with two '60s-style racers – is almost too good to give to the kids. It has a beautifully simple aesthetic that'd work equally well in your garage or office. A matching wooden racetrack (€63.50) is also available.



### DRIVING SHOES

Sparco Zandvoort  
€69.90

[sparcofashion.com](http://sparcofashion.com)

Like the Sparco Imolas we featured a few months back, here's a shoe that's great for driving in but doesn't make you look like you've lost your single-seater. A mesh lining, an artificial leather outer and a curved heel make them comfortable in the car. Other colours are also available.



### TECH

OXOQO iPhone case and lens kit  
£19.99

[amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk)

'The best camera is the one you have on you' is often true of smartphone cameras. Kits such as this one allow you to both protect your phone and improve its shooting abilities. We've got the iPhone SE version – it's tough and gives good results from the lenses; see some of the results at [instagram.com/officiallevomagazine](http://instagram.com/officiallevomagazine).



### PRINT

Tracks Romana  
£19.95 (A4), £31.95 (A3)

[rearviewprints.com](http://rearviewprints.com)

Italy has blessed the automotive world with some of its most desirable products. This print celebrates icons from the 1930s, 1960s and 1970s – the original Alfa Romeo 8C, the Ferrari 250 GTO and the Lamborghini Countach. Other similarly eclectic trios – Jaguars, Porsches, even Batmobiles – are available.



### BOOK

The Ultimate Book of the Air-Cooled Porsche 911  
£175 (cloth bound)

[ultimate911.veleco.co.uk](http://ultimate911.veleco.co.uk)

Prolific automotive author Brian Long's latest tome is not to be missed for hardcore Porsche 911 fans. In almost 600 art paper pages and over 1250 images, it tells the story of every iteration of the air-cooled 911, with details and specifications, period brochures and adverts, and extensively researched prose.

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NEW ARRIVAL

## BMW i8

Always intriguing, but never a group-test winner, will a long-term test show BMW's £104,000 hybrid coupe at its best?



**L**IFE IS FULL OF contrasts, and contrasts don't get much bigger than walking away from six months of RS6 Performance custodianship and into a BMW i8. From 597bhp, 4 litres, eight cylinders and two turbos to 1.5 litres, three cylinders, 262bhp and one 95bhp electric motor. Drive still goes to all four wheels, but with the BMW having two fewer gears to shuffle, that is where the similarities begin and end.

For the next six months the

ferocious acceleration of the Audi will be replaced by the serene and all-but-silent thrust of BMW's carbon-core hybrid coupe. Beyond that, I'm not sure exactly what to expect at this moment, but I'd like to see some semblance of the i8 being a proper sports coupe and a benefit of ditching some cylinders and lugging some super-sized AA batteries around.

evo's i8 has a number of questions to answer between now and the summer. Is it a sports car?

Is it a revolution of the breed and the first taste of what we can expect in the future? Can it entertain and delight? Will it fire our imaginations and play a part in great drives? Can it deliver on the thrill of driving?

Previous drives of i8s have come close to delivering an answer to some of those questions. But only close. Few of us at **evo** have walked away from an i8 regaling others with tales of epic journeys and drives never to be erased from the memory. None of us has felt it has ever got under our skin nor become the default answer to the question: 'Which sports coupe should I buy?' Over the coming months and many miles we will have the opportunity to discover if BMW's hybrid coupe is the real deal or a style (and technology) over substance machine.

What exactly are we running, then? There's only one i8 trim level and it costs £104,540 basic. BMW's generous press office, however, has added £12,065 of toys to our car. There's £1700 for carbonfibre interior trim, £1150 for W-spoke alloy wheels (still 20 inches in diameter), 'Comfort Access' at £795, £85 for eDrive exterior sound (need to work that one out), £95 for an internet connection, £895 for a Harman/Kardon stereo upgrade and £1850 for a Carpo Carum Grey interior. And then there is the £5495 of Post Production Applied Special Paint, which required the removal of all the body panels to have them repainted in Twilight Purple Pearl before being refitted. It's a process currently available only in the UK.

First impressions are light, as I took custody of the i8 just seven days before typing this, so it's still all a bit new. The wife is going to complain about the lack of luggage/shopping space and I'm going to need to remember to charge the batteries to make the most of the i8's abilities. But it's going to be an intriguing journey, nonetheless. ❧

**Stuart Gallagher**  
(@stuartg917)

<b>Date acquired</b>	November 2016
<b>Total mileage</b>	5550
<b>Mileage this month</b>	3947
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	38.1

NEW ARRIVAL

## VW Golf GTI Clubsport Edition 40

It's a Golf GTI that's been specifically tailored for people like us – and now we have one on our fleet

**H**AS THERE EVER BEEN a more exciting time for hot hatches? There's a Leon Cupra with what feels like in excess of 300bhp, a four-wheel-drive Focus RS with a drift mode, a turbocharged Civic Type R with a fabulously unnecessary complement of aero add-ons, and, of course, the Renault Sport Mégane, recently retired but still utterly sublime. And let's not forget the smaller hatches: Peugeot finally finding its mojo again with the 208 GTI, and Ford's Fiesta ST hopping into the desirability spot recently vacated by the RS Clio.

Amongst all of this, however, it has been rather easy to overlook the good ol' Golf GTI. With a mere 217bhp, or 227bhp with the optional Performance Pack, it's been looking a bit tame of late. Thankfully, Volkswagen hasn't rested on its laurels of being the default choice for the average punter looking for a smart, quick hatchback; it has also produced not one but two models for those of us who like our hot hatches a little bit more special.

The most special of those is, of course, the 306bhp Golf GTI Clubsport S, which finished an astonishing second place in our recent Car of the Year test – just ahead of a McLaren 570S, a Honda NSX and an Audi R8 V10 (**evo** 229). Sadly, with just 150 examples coming to the UK, it's already sold out. That leaves the Clubsport Edition 40, which is still available – albeit only until the 'Mk7.2' Golf goes on sale in the spring. It has 286bhp on overboost and, unlike the S, has rear seats. It's also available





with five doors and a DSG gearbox, if you so desire. When we tested the Edition 40 on UK roads for the first time last month, we labelled it ‘the best drivers’ GTI you can buy’.

So I’m rather chuffed to now be running one on our Fast Fleet. Our car has five doors, but not DSG – my thinking is that you might as well have a manual ‘box wherever you still can. The Clubsport Edition 40 kit includes an electronically controlled mechanical limited-slip differential, lowered and retuned suspension, a new front bumper, a rather large (by VW standards) roof spoiler, and some stripes that mimic those which

‘When we tested the Edition 40 last month we labelled it “the best drivers’ GTI you can buy”’

<b>Date acquired</b>	October 2016
<b>Total mileage</b>	3568
<b>Mileage this month</b>	1132
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	28.8

adorned the flanks of the Mk1 Golf GTI. In basic form you’re looking at £31,590 with five doors (£30,935 with three), which is just over £3000 more than you’d pay for a basic Golf GTI and on a par with rivals from Honda and Ford.

Our car also has a healthy smattering of options, namely Oryx White paint (£985), a driver assistance package (including lane assist and side scan, and costing £960), Discover Pro Navigation (£1325), 19-inch ‘Brescia’ alloy wheels (£595, and an inch larger than the standard items), tinted rear glass (£95), rear side airbags (£280) and

a tracker (£536). This little lot takes the total to £36,366.

First impressions? Well, it’s a Golf, so of course it’s a brilliantly easy thing to live with. The extra power is most definitely welcome, and while the Clubsport doesn’t perhaps feel as wild as some of its rivals – not least the Civic, an example of which I ran as a long-termer before the Golf – the VW has its own, more composed strengths. Just the kind that come to the fore in the midst of a grubby UK winter, in fact, as I hope the Clubsport will demonstrate over the coming months. 📧

**Ian Eveleigh**



**END OF TERM**

# Jaguar F-type R Coupe AWD

It's safeguarded Jag's reputation for building cars of character, but would you want to live with it?



OCCASIONALLY, IF I'VE got a lot of travelling to do, I'll buy a Jack Reacher novel. I know they're not Dickens or Booker Prize-winning, but by golly they're page-turners and immensely enjoyable if you like a good yarn; easy to pick up, hard to put down and something of a guilty pleasure. Sometimes you don't want the best, you want to satisfy a craving for a story, and Lee Child provides.

The motoring equivalent? Well, the polished brilliance of a 911 Carrera may make it the car that wins group tests, but I wouldn't blame you if it was the bombastic noise, stunning looks and accessible oversteer of an F-type R you were drawn towards in a showroom. No, the ride isn't as good, neither are the

gearbox and steering, and yes, it is rather heavy, but there is something irresistible and approachable about its charms. It makes you feel good – Jethro Bovingdon said as much when the R went up against the Mercedes-AMG GT in *evo* 227.

To that extent, I would plump for the rear-driven version. After nearly a year with the extra pair of driveshafts I can certainly appreciate the dynamic benefits of all-wheel drive, the car feeling quicker and much more stable (especially in the wet). With 542bhp and 501lb ft, the AWD F-type will still slide if you commit to corners with a bit of conviction, working the front tyres hard on the way in so that the rears will swing under power. But gone is the low-hanging dynamic fruit of

the RWD car, the easily accessible low-speed quarter-turn of opposite lock on the exit of a tight corner or roundabout, instigated almost whenever you feel like it with only a prod of the accelerator. I missed that, because while it might not be particularly sophisticated or quick, it is a lot of fun.

Apart from a switch to rear-wheel drive, I don't think there is much else, if anything, that I would have changed about OE65 KKP – which, incidentally, cost £104,200 from a base price of £91,660, thanks in no small part to the fitment of carbon-ceramic brakes at £7400. The shape of the F-type Coupe is so intrinsically right that it looks good in any colour, but Rhodium Silver (£700) really did make it look very special indeed.

The Design Pack (£395), which replaces the chrome bits with gloss black, was the icing on the cake. Everywhere the R went it turned heads, and not just the heads of car enthusiasts. Most revealing was walking back to it in a car park: safe in the knowledge that they were staring at a car without someone inside, you'd see people almost circling it in infatuation. I don't blame them. I found it hard not to take photos of it constantly.

If you turned them all the way up to level three, the heated buckets were like sitting near an open fire. I've never been sure about heated steering wheels, but on an early winter morning or after cleaning cars in a freezing Welsh lay-by, it was a nice luxury. It might seem



'There is something irresistible and approachable about the Jaguar F-type R's charms'

odd to draw a parallel, but there was something comforting about the raucous noise of the exhaust when you started the supercharged V8, too. Perhaps it triggered a small pulse of warming adrenalin – particularly on the early mornings where you knew it would have disturbed the slumbers of the village, including those in the churchyard.

The tick-tock of the indicators sounded like a grandfather clock in a hallway, while the warning chimes were equally refined. Apart from one occasion where it thought it was in a Discovery and tried to take me green-laning, the satnav was jolly good, too. Fuel economy was predictably poor and the extended side skirts picked up dirt quicker than a schoolboy's knees. And to end this

paragraph of pros and cons, I was surprised by how much you could lug around in the boot.

Unlike the Fiesta ST that I had before the Jag, the R isn't a car that you drive hard all the time. Short-shifting and enjoying the torque was often all a journey required. But if ever you needed a pick-me-up to improve your mood then holding on to a gear, feeling the monstrous pace squeeze you into the seat-back and then listening to the crack from the exhaust on the upshift was wonderfully accessible. A 911 Turbo may be even quicker, but where the Porsche is clinically impressive, the Jag is engagingly ebullient. Which brings us back to the start of this end-of-term report. ✕

**Henry Catchpole**

**Above:** dive into the driving mode settings and you had control of the engine, chassis, gearbox and steering maps. **Top and far left:** exterior had style in abundance

<b>Date acquired</b>	January 2016
<b>Duration of test</b>	10 months
<b>Total test mileage</b>	11,266
<b>Overall mpg</b>	25.9
<b>Costs</b>	£819.52 four tyres
<b>Purchase price</b>	£104,200
<b>Value today</b>	£65,000-75,000



NEW ARRIVAL

## Mercedes-AMG C63 S Coupe

AMG's latest supercoupe arrives on the fleet. Will it be good enough to justify its big price?

**I** IN MORE THAN 20 YEARS in this job I've never run a Mercedes long-termer. This could account for why I've never considered myself a 'Merc Man'. That said, the arrival of this AMG C63 S Coupe might force me to reappraise that opinion, for on the evidence of our first few weeks together I feel very much aligned with Affalterbach's freshest export.

First, the numbers. Were you to spec an identical car to this you'd need £82,875. That's to say £68,710 for the base C63 S, then just over £14,000 for the options, which include keyless go, a panoramic sunroof and a 13-speaker Burmester sound system (all part of the £2595 Premium Package), carbon-ceramic brakes (£4285), 19-inch front and 20-inch rear wheels (up from 19s all-round and costing £1735), and the AMG Driver's Package (£765), more on which in a moment.

Given this car is a rival for the £57,065 BMW M4, that's a chunky amount of money, but personally I've long felt AMG's take on the midsize two-door rocketship is a league above the M-car. Mostly because of what sits beneath the bonnet.

Stuffing a twin-turbo 4-litre V8 into the C-class yields spectacular results. This Benz has 503bhp and 516lb ft at its disposal. With the AMG Driver's Pack its top-speed limit has been raised from 155mph to 180mph, and if you can get its rear tyres to hook-up with the tarmac, it'll nail 0-62mph in less than four seconds. That seems ample to me.

The C63 S revels in its hot-rod role. Push the starter button and the whole car pulses with the throb of the V8, exhausts gurgling and burbling exuberantly – especially if you press the exhaust button and open the silencers a bit. There's even a hint of turbine whistle from

the turbos on a cold start. Your neighbours might not agree, but it's a great way to start the day.

As you'd expect, there's a ton of technology to broaden the car's operating range. You can configure the engine, seven-speed automatic gearbox, chassis and exhaust via the Dynamic Select settings. It's a bit laborious at first, but you can curate all your favourite settings in the Individual mode to speed things up. Tempting though it is to crank everything to Sport+, it's good to discover some shades of grey, so for now I'm mixing and matching to find my optimum blend of attitude, response and comfort.

First impressions are dominated by the sheer performance on tap. This is a truly daft/epic car to have daily access to. One that underlines pleasure is not always dependent on unleashing everything you have at your disposal. Sometimes it's as

'First impressions are dominated by the sheer performance on tap. This is a truly epic car to have daily access to'



## McLaren P1

Our hypercar has been remarkably problem-free, despite its complexity

**I** I'VE JUST DROPPED the P1 off for its first annual service. This is the third time it has been back to the McLaren service centre since I took delivery, the first time being for an indicator that came loose, the second for a manufacturer's recall to replace the front bonnet latch.

Because the car had its brain updated immediately prior to delivery there have not been any further software updates, and for a car of this complexity the fact that the only two issues to emerge in year one were both minor and mechanical is hugely impressive. Indeed, my experience with the P1 has reinforced my personal policy of asking for late build-slots on limited-edition cars.

While I've yet to put any big miles on the car, through a number of regular shorter drives I am getting much more comfortable

behind the wheel. While the McLaren DNA is patent in the P1, once you begin to push it the car is clearly the wild child in the family. Both the 12C and 650S are much more linear and progressive. Put your foot down in a 650S and it will fly, but it all happens with a much smoother progression. Do the same in a P1 and you seem to jump from one- to five- to ten-tenths. The P1 seems to defy physics and compress time. Luckily the low, short bonnet coupled with the large windscreen make placing the car on the road very easy.

While traction is immense, on a concrete road with any moisture it disappears quickly if you are not careful with your right foot. Years with an F40 have taught me to be quite sensitive about twitchy back ends, and on two occasions now this experience has come in handy. So where in the 650S I usually put the traction and gearbox settings

**Below:** on dry surfaces traction is supreme, but on even slightly damp roads the P1's 903bhp and monumental torque make it a tricky beast

'While the McLaren DNA is patent in the P1, the car is clearly the wild child in the family'

into Sport, which allows for some fun, in the P1 the calibration of the systems means that, on the road at least, both are left safely in Normal.

With no known issues for the P1, the service should be fairly straightforward. Looking at the work order, the majority of the cost is labour, as they go through each of the car's systems in detail as well as changing all the fluids. Can't wait for the car to be back. ☒

**Secret Supercar Owner**  
(@SupercarOwner)

<b>Date acquired</b>	July 2015
<b>Total mileage</b>	505
<b>Mileage this month</b>	35
<b>Costs this month</b>	\$2358 service
<b>mpg this month</b>	16

good knowing what you have in reserve, and the C63 S has plenty.

Handling-wise, at low speeds the rear axle is continually under something of an onslaught from the V8's abundant torque. Pulling steadily out of T-junctions you feel the fat rear tyres and limited-slip diff nibble and chunter as they try to keep things on a tight leash. It's not something you feel once your speed builds, but it hints at a car that might be a bit spiky on damp winter roads. For now, though, I'm just enjoying the combination of compact coupe and kick-ass engine. What a cracking car. ☒

**Richard Meaden**  
(@DickieMeaden)

<b>Date acquired</b>	November 2016
<b>Total mileage</b>	1568
<b>Mileage this month</b>	1403
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	23.4





**END OF TERM**

# Vauxhall VXR8 GTS

This car is the last of its kind, but what a way to bow out

**W**HEN I LOOK BACK ON MY time with the VXR8, it's nearly always with a smile. Okay, so when an overdraft warning pinged through on my phone I might have rued the 18.1mpg, but even when the children were eating gruel and my wife was darning socks, I reckon it was probably worth it. The VXR8 GTS isn't perfect by any stretch of the imagination, but it's unique, big-hearted and almost impossible not to love (unless you're Dickie Meaden, who hates it).

I wanted to run this huge Vauxhall because it represents the end of an era for the incredible line of V8-powered, rear-drive saloons built in Australia. Ford no longer builds the Falcon and now the Holden Commodore – on which this car

is based – is dying, too. The whole Holden versus Ford rivalry is like a way of life for car enthusiasts in Australia, so it must feel especially painful for hardcore fans of the V8 Supercars race series, who've grown up as 'Ford guys' or 'Holden guys'. I don't have that history but even so it's sad to see this loud, lairy breed disappear from the motoring landscape. Other reasons? The practicality, of course. And the 6.2-litre supercharged V8 with 576bhp and 545lb ft.

While the £56,234 VXR8 GTS is a dinosaur scavenging for fuel under the dark cloud of a meteor strike, it's not at all crude and certainly doesn't require great sacrifice to live with. In fact, it's unbelievably comfortable, riding on sophisticated

magnetorheological dampers, and it features torque vectoring by braking, multiple driving modes for various situations and has all the toys you could imagine. It'll even park itself. Fitted with the optional six-speed automatic gearbox it covers ground like nothing else, loping along at big speeds with the engine turning slowly and the soft but supportive seats vanishing away the miles. Three-up back from the Nürburgring with a boot full of camera gear, it was almost serene.

Journeys like that were a pretty regular part of life for our GTS – back and forth to the Ring a couple of times, supporting shoots at Spa, trawling across to Wales seemingly every month – and it really did excel in those situations. More usually

it was trips to the airport, the odd school run and blasts into the office. **evo** moved in the summer, and the new commute was fantastic from my place. About 25 minutes of deserted and wide country roads with some wicked cresting corners and even a banked, Karussell-style left through a tunnel of trees. At full tilt the sheer performance the VXR8 GTS deployed for this journey was actually pretty stunning. It was easy to forget the V8's extreme power output when driving even quite quickly, as the slightly monotone engine note could lead you to change up at little more than 4000rpm. But if you held out to the limiter you got a manic supercharger noise to enjoy and truly eye-popping acceleration. It was only when you tried to use





**Above:** alongside its many ancestors at Vauxhall's Heritage Centre in Luton.

**Right:** the big Vaux was a true delight on the limit, dancing on the line between grip and slip with the poise of a far lighter car



that 576bhp that you appreciated the full magic of the chassis, too. The car always felt surprisingly balanced and composed – although short, sharp bumps could get it fidgeting and feeling slightly out of phase with the surface – but it was with the stability control off that you could enjoy its full repertoire. Despite expectations, it was not a monster drift machine. There was too much grip and traction to slide around at low speed. However, it always felt very rear-driven and when you committed early to the throttle you could feel the rear tyres take the strain, the balance just teetering on the edge of oversteer. In the dry it was a sensational feeling and the car never felt unruly. In the wet, it was better to leave the traction control

**'At full tilt the sheer performance the VXR8 GTS deployed was actually pretty stunning'**

very much on, though.

After many thousands of miles I felt I was still learning the VXR8. I tended to skip Tour and Sport modes and head straight to Performance, enabling the torque vectoring. On smoother roads you could even use Track mode pretty comfortably to really tie down any float over undulations. I always used the paddles: I just can't cope with fully automatic driving unless I'm stuck in traffic, and the gearbox was pretty fast and rarely frustrated me by not actioning a downshift request. In fact, the whole car felt nicely intuitive and in tune with your inputs.

The VXR8 GTS was a great car for all occasions, then: vast and comfortable, wickedly fast and

slightly irresponsible, and even surprisingly composed and enjoyable on track, with terrific brake and steering feel on the limit. The interior was relatively crummy, and some people couldn't cope with the image, but I was sorry to see it go. Both from my driveway and the wider world. Life is all the brighter and more enjoyable with a VXR8 GTS for company. This or a new M3? No contest. ✕

**Jethro Bovingdon**

<b>Date acquired</b>	June 2016
<b>Duration of test</b>	6 months
<b>Total test mileage</b>	8922
<b>Overall mpg</b>	18.1
<b>Costs</b>	£0
<b>Purchase price</b>	£56,234
<b>Value today</b>	£50,000

## BMW 2002 Turbo

No, Will Beaumont hasn't built himself a 2002 Turbo replica, he's borrowed the real thing. Here's why

**I** IN CASE YOU MISSED it, BMW celebrated its centenary in 2016.

Something that's more likely to have passed you by is that it was also 50 years since the 2002 arrived. Ideally I would have joined the celebrations in my own example, but it's still languishing in my conservatory, unfinished. So instead I asked BMW UK if I could borrow its precious 2002 Turbo. Much to my delight, instead of being laughed off the phone, the answer was yes.

In the days I had the car I took it to be included in an aerial shot with a group of other 02s arranged to form a '50'. Then it was over to the annual BMW show at the British Motor Museum at Gaydon where the car won best 2002 Turbo in show (it was the *only* 2002 Turbo in show).

But all this was nothing compared



**'The 2002 Turbo's reputation for being an animal that'll spit you off the road has been slightly over-egged'**

with being back behind the wheel of an 02 again. All Turbos are left-hand drive, but the thin pillars and swathes of black vinyl made it an otherwise familiar environment. I was under strict instructions from BMW not to perform a dynamic test of the Turbo, but I couldn't help but sample the full '70s turbo experience.

Above 4500rpm is where all the action happens – there's a surge as the turbocharger kicks in and the revs go berserk. Even so, the Turbo's reputation for being an animal that'll spit you off the road has been slightly over-egged. Actually, as the

boost arrives like clockwork, you can be surprisingly accurate with the car. OK, there isn't much grip, but even with those big bolt-on wheelarches it's still a small car, so there's plenty of room on the road to carve whichever line you like.

The Turbo is a more civilised car than mine was before I took it off the road – more of an autobahn cruiser – but I was far from disappointed after meeting what is one of my automotive heroes. The Turbo is fun, but I'm glad that my car, when it's finished, will be much feistier. ❌

**Will Beaumont**  
(@WillBeaumont)

**Peugeot 308 GTi 270 by Peugeot Sport**

## Peugeot 308 GTi 270 by PS

Our 308 continues to split opinion, but we think we've found a middle ground

**I** I HAD A LONG DISCUSSION with road test editor Dan Prosser about the 308 GTi recently. He'd just returned from a twin-test between it and the Golf GTi (*evo* 229), and while it sounded like the Peugeot had been the more enjoyable car, he declared that he preferred the Golf for its all-round ability. Others on the *evo* team had expressed a preference for the Peugeot, though, so I began to wonder which I would favour.

Having now lived with the 308 for a month, I'm siding with Dan. That's not to denigrate the Peugeot. Not in the slightest. The fact that we were talking about the narrowest margins – that the victory in this pairing comes down to personal preference rather than consensus – is proof

that Peugeot Sport has taken a major step up.

Like Dan, I love the 308's agility and alertness – it genuinely does echo the spirit and verve of a 205 GTi. Indeed, one of the pleasures of the 308 GTi is that you tend to seek out interesting roads, then go through a psychological rolling-up-of-the-sleeves ritual to prepare for playtime. And playful it is. With the nose planted, you can agitate some mobility from the rear with the throttle. Likewise, you can lean on the diff extremely hard, and with the suspension settled fore-and-aft generate startling corner-exit pace.

The drawback is that this is all reliant on the front end hooking into a corner. And now that the roads are getting greasy and the standard-

fit Michelin Pilot Super Sports are approaching 11,000 miles old, you can easily overwhelm the front axle with too much throttle. In fact, if you're really clumsy the 308 will skip a car's width across the road.

Overall I've enjoyed my brief stint with the 308. I love that Peugeot Sport has given it a unique character in a class largely made up of cars built from the same ingredients, and it should be applauded for building a car that is more than a dynamic equal to the Golf GTi. ❌

**Nick Trott**

<b>Date acquired</b>	July 2016
<b>Total mileage</b>	10,678
<b>Mileage this month</b>	2011
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	35.5



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NEW ARRIVAL

# Skoda Octavia Estate vRS 230

evo's staff photographer gets a new workhorse in the form of a stealthy Skoda estate

<b>Date acquired</b>	November 2016
<b>Total mileage</b>	1024
<b>Mileage this month</b>	965
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	34.2

**W** WE WON'T DENY IT: WE do like a good hot-hatch-based estate derivative here at evo. It's why we have a Focus ST on our long-term fleet (see opposite) and also why we're now running this – a Skoda Octavia Estate vRS 230, in a particularly fetching shade called Black Magic.

Of course, the real magic of this breed of car lies in its ability to meld deceptive pace with reliability, comfort, low running costs and a large enough dose of fun to tie it all together. To this end, we've opted for the six-speed manual 'box instead of the DSG, which had a habit of tripping over itself in the diesel vRS we previously ran (and rated highly).

The numerical element of this car's name signifies a 10bhp increase over the standard Octavia vRS. So here the 2-litre turbo in-line four makes 227bhp at 4700-6200rpm and 258lb ft at 1500-4600rpm, which is enough for a 0-62mph time of 6.8 seconds (just half a second behind a Golf GTI Clubsport Edition

'Cars like this meld deceptive pace with reliability, comfort, low running costs and a dose of fun'

40) and a top speed of 153mph. Thirst is rated at 44mpg.

The 230 also gets an electronically controlled limited-slip differential. It's the same one you'll find in the Golf GTI Performance Pack, and along with a new (and aurally very pleasing) sports exhaust and the tickled ECU, it accounts for the bulk of the 230's £1690 premium over the regular vRS.

The Estate vRS 230 is £27,800 basic, which seems a good deal as the model is generously equipped as standard. It gets 19-inch wheels wrapped with 225-section tyres, bi-xenon headlights and LED taillights,

and gloss-black exterior trim for the full sleeper look. Handsome? Surprisingly so.

Within the distinctly German cabin you get meaty sports seats, a touchscreen satnav, DAB radio, dual-zone climate control, cruise control and even a driver-fatigue sensor for what I'm hoping will be effortless motorway schleps to and from far-flung photographic locations.

The optional extras we've gone for include the panoramic sunroof (£1150), Canton sound system (£500), rear-view parking camera (£300) and that lovely paint (£360). The box for Dynamic Chassis Control (£850) has also been ticked because the ability to soften or firm up the suspension and alter the steering weight through several modes is key to this car's all-round appeal.

The total cost? £32,120. Sounds like a lot, and it's a wedge of cash more than our new Ford. It's going to be interesting finding out which car represents the breed's best. **x**

**Aston Parrott** (@AstonParrott)





NEW ARRIVAL

## Ford Focus ST Estate

What's that coming over the hill? Yup, it's another ST Estate, but this one drinks from the correct fuel pump

**N** NO, YOUR EYES AREN'T deceiving you. We may have just said goodbye to a Focus ST Estate (**evo** 229), but that hasn't stopped us welcoming another one onto our fleet. In fact, this will be the *third* ST Estate we've run in recent years (we also ran a pre-facelift version in 2013-14).

It perhaps speaks volumes of the talented Ford that this is the case. Rapid, fun, practical and comfortable, it's an all-rounder that's ideally suited to life at **evo**. As a workhorse, it's got a lot going for it: it's spacious but not too big, it's able to make light work of long journeys, and it's not likely to become a wheezing pinprick in the rear-view mirror of more exotic machinery when it needs to run in convoy with them. It's perfect for photographers and videographers, then, who don't like lagging behind and whose 'essential' kit seems to grow with every photoshoot we go on, while the rest of us will want the ST for family holidays or carrying bicycles and dogs and the like.

So what exactly have we got this time? Well, we haven't replaced like with like. Our outgoing ST was of the diesel variety, meaning 182bhp, 295lbft of torque and 0-62mph in 8.3 seconds. Our new one is petrol-powered, which changes those figures to 247bhp, 265lb ft and 6.5 seconds. As you would expect, the official Combined mpg figure falls from 67.3 to 41.5 (although from past experience we're anticipating just under 30mpg, compared with the mid-40s we got from the diesel), while the CO2 emissions figure rises, from 110 to 159g/km.

Spec-wise, we've gone for a top-level ST-3 again. This costs £27,900 basic compared with the boggo ST-1's £24,050 and adds a bunch of kit, including an 8-inch touchscreen DAB system, bi-xenon headlights, red brake calipers, rear parking sensors, eight-way adjustable heated leather Recaro seats, a quick-clearing heated windscreen, electrically heated and folding mirrors, dual-zone climate control, automatic headlights and rain-sensitive wipers.

**'It's not likely to become a wheezing pinprick in the rear-view mirror of more exotic machinery'**

To this we've also added Deep Impact Blue paint (£525), rear privacy glass (£225), 19-inch black alloy wheels (up an inch from standard and adding £575), Ford's almost hypnotic pop-out door-edge protectors (£85), a rear-view camera (£250), blind-spot warnings (£525), the Driver Assistance Pack (including lane-departure warnings, traffic-sign recognition and auto high-beam, all for £450), and a 'Premium' upgrade for the infotainment system, which adds satnav and ten Sony speakers, including a subwoofer (also £450).

Altogether, that takes the price of our ST Estate up to £30,985 – or just £265 shy of a basic Focus RS. 'Madness!' you may cry, but in the real world, where a car has to work hard for a living and things such as ride comfort, running costs and the ability to easily carry stepladders, bikes and animals are important, things aren't quite so black and white. As I'm sure our ST will prove over the coming months. **✕**

**Will Beaumont**  
(@WillBeaumont)

<b>Date acquired</b>	November 2016
<b>Total mileage</b>	2231
<b>Mileage this month</b>	1996
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	27.9

## BMW E46 M3

END OF TERM

Our web editor is off, and despite the expense and heartache of The Berlin Fiasco, he's taking his M-car with him



**I** 'IT'S ALIVE!' THAT WAS the text message I'd been waiting a long time to receive from Ergen Motorsport in Southampton. At last my M3 was up and running again.

It hadn't been easy establishing what exactly had gone wrong when the car became nothing more than a large silver ornament during a trip to Germany many months ago. Starting the engine would cause the revs to flare, but then it would die. Hooking the car up to a diagnostics reader would show a whole range of faults that seemed to follow very few patterns. Few patterns except for one, that is: VANOS.

Things had smelled a bit fruity under full throttle for a while, which I should've known was a hint that the system, which controls the E46 M3's variable valve timing, was on its way out. With all other (cheaper!) possible causes eliminated, the guys at Ergen Motorsport made the call to rebuild the system, and that rebuild is what ultimately brought the car back to life.

Upon collecting it, the first thing I did was go for a proper run on some B-roads. It now revs even cleaner than before and has lost that nasty fuel smell under full throttle, which suggests the engine is a lot happier.

As am I. Months without the

'The M3 was always fast enough, loud enough and grippy enough to provide excitement whenever required'

car had me well and truly missing it, while that moment it was lifted onto a flatbed in Germany had me thinking I might never experience its unique thrills again.

However, no sooner has my E46 been repaired than it will be disappearing from these pages. No, I haven't sold it – at the moment I don't feel like I ever will – but I have left *evo*, and that means my M3 has left with me.

So, how have my first ten months with the car been? Well, I've already built up some unforgettable memories – and not all of them are accompanied by large bills! It feels as if the E46 has been everywhere. It spent a week in Berlin, did laps on the Nürburgring, drove me around Hackney and took me to north Wales. It has always been fast



enough, loud enough and grippy enough to provide excitement whenever required, but it can also chew through motorway miles without issue. Given how much the car initially cost – £12,500 – it's been unbelievable value for money.

As for actually running an E46 M3, the engine is what makes it special. The 338bhp 3.2-litre in-line six-cylinder has a supercar-like red line (8000rpm), and with the Eventuri carbonfibre intake and Supersprint exhaust I've had fitted to mine, it sounds just brilliant, too.

Then there are the brakes... The standard setup is pretty shocking compared with those on more modern cars, but the Alcons I have upgraded to are truly sublime. They're unbelievably powerful (and expensive) and stop the car feeling big and bulky. I would also like a faster steering rack, as this would make the car feel more nimble still, though perhaps this desire wouldn't be there if I hadn't become used



to driving newer stuff while at *evo*. I also wish the E46 wasn't so rust-prone, but you can't have it all.

The definition of 'The Thrill of Driving' varies from individual to individual. Some might enjoy time on track, others blasting a car down a B-road, but for me it's always been about the adventure and freedom that driving provides. And having a car like the E46 M3 in which to experience that freedom just adds to the enjoyment.

Ultimately, if you want an affordable performance car with an engine a little bit more special than a 2-litre turbo, the E46 is the one. **X**

**Hunter Skipworth**

<b>Date acquired</b>	February 2016
<b>Duration of test</b>	10 months
<b>Total test mileage</b>	4338
<b>Overall mpg</b>	23.0
<b>Costs</b>	£744 intake £1972 exhaust £5071 brakes £1200 VANOS rebuild

# NEXT MONTH



## ISSUE 232

ON SALE WEDNESDAY 25 JANUARY

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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 CY/CYC	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	£25,595	4/1742	232/5500	251/1900	1320kg	179	6.8	-	150	177	37.2	+ Shows signs of deep talent... but quality is 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	£9	4/1984	261/6000	258/1900	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 option	★★★★☆
BMW 130iM Sport	106 R	£9	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	120/6000	107/5200	935kg	130	<b>7.6</b>	<b>22.6</b>	127	-	34.9	+ Chunky, chuckable chassis - Can catch out the unwary	★★★★☆
Citroën AX GT	195 R	£87-92	4/1360	85/6400	86/4000	722kg	120	9.2	-	110	-	-	+ Makes terrific use of 85bhp - Feels like it's made from paper	★★★★☆
Citroën DS3 1.6 THP	142 R	£18-15	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	£6	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	£8	4/1596	118/6000	112/4050	1045kg	115	9.9	-	120	134	48.7	+ Genuinely entertaining supermini - Grown up compared to Twingo/Swift	★★★★☆
Ford Panda 100HP	075 D	£5-08	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	61.3	+ 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	£5-10	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)	229 R	£31,250	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 - Needs to be driven hard	★★★★☆
Ford Focus RS (Mk2)	195 R	£9	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	£2	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	£0-01	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	227 R	£30,000	4/1996	306/6500	295/2500	1378kg	226	<b>5.4</b>	<b>12.4</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	£7-11	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 Championship White	126 D	£9-10	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	£1-05	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 2.1.5 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	£6-13	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	225	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	£9-14	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	£6-14	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	£8-14	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	£2-06	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	£6	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 GT1	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 GT1 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 hot hatch on sale - Nearly £4k more than a Fiesta ST Mountune	★★★★☆
Peugeot 308 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	★★★★☆

## evo videos!

Experience the sound and fury at [youtube.com/evo](http://youtube.com/evo)







OUR CHOICE

**Renaultsport Mégane 275.** This generation of Mégane has got better and better with every update, and the 275 is simply sublime. Optional Ohlins 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 Volkswagen Golf GTI Clubsport S (left) is our favourite hyperhatch, with the four-wheel-drive Ford Focus RS close behind. VW's Golf R is also brilliant if you're looking for something a little more mature. Of the smaller hatches, the Fiesta ST Mountune just edges the Peugeot 208 GTI by Peugeot Sport.

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	
Peugeot 308 GTI 270 by Peugeot Sport	229 R	£28,890	4/1598	266/6000	243/1900	1205kg	224	6.0	-	155	139	47.1	+ Thrilling and engaging on smooth roads - A real handful on bumpy ones	★★★★★
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 dash - Limited choice of colours	★★★★★
Renaultsport Twingo 130	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	229 D	£22,425	4/1618	217/6050	206/2000	1204kg	183	6.6	-	146	135	47.9	+ Willing chassis - Awful paddleshift gearbox	★★★★★
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 V6 255	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	+ Supercar drama without the original's edgy handling - Uninspired interior	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio V6	029 R	'99-'02	6/2946	227/6000	221/3750	1335kg	173	<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	211/5500	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	-	E25,935	4/1998	211/5500	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 FI 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 - FI 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 D	'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	227 R	£28,380	4/1984	286/5900	258/1700	1300kg	224	<b>6.4</b>	<b>13.4</b>	155	156	42.2	+ As below, but with another 10bhp - As below	★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra 280	220 R	'14-'15	4/1984	276/5600	258/1700	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	1376kg	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	237/5000	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+	3/999	59/5000	70/3000	894kg	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 mk1 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)	229 R	£28,515	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1276kg	173	6.5	-	153	139	47.1	+ Brilliantly resolved - Lacks the punch of newer rivals	★★★★★
VW Golf GTI Clubsport Edition 40 (Mk7)	230 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)	229 R	£33,995	4/1984	306/5800	280/1850	1285kg	242	<b>5.8</b>	<b>12.8</b>	165	172	38.2	+ Runner-up at Evo Car of the Year 2016 - Only 400 being built	★★★★★
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	1446kg	187	5.7	-	155	199	33.2	+ Great engine, tremendous pace and poise - High price, adaptive dampers 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	192	35.2	+ Character and ability: the GTIs return to form - Lacking firepower?	★★★★★
VW Golf R32 (Mk5)	087 R	'06-'09	6/3189	246/6300	236/2500	1466kg	170	<b>5.8</b>	<b>15.2</b>	155	257	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	-	36.0	+ The car that started it all - Tricky to find an unmodified 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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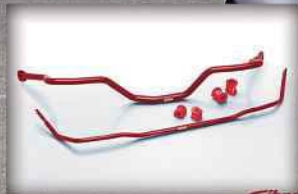


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OUR CHOICE

**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) is hot on the M5's heels, 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 GT.


	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 Giulia Quadrifoglio	229 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	£47,950	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	£57,450	6/2979	404/4500	442/3000	1630kg	252	4.3	-	190	177	37.2	+ Understated appearance, monster performance - E90 M3 is better on the limit	★★★★★
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 2015M cars a big improvement - It's cosy in the back	★★★★★
Aston Martin Rapide	141 R	£107,130	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	£32,330	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	£44,000	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	£08-16	6/2995	328/5500	324/2900	1705kg	195	4.9	-	155	190	34.9	+ Great supercharged powertrain, secure chassis - The RS4	★★★★★
Audi RS4 Avant (B8)	216 R	£12-15	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1795kg	251	4.5	10.5	174	249	26.4	+ Looks and sounds the part, thunderously fast - Unnatural steering, dull dynamics	★★★★★
Audi RS4 (B7)	088 R	£05-08	8/4163	414/7800	317/5500	1650kg	255	4.5	10.9	155	-	-	+ 414bhp at 7800rpm! And there's an estate version too - Busy under braking	★★★★★
Audi RS4 (B5)	192 R	£00-02	6/2671	375/6100	325/2500	1620kg	236	4.8	12.1	170	-	17.0	+ Effortless pace - Not the last word in agility, Bends wheel rims	★★★★★
Audi RS2	214 R	£94-95	5/2226	315/6500	302/3000	1595kg	201	4.8	13.1	162	-	18.0	+ Storming performance (thanks to Porsche) - Try finding one	★★★★★
Audi S6	091 D	£06-11	10/5204	429/6800	398/3000	1910kg	228	5.2	-	155	299	22.4	+ Even faster, and discreet with it - Very muted V10	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant (C7)	203 R	£79,505	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	591/6100	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	£64,485	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	£84,380	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	£98,395	8/3993	591/6100	553/2500	1990kg	305	3.8	-	155	229	28.2	+ Fantastic drivetrain, quality and refinement - Dynamic Steering feels artificial	★★★★★
Audi RS Q3	206 D	£46,120	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	£132,800	8/3993	500/6000	487/1700	2342kg	217	4.9	-	183	254	25.9	+ Effortless performance with real top-end kick - Determinedly unsporing	★★★★★
Bentley Flying Spur V8 S	230 D	£142,800	8/3993	521/6000	502/1700	2342kg	226	4.6	-	190	254	25.9	+ Old-school approach to comfort and luxury - Old-school tech	★★★★★
Bentley Flying Spur	185 D	£154,900	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	£162,700	12/5950	600/5000	664/1350	2365kg	258	4.0	-	187	296	21.6	+ Sublime quality, ridiculous pace - Inert driving experience, SUV stigma	★★★★★
Bentley Mulsanne	178 F	£229,360	8/6752	505/4200	752/1750	2610kg	197	5.1	-	184	342	19.3	+ Drives like a modern Bentley should - Shame it doesn't look like one too	★★★★★
Bentley Mulsanne Speed	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 330d M Sport (F30)	180 D	£37,800	6/2993	254/4400	413/2000	1540kg	168	5.6	-	155	129	57.6	+ Great engine, fine handling, good value - Steering confuses weight with feel	★★★★★
BMW 340i M Sport Touring (F31)	228 D	£41,635	6/2998	321/5500	332/1380	1615kg	202	5.1	-	155	158	41.5	+ Feelsome rear-drive chassis - Easy to drive it beyond its comfort zone	★★★★★
BMW 328i (F30)	165 D	£11-15	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 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	£56,605	6/2979	425/5500	406/1850	1520kg	284	4.1	8.6	155	204	32.1	+ Looks, performance, practicality - Body control on rough roads; engine lacks character	★★★★★
BMW M3 (E90)	123 R	£08-11	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1605kg	262	4.9	10.7	165	290	22.8	+ Every bit as good as the E92 M3 coupe - No carbon roof	★★★★★
BMW M3 CRT (E90)	179 R	£11-12	8/4361	444/8300	324/3750	1580kg	285	4.4	-	180	295	-	+ Saloon chassis + weight savings + GTS engine = best E90 M3 - Just 67 were made	★★★★★
BMW M5 (F10M)	208 R	£73,985	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	6/3195	340/6900	295/4750	1653kg	209	5.9	13.6	155	-	-	+ The Godfather of supersaloons - The family can come too	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E28)	182 R	£86-88	6/3453	282/6500	251/4500	143kg	200	6.2	-	151	-	-	+ The original storming saloon - Understated looks	★★★★★
BMW M6 Gran Coupe	190 D	£95,665	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	£65,240	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	£93,100	8/4395	567/6000	553/2200	2265kg	245	4.2	-	155	258	25.4	+ Big improvement on its predecessor - Coupe roofline still of questionable taste	★★★★★
BMW X6 M	134 D	£09-15	8/4395	547/6000	502/1500	2305kg	241	4.7	-	171	325	20.3	+ Fast, refined and comfortable - But it definitely lacks the M factor	★★★★★
Brabus Bullit	119 R	£330,000	12/6233	720/5100	811/2100	1850kg	395	3.8	-	217	-	-	+ Seven hundred and twenty bhp - Three hundred thousand pounds	★★★★★
Cadillac CTS-V	148 R	£67,030	8/6162	556/6100	551/3800	1928kg	293	3.9	-	191	365	18.1	+ It'll stand out among M-cars and AMGs - The novelty might wear off	★★★★★
Cadillac CTS6	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 2.0d AWD	227 D	£33,825	4/1999	178/4000	317/1750	1615kg	112	7.5	-	140	123	60.6	+ Great chassis gets more traction - Shame the engine isn't as polished	★★★★★
Jaguar XE S	213 D	£44,865	6/2995	335/6500	332/4500	1635kg	208	4.9	-	155	194	34.9	+ Neat handling, 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 engine than V6 petrol - It's still a diesel	★★★★★
Jaguar XFR	181 D	£09-15	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1800kg	284	4.8	10.2	155	270	24.4	+ Brilliant blend of pace and refinement - Doesn't sound as special as it is	★★★★★
Jaguar XFR-S	208 R	£13-15	8/5000	542/6500	501/2500	1800kg	306	4.4	-	186	270	24.4	+ XF gets turned up to 12 - Tyres aren't cheap	★★★★★
Jaguar 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 - We can think of sportier vehicles	★★★★★
Lexus GS F	221 D	£69,995	8/4969	470/7100	391/4800	1790kg	267	4.6	-	168	260	25.2	+ Superb engine, exploitable chassis - Gearbox is off the pace	★★★★★
Lexus IS F	151 R	£07-12	8/4969	417/6600	372/5200	1714kg	247	4.7	10.9	173	270	24.4	+ Shockingly good Lexus - The M3's available as a (second hand) four-door too	★★★★★

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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 Carlton	170 R	'91-'93	6/3615	377/5200	419/4200	1658kg	231	4.8	10.6	176	-	17.0	★★★★★	+ The Millennium Falcon of saloon cars - Every drive a work-out
Maserati Ghibli	186 D	€52,615	6/2979	325/5000	406/1750	1810kg	182	5.6	-	163	223	29.4	★★★★★	+ Bursting with character; good value compared to Quattroporte - It's still a big car
Maserati Ghibli S	198 D	€63,760	6/2979	404/5500	406/4500	1810kg	227	5.0	-	177	242	27.2	★★★★★	+ Stands out from the crowd; sounds good too - Chassis lacks finesse, engine lacks reach
Maserati Quattroporte S	184 D	€80,115	6/2979	404/5500	406/1750	1860kg	221	5.1	-	177	242	27.2	★★★★★	+ Tempting alternative to V8 - Feel-free steering, 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	5.1	12.1	174	365	18.0	★★★★★	+ A QP with the bhp it deserves - Grille is a bit Hannibal Lecter
Maserati Quattroporte Sport GTS	141 R	'08-'12	8/4691	433/7000	361/4750	1990kg	221	5.1	-	177	365	18.0	★★★★★	+ The most stylish supersaloon - Slightly wooden brakes, unforgiving ride
Maserati Quattroporte	085 R	'04-'08	8/4244	394/7000	333/4500	1930kg	207	5.1	-	171	-	17.9	★★★★★	+ Redefines big-car dynamics - Don't use auto mode
Mercedes-Benz 190E 2.5-16	185 F	'89-'92	4/2498	201/6750	177/5500	1360kg	147	7.2	-	142	-	24.4	★★★★★	+ M-B's M3 alternative - Not as nimble as the Beemer
Mercedes-Benz CLA45 AMG	186 D	€42,270	4/1991	355/6000	332/2250	1510kg	239	4.6	-	155	161	31.0	★★★★★	+ Strong performance, classy cabin - Pricy 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 C43 4Matic Estate	228 D	€45,250	8/2996	362/5500	383/2000	1660kg	222	4.7	-	155	181	35.8	★★★★★	+ Incredibly fast and composed - Difficult to engage with
Mercedes-AMG C63	209 D	€59,800	8/3982	469/5500	479/1750	1640kg	291	4.1	-	155	192	34.5	★★★★★	+ Fast and feelsome - Lacks the ultimate finesse and response of the C63 S
Mercedes-AMG C63 Estate	216 R	€61,260	8/3982	469/5500	479/1750	1710kg	279	4.2	-	155	196	33.6	★★★★★	+ Much more fun than it looks - Gearbox dim-witted at low speeds
Mercedes-AMG C63 S	211 R	€66,545	8/3982	503/5500	516/1750	1655kg	309	4.0	-	155	192	34.5	★★★★★	+ Tremendous twin-turbo V8 power - Not quite as focused as an M division car
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG	151 R	'07-'14	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1655kg	277	4.4	9.7	160	280	23.5	★★★★★	+ Monstrous pace and extremely engaging - Same-era M3 is just a little better...
Mercedes-Benz 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 10bhp and squarer headlights - Steering still vague
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W211)	096 D	'06-'09	8/6208	507/6800	465/5200	1765kg	292	4.5	-	155	-	19.8	★★★★★	+ Brilliant engine, indulgent chassis - Vague steering, speed limits
Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG	052 R	'03-'06	8/5439	476/6100	516/2650	1760kg	271	4.8	10.2	155	-	21.9	★★★★★	+ M5-humbling grunt, cossetting ride - Speed limits
Mercedes-Benz S63 AMG L	191 D	€119,835	8/5461	577/5500	664/2250	1995kg	294	4.4	-	155	237	27.9	★★★★★	+ Monster pace - Average steering feel
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG S	199 D	€86,500	8/5461	577/5500	590/1750	1795kg	327	4.1	-	155	231	28.5	★★★★★	+ Remains quick and characterful - Dated gear-box, no four-wheel drive option in the UK
Mercedes-Benz SL63 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 SL63 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 GLE63 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 GLE63 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 - S85K buys a Boxster and an ML350...
Mercedes-Benz G63 AMG	172 D	€124,000	8/5461	537/5500	560/2000	2475kg	220	5.4	-	130	322	-	★★★★★	+ It exists; epic soundtrack - Ancient chassis, silly price
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-300 SST	118 R	'08-'13	4/1998	290/6500	300/3500	1590kg	185	5.2	13.9	155	256	26.2	★★★★★	+ Evo gets twin-clutch transmission - Not as exciting as it used to be
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-360	122 D	'08-'13	4/1998	354/6500	363/3500	1560kg	231	4.1	-	155	328	19.9	★★★★★	+ Ridiculously rapid new Evo - A five-speed gearbox?!
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-330 SST	134 R	'08-'12	4/1998	324/6500	322/3500	1590kg	207	4.4	-	155	256	-	★★★★★	+ Great engine and gearbox combo - It still lives in the shadow of the Evo IX
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-400	181 R	'09-'10	4/1998	403/6500	387/3500	1560kg	262	3.8	-	155	328	-	★★★★★	+ Most powerful factory Evo ever... - about X grand too much when new
Mitsubishi Evo IX FQ-340	088 R	'05-'07	4/1997	345/6800	321/4600	1400kg	250	4.3	10.9	157	-	-	★★★★★	+ Gives Porsche drivers nightmares - Points, Lots of
Mitsubishi Evo IX MR FQ-360	181 R	'05-'07	4/1997	366/6887	363/3200	1400kg	266	3.9	-	157	-	-	★★★★★	+ Well-executed engine upgrades - Prison food
Mitsubishi Evo VIII	055 R	'03-'04	4/1997	276/6500	289/3500	1410kg	199	5.1	-	157	-	-	★★★★★	+ The Evo grows up - Brakes need beefing up
Mitsubishi Evo VIII MR FQ-300	057 R	'03-'05	4/1997	305/6800	289/3500	1400kg	221	4.8	-	157	-	20.5	★★★★★	+ Extra pace, extra attitude - Extra money
Mitsubishi Evo VII	031 R	'02-'03	4/1997	276/6500	282/3500	1360kg	206	5.0	13.0	140	-	20.4	★★★★★	+ Terrific all-rounder - You tell us
Mitsubishi Evo VI Makinen Edition	200 R	'00-'01	4/1997	276/6500	275/2750	1365kg	205	4.6	-	150	-	-	★★★★★	+ Our favourite Evo - Subtle it is not
Porsche Panamera Turbo	227 D	€113,975	8/3996	542/5750	568/1960	1995kg	276	3.6	-	190	212	30.4	★★★★★	+ Searing pace with body control that's a real step up; superb rear wing, too - Still very heavy
Porsche Panamera GTS	208 R	'11-'16	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	'10-'16	8/4806	493/6000	516/2250	1970kg	254	3.6	8.9	188	270	24.6	★★★★★	+ Fast, refined and dynamically sound - It still leaves us cold
Porsche Panamera Turbo S	159 D	'11-'13	8/4806	542/6000	590/2250	1995kg	276	3.7	-	190	270	24.6	★★★★★	+ Pace, excellent ergonomics - Steering feel, ride
Porsche Macan S	205 R	€43,648	6/2997	335/5500	339/1450	1865kg	183	5.4	-	157	204	31.4	★★★★★	+ No less compelling than the Turbo - Although lacks its ultimate speed and agility
Porsche Macan 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	4.5	11.1	165	208	30.7	★★★★★	+ Doesn't feel like an SUV - Not a match for a proper sports saloon
Porsche Cayenne GTS (Mk2, V6)	211 D	€72,523	6/3604	434/6000	442/1600	2110kg	209	5.2	-	163	228	28.3	★★★★★	+ The driver's Cayenne... - but why would a driver want an SUV?
Porsche Cayenne GTS (Mk2, V8)	173 D	'12-'15	8/4806	444/6500	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 - Entry 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 quiet and capable sports SUV - It's still got a weight problem
Range Rover Sport SVR	212 D	€95,150	8/5000	542/6000	501/3500	2355kg	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	5.2	12.9	148	-	-	★★★★★	+ A Subaru with real edge - Bit too edgy in the wet
Subaru Impreza Turbo	011 R	'98-'00	4/1994	215/5600	214/4000	1235kg	177	5.4	14.6	144	-	27.2	★★★★★	+ Destined for classic status - Thirsty
Subaru Impreza PI	200 R	'00-'01	4/1994	276/6500	260/4000	1283kg	219	4.9	13.3	150	-	25.0	★★★★★	+ One of our favourite Imprezas - Doesn't come cheap
Subaru Impreza RB5 (PPP)	187 R	'99	4/1994	237/6000	258/3500	1235kg	195	5.0	14.1	143	-	-	★★★★★	+ Perfect blend of poise and power - Limited numbers
Subaru Impreza 22B	188 R	'98-'99	4/2212	276/6000	265/3200	1270kg								

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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 considerable character and desirability with the switch to four cylinders, but its performance and handling are still exemplary. Jaguar's F-type impresses in most forms, while an Ariel Atom or Caterham Seven offer an even more extreme alternative to the 3-Eleven.

	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CVL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-60MPH	0-100MPH	MAX. MPH	GCC G/M	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	+ Predictable and fun rear end - Vague and lifeless front end	★★★★★
Alfa Romeo 4C Spider	223 R	£60,255	4/1742	237/6000	258/2200	940kg	256	4.5	-	160	161	40.9	+ Stunningly beautiful; better steering than coupe - Still has the coupe's other foibles	★★★★★
Alfa Romeo 8C Spider	161 R	'09-'11	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1675kg	273	4.5	-	181	-	-	+ Beauty meets beast. They hit it off - Boot is useless for touring	★★★★★
Alpina D4 Biturbo Convertible	212 D	£54,950	6/2993	345/4000	516/1500	1815kg	193	5.0	-	171	156	47.9	+ As much torque as a 997 Turbo - A diesel convertible wouldn't be our choice of Alpina	★★★★★
Alpina B4 Biturbo Convertible	227 D	£62,950	6/2979	404/5500	442/3000	1840kg	223	4.5	-	187	186	35.3	+ A great GT - Not as exciting to drive as the numbers may suggest	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3.5 Supercharged	180 D	£38,000	4/1998	310/8400	169/7200	550kg	573	2.7	-	155	-	-	+ As mad as ever - Rain	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3.5R	205 R	£64,800	4/1998	350/8400	243/6100	550kg	647	2.6	-	155	-	-	+ Remarkable balance, poise and pace - Pricey	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3 245	113 D	'08-'12	4/1998	245/8200	155/5200	500kg	498	3.2	-	150	-	33.0	+ The Atom just got a little bit better - Can still be a bit draughty...	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3 Supercharged	138 R	'09-'12	4/1998	300/8200	162/7200	550kg	554	3.3	-	155	-	-	+ It's brilliant - It's mental	★★★★★
Ariel Atom Mugen	165 R	'12-'13	4/1998	270/8300	188/6000	550kg	499	2.9	-	150	-	-	+ Perfect engine for the Atom's chassis - Only ten were made	★★★★★
Ariel Atom V8 500	165 R	'10-'12	8/3000	475/10,500	284/7750	550kg	877	3.0	5.8	170	-	-	+ As good as the coupe, with amplified V12 rumble - Just a smidgen shakier	★★★★★
Ariel Nomad	210 R	£33,000	4/2354	235/7200	221/4300	670kg	365	3.4	-	134	-	-	+ Off-road capabilities make for a super plaything - No Bluetooth	★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage Roadster	130 R	£89,994	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1710kg	250	4.7	-	180	328	20.4	+ Sportiest, coolest drop-top Aston in years - Starting to feel its age	★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage S Roadster	161 R	£108,995	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1690kg	258	4.6	-	189	299	21.9	+ Sounds amazing, looks even better - Still not the best drop-top in its class	★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage S Roadster	212 R	£147,000	12/5935	565/6750	451/5750	1745kg	329	4.1	-	201	343	19.2	+ A brilliant two-seat roadster... - Let down by a frustrating gearbox	★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage Roadster	175 R	'12-'14	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1760kg	294	4.4	-	190	-	-	+ As good as the coupe, with amplified V12 rumble - Just a smidgen shakier	★★★★★
Aston Martin DB9 Volante	150 D	'05-'12	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1815kg	263	4.6	-	190	368	18.2	+ Consummate cruiser and capable when pushed - Roof-up wind noise	★★★★★
Aston Martin DBS Volante	133 D	'09-'15	12/5935	420/5750	1810kg	286	4.3	-	-	191	388	17.3	+ A feel-good car par excellence - It's a bit of a heavyweight	★★★★★
Audi TTS Roadster	207 D	£41,085	4/1984	306/5800	280/1800	1450kg	214	5.2	-	155	169	38.7	+ A serious proposition, ranking close behind a Boxster S - Coupe still looks better	★★★★★
Audi TTS Roadster	122 D	'08-'14	4/1984	268/6000	258/2500	1455kg	187	5.6	-	155	189	34.9	+ Effortlessly quick - Long-term appeal open to question	★★★★★
Audi TT RS Roadster	133 D	'09-'14	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1510kg	225	4.7	-	155	212	31.0	+ Terrific engine... - ...is the best thing about it	★★★★★
Audi S5 Cabriolet	130 D	£46,770	6/2995	328/5500	325/2900	1875kg	178	5.6	-	155	199	33.2	+ Gets the S4's trick supercharged engine - Bordering on dull	★★★★★
Audi R8 V8 Spyder	186 D	'11-'15	8/4163	424/7900	317/6000	1660kg	259	4.8	-	187	337	19.6	+ More delicate and subtle than the V10 - The V10 sounds even better	★★★★★
BAC Mono	189 R	£124,255	4/2261	280/7700	206/6000	540kg	527	2.8	-	170	-	-	+ The most single-minded track car available - That means no passengers...	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT V8 Convertible	168 R	£150,200	8/3993	500/6000	487/1700	2395kg	212	4.7	-	187	254	25.9	+ One of the world's best topless GTs - Still no sports car	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT V8 S Convertible	194 D	£160,500	8/3993	521/6000	502/1700	2395kg	221	4.5	-	191	258	25.4	+ A true drivers' Bentley - Excessively heavy; feels like it could give more	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT Speed Convertible	187 D	£181,000	12/5998	626/6000	605/1700	2420kg	263	4.1	-	203	347	19.0	+ Effortless performance, style - Running costs a tad on the high side	★★★★★
BMW Z4 sDrive 35i M Sport (Mk2)	186 D	£43,005	6/2979	320/5800	295/1300	1505kg	204	5.2	-	155	219	30.1	+ Looks, hard-top versatility, drivetrain - Clumsy chassis is upset by ragged surfaces	★★★★★
BMW Z4 3.0si (Mk1)	094 D	'06-'09	6/2996	265/6600	232/2750	1310kg	205	5.7	-	155	-	32.9	+ Terrific straight-six - Handling not as playful as we'd like	★★★★★
BMW Z4 M Roadster	091 R	'06-'09	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1410kg	244	4.8	-	155	-	23.3	+ Exhilarating and characterful, that engine - Stiff suspension	★★★★★
BMW M Roadster	002 R	'98-'02	6/3246	325/7400	258/4900	1375kg	240	5.3	-	155	-	25.4	+ Fresh-air M3, that motor, hunky looks - M Coupe drives better	★★★★★
BMW 435i Convertible	194 D	£45,680	6/2979	302/5800	295/1200	1740kg	176	5.6	-	155	190	34.8	+ Impressive chassis, smart looks, neat roof - Extra weight, not as composed as coupe	★★★★★
BMW M4 Convertible (F83)	202 D	£61,145	6/2979	425/5500	406/1850	1750kg	247	4.6	-	155	213	31.0	+ As good as fast four-seat drop-tops get... - ...but still not as good as a coupe or saloon	★★★★★
BMW Z8	026 R	'00-'03	8/4941	400/6600	369/3800	1585kg	256	4.8	11.1	155	-	14.4	+ M5-powered super-sportster - M5's more fun to drive	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 160	205 R	£19,710	4/660	80/7000	79/3400	490kg	166	6.9	-	100	-	-	+ The fabulous Seven formula at its most basic - Gets pricey with options	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 270	219 R	£23,795	4/1596	135/6800	122/4100	540kg	254	5.0	-	122	-	-	+ Feisty engine, sweetly balanced, manic and exciting - The temptation of more power	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 310R	227 D	£24,995	4/1596	152/7000	124/5600	540kg	286	4.8	-	126	-	-	+ Intense and exciting - Sticky tyres limit the amount of throttle adjustability	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 360	209 R	£27,795	4/1999	180/7300	143/6100	560kg	327	4.8	-	130	-	-	+ Extra power is welcome - You'll need the six-speed gearbox to make the most of it	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 420	223 R	£30,795	4/1999	210/7600	150/6300	560kg	381	4.0	10.3	136	-	-	+ It's the one we built for ourselves - Trickier on the limit than lesser-powered Sevens	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 620S	220 D	£44,995	4/1999	310/7700	219/7350	610kg	516	3.4	-	155	-	-	+ Ludicrous, near-620R pace, with added habitability - Well, 'habitable' for a Seven...	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 620R	187 R	£50,795	4/1999	310/7700	219/7350	572kg	551	2.8	-	155	-	-	+ Banzai on track, yet still relevant on the road - £50k for a Seven?	★★★★★
Caterham Seven CSR	094 R	£47,295	4/2261	256/7500	200/6200	565kg	460	3.8	-	155	-	-	+ Brilliant for high days, holidays and trackdays - Wet Wednesdays	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Roadsport 125	105 R	'07-'14	4/1596	125/6100	120/5350	539kg	235	5.9	-	112	-	-	+ Great debut for new Ford-engined model - Bigger drivers need SV model	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Supersport	165 R	'11-'14	4/1596	140/6900	120/5790	520kg	273	4.9	-	120	-	-	+ One of the best Caterhams is also one of the cheapest of its era - It's quite minimalist	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Supersport R	180 D	'13-'14	4/1999	180/7300	143/6100	535kg	342	4.8	-	130	-	-	+ One of the best road-and-track Sevens - Impractical, noisy, uncomfortable	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Superlight R300	150 R	'09-'12	4/1999	175/7000	139/6000	515kg	345	4.5	-	140	-	-	+ Possibly all the Caterham you need - They're not cheap	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Superlight R500	123 R	'08-'14	4/1999	263/8500	177/7200	506kg	528	2.9	-	150	-	-	+ Better power-to-weight ratio than a Veyron - Until you add the driver	★★★★★
Caterham Levante	131 R	'09-'10	8/2398	550/10000	300/8500	520kg	1074	4.8	8.2	150	-	-	+ Twice the power-to-weight ratio of a Veyron! - Not easy to drive slowly	★★★★★
Caterham Seven R300	068 R	'02-'06	4/1796	160/7000	130/5000	500kg	325	4.7	-	130	-	-	+ Our 2002 Trackday Car of the Year - Not for wimps	★★★★★
Caterham Seven R500	200 R	'99-'06	4/1796	230/8600	155/7200	460kg	510	3.6	8.8	146	-	-	+ The K-Series Seven at its very best - No cup holders	★★★★★
Ferrari California T	229 D	£155,254	8/3855	553/7500	557/4750	1729kg	324	3.6	-	196	250	26.9	+ Turbocharged engine is a triumph - Still places daily useability above outright thrills	★★★★★
Ferrari California	171 D	'08-'14	8/4297	483/7750	372/5000	1735kg	283	3.8	-	193	299	-	+ Revised with sharper performance and dynamics - We'd still take a 458 Spider	★★★★★
Fiat 124 Spider	228 R	£19,545	4/1368	138/5000	171/2250	1050kg	134	7.5	-	134	148	44.1	+ It's an affordable Italian(ish) sports car - Lacks Italian brio	★★★★★
Honda S2000	118 D	'99-'09	4/1997	237/8300	153/7500	1260kg	191	6.2	-	150	-	28.2	+ An alternative and rev-happy roadster - The Boxster's better	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type Convertible	186 R	£56,260	6/2995	335/6500	332/3500	1587kg	214	5.5	-	161	234	28.8	+ Beautiful, enjoyable, responsive - Noticeably junior to the V6 S	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type S Convertible	183 R	£66,260	6/2995	375/6500	339/3500	1604kg	238	5.3	-	171	234	28.8	+ Better-damped and more rounded than the V6 S - A Boxster S is £20k cheaper	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type R Convertible	-	£92,310	8/5000	542/6500	501/3500	1665kg	331	4.0	-	186	255	26.4	+ Pace, characterful V8 - Costs £25k more than the S	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type SVR Convertible	230 D	£115,485	8/5000	567/6500	516/3500	1720kg	335	3.5	-	195	269	25.0	+ Huge performance - Unpleasant soundtrack; unsettled on bumpy roads	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type Project 7	212 R	'15	8/5000	567/6500	501/2500	1585kg	363	3.9	-	186	-	-	+ Noise, performance, adjustability - Expensive, and not the GT3 rival we would have liked	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type V8 S Convertible	183 R	'13-'14	8/5000	488/6500	461/2500	1665kg	298	4.3	-	186	259	25.5	+ Wilder than the V6 S - Could be too exuberant for some	★★★★★
Jaguar XKR Convertible	130 R	'09-'14	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1725kg	296	4.6	-	155	292	23.0	+ Fantastic 5-litre V8 - Loses sporting ground to its main foes	★★★★★
Jaguar XKR-S Convertible	167 R	'11-'14	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1725kg	319	4.2	-	186	292	23.0	+ Loud and mad; most exciting Jag in years - It was also the most expensive in years	★★★★★
KTM X-Bow GT	183 D	£95,880	4/1984	281/6400	310/3200	875kg	326	4.1	-	144	189	34.0	+ Extraordinary ability, now in a more road-friendly package - Price	★★★★★
KTM X-Bow R	165 R	£87,480	4/1984	296/5500	295/3300	818kg	368	3.6	-	144	-	-	+ Sharper handling, more power - Pity it's not even lighter, and cheaper	★★★★★
KTM X-Bow	138 R	'08-'12	4/1984	237/5500	229/2000	818kg	294	3.8	-	137	-	-	+ Mad looks, real quality feel - Heavier and pricier than you'd hope	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Sport	-	£35,880	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	866kg	157	6.0	-	127	149	45.0	+ 1.6-litre Elise is light and fantastic - Smaller engine could put some off	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Sport 220	-	£43,800	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	924kg	239	4.2	-	145	173	37.7	+ Epic grip and pace - £43k for an Elise?	★★★★★

PAST MASTER



### ASTON MARTIN VANQUISH (Mk1)

The Vanquish was the most significant British supercar in years. Richard Meaden put it to the test in the Scottish Highlands

'With my right foot pushing the alloy throttle pedal firmly into the Wilton, the Vanquish clears its throat and punches hard towards the horizon, 460bhp V12 yowling like a 1960s Le Mans racer, speedo needle surging relentlessly around the dial. The Vanquish devours the straight bits with relish,

but unlike any previous Aston it also has a ravenous appetite for corners.

'With so much power and torque on tap, the rear tyres are easily overwhelmed on cold, wet tarmac. The initial breakaway is rapid, but the balance is really sweet, allowing you to adjust

the attitude of the car purely on the throttle. While this doesn't have much relevance to everyday driving, the fact that the Vanquish has such polished, benign dynamics is mightily impressive and proof that Aston can produce a front-engined supercar that redefines the breed.'

### ISSUE 035, SEPTEMBER 2001

# WORRIED ABOUT EXPENSIVE CAR REPAIR BILLS?

If your car goes wrong, you could be faced with wallet busting repair bills. Not to mention the hassle of dealing with the garage and being without your motor for days, or even weeks on end.

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*Quentin Willson*  
Designed by **Quentin Willson**



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Watch as motoring expert, Quentin Willson, explains the benefits of a used car warranty.

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#### THEO IS WARRANTY WISE

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Simply the Best in the Business



	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	71-15	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	218/9000	156/5000	870kg	254	4.5	11.4	148	199	33.2	+ All the usual Elise magic - Supercharged engine lacks sparkle	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S 1.8	104 R	06-10	4/1794	134/6200	127/4200	870kg	158	6.3	18.7	127	-	37.2	+ Brilliant entry-level Elise - Precious little	★★★★★
Lotus Elise 111S	049 R	'02-'04	4/1796	156/7000	129/4650	860kg	197	5.1	-	131	-	40.9	+ A genuinely useable Elise - Air-con? In an Elise?	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Sport 135	040 D	'03	4/1796	135/6200	129/4850	925kg	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 - Pricy	★★★★★
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 - Pricy 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	-	-	+evo 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	164	6.7	-	137	-	21.0	+ Awesome front-drive chassis - Rather uninvolved	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio	142 D	£98,940	8/4691	434/7000	332/4750	1980kg	223	5.2	-	177	337	19.5	+ As good to drive as it is to look at - Lacks the grunt of some rivals	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio Sport	161 D	£104,535	8/4691	444/7000	376/4750	1980kg	228	5.0	-	177	377	19.5	+ Looks, performance, cruising ability - Brakes could be sharper	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio MC	185 D	£112,370	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1973kg	234	4.9	-	179	337	19.5	+ Most powerful GranCabrio yet - The GranCabrio is starting to show its age	★★★★★
⊕ Mazda MX-5 1.5 (Mk4)	230 F	£18,495	4/1496	129/7000	111/4800	975kg	134	8.3	-	127	139	47.1	+ Lightest MX-5 since the Mk1 - Lacks intensity	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 2.0 Sport Nav (Mk4)	228 R	£23,695	4/1998	158/6000	147/4600	1000kg	161	7.3	-	133	161	40.9	+ Brilliant basic recipe - The desire for stiffer suspension and more power	★★★★★
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	108/4500	1080kg	108	9.3	-	122	-	-	+ Gearchange, interior - Lost some of the charm of old MX-5s; dubious handling	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk2)	017 R	'98-'05	4/1839	146/7000	124/5000	1065kg	140	8.6	-	123	-	32.5	+ Affordable ragtops don't get much better - Cheap cabin	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.6 (Mk1)	131 R	'89-'97	4/1597	115/6500	100/5500	971kg	120	9.0	-	114	-	-	+ The original and still (pretty much) the best - Less than rigid	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG SLC43	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	1575kg	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-titted TG-Turbo 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-AMG SL63	228 D	£114,115	8/5461	571/5500	664/2250	1770kg	331	4.1	-	155	234	28.0	+ Effortless performance - Needs more involvement to go with the pace	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL500	169 D	'12-'16	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	'12-'16	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	'13-'16	12/5980	621/4800	737/2300	1875kg	336	4.0	-	155	270	24.4	+ Chassis just about deals with the power - Speed limits	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	117 D	'08-'13	8/6208	518/6800	464/5200	1970kg	278	4.6	-	155	328	20.0	+ More focused than old SL55 AMG - Lost some of its all-round appeal	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG	071 D	'04-'10	12/5980	604/4800	737/2000	2035kg	302	4.1	-	155	-	-	+ Gob-smacking performance - Gob-smackingly pricy	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL S 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 targa top - It's proper supercar money	★★★★★
Morgan Aero 8	105 R	'02-'08	8/4799	362/6300	361/3400	1100kg	334	4.5	-	170	-	25.2	+ Glorious sound, view over bonnet, dynamic - 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 S (986)	070 R	'99-'04	6/3179	256/6200	229/4600	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	-	-	+ Ranty, 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-ripping grunt - Details	★★★★★
TVR Griffith 4.3	068 R	'92-'93	8/4280	280/5500	305/4000	1060kg	268	4.8	11.2	148	-	-	+ The car that made TVR. Cult status - Mere details	★★★★★
TVR Griffith 500	009 R	'93-'01	8/4988	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	4.8	11.2	148	-	22.1	+ Gruff diamond - A few rough edges	★★★★★
Vauxhall VX220	023 R	'00-'04	4/2198	145/5800	150/4000	875kg	168	5.6	-	136	-	34.4	+ Absurdly good Vauxhall - The badge?	★★★★★
Vauxhall VX220 Turbo	066 R	'03-'04	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	★★★★★

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**RATINGS** ★ Thrill-free zone ★★ Tepid ★★★ Interesting ★★★★ Seriously good ★★★★★ A truly great car



**OUR CHOICE**

**Porsche 911 R.** GT3 RS engine, manual gearbox, no wing and a lightweight build ethic. It sounded like the perfect 911 on paper, and in physical form it has proved to be just that – or very close to it – for many. Hence its win at eCoty 2016 against some particularly strong rivals. Pity about those premiums...



**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	COE G/M	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 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	229 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	230 D	\$154,000	12/5204	600/6500	516/1500	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	168	38.7	+ Dynamically interesting (for a TT) - Still not as interactive as a Cayman	★★★★★
Audi TT RS (Mk3)	230 R	\$51,800	4/2480	394/5850	354/1700	1440kg	278	3.4	-	155	187	34.4	+ Soundtrack; tremendous turbo-to-point pace - A bit one-dimensional in the long run	★★★★★
Audi TT RS (Mk2)	158 R	'09-'14	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1450kg	235	4.4	11.1	155	209	31.4	+ Sublime 5-cylinder turbo engine - Rest of package can't quite match it	★★★★★
Audi TT RS Plus (Mk2)	185 D	'12-'14	5/2480	355/5500	343/1650	1450kg	249	4.3	-	174	209	31.4	+ Stonkingly fast cross-country - Shockingly expensive for a TT	★★★★★
Audi S5	225 D	\$43,795	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	1750kg	263	4.5	-	155	246	26.9	+ Brilliant engine and improved chassis - Lack of suspension travel; inconsistent steering	★★★★★
Audi R8 V8	201 R	'07-'15	8/4163	424/7900	317/4500	1560kg	276	4.1	9.9	188	332	19.9	+ A true 911 alternative - Exclusivity comes at a price	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT V8	178 R	\$140,300	8/3993	500/6000	487/1700	2220kg	229	4.6	-	188	246	27.0	+ A proper drivers' Bentley with decent economy - W12 suddenly seems pointless	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT V8 S	204 F	\$149,800	8/3993	521/6000	502/1700	2220kg	238	4.3	-	192	250	26.4	+ An even better drivers' Bentley - Vast weight makes its presence felt in harder driving	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT	152 D	\$150,500	12/5998	567/6000	516/1700	2245kg	257	4.3	-	197	338	19.5	+ 200mph in utter comfort - Weight, thirst	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT Speed	230 D	\$168,900	12/5998	633/5900	620/2000	2245kg	286	4.1	-	206	338	19.3	+ Desirability meets exclusivity and performance - We'd still have the V8	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT3-R	203 D	\$237,500	8/3993	572/6000	518/1700	2120kg	274	3.6	-	170	295	22.2	+ The best-handling Continental ever - Expensive; it still weighs 2120kg	★★★★★
BMW 1-series M Coupe	188 R	'11-'12	6/2979	335/5900	369/1500	1495kg	228	4.8	-	155	224	-	+ Character, turbo pace and great looks - Came and went too quick	★★★★★
BMW M240i Coupe	229 D	\$35,090	6/2998	335/6800	369/1520	1470kg	232	4.8	-	155	179	36.2	+ Adjustable and plenty of fun - Lacks finesse and precision	★★★★★
BMW M235i Coupe	225 R	'14-'16	6/2979	321/5800	332/1300	1455kg	234	5.2	12.7	155	189	34.9	+ Powertrain, chassis, looks, size - Limited-slip diff is an option, not standard	★★★★★
BMW M2	230 R	\$44,080	6/2979	365/6500	369/1450	1495kg	248	4.5	-	155	199	33.2	+ More progressive chassis balance than the M4 - Feels unsettled on rough tarmac	★★★★★
BMW M4	218 R	\$57,055	6/2979	425/5500	406/1850	1515kg	285	4.3	-	155	204	32.1	+ Ferociously fast - A handful on less-than-perfect or less-than-bone-dry roads	★★★★★
BMW M4 Competition Package	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	229 R	\$120,500	6/2979	493/6250	442/4000	1510kg	332	3.7	8.0	190	199	34.0	+ Vast improvement on lesser M4s - So it should be at this price	★★★★★
BMW M3 (E92)	196 R	'07-'13	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1580kg	266	4.3	10.3	155	290	22.8	+ Fends off all of its rivals - ...except the cheaper 1-series M	★★★★★
BMW M3 GT3 (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 Evolution (E36)	148 R	'96-'98	6/3201	321/7400	258/3250	1515kg	215	5.4	12.8	158	-	25.7	+ Performance, image - Never quite as good as the E30	★★★★★
BMW M3 (E30)	165 R	'86-'90	4/2302	212/6750	170/4600	1165kg	185	6.7	17.8	147	-	20.3	+ Best M-car ever! Race-car dynamics for the road - Prices have got out of hand	★★★★★
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 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	\$62,470	8/6162	460/6000	465/4600	1496kg	312	4.4	9.4	180	279	23.5	+ Performance, chassis balance, supple ride - Body control could be better	★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette Z06 (C7)	227 R	\$89,620	8/6162	650/6000	650/3600	1598kg	413	3.7	-	196	291	23.1	+ Mind-boggling raw speed; surprisingly sophisticated - Edgy when really pushed	★★★★★
Ford Mustang 2.3 EcoBoost	222 D	\$30,995	4/7261	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	★★★★★
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 (NA2)	188 R	'97-'05	6/3179	276/7300	224/5300	1410kg	196	5.5	-	168	-	22.8	+ The useable supercar - 276bhp sounds a bit weedy today	★★★★★
Honda NSX-R (NA2) *	100 R	'02-'03	6/3179	276/7300	224/5300	1270kg	221	4.4	-	168	-	-	+ Evo Car of the Year 2002 - Hard to find in the UK	★★★★★
Infiniti Q60S	228 D	\$42,990	6/2997	400/6400	350/1600	1799kg	226	5.0	-	155	208	31.0	+ Impressive tech - Electronic systems reduce feeling of involvement	★★★★★
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 boistrous	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type R Coupe AWD	227 D	\$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	+ A marginally better drive than the AWD R - Not by enough to justify the extra outlay	★★★★★
Jaguar XKR	168 R	'09-'14	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1678kg	305	4.6	-	155	292	23.0	+ Fast and incredibly rewarding Jag - The kids will have to stay at home	★★★★★
Jaguar XKR-S	168 R	'11-'14	8/5000	542/6000	502/2500	1678kg	328	4.2	-	186	292	23.0	+ Faster and wilder than regular XKR - The F-type R Coupe	★★★★★
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 Exige Sport 350	221 R	\$55,900	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1125kg	312	3.7	-	170	2			

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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	EC MPG	EVO RATING	
Lotus Evija S (V6)	209 R	12-'15	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1176kg	298	3.8	-	170	235	28.0	+ Breathtaking road-racer; our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Gearshift not the sweetest	★★★★★
Lotus Evija S (S2)	105 R	06-'11	4/1796	218/7800	158/5500	930kg	238	4.5	-	148	199	33.2	+ Lightweight with a hefty punch - Uninspiring soundtrack	★★★★★
Lotus Evija (S1)	200 R	00-'01	4/1796	192/7800	146/5000	780kg	247	4.6	-	136	-	-	+ Looks and goes like Elise racer - A tad lacking in refinement	★★★★★
Lotus Evija 400	216 R	£72,000	6/3456	400/7000	302/3500	1395kg	291	4.1	-	186	225	29.1	+ Evija excitement levels take a leap - Gearbox still not perfect; punchy pricing	★★★★★
Lotus Evija Sport 410	230 R	£82,000	6/3456	410/7000	310/3500	1325kg	314	3.9	-	190	225	29.1	+ Even lighter and sharper Evija - Engine and gearbox behind the best at this price	★★★★★
Lotus Evija	138 R	'09-'15	6/3456	276/6400	258/4700	1382kg	203	5.6	13.6	162	217	30.3	+ Sublime ride and handling. Our 2009 Car of the Year - The Evija S	★★★★★
Lotus Evija S	168 R	'10-'15	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1430kg	245	4.6	-	172	229	28.7	+ A faster and better Evija - But one which spars with the Porsche 911...	★★★★★
Maserati GranTurismo	114 R	£82,890	8/4244	399/7100	339/4750	1880kg	216	5.5	12.7	177	330	19.8	+ Striking, accomplished GT - Doesn't spike the pulse like an Aston or 911	★★★★★
Maserati GranTurismo Sport	188 R	£91,420	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1880kg	245	4.8	-	185	331	19.7	+ The best everyday GranTurismo yet - Starting to get long in the tooth	★★★★★
Maserati GranTurismo MC Stradale	193 R	£110,740	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1800kg	256	4.5	-	188	360	18.2	+ Brilliant blend of road racer and GT - Gearbox takes a little getting used to	★★★★★
Mazda RX-8	122 R	'03-'11	2R/1308	228/8200	156/5500	1429kg	162	6.5	16.4	146	299	24.6	+ Never mind the quirks. It's a great drive - Wafer-thin torque output	★★★★★
Mercedes-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	229 R	£69,205	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	4.4	10.3	186	280	23.5	+ A proper two-door M3 rival - C63 saloon looks better	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Black Series	171 R	'12-'13	8/6208	510/6800	457/5200	1635kg	317	4.2	-	186	286	-	+ The C63 turned up to 11 - Too heavy, not as fiery as Black Series cars of old	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG 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	8/5614	571/5500	664/2250	1995kg	294	4.2	-	155	237	28.0	+ Thunderously fast S-class built for drivers - Lacks badge appeal of a Continental GT	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG S65 Coupe	209 D	£183,075	12/5960	621/4800	737/2300	2100kg	299	4.1	-	186	279	23.7	+ Almighty power, fabulous luxury - Nearly £60k more than the S63!	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG GT	227 D	£98,195	8/3982	456/6000	442/1600	1540kg	301	4.0	-	189	216	30.4	+ A true sports car that also does luxury - Takes time to reveal its talents	★★★★★
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	214/5200	1496kg	230	5.2	-	155	248	26.6	+ Sharper looks, improved ride, extra thrills - Engine lacks sparkle	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R (2017MY)	230 R	£193,995	6/3799	562/6800	470/3600	1750kg	326	2.7	-	196	275	24.0	+ More refinement, much improved interior, still fast - Feels a touch less alert	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R Track Edition (2017MY)	229 D	£91,995	6/3799	562/6800	470/3600	1745kg	327	2.7	-	196	275	24.0	+ GT-R regains its sharpness - Getting pricey these days	★★★★★
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	3.2	7.5	196	275	24.0	+ GT-R is quicker and better than ever - But costs over £20k more than its launch price	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R Track Edition (2016MY)	223 R	'15-'16	6/3799	542/6400	466/3200	1740kg	316	3.4	7.7	196	275	24.0	+ Recreates much of the Nismo's ability, without the rock-hard ride - Interior feels dated	★★★★★
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R34)	196 R	'99-'02	6/2568	276/7000	289/4400	1560kg	180	4.7	12.5	165	-	20.1	+ Big, brutal, and great fun - Needs more than the standard 276bhp	★★★★★
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R33)	196 R	'97-'99	6/2568	276/6800	271/4400	1540kg	182	5.4	14.3	155	-	22.0	+ Proof that Japanese hi-tech can work (superbly) - Limited supply	★★★★★
Peugeot RCZ 1.6 THP 200	155 R	£27,150	4/1598	197/5500	202/1700	1421kg	141	7.3	18.1	147	155	42.1	+ Distinctive looks, highly capable handling - Could be a bit more exciting	★★★★★
Peugeot RCZ R	209 R	£32,250	4/1598	266/6000	243/1900	1280kg	211	5.9	-	155	145	44.8	+ Rewarding and highly effective when fully lit - Dated cabin, steering lacks feel	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Cayman	229 D	£39,878	4/1988	296/6500	280/1950	1335kg	225	5.1	-	170	168	47.1	+ Chassis remains a dream - Engine feels strangled and sounds horribly harsh	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Cayman S	230 R	£48,843	4/2497	345/6500	310/1900	1355kg	259	4.4	-	177	184	26.4	+ Faster and better to drive than ever - Turbo four-cylinder is utterly charmless	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman S (981)	202 R	'13-'16	6/3436	321/7400	273/4500	1320kg	247	4.5	10.5	175	206	32.1	+ The Cayman comes of age - Erm...	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman GT3 (981)	219 F	'14-'16	6/3436	335/7400	280/4750	1345kg	253	4.9	-	177	211	31.4	+ Tweaks improve an already sublime package - Slightly 'aftermarket' looks	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman GT4 (981)	221 R	'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	4.3	9.5	188	223	29.7	+ A Carrera with supercar pace - Electric steering robs it of some tactility	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera 4S (991.1)	179 R	'13-'15	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1465kg	273	4.5	-	185	233	28.5	+ More satisfying than rear-drive 991.1 Carreras - Choose your spec carefully	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera 4 GT3 (991.1)	208 D	'15	6/3800	424/7500	324/5750	1470kg	293	4.4	-	189	233	28.5	+ The highlight of the 991.1 Carrera line-up - Pricy 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 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	3.0	7.1	193	296	22.2	+ Sensationally good to drive - They won't all be painted Ultra Violet	★★★★★
Porsche 911 R (991)	229 R	£136,901	6/3996	493/8250	339/6250	1370kg	366	3.8	-	200	308	21.2	+evo Car of the Year 2016 - Limited availability	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.2)	182 R	'09-'11	6/3797	429/7600	317/6250	1395kg	312	4.2	9.2	194	303	22.1	+ Even better than the car it replaced - Give us a minute...	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (3.8, 997.2)	200 R	'10-'11	6/3797	444/7900	317/6750	1370kg	329	4.0	-	193	314	-	+ Our favourite car from the first 200 issues of EVO - For people like us, nothing	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS 4.0 (997.2)	187 R	'11-'12	6/3996	493/8250	339/5750	1360kg	368	3.8	-	193	326	-	+evo Car of the Year 2011 - Unforgiving on-road ride; crazy used prices	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.1)	182 R	'07-'09	6/3600	409/7600	298/5500	1395kg	298	4.3	9.4	192	-	-	+ Runner-up EVO Car of the Year 2006 - Ferrari 599 GTBs	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.1)	105 R	'07-'09	6/3600	409/7600	298/5500	1375kg	302	4.2	-	193	-	-	+evo Car of the Year 2007 - A chunk more money than the brilliant GT3	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.2)	221 R	'03-'05	6/3600	375/7400	284/5000	1380kg	272	4.3	9.2	190	-	-	+evo Car of the Year 2003 - Chassis is a bit too track-focused for some roads	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (996.2)	068 R	'03-'05	6/3600	375/7400	284/5000	1330kg	286	4.2	9.2	190	-	-	+ Track-biased version of above - Limited supply	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.1)	182 R	'99	6/3600	360/7200	273/5000	1350kg	271	4.5	10.3	187	-	21.9	+evo Car of the Year 1999 - Porsche didn't build enough	★★★★★
Radical RXC	189 R	£94,500	6/3700	350/6750	320/4250	900kg	395	2.8	-	175	-	-	+ A real trackday weapon - Can't match the insanity of a Caterham 620R	★★★★★
Radical RXC Turbo	205 R	£129,000	6/3496	454/6000	500/3600	940kg	491	2.6	-	185	-	-	+ Eats GT3s for breakfast - Might not feel special enough at this price	★★★★★
Radical RXC Turbo 500	209 D	£143,400	6/3496	530/6100	481/5000	1100kg	490	2.6	6.8	185	-	-	+ Huge performance, intuitive adjustability, track ability - Compromised for road use	★★★★★
Radical RXC Turbo 500R	227 D	£201,000	6/3496	600/6700	465/4200	1070kg	561	2.8	-	185	-	-	+ Immense accessible performance - Fit, finish and detailing lacks finesse at this price	★★★★★
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	6.9	16.5	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	★★★★★
VW Scirocco GT 2.0 TSI	155 R	£26,125	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1369kg	158	6.5	-	153	139	47.1	+ Golf GTI price and performance - Interior lacks flair	★★★★★
VW Scirocco R	200 D	£32,580	4/1984	276/6000	258/2500	1426kg	187	5.7	-	155	187	35.3	+ Great engine, grown-up dynamics - Perhaps a little too grown-up for some	★★★★★

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**OUR CHOICE**

**McLaren 675LT.** The 'long-tail' is the step forward we've been hoping for from McLaren's super-series cars, adding a real sense of involvement to the incredible pace that's been building since the 12C. In fact, the 675LT is so intense it might even make you question if you need a P1.



**BEST OF THE REST**

The Ferrari 488 GTB (left) has a stunning turbocharged engine and the chassis to exploit it. Lamborghini's Aventador offers true supercar drama, especially in Superveco form, while the Pagani Huayra rivals it for theatre (albeit at four times the price) and was our joint 2012 **evo** Car of the Year.

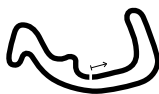
	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE Cyl/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-60MPH	0-100MPH	MAX MPH	GCC G/KM	EC MPG	EVO RATING
Aston Martin Vanquish (Mk2)	203 R	£192,995	12/5935	568/6650	465/5500	1739kg	332	3.6	-	201	298	22.1	+ Much better than the DBS it succeeds, especially in 2015MY form - It's no Ferrari F12
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	228 D	£119,520	10/5204	533/8250	398/6500	1595kg	340	3.5	-	198	272	24.8	+ All the R8 you really need - Some may hanker after a manual gearbox
Audi R8 V10 Plus	229 R	£134,520	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 rocket - Er, lacks luggage space?
Bugatti Veyron Super Sport	151 R	'10-'14	16/7993	1183/6400	1106/3000	1838kg	654	2.5	-	268	539	12.2	+ The world's fastest supercar - Limited to 258bhp 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	228 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	-	-	+ 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	-	-	+ 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 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	230 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 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 GTCC4 Lusso	225 D	£230,430	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	229 R	£132,75	6/3493	573	476/2000	1776kg	328	2.9	-	191	228	28.2	+ 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
Koenigssegger Agera 1	180 R	c£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
Koenigssegger One R	202 R	c£2.0m	8/5065	1341/7500	1011/6000	1360kg	1002	2.9	-	273	-	-	+ The most powerful car we've ever tested - It's sold out; we couldn't afford one anyway...
Koenigssegger 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 RWD Coupe	229 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 LP640	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 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 Coupe	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 SV Coupe	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	359	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 540C	228 R	£126,000	8/3799	533/7500	398/3500	1311kg	413	3.5	-	199	258	25.5	+ A very good junior supercar - The 570S is still better to drive
McLaren 570S	229 R	£143,250	8/3799	562/7500	443/5000	1440kg	397	3.1	-	204	249	26.6	+ A truly fun and engaging sports car - McLaren doesn't call it a supercar(!)
McLaren 570GT	228 R	£154,000	8/3799	562/7500	443/5000	1495kg	382	3.4	-	204	249	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	228 R	£259,500	8/3799	666/7100	516/5500	1328kg	510	2.9	-	205	275	24.2	+ Runner-up at eCoty 2015; asks questions of the P1 - Aventador price tag
McLaren 675LT Spider	222 D	£285,450	8/3799	666/7100	516/5500	1368kg	495	2.9	-	203	275	24.2	+ Spectacularly fast; involving, too - Might mess up your hair
McLaren 12C	228 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	228 R	'13-'15	8/3799	903/7500	664/4000	1490kg	616	2.8	-	217	194	34.0	+ Freakish breadth of ability - At its mind-bending best on track
McLaren F1	228 R	'94-'98	12/6064	627/7500	479/4000	1137kg	560	3.2	6.3	240+	-	19.0	+ Still the most single-minded supercar ever - There'll never be another
Mercedes-Benz 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	228 R	'03-'07	8/5439	617/6500	550/3250	1693kg	370	3.7	-	208	-	-	+ Zonda-pace, 575-style drivability - Dreadful brake feel
Noble M600	186 R	c£200m	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 baprice
Pagani Huayra	185 R	c£1m	12/5980	720/5800	737/2250	1350kg	542	3.3	-	224	-	-	+ Our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Engine isn't as naive-prickling as the Zonda's
Pagani Zonda 760RS	170 R	£1.5m	12/7291	750/6300	575/4500	1210kg	630	3.3	-	217+	-	-	+ One of the most extreme Zondas ever - One of the last Zondas ever (probably)
Pagani Zonda S T.3	096 R	'02-'05	12/7291	555/5900	553/4050	1250kg	451	3.6	-	197	-	-	+ evo Car of the Year 2001 (in earlier 7.0 form) - Values have gone up a fair bit since then
Pagani Zonda F	186 R	'05-'06	12/7291	602/6150	575/4000	1230kg	497	3.6	-	214	-	-	+ Everything an Italian supercar ought to be - Looks a bit bingy next to a Carrera GT
Pagani Zonda Cinque Roadster	147 D	'09-'10	12/7291	669/6200	575/4000	1400kg	485	3.4	-	217+	-	-	+ The best Zonda ever -

# 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
BAC Mono 2.5 (fastest sports car)	1:07.7	229	Yes
Radical RXC Turbo 500 (fastest coupe)	1:10.5	-	Yes
McLaren P1 (on Pirelli 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
Ferrari 488 GTB	1:12.8	228	Yes
McLaren 675LT	1:12.8	228	Yes
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (991.1)	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)	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 (991.1)	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	-
VW Golf R (Mk7)	1:21.6	212	-



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## 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
Mercedes-AMG C63 S Saloon	1:24.0	211	Yes
VW Golf GTI Clubsport S	1:24.1	227	-
SEAT Leon Cupra 290 (on optional Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres)	1:24.2	227	-
Ford Focus RS (Mk3, on optional Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres)	1:24.6	227	-
Honda Civic Type R (FK2, on Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres)	1:24.6	227	-
Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy-R	1:25.1	227	-
VW Golf R (Mk7)	1:26.1	-	Yes
Audi RS3 Sportback (2015MY)	1:26.6	-	Yes
Ford Fiesta ST Mountune	1:29.5	213	-
Mazda MX-5 2.0i Sport (Mk4) (fastest sports car)	1:29.8	-	Yes

## 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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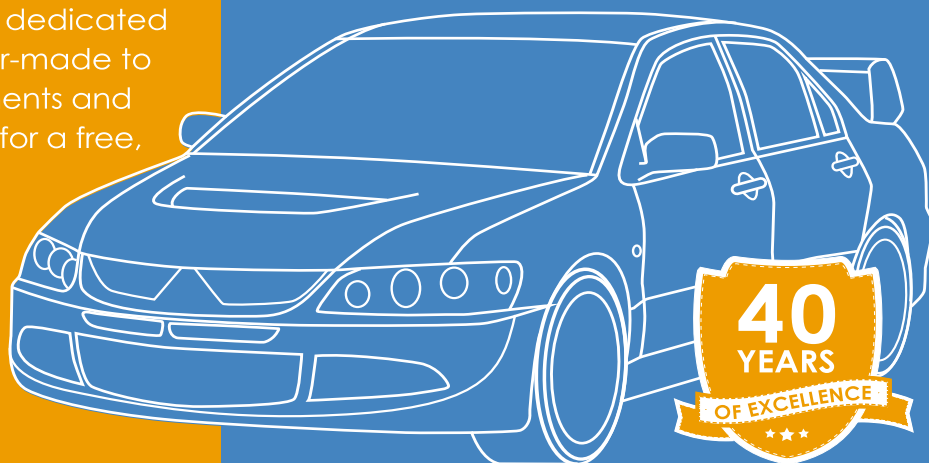
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# FINAL FRAME

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## Renault 5 Turbo

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